

UCSD Actions Associated with Recommendations from WASC

Two documents that resulted from the last round of WASC reaffirmation activities, the April 18, 1998 “Report of the Visiting Committee” and the July 6, 1998 letter from Ralph A. Wolff to Chancellor Robert C. Dynes, contained many observations and recommendations. While none of the observations or recommendations required immediate response, they have served as important inputs into the UCSD system of continual educational improvement.

In the following paragraphs, as well as in the Institutional Proposal itself, we outline some of the actions that have been taken by the campus that coordinate with the recommendations and observations in the two 1998 documents. In many cases, the recommendations and observations from the WASC review were motivating factors that led to (or at least added to the motivation for) the actions that were taken.

1. Data, Data Systems, and the Use of Data for Decision Making.

Many of the recommendations that were made in the July 6, 1998 letter to Dynes related to the fledgling efforts that had been made in UCSD’s “experimental” approach to WASC Reaffirmation of Accreditation – particularly with regard to the Data Portfolio approach. In the nearly ten years since the inception of the Data Portfolio, much work has been done on UCSD’s data systems, access to these data systems by the University Community, and the expectations that decisions be based upon data available to the University Community. Among these was the creation of the Institutional Research Coordinating Committee (IRCC) which is made up of a large number of individuals who are involved in the generation and dissemination of institutional data. This committee (which is also one of the three key committees for our WASC reaffirmation activity) has been instrumental in the coordination and use of institutional data for many aspects of institutional decision making from budget to enrollment planning to student satisfaction data. The IRCC has also been given the authority to rule on what surveys, external to the institution, our students and alumni will be asked to participate in. It has become abundantly clear that, if there are not controls placed upon access to our students and alumni, we will be unable to rely on their participation in the surveys that are so vital for us to understand the long-term impacts of UCSD’s curricula.

Perhaps even more important than the creation of bodies like the IRCC and the increasing sophistication of the data systems we employ, is the personnel who have been added to our staff for the explicit purpose of generating meaningful analytic studies. As but one example, the newly created office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education has in its employ a full-time individual whose primary responsibility is the “taming” of our multiple data systems and the generation of studies and reports designed to enhance the use of data in service of educational planning and evaluation. One example of the kind of studies that are done is the early forecasting of freshman course demand. Large institutions such as UCSD have had significant problems assuring that a sufficient number of seats were

available in the first instructional period of the year for newly entering students. This was a problem because students do not commit to enrollment until after the deadline for building the schedule for the first instructional period. However, by using data available at the time letters of admission are sent to prospective students (with a fine tuning at the date that students indicate their acceptance) we are able to reasonably accurately forecast the numbers of seats that will be needed in the courses taken by our freshman students. This kind of use of data has allowed the institution to operate more efficiently and has allowed our students a smoother start to their learning experiences by assuring that there are sufficient seats in most classes that serve as the starting points for their learning experiences.

2. Campus Involvement in Planning Processes

A number of innovations have taken place in the methods by which the campus engages in its planning process. Perhaps the most important of these is the “Charting the Course” process instituted by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. This process, now in its third cycle, begins with each unit (department, program, college, etc.) assessing its goals, current strengths and weaknesses, and future growth needs – both from a local perspective and from the perspective of changes in the field. These inquiries and evaluations may involve the entire faculty depending on how the units approach the task. The results of these inquiries become the inputs to the Divisional Deans and Council of Provosts, who are given the responsibility of reviewing, integrating, and prioritizing the requests for future growth that have come from the individual units. These integrated and prioritized requests, together with the principled justifications, become the input for decision making and planning efforts by the Senior Vice Chancellor and her staff who have the responsibility for the actual allocations of resources within the General Campus. In addition to this “bottom-up” process for assuring campus involvement in the planning process, the Senior Vice Chancellor utilizes the consultative review functions of the Program Review Committee (PRC). This Committee, made up of the Chair of the Academic Senate and relevant Senate committees (Educational Policy, Graduate Council, Planning and Budget), General Campus deans, the University Librarian, a representative of the Council of Provosts, representatives of the Graduate Student Association and the Associated Students (undergraduate student body), and representatives of the staff, meets on a regular basis to review the program policies, allocations, and budget issues that have direct impact on the General Campus. For example, the PRC regularly reviews the process by which temporary instructional funds are awarded to the units, by which teaching assistant funds are allocated, and the means by which equipment funds (including instructional) are awarded – among other policies.

3. Assessment and Departmental Reviews

One of the major areas of self study in our proposal involves the review and assessment of our revised process for undergraduate program review with its strong emphasis on outcome assessment and learning evaluation. Virtually all of the recommendations (pages 24-25 of Visiting Committee Report) were considered by

the Senate-Administration Task Force to Examine Program Reviews (see [Appendix 7](#)) that was appointed to evaluate our systems for undergraduate and graduate program reviews. The resulting recommendations and the effectiveness of the implementation of those recommendations are the substance of our proposed third area of self study.

4. Undergraduate Colleges

The undergraduate colleges remain a vital and integral component of the undergraduate educational plan of the University, being the primary units through which the general educational goals of the campus are planned and delivered. In addition, the colleges provide our students the courses through which they receive writing instruction and meet the undergraduate writing requirements of the institution. Since the last round of WASC reaffirmation activities a new college has been launched, has enrolled both native freshmen and transfer students, and has graduated its first class of students. The new college, currently named Sixth College, joins with the other five colleges in providing a high quality general education and writing curriculum (supported by all other General Campus units of the institution). In its review, the Visiting Committee made several recommendations concerning the review and assessment of several components of the colleges: specifically the Visiting Committee recommended “the university adopt a more systematic assessment effort for the colleges, with increased emphasis on evaluating the outcomes of the various models of general education. This recommendation has been taken very seriously by the institution. One component of our proposed self study (Self-study 1) is the outcome-based assessment of our freshman writing program – perhaps the single most expensive (in both budgetary and personnel terms) component of the college system. In addition, the systematic review of general education and core curriculum for each of the colleges will be conducted, on a college-by-college basis, as part of our Undergraduate Program Review initiative (Self-study 3).

5. Transfer Students

As noted in the Report of the Visiting Committee, transfer students comprise a large portion of the UCSD student body. The Committee provided a number of extremely useful observations about and comments on the general issue of transfer students. The University, again motivated in part by the comments of the Visiting Committee, appointed a Task Force to Consider Transfer Student Issues comprised of student representatives, faculty, administrators, and staff. This Task Force issued a comprehensive report (see <http://academicaffairs.ucsd.edu/offices/planning/reports/TSTF/report.htm>) which has since led to the creation of two specialized working groups (one oriented to Student Affairs and one oriented to Academic Affairs) to bring forth recommendations for implementation. In addition, we have launched a series of one-unit seminars (patterned after the successful Freshman Seminar Program) specifically designed for transfer students. The purpose of these seminars, which for the most part are organized at the discipline level, is to provide the opportunity for transfer

students to “catch-up” with students who have been on campus for two years in acquiring knowledge and experience related to issues such as research opportunities, visions and strategies for post-baccalaureate study, career planning, and many others.

6. Instructional Technology

Instructional technology on the UCSD campus (as elsewhere in the United States) has advanced at a pace unforeseen even by the Visiting Committee during its visit to the campus. An incredible host of challenges has faced the campus in dealing with these issues which range from security to assuring the faculty and students that, regardless of the classroom they are occupying, a full range of instructional technologies will be available. As the University, through its many offices devoted to instructional systems and committees that study, review, and bring forth recommendations, has progressed, new and vital issues have emerged. In particular, a campus-wide concern with Information Literacy is an unexpected consequence of the ever-changing nature of information availability that has resulted from transformations in information technology. To this end, the fourth area of self study has been proposed – a fresh and novel campus-wide study of the impact of changes in information technology upon student learning. This inquiry will not only address issues of information literacy (principally the vetting of information), but will also consider issues pertaining to electronic resources such as those traditionally provided by slide collections of art departments, map and document rooms in libraries, and collections in museums. In addition, this self study will address issues such as basic support for instructional activities like those envisioned in the Visiting Team’s comments on Instructional Technology.

7. Administrative Concern with Undergraduate Education

At several points in the report it was noted that additional attention, particularly at the administrative level, needed to be paid to the undergraduate education mission of the institution. It was noted that the appointment of an Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Programs (renamed to Academic Planning and Resources) was a step in the right direction. Since the time of the last series of WASC visits, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Resources has been joined by an Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education. With this addition the senior administration of the university has as a member an individual whose responsibility is wholly devoted to enhancing and improving undergraduate education.