

Integrative Essay

WASC Educational Effectiveness Review

October 4, 2004

It should be clear that this review finds a larger and more dynamic UCSC than did the 1994 visiting WASC review team. Stimulated by a period of rapid growth in enrollment, campus leadership has facilitated development of an ambitious and forward-looking series of initiatives, including expansion of campus academic programs, extensive capital improvements, planning for a center for research and instructional initiatives in the Silicon Valley, improved support for research support, and increased development activity. The current interim leadership, who have long been engaged with these processes, are preparing an updated Long Range Development plan to provide continuity of growth and development along the current trajectory.

Equally clear to us is the expectation of another exciting decade. UC Santa Cruz is in the process of finalizing its Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) in which we announce that we hope to grow to 21,000 students. Both the Academic Senate and the administration intend that 3000 or more of the 21,000 students will be graduate or professional students. We are exploring ways to expand to Silicon Valley and to increase our research capacity. Meanwhile, all constituencies on the campus look forward to extra-divisional and inter-divisional advances that will enhance life at UCSC for everyone. Two extra-divisional initiatives are improved information technology for all sectors of the campus and the building of an additional child care facility. Inter-divisional educational programs are also likely to become more frequent.

CULTURE OF EVIDENCE: DATA BASED DECISIONS

Growth and change occasion multiple decisions. Some of the decisions, like where to place buildings on campus, are large and involve huge expense. Some, like how to renumber courses, seem less gargantuan in scope.

Whether large or small, decisions are best made with the aid of good data. In the process of crafting the Educational Effectiveness Report, laying out for ourselves and for the WASC commission the myriad decisions that we face as a campus, we have come to appreciate that our campus has not uniformly kept good information about important topics. We have, furthermore, only recently begun to regularize the transmission of data to all who might benefit. Too often, valuable reports prepared by the Office of Institutional Research have not been disseminated to all relevant parties. Not often enough has the central administration required standard information from divisions and departments.

Fortunately, the seeds of change have already been sown, and the administration and Academic Senate are of like minds about information to be collected. We now provide every department and program with standardized data for the external reviews. As a

direct consequence of the need to prepare the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, two events have already transpired on our campus. First, the procedures for external reviews have been modified so that every department and program must contain in its self study a statement not only of its mission but also of the learning outcomes that it has identified. Second, the administration and Senate have joined forces to ask of departments information about their goals for undergraduate education and about their means of assessing how well the goals have been met. Also in line with our increased commitment to linking evidence, inference, and decisions, the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, along with the Senate's Graduate Council, has begun to accumulate information concerning the admission and retention of graduate students.

Strategic Deployment of Resources

Good decisions require more than good data. They also require resources. As the discussion in this report and our on-going institutional review and planning makes clear, UCSC faces difficult questions about how to allocate limited resources. We cannot achieve all we wish to achieve instantly given current financial realities in California. We must prioritize our goals.

Reflection on our opportunities for allocation of new resources during this period of enrollment growth and the recent necessity for coping with state budget reductions suggest four related recommendations:

In determining priorities, issues of educational effective should be paramount.

Considerations of educational effectiveness should not be narrow and short-term but rather should be broad and long-term. For example, a very narrow view might question how the building of more child care on campus contributes to educational effectiveness; but a broader view considers that the institution can best be assured of effectively educating its students if it safeguards the well-being of campus personnel and of the student bodies.

In setting priorities for growth in graduate programs, benefits to the undergraduate program are to be considered.

In setting priorities for continued excellence in undergraduate programs, benefits to the graduate program are to be considered.

Balancing Undergraduate and Graduate Education

The last visiting committee and the WASC Commission's action letter both reinforced the necessity of honestly addressing the challenges inherent in attempting to expand graduate education in the current resource climate without damaging undergraduate education. The consultation involved in preparing for the WASC review has reminded us of some ways in which the growth of graduate programs seems to compete with the continuation of undergraduate programs. It has also clarified that there are opportunities for synergy. There are ways in which the continued excellence of our undergraduate programs is not in conflict with, but rather depends on the expansion of graduate programs.

In what ways might the growth of graduate programs be detrimental to undergraduate education? At a basic level, the answer involves money. For every new student whom the university takes, the state of California, via the Office of the President of the University of California (UCOP) sends dollars to the campus – currently in the order of \$7700. The state does not distinguish between undergraduate students and graduate students. Graduate students are more expensive to educate than undergraduates, primarily because of the faculty time they absorb. The campus must be both clever and realistic if it is to insure that future growth in undergraduate enrollment does not take all of the marginal increases in state support for that enrollment.

While not minimizing the ways in which graduate growth might potentially threaten aspects of our undergraduate program, discussions on the campus have also been cognizant of the ways in which graduate students contribute to the education of undergraduates. To be sure, in the natural sciences, the social sciences, engineering, and the arts, graduate students can function as helpful mentors to undergraduates in both laboratory and classroom settings. The nature of scholarship in the Humanities, where it is rarer to speak of laboratories or studios, does not as easily lend itself to “vertical teams” in which more senior students work side by side with less senior students. But even in the Humanities it is possible to conceive of ways in which graduate students might interact with and contribute to the learning of undergraduates in ways that achieve greater educational outcomes than the traditional faculty-student interactions. Graduate students in all disciplines, for example, might be more effective advisors to undergraduates than are faculty. Similarly, advanced graduate students might make outstanding instructors in freshman discovery seminars.

Just as graduate students can be seen as bringing benefit to the undergraduates, so can undergraduates be seen as bringing benefit to graduate students. Throughout the social and natural sciences, many of our advanced undergraduates serve as assistants to our graduate students as the latter undertake research independently or in collaboration with faculty. In addition, having the opportunity to help teach undergraduates benefits graduate students in a number of ways. Graduate students are often glad of the income that comes with being a teaching fellow. They also enjoy having an opportunity to practice college teaching for many of our graduates will go into teaching careers. Finally,

they benefit from the intellectual discipline of explaining to naïve others the fundamentals of their disciplines.

UNDERGRADUATE ISSUES

Not all of the issues concerning undergraduate education relate to its coordination with graduate growth. As our in-depth essay on undergraduate education makes clear, we face some intriguing issues. Campus discussions have highlighted three issues that call for further consideration: the balance between freshmen and transfer admits; retention and graduation rates; and curriculum analysis.

The balance between freshman and transfer admissions

The overview provided in the associated exhibits shows that the recent substantial increase in undergraduate enrollment has been provided disproportionately by increases in freshman enrollments. There has been relatively little increase in the admission of transfer students. This situation has emerged naturally as a result of UC's attempts to manage enrollments to insure that its obligations under California's Master Plan for Higher Education are honored in the "tidal wave II" period.

This review provides an opportunity to ask whether this emergent result is beneficial to UCSC's undergraduate education. That our undergraduate enrollment will continue to grow is clear. However it seems advisable that we should undertake a serious consideration of the balance between freshman and transfer admissions.

For good reasons, UCSC does not wish to allow student demand for programs to be the principal driver of the deployment of academic resources. It is an important factor in academic planning. But we must also look for ways to direct, to the extent possible, student enrollments toward available but underutilized capacity in undergraduate programs. This is difficult to do in the freshman admissions process but more feasible in transfer admissions. In addition, it seems clear that there is ability to absorb increases in enrollment in much of the upper-division curricula more efficiently than to expand lower-division curricula.

These considerations suggest the following recommendation:

In consultation between the academic senate and the administration, the campus should examine the possibility of absorbing mandated future enrollment increases

primarily in graduate and upper-division transfer enrollment rather than in freshman admissions.

Improvements in retention and graduation rates

The management of the undergraduate enrollment capacity of the University of California naturally directs attention to retention and graduation rates. We can serve our students well educationally while improving our capacity to absorb undergraduate enrollments if we insure that students are able to achieve their educational goals efficiently. There are two ways in which we can pursue this goal: improvements in academic advising and curriculum analysis.

The academic advising system will serve our students best if it facilitates early development of students' academic goals and early engagement with the programs that will allow them to achieve them. In this way, we can insure that educational opportunities for students will not be limited by the desire for them to complete their degrees in a timely manner. The agenda for improvement to the academic advising system discussed above anticipates the following recommendation:

The campus should take steps to insure that it provides undergraduate students with effective academic advising that encourages retention and timely achievement of their academic goals.

Curriculum Analysis

A second strategy for improving educational effectiveness while managing undergraduate enrollment requires analysis of the curricula and requirements of the various programs to eliminate any "bottlenecks" that impede progress toward completion of the degree.

This is an area in which we have been hampered by our prior practices in curriculum planning, scheduling, and monitoring. The implementation of the new academic information system should be an opportunity to remedy this situation.

The campus should prioritize development of curriculum analysis to insure that we do not inadvertently delay student progress toward completion of a degree.

Both of these recommendations are in accord with the strategic directives of the state and UC.

GRADUATE ISSUES

While issues of graduate growth must be seen primarily with an eye to preserving the excellence of our undergraduate programs, it is also true that some of the questions we face are primarily trade-offs between different models of graduate growth. As a campus, we need to decide whether or not to transform the Department of Education into a School of Education. If such a transformation seems advisable, what should the new School look like? Where are our special strengths? What aspects of education should we emphasize in our curriculum? We also need to think about whether other professional schools might

be consistent with our mission. Would UC Santa Cruz benefit from developing a School of Public Policy and Resource Management? If so, how might such a school be developed? What about a School of Business? What special opportunities should be pursued in Silicon Valley and elsewhere off campus?

Until there is clarity about whom President Dynes selects to serve as our Chancellor and about who will then be selected to serve as the Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, it seems impractical to expect immediate answers to the host of questions about graduate education.

ANTICIPATION

We are, nonetheless, eager not to lose the momentum that has come by force of seeking broad campus participation in the WASC review process. The Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education plans, therefore, to convene a special meeting of the campus leadership, bringing together the present incumbents of the senior administration and the leadership of the Academic Senate. The point of the meeting will be to discuss openly and honestly the issues that face us. Hopefully, the meeting will occur prior to the February visit of the WASC team. It is our desire to lay before the visiting team a summary of campus sentiment and to profit from their views of our ideas.