

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM  
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To: Humboldt State University

February 3-5, 2010

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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

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**HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**  
**TEAM REPORT**  
**March 4, 2010**

**SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

**A. Description of Institution and Visit**

Humboldt State University (HSU) is a member of the California State University system. Its origins are in the Progressive Movement that emerged in the U.S. around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1913 California Governor Hiram Johnson signed the law establishing Humboldt State Normal School for the training and education of teachers and others in the art of instruction and governance of the public schools of the state. In 1921 this fledgling institution was renamed the Humboldt State Teachers College. The college began offering civilian pilot training in 1939, followed by a time in which World War II had a significant impact. Owing at least in part to the military training that took place in Humboldt County and the number of service personnel assigned there, courses of instruction included such things as “*Wartime Conversational French*,” “*Commando Physical Fitness*,” and “*The War Today*.”

In 1950 Cornelius H. Siemens, for whom the current administration building is named, became the president and served for 23 years. Much of the physical campus was built on his watch. For example, in 1957 five buildings were dedicated: the gymnasium, art and home economics building, wildlife building and facilities, music building, and the home management cottage. In 1968 more buildings were dedicated: the administration and business building (now Siemens Hall), language arts, the field house, the natatorium, a cafeteria, the health center, Redwood Hall men’s residence and Sunset Hall women’s residence.

The institution changed its name again in 1972 to California State University, Humboldt. In 1974, the same year Alistair McCrone was appointed president, the name was changed again to Humboldt State University or HSU.

HSU has a tradition of long serving presidents. In its 95-year history there have been only six presidents. Alistair McCrone honored that tradition by serving 28 years until 2002 when its current President Rollin C. Richmond took office.

HSU currently employs 490 faculty (287 full-time and 203 part-time including lecturers and instructors who teach different course loads) and 654 staff (540 full-time and 114 part-time), and enrolls approximately 7,800 students (6,869 undergraduate and 931 post-baccalaureate). It has a direct annual operating budget of roughly one hundred million dollars and another fifty million dollars is managed by HSU through auxiliary entities such as for the student residence halls, parking garages and other activities.

The University's most recent reaffirmation of accreditation was granted in 1998. Since that time, HSU has submitted an Interim Report (2000), a Proposal for the current review process (2006), and a Capacity and Preparatory Report (2007). HSU hosted a CPR visit in 2008, and thereafter submitted an Educational Effectiveness Report (2009) which led to the visit from February 3 to 5, 2010. This report reflects on all these events with primary emphasis on the 2009 EER and the 2010 visit.

The members of the 2010 Site Visiting Team (SVT) were:

- Gerald L. Bepko (Team Chair), IUPUI Chancellor Emeritus and IU Trustee Professor
- Gail G. Evans (Assistant Chair), Dean of Undergraduate Studies, San Francisco State University
- Phillip L. Doolittle, Executive Vice President/COO, University of Redlands
- George Morten, Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs, CSU, Channel Islands
- Mary E. Savina, Professor of Geology and Director of Archaeology, Carleton College

Gerald Bepko, Phillip Doolittle, Gail Evans and George Morten were also members of the Capacity and Preparatory Review in 2008.

### **B. Humboldt State University's Educational Effectiveness Review Report: Alignment with the Proposal and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report**

HSU's EER Report is well conceived, well written, well supported by accessible documentation, and generally aligned with the Proposal. The deviations, if any, from the Proposal are healthy and positive since they derive from recommendations made following the CPR visit. The two themes articulated in the Proposal have been retitled to reflect a slightly broader focus while maintaining their original intent:

**Theme 1 (Proposal) – Core Academic Expectations for HSU Students**

**Theme 1 (EER) – Understanding the Student Learning We Produce**

**Theme 2 (Proposal) – Ensuring Academic Success for Traditionally Underrepresented Students**

**Theme 2 (EER) – Making Excellence Inclusive**

The 2010 EER Report has included two additional essays to address issues that were identified during the accreditation process by HSU leadership. This was based in part on suggestions made in the 2008 Report of the Site Visiting Team (SVT). The inclusion and focus of these two additional essays seems an entirely positive development directed at addressing HSU's challenges. They are:

**Essay 3 - Realigning Resources and Institutional Structures**

**Essay 4 - Engaging in Organizational Learning and Improvement**

Although these essays emerged as part of the WASC process, they are based on years of reflection on strategic issues, planning, and the effort to deal with change. There seems a naturally generated energy and focus which came to the surface in connection with the 2008 visit. Thereafter, a talented thirteen member EER Steering Committee, which included faculty,

staff, administrators and students, prepared the entire EER Report including these two new essays.

### **C. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review**

The Commission action letter following the CPR (June 25, 2008) “emphasized the importance of continued progress in the following areas cited at the end of the team report: 1) assessment of the seven outcomes of an HUS education, the majors, and general education; 2) use of data to create a culture of evidence and improve decision making across the curriculum, particularly in support of the strategic plan; 3) progress in the ‘Making Excellence Inclusive’ initiative; and 4) establishment of priorities, as well as alignment of resources, and creation of decision-making processes to support those priorities.”

The SVT found that significant progress has been made. The efforts of the HSU community since the CPR are remarkable. Nothing that is said here about work yet to be done should detract from the praise intended by the SVT for HSU’s diligence, hard work, creativity, and commitment to the challenges outlined in the CPR. Nevertheless, the work that HSU has undertaken is still in progress. This is something that must be viewed in the context of the 2008 Commission letter which stated, “HSU has a history of beginning such efforts (assessment) but failing to sustain them.” While HSU’s efforts deserve congratulations, this historical pattern and the fact that so much appears to be emerging at this time, suggests that questions still remain about whether the infrastructure for educational effectiveness has been fully developed (CFRs 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8), whether the campus community as a whole has used data to create a culture of evidence to improve decision making across the institution (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6), whether significant progress has been made toward embracing Inclusive Excellence across campus (CFRs 1.5, 3.2), and whether the institution has established a pattern of using institutional research capabilities to support data-driven decision-making (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3).

## **SECTION II – EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER WASC STANDARDS**

### **A. Evaluation of the Institution’s Educational Effectiveness Inquiry**

The SVT found that the educational effectiveness inquiry at Humboldt State University was well-directed, addressed issues that are critical to the institution’s culture and current planning and priorities, and addressed difficult questions that focused on prevailing values at HSU. The review involved members from all sectors of the campus community. Overall, the Team found the campus to be focused on making very difficult decisions during these challenging times. The economic crisis in California has had a profound effect on both HSU and the CSU in general. The administration has embraced an evidence-based approach to planning and change, and many of the faculty are moving in that direction, as well. Nevertheless, there are significant numbers of programs that have not yet developed a culture of evidence to support decision-making as is explained in the following discussion of the four themes of the EER.

#### **Understanding the Student Learning We Produce**

The first essay (theme), “Understanding the Student Learning We Produce,” defines HSU’s core institutional purpose as the production of student learning, and it describes the improved understanding of the need for meaningful learning assessment and the process for implementing it. The essay addresses the progress that has been made in identifying, coordinating, and assessing student learning outcomes across various levels: institutional outcomes, general education outcomes, degree program outcomes, and co-curricular outcomes (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.11, 3.4, 3.7, 3.5, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8).

#### **The Evidence**

The team examined the data included in Essay 1 and many of the associated documents collected as appendices. These included an Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators for

General Education and degree programs (EER required exhibits); a preliminary alignment of the seven HSU Outcomes with outcomes of General Education and programs (Appendix B); a report of the EER Steering Committee, assessing the general state of institution-wide fulfillment of these HSU outcomes and proposing an “Outcomes Assurance Task Force” as a next step (Appendix C); a General Education Assessment Report for 2008-09 (Appendix D); learning outcomes and models for GE (<http://www.humboldt.edu/~ugst/learningoutcomes/>); and a university-wide policy on writing outcomes (Appendix E). Since the CPR, HSU has also implemented a system for measuring student achievement in terms of recruitment, retention, and completion within programs.

While on-site, three members of the team interviewed faculty members of the English, Mathematics and Nursing departments to assess the program review process. Further comments on Program Review are set forth in Section II B near the end of this Report. The team also met with campus leaders in faculty development, curriculum oversight, and assessing and improving academic programs.

The institution’s educational objectives are consistent with its statement of purpose cited in the EER report. The essay and associated documents indicated that HSU has taken to heart the need for assessment of student learning outcomes at multiple levels, including institution-wide for general education requirements and at the program and department level. Following the CPR review in 2008, the institution learned from its study of Theme I that:

- there is value in periodically rethinking the institution’s vision and purpose and the way in which it aligns with the curriculum, learning outcomes and institutional structures;
- student success must be inclusive and integrated across the various units and levels of the institution;

- uneven attention was given to the seven HSU Outcomes by degree and co-curricular programs;

While the institution has grown considerably as a result of its self-assessment, it still has a distance to go before assessment and evidence-driven decision-making are fully embraced by its faculty and staff.

The seven student learning objectives are specific, distinctive, and assessable (CFRs 1.6, 1.7). They form a good basis for defining the nature of the institution, what should be accomplished in General Education, and how curricula and requirements could be aligned (CFR 2.9). Student learning outcomes have been developed for all GE requirements and for the majority of HSU programs (48/52; CFR 2.3). Learning outcomes are also being developed for all co-curricular areas. Most undergraduate majors (36 of 42) submitted assessment reports in either or both of the academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08. Several departments are now starting a second cycle of data collection (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10). We heard from some departments and other working groups that access to student work and tangible assessment data produced “AHA” moments and productive discussions that resulted in curricular change. For these groups, the assessment cycle is coming full circle, appears to be moving toward sustainability within those programs and is increasingly understood as “part of what faculty do.” Equally important, a decentralized campus academic climate characterized by entrepreneurial individuals and departments (in some form of silos) is transitioning to a campus where there’s more knowledge about common interests and wider institutional needs. The formation of the Integrated Curriculum Committee as the central place for academic decision-making, replacing several independent groups, is a case example of the positive results of what can happen when disparate groups share in the decision-making together. Thus, there are indications that a “culture of evidence” is emerging at HSU. Additional tangible indications of institutional support are new

hires in Assessment and Institutional Research. **The visiting team concludes that HSU has made a good start on understanding student learning since the CPR review, particularly in building additional institutional capacity and frameworks for these efforts.**

However, while HSU defined seven Student Outcomes, they have not provided concrete evidence as to whether or not students are meeting these outcomes. In fact, the Educational Effectiveness Review Steering Committee (EERC) concluded in April 2009 “the university cannot, at present, guarantee that all HSU students engage with all seven HSU SLOs.” (EERSC report, Appendix C). There is little in the Essay One report to suggest that student learning results are **currently** being systematically and universally assessed and that the assessments are being used to improve learning and teaching. Annual assessment reports compiled by departments and programs do not seem to be used to assess success on institutional outcomes. The EER Report is filled with suggestions that momentum has begun to build toward a university-wide commitment to use assessment evidence in decision making. These welcome suggestions, in phrases like “...we have begun to...” and “...we are gradually shifting away from...”, do not yet constitute substantive results.

The February 2009 program prioritization report noted “a lack of consistent learning outcomes data” that could be used for the prioritization. Department and program student learning outcomes and assessment measures vary widely in quality and assessability. The relative absence of reliance on student portfolios, senior theses and the like indicates continuing need to refine where the outcomes are measured and how they are recognized. Most faculty and administrators we talked with suggested that general education assessment is still nascent – and that the attempts at GE assessment so far indicate a real need for revision of the GE requirements. The first report on GE Assessment (University Curriculum Committee report on Assessment; Appendix D) notes the variable quality of the assessment work and reporting done

for the first time in 2008-09. The outcome measures devised for GE are a good first start, but as of now, they are phrased in a general way, without specific indications of either what evidence has been/will be collected to assess them or what that evidence will show. Departments and programs continue to need help making sustainable assessment schedules (of undergraduate and graduate programs, service and GE courses, institutional and department learning objectives) and maintaining the momentum that has been started.

An example of a university-wide effort for one of the primary questions in Theme One is student writing, and yet the EER Report acknowledges that “only a handful (of programs) have...” assessed student writing. The fact that only a “handful” have assessed student writing suggests that, no matter how well HSU has performed in the past two years, there is still work to do in this area – work which was to be a primary focus of the WASC 2010 Educational Effectiveness Review.

Given HSU’s preliminary and mixed results of assessment, including the seven HSU outcomes, GE outcomes, and program outcomes, it is difficult to reach substantive conclusions about whether student learning has improved. In Essay 1, the institution candidly acknowledges as much. It is particularly hard to tell how deeply the new systems are embedded – because they are new, because they seem to be additions to structures already present (rather than replacements), and because it’s not clear which are permanent and which are temporary. While learning outcomes were developed for general education and most majors, just 56% of all programs reported assessment of their program outcomes or that they made improvements as a result of their assessments.

Ideally, student learning outcomes and their assessment should be at the center of decision-making for HSU and should at least be taken into account in deliberations on such things as prioritization and benchmarking. While the choice of criteria for prioritization may go

beyond the scope of the WASC EER, it is notable that defined learning outcomes apparently were not included in the process of prioritizing academic and co-curricular programs for purposes of resource allocation and determining program viability (CFRs 3.8, 4.2, 4.4). This seems another area for potential development and alignment. Before HSU reaches the next stage of its development of learning measurements it will be important to engage in and report analysis of the role of learning measurements in such deliberations as prioritization and possibly even the work of the Cabinet for Institutional Change, the Enrollment Advisory Committee and other important decision-making bodies on campus. This is important not only for the validity and efficacy of decision-making, but also is a signal to units on campus of the importance of the assessment of learning outcomes – an importance that seems to be asserted in the CPR and EER essays.

Compared to the situation during the CPR review, HSU shows additional building of capacity for assessing and understanding student learning, as discussed above. However, the institution is still at the early stages of developing an ability to evaluate the results of student learning assessment and make use of data derived from this work. It's clear from the matrix of Indicators of Educational Effectiveness that some programs are completing the assessment cycle by adjusting their curricula and course content based on assessment results and they deserve great credit for their advances in this direction. However, on an institutional level, indicators of success do not seem to be built into newly implemented plans, strategies, and activities (e.g., in all of the five focus areas of the Report and Recommendations of the Cabinet for Institutional Change and in assessing coordination and cooperation within and across divisions to achieve the institution's educational objectives). Similarly, alignment of curriculum requirements and assessment of student learning outcomes at various levels is still a work in progress.

HSU is making good, if slow and uneven progress on understanding student learning, with some apparent regressions along the way. It is likely that the problems of deteriorating resources for California higher education will place new and additional stresses on this progress. Nevertheless, it should be HSU's goal to have assessment plans for all programs, to have collected assessment data on their SLOs, and to have used those data to adjust their teaching and curriculum. HSU should have evidence that the assessment of SLOs on all levels plays an important role in university decision-making, including in places such as the Integrated Curriculum Committee and the Cabinet for Institutional Change. The ultimate goal should be to create a culture of evidence and learning with the use of the tools under development.

The progress on educational assessment made by individual faculty, departments and programs at HSU in the last several years is part of a change in the academic culture on campus. The SVT heard from several HSU faculty and staff about a move toward collective decision-making and responsibility for student learning. The faculty development programs at HSU, centered in the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and also including a Faculty Associate for Assessment, deserve great credit for the work they have done supporting faculty and helping build momentum across campus.

### **Making Excellence Inclusive**

In its EER Report HSU developed a second theme titled "Making Excellence Inclusive." It focuses on encouraging academic excellence for traditionally underrepresented students by focusing on access, persistence, and graduation. This grew out of a theme expressed in HSU's CPR Essays initially titled, "*Ensuring Academic Success for Underrepresented Minorities.*" In line with these perspectives, HSU adopted the Association of American Colleges and Universities' "Making Excellence Inclusive" initiative which offers a framework for organizational change and guidelines for achieving "inclusive excellence." Several outcomes

were identified by HSU: 1) developing multiple plans for improving access, retention, and graduation rates for underrepresented students, 2) developing and incorporating in the plan measurable process and outcomes objectives, and 3) applying what was learned in individual programs to improve the success of other programs (CFR 1.5).

In May of 2008, the CPR SVT and the Commission letter acknowledged the positive work that had been done on this initiative and made several recommendations for continued progress. The Commission asked that the campus provide clear evidence in the EER report that substantial progress was being made in accomplishing the objectives outlined in the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative. Specifically, the Commission asked that the campus:

- provide a report on its cascading activities;
- draw on student performance assessment data to support the success of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds;
- demonstrate that a significant amount of activity has been generated;
- provide proof of the beginnings of measurable data, as well as projected data to judge educational effectiveness;

### **The Evidence**

HSU's EER Report includes responses to these questions and extensive evidence in three parts or pieces to document progress. The first piece comprises a set of MEI Plans which provide five examples of Three-Year Plans for Making Excellence Inclusive. While the five plans address diversity issues particular to the individual departments, all programs were asked to focus their reviews around four research areas and to include in their reports measurable process and outcome objectives. The four research areas were:

1. Observation/issues identified by department
2. Questions to be answered in relation to issues

3. Practices that could be implemented to address the situation
4. Ways of measuring effectiveness of implemented practices

This evidence clearly addresses the Commission's request that a significant amount of activity be generated on the MEI plan and presented for the EER team's review.

The second piece of evidence is a report commissioned by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs titled, *Dissecting Diversity for HSU*. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, along with other campus units responsible for collecting and processing diversity information, was asked to work with Analytic Studies Group to draft a report to help assess how well the campus meets its diversity goals. The report contains data on several key indicators of campus diversity on both institution and department program levels (CFR 4.1). For example, the report includes data on the campus ethnic composition and several sets of disaggregated data on student access, retention, and graduation rates; GPA and drop-out rates; and demographic characteristics of, and equity across, faculty and staff (CFR 2.10). This is an excellent example of a collection of high quality disaggregated data that WASC encourages institutions to generate for assessing performance; more specifically, it directly addresses the Commission's requests that 1) the university draw on student performance assessment data to support the success of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and 2) that the university provide proof of the beginnings of measurable data, as well as projected data to judge educational effectiveness.

A third and final piece of evidence is a list compiled by the Theme II Action Team of best practices and activities shown to be effective at improving the success of HSU underrepresented students. Some of the practices focus on community building and outreach, others on ways of improving inclusion and academic excellence, and still others on improving student retention and graduation rates. The expectation is that this list will expand as new

programs are reviewed and new best practices are identified and shared across departments. This addresses the Commission's request for a report on HSU's cascading activities.

All of the evidence presented for review was appropriate and relevant to Making Excellence Inclusive and the data found in the *Dissecting Diversity* report was particularly noteworthy. The methods used to compile and analyze the data were exceptional. Similar good quality was also evident in the approach used to create and disseminate the list of best practices for improving student success. Finally, the MEI Sample Plans incorporated good methodology and showed potential for producing good results.

While these are all positive steps there is work yet to be done in gathering evidence. As HSU continues its efforts it would seem important to have more granular or disaggregated data. It would be constructive if a profile was developed for each department showing how it fared on each element of access, retention, and graduation rates. Most departments in the examples only addressed one or two of the elements and few if any departments set forth end goals for each element or any incremental goals used as benchmarks.

There is considerable evidence that HSU's capacity for Making Excellence Inclusive has increased as a result of MEI initiatives and that improvements have been made in outcomes. It should be noted that the Theme II Action Team pointed to possible improvements in enrollment by three of the fourteen programs in the Pilot Study for fall 2006 to fall 2008 (see Table 4, page 20.) There is less evidence that these initiatives have produced meaningful and sustainable results across the institution. This will require additional work and data.

HSU has conducted a number of studies over the past decade that document disparities in academic achievement among traditionally underrepresented students. The *Dissecting Diversity* report represents the first organized effort by the campus to collect diversity data across various departments and assemble it into a single document that could be used by the campus

community. The report confirmed earlier assumptions about diversity and disparities at HSU; namely, that ethnic minority students feel isolated, uncomfortable, and unsupported, and are marginalized academically. The report goes on to dissect the underlying supporting data by categories of race and ethnicity; student, faculty, and staff status; and departmental programs (CFRs 3.2, 3.4, 4.3). It also provides ethnic data on student access, retention, and graduation rates that are important to Making Excellence Inclusive. The fact that these data will be compiled, updated, and reported each year is a new practice for the campus that will allow it to continually assess and improve the success rates of traditionally underrepresented students over time.

The EER SVT found that HSU's EER did an excellent job of documenting the campus' capacity to develop sound diversity plans, to measure and track results, and to make necessary improvements. Missing from the EER Report, however, is clear evidence that this capacity was used to produce meaningful and sustainable results. Also missing from the sample plans are process and outcomes measurements that allow programs to gauge their progress toward accomplishing defined outcomes, especially eliminating among underrepresented groups the sense of being isolated, uncomfortable, unsupported and marginalized. In this important effort HSU is moving forward, but, as in other areas, it has some way to go in fulfilling its own plans and vision.

### **Realigning Resources and Institutional Structures**

The third essay, "Realigning Resources and Institutional Structures," discussed a broad range of institutional processes, structures, and resources that were the focus of campus-wide analysis and reorganization. In order to fulfill its two overarching commitments: (1) identify and assess the student learning that it produces and (2) identify and remove the barriers that prevent particular groups of students from achieving success, HSU will need resources and effective

processes to make informed decisions. Since obtaining new resources will be unlikely, HSU will need to revisit its allocations of money, time and attention. The third essay focuses on four areas related to this challenge: (1) prioritization studies involving academic and non-academic areas; (2) a restructuring of curriculum coordination, oversight and decision making; (3) a review of the processes for academic program review; and (4) a restructure of institutional research functions. The intended outcomes of these initiatives included the realignment of resources, the improvement of decision-making mechanisms, and the improvement of data quantity and quality as well as analysis capabilities (CFRs 1.3, 2.7, 3.5, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5).

### **The Evidence**

The team examined the data included in Essay 3 and related documents contained in the appendices. In connection with resource prioritization initiatives conducted by HSU, the team reviewed the four prioritization reports, as well as planning documents related to University Advancement. In regard to curriculum reform, the team reviewed the constitution for the Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC). In the area of program review, the team reviewed the 1997 and 2005 Program Review Guidelines as well as the Temporary Program Review Addendum.

### **The Results**

HSU engaged in a series of independent prioritization studies where departments, programs and services were assessed and compared to each other in order to identify relative strengths and weaknesses. The purpose was to inform decisions about resource realignment and reorganization of institutional structures.

Four prioritization studies were conducted: (1) academic programs, (2) non-instructional academic support services within Academic Affairs, (3) non-instructional programs and services with Student Affairs, and (4) services within Administrative Affairs. The stated objectives for

the academic programs prioritization study were to identify and support the core strengths of the university, to align them with the institution's vision, and to guide resource allocations. The study was to be a systematic, university-wide prioritization of academic programs, to be collaborative, and to be based on agreed-upon criteria.

HSU achieved many of the objectives it established for the academic programs prioritization study. The institution developed methodologies and criteria for generating data and reporting for each academic program, for evaluating and scoring the program reports, and for ranking the programs. The study was comprehensive in that it involved all 72 of the university's academic programs (98 distinct programmatic entities). The study was collaborative in that it involved key stakeholders at all levels and that the principles of openness, communication and fairness were observed. Efforts were also made to ensure that objectivity and independence were incorporated into the overall process. Finally, the study was completed and the task force responsible for overseeing the study provided a final report with results and recommendations to the Provost.

In developing the process for the academic program prioritization study, HSU reviewed similar work of other universities. Also, HSU envisioned that the process would be driven by faculty and staff, rather than administration. And, finally, there was to be a strong correlation between the overall scores received by academic programs and the prioritization categories to which programs would ultimately be assigned.

Along with these strengths there were limitations to the academic prioritization study including questions about inconsistent data on program costs, revenue, student/faculty ratio, diversity, student progress toward completion, and teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. As mentioned earlier in this Report the study Task Force also noted the lack of consistent learning outcomes as a serious omission from the prioritization process. Other matters included

variability in the quality of the reports generated by the academic departments, that the review process did not use separate review criteria for undergraduate and graduate programs, and that external benchmarking and comparative analysis was not a significant feature of the evaluation process.

The final report from the academic programs prioritization study with results and recommendations was presented to the Provost who reviewed the report and recommendations and forwarded his recommendations to the ad hoc Academic Planning Committee. The Provost's recommendations focused primarily on programs identified in two of the five prioritization categories contained in the report; "enhance" (Category 1) and "restructure" (Category 4). Around the time of the Visitation the Prioritization Study played a role in actions taken by the Academic Senate to affirm a set of priorities for future decision making.

Because this type of prioritization is not part of the common patterns of academic life, it is not surprising that the HSU process has some self identified weaknesses. Notwithstanding those weaknesses HSU is to be commended for tackling one of the most difficult of academic issues and the SVT applauds HSU's progress to date on the academic programs prioritization process. The SVT found the study to be credible and believes it represents a significant step toward HSU's goal of optimal use of resources. The question for the institution is whether the study and prioritization process, for which much effort has been devoted, will produce substantive results (CFR 3.8).

HSU conducted other prioritization studies with various methodologies. The studies involving Student Affairs and Administrative Affairs utilized a methodology based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Development (pyramid of human needs) and created priority pyramids or matrices for ranking services and programs. The Student Affairs process resulted in the development of two priority pyramids, a three-tiered ranking for programs and services

supported by the General Fund and a three-tiered ranking for programs and services supported by other resources. The Administrative Affairs process resulted in the creation of a three-tiered priority ranking for its programs and services. These prioritization documents are to serve primarily as resource management guidelines for these units in making decisions about the augmentation and/or reduction of services and programs. The study conducted of the non-instructional services unit in the Academic Affairs offices utilized an assessment approach which highlighted strengths and weaknesses and potential areas for restructure or change, but did not rank the units or place them in priority categories.

It seems clear that the leadership in Student Affairs, Administrative Affairs, and Academic Affairs dedicated significant time and effort to the prioritization studies in their respective areas. The studies provide valuable information and insight about these organizations which should be useful both to the organizations themselves and to the institution as a whole. The studies serve to enhance understanding about the purpose, role and contributions of these programs and services within the institution and provide some perspective on their relative strengths and weaknesses. The studies also provided valuable lessons on how to undertake these kinds of prioritization efforts. In several cases, the information from the studies was helpful to the institution in making near-term budget decisions. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these studies will be demonstrated only when sound decisions are made based on the evidence gathered in the studies. That seems to be another work in progress especially as to the potential for shifting resources from a lower priority function in one unit to support a higher priority function in another unit.

The essay discussed the university's commitment to realigning institutional structures, including curriculum oversight. Both CPR review and the Keeling & Associates consultant report discussed concerns about HSU's structures and processes governing curriculum and

academic planning. In response HSU has engaged in efforts to reform the structures and processes for curriculum oversight. The stated objectives of these endeavors were to: (1) affirm faculty responsibility for curriculum content, program development, and recommendations regarding curricular resource priorities; (2) define administrative and staff roles in curriculum review processes; (3) coordinate, at the university level, the curriculum review process; and (4) to streamline and expedite various review processes (CFR 3.8).

The university organized this reform effort by appointing an ad hoc Curriculum Review Process Working Group. Over a period of an academic year, the Working Group conducted a review to better understand the issues and to develop recommendations for reform. The Working Group's analysis included reviewing academic planning models at other universities. The working group produced a proposed new structure that it shared with the campus community in early Spring 2009. This new Integrated Curriculum Committee model is intended to integrate curriculum review across the university's three colleges, across all levels of curricular responsibility, and across all of the curricular functions. The Academic Senate approved the Integrated Curriculum Committee model in late Spring 2009 and implementation started in the summer (CFR 3.11).

The Integrated Curriculum Committee offers great promise and seems to address issues raised in the CPR. In this connection, as in other areas, the SVT compliments HSU on these very thoughtful efforts. Despite its promise in contributing to better decision-making, enhancing learning outcomes, and making excellence inclusive, it seems that the ICC, like other developments at HSU, is a work in progress. Its primary contribution to the desired outcomes will be, at the earliest, a few years in the future.

As was observed in the CPR review, HSU should further develop its institutional research and data management capabilities. The university acknowledges in the essay that these required

resources are necessary for the institution to meet its analysis and data-driven decision making objectives. Recently, the university formed the Institutional Research Office under the Provost and dedicated existing analysis and technical staff resources from Academic Affairs to the new office. HSU has been committed to recruiting a director to lead the new office. That office has now been filled and the incumbent was on the scene and introduced to the VST during the Visitation. In the period leading up to her arrival, HSU has utilized the services of consultants to perform some research related tasks, including research connected to peer selection methodology and initial peer selection. It is anticipated that the newly hired IR Director will address the issue raised earlier although this, too, is in some ways a work in progress (CFR 4.5).

### **Engaging in Organizational Learning and Improvement**

The fourth essay (theme), “Achieving Our Core Purpose by Engaging in Organizational Learning and Improvement” focuses on the “learning to make a difference” theme and discusses the university’s efforts to build resources in non-academic or support units that enhance institutional capacity and student learning (CFRs 1.2, 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7).

HSU determined that it had to develop the capacity for engaging in systematic evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The essay outlines the results of its evaluation efforts and the ways in which the results were utilized to reform institutional structures and approaches. The effort included the engagement of external consultants to assist in the evaluation and improvement of such areas as budget development, management processes and institutional culture.

### **The Evidence**

The team examined the data included in Essay 4 and related documents contained in the appendices. Relative to budget processes and development, the team reviewed the consultant report prepared by Maddox Management Consulting as well as the “Budget Book” and related

materials developed by the university. The SVT also reviewed the consultant report prepared by Keeling Associates, the Google Analytics materials, as well as statistics on the use of the website containing budget related information.

HSU engaged in two substantial evaluation exercises involving external consultants. The first was a comprehensive review of the university's budget development and management practices. The stated intent of the review was to identify the most critical issues in HSU's budget process and to develop concrete changes to meet the university's goal of a process that was easier to understand, reduced confusion, and assisted the university in moving forward to more effectively address its budget challenges. An external consultant, Maddox Management Consulting, was engaged by the university to assist with budget review. The second evaluation engaged in by the university was an assessment of institutional culture focused on assisting the institution to address issues related to governance, decision-making, policy development and organizational structures. This review was conducted by the consulting firm of Keeling Associates. Although these two reviews were independent from each other, they overlapped in scope and were conducted in close proximity with each other.

Based on the initial review by Maddox Consulting Management, which included meetings with participants and stakeholders, four primary groups of issues/concerns were identified: (1) Planning: the need for more clarity on the strategic intentions of the university and the actions the university must take to be successful in its funding environment; (2) Information: enhanced availability of information and the capacity to identify and use information that holds explanatory power; (3) Communications: the need to make use of available communication tools, more effectively consider the background of the audience, communicate extensively and frequently, and reinforce messages; and (4) Group processes: the need for the university to improve the quality of its group processes.

With the general approach of enhancing the principles of transparency, accountability and optimization of resources, the Maddox Consulting Management report recommended that HSU take a series of steps with respect to planning, data and reports, budget reporting, reorganization of budget development, communications, and technical issues. HSU accepted the recommendations from the Maddox Consulting Management report and has begun the process of implementation. HSU initially focused on the data and reporting recommendations, many of which have already been implemented or are in the process of implementation. Most significant of these data, reporting, and communication undertakings, was the development of the university's first comprehensive "Budget Book", which was completed in January 2009. The "Budget Book" is an annual document which includes reporting on all sources of revenue and expenditures, including the activities of auxiliary enterprises and organizations. The auxiliary organizations have been converted to the common management system used for state funds allowing for "all-funds" accounting and reporting. After conducting a survey related to budget communications, HSU developed a new campus-wide communication plan that was implemented in Fall 2009. The university has also developed standardized monthly department budget reports and quarterly budget-related management reports. In addition, the university has enhanced the budget coordination process at the vice presidential level under the leadership of the Provost and has enhanced the initial budget proposal process (preparation and presentation) to the University Budget Committee.

HSU also engaged the consulting firm of Keeling Associates to conduct an assessment of institutional culture. The work of the consulting firm involved information gathering activities, including the initial conversations with senior administrators, extensive review of existing data and documents on the institution...mission, history, operations, resources and challenges, pre-visit interviews and on-site meetings, discussions and interviews. Keeling Associates' efforts

focused on governance, institutional fatigue, academic programming and decision-making, moving from a teaching centered to a learning-centered paradigm and the need to create a culture of evidence. Their recommendations will be treated in more detail in this report since they relate to the most fundamental questions about HSU.

Keeling Associates found HSU, due to state budget reductions, to be challenged by both the availability of resources and by the exposing of internal and organizational problems. Keeling Associates observed that HSU's responses to funding reductions had not been consistently strategic, and that the processes through which the institution has addressed them had not always been functional. Further, the consultants found that the university's record has been characterized more by finding ways to avoid the hard decisions made necessary by budget reductions than by adapting to or accommodating those reductions in a thoughtful and strategic manner. Keeling Associates outlined the university's institutional challenges as being in the following summarized areas: lack of shared institutional vision; need for more effective decision-making; academic governance; the presidency; administration; trust; change resistance; definitions of and challenges to academic distinctiveness; fiscal management; and assessment as an institution priority. The Keeling Associates characterized the university as being "stuck," unable to free itself from the "stalemate in institutional culture," and further, that the quality of decision making, governance, and resource allocation, at the institution was marred by an old tightly knit blanket of profound distrust, a general lack of accountability, insufficient attention to responsible stewardship of limited resources, dysfunctional faculty governance, the state's relentless practice of cutting budgets, the California State University System's administrative demands and funding model, and a belief that there is ineffective administrative and faculty leadership. Fundamentally, the findings suggested that the university's organizational culture suffered from a lack of trust, resiliency, and hopefulness; a tone of negativity, conflict, suspicion,

and constant criticism reinforcing isolation and contributing to poor morale. The report also indicated that HSU had lost its direction and had no shared institutional vision. Keeling Associates concluded that there was a “significant and serious need for substantial, thoroughgoing institutional renewal.”

The overall recommendation from Keeling Associates was that the university engage in a process of renewing its institutional culture and that the matter be addressed relatively quickly. Keeling Associates recommended that the institution take the following summarized steps: (1) The President should publicly, transparently, and candidly reiterate his statements that the gravity of the challenges facing HSU were severe and further that he announce that the university would focus its best efforts on addressing those challenges sufficiently to restore trust and institutional sustainability and address the critique of the WASC CPR accreditation team. The President should explicitly commit himself and the university to an immediate process of change and renewal; (2) The President should immediately appoint the Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs as permanent Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Keeling Associates indicated in its recommendation that so much of the change agenda revolved around academic programs and faculty goodwill that the Provost needed the legitimacy of a permanent appointment to support his leadership role in the process of institutional change and renewal; (3) the university document all of its activities and initiatives undertaken in the process of institutional renewal and use such records in its reports to WASC as preparation for the EER review; (4) the President consider appointing a Cabinet for Institutional Change to be chaired by the Provost and with representation from various campus constituencies, including faculty. The Cabinet would be charged with coordinating, organizing and guiding the university’s short-term change management process; (5) shortly after the appointment of the Cabinet for Institutional Change, the members of the group should meet in a facilitated retreat for reflection, discussion

and planning. The method, process and procedures to be used for the retreat would serve as a model which could be used for other campus groups. It was envisioned that the retreat would serve as an example of cross-institutional planning and decision-making while functioning as an exercise in community building; (6) the Cabinet for Institutional Change should incorporate the further recommendations of Keeling Associates (below) into a preliminary plan and that the institutional renewal emerge from a broadly representative process that in and of itself models the process of transformation. Following the retreat, a draft plan for institutional renewal should be communicated to the campus and reviewed and discussed by major governance groups. The groups should be asked to endorse the plan as submitted or with modifications. After feedback, the Cabinet for Institutional Change and the President should produce and communicate a final, institution-wide plan for institutional renewal that would specify the scope, sequence, and timeliness of activities designed to revive a healthy institutional culture, move toward a shared vision and direction for the institution and create structures, processes and procedures for collaborative decision-making; (7) the Provost should suspend, with the concurrence of the Academic Senate, all non-essential institutional governance activities for the period of institutional urgency; (8) the university should develop a website for providing regularly updated, accurate and candid information to the campus community about the change management process; (9) the Cabinet for Institutional Change should convene for a series of half or full day mini retreats of representatives of various campus groups for reflection and thoughtful discussion of institutional direction, challenges, priorities and change management needs. The meeting discussions were to focus on the development of institutional vision and direction and produce recommendations for revised institutional policies, procedures, and processes to support effective decision-making and resource allocation to be considered by the full Cabinet; (10) the Cabinet for Institutional Change should review the summaries, comments and recommendations

by the groups convened (referenced above). The Cabinet should review the comments and recommendations and develop a prioritized list of policies, processes, and procedures that should be implemented to create resonant structures for institution-wide decision-making, planning and community building; (11) the major institutional governance group should review the Cabinet's recommendations and endorse them as submitted or modified. Once the feedback is received, the Cabinet should create a final list of policies, procedures and processes to be implemented, with timelines and specified accountability; and (12) using structures, systems and processes established as a result of the work of the Cabinet, the university should proceed to engage significant questions and problems that require difficult institutional decisions. The Keeling report also identified a pressing need for a strategic planning process that would enable the university to formalize its vision, direction, goals and objectives. Once the urgent work of the Cabinet is completed, the HSU family can focus its attention on a new strategic planning effort. In this spirit of urgency, the Keeling Group recommended an aggressive schedule for moving forward.

HSU has adopted many of the recommendations of the Keeling Associates consulting report. One of the significant recommendations from Keeling Associates was the creation of the Cabinet for Institutional Change. The Cabinet was formed in spring 2009. The Cabinet was charged with identifying key areas for change and developing recommendations that will allow the University to plan effectively and to tie resources to these plans. The initially defined five key areas of change are to be: university vision; campus governance; student success; culture of evidence; and creating a collegial, respectful and responsive community (CFRs 4.1, 4.6).

The Cabinet organized itself into groups to address each of the five key areas. Various open forums and focus groups involving campus constituencies were conducted. After a year of work, the Cabinet for Institutional Change developed a report of its final recommendations

which was presented to the campus community at around the time of the WASC Visitation in February 2010. The report addressed each of the five areas. The primary recommendations, organized by the five key areas, included the following: (1) vision (including short-term recommendations for policymaking): (a) the new Office of Institutional Research and Planning must be actively involved in helping to develop measures and assess progress in ensuring that programs that advance vision are protected and advanced in the budgetary process; (b) a component of the campus enrollment plan must evaluate programs central to the vision; (c) on a biennial basis policy-makers must establish specific priorities and projects that will advance the vision; (d) jump-start the planning process; and (e) in the near future, the Academic Senate should initiate a campus process to streamline and focus the vision in a manner that leads clearly to operational plans. (2) campus governance: (a) restructure the existing Academic Senate into a university-wide Senate, including faculty, staff, administrators and students; (b) restructure the university committee system; (c) and eliminate the General Faculty Association. (3) student success: (a) reinstatement of university Enrollment Management Task Force; and (b) initiative to increase graduation rates. (4) collegial, respectful and responsive community: (a) establish open time on Fridays for community time; (b) create an HSU “Benevolent Association” to catalyze new collaborations and a new sense of community; (c) faculty and staff club; (d) campus calendar and effective networking; and (e) mentorship as an expectation. (5) cultivate Evidence-Based Decision Making: (a) proposals must clarify use of evidence; (b) the Office of Institutional Research and Planning should serve the entire campus – entire campus should make use of the research/planning capabilities; (c) ensure the Office of Institutional Research and Planning communicate with and coordinate efforts among existing data sources and analysts across campus; and (d) recommend that the Director or a staff member of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning be routinely included in campus policy and planning efforts.

As mentioned earlier, the Cabinet's recommendations are being shared with the campus community for review and dialogue

The essay disclosed controversy about the President's appointment of the Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to the permanent position. This was a key recommendation of the Keeling Associates' report. The President made the appointment permanent after consulting with various campus leaders, including all of the faculty members on the Cabinet for Institutional Change. The President felt he had support for the action given the financial and organizational challenges confronting the institution. However, the Academic Senate and the Academic Senate Executive Committee both strongly recommended the conducting of a national search. After the President made the appointment, an emergency meeting of the General Faculty Association was called and a vote of "no confidence" was passed. It was disclosed that of the 394 faculty eligible to vote, 128 (33%) voted to approve the "no confidence", 4 (1%) against, and 2 (.5%) abstained. CSU Chancellor Charles Reed was advised of the "no confidence" vote, but indicated his continued support of the President, based on the President's relatively recent six-year review. Chancellor Reed did visit the campus in the Fall 2009 to confer with faculty and administrative leadership.

In addition to discussing the budget development and management processes initiative and the institution's efforts to make the institution more effective, specific to the Cabinet for Institutional Change, the essay provides information on the institution's efforts to cope with the budget crisis in California and the campus' response to it, including the management of a proposed \$10.1 million baseline reduction in state funding and a \$2.1 million one-time funding reduction in the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The essay also discusses the quality improvement work conducted in Administrative Affairs, improvements in business information services including the development of a service request data and delivery system, the use of Google Analytics,

improvements to the Student Assistant Payroll process, participation in the CSU system-wide quality improvement program, the establishment of a new Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and associated initiatives, and the development of the Training and Professional Development Collaborative. All these efforts are responsive to the CPR SVT Report and the WASC Commission's commentaries in 2008. They also reflect an excellent effort to address long standing issues and, while the final results are not yet in, HSU is to be congratulated for taking determined and purposeful steps to improve its institutional culture (CFRs 3.10, 3.11).

## **B. Program Review**

The visiting team chose Mathematics, English and Nursing as representative departments for evaluating the program review process. New guidelines for the program review process were accepted in 2005. An amended version of the guidelines adopted in September 2008 (incorporating the departments' prioritization reviews) is in place until the start of the 2010-11 academic year. These programs represent different Colleges: Natural Resources and Sciences; Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; and Professional Studies, respectively. The last program review for Mathematics preceded the recent interim program review guidelines and the English department review took place during the interim period. The Nursing program review occurred in conjunction with its professional program accreditation from the California State Board of Nursing and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, which seems to the SVT a good use of departmental and institutional resources. Although the interim self-study guidelines do not meet all the goals of the 2005 review guidelines, the visiting team agrees with the short-term aim of using available information while everyone at HSU is working on program prioritization.

The visiting team appreciates the good attendance and the frankness of the department faculty who attended our sessions. It is apparent to those SVT members who attended the meetings that the program review process (both original and modified) succeeds as an

opportunity for faculty within a department to reflect and discuss the totality of a program, uncover major program issues and chart new directions (CFRs 2.2, 2.7). All three departments we visited with had used their most recent reviews to modify aspects of their curriculum and/or assessment processes. The program review process also incorporates four levels of review of the department self-study outside the department, at the College and Provost levels. Letters triggered by these additional reviews (and the department responses) become part of the review file. Additionally, the 2005 guidelines encourage (but do not mandate) an external reviewer(s) for each program.

The SVT found that, as a result of program reviews, the English department has instituted a new portfolio requirement for all seniors, the Mathematics department identified major program disciplinary weaknesses which it was able to ameliorate with two new faculty hires, and the Nursing department has developed better ways to use the test results from the ATI process (a series of about twelve exams taken by each student) to predict and track student course performance and design interventions. To the extent possible, department and program assessments (and other yearly program reports) should be incorporated into the program review process as its guidelines are revised. CSU guidelines support an outside reviewer as part of the review process, and money should be found to make this element a part of every review. Departments and programs should be encouraged to use the review outcomes as department agenda items for the years after the program reviews take place.

### **SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW AND THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

#### **Reflections on the Visit**

It seems clear that the entire HSU family has responded energetically and thoughtfully to the CPR and the EER. An extraordinary amount of effort has been devoted to the challenges

noted in the CPR and HSU has achieved a great deal along the path it set for itself. Its choice of themes and essays seems very appropriate and there was much creativity and wisdom in the analysis of the challenges posed for HSU by its own ambitions and the WASC process – ambitions and processes which have come into a certain harmony.

Speculating about the general atmosphere or condition of a campus is fraught with difficulty. Nevertheless the SVT has reached the conclusion that HSU may well be on the brink of a new era of progress that could beget increasingly high achievement in student learning and in making excellence thoroughly inclusive through realigning resources, through realigning institutional structures, through organizational learning, and through institutional improvement.

HSU's approach to understanding the learning it produces reflects an understanding of the need for assessment of student learning outcomes at multiple levels and impressive movement from where it was at the time of the CPR. As is noted in this report, however, the work is still in its early stages and deals mostly with building capacity and frameworks for assessment. There is little evidence that student learning outcomes are currently being systematically and universally assessed and that the assessments are being used to improve learning and teaching. This should not be viewed as a criticism of what HSU has done since the CPR. Much has been done in the last two years, perhaps more than in any other period in HSU's history, but HSU is still in the relatively early stages of developing an ability to obtain and evaluate student learning and make use of the data derived from this work.

HSU's continuing efforts to make excellence inclusive are also impressive. In response to the CPR it furnished a report on the cascading initiatives, it demonstrated significant activity of various kinds to enhance the experience of underrepresented populations, it drew on student performance assessment data to support students from diverse backgrounds, and it gathered the beginnings of measurable data to judge educational effectiveness. The thoughtful methods used

to collect and compile these data were exceptional. There is less evidence, however, that these data and the accumulated wisdom shown in the compelling publication titled *Dissecting Diversity* have produced meaningful and sustainable results across HSU. In particular more attention has to be focused on the finding that ethnic minority students feel isolated, uncomfortable, unsupported, and academically marginalized.

A significant part of the Site Visit was devoted to analyses and activities undertaken in response to suggestions found in the SVT Report at the time of the CPR. These analyses were conducted under the headings of *Realigning Resources and Institutional Structures* and *Engaging in Organizational Learning and Improvement*. Both of these efforts are very commendable and the SVT is hopeful that they will produce positive, long lasting results.

A number of studies were conducted under the heading of *Realigning Resources*, the most notable of which was an academic program prioritization process to help with resource decisions which are most likely to have to be made in the future, perhaps the near future. HSU is to be commended for taking on one of the most difficult of academic issues and the SVT applauds HSU's progress. The study seems credible and the SVT believes it represents a significant step toward optimal use of resources and service to its constituents. It appears that the resulting prioritization conclusions are being used and they were incorporated with modifications by actions of the Academic Senate, but the final result of this well intentioned process will not be known until wise judgments are made about scarce resources and HSU is able to weather resource challenges in a way that makes it stronger.

Most fundamental of all the initiatives underway may be the effort to engage in organizational learning and institutional improvement. The most potentially valuable initiative described in the WASC EER derives from the comments and recommendations of the consultants from the Keeling Group. Their descriptions of HSU are provocative and may be

unsettling to some, but the SVT believes that Keeling's conclusion, that there is a significant and serious need for institutional renewal, is insightful. This same commentary might be made about more than a few higher education institutions. What is most important is how HSU decides to respond to the critique.

Up to the time of the EER visit HSU seems to have embraced the recommendations of the Keeling Group, in particular in forming a Cabinet for Institutional Change which is chaired by the Provost. The Cabinet is working on recommendations of the Keeling Group including the University's vision, campus governance, student success, a culture of evidence, upholding standards of transparency, and an effort to engage the entire campus to create a new era of collegial, respectful, and civil discourse in a responsive community. This shows promise for a renewal of HSU and a reaffirmation of a culture of collegiality and progress.

The Keeling Group Report suggests that HSU has a record of finding ways to avoid hard decisions and of not completing initiatives. In today's environment of ever increasing financial problems and mounting emphasis on accountability, an institution which avoids issues will be at risk. In order to meet its mission and to address the CPR and EER commitments HSU must embrace institutional change and this moment may involve truly crucial choices. HSU can have a very bright future, but only if it uses advice wisely and uses moments such as this to regroup and improve.

This leaves the SVT with the same reaction which has been triggered by each of the Themes and Essays in the EER. This is a moment of great opportunity. It is a moment when there is an alignment of people and ideas which could be used to build a much grander future for HSU. At this point, however, so much of this valuable effort is, in a very global way, a work in progress. It may well be that the most important chapters in the history and development of HSU

will include the events unfolding now. At this time, however, the ultimate results of these current activities are yet to be determined.

### **Commendations**

1. Humboldt State University has used the WASC CPR and EER to improve its understanding of the need for assessment of student learning outcomes at multiple levels and has taken some steps along the path of assessing learning outcomes and using the results of these assessments for teaching and institutional improvement.;
2. HSU's continuing efforts to make excellence inclusive are impressive, including demonstrating various activities to enhance the experience of traditionally underrepresented populations and employing thoughtful methods to collect, compile, and utilize assessment data for educational effectiveness.
3. At the suggestion of consultants, HSU has embraced several new initiatives, including the establishment of a Cabinet for Institutional Change. The Cabinet's work on the University's vision, campus governance, student success, a culture of evidence, upholding standards of transparency, and the effort to create a new era of collegiality and civil discourse, show promise for a positive renewal of HSU.
4. HSU conducted a credible academic program prioritization process to help with resource decisions that will have to be made in the future.

### **Recommendations**

1. HSU should continue to move from building capacity and frameworks for assessment to assessment of learning at all levels – course, program, and institution – and use assessment of

learning outcomes routinely to improve curricula (including general education), teaching, and learning, as well as in other areas of decision-making, including resource allocations.

2. Although HSU has collected data on making excellence inclusive, it has not produced meaningful and sustainable results across the campus. In light of that, HSU should make more progress in enrolling and graduating students from historically underrepresented groups at a level that is more proportionate to percentages in the state's population, and demonstrate better progress in addressing the finding that ethnic minority students feel isolated, uncomfortable, unsupported, and academically marginalized.

3. HSU must embrace institutional change and make crucial choices in order to meet its mission and address the CPR and EER commitments. It should continue to employ the Cabinet for Institutional Change to focus HSU's mission and vision, to create shared understandings, to create clear structures of governance, to communicate well and with mutual respect in an effort to improve.

4. HSU should take the work of the prioritization process to its logical conclusion in decisions about resource allocations.

5. The 2008 CPR visit, 2008 WASC Commission letter, and consultant's report all suggest that HSU has a record of finding ways to avoid hard decisions and failing to complete initiatives. The University should be held accountable to complete the good work it has begun in connection with the WASC accreditation process.