

Humboldt
State
University

Report of Consultation
October 14, 2008

Creating a Shared Vision

Assessing Institutional Culture
Planning Sustainable Change

Executive Summary

A series of State budget reductions ramifying through the California State University system (CSU), linked with the CSU enrollment-based institutional funding model, has challenged Humboldt State University (Humboldt; HSU), both by limiting available fiscal resources and by exposing serious internal and organizational problems. The pure financial challenge created by reduced funding has been substantial, painful, and difficult. Until recently the University's responses to those reductions have not been consistently thoughtful and strategic. Especially in the past year, President Richmond and interim Provost Snyder have worked directly with the University Budget Committee on a more strategic approach to budgeting, resource allocation, and priority-setting.

The weight of sequential budget reductions over many years -- beginning well before the current University administration -- has reduced Humboldt's flexibility and resiliency. Adjustments to the increasing scarcity of resources have been difficult and have highlighted dysfunctional aspects of campus culture. Dissonance has grown; there is a general perception of ineffective leadership at multiple levels. The University has lost its sense of common purpose and shared institutional vision. Processes of decision making are perceived as frustrating and ineffective. Administrators, staff, and faculty seem fatigued, if not demoralized. Mobilization to address chronic problems has been slow and incomplete. The President has repeatedly called for change, but the campus feels "stuck," lacking in trust, fearful of change, and pessimistic about the prospects for renewal.



Trust has been the most important loss at Humboldt; the rhetoric of distrust on campus includes incisive, strident questioning of authority -- and not only of the administration, but also within and among the faculty and its governance structures. This loss of trust and confidence now paralyzes governance, complicates decision making at all levels, sustains suspicion about motives and actions, and, unless substantially altered, makes change unlikely.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) has recommended that the scheduled visit for its Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) be deferred for one semester (from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010), a clear signal of serious problems that could become critical if left unattended. The WASC recommendation, which Humboldt accepted, has broad institutional implications that require urgent action. The University's current culture, leadership challenges, and decision-making processes undermine the possibility of an effective response. There must be significant change to allow change itself to occur.

Many members of the faculty and staff believe that levels of dissonance and distrust at Humboldt are so high that they cannot be overcome without significant institutional change. But -- and at least equally important -- there is readily perceptible, genuine hope and hunger for renewal. Expressions of dissonance were associated more with descriptions of fatigue than with resolute, angry statements, and nearly everyone with whom the consultants spoke acknowledged Humboldt's significant and distinctive assets and described some degree of hopefulness about the possibility of change. When the consultants discussed the necessity for recommitment to the institution's future -- and, if need be, for the willing, if temporary, suspension of disbelief about the possibility of success -- participants in our meetings and interviews (including administrators, faculty, staff, and students) responded affirmatively in almost all cases.

Although the challenges facing Humboldt are serious, we heard far more evidence of willingness to move forward than of intentions to obstruct growth and renewal. Humboldt has the ability and the will to change its institutional culture. An enduring belief in the potential of the University exists among the great majority of the students, faculty, staff, and administrators with whom we met. Now the institution as a whole organization must rise to the challenge, quickly, and take the opportunity of successfully mobilizing the good intentions, intellect, and pride of those people in the interest of rebuilding its own culture and restoring its own community. Our recommendations are designed to provide a framework that will catalyze and sustain a rigorous and transparent process

of institutional change and renewal through which Humboldt can re-establish a shared vision, reconstruct a sense of community and universality, and develop processes, policies, and procedures to support effective communication and decision making.

A process designed to restore confidence, mutual respect, and universality that is engaged by people who are willing to take an institutional view, focusing on the real problems that must be solved for Humboldt to move forward, can succeed. An improperly guided process will result only in further frustration and recrimination. The object is to rebuild trust and improve functionality in a robust enough way to allow those improvements to be sustained beyond the imminent, albeit important, WASC visitation. Our recommendations intentionally call for the president, his administration, the faculty, staff, and students, collectively and aggregately, to engage in an intensive and extensive dialogue that builds trust, motivates positive action, and inspires hope.

Talking nicely to one another will not suffice. What is needed is the collective construction of fundamental agreements on 1) Humboldt's short- and long-term direction and priorities, 2) the covenants, obligations, and required accountability of campus governance at all levels, 3) ways and means of effective decision making, especially for budget and resource allocation, and 4) the development of policies, protocols, and expectations about the assessment of learning that not only satisfy WASC standards and demonstrate the University's responsiveness to WASC's critique but also improve teaching and learning over the long term. Of course the president is responsible for making final decisions; what we have recommended are strategies for developing shared processes of decision making that can increase the probability of greater trust in and support for those decisions -- and for the leaders who make them.

Introduction

This project emerged in the context of Humboldt State University's (Humboldt; HSU) current process of reaccreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Colleges and Schools (WASC), but it reflects a more general concern among HSU's leaders about campus culture and the absence of a shared institutional vision that engages and inspires members of the faculty and staff. The President, acting well prior to the WASC Capacity and Preparatory Review (CP&R) in February 2008, has repeatedly called for change. WASC's visiting team, in the CP&R report, recommended a semester's delay in the University's Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) and expressed concern about: the extent to which there is a shared institutional view and vision at Humboldt; the ways and means of decision-making governance and resource allocation; and the process of managing change in response to enrollment and fiscal challenges.¹

¹ Quoting from that report:

A critical ingredient to this future will be the degree to which HSU can come together, unite around its emerging vision, and sustain a process for making good use of data and for making optimal decisions about its future. If HSU is able to create a compelling common agenda for which there is broad support among its constituencies, it seems that HSU will rise in the CSU system, in drawing power, and recognition (p. 4).

And later:

...There is a still a great deal of work to be done prior to the Educational Effectiveness Review and a serious challenge for ensuring that student performance is being measured across all departments, as well as in the general education program...The oversight and approval of curriculum, including general education, appears to be decentralized to the point of being less than cohesive (p. 9).

Resource planning probably should begin with the renewed emphasis on academic program prioritization discussed in the essay on "Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn." Of course it is easier to set priorities when resources are expanding. In such cases the question is who will get extra funding. It is much more difficult to set priorities when resources are being reduced because program curtailment may be necessary, a point that often surfaced at discussions about the appropriate organizational mechanisms and criteria that HSU will use to study these challenges (p. 27).

These tensions were evident during Visitation Team interviews with members of several planning committees. Not surprisingly, conversations about University-wide planning were frequently dominated by personal concerns over the survival of programs or job security. As pointed out in the essay on "Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn," the most critical component of the prioritization process is the development and weighing of criteria by which programs will be evaluated. This subject has generated debate and some confusion. Again, not surprisingly, there are different approaches and understandings about the criteria that should be used to prioritize programs and reallocate resources (p. 27).

This could be among the most important Planning challenges in HSU's history. It will be an opportunity to solve the resource challenges that are so much on the minds of the faculty, staff and students of HSU. Perhaps more importantly, it will be an opportunity to, in the concluding words of the HSU Capacity and Preparedness Review, "link campus planning that begins with a clear sense of what the campus should look like in the next decade . . . to resource allocations and to the outcomes of program review and curricular assessments" (p. 28).

Humboldt seeks to inspire the creation of a renewed institutional culture united around a common vision and to develop processes of priority setting, collaborative discourse, decision making, and resource allocation that are systematic, evidence-based, and data-driven. In pursuit of those goals, Humboldt retained Keeling & Associates, LLC (K&A) to complete an assessment of institutional culture to further elucidate and amplify findings of the WASC report and provide guidance toward change management. This report summarizes K&A's method, findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

Institutional Background

Humboldt State University, a campus of the California State University System, is a public institution of higher education offering 49 undergraduate and 12 master's programs. Located in Arcata, CA, HSU enrolled 7,773 students (headcount) in fall 2007. It employed 276 tenured or tenure stream faculty and 242 temporary or adjunct faculty in fall 2007. Unlike most of its peer institutions in the CSU, Humboldt is rural, primarily residential, small, and focused on distinctive academic offerings in Natural Resources and Sciences and the visual and performing arts.

Method

K&A gathered the information and data on which the findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations in this report are based through:

- ▶ Initial telephone conversations with senior administrators in the offices of the Provost and President.

- ▶ Extensive review of existing data, documents, and other print and digital resources to develop a core knowledge base about the institution and its mission, history, operations, resources, and challenges.

- ▶ Eleven (11) structured pre-visit telephone interviews.²

- ▶ On-site meetings, discussions, tours, and interviews, including 24 sessions with more than 60 individuals over a period of more than 36 contact hours. Given the focused nature of the WASC report's critical analysis and the short time horizon, the time and emphasis of the campus visit were weighted heavily towards meetings with faculty and administration; our meetings and discussions were strongly framed by WASC's key concerns about governance, institutional fatigue, academic programming and decision-making, moving from a teaching centered to a learning centered paradigm, and the need to create a culture of evidence including a far more robust regime of learning outcomes assessment. The visiting project team included Richard P. Keeling, M.D., Principal and Senior Executive Consultant; Richard H. Hersh, Ed.D., Senior Consultant; Kyle J. Hutchison, Chief of Staff; and Trey Avery, Consulting Associate; the team spent 3 full days at Humboldt on September 8-10, 2008.

- ▶ A public forum attended by 37 Humboldt students, faculty, staff, and administrators on Monday, September 8, 2008.

² K&A developed a group of standard questions with which to conduct these interviews:

1. How well do you understand the work Keeling Associates is doing with/for HSU?
2. How familiar are you with the WASC CP&R report and the primary areas of concern expressed within?
3. What are your thoughts/comments on:
 - the extent to which there is a shared institutional view and vision at HSU?
 - the ways and means of decision making, governance, and resource allocation at HSU
 - the process of managing change in response to enrollment and fiscal challenges
 - the need to develop what WASC called "a consensus or a workable basis for moving ahead."
4. Are there other issues, concerns, or comments you have that are related to the institutional culture at HSU?
5. We'll be conducting a number of interviews during the coming month leading up to our September campus visit. Are there specific individuals or groups you feel it is important that we speak with or specific experiences we should have while on campus?

Findings and Analysis

Introduction

We begin with a cautionary note. The report of findings that follows attempts to provide a candid and transparent summary of what the consultants have read, heard, and seen. It is intended to be neutral and descriptive regarding the conditions we found, while simultaneously offering an analytical and evaluative framework intended to help the campus move forward. We encountered pressing problems in our work at Humboldt, and the report has, accordingly, a serious and critical tone. This is the tone that dominated our meetings on campus.

But we also heard in most of our discussions positive accounts, affection for the institution, and suggestions for how best to move it forward. We identified strong institutional assets and found a campus community willing to invest in productive change and renewal; hence the sober but authentically aspirational tone of our recommendations. We recognize that our findings and analysis are tough-minded, as the situation at Humboldt requires. We also feel confident that a rigorous and reflective effort to rebuild community and change campus culture, using the University's clear institutional assets, will restore HSU's strengths, rekindle hope, and set the stage for institutional transformation.

General Observations

A series of State budget reductions ramifying through the CSU, linked with the CSU enrollment-based institutional funding model, has challenged Humboldt, both by limiting available fiscal resources and by exposing serious internal and organizational problems. The pure financial challenge created by reduced funding has been substantial, painful, and difficult. But, equally or more important, the University's responses to those reductions have not consistently been strategic, and the processes through which the University has addressed them have not always been functional. As is often true of adjustments required by funding reductions in many other colleges and universities, Humboldt's record has been characterized more by finding ways to avoid the hard decisions made necessary by budget cuts than by adapting to or accommodating those cuts in a thoughtful and strategic manner. As noted elsewhere in this report, a series of observations by WASC over more than 20 years -- and the conclusions of two enrollment

management consultations since 2002 -- have emphasized the need for more agile, campus-wide, and unified ways and means of addressing existing and anticipated financial constraints, including the creation of more effective recruiting, enrollment, and retention strategies. Early evidence of the planning and implementation of more strategic and effective processes are found in a proposal from President Richmond and the Vice Presidents to the University Budget Committee (UBC) for fiscal year 08/09 budget reductions, the UBC's positive response endorsing the proposed use of differential rather than pro-rata cuts, and the current program prioritization process in Academic Affairs.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that most participants in our interviews and meetings recognized and affirmed the seriousness of the WASC C&PR report -- especially WASC's recommendation that Humboldt delay its Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) for a semester. Common agreement on a serious problem is a necessary beginning for a useful solution. At the same time, however, some observers questioned the degree to which their colleagues really understand the gravity of the University's current accreditation situation; they reported that some of their peers simply say, "We've gotten past difficult things in the past; we'll get past this, too." But over the course of the three days of our meetings on campus, the consultants observed an increasing seriousness in the tone of discussions about the WASC report and heard stronger and stronger affirmations of the need to ensure a sufficient and productive response. Agreeing that there is a problem, while necessary, is not sufficient. There also needs to be agreement on the nature and causes of the problem(s) before collective agreement on the solution(s) can be attained.

Description of Institutional Challenges

Lack of Shared Institutional Vision

K&A observed early in the course of our interviews that the view of the institution among faculty, staff, students, and administrators is quite fragmented; we could not detect a consistent shared vision, and there was little evidence of universality (the sense of common, shared purposes and goals -- the idea that "we're all in this together"). Furthermore, we found no convincing or consistent evidence of the existence or nurturing of institutional structures, systems, or infrastructure through which Humboldt might create such a sense of common purpose or bring

people together to restore it. There appear to be complex and intertwined historical, structural, and cultural reasons for this deficiency.

Humboldt continues to experience internal conflict regarding its most fundamental academic models and designs: To what degree should HSU increase its expectations of faculty scholarship and research? Can (and should) the University retain its historical emphasis on teaching as its primary academic signature? What expectations of scholarship might facilitate better teaching and learning? Despite some perceptions to the contrary, there seems to be no driving intention to make Humboldt a “research institution” -- but the spectrum between an institution that thrives with a strong primary focus on teaching and one that emphasizes research and productive scholarship as its main goals is broad, and the University has not developed a comfortable consensus about its proper placement on that continuum. There is, then, an absence of clarity about this key point of institutional vision and direction.

We found little agreement about what the institution intends to be, and for whom. This is sometimes described at HSU as an absence of organizational or functional focus, and this uncertainty about how the University should move forward is ascribed, in part, rightly or wrongly, to the absence of a functional, meaningful strategic plan. Consistent observations were that 1) the University’s most recent strategic planning processes were ineffective and flawed,³ 2) the resulting documents were poor products that provided little guidance, and 3) implementation of change or directions recommended in the plans has been haphazard, poorly monitored, unsupported by data,⁴ and ineffectively communicated.

Need for More Effective Decision Making

Across the schisms of its institutional culture, and independent of new faculty and administrative leadership, Humboldt has not in the past fifteen years or more been able to mold decision-making structures and models that function effectively; there is no consistent process in place for reaching difficult decisions, especially about resource allocation. There are deep problems with the University’s ability to take on challenges, such as budget cuts, with a sense of universality and

³ An observation also made by WASC in their C&PR report.

⁴ Or, that the data used to track implementation steps were themselves questionable.

common purpose, to engage in compromise, and to do what is best for the institution as a whole. Indeed, it seems that the University has not found comfortable, sustainable ways in which people can disagree in a healthy way -- or even communicate effectively -- without undermining the sense of community on campus or obstructing the process of necessary decision making. The atmosphere is described as one of distrust, suspicion, fear, and fatigue (also see later); there is little feeling of community.

Humboldt needs more effective systems, structures, and processes for allocating resources; consistency (and organizational effectiveness) are endangered and undermined repeatedly by the need to successively re-invent solutions to problems that have been addressed (if not solved) before. Humboldt is a small institution, but has many administrative layers, committees, and procedures -- most of which are said not to function effectively. Faculty members told the consultants that committees are numerous -- but do not achieve their purposes. The WASC report also emphasizes this lack of clear decision-making structures and resulting frustrations.

Faculty, staff members, administrators, and students uniformly complained about the processes through which final decisions are made at all levels, including by the President, and about the lack of transparency of those processes. The pattern consistently identified as frustrating in our interviews was that advisors to the President (including the Vice Presidents) give their best counsel, only to find that their ideas and conclusions are rejected or substantially modified -- and that they received no follow-up or "loop-back" information to explain what happened.

More generally, decision making at Humboldt is perceived and described as non-strategic. Formal structures for decision making are perceived to be inconsistently used, and individual opportunities or problems may demand (and get) short-term answers through tactical decisions that are not intentionally and prospectively aligned with broader principles or institutional strategy. The linkage of this problem to the questions of institutional identity and mission is clear; in the absence of a clear sense of vision and direction, both priorities and messages are necessarily obscure, and without a guiding framework of clear and mutually agreed to priorities, individual decisions are perceived to be capricious and thereby understood as incidental and situational, rather than strategic.

Tactical decisions, as seen together over time, may have little coherence. A tactical approach rewards management more than leadership, reinforces incremental answers to complex questions, diffuses responsibility, and undermines any sense of institutional universality; universities that operate tactically have difficulty achieving resilience and virtuosity. Given the imbalance of strategic and tactical decision making at HSU, it is not surprising that resource reductions are perceived by many to have been mostly accomplished through “across the board,” rather than differential, and through opportunistic, rather than strategic, methods, even though the consultants saw evidence that across-the board cuts during the past six years have been limited.⁵ A perceived pattern of incremental, tactical decisions about resource limitations can accustom members of a campus community to an approach that never seems to require really difficult, strategic decisions and create the misimpression that those decisions can be continually postponed. To the degree that the perception of tactical decision making is at odds with the reality, there will continue to be a belief that hard decisions are being avoided.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the current academic program prioritization process, initiated by the interim Provost, has strong strategic features.⁶ This process uses three categories to rank academic programs and allocate resources: 1) programs to be augmented -- grown or enhanced, 2) programs that are not candidates for special consideration for either augmentation or reduction, and 3) programs that are candidates for reorganization, reduced support, or elimination. There are, unsurprisingly, disputes about the value, structure, methods, and probable outcomes of this process. Disagreements in such a process, up to a point, are healthy, inevitable, and predictable. With strategic decision making, there are inevitably differential outcomes; changes,

⁵ Opportunistic decision making includes, for example, the practice of responding to budget cuts by simply not filling vacant positions -- regardless of the importance of those positions, or the relative priority of the work done in those positions *vis-à-vis* the work being accomplished by people in positions that are currently filled. In other words, opportunistic processes of decision making prevents HSU from determining whether some things that it now does are less important than things that it might do.

⁶ WASC endorses this process in their C&PR report:

One sound approach is found in a document titled: Prioritizing Academic Programs. It was written in consultation with the Provost Council by the Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, a person who is likely to play a pivotal role in HSU's prioritization efforts. This document uses three categories to rank programs and to allocate resources: 1) programs to be grown or enhanced, 2) programs that will not be grown or will be reduced, and 3) programs that are to be reorganized, given reduced support, or eliminated. In spite of the HSU administration's efforts to clarify this matter, the passions seem to be running high and there seems much work to do in developing a consensus or a workable basis for moving ahead (p. 27).

and pain, may not be equally distributed. A few faculty members complained that the prioritization process is flawed because it is based on “bad data”; others alleged that time will be wasted in studying or explaining data that are inaccurate.⁷ As consultants, we have no way of verifying any facts that may be behind these sentiments -- but to any extent that there are inadequate or questionable data and to the degree that lack of trust in the process is widespread, this priority-setting process will be unnecessarily hindered. From our perspective, however, the academic program prioritization process is a transparent and salutary step that can be helpful in creating a foundation for strategic thinking and planning that engages significant numbers of faculty members in a new (for HSU) way (see recommendations). Especially, it responds to both the real challenges of institutional funding and the need to continuously assess and improve academic programs in the interest of supporting good student and institutional outcomes -- and it explicitly acknowledges the need to make non-incremental decisions in a strategic manner.

A particular subset of decision-making problems that has frequently recurred at HSU relates to budget and financial matters. Because of the way Humboldt has in years past managed discussions of budgets and financial performance, those matters are widely perceived to occupy too much institutional time and rise to disproportionate priority. While inadequate revenue predictably focuses intensive and extensive attention on budget, the perception is that there still is much too much time spent on budget discussions. The consultants were told that conversations about budget seem never to end; someone is always unhappy with whatever conclusion is being reached, and that unhappiness seems sufficient to motivate an entire reconsideration of the matter under discussion. In its own way, these organizational phenomena simply illustrate the more general problem of dysfunctional organizational and operational adaptation to changing circumstances that undermines the University’s ability to move forward. This predicament is noted in the WASC report and was singled out for special mention in President Richmond’s Convocation address on August 19th.

It is unlikely that the University can provide credible evidence (to WASC, or for any other purpose) of being able to gain consensus and develop sound processes of resource allocation without the

⁷ There is a more general suspicion of the quality and accuracy of institutional data; Humboldt’s style of decentralized institutional research seems to have resulted in an unintended consequence--pervasive mistrust of data; indeed, some respondents in our interviews have become cynical enough to wonder out loud if perhaps there is intentional misrepresentation of those data as well. There is perceived to be no generally trusted, reliable, or trustworthy data from which enrollment or fiscal strategies could be considered. There is a lack of shared metrics, assessment practices, and reporting expectations.

efficient development of a unified institutional vision, consistent and pervasive understanding of shared governance, and strengthened respect for leadership, especially given the long duration and apparent intractability of its decision-making problems.^{8,9}

Academic Governance

Many members of the faculty and several administrators suggested during discussions with the consultants that the faculty at Humboldt, as a rule, are suspicious of central authority and resist standardization. Furthermore, we were told that these attitudes have existed at least for decades at Humboldt; they are also common to much of academia. Many institutions in stronger situations can afford to look beyond such attitudes, even though they are ultimately harmful. But years of frustration have so hardened negative feelings and reinforced dissonance between faculty and administration over questions of governance that those attitudes have become pernicious at HSU.

There is little clarity about the boundaries, expectations, and prerogatives of faculty governance at Humboldt. Although one of the most jealously guarded provinces of faculty authority in many institutions is the curriculum, for example, Humboldt has no central, substantial process of review or renewal of the curriculum, and control of the curriculum is quite decentralized. Among faculty members with whom the consultants met, there was a range of opinions about the functionality and effectiveness of faculty governance, and especially about the value and effectiveness of the Academic Senate. Views of the effectiveness and work of the Academic Senate held by those outside the faculty were mostly quite negative and often truly caustic. Most respondents who are not faculty members see the Senate as fundamentally resistant to change, unable to make sound decisions, and obstructive.

⁸ In his memorandum to the faculty on the process of prioritizing academic programs, the Interim Provost noted that a previous WASC review team had recommended *in 1990* that “Humboldt should develop an effective campus-wide planning process that begins with a clear sense of what the campus should be like in the next decade...campus planning should be linked to resource allocations and to the outcomes of program reviews and curricular assessments.” The Provost’s memorandum further notes that this passage from the 1990 report was cited again in the 1997 WASC report.

⁹ The WASC C&PR report notes: “The Visitation Team also observed that governance and decision-making processes at the University are complicated, cumbersome, and difficult to understand. HSU seems to take a fragmented approach to institutional decision making which creates internal confusion and sometimes unclear results. There are several examples of this, including the decentralized and somewhat disconnected departmental focus on many curriculum matters; the loose structure of faculty governance over curriculum, in general; the absence of a centralized faculty based focus on general education; and in the University-wide budget and priority setting process...” (pp. 23-24).

A combination of factors -- including the Senate's conflicted image and inconstant credibility, fatigue among faculty members associated with pessimism about the probability that governance structures, and most notably the Senate, have the power to do anything useful, and competing demands on faculty time -- now make it difficult to elect new leaders in the Senate. That problem compounds further the other concerns noted above and therefore reduces the Senate's perceived functionality and value.

Teaching loads at Humboldt are variable but can be heavy -- typically, 12 units (four 3-credit courses) per semester for many, while others have lighter loads. The consultants were told by members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that the number of full-time-equivalent faculty members has decreased by a factor of 1/7 over the past decade, no doubt a function of the severe budget constraints Humboldt has faced. Yet we understand that HSU has one of the highest tenure-track ratios in the entire system. Given substantial teaching loads, faculty are sensitive to University policy on course release time; as the amount of faculty time allotted to committee functions (including the University Curriculum Committee) has decreased, the participation of faculty on committees has decreased.

Given our limited time on campus and the fact that we only had the opportunity to meet 15-20 faculty members (fewer than 10% of the regular faculty complement), we recognize that generalizations about "the faculty" at Humboldt are hard to sustain, and, in any event, the concept of the faculty as a monolithic community is artificial. But it is important to note that we heard too many times to be ignored reports that relationships *within* the faculty have also frequently been difficult and, sometimes, contentious. We were told that even within individual academic departments, faculty members have little sense of commonality and community. Some observers spoke of the existence of different faculty cultures based on generations, more than disciplines, and noted that more recently hired (and often younger) faculty members are less likely than their predecessors to stay on campus late in the day, participate in governance work, and make themselves easily accessible to students. And, in terms of faculty representation, some faculty perceive that the CSU faculty union, more than the University's faculty governance structures, has been the source of organization and mobilization of a faculty voice. While that may be the case, others claimed just as vociferously that the faculty union was itself the cause of much contention on campus, asserting itself as the legitimate voice of faculty despite the fact that many faculty

members do not feel that their views are represented by the union at all -- even if they feel cowed by its perceived power.

The Presidency

President Rollin C. Richmond assumed the presidency of Humboldt in May 2002 after serving as Provost at Iowa State University. His previous experience -- primarily in large public research institutions (in addition to Iowa State, Stony Brook University, the University of South Florida, and Indiana University) -- brought important change to HSU, with a new focus on enrollment, physical plant and facilities, and faculty scholarship. Most participants in our meetings and interviews said that President Richmond's arrival was welcomed enthusiastically by both faculty and staff and that the initial years of his presidency were "calm." Most with whom we spoke -- even those who are now critical of the President -- give President Richmond high marks for a number of changes accomplished to date during his incumbency. Most often mentioned are: a strategy for and, indeed, the accomplishment of increased enrollment; the improvement of the Advancement office and successes in fundraising; substantial improvements in relationships with the community and business sector; and securing funds for important renovations and new facilities on campus.

Many students, faculty, and staff with whom the consultants met spoke positively and warmly of the President as a person. Some commented that he has been less visible and "present" on campus during the past two years as compared to his first several years in the presidency; many of those observers speculated empathically that the pressure of institutional financial strain and the imposition of System constraints may account for the evidence of severe pressure on him, as would be true of any president. In recent years, though, the presidency has become a source of controversy, and the perception is that the prolonged dissonance about leadership has taken some toll on the President; he is increasingly perceived, especially among members of the faculty, as disengaged from issues that threaten the University. Over the last several years, the President has been the frequent object of public criticism from faculty members and the Associated Students. The possibility of a no confidence vote by the Senate has existed for more than a year.¹⁰

¹⁰ That possibility seemed somewhat lessened after the most recent discussions in the Academic Senate, a meeting of which the consultants attended, and during which the President spoke and responded to questions, on September 9, 2008.

The factors underlying this broad loss of faculty confidence in the President are multiple, and they include matters that are large and central to issues of mission and direction, including a widely held perception that the President seeks to change the basic academic character of the institution from teaching to research, the belief that he has a fundamental lack of respect for professors and academic matters, and the conviction that he has moved too many resources to non-academic priorities. Some faculty members said that they feel the President has increasingly disengaged from them, noting that he seems to stay more in his office, meeting primarily with administrative (but not academic) staff members, is not seen frequently around and about on campus, and often does not attend Senate meetings. Positively, though, faculty members praised the President's record on hiring a greater diversity of faculty and staff.

Some students with whom the consultants spoke also described their frustration with both administrative and academic decisions made by President Richmond, such as an increase in the instructional and activity fee (for athletics) in 2006¹¹ and the discontinuation of the German program, both of which the Associated Students opposed. Some staff members noted that the President's statements to (or about) them sometimes make them feel less valuable, to him and the University, than faculty.

Administration

The limits and bounds of the President's authority are matters of speculation, suspicion, and dispute in the campus community at HSU; they have been the subject of debate earlier this year between the Academic Senate Executive Committee and the President. Many faculty members regard the administration -- including the President, Vice Presidents, and certain offices and functions, such as enrollment management and advancement -- as obstacles to the preservation of primary academic functions, at best. As we have seen on many other campuses under financial stress, they see non-academic operations as dangers to academic programs and faculty lines; they think of non-academic offices (and, for that matter, consultants...) as draining resources from

¹¹ The President enacted a \$202 increase in the fee in 2006 against the recommendations of the Fee Advisory Committee and the Associated Students, which censured him on April 28, 2006. Representatives of the Associated Students who met with the consultants said that 30% of Humboldt's students had voted in the referendum that rejected the fee increase -- certainly an unusually large voter turnout for a student election.

the academic program and causing drops in academic quality. In the adjustment to any budget reduction, they would favor taking funds differentially from non-academic sources.

Many faculty members bristle when some administrators urge that the University should be “run more like a business” and object to both the principles suggested by that exhortation and the increase in central administrative power that it implies. Members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee felt that a theme of the current administration has been a gradual increase in core administrative power, and some faculty believe that HSU is “using” the WASC report as an “excuse” to centralize that power.

Relationships among senior administrative officers of the University are commonly perceived by others as unpleasant, competitive, and contentious. Although the Vice Presidents, meeting together, told the consultants that they usually work well together, a very different view emerges from other interviews; several staff members described having to avoid being caught in conflicts between their boss and another Vice President.

In response to the ongoing critique of budgeting, Humboldt has changed the structure of its University Budget Committee (UBC) annually for the past three years to improve its functioning, but disenchantment with the budgeting process, while somewhat muted, continues. Faculty members complained that they, as represented by the Senate, had insufficient input in the creation of the UBC, and some faculty critics regard the UBC as a “useless” body that obscures the fact that the real budget decisions are made by the Executive Committee without faculty representation.¹²

Finally, Humboldt’s academic culture both experiences and reinforces the limitations and constraints inherent in having senior academic leaders and administrators in interim positions and roles. The Provost and two academic deans are “interims.” Several groups spoke with the consultants about the resulting problem of “interim management,” which tends to lead to administrative stasis. The need for appointment of a permanent Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs was commonly noted. A different, but parallel, problem exists on the administrative side of the institution: high rates of turnover; many administrators have been in their positions no more than two to four years.

¹² The University has engaged another consultant to review its budget process and make recommendations for improvement.

Trust

In the difficult organizational environment that exists at Humboldt today, trust has been an important casualty.¹³ There is neither confidence in faculty governance nor administrative leadership. It is believed that responding to requests for one's opinion is a waste of one's time, and is risky at best. With its roots in the erosion of communication, a perception of the emergence and dominance of tactical decision making, and a decline of confidence in leadership and administrative intentions, this loss of trust now paralyzes governance, complicates decision making at all levels, sustains suspicion about motives and actions, and makes change unlikely.¹⁴ Today, Humboldt's campus feels hunkered down, less like a genuine community than it once did, with people feeling less connected to each other and to the university. Shared experience is less common, we were told, and there is certainly little coming together in celebration. While these may well be a predictable consequences for an institution that has faced (and now continues to face) hard times, it is difficult for any institution to accommodate change in the absence of trust and without the assumption of goodwill. In light of this central quandary, we recommend below a process that may help people come together again in a mutual quest for the common good in an effort to renew the energy that arises when people share a common vision.

Change Resistance

From the beginning of the work of this consultation, the consultants heard repeatedly about strong resistance to change at Humboldt -- centered, perhaps, in the faculty and its governance structures, but diffused throughout the institution and, in fact, part of the basic character of people and groups in the geographic region in which the University is located. A number of participants in our meetings and interviews claimed that faculty members who moved up into administrative or

¹³ In his *Response to the Humboldt State University Academic Senate Executive Committee Summary of Concerns with Presidential Leadership*, dated May 30, 2008, President Richmond writes: "It seems to me that a failure of trust is at the basis of the dysfunction of shared governance at HSU that has persisted for many years."

¹⁴ During three days of intensive on-site meetings, the consultants began to hear over and over again a series of narratives through which faculty members, on the one hand, or administrators, on the other, portrayed reasons for their lack of trust of each other. Administrators claimed that students, new faculty members, and the local media are "courted" by change-resistant faculty members; that faculty members are "in denial" about the institution's financial and operational challenges; that It is common knowledge (and accepted practice) for some faculty to give students homework assignments to email the President and protest change of any sort and at any level; that tenured faculty members intimidate new faculty.

leadership roles tended to be Humboldt graduates; several described a “self-satisfaction” or smugness among longstanding faculty members that reinforces the *status quo*.

While there may be substantial change resistance as a primary organizational problem at Humboldt, there are other negative factors in institutional culture that may create that appearance -- including the paralysis produced by loss of trust, the lack of common accord across the institution, the absence of clear vision and direction, a tactical (rather than strategic) process of decision making, and the institutional fatigue produced by a succession of budget cuts and their consequences. It was not irrefutably clear to the consultants that change resistance *per se* is substantially greater as an organizational issue at Humboldt than it is in many other institutions of higher education, which tend by their very nature to be conservative regarding the initiation, pacing, and scope and scale of change. We do not argue that change resistance is not an important issue for Humboldt, nor do we dispute the effects and consequences of negative attitudes toward institutional change; our point is that the *appearance* of change resistance may be greater than the actual functional and operational level to which change resistance itself rises as an independent factor because of the presence of other cultural factors that could be misinterpreted or misunderstood as change resistance.

The succession of painful budget cuts has weakened or eliminated the programs that encourage growth and professional renewal - such as professional development and travel to conferences, or institutional swiftness in filling vacated positions. In an environment of ongoing (and seemingly unrelenting) financial restraints, many members of the Humboldt campus community may simply have grown tired and resistant to anything new that is placed on the table.

Definitions of and Challenges to Academic Distinctiveness

Faculty members identify two major characteristics that specify the University’s uniqueness -- or “brand” -- in their minds: small class sizes¹⁵ and students’ access to a wide variety of elective

¹⁵ IPEDS data show that, in fall 2007, the average class size was 24 students in the undergraduate programs and 8 students in the master’s programs; student:faculty ratio was reported as 18:1.

courses.¹⁶ Faculty report that there have been slight increases in class sizes in many courses, and substantial increases in a smaller number. Although they also often claimed that there have been negative educational consequences resulting from increasing class sizes or reductions in the numbers of electives offered, there was no evidence presented that documented any impact of those changes on educational effectiveness, student learning outcomes, or academic persistence and retention.

HSU has long attempted to distinguish itself as the liberal arts campus of the CSU; at times in the past, it was regarded as the “golden child” of the System because of its apparent success and its emphasis on individual attention to students, close faculty/student relationships, and a variety of course options. But it is not clear that these are sustainable learning designs in an environment of competition for enrollment and diminishing resources, especially given the CSU funding model and the resource-intensive nature of some of Humboldt’s most important academic programs.¹⁷

Echoing comments made by several others, one person noted that “We can no longer afford to be what we have become.” Recognition of this reality has been slow to come at Humboldt. A faith -- granted, an increasingly challenged faith -- that somehow the budget problems will “go away” has marginalized or derailed attempts to anticipate and respond effectively to them, and a certain level of magical thinking still prevails. But it is highly unlikely that the University will get a unique exception from the System regarding its per-student funding formula. Faculty engagement with the current process of setting program priorities is, therefore, mixed. The Interim Provost has made a strong and compelling case for the need for program prioritization -- not only to satisfy the requirements of WASC, but to respond effectively to the University’s compromised budget.

¹⁶ Interestingly, the Noel-Levitz report of 2005 identifies the following five characteristics of a primary theme of engagement, involvement, and interaction that should define Humboldt’s recruitment messages: 1) variety of academic program offerings, 2) quality of faculty as teachers, 3) student involvement in research, field experiences, and internships, 4) mentoring relationships between faculty and students, and 5) educational outcomes and graduate success. Similarly, the University’s Web site represents the institution’s unique strengths in terms of students’ access to and engagement with faculty members: “ Innovation begins with the way we approach the teacher-student relationship. Many colleges boast prestigious, but distant, faculty members. Our students actually know their world-renowned professors. In addition to being leaders in the sciences and humanities, HSU professors are committed to mentoring their students by including them in all kinds of experiments, lab research, and field work.”

¹⁷ Both administrators and academic leaders noted that Humboldt has a higher percentage of higher cost programs than most other institutions in the CSU system.

Fiscal Management

From a fiscal perspective, and given the CSU enrollment-based funding formula, many on campus believe that the most stabilizing things that could happen for HSU are an increase in the University's enrollment base and the raising of additional outside funding. Given so few choices for fiscal relief in the face of continuing state budget cuts, President Richmond has successfully bolstered the institution's ability to enroll more students and raise funds. But there still is lacking a strong institutional consensus on enrollment goals; neither is there agreement on the most appropriate and efficacious methods to increase enrollment, to the extent that enrollment gains are desirable.

Given the circumstances Humboldt has faced, hiring enrollment management consultants was a logical decision that would make great sense. But many faculty members dispute the value of an enrollment management consultation completed in 2005 by Noel-Levitz and disparage the most visible manifestations of what they think were the recommendations (apparently improperly--see footnote) alleged to have been made in their report: the gates and kiosks erected with the purpose of giving the campus clearer boundaries and a sense of geographic identity.¹⁸ Rightly or wrongly, the gates and kiosks have become provocative symbols of the dissonance between the University's administration and its faculty and flash points in the faculty's now long-standing dispute with the President.¹⁹

The consultants heard few expressions of confidence in enrollment management as it is currently practiced and led at Humboldt, despite the demonstrable achievements of that office in improving enrollment numbers;²⁰ the organizational placement of enrollment management in Student Affairs was questioned by many faculty members. Faculty discomfort with and criticism of the organizational placement of enrollment management seems linked with discord between Academic

¹⁸ The consultants found no reference to a recommendation for gates and kiosks in the Executive Summary of the Noel-Levitz report. That recommendation does, however, appear in the CSU "HSU Enrollment Management Study," dated September 27, 2002: "9. Create a space that provides a front door to the University for the purpose of welcoming prospective students and their parents, facilitates the 'first look/last look' sales idea, and allows for the delivery of 'one stop' effective/efficient services to students."

¹⁹ Faculty members see, in the gates and kiosks, evidence of misplaced priorities; some students, staff, and administrators, as well as certain faculty members, see in the specific design and realization of the gates and kiosks racist expressions of architecture that are offensive, especially to Native Americans.

²⁰ The recent departure of the director, after only a short tenure at Humboldt, exacerbated these views.

and Student Affairs for a variety of other reasons, including the perceived ability of Student Affairs to secure resources at the expense of Academic Affairs. The portfolio of Student Affairs at Humboldt is quite large; it includes, in addition to traditional Student Affairs programs and services, a group of academic support programs, the Children's Center, Enrollment Management, Intercollegiate Athletics, the University Police Department, and both Associated Students and the University Center (which are auxiliary organizations). Several faculty members expressed discomfort with the aggregation of so many programs in Student Affairs.

Assessment as an Institutional Priority

In the C&PR report, WASC expressed dissatisfaction with Humboldt's progress in developing and, especially, assessing student learning outcomes²¹; this problem was a strong factor in the Visiting Team's recommendation to delay the EER. It has been difficult -- or, thus far, in some areas impossible -- for Humboldt's faculty to establish consistent, shared student learning outcomes at departmental, school, or institutional levels.

The justification for assessment at Humboldt, as in every other institution of higher education, is most powerful on educational grounds — the measurement of learning for the purpose of improving teaching, learning, and institutional efficacy. Timely and appropriate feedback to both students and teachers enhances learning by making expectations and standards explicit, thus increasing transparency — learning ought not to be a guessing game. And assessment data show where institutional efforts to integrate learning have succeeded, and where more work is needed.

²¹ In their C&PR report (p. 11), WASC emphasized that, at the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review (which was postponed), the Visiting Team would expect to see:

- Assessment results for at least one student learning outcome for each program. The results should include student performance data, as well as how those data have been used to improve student performance.
- Student learning outcomes for all General Education Areas, with assessment results for at least one outcome in each area.
- Evidence that initial assessment data was used to improve writing proficiency among students rated as "weak" writers.

In this sense, learning assessment can best be understood as a form of teaching and learning for students, faculty, and the institution, rather than being viewed simply as a way to meet external demands -- although, at this point, Humboldt must institute credible assessments of student learning simply to meet the requirements of WASC. Used appropriately, learning assessment thus can simultaneously serve the two masters of improvement and accountability, given that institutions are considered most effective to the extent that their purposefully designed and implemented learning experiences support students in achieving desired outcomes.

But many faculty members and some academic leaders at HSU disputed the need for assessment of student learning, especially early in the consultants' campus visit. Some faculty protested the additional workload that assessment of learning may require; others described it as an "unfunded mandate" from the Chancellor's Office (or from WASC) and expressed doubt about the salience of assessment in improving student learning or outcomes. Acknowledging the requirements of WASC, though, most faculty with whom we spoke later in the visit stated their intention to conduct and provide assessments of student learning to meet WASC's standards.²²

A Campus Hunger for Renewal: Moving From "Stuck" to Resiliency

In discussions with many groups, the consultants explored ways in which the current stalemate in institutional culture -- the fact that HSU is "stuck" and has not been able to free itself from the constraints of that problem²³ -- might be resolved. We asked about "signals" -- actions, statements, or behaviors that might suggest a willingness to find ways to move forward. Many faculty members said that the President had to give a strong signal of respect for academics (beginning with attending most Senate meetings) and that he should publicly take his fair share of responsibility for the current state of dissonance and distrust at Humboldt. Others, including some faculty members as well as students and administrative staff, said that signals had to come from the faculty as well -- that "stepping back" from a no-confidence vote and re-establishing respectful communication with the President and his administration would be equally important.

²² In response to a comment from one of the consultants regarding the need to assess student learning outcomes ("You don't have a choice; you have to do this..."), faculty members in a later meeting said, "And we will."

²³ In three days of meetings and interviews, no one disagreed with the proposition that the University is "stuck."

While many faculty and staff believe, as do the consultants, that the loss of trust at Humboldt is so profound that it cannot be overcome without significant institutional change, there is a perceptible hunger for renewal. Expressions of dissonance were associated more with descriptions of fatigue than with resolute, angry statements, and nearly everyone with whom we spoke acknowledged Humboldt's significant and distinctive assets and described some degree of hopefulness about the possibility of change. When the consultants discussed the necessity for recommitment to the institution's future -- and, if need be, for the willing, if temporary, suspension of disbelief about the possibility of success -- participants in our meetings and interviews responded affirmatively in almost all cases.

Certainly there are members of the campus community whose fixed attitudes and intransigent views will add degrees of difficulty to the challenge of restoring a sense of community and shared purpose. But we heard far more evidence of willingness to move forward than of intentions to obstruct growth and renewal. Humboldt has the ability and the will to change its institutional culture. An enduring belief in the potential of the University exists among the great majority of the students, faculty, staff, and administrators with whom we met. Now the institution as a whole organization must rise to the challenge -- and take the opportunity -- of successfully mobilizing the good intentions, intellect, and pride of those people in the interest of rebuilding its own culture and restoring its own community.

Perspective

The WASC C&PR report and its implications are an urgent academic and administrative challenge for Humboldt, and the University's leadership and the problems in its existing organizational, operational, administrative, and academic systems, processes, and procedures may not allow it to respond to that challenge in a predictably effective manner. There must be significant change in institutional culture to allow change in any other area to occur.

Need for Institutional Renewal

The quality of decision making, governance, and resource allocation at Humboldt is marred by an old but tightly knit blanket of profound distrust, lack of universality and accountability to the institution, insufficient attention to responsible stewardship of limited resources, dysfunctional faculty governance, the state's relentless practice of cutting higher education budgets, the System's administrative demands and funding models, and a belief that there is ineffective administrative and faculty leadership. The University's organizational culture suffers from a lack of trust, resiliency, and hopefulness; a tone of negativity, conflict, suspicion, and constant criticism reinforces isolation and contributes to poor morale. The President's calls for renewal and change have not resulted in broad, sustained improvements. Humboldt is "stuck" and has lost direction; there is no generally shared institutional vision. The consequences of these challenges are felt in matters large and small, from the everyday processes of governance and administration to the periodic need to marshal evidence for successful reaccreditation. There is a significant and serious need for substantial, thoroughgoing institutional renewal.

Challenges to Institutional Renewal at HSU

Change is often (some would say always) difficult in higher education. The organization of colleges and universities is a complex constellation of historically developed values and norms, centered in a pervasive but somewhat obscure academic culture strongly oriented around vertical structures, or "silos" (e.g., divisions, schools, departments) that are predominantly connected to and aligned with professional disciplines or major institutional functions (such as Student Affairs programs). Vertical, or discipline-based, systems are culturally accepted, customary, and a traditional form of structure in higher education; despite its relatively small size and unique character, those vertically-oriented structures are dominant and powerful at HSU as well. As noted earlier, the degree of change resistance at Humboldt may not be so unique as are the features of its increasingly negative organizational culture, which reinforces all of the "silos" that challenge collaboration and undermine a sense of universality on campus.

The need for the specialization of knowledge and functions must be balanced by the integration of information and operations between and among specialty areas or silos – what might be considered *horizontal* knowledge and functioning. Horizontal forces integrate and function across

vertical structures. The quality of the undergraduate student experience and the achievement of such desired learning outcomes as critical thinking, civic engagement, appreciation of human differences, and basic liberal arts knowledge are horizontally oriented; undergraduate learning, especially in the lower division and pre-major years, is not solely owned by a particular discipline, but rather by the entire institution. Yet horizontal structures or norms for accountability at Humboldt are generally weak, as it true in many other universities. Some key institutional priorities, such as accreditation, require that the University demonstrate capacity and effectiveness in the convergence of both vertical and horizontal functions. In many ways, that capacity is what WASC asked to see demonstrated at HSU. To achieve significant and meaningful change, Humboldt, as a whole campus community, must come together across the traditional boundaries of vertical structures; institutional change to achieve accreditation, set priorities, allocate resources more effectively, or support learning specifically demands a cross-campus approach.

Catalysts for Change and Renewal

There are many possible antecedents and catalysts for institutional change. Strategic planning, for example, provides an opportunity for institutional self reflection and agenda setting. Done well, a strategic institutional change process does not have to drag on forever -- in fact, it can be done in an intensive, extensive, and timely manner -- and engages the entire campus community in reviewing and renewing its direction. It provides a way to integrate purposes, goals, and vision across the institution. Strategic planning has not, however, been done well at Humboldt in the recent past. Similarly, taking a stronger focus on student learning inspires institutional attention to advancing learning and enhancing student success across campus; a cross-institutional focus on student learning -- and the assessment of learning -- has not, however, been achieved at HSU.

Many colleges and universities are sharpening their focus on student learning and developing intentional strategies to support student success -- not only in response to accreditation requirements, but in the interest of improving outcomes. What will be especially difficult for Humboldt is that advancing student learning requires multiple, intersecting changes at many levels across the institution, from institutional culture to programs, systems, and infrastructure. Significant institutional change can be powerfully catalyzed by focusing on learning because a focus on learning engages the whole institution and all of its resources in a horizontal manner. HSU has little

recent organizational experience of that kind of collaborative reflection, decision making, and action, nor does it have the necessary collective, shared focus on learning as its highest priority.

Recommendations

Our analysis and some of our recommendations are foregrounded in President Richmond's August 19th Convocation address, in which he stresses the need for improving learning assessment, strengthening decision-making and budgeting processes, and developing effective means of priority setting. Indeed, his long-standing recognition of the problems Humboldt is now facing and the decision to hire outside consultation for budget planning and for institutional culture change have in fact begun the change process itself.

From our vantage point, the core problem facing Humboldt is the need for renewal of its institutional culture. The particular challenge the University must engage is that such a renewal must occur quickly (during the next 15 months), both in order to enable it to provide evidence to support reaccreditation and to build for itself a new foundation of trust and community. The complexity of forces and factors that have generated and sustained the current forms and content of institutional culture requires, at the same time, that the process of change be multilayered and nuanced. No part of the needs that Humboldt faces allows for a "business as usual" approach during the coming one to three academic years -- and especially not in the period prior to the forthcoming WASC EER. The usual and customary dissonance, disputes, and alienation that have come to be accepted as the norm must be replaced by an unswerving commitment to goal-oriented institutional change; the existing leadership models, decision-making processes, and governance structures of the University are not adequate to the task required.

Below, we recommend a process and a group of specific actions that focus on the major concerns delineated in the WASC report:

- the collective construction of a culture of trust, that necessary foundation for both short-term and longer-term decision-making in predictably difficult future circumstances (we note here the probable prolonged nature of severe budget constraints the State of California now faces);

- the need for substantial progress to be made on the institution's short and long term direction and priorities;
- the need to strengthen campus governance procedures with agreed upon responsibilities for and accountability by all parties;
- a transparent budget-setting procedure linked to the priorities;
- significant development of learning assessment protocols that not only will satisfy WASC standards but help to improve learning and teaching over the longer term.

We are suggesting a multiple step process that intentionally challenges the vertical ("silo") organization of the University through a horizontal (cross-institutional) intervention that brings the campus together across its divisions, differences, and differences. The process we are recommending asks that, given the nearly universal complaint made to us that people are fatigued and time saturated, "business as usual" be set aside everywhere possible, and that all campus constituencies be brought together to reconstitute community by drawing on the the vast reserves of goodwill and caring we observed during our campus visit.

Humboldt should take the following steps:

1. The President should publicly, transparently, and candidly reiterate much of what he said in his recent Convocation speech -- especially, that the gravity of the challenges facing the University is severe -- and announce that Humboldt will focus its best efforts on addressing those challenges sufficiently to restore trust and institutional sustainability and address the critique of the WASC accreditation team. In doing so, he should explicitly commit himself and the University to an immediate process of change and renewal. We make this recommendation because the institution needs and desperately wishes to have decisive leadership from its president and we perceive sufficient goodwill that such a presidential stance would be welcomed and would catalyze movement forward.
2. The President should appoint the interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs as permanent Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, effective immediately. So much of the change agenda revolves around academic programs and faculty goodwill that the Provost

needs the legitimacy and credibility of a permanent appointment to support his leadership role in the process of institutional change and renewal. We make this recommendation not out of favoritism but because it was clear in our conversations on campus that the interim Provost has the deep and wide respect and confidence of the faculty -- attitudes which, at this moment, would not automatically be given to a new appointee. The President should specify that the Provost serves as the Chief Operating Officer of the University, second in command and reporting to the President, and that the Provost acts with the imprimatur of the President regarding all matters of the institutional change and renewal process.

3. The University should carefully and completely document all activities and initiatives undertaken during this process of institutional renewal and use those records in its reports to WASC about its progress toward preparedness for the EER. This is an important recommendation in that WASC needs to see evidence that Humboldt has begun an improvement process that can be sustained, a process that has resulted in important priority decisions on the issues listed above, and a process WASC states clearly is necessary for the ongoing health of the institution.
4. The President should consider appointing a Cabinet for Institutional Change (or some similar entity) to be chaired by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Cabinet for Institutional Change should include representatives of the faculty, staff, administration, and students; we suggest five faculty, two senior administrators, two staff members, and two students, to be chosen by their regular representational and governance bodies (e.g., the Academic Senate, staff council, and Associated Students) or, in the case of administration, the Provost. The President and Provost should write a charge for the Cabinet and the President will serve as an *ex officio* member.

The Cabinet would have coordinating and leadership responsibility for organizing and guiding the University's short-term change management process and for communicating with the Humboldt community and the public about that process. The Cabinet should be appointed within several weeks of the receipt of this report and should begin meeting on a weekly basis immediately thereafter. At each meeting, the Cabinet should a) hear updates about the change management process and its outcomes, b) ensure the coordination and timely implementation of change management plans, and c) review data regarding the achievements and efficacy of the change management process. We make this recommendation not because there is any

magic in this particular structure, but because it serves as an example of what is needed to transcend the broken governance system and restore the lack of trust that now exists. Surely there may be an alternative structure or mechanism that is preferred but we provide in this recommendation the principles of such a collective entity.

5. Shortly after its appointment and no more than a month after receipt of this report, members of the Cabinet for Institutional Change (CIC) should meet in a facilitated retreat for reflection, discussion, and planning. The method, process, and procedures used for this retreat will establish a model which should then be used with other groups (see below). Desired outcomes of the retreat should be both concrete (e.g., a draft plan for inspiring, motivating, and achieving culture change and institutional renewal) and “soft” (development of a sense of unity and common purpose among the members of the Cabinet). This retreat will, then, serve as an example of cross-institutional planning and decision making while functioning as an exercise in community building. The Cabinet should produce a summary of discussions, conclusions, and plans created at the retreat and communicate that summary widely to the University community.

We recommend a retreat in this case because substantial leadership and cultural change require immersion in a process in which there is adequate time, privacy, and shared experience -- a coming together to resolve real problems that by its nature builds trust, allows for risk-taking, and forces closure on problem-solving that must be accomplished by retreat's end. Remaining on campus, with its interruptions, family obligations, other distractions, and lack of sustained collective deliberations generally fails to meet these conditions. We appreciate the “costs” associated with such retreats, but in this case the cost/benefit ratio can be extremely favorable.

6. At the retreat, the CIC should incorporate the recommendations that follow in this report into a preliminary plan; *it is essential that institutional renewal emerge from a broadly representative process that in and of itself models the process of transformation*. Within 10 days of the retreat, a draft plan for institutional renewal at Humboldt should be communicated to the campus and promptly reviewed and discussed by each of the major governance groups on campus -- notably the Academic Senate, staff council, and Associated Students. These groups should endorse the plan as submitted or with modifications. After receiving feedback from all the

groups, the CIC and President will produce and communicate a final, institution-wide plan for institutional renewal that will specify the scope, sequence, and timelines for activities designed to a) revive a healthy institutional culture, b) move toward a shared vision and direction for the University, and c) create structures, processes, and procedures for collaborative decision making. We make this recommendation because we believe it is important that both the President and Provost secure the advice of a new “kitchen cabinet” that itself has the trust and respect of the campus. A “business as usual” approach might predictably result in the promulgation of a comprehensive plan for change by either the President and/or the Provost, only to have that plan shot down with the usual recriminations aimed at either or both administrative leaders. We are recommending that such a new entity be created so that each campus constituency begins to take ownership, with the administration, of the difficult decisions than of necessity must now be made.

7. The Provost should suspend, with the concurrence of the Academic Senate, all non-essential institutional governance activities, including many committees, for the current period of institutional urgency -- at least for the remainder of academic year 2008/2009. The academic program prioritization process and the work of a few other truly essential committees or task forces should continue, but routine meetings of other groups without clear strategic importance should not occur. What we recommend here responds to the universal complaint that everyone is stressed by being far too busy. Suspending work on some issues must be publicly sanctioned so that there is no confusion or fear of punishment because certain kinds of work no longer gets done in this interim period.
8. Humboldt should develop a Web site through which to provide regularly updated, accurate, and candid information to the campus community about the change management process. Both the President and the Provost, as Chair of the CIC, should provide regular (no less than weekly) updates to the community through the Web site. We recommend this as one of the ways that will increase trust by providing timely and appropriate information in a transparent manner.
9. The CIC should convene a series of half- or full-day meetings or mini-retreats (longer if deemed necessary), as required by the size and complexity of the groups, of representatives of various campus groups -- both vertical (e.g., academic departments, colleges, and divisions [such as

Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Advancement]) and horizontal (institution-wide committees and councils, department chairs, deans, the WASC planning committee, assessment committee, etc.) in nature, for reflection and thoughtful discussion of institutional direction, challenges, priorities, and change management needs. Participants in each meeting should be prepared with advance readings and materials chosen by the Cabinet; one or more members of the Cabinet should attend and lead each meeting. Discussions in these meetings should a) focus on the development of institutional vision and direction and b) produce recommendations for revised institutional policies, procedures, and processes to support effective decision making and resource allocation to be considered by the full Cabinet. The meetings of these groups are intended to serve both formative (process; community-building and direction-setting) and outcome (recommendations) goals. These meetings should occur over the period mid-November 2008 through the end of February 2009.

10. The CIC should receive and review the summaries, comments, and recommendations developed by each of the groups convened as above; the Cabinet will sift and winnow those comments and recommendations and develop a prioritized list of policies, processes, and procedures that should be implemented to create resonant structures for institution-wide decision making, planning, and community building. These recommendations should address questions such as the assumptions, expectations, and processes of shared governance, budget development, and program and service review. The Cabinet should then communicate its list of recommendations widely.
11. Major institutional governance groups should quickly review the Cabinet's recommendations and endorse them as submitted or modified; once the Cabinet receives feedback from all governance groups, it should create a final list of policies, processes, and procedures to be implemented, with timelines and specified accountability. This final list should be completed and communicated by the end of March 2009. Initial implementation of new policies and procedures for institutional decision making and community building should be accomplished by the end of April 2009.

12. Using structures, systems, and processes established as a result of the work of the CIC, the University should proceed to engage significant questions and problems that require difficult institutional decisions, such as augmentation or discontinuation of programs. These discussions and the decisions that emerge from them should be documented on the Web site described earlier.

13. There is a pressing need for a legitimate, institutionally credible strategic planning process that enables Humboldt to formalize its vision, direction, goals, and objectives.²⁴ As the urgent work of the CIC is replaced by the use of newly developed processes and procedures, as above, the Cabinet can turn its attention to the inspiration and implementation of a new strategic planning effort which, through the use of the processes and structures developed through the change management process, will be far more community-based, resonant, flexible, and effective than the last two strategic planning initiatives conducted by the University.

²⁴ This recommendation iterates the President's plan to renew strategic planning, as described in his *Response to the Humboldt State University Academic Senate Executive Committee Summary of Concerns with Presidential Leadership*, dated May 30, 2008: "The WASC process and the need to update our strategic plan that is slated to be reviewed in 2009 will ensure that we once again restate our vision for HSU."