



# **HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY**

Learning To Make a Difference

**Humboldt State University**

**Educational Effectiveness Review**

**Essays**

Submitted to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
November 2009

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The world has changed since Humboldt State University began its accreditation review in 2005. Politically and economically, we find ourselves in a rapidly shifting landscape. Even the accreditation review process itself has undergone revisions along the way. Accommodating these shifts has presented major challenges to the university; fortunately, the reflective, action-oriented stance required by the accreditation review process has served us well in navigating the course we need to take.

In our Institutional Proposal, we identified two core themes on which to focus our collective efforts: “Theme I: Identifying Core Academic Expectations” and “Theme II: Ensuring Academic Success for Underrepresented Minorities.” As work began in the Capacity and Preparatory Review stage, Theme I evolved into “Working with the Campus Community to Articulate Greater HSU Expectations,” which initially focused on the development of institutional learning outcomes. Similarly, Theme II evolved into “Making Excellence Inclusive” focusing primarily on using reliable, disaggregated baseline data to initiate department/program-based plans for employing “best practices” to improve the success of students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Broadly understood, these themes focused the attention of the campus community on two commitments: first, a commitment to identify and assess the student learning that we produce; and second, a commitment to identify and remove the barriers that prevent particular groups of students from achieving success. In the course of the Capacity and Preparatory Review, it became clear that fulfilling these commitments would require resources – not just funding, but also more effective processes to facilitate making informed, effective decisions. It also became clear that, since obtaining new resources would be unlikely, we would need to revisit our allocations of money, time, and attention.

Our Capacity and Preparatory Review report, submitted in November 2007, reflected both our struggles with and our progress in these areas. The CPR Visitation Team, which came to campus in February 2008, provided additional focus and direction for our work as we entered the Educational Effectiveness Review phase of the process. Overall, the team pointed out that our institutional success would require fundamental changes to our culture. Acknowledging our struggles to realize our institutional identity, they observed that Humboldt State University must unite around a common vision, develop processes and structures for making decisions about how to achieve that vision, and use data for planning and evaluating progress toward that vision. The team also recognized that HSU has “a very large agenda

to undertake at a time of great stress caused by the resource crisis that is looming” and therefore recommended that the Educational Effectiveness Review be delayed by six months.

Shortly after the report of the Visitation Team was issued in the spring of 2008, a list of report’s key points and action items was prepared for broad circulation throughout the campus. This set of action items has guided a number of the university’s activities over the past two years. The status of these activities, along with their results, is described in this Educational Effectiveness Review report. We have not attempted to cover all the Criteria for Review in this report but have chosen instead to address the areas which we, along with the Visitation Team, have identified as most in need of improvement. For evidence with regard to meeting the other Criteria for Review, please see the Index of Evidence (Appendix A).

While the emphasis in an Educational Effectiveness Review is on evaluating results, our Capacity and Preparatory Review uncovered the necessity of developing additional institutional capacity, as affirmed by the report of the CPR Visitation Team and the subsequent letter from the Commission. For us, then, one of the results of our work in this phase of the accreditation review has been the development of institutional processes and infrastructure in order to better support and sustain our educational effectiveness.

The first essay, “Achieving Our Core Purpose by Understanding the Student Learning We Produce,” defines our core institutional purpose as the production of student learning, and it describes our improved understanding of both the need for meaningful learning assessment and the process of implementing it. Included in this essay is the progress we have made in identifying, coordinating, and assessing student learning outcomes across various levels: institutional outcomes, general education outcomes, degree program outcomes, and co-curricular experience outcomes. The essay also outlines the improvements that HSU has made in response to assessment results confirming that student writing, long considered an area of concern, does, in fact, require additional instruction and development.

The second essay, “Achieving Our Core Purpose by Making Excellence Inclusive,” describes further developments in our efforts to reduce barriers to the success of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Beyond the initial results of the unit-level activities implemented by the Making Excellence Inclusive Action Team, the essay also outlines other

relevant developments, such as the establishment of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the launch of an annual report on disaggregated metrics for student success, and improvements in the accessibility of instructional materials.

The third essay, “Achieving Our Core Purpose by Realigning Resources and Institutional Structures,” focuses on a broad range of institutional processes, structures, and resources that have been the subject of campus-wide analysis and reorganization. It describes efforts to inform resource decision, by prioritizing among programs, integrating and improving all facets of curriculum oversight, revisiting our approach to program review, and developing an institution-wide structure for utilizing data in making strategic decisions.

The fourth essay, “Achieving Our Core Purpose by Engaging in Organizational Learning and Improvement,” highlights the university’s improvements in “learning to make a difference” as an institution. We describe the use of outside assistance to alter long-standing patterns and processes in budgeting, decision-making, collecting and using data, and rethinking the institutional vision and our alignment with it. The essay traces our process of moving from external consultation to internal self-transformation through the creation of a Cabinet for Institutional Change. In this essay we discuss our approach to the budget crisis that HSU and California are facing, the dimensions of which are beyond anything we could have imagined just a few years ago. We also describe how, in spite of financial challenges, we are working to build resources that support institutional capacity and its effect on student learning.

These essays constitute chapters in the story of Humboldt State University, each connected to the others but providing a different perspective. In the final section, “A Reflection on the Accreditation Review Process,” we summarize the impact of engaging in the Institutional Proposal, Capacity and Preparatory Review, and Educational Effectiveness Review sequence. We describe the progress we have made and the challenges that still face us. Most importantly, we review the structures that have been established to foster sustained educational effectiveness throughout the institution.

**The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large. Through its purposes and educational objectives, the institution dedicates itself to higher learning, the search for truth, and the dissemination of knowledge. The institution functions with integrity and autonomy.**

WASC Standard One

CFR 1.1

*We will be stewards of learning to make a positive difference.*

### HSU Vision

Humboldt State University has a longstanding tradition of valuing teaching and learning. As a matter of course, we emphasize faculty-student interaction, along with a number of what George Kuh has identified as “high-impact practices.” However, we are aware that classes and instruction, regardless of the practices they draw upon, are means to an end rather than our goal or purpose, which is to produce student learning. To paraphrase John Tagg, universities cannot define their purpose as “providing instruction,” any more than a hospital can define its purpose as “filling beds” or a manufacturer can define its purpose as “building assembly lines.” Instead, defining our core institutional purpose requires us to identify what we intend our students to learn as a result of their university experience. It also means that in order to know if we are achieving our core purpose, we have to find out how well our students are learning what we intend them to learn.

This chapter describes how Humboldt State University is working to better understand the student learning that is our objective. The chapter also describes how this work of understanding student learning is complicated by the fact that responsibility for the experiences that produce that learning is divided among various programs: the general education program, major and minor programs, co-curricular activities, and other kinds of experiences such as on-campus employment. Also highlighted are some initial results of our efforts to understand what students are learning, including an account of how we are reviewing our curricula in response to what we have learned about student writing performance.

### Describing the Learning We Produce: The HSU Outcomes

CFR 1.2

Beginning in September 2006, a broadly representative Action Team was convened to guide the effort of identifying Humboldt State University’s learning outcomes. This effort was the central focus of the first of Theme I, articulated in our Institutional Proposal. The Action Team, comprising faculty, professional staff, students, and administrators, was tasked with addressing three questions:

1. What are core academic expectations for HSU students?
2. Are these core academic expectations being met by HSU students?
3. Are HSU students achieving proficiency in written communication skills?

Inspired by the AAC&U’s landmark initiative *Greater Expectations*, most particularly its recommendation that institutions rethink what they expect from a college education in the twenty-first century, the Action Team nicknamed the effort to identify HSU’s institutional learning outcomes “Greater HSU Expectations.”

Relying heavily on documents which had themselves been produced through broadly consultative processes, and which distilled the essential values and character of the HSU community, the team produced an initial set of discussion-draft outcomes around which the campus community could organize its deliberations. These

CFR 2.5

deliberations occurred within a broad range of campus groups throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, and the resulting set of Humboldt State University outcomes has been widely communicated. These outcomes, summarizing an education that is distinct to Humboldt State University, appear in the University Catalog, on the university website, and in many course syllabi:

CFR 2.3, 2.4

***HSU Student Outcomes:***

**What all HSU graduates should know and be able to do as a result of their HSU experience.**

**HSU graduates have demonstrated:**

Effective oral and written communication

Critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad knowledge base and applying it to complex issues

Competence in a major area of study

CFR 1.5

Appreciation for and understanding of an expanded world perspective by engaging respectfully with a diverse range of individuals, communities, and viewpoints

**HSU graduates are prepared to:**

Succeed in their chosen careers

Take responsibility for identifying personal goals and practicing lifelong learning

Pursue social justice, promote environmental responsibility, and improve economic conditions in their workplaces and communities

CFR 1.5

Academic departments, co-curricular programs, and campus offices worked to map their courses and activities onto the HSU Outcomes. This effort, while useful in helping a variety of campus constituencies to think about how their programs contributed to students' achievement of the HSU outcomes, resulted in information that was difficult to interpret. The information collected indicated that each program seemed to envision the outcomes and the degree of focus involved in addressing them somewhat differently. Some programs, for example, indicated that writing or critical thinking was the primary focus of instruction in all of its classes, a claim that was not supported by curricular evidence.

Such variation in different concepts of the outcomes ultimately undermined implementation of the original cyclical plan to assess one of the HSU outcomes each year using assignments to be drawn from courses and co-curricular experiences identified as having primary focus on the outcome to be assessed that year, illustrating some of our fundamental difficulties with assessment.

The development of a culture of continuous, comprehensive, and meaningful learning assessment has presented a number of challenges at HSU. We have made many attempts to overcome these challenges, as described below, and have made some progress while learning a number of valuable lessons in the process. One lesson we have learned is that even flawed assessment efforts can be productive, if approached in the spirit of learning. Our most important realization, however, is that without full time professional stewardship of assessment our efforts will continue to fall short despite a great deal of effort and the best of intentions. Accordingly, the university has created a new full-time position, Director of Learning Assessment, charged with guiding and tracking assessment activities toward the enhancement of student learning. The search to fill this position was unsuccessful last year; however, even in the context of our current budget constraints, an increased level of assessment support and expertise is

CFR 3.5

so important to achieving HSU's educational objectives that the search is underway again this year, with the new Director expected to be in place by July 2010.

### **Assessing the HSU Outcomes**

The effort to assess the HSU Outcomes had begun, as reported in the Capacity and Preparatory Review (p. 30), with assessing student writing proficiency. Writing proficiency, which was the focus of a Theme I research question as well as part of the first HSU outcome, was assessed during the Fall 2007 semester through an inductive analysis of Graduation Writing Proficiency Examination (GWPE) papers (see "Taking a Curricular Approach to Improving Student Writing" below).

As that first round of HSU Outcomes Assessment got underway in Fall 2007, the HSU Outcomes Assessment Working Group also began to consider the next outcome scheduled on the Assessment Plan -- "critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad knowledge base and applying it to complex issues." Intending to implement curriculum-embedded assessment as described in the assessment plan, the Working Group collected and reviewed assignments that various programs had identified as addressing the second HSU outcome. However, the variation proved to be so wide-ranging, and the contexts so specific, that the committee was unable to develop a common set of indicators to use across the disciplines. Instead, they sought an approach that could be applied more effectively outside specific course contexts.

Looking back at the analysis of student writing competence, which had utilized student papers produced for a university-wide graduation requirement beyond any specific course or program, the Working Group proposed that a dual-purpose prompt be designed for a forthcoming GWPE administration. The first attempt was to work with faculty members active in general education Area A/Critical Thinking to develop prompts that could be used to assess the critical/creative thinking HSU outcome described above, but that approach was unsuccessful. Next, having become aware of a CSU-Los Angeles pilot test assessing "Student Understanding and Appreciation of Diversity" using their Writing Proficiency Exam, the Working Group decided to follow that example and develop some suggested prompts to assess a similar HSU outcome.

In consultation with campus diversity experts, the Working Group developed several prompts that would require students not only to demonstrate proficiency in writing, but also to demonstrate "appreciation for and understanding of an expanded world perspective by engaging respectfully with a diverse range of individuals, communities, and viewpoints" (the fourth HSU outcome). Unfortunately, the prompts that were used resulted in student work with limited value for the direct evaluation of these skills.

These difficulties have stemmed from a number of familiar challenges that manifest themselves in various ways across the campus: lack of clear communication and allocation of responsibilities, views of assessment and its purposes that are still at the developing stages, and general – and genuine – confusion about the relationships among various levels of outcomes and, therefore, various levels of assessment. The relationships among HSU outcomes/assessment, general education outcomes/assessment, program-level outcomes/assessment, and co-curricular outcomes/assessment have been difficult to conceptualize. As HSU has struggled to embrace assessment as a means of improving student learning, the Educational Effectiveness Review Steering Committee grappled with ways of framing and organizing the different levels of student learning outcomes as a means of institutionalizing the HSU outcomes.

Luckily, a statement in the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review Visitation Team suggested a way to approach these relationships. The team noted that HSU faces the challenge of "assessing how the HSU outcomes are met as a result of the integration of General Education and the major, as well as curricular and co-curricular activities." A careful reading of this observation led us to the insight that while the HSU Outcomes had been mapped onto curricular and co-curricular activities with very mixed and subjective results, we had not mapped them onto

the general education, program, or co-curricular *outcomes*. Because the outcomes at each level not only capture what is most important to that program or area, but also constitute part of a regular and cyclical assessment process, we decided to map the HSU outcomes onto all other levels of outcomes (see Appendix B). This allows us to see alignments and gaps in program emphases against the framework of the institutional outcomes.

Results of this mapping indicate uneven attention to the HSU outcomes. On the one hand, many outcomes across the university relate to “critical/creative thinking in acquiring and applying knowledge” (HSU outcome 2), some form of which is listed by 6 of the 13 general education/ all-university areas experienced by all students, 40 of the 48 major programs that submitted learning outcomes, and 5 of the 12 co-curricular programs that submitted outcomes. The same is true of “engaging respectfully with diverse people, viewpoints, and communities” (outcome 4), with related outcomes listed by 4 of the general education/ all-university areas taken by all students, 26 major programs, and 5 of the 12 co-curricular areas. On the other hand, components of “preparation to set goals and pursue lifelong learning” (outcome 6) are listed among the outcomes of only one general education area, 4 major programs, and 4 co-curricular areas, and while “preparation to succeed in one’s chosen career” appears in some form among the outcomes of 18 major programs and 4 co-curricular programs, it is not listed among the outcomes of any general education/all-university areas.

Clearly, students have a number of curricular and co-curricular opportunities to achieve the HSU outcomes, and many of them participate in a variety of such opportunities. Indirect evidence suggests that they may be reaching a strong level of competence in many of the outcomes as a result of that participation. For example, a recent large-scale survey conducted by Performance Enhancement Group, Ltd. asked alumni to rate how well their degree prepared them in several areas related to the HSU outcomes. On a scale from 1 to 4, where 4 was defined as “excellent preparation,” the mean response for “commitment to continuous learning” by HSU alumni was 3.39, which was higher than the mean for comparable institutions. HSU alumni ratings were also high for other areas reflecting achievement of HSU outcomes, with a 3.25 mean rating for “contributing to my community,” a mean of 3.18 for “current work status,” and a mean of 3.17 for “further graduate education.” Indirect evidence suggests, then, that alumni have a strong sense of having mastered the skills that we have subsequently identified as key outcomes of an HSU education. Development of more direct ways to measure student and/or alumni learning in these institutionally-valued areas will help us understand where, and for which students, this is occurring at HSU.

Overall, the review indicates that while HSU provides many opportunities for students to develop each of outcomes, there are no guidelines or requirements in place to ensure that all students do so. Accordingly, the Educational Effectiveness Steering Committee developed a proposal (see Appendix C) to rethink the relationships among HSU’s programs and the HSU outcomes. While the primary goal is to assure that the outcomes are developed by all HSU graduates, clarifying the relationships among the outcomes at various levels will assist the university in developing a more comprehensive and efficient approach to assessing the HSU outcomes and improving student learning. In Fall 2009 the Integrated Curriculum Committee was charged with addressing the recommendations in the proposal.

### **Assessing General Education Outcomes**

Ongoing assessment and evaluation of the educational programs at HSU has been an area of development for the last several years. General education (GE) has been one of the more difficult areas in which to develop, implement, and institutionalize assessment, due in part to the fact that general education courses are located in multiple colleges and departments. Assessment is further complicated by the level of choice that students have in selecting their GE curriculum. Perhaps the most difficult challenge to overcome, as noted in the Capacity and Preparatory Review Visitation Team Report, has been the fragmentation of GE oversight: until the new Integrated Curriculum Committee was established in Fall 2009, oversight of GE Area B resided in the College of Natural Resources and

CFR 4.8

CFR 2.2.a

CFR 4.6

Sciences, oversight of GE Areas C and D were assigned to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and oversight of Areas A and E, Institutions, and Diversity and Common Ground requirements was the responsibility of the University Curriculum Committee. Each of these supervisory bodies took a somewhat different approach to the process of conducting assessment, collecting results, and providing feedback.

In spite of these obstacles, HSU has made progress in identifying student learning outcomes in each area and beginning the process of assessing these outcomes, generally using a course-embedded approach. With the added impetus of the CPR Visitation Team's request that at least one outcome be assessed for each GE Area before the Educational Effectiveness Review was concluded, the campus completed the process of identifying student learning outcomes for all areas by the end of Fall 2008. By the end of Spring 2009, at least one outcome for each general education area had been assessed, and assessment is continuing in the 2009-2010 academic year.

CFR 2.6

In addition to taking direct responsibility for the assessment of Areas A and E, the Institutions requirement, the Diversity and Common Ground (DCG) requirement, and the Communication and Ways of Thinking (CWT) cluster, the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) coordinated the assessment of the general education program. Its report makes clear that this first year of assessment reflected "a learning experience" (see Appendix D). The nature of the report and the process is reflective of the diverse approaches to general education on the HSU campus. The report also makes clear the need to be proactive in systematizing and planning the process of general education curriculum review and assessment.

#### ***Area A/ Oral Communication***

##### **Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- design an appropriately organized and credibly supported speech, using techniques to inform and/or persuade an audience
- deliver a speech using effective verbal and nonverbal skills
- critically listen to and analyze oral communication
- recognize the role that oral communication plays in human societies.

Two-thirds of the students were able to "*design an appropriately organized and credibly supported speech, using techniques to inform and/or persuade an audience.*" Here, too, there were significant methodological challenges that raise questions about the validity of the data. Greater agreement is needed in assigning assessment criteria and applying such criteria consistently.

#### ***Area A/ Written Communication***

##### **Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- write a well-composed and mechanically correct essay, consisting of an introduction, thesis, argument, and conclusion
- utilize other forms of writing as appropriate to the needs of different audiences and rhetorical situations
- critically analyze both the form and content of other's writings, understanding how the form of presentation may influence the perception of content.

As a regular part of the freshman English program, students completing the Area A Written Communication requirement submit an assessment portfolio that is read by at least two instructors in the composition program. While the mean portfolio passing rate for Fall 2005 through Fall 2008 is 86 percent, the Fall 2008 passing rate was

80.3 percent, raising concerns about the impact of class-size increases and other changes due largely to budget reductions. Recent improvements to the English 100 course resulting from consideration of assessment results include providing additional scaffolded experiences to foster students' writing self-awareness, and framing research as focused processes of inquiry rather than as a kind of paper or genre.

#### ***Area B/Mathematical Concepts & Quantitative Reasoning***

**Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- demonstrate their understanding of basic concepts in math and quantitative reasoning
- apply mathematical concepts and quantitative reasoning in scientific contexts.

One-third of the students sampled were able to “*demonstrate their understanding of basic concepts in math and quantitative reasoning.*” There were significant methodological challenges in the measurement of Area B outcomes that raise questions about the validity of the data. Greater clarity in sampling and in explicating the relevant outcomes across courses would increase accurate and meaningful measurement.

#### ***Area C/Arts, Literature, Philosophy, Modern Languages***

**Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement,**

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of and ability to apply discipline-specific vocabulary. Written, tangible, or presentational assignments will demonstrate application of concepts and principles to a specific instance.
- Through written, tangible, or presentational assignments, students will demonstrate an integrated response of affective subjectivity and collective standards of judgment in relation to an artistic or humanistic work.
- Through written, tangible or presentational assignments, students will demonstrate their ability to critically evaluate the production of humanistic or artistic works through the lenses of (but not limited to) gender, culture, or ethnicity.
- Students will articulate in written, tangible, or presentational assignments the particular contribution(s) that a discipline within the Arts and Humanities can bring to understanding human experience.

Between five and sixty-two percent of the sample students were able to “*demonstrate an integrated response of affective subjectivity and collective standards of judgment in relation to an artistic or humanistic work.*” Substantial methodological issues limit the value of these data. This area of assessment has been departmentally based and has lacked consistency across departments and courses. Efforts are underway to create some level of uniformity in the rubrics and methodological processes used.

#### ***Area D/Human Social, Political, and Economic Institutions and Behavior, and Their Historical Background***

**Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement,**

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of and ability to apply discipline-specific vocabulary.
- Written or presentational assignments will demonstrate application of concepts and principles to a specific instance
- Through written or presentational assignments, students will demonstrate their knowledge of how social change affects human experiences including (but not limited to) experiences of women and people of color.

- Through written or presentational assignments students will demonstrate the interrelationship of four of the core “organizing principles” of the social sciences.

Between seventeen and seventy-two percent of the students were able to “*demonstrate knowledge of and ability to apply discipline specific vocabulary.*” Significant methodological issues limit the usefulness of these data. Because the student learning outcome is by definition disciplinary, uniformity across departments was difficult to achieve. Efforts are underway to bring greater consistency to the methodological processes so that assessment data can be aggregated and used to guide program improvement.

#### ***Area E/Human Integration and Lifelong Learning***

##### **Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- demonstrate understanding of and appreciation for the nature of being human as an integration of physiological, psychological and socio-cultural influences.
- demonstrate preparation for the life-long and complex process of self-understanding, self-analysis, and self-development as an individual among others

Seventy percent of the students were able to “*demonstrate understanding of and appreciation for the nature of being human as an integration of physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural influences.*” There were some methodological challenges that resulted primarily from using a more heuristic method on top of a quantitative process.

#### ***Communication and Ways of Thinking (CWT)***

*These are synthesis courses that meet an upper-division general education requirement in a contextualized way while focusing on developing students' communication skills. In addition to participating in the assessment of the relevant upper-division general education area, CWT courses also identify and assess learning outcomes specific to Communication and Ways of Thinking.*

##### **Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- distinguish among the ways of thinking which are characteristic of at least two of the following broad disciplinary areas: humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences
- show the relationship between at least two of the following broad disciplinary areas: humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, their similarities and differences and how they complement one another in enabling us to order our experience in the world
- demonstrate effective oral and/or written communication skills.

Sixty-nine percent of the students could “*distinguish among the ways of thinking which are characteristic of at least two of the following broad disciplinary areas: humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.*” Some methodological challenges occurred, but overall this appeared to be an accurate assessment of students' development of this learning outcome.

*The following two areas, while not technically part of the general education program, are similar to general education in that they are “all-university” requirements that must be completed by all Humboldt State University students.*

#### ***Institutions/American History***

##### **Outcomes - Upon completing this requirement, students can**

- demonstrate knowledge about significant events in American history spanning a minimum of 100 years

- discuss the role of important regions, ethnic groups and social groups that contribute to the American experience
- discuss American history in a framework of at least three of the following: political events, economics, social movements and geography

Between sixty-six and eighty-seven percent of students were able to demonstrate knowledge “*about significant event in American history spanning a minimum of 100 years.*” There were significant methodological problems in this assessment that raise questions about the validity of the data. Additional clarity is needed in instrument design and sampling methodology.

#### ***Diversity and Common Ground (DCG)***

##### **Outcomes- Upon completing this requirement, students can:**

- demonstrate understanding of diverse cultural experiences
- analyze how cultural differences and identities are produced and perpetuated through a variety of social, cultural and disciplinary discourses (e.g. literature, popular culture, science, law, etc.)
- analyze how differential privilege and power are organized and affect diverse cultural experiences

Eighty-six percent of the students could “*demonstrate understanding of diverse cultural experiences.*” Significant methodological issues emerged in the development of the assessment rubric and its application. Additional work in this area is required for the data to be more useful.

The challenges in the assessment of general education have reflected the larger challenges of curriculum oversight within the university. As a result of feedback from the CPR Visitation Team, the campus has completely revised its processes for curricular oversight, including assessment processes. The development of the Integrated Curriculum Committee (discussed in Chapter 3 below) includes the establishment of a subcommittee on Program Planning and Assessment (PPA), which is helping to systematize the assessment process and link it with program planning and resource allocation.

The initial assessment data are being reviewed by the PPA, and recommendations are being developed during the 2009-2010 academic year. The PPA is also continuing the ongoing assessment of general education: setting up the schedule for assessments in each area of GE and all-university requirements, producing a set of assessment standards and guidelines, developing standardized report forms, and creating standardized prompts and rubrics. So far, the approach has been to assess assignments embedded in relevant courses, and to rely on course instructors to help analyze the student work. One challenge presented by this approach is that it can be difficult for participants and other faculty members to consider the results at the program level instead of viewing them as being section-specific. Discussion of a possibility for taking a less course-bound approach recently reopened, with renewed consideration of shaping the Graduate Writing Proficiency Examination to assess additional broad learning outcomes. In the meantime, however, assessment of a specified outcome will occur in a subset of courses in DCG, Area A/Critical Thinking, Area A/Oral Communication, Area C, Area D, and Area B and Area E in Spring 2010. In Fall 2010, a specified outcome in CWT, Institutions/History, and Institutions/Constitution will be assessed.

A critical part of the general education assessment effort currently underway in the PPA is the refinement of the GE learning outcomes to ensure that they are measurable and reflect the university outcomes and the revisions to GE recently made at the system level. The initial GE assessment report makes clear that questions related to alignment remain; the PPA will discuss how to address such questions, thereby closing the loop by engaging faculty in discussions about the results.

CFR 2.2.a, 2.3, 2.6

### Assessing Degree Program Outcomes, Implementing Improvements

As recently as the spring of 2006, when a half-time Faculty Associate for Assessment was appointed to support assessment efforts, only a few of the undergraduate major programs had begun assessing student learning at the program level, and there was widespread faculty suspicion that implementing assessment might result in negative or punitive consequences if assessment findings revealed student performance that was less than stellar. In order to overcome that source of resistance, the early phases of assessment reports were received by the Faculty Associate for Assessment, encouraging more widespread engagement with assessment as collegial inquiry rather than a test to be passed or a hurdle to be cleared. The administration received only status reports indicating which programs were seriously out of compliance in providing their student learning outcomes, assessment multi-year plans, and/or assessment results. This deliberate choice to provide confidentiality to the programs was intended to create an atmosphere of embracing formative rather than summative assessment.

For the academic year 2006-07, the Faculty Associate for Assessment received assessment reports for 30 of the 52 undergraduate majors. Most of the lessons learned in the first year of requiring programmatic assessment activities had to do with the assessment process itself. However, some programs made curricular or pedagogical changes as a result of their assessment analysis. For example, after reviewing an assessment of their students' oral communication skills, the Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation program moved an existing course in Environmental Communication into the core curriculum, to improve student performance in that area. As another example, the Sociology program made changes to more intentionally link theory and research methods in courses addressing each of those areas, and it developed a more structured process supporting student preparation of senior project proposals prior to taking the culminating project course. For that first year, assessment reports were due to the Faculty Associate for Assessment at the end of the spring semester. However, it became clear that this was an unrealistic deadline when most reports actually trickled in during the following fall semester, and the ones that had been submitted in May typically did not have evidence that the program faculty had actually reviewed and interpreted the assessment results.

CFR 4.6

To provide more time for departments to review and discuss their assessment results, the due date for reports on program assessment activity for 2007-2008 was set for September 2008. The Faculty Associate for Assessment received assessment reports for 32 majors. Four of the programs that had provided first-year reports did not provide second-year reports, while six programs that had not been assessed in the first year were assessed in the second. In general, the 2007-2008 assessment reports reflected substantial improvement in the quality of the assessment activities themselves and in faculty perception that assessment activities are, in fact, useful – particularly the conversations among faculty around the process of interpreting the results -- and more programs indicated plans to implement improvements as a result of their analyses of their assessment findings. For example, the Politics department faculty recognized the need to provide more explicit instruction in distinguishing and critically evaluating the rapidly changing landscape of political information. And in response to gaps revealed by assessment results, the Women's Studies faculty planned a faculty development workshop for Fall 2008 to help faculty develop techniques for teaching intersectional analysis throughout courses in their curriculum. In short, moving the due date to the beginning of the next academic year resulted in substantially more complete reports, including "Closing the Loop" discussions and subsequent action.

Collecting all the annual reports remains problematic, especially as there was considerable general education assessment activity in the academic year 2008-09, as well as the expectation for continued program assessment activities. As this goes to press, the Faculty Associate for Assessment has received 29 reports for 2008-2009. Still, the quality of assessment efforts themselves is improving, and there is increasing evidence that departments are using the results to improve curriculum and instruction. For example, one department indicated that their report would be slightly delayed because their analysis of results had initiated a set of curriculum changes which they

CFR 2.2.b

wanted to describe in the report. Also, many reports have included instructional observations, such as noting that assignments need to be more carefully crafted in order to foster better student work.

As described later in this chapter, all undergraduate programs have developed an explicit student learning outcome regarding written communication. For those programs that have not yet assessed the quality of student writing, and only a handful have, the program outcome to be assessed this academic year, 2009-10, is the writing outcome. Workshops last spring and one scheduled for this fall are providing assistance to program faculty in crafting expectations for writing in their disciplines, assignments, and rubrics for assessing the quality of writing produced by students. This support has also contributed to a greater willingness among faculty to embrace assessment activities.

In the first two and a half years of the new assessment activities, attention was concentrated on the undergraduate major programs. During 2008-09, graduate programs were brought into the process, though they are not yet submitting reports to the Faculty Associate for Assessment. Currently the credential programs are working to craft a manageable routine of processing and making sense of the comprehensive data they routinely receive from the state on student performance.

As noted above, in these first years of regular assessment, expectations were deliberately disconnected from consequences in order to build experience in and trust of the processes among the faculty. With the advent of the new Integrated Curriculum Committee, the Program Planning and Assessment subcommittee is shaping a new program review process in which assessment results will play a more central role. We expect that when the new process is adopted by the Academic Senate, annual reporting by programs of their assessment findings will be incorporated into resource allocation and other decisions.

### **Assessing Co-Curricular and Academic Support Program Outcomes**

CFR 2.11, 4.6

Last year Student Affairs embraced a division-wide Student Learning Outcomes model as a new tool for assessing the success of programs and services. Initially, a team of 5 staff members was sent to a CSU Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment training. The training presented a model for assessment of student learning that is linked to whole student development, institutional effectiveness, and student success. Participants in the training learned how to create economical and effective assessment plans, methods, metrics and processes, taking advantage of opportunities to define, develop, write, and revise outcomes.

Upon its return, this team facilitated in-service training for all Student Affairs units. The team presented what they had learned by way of an iterative and interactive workshop, held in the context of assessment as a collaborative practice. Representatives from each program learned how to use the learning outcomes template to produce and track at least one student learning outcome for 2008.

Each program added another outcome for 2009, and for every subsequent year all programs will create and track additional outcomes. The outcomes are aligned with the HSU Student Learning Outcomes learning outcomes, as well as with the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative; they are part of the comprehensive university-wide effort to engage in ongoing institutional learning.

Initially, staff from various programs responded with some anxiety regarding this new assessment focus. The shift from tracking numbers of students served by specific programs to measuring what learning occurs as a result of engaging students in particular ways was a significant change that caused concern on the part of many staff members who were wary of having to use yet another way of assessing their programs.

The anxiety surrounding the adoption of student learning outcomes was eased through many follow-up discussions among the various program staff and the team of five individuals who attended the training and facilitated the workshop. Team members made themselves available to help units create outcomes and brainstorm ways that

CFR 4.4

outcomes could be measured. Also, the Vice President of Student Affairs sent a clear message to all staff stating the importance of shifting the way Student Affairs programs measure their success. The Vice President further reassured program directors that this new tool was not the only measurement that would be utilized in planning or making budget decisions.

As a result of adopting the student learning outcomes model of assessment, many Student Affairs co-curricular programs and academic support programs have initiated plans to change how success of services and programs is identified and how units improve the way in which they serve students. For example, the Career Center tracks the kind of student learning that occurs through resume development sessions by looking at changes in resume content once students have received guidance from the Career Center, in addition to gathering counts of students served by the center. Another example is the Learning Center's change to a scenario-based activity that asks student instructional leaders to demonstrate how well they have learned effective communication skills through the center's training program, instead of having them fill out traditional evaluation forms. All Student Affairs co-curricular and academic support programs have started tracking student learning in similar ways. These student learning outcomes will not replace existing evaluation tools but will enhance the way programs gather information about the effectiveness of services and student learning success.

### **Taking a Curricular Approach to Improving Student Writing**

CFR 4.3

In the course of developing the Institutional Proposal, the quality of student writing emerged as a campus-wide concern. A focus on this area was eventually incorporated into our first theme, in which we sought to identify and assess the outcomes of an HSU education. It was clear that students' writing proficiency was not only an outcome that the campus community valued, but was also one that had been identified consistently as needing additional attention.

It is important to note that institutional evaluation of student writing has been ongoing for thirty years. As part of the California State University system, HSU is required to administer an exit assessment of student writing proficiency. At HSU, that assessment takes the form of a timed writing called the Graduation Writing Proficiency Examination (GWPE), first administered in the fall of 1979. However, the high passing rate on the GWPE, in the context of widespread perceptions that student writing was not proficient, has led to questions regarding the validity of GWPE scores; moreover, papers written for the GWPE are scored holistically and thus give little indication of specific areas for improvement in student writing overall.

Accordingly, the first step in improving student writing was to examine actual student work in order to identify areas in need of improvement. A random sample of student papers written for the February 2007 GWPE administration was evaluated, independent of the GWPE rubric and scores, at a September 2007 writing assessment workshop. Eight groups of faculty and staff evaluators, a total of sixteen readers, each reached consensus on their categorization of a dozen papers as "average/adequate," "weak," or "strong." The evaluators then did a trait analysis of the student work in the "weak" and "strong" categories, in order to identify the characteristics of student writing most in need of improvement. The negative traits identified as most common -- and most troubling -- were not simply surface problem of grammar or structure. Instead, they tended to be large, global problems: lack of focus or purpose, underdeveloped ideas, inadequate support, and insufficient depth or thoughtfulness. In subsequent discussion of these findings among the evaluators, over the course of several meetings, it became clear that difficulties in these areas were not confined to the weakest writers; in fact, most students could benefit from improving their competence in these areas.

The ad hoc HSU Outcomes Assessment Working Group received the findings and was tasked with making recommendations on how to improve student writing. In considering the results of the analysis, the group realized

that the necessary improvements would not be achieved by simply expanding the Writing Center resources and services or conducting workshops on writing instruction, though both of these actions could be helpful. Instead, if all HSU students were to achieve proficiency in academic writing, they required more instruction and more opportunities work on and receive feedback about their writing. In short, more frequent and explicit writing instruction needed to be built into the curriculum.

The Working Group looked at a number of other universities to see how student writing instruction was approached and found a range of writing programs or projects in a wide variety of institutions, including some of the other CSU campuses. Based on this survey, the group submitted to the Education Policies Committee a continuum of possible curricular policy approaches.

CFR 4.7

After carefully considering the approaches described by the Working Group, the Education Policies Committee forwarded a resolution to the Academic Senate, observing that “because writing skill develops over time with constant practice, an approach that develops skills over multiple courses will increase student learning of this essential skill. In addition, developing discipline-specific writing skills is essential because effective writing is tied to the content of the writing.” The policy that resulted from extensive discussion of that recommendation has been implemented as follows:

- Each undergraduate program was directed to include discipline-specific writing skills as one of the student learning outcomes for the major.
- A writing implementation plan was developed by each program, identifying and describing at least one specific type of document that students in the program will learn to produce, using the one-page template provided (See Appendix E).
- Each program’s writing plan also maps the introduction, development, and mastery of the designated document onto the program’s curriculum.
- Feedback on the writing plans was provided by the Program Planning and Assessment Committee in October 2009.
- An initial assessment of student writing skills will be conducted by each program, if they have not already assessed their students’ writing, during the 2009-2010 academic year.

CFR 3.4

In order to support departments’ efforts to identify and describe the documents around which they could plan their writing instruction, and to map the instruction onto their curricula, two workshops were facilitated by Carol Holder, expert in the field of writing in the disciplines, during Spring 2009. Programs were asked to appoint two writing liaisons, who were paid to participate in the workshops and prepare the draft plans to be developed and refined in collaboration with their departments. The plans were submitted in May, 2009.

CFR 3.4

The Program Planning and Assessment Subcommittee of the new Integrated Curriculum Committee was given the responsibility of providing feedback on the plans by mid-October, 2009. In November 2009, with the support of the Faculty Development Committee, a rubric-development workshop facilitated by Mary Allen will assist departments in preparing to assess student writing, analyze the results, and consider adjustments to assignments, courses, or teaching methods.

### **Learning to Make a Positive Difference**

All campus constituencies were involved in the broadly consultative process of developing Humboldt State University’s institutional learning outcomes, participating in the visualization of what our graduates should know and be able to do as a result of their HSU experience. It has been more difficult to get general participation in identifying “how the HSU outcomes are met as a result of the integration of general education and the major,

as well as curricular and co-curricular activities,” as the CPR Visitation Team phrased this larger challenge. Understandably, the many opportunities available to help students develop the outcomes have tended to distract us from the need for a structure to assure that they all do so. We have begun to address that gap with the EER Steering Committee’s proposal.

As noted in the Commission letter that followed the Capacity and Preparatory Review Visit, “HSU has a history of beginning [assessment] efforts but failing to sustain them.” To some degree, wariness about how any resulting data might be used – a symptom of pervasive trust issues across the campus, discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 below – was to blame for the lack of progress in this area. There were also a number of practical reasons, including the absence of cohesive curricular oversight, a shortage of support for assessment efforts, and a disconnect among curricular planning, assessment, and resource decisions.

In the time since the Capacity and Preparatory Review, Humboldt State has made concrete progress in addressing these challenges in order to better address our educational objectives. We have begun to overcome distrust and to approach assessment with a spirit of inquiry. Helping in this effort is the institutional commitment to hire a full-time Director of Learning Assessment. Also, responsibility for overseeing assessment efforts has been assigned to the Subcommittee for Program Planning and Assessment, one of the subunits of the new Integrated Curriculum Committee (described in Chapter 3). The new Director of Learning Assessment will be a member of that subcommittee; the Faculty Associate for Assessment is temporarily filling that role. This reorganization not only provides much greater coordination of assessment efforts across various units and levels, but it also places assessment processes at the heart of curriculum planning and program review.

As a campus community, we are gradually shifting away from considering assessment to be an external requirement to be either resisted or complied with. Instead, we are more consistently seeking to learn from our assessment efforts and, as a result of what we learn, to make positive changes in our students’ experiences so that they achieve the learning that we have collectively identified as our purpose.

**The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in its efforts to attain educational effectiveness.**

WASC Standard Two

*Diversity, like technology, is a powerful presence,  
and institutions will not be credible or viable  
if they do not make diversity fundamental.*

**Daryl G. Smith,  
“Reframing Diversity as an Institutional Capacity”**

CFR 1.5

In a democratic society, it is incumbent upon a publicly-funded institution to assure equal access to the benefits of a quality education. Moreover, it has become clear that anyone who is unprepared to function skillfully and respectfully in today’s diverse environment is at a disadvantage; the lack of access to diversity as an educational process impoverishes the educational experience of all students. The California State University system is justly proud of its efforts to serve historically underrepresented populations, and Humboldt State University is working to increase diversity among its students, faculty, staff, and administration, for the benefit of all members of the university community.

CFR 2.10

However, in recent years it has become clear that providing access to educational institutions and programs is not enough. As the new California State University strategic plan phrases it, what is required is “Access to Excellence”: not just an equal opportunity to participate, but an equal opportunity to succeed. In other words, it is not enough to admit a student population whose diversity mirrors that of the state, though that is an essential first step; instead, the goal is to *graduate an alumni population* whose diversity mirrors that of the state. Achievement gaps – demographic variation in learning and graduation rates – indicate the need for significant change in the overall learning environment of the institution.

This chapter describes progress that HSU has made in working toward achieving educational effectiveness through the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative, through building capacity around diversity issues for faculty and staff, and through improving the accessibility of materials and methods to enhance student success.

### **Making Excellence Inclusive**

In response to the need to make student success more inclusive, the second of two main themes proposed by Humboldt State University for its self-study was “ensuring academic excellence for traditionally underrepresented students in the areas of student access, persistence and graduation.” A Theme II Action Team was appointed to lead the effort to accomplish these goals. In AY 2006-07 the team pursued the three inter-related research questions posed by the Institutional Proposal:

1. Which HSU program areas were graduating and retaining the largest numbers and percentages of under-represented students?
2. What “best practices,” circumstances, or conditions in those programs were factors impacting underrepresented students’ access, retention, achievement and graduation?
3. How could these “best practices,” circumstances or factors be used in other program areas?

Specifically, the Theme II Action Team was given responsibility for developing multiple plans incorporating both process and outcome objectives that are measurable and ambitious, and that are based on analyses of institutional data at the level of major programs and co-curricular programs, to help shape a learning-centered environment and to actively promote student success. The team embraced the intellectual framework described in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) “Making Excellence Inclusive” initiative, and shared this with departments and programs engaged in the Phase I Pilot Study.

### **Phase I: Pilot Study**

The Action Team first identified 18 HSU program areas, co-curricular as well as academic, based on institutional data that revealed them as having Students of Color (SOC) enrollments well above or below the 21 percent university average. The team selected categories of institutional aggregated and disaggregated data through which programs could explore the research questions listed above and prepared information packets containing baseline data, the AAC&U report “Achieving Equitable Educational Outcomes for All Students: The Institution’s Roles and Responsibilities,” and a recommended approach for completing the program area analyses. The recommended approach involved reading and discussing the AAC&U report, reviewing the program-specific data included in the packet, and brainstorming about possible influential factors. Programs were also asked to write an analysis of their data identifying possible practices, action steps and strategies for improvement, along with measurable process and outcome objectives for each of the next five years.

In the pilot process, pairs of Action Team members engaged each of the programs in analyzing and interpreting their data and identifying best practices, circumstances or other conditions that influenced success, retention, academic achievement, and graduation rates of underrepresented students. Both the AAC&U report and team members stressed the value of “moving beyond compositional diversity” toward an institution suffused with a commitment to “diversity as educational process” and building the institutional capacity required to achieve this. The response rate in the Pilot Study was 78 percent; by the end of February 2007, 14 of 18 programs had responded.

CFR 2.10

### **Phase II: Cascading Roll-Out**

During Phase II the Action Team members charted key findings from the pilot reports, undertook a review of the literature, and developed a website to serve as an ongoing resource for the campus. They posted a literature guide, along with their insights from program area reports, and developed a list of suggested “best practices.” They made clear their understanding that it was appropriate for different disciplines and student service areas to choose different methods to enhance student access, persistence, retention and success.

In line with WASC Visitation Team suggestions, the Action Team’s initial intention that the entire campus immediately engage in developing five-year plans was revised into a “cascading roll-out” that required program areas to develop and track at least two “best practices” over three years (see Appendix F for sample plans). At the beginning of AY 08-09, the WASC II Action Team re-identified itself as the “Making Excellence Inclusive” (MEI) team, taking HSU ownership of the initiative, and a .4 faculty associate was appointed to serve as a coordinator of the effort. The MEI team developed a series of selection criteria for programs’ placement in the roll-out schedule and circulated a table (see Table 1 below) showing the proposed plan of campus engagement. The implementation began with those in the pilot study; five new departments and programs will be added to this self-study and review process each semester over the next four years until the entire campus is involved.

CFR 4.6

The criteria for priority placement in the plan were: 1) self-identification (volunteers who wanted to begin immediately); 2) a drop-out rate of ethnic minority students above HSU average of 22 percent; 3) a high migration rate of ethnic minority students from the department major; 4) non-academic units with the most impact on

retention; and 5) a low number of ethnic minority students in the major. The criteria served as initial selection factors; the table makes it clear that the entire campus is involved in this transformation.

**Table 1: Making Excellence Inclusive 5 year plan**

Administrative Unit	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
College of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences	Art Communication Geography Religious Studies Sociology	Journalism & Mass Comm Politics Women's Studies	English History Philosophy World Languages and Cultures	Anthropology Native American Studies Music	Theatre, Film & Dance
College of Natural Resources and Sciences	Biological Sciences Chemistry Environmental Resources Engineering Physics and Astronomy Computing Science	Forestry and Wildland Resources	Mathematics Wildlife Management	Fisheries Biology Geology	Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences
College of Professional Studies	Nursing Economics Business	Psychology Social Work	Education Kinesiology and Recreation Administration Child Development		Applied Technology
Other	Athletics Education Opportunity Program (EOP) Indian Teacher and Personnel Program (ITEPP)	Undeclared Financial Aid		Registrar's Office Housing Learning Center Multicultural Center University Police Dept Library	Psychological Services Health Center Humboldt Orientation Program (HOP) Career Center University Center Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC)
Total programs participating	16	25	34	45	54

Two workshops were provided in September 2008 (one for the original 14 programs that participated in the pilot study and another for the five new units scheduled to begin participating that semester). MEI team members explained the need for a degree of consistency required when working with institutional level data. They shared a straightforward tool that they had developed, which could be used by a program to readily identify achievable goals and incorporate its earlier pilot study work. The workshops further provided an opportunity for pilot study participants to review/renew their progress and more importantly to discuss strategies and share experiences with others. During the workshops the team reviewed with the groups the various data sets available on the Analytic Studies website. The also reviewed the resource material available on the MEI Moodle site, and stressed their availability to support the groups as they develop plans to institute processes and track outcomes. Participants were clear that our campus goal of ensuring inclusive academic excellence for traditionally underrepresented students in the areas of student access, retention, achievement and graduation will be more readily achieved when we discuss and track our data.

In Spring 2009 the team met with programs individually to undertake the same process; the new Associate Director for Diversity and Inclusion joined the MEI team, an enormous benefit to both the work of the team and the ongoing

perspective of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. In October of 2009 the team provided workshops again for the units participating in 2009-2010, and they were joined by faculty members from Kinesiology, Art, Economics, and Nursing, who shared the broad range of approaches their programs had used as they participated in the project.

### Initial Data

The tables below represent baseline data, because the new strategies put in place by even the first programs to participate in the project had not had time to yield results by Fall 2008. Table 2 provides context for the pilot program data, showing the large variation in two-year retention rates among different demographic groups across the university.

**Table 2: University-wide Two-Year Retention Summary by Ethnicity**

Fall 2006 Cohort	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Unknown	White	Total
Initial number of students	68	42	130	22	227	491	980
Number of students still enrolled two years later	27	29	89	6	137	296	575
Two-year retention rate	40%	69%	62%	27%	60%	60%	59%

Tables 3 and 4 present the initial data for the pilot project cohort, disaggregated by major and demographic group. The data provide a snapshot of the point from which each of the participating programs is starting its efforts to improve the success of students from underrepresented groups.

**Table 3: Initial 2-Year Retention Rates for Fall 2006 Pilot Participant Programs - 2006 Incoming Freshmen Retained in 2008**

Department	Number of 2006 Underrepresented First-time Freshmen Continuing in 2008				Number of 2006 "Unknown"/White First-time Freshmen Continuing in 2008	
	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native Am	"Unknown"	White
Art	2	1	3	-	16	19
Communication	3	1	1	-	2	7
Geography	-	-	-	-	-	1
Religious Studies	-	-	-	-	1	2
Sociology	1	1	1	-	2	6
Biology	6	7	12	-	25	48
Chemistry	1	2	5	-	-	7
Environmental Resources Engineering	1	1	2	1	5	7
Physics/Astronomy	-	2	-	-	3	2
Nursing (Pre-Major)	2	4	11	2	10	23
Computing Science	1	-	1	1	-	5
Business Admin	10	1	6	2	12	25
Economics	-	-	1	-	-	-

The initial data in Table 3 are difficult to interpret, but comparing them to the data in Table 4 can be instructive. For example, of the 38 Hispanic students in the Art program in 2008, only 3 had been first-time freshmen in 2006 who were still in the program in 2008.

**Table 4: Initial Enrollments for Fall 2006 Pilot Participant Programs - Total Numbers of Underrepresented Students in Fall 2006 and Fall 2008**

Department	Black		Asian		Hispanic		Native American		Totals	
	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008
Art	9	8	15	19	37	38	7	3	68	68
Communication	9	9	2	2	8	8	2	2	21	21
Geography	0	0	0	4	7	7	0	0	7	11
Religious Studies	0	1	1	1	3	3	1	0	5	5
Sociology	8	7	6	4	26	20	4	3	44	34
Biology	17	19	28	25	52	74	7	6	104	124
Chemistry	5	3	3	4	15	10	1	2	24	19
Environmental Resources Engineering	1	4	5	7	12	22	2	6	20	39
Physics/Astronomy	0	0	1	0	1	7	0	0	2	7
Nursing (Pre-Major)	5	8	12	14	26	28	5	8	48	58
Computing Science & CIS	6	3	10	9	8	10	2	2	26	24
Business Admin	30	39	17	24	40	54	13	10	100	127
Economics	0	0	0	1	5	9	0	0	5	10

While the initial data presented in these tables are very preliminary and must be interpreted with caution, there is some basis for optimism. For example, Table 4 indicates that in this two-year period the number of Hispanic students increased from 52 to 74 in Biology, from 12 to 22 in Environmental Resources Engineering, and from 40 to 54 in Business Administration. The latter department also saw a significant increase in Black students, from 30 to 39. Tracking this disaggregated information will provide departments with vital feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies they choose to implement.

### Phase III: Institutionalizing Inclusive Excellence

The process of working with individual departments and programs, both in the pilot study and again in 2008-2009, has led to a greater degree of focus on the issues and greater familiarity with the data. The sharing of input/output data in particular has been of significant critical interest – specifically, tracking the movement of students out of the majors and exploring the factors that may explain this. As individual faculty/staff and departments/programs engage in these conversations, new understandings and new questions have emerged. While there may be a slight delay before we see the impact of this work in the retention data, campus awareness has begun to shift and the necessity of tracking program metrics is becoming embedded in institutional practice.

While some academic departments already had made conversations about underrepresented student excellence and success an integral and regular feature of department meetings, it appears that these concerns are on the way to becoming a routine element of more discussions in more departments. There has been broad interest in community building and outreach to underrepresented students as a first “best practice,” and this has entailed significant discussions about combining receptions and other social events with gathering meaningful student survey data in sensitive ways. In many departments the initial engagement of the faculty is somewhat uneven.

CFR 4.7

But it is invariably the case that as faculty begin to review the data and contemplate possible “best practices” to implement, the fact that the large task of transformation begins with a small, concrete step becomes clear, and the process is gradually embedded in department practice.

For example, the Politics department members generally believe themselves to do quite well with under-represented students, but they cannot explain why this is the case; they realized that they have the opportunity to undertake real political research on their own performance in this area.

In another example of action emerging from analysis of the data on student success, the Nursing program instituted a one-unit course, “Success in Nursing,” for all new Nursing majors; the course, in turn, is deepening the department’s understanding of the challenges faced by students, most especially by minority students. Faculty members in the Nursing department spend a great deal of their time addressing elements of external accreditation but have been eager to incorporate curricular issues around multiculturalism by means of a focus on student engagement and success. They find themselves increasingly engaging in conversation with each other, and sometimes with students from traditionally underrepresented groups, where they are broaching topics that they did not feel free to discuss before. Much of this is tentative, covering new ground and leading to new understandings.

In yet another example, Economics faculty wondered if revising their department website to include profiles of successful economics graduates who were also students of color would help attract a more diverse population of majors. They obtained the help of an alumnus, a Latino student in a Ph.D. program, whom they featured on a page with his description of his educational experience at HSU. They have also designed questions in their senior survey which ask seniors for their perceptions of the diversity/inclusion of the department; they will investigate how those perceptions affect retention and success rates for all students, with an emphasis on reviewing the data regarding traditionally underrepresented students.

In another approach to improving student success, Art faculty members are making a department-wide effort to have representation at many more of the social events on campus and to engage in community-building activities within the department. They are tracking the numbers of students who attend, and they will investigate whether increased outreach and student attendance at these events can lead to greater retention and success for all students, including those who are traditionally underrepresented. The department has also established a distinct committee to begin reviewing their curriculum and examining its potential impact on student retention and success.

### **Examples of Potential “Best Practices” Being Instituted on Campus**

#### ***Community Building and Outreach***

- Holding more social and informative events for students and faculty to get together and develop connections and then evaluating their impact on retention
- Reflecting on some of the additional hurdles that first-generation college students have (reluctance to approach faculty for example) and making efforts to address those concerns
- Staging some of these events in the first week of the fall semester to welcome students to the department and the campus
- Highlighting the success stories of graduates from the program who are members of under-represented groups

#### ***Inclusive Academic Excellence***

- ‘Student roll-call’ as a regular item in department meetings – giving faculty the opportunity to discuss the success of their students

CFR 2.11, 2.13

- A new one-unit “Success in Nursing” class

#### ***Disaggregating GPA scores by ethnicity and investigating possible causes of disparities***

- Surveying graduating seniors to determine student views on what worked well for them and what could be improved in the curriculum, the major, the campus climate
- Student surveys – to check-in early with students about factors that will assist their success and to detail their experience in a more comprehensive way
- Highlighting curricular opportunities to reflect on the social conditions behind the low representation of some groups in the discipline
- Seeking to hire more faculty of color in the major
- Instituting a student mentor program in the major to promote student success

#### ***Persistence and Retention***

- Exit Interviews when students leave one major for another to determine the reasons and then making changes if called for
- Exit interviews when students leave the campus to determine what factors are behind the decision
- Looking at the impact of “gateway” courses on students from underrepresented groups, both those courses that determine entry into the major (often taken as a general education requirement) and those that prevent progress in the major

#### **Establishing an Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

In May 2006 the Diversity Plan Action Council (DPAC) published an annual report which noted that the identification of diversity with compliance as a human resources function meant that diversity issues were not being given sufficient priority. In Summer 2006 the President’s Office made the decision to dismantle the Diversity and Compliance Office, relocating the compliance function within Human Resources and beginning the process of establishing a unit assigned specifically to foster campus diversity. To staff an initial and interim Diversity Office, the President appointed a half time faculty member and a .75 professional staff member. Their charge was to continue the diversity policy and cultural programming functions; conduct research about “diversity office models” nationally before establishing a senior diversity position at HSU, and develop and present staff and faculty training events. There were significant budget constraints; with no office budget for special training, the unit had to compete for grant funding available through a diversity programming fund.

In Spring 2009, a newly-configured Office of Diversity and Inclusion was relocated to Academic Affairs, in recognition of the centrality of diversity to every part of the educational process. The staffing levels remain at one .75 staff and .5 faculty, both of whom have a part-time presence in the office, but a search is underway to add .5 staff support. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is currently charged with developing campus policies to institutionalize diversity as a core part of HSU’s mission, and to overcome the historical and social inequities that continue to challenge students, faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion continues to work with the Diversity Plan Action Council, the Making Excellence Inclusive Action Team, the Multicultural Center, Student Affairs, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Academic Personnel Services, and other campus entities. The result has been better coordination of support for cultural programs, educational experiences and professional development opportunities that work to

CFR 2.5, 2.12, 2.13

CFR 1.5

deepen understanding across various groups, to advocate for social justice, and to improve the climate in classrooms and other institutional spaces. The office also provides guidance to campus units seeking to make fundamental changes to how they approach their work, in order to overcome barriers to achieving the campus diversity goals.

### **Building Capacity around Diversity Issues for Faculty and Staff**

The Capacity and Preparatory Review report previously noted the fact that our campus capacity in the diversity area has been limited to ‘pockets’ of faculty, staff and students who provide what leadership and support they can, but that we have lacked such capacity in our senior leadership. It further identified the lack of a campus-wide buy-in based on a solid understanding of our own data and performance with regard to underrepresented student success, or other diversity issues that impact campus climate. The report also acknowledged that “*integrating diversity and quality into the core of institutional functioning is a key element in re-visioning the university’s diversity efforts*” (CPR: 12).

In addition to the WASC self-study process, other recent activity has contributed significantly to the beginnings of a campus-wide grasp of the context and the need for action and understanding; as a result, we have made significant progress.

### **Enhancing Professional Development on Diversity**

In 2006-07 the Diversity Plan Action Council re-oriented its work away from regular large-scale meetings and moved the focus to its task forces charged with pursuing the specific actions items in the Diversity Plan. The Access, Retention and Recruitment Task Force already constituted a majority of the WASC Theme II / Making Excellence Inclusive team. The Training and Accountability Task Force worked with the Provost to institute an annual Professional Development Day, which focuses on diversity and inclusion and is generally held on a non-instructional work day at the beginning of each spring semester. There was a clear understanding within this group that to be most effective in institutional efforts to serve underrepresented students there must be a transformation of campus climate and a strong focus on classrooms.

The first Professional Development Day on Diversity and Inclusion was held in January 2008. Attendance was promising, both at the keynote by diversity strategy expert Yuri Brown on preparing for globalization and a diverse workforce, and at the workshops, repeated morning and afternoon. A total of 129 staff, faculty and administrators were in attendance.

In October -November 2008, partly in response to some of the questions that had been raised at that first Professional Development Day, nationally known consultant and social justice activist Frances Kendall was invited to engage staff, faculty and administrators in reflections about white privilege in institutional design and in discussions about organizational change. The various workshops presented by Dr. Kendall were attended by 158 faculty, students, and staff members. According to feedback collected through assessments of the activities, Kendall’s sessions caused some participants to experience eye-opening revelations about privilege and about becoming change agents. Others, who reported feeling frustration and discomfort, sought out follow-up discussions which provided opportunities for further reflection and learning. For example, frustration on the part of many science faculty led to the development of two workshops facilitated in the College of Natural Resources and Sciences (CNRS) by the Associate Dean and the Director of Indian Natural Resources, Sciences and Engineering Program (INRSEP). The workshops helped faculty question how they viewed student success and led the group to seek practices that could support inclusive learning, specifically in the Science disciplines. Ongoing efforts in CNRS include bringing speakers to campus to further discuss diversity issues in the STEM disciplines and sending CNRS faculty members off-campus for training.

The second Professional Development Day, held in January 2009, was centered on relationships among advising, mentoring, outreach, and retention. The keynote address by Dr Daryl Smith was entitled “*The Imperative of Diversity:*

CFR 4.3

CFR 4.7

*How Do We Know We Are Making Progress?* A total of 142 staff, faculty and administrators were in attendance. There was already some familiarity with Dr Smith's work in the California-wide Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI), with its clear focus on institutional learning and the capacity-building required for diversity efforts to have a sustained impact. Diversity Office staff had previously made presentations about the metrics tracked in the Campus Diversity Initiative, suggesting that HSU could readily adapt the process to build on the momentum generated by the Making Excellence Inclusive efforts, and copies of the CDI report had been provided to all deans and chairs. Dr. Smith's visit to campus, however, provided an invaluable opportunity for the campus to begin understanding the need to choose appropriate metrics and disaggregate the resulting data in order to make diversity efforts successful; in the time she was here, she was able to work with the Executive Committee, DPAC members, MEI Action Team members, the Cabinet for Institutional Change (the Cabinet is described in Chapter 4) and the Provost and Vice Provost. The new Associate Director of Diversity and the Provost were able to spend almost two days with her. In a very short time the commitment to tracking the institution's disaggregated data was embraced by the senior leadership and its importance was made clear to the rest of the campus community.

CFR 2.10, 4.3, 4.4

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion subsequently developed a set of institutional metrics, as described below, closely modeled on the "best practices" that emerged in the CDI study and incorporating NSSE data and local focus group results. Monitoring our progress will transform our institutional practice and build capacity at all levels, as we broadly embed a shared awareness of the core issues behind the metrics.

We should note that although we have a long way to go there is a sense that the profile of diversity issues has been raised and there is a new commitment from the campus leadership, from the president to the program leader and individual faculty level, to find proven ways to support success for underrepresented students. The issue has become a greater part of the campus fabric and concern.

### Initiating University-wide "Diversity Metrics"

In Spring 2009, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was asked by the President and the Provost to develop a reporting process designed to track, monitor and report annually to the campus community on a comprehensive range of key diversity-related indicators. This initiative was seen as a critical means of monitoring progress towards the achievement of the educational outcomes that have been articulated through the WASC process. It also stemmed from the need, felt across the university, for evidence-driven decision-making. This "Diversity Metrics" process has two goals: 1) to integrate the reporting of diversity-related data across various campus constituencies, and 2) to institutionalize a mechanism for ongoing monitoring of patterns and trends in campus diversity as a means to help inform the work of faculty, staff and administrators across campus. It tracks a range of data included within four broad dimensions of diversity: institutional viability and vitality, education and scholarship, access and success, and climate and intergroup relations.<sup>1</sup>

CFR 2.10

CFR 4.3

CFR 4.6

First presented in proposal form in Spring 2009, this initiative received wide support as all relevant campus constituencies were invited to endorse them as a set of appropriate and meaningful indicators. In cooperation with the many units on campus involved in data collection and processing (such as Analytic Studies, Academic Personnel Services, and Human Resources, among others), the Office of Diversity and Inclusion undertook the process of data

<sup>1</sup>Clayton-Pedersen, Alma R., Sharon Parker, Daryl G. Smith, José F. Moreno, and Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi, *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: a Guide to Institutional Change* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). HSU's Diversity Metrics process is structured according to the framework of "best practices" outlined in the Campus Diversity Initiative's *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: a Guide to Institutional Change*, which studied 28 college campuses in California over the course of six years to determine the most effective ways of institutionalizing diversity imperatives in a university setting. Based on these six years of research, the study identified four critical dimensions of diversity, and suggested mechanisms for monitoring and assessing progress across these dimensions.

collection and analysis for this reporting process, and its first report, “Dissecting Diversity at HSU,” was distributed widely across the campus at the start of the Fall 2009 semester (see Appendix G for the full report). It is intended that this first report will comprise the basis for structuring and informing campus initiatives addressing critical issues such as student retention, inclusive excellence, campus climate, and others.

***The report’s findings focus on four primary areas of concern:***

- First, by constructing a weighted analytical tool that allowed us to compare our campus demographics to the demographics in our students’ regions of origin, the report demonstrates that – in terms of ethnic diversity – our student population is significantly less diverse than we would expect. For example, based on this weighted analysis for Fall 2008, White students should constitute about 54 percent of HSU’s population; however, the actual proportion of White students that semester was over 70 percent
- Second, the report illustrates that retention and graduation rates for our undergraduate students are wildly disproportional across ethnic groups. For example, average graduation rates for Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American students are nearly half that of White students.
- Third, the report shows that our campus is lagging far behind the CSU system as a whole in terms of the ethnic diversity of both our faculty and staff populations, and that our campus also falls behind the CSU average in terms of the gender diversity of our faculty. The report also highlights clear disparities in our campus’s retention rates for Female faculty members and for faculty members of Color. This is not merely a matter of administrative concern; the student focus groups name this issue as the single most important thing the university could do to improve the experience and success of Students of Color at HSU.
- Fourth, the report raises a number of concerns relative to the campus climate for students from diverse backgrounds. Focus groups conducted with Students of Color and students with disabilities highlight feelings of isolation and discomfort on campus, rampant occurrences of stereotyping and prejudice, the need for more consistent accommodation of disabilities by both faculty and fellow students, and various other factors related to inclusion and exclusion on campus, to the dynamics of diversity in the classroom and the curriculum, and to the lack of a clear institutional commitment to diversity.

In addition to these four main categories of analysis, the report’s findings also point to various other key issues surrounding the role of diversity at HSU. These include disproportionately higher fail rates for Students of Color in most “Gateway Courses” at HSU during the 08-09 academic year; GPA gaps between Students of Color and White students in many departments; and differential success across academic departments in recruiting, retaining and graduating different groups of students.

Since “Dissecting Diversity” was issued in September 2009, the Associate Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion has met with a variety of campus groups (e.g., the Academic Senate, the Council of Chairs) to discuss its findings and answer questions about next steps. These groups have commended the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for preparing such a thought-provoking resource, which provides both focus and accountability for wide-ranging campus efforts in support of underrepresented student success.

### **Revising Faculty Search Procedures to Diversify Faculty**

Even before “Dissecting Diversity” reported that student focus groups cited diversifying the faculty as the most important action that HSU could take in order to improve the campus climate and student success, work had begun on identifying how to enhance recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups.

CFR 3.3

Throughout the spring semester of 2009, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion worked with the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs and the Provost to develop specific means of diversifying the faculty. They revised faculty recruiting processes, with the goal of attracting more diverse applicant pools. They also reviewed search committee processes, adding some key elements to focus more explicitly on removing barriers to diverse hires. Examples include participation in mandatory diversity workshops for all search committees and the nomination of an “affirmative action advocate” for each committee. The plans for these changes were shared broadly with faculty leadership, Human Resources, hiring authorities, and administration; feedback from groups and individuals was used to clarify both the goals and the procedures.

### Designing for Universal Learning

CFR 3.6, 2.10

Humboldt State University currently is participating in the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI), a CSU-wide mandate to achieve technological accessibility for all students and particularly those with disabilities and alternative needs. While the university has taken a lead role in accommodating the needs of students with disabilities, reporting the highest number of students with disabilities in the CSU system, the new ATI represents a shift to a more proactive approach to accessibility. Preparing web sites and course materials that are designed to be accessible represents a shift away from a system of special accommodation upon request and proof of eligibility, and toward access that neither requires special status nor involves delays for transformation into a different format.

A core instructional principle underlying full accessibility is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the practice of consistently providing multiple ways for students to attain and demonstrate learning outcomes. UDL fosters the goals of both ATI and Making Excellence Inclusive by building access and multiple approaches into learning materials and activities. Through three years of participation in the EnAct (Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology) grant program coordinated by Sonoma State, Humboldt State University has been able to expand campus understanding of how UDL can enhance learning for all students.

To date HSU has adopted several policies and training approaches in order to implement the recommendations of the Executive Steering Committee to bring the campus into compliance with Executive Order 926, the governing document of the ATI.

CFR 3.4

The university adopted a new policy regarding guidelines for course syllabi, effective Fall 08, which included the requirement that syllabi be accessible, along with a statement about improving accessibility of other course materials as well. In order to help the university community learn to produce materials that are accessible to students who use assistive technology, Faculty Accessibility Institutes were provided in May and August of 2008. Partly supported by the EnAct grant, the workshops comprising these Institutes trained almost 100 participants in the principles of Universal Design for Learning as well as in the techniques of producing accessible materials such as Word documents and PowerPoint presentations. Such workshops continue to be refined and offered; most recently, an online component has been developed to guide participants through some preparatory work before attending a face-to-face workshop on preparing accessible Word documents.

The university also adopted a policy requiring textbooks to be ordered by the established deadline, to allow time for conversion to alternate formats as required, and clarifying the responsibility of department chairs to obtain all orders in a timely manner. In order to improve the response rate for timely textbook submissions, the HSU Bookstore began offering some incentives. For example, departments that have submitted at least 90 percent of textbook orders on time are entered into a drawing to win a portion of \$1000 for textbook scholarships, which they can award to the students of their choice. The response for the Spring 2009 semester was positive, with 5 departments reaching 100 percent compliance with the deadline. Overall, 179 of a total of 352 instructors submitted textbook orders on time - a 51 percent rate of timely orders. For the Fall 2009 semester, 7 departments were awarded the scholarship

money, with 201 of a total of 367 instructors having submitted orders on time -- a 55 percent rate of timely orders. The scholarship incentive seems to be having an impact and will be continued.

An opportunity to improve web accessibility to engage the university community in accessibility training has arisen with the impending replacement of the outdated HSU web server. Information Technology Services is requiring that every campus web developer complete the relevant components of five online accessibility workshops available, based upon the individual's set of responsibilities, before moving the sites for which they are responsible to the new server. This new policy prohibits the activation of new web accounts, as well as the migration of existing accounts from the old server, without the account owners' having completed the appropriate accessibility training.

In a number of ways, HSU has made considerable progress in improving accessibility. The challenge, as with other initiatives aimed at supporting students with diverse needs, is to institutionalize the practices that are called for by policy, especially in the absence of central coordination or additional resources. Several subcommittees continue the work of guiding the campus in developing accessible materials, tools, and media, but much work remains to be done.

### **Making Learning Inclusive**

The shift in higher education from a focus on providing instruction to a focus on producing student learning provides a larger context for rethinking students' learning experiences at the university. In this context, the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success are aligned to enhance one another: scholarship on student success shapes the institution's teaching and learning activities, research and creative activity engage faculty in learning together with students, and metrics that monitor student learning and success become the yardstick by which HSU monitors the achievement of its institutional purpose.

The recruitment and retention of a diverse student body is a key component of the charge to a new Comprehensive Enrollment Management Task Force, appointed in September 2009. This task force comprises two working groups, one for recruitment and one for retention. Their goal is to develop a three-year institution-wide plan that encompasses both areas. The charge specifies that "the recruiting and retention plans must include strategies for attracting and retaining a diverse student population. The plan must focus the university's efforts on a manageable set of actions in the form of specific action plans with benchmarks and assessment measures [and] should also include a recommendation for a group whose on-going responsibility will be overseeing enrollment management efforts for the campus."

By focusing recruitment efforts for faculty and staff as well as students, incorporating such approaches as Universal Design for Learning and "best practices" for student engagement into multiple areas across the campus, and tracking the success of specific types of students, we are moving away from seeing diversity and accessibility as peripheral concerns and moving toward making them fundamental.

CFR 2.13

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through its investment in human, physical, fiscal, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high quality environment for learning.

WASC Standard Three

*Most institutions can no longer afford to be what they've become.*

**Robert C. Dickeson,**  
*Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*

CFR 4.3

Realignment of resources and institutional structures at Humboldt State University is beginning to follow a model of *adaptive management*, in which well-defined objectives are optimized adaptively, not through trial-and-error but rather through a systematic process of purposeful data collection and analysis that informs decision-making. Adaptive management requires data upon which decisions will be based and well-defined mechanisms for analyzing and using that data.

Based on input from WASC following the CPR visit, and from other external reviews (see Chapter Four), it was apparent that HSU needed to improve both data quantity/quality and decision-making mechanisms. Although the ultimate goal of institutional resource and structure realignment is to create an adaptive management process that will serve us in the future, the immediate need is for data that aid the university in undertaking a far-reaching assessment of the current state of its programs, departments and services. This assessment took the form of several prioritization processes, in which programs, departments and services were not only assessed but were compared to each other in order to identify relative strengths and weaknesses and thereby inform decisions regarding resource realignment and reorganization of institutional structures. These prioritization processes required substantial expenditure of time on the part of faculty, staff and administration and were designed to jump-start the adaptive management process.

CFR 3.8, 4.5

Concurrently, HSU embarked on the restructuring of three major institutional structures required to ensure effective data-driven decision-making into the future: curriculum oversight, program review, and institutional research capacity. This chapter describes both the prioritization study and the institutional structure reorganization, which together form the foundation of HSU's new approach to adaptive management of its programs, resources, and structures.

### **Realigning Resources through Prioritization**

CFR 4.1

Four different types of institutional activities were assessed via prioritization studies: 1) academic programs (e.g., majors, minors); 2) non-instructional academic support services provided by Academic Affairs (e.g., library, research facilities); 3) non-instructional programs and services provided by Student Affairs (e.g., financial aid, career center); and 4) services provided by Administrative Affairs (e.g., facilities, business services). A separate prioritization process was applied to each of these areas. In addition, the Division of Advancement conducted its annual planning process, including elements of prioritization and reorganization. The processes, methodology, and results of these prioritization efforts are presented in this section.

### Prioritizing Academic Programs

From January 2008 through February 2009 Humboldt State University conducted a prioritization of all academic programs. The process was initiated by then-Interim Provost Robert Snyder and represents the first systematic, university-wide prioritization of academic programs that has taken place at Humboldt State University. The purpose of prioritization was to collaboratively identify and support the core strengths of the university in alignment with HSU's institutional vision and to guide resource allocations based upon an evaluation of programs according to agreed-upon criteria.

CFR 2.7

The overall need for prioritization arose from two key factors. First, in recent history, Humboldt's internal processes have not led to a thorough, comprehensive and comparative evaluation of academic programs across all colleges. The periodic program review process, although generally supported by faculty, had not critically evaluated programs against one another, nor had this process resulted in strategic decisions in relation to the overall configuration of academic programs. Second, declining state support and static overall student enrollment constrained the Academic Affairs budget; if key programs were to be strengthened or new programs added, resources had to be made available by restructuring, reducing, or eliminating other programs.

### Methods

The process included a review of all 72 academic programs at HSU that lead to an undergraduate major or minor, certificate, credential, or graduate degree. Each academic department also submitted a report that was used to frame the evaluation of its programs. Evaluation was based on a consistent set of criteria which had been collaboratively developed in consultation with numerous campus groups. The criteria were intended to characterize the nature and quality of programs across several domains (see Appendix H). The overall prioritization process—including determining the criteria for evaluation, developing program report templates and scoring rubrics, and scoring and ranking programs—was guided by principles of openness, communication, and fairness.

Each program report was scored by two independent review teams, by the Prioritization Task Force (PTF), and by the deans of the colleges in which programs were housed. Some university-wide programs were scored by all three college deans. Individual review teams scored an average of about 18 program reports, whereas the PTF scored all 72 program reports. Deans scored variable numbers of programs depending on the number of distinct programs within their colleges. The PTF then assigned each program to one of five prioritization categories.

### Review Team Scoring

CFR 3.11

Each review team included one faculty member from each of three different academic disciplines (one discipline from each college) and one individual from a non-instructional unit (e.g., library, administration). The team's members were appointed by the President, and a team did not review the programs of faculty serving on that particular team. One individual from each team was appointed by the PTF as group convener. One reader and one lead discussant were randomly assigned to each program that was reviewed, although all members of the committee were expected to have read, and to participate in discussion of, each program report. Each prioritization group was charged with reviewing its assigned programs and developing consensus evaluation scores (as opposed to numerical averages of individual group member's evaluations) in each of the following weighted areas (percentage weights are in parentheses):

- Vision (15%)
- Demand (20%)

- Quality (30%),
- Cost and Efficiency (20%)
- Potential (15%)

The highest possible score a program could receive was 100 plus 5 additional “bonus points.” For a specific program, an overall program score was calculated from the two independent review team scores and the PTF program score as  $(\text{Team A} + \text{Team B} + 2 \times \text{PTF})/4$ . This formula gave the PTF score twice the weight of the individual scores of the two independent review teams, on the basis of two factors. First, individual review teams scored only about 25 percent of all program reports, whereas PTF members reviewed and scored all 72 program reports. Second, the PTF was composed of seven members, as compared to review teams, which consisted of four members each. The above process for calculating overall program scores did not incorporate scores or comments provided by deans, as the deans had access to information that went beyond the reports provided by the individual programs.

### Prioritization Categories

Each program was then placed by the PTF into one of the following five categories.

1. *Enhance* - Programs assigned to this category generally received high overall program scores. Investment in these programs should be a priority to strengthen the academic performance of the university.
2. *Maintain*- Programs assigned to this category generally received medium to high overall program scores. Continued support of these programs, at or near their current resource allocation, is central to maintaining the academic performance of the university.
3. *Review*- Programs assigned to this category generally received medium to low program scores. Programs in this category contribute to the academic quality of the university, but curricular reorganization and/or resource reduction is required for long-term viability on contribution of these programs.
4. *Restructure*- Programs assigned to this category generally received low program scores. Restructuring or eliminating these programs will permit the redistribution of resources to other targeted programs and/or will enhance the academic performance of the university.
5. *Revisit*- Programs assigned to this category have been recently restructured and therefore could not be adequately assessed at this time but have potential to contribute to the academic performance of the university. A careful review of these programs should be conducted within the next three years.

In addition to generating numerical scores for program reports, review teams and the PTF provided written comments concerning various aspects of program reports. Such comments would point out, for example, when demand for a particular major was very strong but demand for a specific option in that same major was extremely low or if the cost of a specific option seemed unusually expensive when compared to other options offered in the same major. These comments proved helpful when the PTF assigned programs to the prioritization categories but were not the primary factor on which the PTF based its categorization.

The final categorical rankings in the Prioritization Task Force report, and separate reports from the college deans were then submitted to Provost Snyder for review.

### Note about Graduate Programs

Standards for review of graduate programs differed from those of undergraduate programs in two important respects. First, the standards by which demand for programs was assessed differed for graduate and undergraduate programs. Specifically, lower threshold values were used for graduate programs than for undergraduate programs to distinguish between levels of demand (note: demand for a given graduate program was measured by numbers of students enrolled in the graduate degree program, and demand for an undergraduate program was measured by number of majors). Second, the degree to which program course offerings were important for other programs was not weighted as heavily for graduate programs as it was for undergraduate programs.

### Limitations

The academic prioritization process was intended to be as objective and fair as possible and represents a substantial, positive first attempt at program prioritization at HSU. However, several limitations to the process became apparent. First, the quality of the reports provided to the prioritization committees varied widely. Second, the review process (e.g., items, rubric, weighting of items, and program ratings by various committees) was limited by a lack of consensus in principal and application, which resulted in variability in some of the evaluations. For example, the Recreation Administration program received scores of 90.6 and 79.7 from the two review teams and a score of 67.8 from the PTF, for an overall score of 76.5. Third, with the exception of the two differences mentioned above, the review process did not use separate review criteria and rubrics for undergraduate and graduate programs, which are not comparable in mission, number of students, resources, and other factors.

### Results

Of the 72 programs reviewed, 24 had separate options, certificate programs, minors, or other sub-areas that were sufficiently different from the rest of the program to warrant a separate categorization and review. Thus, 98 distinct programmatic entities were ultimately categorized. Given HSU's strong history and focus on the sciences, it was not surprising that six of the top ten programs were from the College of Natural Resources and Sciences (CNRS). However, several programs, including Geography, Political Science, and Sociology from the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS), and one program, Economics, from the College of Professional Studies (CPS) were also in the top ten. The program with the highest rating, Wildlife, received an overall score of 88.9, and the program with lowest rating, Physical Sciences, received an overall score of 51.6. Interestingly, individual focus areas within several of the top ten programs were targeted for restructuring, i.e., were assigned to Category 4. This result in part reflected programs that had numerous sub-areas with small enrollments. The distribution of the 98 programmatic entities among the five categories was:

Category 1 (Enhance): 12% (n = 12)

Category 2 (Maintain): 35% (n = 34)

Category 3 (Review): 25% (n = 24)

Category 4 (Restructure): 19% (n = 19)

Category 5 (Revisit): 9% (n = 9).

For a complete review of individual program scores and categories please refer to Appendix H.

In addition to the review scores and categorization, the prioritization review drew attention to several broad areas of curricular concern, including (a) interdisciplinary studies, (b) graduate programs, (c) fragmented or overlapping curricula, (d) faculty overloads, and (e) programs that appear to serve as “escape valves” to allow students to graduate but that otherwise lack obvious justification.

CFR 4.6

Another key outcome from the academic prioritization process was identification of issues and subsequent recommendations for future program evaluation efforts. The issues that were addressed included the need for consistent program data on costs, revenue, student-faculty ratio, teaching effectiveness/learning outcomes, diversity, and student progress toward completion.

Overall, the prioritization process was an important and comprehensive initial effort at prioritizing current academic programs. The process was limited by several factors; nonetheless, the results of prioritization provided several important outcomes, including the identification of key issues currently affecting academic programs and recommendations for future prioritization efforts. The prioritization process has provided HSU with empirical information to make decisions about, and allocate potential future resources to, academic programs across campus.

CFR 4.4

The prioritization process has allowed HSU to be better prepared to make informed decisions about potential program elimination, consolidation, and future growth. It has laid the groundwork for decision-making processes that have been necessitated by the budget crisis currently affecting the California State University system. For example, both the process and the outcomes of academic prioritization will inform the ongoing benchmarking process coordinated by the academic deans at HSU. Further, the criteria that HSU developed and used, and the limitations of those criteria identified through the process, have provided a foundation upon which the university can develop more effective approaches to evaluating both existing and proposed academic programs. As such, the academic prioritization process has provided a blueprint from which HSU can build a focused academic identity.

CFR 4.1

### Implementing Academic Program Prioritization Recommendations

CFR 3.11

Having received the final report of the Prioritization Task Force, the Provost reviewed all of the materials. On March 23, 2009, he forwarded his recommendations to the ad hoc Academic Planning Committee, focusing primarily on programs in Category 1 and Category 4 as specified in the Procedure for Post-Program Prioritization Process that had been approved by the Academic Senate. Some of the recommendations, however, involved multiple programs in other priority categories within a single department.

The Academic Planning Committee directed four programs recommended for discontinuance to form committees charged with considering the Provost's recommendation. The other programs were directed to collect information, develop plans, or investigate specific alternatives before submitting responses to the Academic Master Planning subcommittee of the newly-formed Integrated Curriculum Committee, the successor to the ad hoc Academic Planning Committee. As of this writing, the Academic Master Planning subcommittee is progressing through its consideration of all program responses.

### Prioritizing Non-Instructional Academic Support Services

CFR 4.4

Concurrent with the Prioritization of Academic Programs, Humboldt State University conducted a review and prioritization of non-instructional academic support services units. Among the 25 units included in the review process were each of the three academic colleges, the Provost's Office, Research and Graduate Studies, the Natural History Museum, the *Coral Sea* marine research vessel, Indian Teacher and Educational Personnel Program, Writing Center, Library, and IT units (see Appendix I for a complete listing of programs and their individual review summaries). The dissimilarity of the units included in the prioritization review resulted in a challenging review process and limited conclusions that could be applied across units. Nonetheless, the review process did highlight strengths and weaknesses and areas of potential restructuring and change across the units, as well as recommendations specific to future evaluation or prioritization efforts.

## Methods

The primary goal of the prioritization process was to assess the status of each of the 25 units in the following six overarching areas:

1. Support for the mission and vision of HSU,
2. Variety of strengths in the program,
3. Clear and appropriate assessment measures,
4. Measureable indicators for comparison to other programs,
5. Potential to maintain or improve quality and capacity, and
6. Adaptability to changes in budgetary constraints or program demand.

The above areas were then distilled into the following four rubric criteria for the prioritization review:

1. Centrality to Mission,
2. Quality/Outcomes,
3. Organizational Context and Efficiency, and
4. Potential Adaptability

A team of nine HSU administrators, faculty, and staff personnel representing the academic Colleges, Provost's Office, Library and other academic support units used the scoring rubric to review the 25 units.

The reviewers individually read each unit's report and then met as a group to develop one overall rating per unit. The rating was intended to reflect the strength of evidence demonstrating the unit's attainment of the six overarching goals within each of the four main rubric criteria outlined above. The review team assessed the level of evidence of strong and meaningful support for the four main rubric criteria using the following ratings:

1. Outstanding,
2. Strong and meaningful,
3. Some meaningful mission and vision, and
4. Little or no evidence.

The review team then developed by consensus a final overall recommendation using the above ratings and specific comments for each unit.

## Results and Conclusions

The team members agreed that each non-instructional academic support unit is necessary to the function and purpose of the university and that each unit's human and financial resources are extremely lean in their current state. As such, the review team could not recommend reductions for any of the units. However, the reviewers noted that the individual unit reports were very uneven in quality and approach; some were quite clear and thorough, whereas others did not contain the desired information. The reviewers attributed some of this imbalance to the learning curve associated with this first attempt at prioritization and the challenge of developing an instrument applicable to such diverse units. The reporting format led to information that was irrelevant to the rubric, which

suggests that one or both should be re-examined. Future prioritization efforts should incorporate (a) a follow-up assessment of this first time process; (b) recommendations for revising the current reports, rubric, and scoring formats; (c) a sample of reports that were written well; and (d) a list of FAQs and answers for common mistakes and tips for effective report writing.

Overall, because the essential nature of many of the units was so different, it was difficult to prioritize across them. In subsequent prioritization efforts, it would be more productive to align offices that have similar functions into groups and tailor the process to provide data specific to those units in order to facilitate meaningful comparisons within the institution and with external benchmarks. For example, college offices could be compared to each other within the institution as well as with those at external benchmark institutions, as could the various instructional technology units. Other benchmarking could focus primarily on comparisons with similar functions at other comparably sized institutions (e.g., for the library).

Dealing with comparisons across a broad range of dissimilar functions, and the resulting need for external comparison data, are also issues that will arise if a university-wide process of prioritization is undertaken across divisions.

### **Prioritizing Programs and Student Support Services within the Division of Student Affairs**

CFR 4.1

The prioritization process for non-instructional programs and student support services within Student Affairs included a critical review, an appraisal of efficiency, and an assessment of achievement in relation to Humboldt State University's goals, which are adopted from the university's strategic plan. Additionally, the Student Affairs student programs and services were evaluated with respect to the two institutional themes chosen for the WASC self-study. The prioritization process allowed managers to measure a program's combined effect on the stated goals and to align and allocate resources in a structured manner.

### **Prioritization Model**

CFR 4.6

The Student Affairs management team desired critical analysis and prioritization of all non-instructional programs regardless of organizational structure; the goal was to develop a process parallel to the one being utilized by Academic Affairs. Student Affairs managers created the prioritization process based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Development, a theory proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper titled *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Utilizing the idea of Maslow's pyramid of human needs, the management team created a hierarchy for prioritization that included three levels.

CFR 4.2

1. The first level constituted "mandatory and required services in order to provide a safe educational environment, or required in order for education to take place." The second included "necessary and essential services for promotion of student success and/or student academic achievement."
2. The third level included "value-added, though not required, programs and services that educate the whole person, enhance student success and/or support other university goals."

### **Methods**

CFR 1.3

Department directors and coordinators divided department services into subsets for ranking purposes. Further, the assessment was divided into two separate pyramids: one for programs and services supported by General Fund and a second for all others not supported by the General Fund. Departments evaluated programs and services based on

1. Efficiency, numbers of students/faculty served, academic indicators (e.g. GPA), retention rates, customer satisfaction, and/or benchmarks against other CSU institutions,

2. How services and unit accomplishments aligned with HSU's 2008-09 goals, and
3. How services and unit accomplishments met progress towards the two themes of the WASC self-study:
  - *What should a Humboldt State University graduate know and be able to do?*
  - *Increasing the success of underrepresented students.*

Departments ranked their services by the three levels of the tiered prioritization pyramid and then gathered at an expanded Student Affairs Council and Student Affairs managers meeting to debate the appropriateness of the rankings and negotiate changes to service priorities.

### Results and Implementation

Once there was agreement on the rankings of various services, a final document and chart were prepared (see Appendix J), outlining where on the priority pyramid each service or program stood. This document and chart will serve as a guide for making decisions about the augmentation and/or reduction of services and programs in light of the present budget concerns. Specifically, several positions have already been eliminated, based on the chart, and some restructuring is under consideration. Additionally, the HSU Student Affairs prioritization process has been published by the Educational Advisory Board in its 2009 report, "Managing Through the Downturn: Strategies for Cost-Cutting and Revenue Generation in Student Affairs Organization."

### Prioritizing Services in Administrative Affairs

On January 15, 2009, President Richmond emailed the campus to advise everyone on developments in the budget situation. Shortly thereafter, Administrative Affairs Vice President Burt Nordstrom called upon the directors in his division to prioritize their core services, and he planned a series of meetings to discuss a method and process for doing so. With the help of the campus Quality Improvement Analyst, each business unit in the division was provided a matrix and in late January 2009 conducted meetings to begin classifying their main services.

### Prioritization Model

The model of evaluation and prioritization was patterned after the approach used by Student Affairs, classifying main services within administrative departments into three levels. Level One was defined as mandatory or required services, projects, and initiatives. Operational or project activities under Level One were required by law or university policy, or were identified as critical by accreditation or external consultants. Level Two was defined as services and projects "essential to campus operations and mission." Services in Level Two were ones that could not be completed by any other department and were essential to ensure that the campus could operate effectively. Level Three was defined as administrative services that were "value-added, but not critical or essential" to the university. Level Three services were identified as those that made a positive impact or benefit but ultimately were not mandated or essential.

### Methods

Each major business unit conducted a prioritization meeting with key managers in order to fully capture all services to be scrutinized within the methodology described above. Initial prioritization reports were submitted by Plant Operations, Facilities Management, Business Information Systems, Human Resources, Finance, Risk Management, and Facilities Design. The individual submissions were gathered and consolidated onto a division-wide template. The leadership then conducted a series of meetings to discuss and prioritize the services in a consensus-type format, making sure there was agreement in how the services were prioritized within the matrix.

CFR 1.3

CFR 4.2

CFR 4.6

## Results and Implementation

The result was documented in a division-wide services prioritization matrix that was developed, reviewed, and agreed upon by all directors in the division (Appendix K). The matrix was then submitted to the Administrative Affairs Vice President for further review and decision-making. One result was the elimination of the Facilities Management Interior Design positions, which had been serving as in-house consultants to various campus construction projects. Elimination of the positions allowed the division to meet the proposed reduction in operating expense in the short term, and the effective use of the process positioned the prioritization activity to further aid decision-making about potential cuts during this time of financial uncertainty.

## Prioritizing in University Advancement

Prioritizing within the division of University Advancement occurs on an ongoing basis, with an annual planning process in May - July each year followed by continuous attention to review and improvement throughout the year (see Appendix L). Priorities identified elsewhere in the university, as described above, also inform the work of the Advancement division by clarifying which campus programs and initiatives should receive priority attention in marketing and fundraising. The ongoing cycle of planning, setting of priority objectives, continuous review and improvement, and annual reporting has resulted in the implementation of major priority-driven actions. For example, cost savings from division reorganization efforts and from increasing the university radio station's reliance on underwriting and fundraising have been reinvested in fundraising programs, supporting the creation of a professional annual giving program and a planned giving program.

The result has been an increase in fundraising activity, a function that the CPR Visitation Team highlighted as becoming increasingly vital as state support weakens. The donor data base now has more than 87,800 constituent records, over 20,000 of which have been added in the last four years, including almost 5500 since July 2009. The number of alumni donors to HSU has more than doubled since 2004; at a current total of 3880, this represents a participation rate of 8.8 percent. Funds donated by parents have increased by 76 percent since last year. In the past three years (fiscal years 2007, 2008 and 2009), fundraising activity (excluding bequests) has raised \$10,889,078, a 36.5 percent increase over the previous three-year period, in spite of an extremely challenging economic climate. During this time, fundraising activity raised \$776,546 in unrestricted funds. During the first quarter of FY2010, we have already raised more than \$2.4 million.

The impact of fundraising is felt across the campus in funding that supports academic programs including seminars, guest speakers, and faculty research in areas as varied as redwood ecology, social work, and earthquakes. Student scholarships, campus technology projects, the First Street Gallery, and athletics programs are among the other areas that benefit from fundraising resources.

In regard to marketing, a campus-wide process in partnership with the consulting firm Noel Levitz produced a series of recommendations related to enrollment, a portion of which focused on marketing. A report was given to the campus in the fall of 2008 regarding the implementation of the marketing related recommendations and the outcomes of those actions (see Appendix M).

Additional refinement of campus-wide priorities across divisions would provide vital guidance to the advancement division in its planning and implementation of focused fundraising efforts. This is especially the case in the context of the university's upcoming centennial in 2013, with its potential to accelerate philanthropic support for the university.

### Realigning Institutional Structures to Facilitate Ongoing Improvement

CFR 3.8

Although the prioritization assessments described above were necessary to begin the process of resource realignment, several key institutional structures themselves required reorganization in order to sustain the alignment of resources with institutional purposes into the future. In particular, HSU has committed itself to an ongoing process of aligning its resources with its institutional purpose through fundamental changes in curriculum oversight, program review, and institutional research structure.

### Realigning Curriculum Oversight

CFR 3.11

The WASC CPR Visitation Team underlined the need for a more transparent and cohesive structure for overseeing curriculum processes such as planning and assessment. The Keeling & Associates report also strongly advised a restructuring of the HSU curriculum and academic planning processes. In response to these recommendations, the Provost appointed an ad hoc Curriculum Review Process (CRP) Working Group to address issues identified in these reports. The CRP group included four faculty members, one student, and three administrators. The charge to the group was to develop a new approach to curriculum review that accomplishes a number of goals: a) affirm faculty responsibility for curriculum content, program development, and recommendations regarding curricular resource priorities; b) define administrative and staff roles in curriculum review processes; c) coordinate, at the university level, the multiple components of curriculum review; and d) streamline and expedite review, feedback, documentation, and approval processes.

The CRP Working Group also affirmed a number of related concerns:

- Existing curriculum processes and structures had inhibited cross-college and university-oriented conversation on curricular changes as they are proposed. Instead, a system had developed in which each College planned in isolation from the other Colleges, a university-wide conversation occurred only at the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) level, and then only in some cases and after considerable work had gone into proposal design and review at the college level. Many curriculum proposals (e.g., new courses that were not General Education, program changes) were not routed through the UCC at all but went directly from the College level to the Vice Provost. Also, problems with curricular changes sometimes were not identified until they reached the Office of the Registrar.
- There were no standing faculty-based structures for university-wide academic planning in the form of an Academic Master Plan; further, no criteria existed for evaluating new program proposals in light of potential other uses of limited university resources.
- The learning outcomes (Departmental, Diversity and Common Ground, General Education and HSU Learning Outcomes) and related assessment processes had not yet been integrated into ongoing conversations around academic and curriculum planning. As noted in Chapter One, oversight for General Education curriculum and assessment was fractured, making such integration almost impossible.
- The UCC existed as an administrative committee, charged with making recommendations to the Academic Senate and with advising the Provost on various curricular matters. The Academic Senate was not directly involved with academic and curricular processes beyond policy documents.

The CRP Working Group met one to two days per week during most of the 2008-2009 academic year. The group reviewed a variety of academic planning models from other universities and discussed the range of processes and decisions involved. In particular, the group noted that different curricular processes operated in isolation from one another so that resource decisions were artificially segregated from curriculum structure decisions. The group then

CFR 1.3, 3.8, 3.11

developed a model to meet local needs and goals. Drafts of the proposed new structure, referred to as the Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC), along with the supporting documents, were shared with the campus community beginning in the early part of the Spring 2009 semester. College curriculum committees and the UCC had already been invited to comment on an earlier draft. The Senate ultimately approved the new ICC model in late spring and implementation began during the summer of 2009.

The ICC is integrated in several ways: first, it is integrated across colleges, with representation from all three. In effect, all three college curriculum committees have been combined. Second, the ICC is integrated across all levels of curricular responsibility – staff, faculty, and administration. Third, it is integrated across curricular functions, including academic master planning, program revision, course development, learning assessment, program review, and catalog revision. Core ICC membership comprises twelve faculty members, including a department chair and three members-at-large from each of the three colleges; five academic administrators (the Vice Provost, the three deans or their designees, the Director of Learning Assessment), the Registrar and a staff member from the Office of the Registrar, the Academic Programs office staff member who coordinates and tracks the processes, and two student representatives. This approach provides for collaborative decision making that incorporates faculty, student, staff, and administrative perspectives, content considerations, and resource information. It also provides a structure that supports developing a cohesive university focus – reducing redundancy, building a clear and cohesive GE program, and balancing GE with the needs of major programs.

The ICC is internally subdivided into three subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Course and Degree Changes (CDC), the Subcommittee on Program Planning and Assessment (PPA), and the Subcommittee on Academic Master Planning (AMP). Also, the Academic Policy Committee of the Academic Senate overlaps the structure of the ICC. The ICC sits as a “committee of the whole” every two weeks, with subcommittees meeting in the intervening weeks. All curricular proposals now enter the process through the Academic Programs office, allowing the ICC to track and coordinate curricular decisions. Proposals or other tasks are passed from the ICC to the appropriate subcommittees, which report their findings and recommendations to the ICC for any final deliberation. The ICC reports its recommendations to the Academic Senate for discussion and approval using a combination of business and consent calendars. Locating curricular oversight in the Academic Senate affirms the role of faculty and of shared governance in this central function of the university. Additional details on the structure and function of the ICC can be found in the ICC Constitution (Appendix N).

### **Rethinking Program Review**

The California State University system requires regular review of academic programs, but each campus determines the specific format of its reviews. Humboldt State University’s program review process has been revised several times in the past ten years (see Appendix O) for the 1997 and 2005 guidelines). Some of the changes to the process have included an adjustment of the cycle length from every five years to every seven years (1999), as well as the 2005 additions of a student learning assessment requirement, a two-year timeline for the review, and more specific guidelines and structure for the report.

Widespread dissatisfaction with program review processes remained, however, despite these changes. The purposes for program review were unclear, and delays of several years were common. Often the only direct result of a completed review was eligibility for one-time funding, the amount of which varied each year depending on how many reviews were completed that year. Given the length of the process, there was sometimes a lag time of three years or more between the time that a need for one-time funds was identified in the self-study and the time that the funding committee addressed the request. Some curricular and/or staffing changes were connected to the results of a Program Review, but such connection was neither required nor widely practiced.

When academic program prioritization was initiated in Spring 2007, the campus suspended regular program reviews, after consulting with our WASC staff liaison. The campus anticipated that whatever criteria would be adopted for the prioritization process would constitute suitable criteria for the next program review. To some degree that was correct, but the prioritization criteria took somewhat longer to develop than anticipated, and a sense emerged that additional information should be appended to departmental prioritization reports in order to serve as program reviews for those programs due to submit them upon resumption of the program review cycle. A set of supplementary criteria was developed, and a temporary program review process, utilizing the program prioritization reports along with the specified addenda, was approved by the Academic Senate and President Richmond in early Fall 2008 (Appendix P). Program reviews submitted in 2008-2009 followed this temporary process.

In the meantime, the Program Planning and Assessment subcommittee (PPA) of the Integrated Curriculum Committee is in the process of developing a new approach to program review. The PPA subcommittee set out to develop a process, timeline, and set of guidelines that will be more effectively incorporated into departmental routines and institutional decision making. The subcommittee began by considering such resources as the San José State University 2006 Revised Program Planning Guidelines, the draft “WASC Resource Guide for Outcomes-Based Program Review,” and the WASC “Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning Assessment into Program Reviews.” It is also able to draw upon a number of ongoing program review processes that are currently underway across the campus: the preparation of program proposals resulting from Academic Prioritization recommendations; the data analysis, planning, and subsequent curricular or pedagogical revisions made in connection with the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative, as described in Chapter 2; annual analyses of learning assessment results followed by corresponding program adjustments, as described in Chapter 1; and reviews based on the benchmarking and program viability measures developed by the college deans, which was initiated in the wake of budget challenges during Summer 2009. The goal is to have a new process integrating the most useful of these components, emphasizing program planning as the purpose for the reviews, in place for the 2010-2011 academic year. The PPA also consulted with the Academic Master Planning subcommittee, which is charged with developing criteria for approving new program proposals, so that the criteria for approving new programs and the criteria for reviewing existing programs will be in alignment.

CFR 4.4

### Realigning Institutional Research and Analysis Capacity

As the CPR Visitation Team noted, the university must expand its efforts in the area of institutional research in order to better support data-driven decision making. While we have a substantial history of providing student enrollment data, we have been deficient in performing deeper analysis and interpretation. There is a need to develop more focused data to contribute to policy and planning recommendations, and to better integrate data across the university. Further, the institutional research function should be identifiable throughout the university as the primary source of standard measures used for planning and benchmarking.

CFR 4.5

To meet these objectives, an Institutional Research Office is being formed during the 2009/10 academic year under the direction of the Provost. The initial personnel resources consist of the analyst staff (1.75 FTE), Research Technician (1.0 FTE), and Special Projects Coordinator (.5 FTE), currently within Academic Affairs. Additionally, there are plans to create a new full-time management-level director and clerical support position starting in the Spring 2010 term. The director will participate broadly in university planning activities and will articulate the key management questions for development of data and studies to support decision making. Within the student data realm, there is a long-standing working group of analysts and subject matter experts in Enrollment Management and Academic Affairs. This group will be expanded to include data experts for the areas of finance and human resources to address the areas where more access and integration of data is needed.

CFR 4.3

The Institutional Research Office will also take a more active role in supporting and coordinating various research efforts. This will include consultation and support for conducting surveys, as well as the development of a more

comprehensive data directory to assist the entire campus community in understanding how our data measures connect with business practices. The new research technician position will assist with survey research in addition to expanding the scope of data collection and presentation. The acquisition of survey tools will be investigated so that ad hoc and routine surveys are better supported.

CFR 2.10

Expanding existing mechanisms for student data reporting, the campus data web site will also provide a channel (request form) through which all data requests will be made. This gives the campus a clear method for making inquiries, ensures appropriate review and collaborative consultation, and helps avoid redundant work. This approach is currently operational for student data requests and publishing ([www.humboldt.edu/~anstud](http://www.humboldt.edu/~anstud)). The entire group of analysts and subject matter experts will regularly participate in collaboration meetings for planning and coordination purposes. They will also maintain routine electronic communications, sharing common data publishing methodology and documentation tools.

CFR 4.4

In order to supplement existing capacity while getting the new Institutional Research Office underway, the Provost retained the Hanover Research Council in Fall 2008 to assist in selected institutional research studies, particularly focusing on inter-institutional comparisons. Among several studies, the Hanover group has provided a peer selection methodology and an initial selection of peer institutions. To facilitate comparisons among our peers, we have compiled a data directory of on-line resources for each peer institution. (<http://www.humboldt.edu/~anstud/peers.shtml>). Institutional research capacity has also been augmented by the Educational Advisory Board, which prepared at our request a custom research brief on models for encouraging student participation in academic advising activities. This resource and other briefs obtained from the organization have informed recommendations regarding academic advising practices at HSU.

### **Prioritization as Adaptive Realignment**

CFR 3.8

Through prioritization, Humboldt State University has jump-started a new adaptive management approach to achieving its core institutional purpose. Prioritization not only provided much-needed initial data but also generated recommendations regarding both content and process for future data collection and analysis. Further, by changing the key structures for curriculum oversight, program review, and institutional research, HSU is establishing the mechanisms for collecting, analyzing and using data to sustain educational effectiveness. Finally, although neither the prioritization nor the restructuring efforts described in this chapter were undertaken specifically to address the current acute budget crisis, both efforts have enhanced HSU's ability to respond to the current budget situation quickly, efficiently and in a proactive rather than reactive manner. Indeed, this is the heart of adaptive management—planning to undertake change effectively and proactively rather than undertaking change reactively only when it is forced upon us.

**The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at different levels of the institution, and to revise institutional purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning, and scholarly work.**

WASC Standard Four

*As we change the way we do the work of education,  
we must at every step move towards expecting more, never less,  
of our students and of ourselves.*

**John Tagg,**  
*The Learning Paradigm College*

The identification of institutional priorities and the realignment of institutional structures and resources to support them facilitate ongoing evaluation and improvement. This chapter describes Humboldt State University's progress in developing the means for engaging in systematic evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The chapter also describes some of the results of such evaluation, as well as ways in which the results have been applied to the revision of purposes, structures, and approaches to institutional work.

### **Seeking External Guidance and Assistance**

The WASC CPR Visitation Team expressed concerns related to institutional culture, organizational structure, and management processes at HSU. The team described the governance and decision-making processes as "fragmented" and "complicated, cumbersome, and difficult to understand." They suggested that the budget process was too decentralized for a school of HSU's size and believed this played a role in a "silo attitude towards problem solving and organizational change."

CFR 4.1

The Visitation Team specifically recommended that HSU engage a third-party consultant to conduct a "comprehensive functional analysis (process re-engineering) of its budget development and management processes." In response, HSU hired Maddox Management Consulting, a firm specializing in strategic planning and financial management for higher education and nonprofit organizations, to assist with these issues. HSU also retained Keeling & Associates, LLC to conduct an assessment of institutional culture in order to further elucidate findings of the WASC CPR Visitation Team report and help us address issues related to governance, decision making, policies, and organizational structure.

Mr. David Maddox visited campus in October 2008 and again in January 2009. He reviewed key documents, met with participants and stakeholders in the budget processes, and developed a set of recommendations. In his final report (Appendix Q), Maddox made recommendations in four specific areas: effective strategic planning at multiple levels; availability of the right kind of information, in the right format; more effective communication; and group processes (which are tied to institutional culture issues).

CFR 4.2

In February 2009 HSU invited representatives of the major leadership groups involved with the budget process to attend an all-day retreat designed to prioritize and develop implementation plans for the Maddox recommendations. The implementation proposals were developed by small groups of the retreat participants. The groups were chosen to provide a variety of perspectives as well as input from key individuals. Each group worked on a different set of recommendations and then presented their implementation proposals to the full group. The topics were then prioritized and timeframes were assigned to each objective.

CFR 3.5

Several of the most important Maddox recommendations related to data and reporting have already been or are in the process of being implemented. For example, HSU created its first comprehensive “Budget Book” in January 2009. The Budget Book (see Appendix R), updated annually, reports on all sources of revenue and expenditures and includes ancillary organizations like the University Center, Associated Students, the Humboldt State University Advancement Foundation, and the Humboldt State University Sponsored Programs Foundation. Further, most of these auxiliary organizations have shifted to the common management system used for state funds. This has been an enormous task but will allow for all-funds accounting options.

In Spring 2009, a survey was administered among staff and faculty to gather input about communications related to the budget. The survey results directly contributed to the new communication plan developed for the campus and currently being implemented in Fall 2009 (see Appendix S for statistics indicating budget website use). The University Budget Office has also developed standardized monthly reports for each department, as well as quarterly management reports (with the latter available since October 2008). These reports will assist the university in tracking long-term trends and in making data-driven decisions about resource allocations.

As a result of the unprecedented financial challenge currently facing the CSU and HSU (discussed in more detail in a subsequent section of this report), a number of the other recommendations from the Maddox report have been temporarily delayed. However, once the budget reduction scenarios are set for this year, we expect that a new schedule will be developed to address the remainder of the recommendations.

CFR 4.1, 4.6

The Keeling and Associates team conducted a variety of on-site meetings, discussions, tours and interviews in Fall 2008, as well as phone consultations and data and documentation reviews. They identified a number of institutional challenges that include the lack of a shared institutional vision, the need for more effective decision-making, a lack of trust, and resistance to change. Their report also described conflicts between administration and faculty over shared governance. Most importantly, however, the Keeling and Associates report offered a set of key recommendations for how to move the campus forward. Several of these recommendations described a plan to enact a more collaborative approach to planning and decision-making on campus. In particular, they called for the formation of a Cabinet for Institutional Change to address the university governance system and restore trust, recommended that the cabinet comprise representatives of the faculty, staff, administration, and students, and offered a plan for the implementation of this cabinet. The university has followed the majority of these recommendations, as discussed below. The President and the Vice Presidents are in ongoing conversations with the academic senate about how shared governance on this campus can be improved.

The Keeling and Associates report also pointed to the internal communication challenges at HSU. In order to help improve communication skills for wrestling with difficult problems, the campus hosted a series of professional development workshops called “Fierce Conversations™” in Spring 2009. This series brought campus stakeholders together to practice a series of interactive communication methods designed to help foster truthful and open dialogue. The series offered a basic approach to Fierce Conversations, Team Communication, Coaching and Confrontation, and Accountability and Delegation. In all, 325 staff, students, faculty, and administrators attended all or some sessions within the series. The organizing staff collected comments from all attendees and provided a written summary of the comments to the Cabinet for Institutional Change.

### **Convening the Cabinet for Institutional Change**

CFR 4.1

The Cabinet for Institutional Change (CIC) was formed in early in the Spring 2009 semester, in response to issues raised during the current reaccreditation process and at the recommendation of Keeling & Associates. The Cabinet is charged with initiating comprehensive reforms at Humboldt State University, with the goal of making the institution more effective and responsive.

CFR 4.6

The Cabinet is working to develop specific approaches to five major areas of change, based on a variety of recent studies, reports and other feedback. These areas are university vision, collegiality, culture of evidence, student success, and campus governance. Focus groups within the Cabinet have been established to address each area. Moreover, the Cabinet is seeking broad engagement of faculty, students, staff, administrators and alumni. Here we discuss some of the Cabinet's progress.

### **Open Door for Campus Voices**

One of the initial acts of the Cabinet was to provide a venue for campus to participate in the discussion of change, share ideas, and provide feedback. While town hall-style meetings have been held on occasion, it was clear that the Cabinet could not meet with everyone in person. In order to provide a way for all campus stakeholders to contribute, the Marketing and Communications department created a Cabinet website, supplemented with an online community forum for open and accessible dialogue. This has allowed the Cabinet to post progress updates and has provided campus community members with a place to share their views and ideas. All suggestions, discussions, and comments are reviewed by the Cabinet, and many have been used to inform subsequent actions.

### **Vision**

CFR 3.5

This team conducted a university-wide open forum in May 2009 to collect feedback from staff, students, and faculty. The goal of the forum was to check the 'pulse' of campus and determine how stakeholders believe the campus vision can be more successfully implemented. Many informative ideas and observations emerged and are summarized on the Cabinet website (May 29, 2009 blog entry). Three main areas were identified as particularly needing to be aligned with our vision as we move forward: 1) our budgetary decisions; 2) university-level planning; and 3) university-level communications. A final set of specific recommendations will be shared with the campus in Fall 2009.

### **Collegiality**

CFR 4.6

The focus group for campus collegiality conducted an open session for campus in April 2009 to generate discussions and recommendations on four main topics: 1) communication on campus; 2) development of a more supportive campus culture; 3) improvement of interactions among all the various stakeholders; and 4) identification of the attributes of collegiality we expect and want to see on campus. As with the discussions of campus vision, the results of this session and the deliberations of the focus group are expected to be summarized in a set of specific recommendations to be presented in Fall 2009.

### **Culture of Evidence**

CFR 4.4

The major effort of this cabinet focus group has been to help guide the creation of an Office of Institutional Research, as described in Chapter Three. In response to recommendations from the WASC CPR Visitation Team and advice from outside consultants, a search has been initiated for the newly-created position of Director of Institutional Research. The search is expected to be completed in the Fall 2009 semester, with the Office of Institutional Research to become fully operational in Spring 2010.

### **Student Success**

CFR 1.2, 1.5, 3.5

The focus of this team is on evaluating and improving the success of all our students, including historically under-represented students. It draws upon the two initiatives HSU has been pursuing as a part of its WASC accreditation review process: HSU Student Learning Outcomes and Making Excellence Inclusive. The focus group is working to identify (or develop where necessary) curricular and co-curricular activities for achieving inclusive academic excellence and student learning outcomes. This effort includes the development of university-wide metrics for the

assessment of these activities, as well as student retention efforts (as discussed in Chapter 2, the recently-released “Dissecting Diversity at HSU” report provides some key baseline data). During Spring 2009, Student Success focus area leaders met with stakeholders across the campus and cataloged current campus efforts regarding the seven student learning outcomes and inclusive academic excellence. Upon review of campus community recommendations, the cabinet has identified the need for a campus-wide Enrollment Management Task Force. As also noted in Chapter 2, the Task Force has been appointed after the recommendation for membership of the Task Force and for developing recruitment and retention plans was vetted with the university’s department chairs, college deans, Academic Senate, Staff Council, Associated Students and Vice Presidents. The Enrollment Management Task Force will draft the enrollment and retention plans for campus-wide review and implementation in Spring 2010.

### **Campus Governance**

Campus governance continues to be the one of the most controversial and difficult challenges at HSU. As the Keeling and Associates report notes (see Appendix T), distrust and loss of confidence has been pervasive, not only between faculty and administration, “... but also within and among the faculty and its governance structures.” One example of how these multiple fractures have manifested themselves occurred in late Spring 2009, after the President proposed appointing the Interim Provost to the permanent position as recommended by Keeling and Associates. He had discussed the idea with a number of faculty, including all faculty members of the CIC, and with other leaders on campus, finding that most of them expressed support for making such an appointment without a national search, given the financial and organizational challenges facing the university. However, the Academic Senate and the Academic Senate Executive Committee both strongly favored conducting the national search. When the President followed through with his proposal, an emergency meeting of faculty was called and a vote of “no confidence” was passed. Of the 394 faculty eligible to vote, 128 voted in favor of a vote of “no confidence,” 4 voted against, and 2 abstained. CSU Chancellor Charles Reed was informed of the vote but continues to support the President, based on results of a recent external six-year review of the President. Chancellor Reed came to campus at the beginning of the Fall 2009 semester to confer with administrative and faculty leadership. Since then, the President and the Academic Senate have agreed to cooperate on strengthening shared governance.

Seeking effective ways to address the complex issues underlying HSU’s difficulties with governance, the Cabinet’s governance focus group met with governance bodies and leaders on campus from March through June of 2009. The focus group documented a substantial body of conversations and ideas that were collected campus-wide. In September 2009, the Cabinet convened with the President and the Academic Senate Executive Committee to urge all members to work together to move the campus toward a system of governance that allows open discussion of decisions and focuses on the best interests of the campus overall. During the current (2009-2010) academic year, Cabinet representatives have examined governance models generally considered effective at peer institutions, and they have invited representatives from San Diego State University and California State University at Long Beach to visit our campus and share information about their approaches to governance. Based on all this information, the Cabinet will develop a set of proposed changes to HSU’s governance model and vet them with the campus, which will then implement the changes.

### **Navigating the Budget Crisis**

As a result of the budget crisis in California, HSU must drastically reduce its budget, as well as seek increased levels non-state support. For the current (2009-2010) academic year, HSU faces a \$10.1M baseline reduction in state funding and an additional \$2.1M one-time funding reduction.

The President and Vice Presidents have developed a set of budget reduction principles that are tied to the university vision. One principle is that major budget reductions and reallocations be tied to the CSU system priorities and to

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campus priorities. Another principle states that, although HSU is reducing its budget, the institution must continue to work toward realizing its institutional vision. The priorities set forth in the guideline are student success, enrollment, WASC reaffirmation of accreditation, and revenue generation.

Although these financial challenges are unprecedented, HSU is fortunate to have recently engaged in a series of campus-wide reviews. The accreditation review process, the program prioritization results in each division, and the recommendations arising from the Maddox and the Keeling and Associates reviews have provided insights for the strategic planning and decision making that we must undertake in order to address our budgetary constraints. As mentioned previously, we have made progress on many recommendations from the consultants, and we are also realizing momentum in support of the institutional commitments we made as part of the WASC self-study. This work has positioned HSU to strategically modify, reorganize, reduce, or cut programs in ways that will make the institution stronger when it emerges from this crisis, as well as to identify priorities on which our fundraising team can focus its efforts. The institution is better-informed and better-prepared to make effective decisions than even a year ago.

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Because most faculty, staff, and administrative units across the CSU agreed to furloughs, providing a one-time budget reduction measure for AY 2009-10, HSU has time to plan how it will implement significant base budget reductions for AY 2010-11. A number of approaches are being taken, with divisions examining their plans for AY 2009-10 and their program prioritization results in order to make decisions for budget cuts. For example, student enrollment targets for HSU, as at other CSU campuses, are being set lower, which requires strategic decisions about which programs should be limited or reduced in size. At HSU, with academic prioritization underway, the resources that were expected to result from restructuring or eliminating programs evaluated as having a low priority are being absorbed by budget shortfalls rather than becoming available for augmenting other programs, as initially intended. Additional metrics are also being used to determine program viability and guide decisions regarding resource allocation or reduction through benchmarking comparisons with other institutions on such measures as numbers of majors, student-faculty ratios (SFRs), number of units required, and program graduation rates.

### **Extending Quality Improvement in Administrative Affairs**

When the WASC CPR visit was concluded, the feedback directed HSU to provide data for Quality Improvement (QI) work conducted in Administrative Affairs. At the time of the Capacity and Preparatory Review, the Division had completed an analysis of strengths, weaknesses opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and had formed several project teams to focus on improving various services on campus. Each team focused on one or more of the following themes: customer service, communication, integrity, efficiency, and campus image.

### **Building Data Capacity and Using Evidence to Focus Improvement Efforts**

One of the cultural challenges with this enterprise was getting teams and departments to begin tracking their services. Project teams measured data on campus building security, enrollment applications for specific departments, training registration trends, and service satisfaction rates. Each team learned some basis for measurement of quality improvement projects. Of the teams that committed to improvements initially, many became inactive. Although some teams lost momentum and became inactive, the ones that prevailed were able to demonstrate the value of the improvement process and methods. Some key successes are described below.

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### **Improving Business Information Services**

The acquisition and retrieval of important information is critical to effective assessment. In order to support such data management, the Administrative Information Systems (AIS) department team developed and built a service

request database and delivery system, nicknamed “En Fuego.” The system was designed primarily to improve service, but also allowed the acquisition of service metrics and assessment of customer satisfaction levels. Administrative Affairs users in need of technical support are able to submit a request for help at any time, but can also identify the level of severity or importance of their problem. This approach facilitates work prioritization for the Business Information Services (BIS) department, now Administrative Information Services (AIS), as support personnel can see all requests and their priority and can accept the work based on their expertise, ensuring that critical service issues are not dependent on a single resource. The department continues to serve users via telephone, email, and in-person requests, but the use of the “En Fuego” tool has increased significantly and become a mainstream part of AIS operations.

After six months, the department conducted a survey with existing users of the tool to determine the satisfaction level with department services overall. The results reflect an overwhelming appreciation of and satisfaction with service levels and staff courtesy, expertise, and professionalism. The survey also confirmed that the service delivery tool was working to accomplish what the team intended: timely and efficient response, resolution, and communication to allow users to continue working.

### **Using Data to Monitor Website Effectiveness**

In Spring 2008, trainers started to teach departments how to use a free internet service called Google Analytics. This technology allows departments to assess how their website is being utilized by visitors by tracking a variety of metrics and data points. Plant Operations, Human Resources, Finance and Budget, Administrative Information Services, the Oceanography department, and Training & Professional Development sites are able to use the reports to help understand the needs of online visitors and plan site improvements.

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### **Lowering Costs and Improving Quality with Team Projects and Assessment**

In 2008, a survey of campus managers in Administrative Affairs revealed that the Student Assistant Payroll process was in need of attention. Based on the survey results and consultation with Finance and Payroll managers, a team was assembled to determine the root cause of the gaps in this student payroll process. The team interviewed several campus departments that hire, train, and utilize student assistant workers. The team discovered that the Student Assistant Time Voucher form was causing too many errors, simply because of the form’s design. The team committed to changing the student payroll form to see if this would diminish the number of errors. The Payroll department notes that the estimated fraction of vouchers with errors has been reduced from about 1/3 to 1/6 with the new form, a substantial improvement and increase in efficiency.

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In May and November of 2008, the CSU System-wide Quality Improvement program provided training for the Malcolm Baldrige-based approach called “Excellence in Higher Education” to all Quality Improvement professionals. The program showed promise as a more relevant approach to quality improvement than the previous business-oriented approach because it was tailored specifically to higher education needs. The HSU Quality Improvement analyst attended the May training and then presented the materials to campus stakeholders at Humboldt upon returning. Based on interest from various campus departments, eight campus employees attended the November session. Three departments have subsequently begun or completed an EHE assessment and planning project: the Advising Center, Human Resources, and the newly-formed Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

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### **Revising Institutional Approaches to Teaching and Learning**

The support of student learning is the focus of both themes chosen by HSU: the identification and development of student learning outcomes and the effective support of students from underrepresented groups.

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In order to strengthen the resources available to help campus educators in these efforts, a new Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) was established in July 2008. Formed by bringing together the former Courseware Development Center staff and the Faculty Development/Communication Across the Curriculum Coordinator, CELT supports and guides the university community in fostering engaged, inclusive, and continuous learning. In June 2009, the half-time Faculty Associate for Assessment joined the team. A search for a new Director of Learning Assessment, to coordinate assessment efforts campus-wide and provide leadership for the Center, was unsuccessful in spring 2009. As a result, management of the Center remains with the Vice Provost for the time being; however, the search has been initiated again this year.

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Emphasizing the development of ongoing relationships with campus educators for the purpose of improving student learning, the CELT team uses a variety of evidence and input to plan its services and events. CELT collaborates with the Faculty Development Advisory Committee, a standing subcommittee of the Academic Senate, to explore options in programming. CELT also utilizes annual Faculty Interest Survey results, aggregates and analyzes event evaluation data, and monitors participation in events, in consultations, and in the resources provided on the Center's dynamic, interactive website.

One example of sustained support is the series of two Writing Plan Implementation Workshops offered in February and April 2009 to assist with the implementation of the policy for improving student writing. The Faculty Development/Communication Across the Curriculum Coordinator invited Carol Holder, who facilitated both of the workshops, to provide departments with assistance in identifying how they could best implement the new approach in ways that address their programmatic goals. Continuing this support, assessment workshops in the fall and spring will further assist departments as they prepare to assess and improve the writing of students in their programs.

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As another example, in May 2009, funding from the Provost, the College of Natural Resources and Sciences, and the Office of Academic Programs and Undergraduate Studies enabled CELT to organize a Learning and Teaching Institute, with keynote and workshop by Craig Nelson in addition to workshops facilitated by campus experts. Drawing upon the scholarship of teaching and learning, evolutionary biologist Craig Nelson described how standard classroom practices can routinely get in the way of student learning, especially among students from traditionally underrepresented groups, and he stressed the responsibility that we have for changing such practices. In addition to surveying participants before and after the event, a unique "My Notes" form printed on NCR paper allowed CELT staff to collect copies of participant notes in order to identify specific changes that participants intended to make as a result of the Institute. They will follow up with reminders, resources, and offers of assistance.

As part of the HSU Training Collaborative (see below), CELT also works with other campus trainers to collaborate on initiatives that are important to the university. For example, various types of training required to make materials accessible, as necessitated by the Accessible Technology Initiative, are being developed collaboratively by staff in CELT, Human Resources, and the Student Disability Resource Center. Similarly, planning for the upcoming Professional Development Day for Diversity involves CELT staff and Human Resources staff, as well as DPAC members.

The CELT staff is also responding to the unfolding budget crisis in a number of ways. Because class sizes are being increased, for example, CELT has developed quick-reference materials to assist faculty with implementing active learning strategies in large classes. Planning is also underway for other course transformation efforts, including the development of hybrid classroom/online courses to enhance campus capacity and scheduling flexibility while guiding the design of effective learning experiences.

**Coordinating HSU Training and Professional Development**

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In Fall 2008 the Humboldt State Training and Professional Development Collaborative (TPDC) was developed, representing an effort to cross division lines and enhance institutional capacity to conduct training and to track and measure training effectiveness. This self-organized group began with the intent of various campus training professionals to determine if resources, knowledge, and tools could be employed more effectively. The first group project was to identify and adopt a shared, central training registration tool. Requirements were developed, models were researched, and tools were identified that could capture meaningful metrics and patterns of training and professional development at HSU. The group consulted with managers in their respective divisions; as a result, a Memorandum of Understanding among Information Technology Services (ITS), Human Resources, and AIS allowed the group to proceed further with the project and implement the tools that best met the criteria.

The university now has the capacity to develop a historical perspective on seminars, training, and professional development, allowing for an assessment of what training has accomplished, what the critical needs are, and what can be done to improve resources, content, and collective professional learning on campus. The value of the registration and communication tools was demonstrated recently when furlough-specific information, policy, payroll changes, and management classes were quickly made available to the campus community. Data about which groups are being served, and to what degree their needs are being met, will shape future offerings.

**Learning, Changing, and Moving Forward in Difficult Times**

CFR 4.1

In collecting and discussing evidence that indicates how well HSU is accomplishing its institutional purposes, the campus learns where changes should be made. Developing the processes for actually making such changes, however, is more difficult. Paradoxically, while the budget situation in some ways exacerbates this difficulty, it also makes action unavoidable. At a time when maintaining the status quo is not an option, the questions that remain are these: which actions will the campus decide to take, and on what basis will those decisions will be made?

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In this context, HSU is striving to base its decisions on what it is learning through the systematic collection of evidence. In such disparate areas as achieving fiscal transparency, managing large-scale institutional change, improving the quality of administrative functions, increasing the amount of external funding, and supporting the enhancement of student learning, the university is making concrete progress toward consistent, evidence-based improvement.

## A Reflection on the Accreditation Review Process

### **A Reflection on the Accreditation Review Process**

We entered the reaccreditation process over four years ago, identifying the two themes on which our institutional self-study has subsequently centered. Together, both themes have consistently directed the university community's attention to our core institutional purpose of producing student learning, and they have highlighted the complex ways in which institutional resources, practices, and structures must align in order to foster educational effectiveness.

One theme focused on the HSU educational experience, about which we sought to answer three questions: (1) What are the core academic expectations for HSU students? (2) Are these core academic expectations being met by HSU students? (3) Are HSU students achieving proficiency in written communication skills? We have successfully addressed (1) through the development of the seven institutional learning outcomes. When we discovered through a coordinated assessment effort that the answer to (3) was that too many students were not achieving proficiency, we were able to use the assessment results to develop – and support implementation of – a policy integrating writing into the outcomes and assessment cycles of major programs. We have only partially answered (2), though initial assessment results have already provided guidance for subsequent curricular and instructional revisions. The institutionalization of ongoing learning assessment has been a long-standing challenge for the university, but, as part of the accreditation review process, we have built capacity for collecting meaningful assessment evidence in ways that answer significant questions about student learning. We are working to arrive at an explicit understanding of the connections among program, general education, co-curricular, and institutional outcomes and their assessment. We have tried a variety of assessment methods; some have worked well, while others have not. These efforts, and the lessons learned from them, will be better coordinated now that responsibility for oversight of learning outcomes assessment processes has been located in a more centralized curricular body. Most critical to our improvement in this vital area will be the forthcoming hire of a Director of Learning Assessment to provide guidance for HSU's assessment and learning improvement efforts.

The second theme focused on three additional questions: (1) Which program areas at HSU are most successful at retaining and graduating underrepresented students? (2) What are the “best practices” that characterize program areas that are successful in supporting access and success of underrepresented students? (3) How can these and other “best practices” be used to facilitate underrepresented students' access, persistence, academic achievement, and graduation in other program areas at HSU? We have been able to answer (1) through the disaggregation of student data and (2) through consultation with key departments and programs. Question (3) is currently being addressed through a cascading program involving academic departments and other units which are selecting “best practices” to implement. The campus, as well as these departments and units, have begun to develop and implement strategies aimed at long-term, sustained improvement. We will continue to track disaggregated measures of student success to determine what is working and where.

Throughout the review process, the university has wrestled with long-term organizational and cultural challenges. These have included the lack of a shared institutional vision and direction, a need for more effective decision making, mistrust in various forms and at various levels, and pervasive organizational silos. Each of these challenges has presented its own set of barriers; however, they are also interconnected. Fundamentally, HSU was faced with the need to plan as a community and to act more collectively, with the well-being of the university as a primary goal.

Over the course of the accreditation review process, we have made progress in organizational renewal. One of the most visible achievements in this regard is the convening of a cross-divisional Cabinet for Institutional Change (CIC) charged specifically with developing new approaches to address some of our most persistent and difficult challenges. This body intentionally and successfully transcends the silos identified in the CPR Visitation Team's report. It has not only worked toward the goal of addressing specific challenges, but along the way it also has sought to model some general processes that other campus groups could use for finding collaborative solutions to

## A Reflection on the Accreditation Review Process

dilemmas that tend to divide us. Another substantial achievement in organizational renewal is the restructuring of curricular oversight through the development of a new Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC), now reporting directly to the Academic Senate. It, too, transcends organizational silos, integrating perspectives across colleges and divisions, and fostering collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators. Both the CIC and the ICC are working toward removing some of the barriers to effective planning and collective action.

Program prioritization processes, which were conducted in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administrative Affairs, and Advancement, constitute major steps toward clarifying and communicating institutional focus. While this was planned in advance of the current California state budget crisis, the timing was fortuitous: by the time the dimensions of our budget reductions were known, we had already developed sets of relative priorities to provide direction as additional cuts become necessary.

In the same vein, substantial improvements in the transparency of budget and business processes, along with an institutional commitment to providing broad access to common sets of data, are beginning to inform decision making and improve trust on campus. Quality Improvement and Excellence in Higher Education efforts, which have now expanded beyond Administrative Affairs, have resulted in the demonstrated enhancement of workflow and priority setting in several units.

Humboldt State University has engaged in the sequential accreditation review process with the intention of assessing our current effectiveness and sustaining long-term success as an educational institution. In developing the Institutional Proposal, we placed student learning at the heart of the review process. In the course of the Capacity and Preparatory Review, we were able to clarify the key components of an HSU education and identify ways to remove barriers that were preventing too many students from achieving success. However, we also found ourselves lacking components of institutional infrastructure that we needed in order to fulfill our core commitment to educational effectiveness. It became clear that we needed to clarify institutional priorities and reallocate resources in order to support those priorities. Progress in this area has been swift, resulting in new institutional investments in Institutional Research, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and assessment efforts.

In proceeding through the Educational Effectiveness Review, then, we not only collected and analyzed evidence of our current effectiveness, we also developed new structures, resources, and processes to sustain and improve our educational effectiveness in the years to come.