

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM**

**PREPARATORY REVIEW**

**To California State University, Fresno**

**January 14, 2004**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Advancement to Educational  
Effectiveness Candidacy**

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**The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action to the institution for consideration.**

## **I. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION AND VISIT**

California State University, Fresno (CSUF), dating back to 1911 (known as the Fresno State Normal School), is a major public university serving California's central San Joaquin Valley. The move to its current site took place in the mid 1950s, and the current name, California State University, Fresno, dates from 1972. The institution is located approximately 185 miles southeast of San Francisco and 220 miles north of Los Angeles in the heart of the richest agricultural valley in the world.

CSU Fresno is part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, the largest state university system in the nation. The university is situated on 1470 acres, 74 percent of which are devoted to agriculture-cropland, orchards, vineyards, farm animal facilities and laboratory and research facilities. Recent construction at the core of this location includes the Music Building, the Education Building, the Smittcamp Alumni House and the Atrium. The Downing Planetarium and the State Crime Lab constitute beginning elements of the Fresno State Science Center. Anticipated constructions in the Science Center are a planetarium-affiliated science museum and a major new classroom-office building, Science II. Also planned for this area are a number of other buildings, including a Science Partners' building. With the construction of Science II, the last of six "temporary" buildings dating from 1968 will be removed. Classrooms and laboratories have undergone regular renovation and modification. These efforts include, in particular, modifications to better accommodate persons with disabilities and to incorporate new technological resources that bring state of the art capabilities to instruction.

CSU Fresno has evolved over the past 92 years to its present 2003 enrollment of more than 21,000 students, where almost one out of four students is enrolled in a post-

baccalaureate or graduate program. Two thirds of the students come to the institution from high schools and community colleges in the five surrounding counties, with 33 to 40 percent coming from within Fresno and Clovis proper. A high level of diversity is apparent among the student body. Entering fall 2001 freshman self-selected their ethnicity as the following: 42% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, 19% Asian, and 7% African-American. The institution employs 1274 faculty. 535 are tenured and tenure track, 526 are part time lecturers, and 127 are full time lecturers. Percentage of ethnicity is somewhat consistent, by demographic, between lecturer and tenure/tenure track faculty.

Lecturer-FT	Lect- PT	Tenure/TT	Enthnicity
1.6%	0.6%	0.2%	American Indian
			0.5% Total
9.4%	6.7%	11.0%	Asian
			8.9% Total
3.1%	1.1%	3.2%	Black
			2.8% Total
8.7%	7.6%	8.6%	Hispanic
			8.2% Total
74.0%	78.1%	75.5%	White
			76.0% Total

The campus has a relatively traditional organizational structure with a president and four vice presidents. The President of the institution is Dr. John D. Welty, who took office in July 1991.

In 2000-02, CSU Fresno received a total of \$167 million in general funds, consisting of over \$130 million in base allocation and over \$36 million in revenues and reimbursements, primarily fees and tuition. In addition, grants, contracts and private donations reach over \$60 million per year, providing 25% to 30% of the total university budget. All basic university functions are funded from the general funds.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), as a regional accreditation agency accredits CSU Fresno as a regional comprehensive university at the undergraduate and graduate level. The University offers 54 baccalaureate degrees and 41 master's degree programs, 7 certificates of advanced study and 1 doctoral joint program in Educational Leadership with UC Davis. The institution has 37 nationally accredited departmental programs.

The departments offering these degrees exist in eight schools and colleges:

- College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology
- College of Arts and Humanities
- Craig School of Business
- Kremen School of Education and Human Development
- College of Engineering and Computer Science
- College of Health and Human Services
- College of Science and Mathematics
- College of Social Sciences

A strong sense of academic shared governance exists throughout the campus. This is embedded in the Constitution of the Academic Assembly, of which the Academic Senate is the representative body. Provisions defining rights and responsibilities have

been drawn from multiple sources, foremost of which are the State Legislature, the CSU Board of Trustees and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The California Higher Education Employer-Employees Relations Act (HEERA) recognizes consultation and joint decision making between administration and faculty.

Recent initiatives undertaken by the campus community include the following: Honors Programs, Faculty Transformation, Community-Campus Interactions, Assessment, Diversity, Academic Technology, Doctoral Degrees, Decentralization, New Focus on Athletics, and Non-state support.

CSUF accreditation visits and communications began in 1953, continuing through April 2003. The last comprehensive visit occurred in November 1993. In March 1994 the Commission acted to reaffirm accreditation and to schedule the next comprehensive visit for fall 2001. In April 1999 the staff requested to move the site visit from fall 2001 to fall 2003.

This report is an account of the most recent visit for purposes of assessing institutional capacity to continue with the educational effectiveness phase of the accreditation process. Five Team members arrived on the campus Wednesday morning, November 19 and concluded at 1:00 on November 21, following the Team Leader's private meeting with the President and public campus address.

During this two day visit the Team met with multiple constituencies of the University: the WASC Steering Team, Deans, the President's Cabinet, the Executive Committee and Senate Chairs, the President, the University Advisory Board, Student Affairs Executives, University Budget Committee, the Task Force on Student Success, the Finance Group, the Senior Technology Leadership, the Service Learning

representatives, Plant Operations and Agricultural Operations, Community Interaction Representatives and Center Directors, the Athletic Advisory Council, Student-Athletic Services, a Staff Forum, a Student Forum, five individual departments (English, Theatre Arts, Mathematics, Biology, Communication and Counseling), Graduate Students, and Associated Student Leadership.

### **IB-Quality of the Preparatory Report**

The Team felt that the Presentation and the alignment of Presentation to the Institutional Proposal were of high quality. The Presentation reflected the institution's core values. The team praises the institution for the candid and forthright approach it pursued throughout the Presentation. The overall quality and organization of the Institutional Presentation and the supporting Portfolio were clear and consistent. The Preparatory Review Report accurately reflects the state of the institution at the time of this team's visit.

Though the data and exhibits selected by the institution in the Presentation were generally thorough, there were some inconsistencies. In some circumstances, conclusions drawn from the data were not readily evident from the tables provided and in some cases the conclusions seemed to be optimistic and perhaps overstated. In the Educational Effectiveness Report, the institution has to avoid spotty information accompanied by limited analysis when presenting exhibits and related data in the Report. Overall, the process of Self-Review led to a deeper and broader understanding of the institution's capacity and infrastructure for data collection and analysis. However, as mentioned above, there were some gaps in evidence presented. All additional data that were requested by the Accreditation Team were readily provided.

## **IC- Response to Previous Commission Issues**

The institution was forthcoming in its responses to issues highlighted by the WASC in its previous action letter as well as the major recommendations of the last evaluation team.

The major recommendations from the last site visit included: Cultural and Racial Diversity, Fiscal Resources, Managing Change, and Redefining the University. The Accreditation Team compliments the institution on creative and authentic strategies it has used to address faculty and student diversity, budgetary constraints and institution mission and vision. Throughout this core capacity report, the Accreditation Team will address elements within each of these areas, which continue to need institutional attention. The most recent Substantive Change Action taken by WASC approved site-based, off-campus programs within the United States. WASC determined that systems approval for international sites was not appropriate at the time. Development of off-campus programs within the region was not addressed in the Preparatory Review. WASC did not approve systems review for the implementation of distance learning degree programs where 50% or more of a degree program is offered online. Rather, WASC requested that the institution submit a substantive change proposal for its first full online degree program. Neither the Preparatory Review nor interactions during the site visit addressed this issue. It is recommended that the Educational Effectiveness Review incorporate an assessment of off-campus programs.

## **II-EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS**

### **II A- Organization and Strategy**

Prior to the campus visit, each team member reviewed the campus Preparatory Report and independently identified areas of the report which were unclear or needed to

be further addressed. The team Chair interacted with the campus liaison to request further data from the campus and to request additional meetings with campus constituents.

Together the team Chair and the campus liaison designed the campus visit. The campus visit lasted two full business days and concluded with the team chair having a morning confidential meeting with the campus President followed by the Chair sharing the major team recommendations in a campus wide-open forum. During the visit the five-team members met with the various constituents. The team unanimously agreed on the overall recommendations. Each team member was responsible for taking the lead on writing the body of text for each of the four standards. The issues that received special attention were those that most related to the campus mission and are most topical: strategic planning, athletics, diversity, service learning, and the capital campaign, assessment of student learning, institutional aspirations, and budget.

The following four sections provide summaries of each of the standards, followed by the overall team recommendations. Threaded throughout each standard are the following institutional capacity issues: how resources, structures and processes are aligned with the institutional mission and priorities; whether the deployment of those resources is effective in fulfilling the educational goals and aspirations of CSU, Fresno; and, the institution's potential to define and sustain educational effectiveness.

## **STANDARD I**

- Standard I seeks to establish whether the institution has defined its institutional purposes and educational objectives. This includes both Institutional purpose and institutional integrity.

CSU Fresno's vision is to be one of the nation's premier interactive universities, recognized for quality teaching, transformational scholarship, and cultural leadership for the benefit of society.

The guiding mission statement (established 1993) states:

- The university offers a high-quality educational opportunity to qualified students at the bachelor and master's levels, as well as in joint doctoral programs in selected professional areas.
- To carry out this mission, the university provides a General Education program and other opportunities, to expand students' intellectual horizons, foster lifelong learning, prepare them for future professional study and instill within them an appreciation of cultures other than their own.
- The university offers undergraduate degrees and programs in the liberal arts and sciences as well as in a variety of professional disciplines emphasizing agricultural, business, engineering and technology, healthy and human services, and education, preparing students for productive careers and responsible world citizenship.
- Building upon the strength of these undergraduate programs, graduate programs provide opportunities for personal and career enhancement through advanced study, preparing students for positions of leadership in the arts, sciences and professions.
- The university encourages and protects free inquiry and statement, ensuring a forum for the generation, discussion and critical examination of ideas. By emphasizing the primacy of quality teaching and the close interaction between faculty and students, the university seeks to stimulate scholarly inquiry and discourse, inspire creative technical competencies, encourage and support research and its dissemination, and recruit and develop outstanding teachers-scholars/artists.
- The university fosters an environment in which students learn to live in a culturally diverse and changing society. Within that environment, it strives to develop a community founded upon mutual respect and shared efforts, in which individuals can communicate openly and work together to enrich the lives of all and to further the growth and excellence of the university. The university seeks and encourages historically under-represented students to embark upon and complete a university education.
- The university serves the San Joaquin Valley while interacting with the state, nation, and world. The university is a center of intellectual, artistic and professional activity. Through applied research, technical assistance, training and other related public service activities, the university anticipates continuing and expanding partnership and linkages with business, education, industry and government.

## **Strategic Planning**

CSU Fresno has created a process that strives to continually reflect upon and implement the institution's mission and vision. This is accomplished through the institution's strategic planning process. Most institutions undertake an annual strategic planning process. These strategic plans though intended to be an ongoing institutional blueprint are only revisited to assess whether the projected outcomes were achieved. CSU Fresno, on the other hand, has established a strategic planning culture that models a seamless on-going form of continuous improvement. The strategic planning committee communicated with the Accreditation Steering Team to organize the institution's goals and activities into three categories: Opportunity, Exploration and Interaction. This appears to have been a continuous process over the past decade. If this is in fact the case, it serves as a good model for campus wide, inclusive, institutional assessment: strategically identifying institutional goals, designing activities and rubrics to achieve and measure the outcomes, and adjusting these goals based upon evidence. It is recommended that CSU, Fresno examine its strategic planning process and ascertain whether it is broadly and accurately (1) inclusive, (2) seamless, (3) continuous, (4) and reflective.

## **Diversity**

The increase in diversity among the part-time and the full-time faculty is commendable and much aligned with the mission of the institution. The 1998-2002 percentage increase in the number of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander faculty is commendable. Attention needs to be paid to achieving further percentage increases in American Indian and African American faculty hires. It is recommended that the

institution initiate a systematic approach to recruiting and retaining faculty from underrepresented groups.

It is apparent that diversity among the student body is a high priority and is addressed by support services within the institution. This is evident through the Faculty Mentoring program, Dog Days, Summer Bridge and the McNair Program. Attention should be paid to the following trends at the institution:

- (1) why the percentage of entering lower division Latino students has declined from 36.8% to 32% between 1998 and 2002
- (2) why the percentage of entering African American students has remained at 7% or 8% between 1998 and 2002.

Student services that support all students should continue to be maintained.

### **Service-learning and serving the region**

It is apparent that both the service learning program and the programs that serve the community are strong and well respected both on campus and among community constituents. This is evident through courses that embed service learning as well as testimonials from community partners. As these programs are a strong part of the foundation of the institution's mission, these programs should remain a priority for the institution.

From an evidentiary perspective, the institution provided appropriate documents, policies, procedures and structures that support their purpose and integrity. Through documentation and interviews the Accreditation Team concluded that the institution provided appropriate evidence that supports the integrity and purpose of the institution. This was most apparent in the areas that address student success, service learning and

community interaction, and academic program goals. Areas of institutional integrity and purpose that need to have greater alignment include: (1) greater and more systematic assessment of service learning and community interaction activities, (2) more thorough and systematic attention paid to student learning outcome assessment within many of the academic departments, (3) faculty achievements recognized for promotion and tenure, (4) capital campaign goals, funding, and institutional priorities, (5) institutional pride for serving the community needs and the regional population

The institution is commended for its longstanding commitment to access and diversity in student enrollment and services. The team encourages the University to enhance and celebrate these activities. CSU Fresno is a national model for other institutions interested in becoming generators of social mobility, economic development and student success.

### **Standard I Findings and Recommendations**

1. The institution is commended for its longstanding commitment to access and diversity in student enrollment and services. The team encourages the university to enhance and celebrate these activities. CSU Fresno is a national model for other institutions interested in becoming generators of social mobility, economic development and student success.
2. The University needs to expand and further institutionalize its efforts to recruit and retain more diversity faculty. It is recommended that the institution initiate a systematic approach to recruiting and retaining faculty from underrepresented groups.
3. The institution's mission and purposes are well understood by on campus and off campus constituents.

4. The institution is well led and greatly respected in its service regions. Especially appreciated is the institution's interactivity with the region and its needs. In this light, it is recommended that service learning activities and community-university partnerships be amply supported through a common office.
5. We commend the Student Affairs Division and the Student Success Taskforce on their commitments to new and continuing students. Efforts should be made to continue and to enhance these services, even in the face of budget reductions.
6. The institution has positively and publicly affirmed its integrity by no longer admitting proposition 48 student athletes and having the academic services unit for student athletes report jointly to the provost and athletic director.
7. The university is fortunate to have a highly dedicated and involved advisory board and foundation board. These efforts should continue.
8. It is recommended that CSU, Fresno examine its strategic planning process and ascertain whether it is broadly and accurately (1) inclusive, (2) seamless, (3) continuous, (4) and reflective.

## **STANDARD II**

### **Teaching and Learning**

The Accreditation Team found much to praise, and no critical weaknesses, in CSU Fresno's demonstrated capacity to achieve educational objectives through core functions.

According to the Preparatory Review Report, CSU Fresno's academic programs at the undergraduate level are noteworthy in that they include a GE program, newly introduced in 1999/2000, for which learning objectives are established and which

incorporates an upper-division multicultural/international requirement that applies to all students, including transfer students. All lower division GE classes require 2000 words of writing, while upper-division GE classes require 4000 words. While the Preparatory Review Report substantially describes all of the aforementioned activities, it will be important for the institution to thoroughly review and analyze the results of those programs in the Educational Effectiveness Report.

The detailed statement of Procedures and Guidelines for Review of Academic Programs that appears on the Web impressed the team. The process appears to be well thought-out, clearly articulated, and appropriate to the task. It leans heavily on the results of outcomes assessment, planning for which was given a “jumpstart” in 1998 when departments were given the option of developing an assessment plan as a one-time replacement for a five-year program review, and were offered 3 units of release time. Within three years (according to the preparatory review report), all departments had participated in the Student Outcomes Assessment Planning (SOAP) process, which applied to both undergraduate and graduate programs.

The process for reviewing and providing feedback on an assessment plan is quite extensive, incorporating reviews by the Associate Provost; a team that includes an outside member from within the discipline; and a university level committee. An on-line Assessment Plan Status Report indicates that sixteen programs have reached stage 7 of the process (*revised plan complete*), four are still at stage 1 (*plan not yet received*), and the remaining eighty or so are somewhere in-between. On the one hand, the team was a little concerned about the absence of a full five-year cycle of program reviews and will be alert during the Educational Effectiveness review to possible evidence of negative

consequences to the programs themselves; on the other hand, the reported progress in assessment planning was considered impressive. The team was informed by administrators that some faculty remain unconvinced of the value of assessment.

However, the few objections raised at the team's meetings with departments focused on its workload implications rather than its value to the institution. The team recommends continuation of the assessment planning process and implementation of the plans, with use of the results for program improvement. In view of the importance of General Education to all students, the assessment plan for this program (which the team was told still needs considerable work) should be given the highest priority.

Existing University policy states that the results of student outcomes assessment remain under the control of the unit conducting the assessment and are not to be used for personnel evaluations (without the individual's permission) or for allocating resources to schools, departments, and programs. The team believes that this policy is appropriate and probably necessary in order to obtain faculty buy-in to the assessment process. The team was given no reason to suppose that the Administration would attempt to use data from this process in making budget reduction decisions, and it urges that any temptation to do so be strongly resisted unless the faculty accede to a change in the policy.

The team was given evidence (in the written presentation, in the on-line portfolio, in brochures, and verbally during the visit) that the curriculum is well connected to the community in a variety of ways: through service learning, internships, Solutions Center projects, and other community-based learning activities. As indicated in the preparatory review report, missing from the infrastructure is a single university program, a "central node," to connect all of these activities and, in particular, to be a first (and visible) point

of contact for external groups seeking to partner with the campus in community-based learning.

### **Scholarship and Creative Activity**

The team was impressed by the growth in scholarship and creative activity, especially by the faculty, which appears to have taken place in the past few years. The team also recognizes that the increase in priority given to this activity has created or intensified a number of challenges.

On-campus discussions with administrators and faculty were consistent with the picture of a significant increase in scholarship and creative activity presented in the preparatory review report and the on-line portfolio. The team applauds the campus for successfully pursuing this Strategic Direction from the *Plan for Excellence*. However, from discussions with departmental faculty, in particular, it seems that strains are appearing. Although release time and other support are typically given to new faculty, further support must be self-generated through contracts and grants. Infrastructure, including physical facilities and administrative systems, is struggling to keep up with the growth in sponsored projects. Although the faculty perspective appears to vary from one department to another, many seem to be having difficulty balancing the time devoted to instruction, research, and service, while still attempting to “have a life.” Concern was expressed that the new emphasis on scholarly and creative activity, while supportive of student learning in some ways, might be leading to a reduction in the extent to which tenure-track faculty are directly involved in classroom instruction, historically a strength of CSU Fresno. The team also sensed uncertainty about the manner in which the different roles of faculty are to be recognized in the reward system, especially the retention, tenure,

and promotion (RTP) process, although the probationary plans required of new faculty represent an impressive attempt to remove some of the uncertainty typically encountered in other universities during the pre-tenure years.

The preparatory review report acknowledged reasons to suppose that faculty typically might favor involving graduate students rather than undergraduates in their research. Such involvement is especially beneficial for the graduate students, but the value to undergraduates, generally, is also well documented in the general literature and should be encouraged whenever possible.

### **Support for Student Learning**

The team applauds CSU Fresno for its considerable efforts in support of student learning at, especially for “at-risk” students, and encourages their continuation despite even tighter budget constraints. The Task Force on Student Success serves an important purpose in providing oversight and coordination. Implementation of the PeopleSoft Student Administration module has promise for future improvements (e.g., in providing services on-line to students) but is evidently creating significant difficulties for students and staff in the transitional period, which the team hopes can be quickly resolved.

The preparatory review report documents an impressive array of student support initiatives, including *Dog Days*, *Summer Bridge*, the *BARK* handbooks, and a faculty-mentoring program. Recognizing that less than one-half of entering students (freshmen and transfers) attend *Dog Days*, the team was told that an on-line option is being developed. At meetings with Student Affairs staff and others, the team sensed that the staff is truly dedicated to serving the students, but that competing demands on their time cause frustration for both the students and themselves. Due to the continuing state budget

crisis, this will not be an easy problem to solve in the foreseeable future, although the team encourages continued efforts in this direction.

The team was told that both faculty and professional staff share the responsibility for academic advising, and that workshops are available to assist the faculty in this effort. During the visit, students commented anecdotally that advisors are generally “nice people” who try to be helpful, but that they are not always knowledgeable about what happens or is expected outside their own particular units. The team encourages the University to investigate this complaint and, if appropriate, to find ways of improving communication between advisors in different units.

In general, the team emphasizes the importance of assessing the impact of support activities – including advising -- on student learning, and of using the results in order to make improvements.

**Standard II Recommendations:**

1. Continue to further develop institutional, program and department learning goals with more attention given to assessment, especially in the areas of student learning, student work and program modification.
2. The University needs to carefully review and consider the implications of its movement toward more emphasis on faculty research and the resulting effects on faculty workload and classroom instruction.
3. There is uncertainty and confusion within the faculty regarding how and what standards are applied in the promotion and tenure process. It is recommended that these standards are clarified and communicated to the faculty.

4. The university is commended for the number and quality of its service learning programs and activities. Consideration should be forgiven to the establishment of a coordinating group to ensure better on campus and off campus awareness and assessment of these groups.
5. A General Education assessment plan needs to receive the highest priority for development and implementation.
6. The campus is commended for its movement toward establishing assessment activities, which bolsters the strategic planning, curricular decision making, and student learning while helping to create a culture of evidence across the campus. However, assessment activities aligned with program improvement should not be used in budget reduction decisions, as already stated in an existing institutional policy.
7. In view of the importance of General Education to all students, the assessment plan for this program (which the team was told still needs considerable work) should be given the highest priority.

### **STANDARD III**

The review did not uncover any critical weaknesses in the institution's human resource, physical, fiscal and information resource capacity. Furthermore, the manner in which it has organized its management functions and processes are responsive to the challenges and opportunities it faces.

#### **Faculty and staff**

During meetings with students, faculty was consistently commended for the quality of teaching and their genuine caring attitude. The faculty is also very dedicated to

the community, as evidenced by the many service-learning activities. Similarly, staff were commended by students for their dedication to service despite the challenges posed by budget cuts and new administrative systems. Overall, even though CSU Fresno has had to weather years of budget austerity, its faculty and staff have been able to maintain a level of teaching, research, and service and support activities satisfactory to its primary constituencies.

To maintain its capacity to meet future aspirations such as movement towards becoming a more research involved institution and still provide quality teaching and service, CSU Fresno should carefully monitor the effects of replacing full time faculty with part-time employees. In addition, attention to morale among staff as future budget cuts and changes in organization and operating practices are implemented is suggested.

#### **Physical, fiscal and information resources**

Past financial reports indicate conservatism in spending with increases in its fund balances and net assets at the end of each year. Audited financial reports reflect increases of \$20.4 M and \$13.6 M at the end of FY 2001 and 2002, respectively, indicating a positive capacity to respond to future financial demands. In addition, discussions with the University leadership as well as community representatives on the University Advisory Board and the CSUF Foundation Board of Governors reflect confidence and enthusiasm with respect to the planned \$300+ M capital campaign. As is typical of large campaigns, it may take as long as five to seven years to complete; much of the revenue stream will not be fungible; and many gifts will be in the form of pledges and endowments. Usable funds may not be immediately accessible as some campus constituencies currently believe.

Despite the relative age of the campus and declining operating budgets, the physical facilities are found to serve current needs well. Operating adjustments have been made to adjust to declining resources including reducing the frequency of cleaning cycles in administrative offices. In addition, the institution has taken full advantage of energy saving technologies and strategies including optimal energy purchasing and billing strategies.

Consistent with its strategic plan, CSU Fresno has made significant investments in information technology, including its policy of providing a laptop to each full-time equivalent faculty member; online learning through the Blackboard Management System; the \$16.5 M capital improvement project will upgrade the campus network infrastructure and classroom technology. The recognition of the value of technology and the decision to make these investments are commendable. However, assuring integration and the efficient use of resources is important given the large expenditure of funds involved in IT. In addition, changes in business practices when converting to new technologies should be sensitive to the demands placed on staff employees. The effectiveness of coordinating and integrating information technology initiatives and on-going activities via the current committee structure should be periodically evaluated.

### **Organizational structures and decision-making processes**

CSU Fresno has developed a budget process that is characterized by a willingness to be open, relative simplicity, and a balance between decentralized and centralized authority through a tiered approach to budget preparation and implementation. Through the Budget Committee, an entity reporting to both the President and the faculty senate, the faculty are intimately involved in the process as evidenced by the committee's role in

developing the current process and continuous responsibility for evaluating and periodically making changes to that process. This well positions the institution for future budget challenges.

Staff and students have expressed concerns relative to matters such as the availability of courses required for timely graduation and the impact on administrative staff morale of implementing the student information system. Both of these relate to budgetary decisions. To maintain the strong capacity to manage budgets in the future, it is suggested that the University consider ways in which students and staff can be effectively engaged in the budget process.

CSU Fresno has a long history of strategic planning. The process has been strengthened by the overlay of themes, which are widely accepted as the core values of the institution. With the planned capital campaign looming, and in light of the possibility of another state budget crisis, the following are necessary.

Strategic planning must be aligned with the capital campaign, especially with respect to the themes of opportunity, exploration and interaction. This will have the mutual effect of strengthening the institution's strategic planning capacity as well as its capacity to raise private funds.

Related to the above, within the strategic planning process, while focusing on the themes of opportunity, exploration and interaction, there needs to be discriminatory judgment applied to what areas will be supported and when and how, based upon the availability of funds. A process of implementation linked to financial assumptions will improve the capacity and credibility of the planning process.

Finally, similar to comments on the budget process, students have little understanding of the strategic plan and its importance. In order to maintain a culture of openness and to bring planning closer to those most impacted by it, students need to be more engaged in the strategic planning process.

### **Standard III Recommendations**

1. Increase campus efforts to engage more students and staff in the strategic planning process and budget allocation activities.
2. The institution has managed its budget and associated allocation procedures very well. It is better prepared than before to handle any new budget crises.
3. The faculty is well trained and very committed to student success, teaching and learning, and service to the region. Recognize and reinforce these aspects.
4. The administration and staff are well organized and deployed to serve students, faculty and others. Like the faculty, they too are highly dedicated to helping students and others fulfill their dreams. Continue to recognize and encourage this.
5. The university is commended for planning a significant capital campaign to raise money to meet various needs including student scholarships. However, the successful completion of a capital campaign of this magnitude could take five to seven years. Usable funds from this endeavor may not be immediately accessible as some constituents currently believe.
6. The University's facilities and grounds are well maintained and the associated agricultural holdings are well managed and used effectively in supporting the academic and service purposes of the institution.

7. The institution is commended for the priority given to information technology.

However, the effectiveness of coordination and integration of IT through a committee should be periodically evaluated, given the high cost of these investments.

#### **STANDARD IV**

The University has a long history of engaging in strategic planning. It has become a part of its organizational culture. Since the early '90s the institution has developed and executed three major plans that have involved extensive participation of campus community members. The current strategic plan objectives, *Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Plan for Excellence II (2001-2006)*, are used along with the criteria for review in the Preparatory Review Report. The previous plan covering 1997-2000 included a systematic process for review of success in reaching the goals. Some markers of successful change from this previous plan are an enhanced educational and informational technology, an honors program, implementation of service learning, and funding source diversification. The intent is to use the current plan, as previous plans have been used, as a guideline for future institutional changes. The indicators of Implementation Success for the current plan are laid out as part of the electronic portfolio.

The University community has operationalized its plan through a committee structure that reviews information, assessments, and evaluations provided by other committees that focus on particular areas such as academic program review, student learning assessments, and other educational objectives. The institution has an extensive configuration of planning and advisory committees addressing every level of concern, from budgetary concerns to student assessment and the addressing of regional needs.

An overarching component of the institution's planning is its goal to launch a capital campaign within the next two years to raise \$350 million. This will be the first major campaign for this University and it has generated tremendous excitement and enthusiasm on the part of the faculty.

With respect to the WASC Preparatory Review Report, the institution has created a series of themes (Opportunity, Exploration, and Interaction) that reflect its mission objectives. Within each of the themes the report shows where the strategic planning objectives and the criteria for review of the standards are reflected. This approach created a very well done report that provided a clear map for the reader on how the standards were addressed and how the strategic planning objectives were reflected in these themes.

### **Strategic Thinking and Planning**

The major strength of this institution is its commitment to a strategic planning process. This is evidenced by the University's public statement on its web site (electronic portfolio) and reinforced by the sentiment expressed by the campus community at the site visit. There is strong engagement in every aspect of this process by faculty and key staff in the committee structures that plan and reflect upon their specific charge.

The electronic portfolio and discussion with the strategic planning committee indicate that they have effectively set goals and implemented them in the past. This was clear from the reading of the previous strategic plan and evidenced by the implementation of previous goals such as an Honors Program, a service learning program and an increase in faculty led research grants. The new plan (38 objectives) is a revision and update of

the previous plan with the intent of setting the course of the University for the next five years. Those objectives are only beginning to be realized and effectively measured through the development of evaluative data collection instruments.

The University has increased its capacity for diversifying its revenue sources, which has allowed it to enhance its physical environment and expand the physical plant. This was not only pointed out in the Preparatory Report but was also commented on by some of the students who were interviewed. They indicated that they felt the campus is very attractive, pointing out that the flowers and casual benches around the campus make it park-like. Many faculty and students pointed out with pride the new Sav-Mart Center among the new buildings on campus.

Even though there is strong engagement of faculty in the strategic planning process, there was little evidence of the involvement of students. In a discussion with the student leadership, it appeared that while there was some student representation on a few committees, overall there was little engagement of students in the overall strategic planning process, and they had little to no knowledge of this process or its objectives. Similarly, line staff equally expressed a lack of involvement in this process. Directors of units were involved, judging from their presence at the site visit on various committees; however, line staff had little knowledge of strategic planning on the campus.

There are numerous objectives set out in the strategic plan. Both in the report and the interactions with committees at the site visit there was tremendous enthusiasm for trying to achieve most of the objectives. However, each objective cannot be given equal attention. The institution may need to evaluate its priorities and develop a hierarchy of achievable goals in view of the themes laid out in the Preparatory Report, the goals of the

Capital Campaign, and the current and future budgetary constraints projected for California higher education.

The interest and eagerness of the administrators and faculty for starting on their capital campaign are infectious and in no way should it be dampened. However, there needs to be clarity about what can be achieved by the capital campaign and in what timeframe. That is, the activities that can be supported by a capital campaign will probably not be realized in the near future because of the nature of these types of campaigns. In short, clarity now can help to create realistic expectations.

### **Commitment to Learning and Improvement**

The institution has a review and assessment process of both the academic and administrative operations. For example, academic program reviews are expected every five years, and are submitted to the Dean. Additionally, the departments submit annual reviews to the Dean. The Deans submits an annual report to the Provost. Administrative units also submit annual reports and periodic (five-year) reviews to the appropriate Vice President. Each Vice President develops and submits to the President an annual report covering his/her scope of responsibility.

Moreover, there have been several surveys done in the past that have been used to some degree to assist in decision-making. There are offices such as the Institutional Research Planning and Assessment and Testing Services that assist departments and the administration in assessment efforts.

There has also been considerable attention given to assessing the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. The new General Education program already has an approved plan for assessment, although it apparently requires additional work. The

committee charged with assessment outcomes monitoring is trying to address ways to provide incentives to departments to prepare these outcome assessment plans such as delaying, on a one time basis, program reviews in order to give the student outcomes assessment plans priority.

Key to the overall engagement of various stakeholders has been the decentralization of the decision making process so that colleges and schools have more responsibility over their own academic programs and initiatives. Particularly important in this decentralized decision-making process has been the proliferation of advisory boards at all levels of the university. These include faculty, technical staff, and community members. This aspect of decentralization was very evident at the site visit.

While there is evidence of significant effort and attention given to the development of assessment tools in both the academic programs and to student learning outcomes, these efforts seem to be moving more slowly than needed. This may be due to faculty workload. Faculty seem to need more time to work on student learning assessment campus-wide and in their programs. They may have too many issues to address all at once. Some attention may have to be given to how this effort can be furthered with the time and human resources available.

#### **Standard IV Recommendations**

1. Work on alignment of strategic planning and the capital campaign with a continuing focus on the themes, etc.
2. Within the strategic planning process, while focusing on the themes (opportunity, exploration and interaction), there needs to be a discriminatory judgment applied

to what areas will be supported and when and how based upon availability of fiscal and human resources.

3. The organization and the presentation of the Preparatory Report were well done. It accurately presents evidence of the institution's capacity and performance. Continue to use it as a guide through the accreditation process.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the institution is commended for its longstanding commitment to access and diversity in student enrollment and services. The visiting team, however, encourages the University to continue to enhance and celebrate these activities. California State University, Fresno is a national model for institutions interested in becoming generators of social mobility, economic development, and student success.

With the University's strategic planning process that focuses on the themes of opportunity, exploration and interaction, there needs to be more discriminatory judgment applied regarding what areas will be supported over time, depending on the availability of fiscal and human resources. Additionally, the institution needs to better align its strategic planning and the upcoming capital campaign with a continuing focus on the aforementioned themes.

California State University, Fresno's budget development process is excellent. The institution is commended for its efforts to demystify budget activities, but there need to be more students and staff involved in the budget allocation process. Similarly, the strategic planning process could benefit from more student and staff involvement.

The institution is having good success in creating a campus committed to establishing a culture of evidence regarding university performance. The visiting team

suggests that the University continue to strengthen its efforts in the areas of program and department assessment with more attention given to student learning outcomes, student work samples, and data analysis and program modifications.

Faculty at CSU Fresno are well credentialed to fulfill the academic mission of the institution. There needs to be, however, more effort given to expanding and further institutionalizing efforts to recruit and retain a more diverse faculty. Among some faculty in the junior ranks, there is uncertainty regarding how and what criteria and standards are applied in the promotion and tenure process. This confusion may be the result of the University's efforts to strengthen and expand faculty research. The academic administration needs to carefully review and consider the implications of its movement toward more emphasis on faculty research and the resulting effects on faculty workload, classroom instruction and morale.

Service learning continues to be a high priority for CSU Fresno. The visiting team commends the University for the variety and success of its service learning programs and activities. Some consideration should be given to establishing a coordinating group for service learning to ensure better campus and off campus awareness and assessment of those programs.

Information technology is well entrenched at Fresno. The use of technology permeates throughout the curriculum and beyond. However, the effectiveness of coordination and integration of information technology through a committee should be periodically evaluated, given the high costs of those investments.

CSU Fresno is greatly respected in its service region. The leadership of the institution is exemplary and it too is appreciated and admired in the region and

throughout the campus community. The University is an excellent model for how a campus can positively and creatively interact with its service region and its needs. The institution's mission and purposes are well understood by all campus and off-campus constituents.

Students continue to be the highest priority at CSU Fresno. The visiting team commends the Student Affairs division and the Student Success Taskforce on their commitments to new and continuing students. Efforts should be made to enhance these services even in the face of budget reductions.

While support for public higher education remains problematic in California, Fresno has managed its budget and associated allocation procedures very well. It seems prepared to handle any new budget crisis. Similarly, the University's facilities and grounds are well maintained and the associated agricultural holdings are well managed and used effectively in supporting the academic and service purposes of the institution.

The campus is again commended for its movement toward establishing assessment activities, which bolsters strategic planning, curricular decision making, and student learning while helping to create a culture of evidence across campus. The visiting team recommends, however, that the plan for general education assessment needs to receive the highest priority for development and implementation. Assessment activities associated with program improvements should not be used in budget reduction decisions, as already stated in an existing institutional policy.

CSU Fresno is fortunate to have a well-trained faculty, very committed to student success, teaching and learning and service to the region. The administration and staff are well organized and deployed to serve students, faculty, and others. Like the faculty, they

too are highly dedicated to helping students and others to fulfill their potential. The University is also fortunate to have a highly dedicated and involved Advisory Council and Foundation Board.

The University is commended for planning a significant capital campaign to raise funds to meet various needs, including student scholarships. However, the successful completion of a capital campaign could take five to seven years. Usable funds from this endeavor may not be immediately accessible as some campus constituents currently believe.

In conclusion, the organization and presentation of the preparatory report was well done. It accurately presents evidence and substantiation of the institution's capacity and performance. CSU Fresno is ready for and capable of engaging the campus community in an educational effectiveness review.