# FINAL REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM

# EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA RIVERSIDE

## OCTOBER 27-29, 2009

### In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Reaffirmation

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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 for action and to the institution for consideration.**

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**SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

### A. Description of Institution and Visit

The Educational Effectiveness Team visited the University of California at Riverside from October 26 to October 29, 2009.

The University began offering undergraduate classes in 1954, and became a general campus offering both undergraduate and graduate programs in 1959. Enrollment has grown substantially in recent years (over 70 percent in the last decade) and reached 19,439 in fall 2009, including 2,443 graduate students. This is a seven percent increase from the previous year and is the largest enrollment in the University's history. The University has three colleges, two schools, and a division of biomedical sciences. Combined, UCR offers 80 bachelor's degree programs, 46 master's degree programs, 38 PhD programs, and 17 California teaching and administrative credential programs. In 2008, the UC Board of Regents approved the formation of a medical school, and a founding dean was appointed during the team's visit. The Board of Regents approved a School of Public Policy at the same time as the medical school, but the current financial environment has delayed its implementation. Located in the City of Riverside, some 60 miles east of Los Angeles, the University is the premier institution of higher education in the Inland Empire, the fastest growing region in the state.

With 98 percent of its students residents of California, the University's undergraduate enrollment reflects the ethnic diversity of the state. In 2008, 40.2

percent of the undergraduate students were drawn from underrepresented minorities, compared with 24 percent in the University of California as a whole. Moreover, 56 percent of the Riverside students are drawn from the first members of their families to attend college, compared with 46 percent for the University of California as a whole. The University is justifiably proud of its diversity and notes that *U.S. News and World Report* ranks it as the nation's fifth most diverse research university.

WASC extended initial accreditation to the University in 1956, and reaffirmed accreditation in 1971, 1978, 1983, 1988, and 1998. The institution submitted its Proposal for Reaffirmation on October 11, 2005 and the Proposal Review Committee accepted it on November 30, 2005. The Proposal established three themes: Learning within a Campus Culture of Diversity, Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs, and Improving Undergraduate Student Engagement, Experience, and Learning. The Capacity and Preparatory Review Report was submitted on December 20, 2007, and the WASC team visited the campus from March 12-14, 2008. The CPR team identified and the Commission approved the recommendations of the visiting team. The Commission emphasized four areas in its June 24, 2008 letter to the University: strategic planning, student learning and assessment, diversity, and plans for graduate expansion. The Commission indicated it expected to see substantial progress in all four areas. In particular, it expected that strategic planning would be addressed as soon as possible, and that by the Educational Effectiveness review, the institution would

have an assessment program underway across the institution, with the results of assessment available for review.

The Commission scheduled the Educational Effectiveness Review for October 28-30, 2009.  The team reviewed the Educational Effectiveness Report submitted by the Institution on July 7, 2009.  As part of its review, the team considered materials concerning the off-campus programs at Palm Desert, although a site visit, having been conducted on the earlier visit as part of the Capacity and Preparatory Review, was not considered necessary.  No special follow-up visit to this site was conducted in connection with the Educational Effectiveness Review.  Additionally, the team reviewed materials made available during the visit and met with over 150 individuals including administrators, faculty, students, staff, and community members.

**B. The Institution's Educational Effectiveness Review Report: Alignment with the Proposal and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report**

The institution's Educational and Effectiveness Review was consistent with the Proposal.  The three themes; Learning within a Campus Culture of Diversity, Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs, and Improving Undergraduate Student Engagement, Experience, and Learning Outcomes, were dealt with thoroughly in the review, despite the changes in institutional leadership that have occurred in the years since the Proposal was approved.  The institution's

review provided evidence indicating active examination of each of the themes chosen for special study.   In its EER report, the University evaluated its efforts and concluded that the goals established for the undergraduate theme had been partially fulfilled, the goals of the graduate theme had been met to a "significant extent," and the diversity themes goal's required more effort to be accomplished fully.  Each of the themes is addressed in depth in Section II of this report.

The Institution's Proposal established the following outcomes for the Educational Effectiveness Review:  Definition and use of faculty aspirations [goals] for assessment of student learning at all levels; data collection and analysis of feedback for improvement of student learning; establishment of faculty workshops on educational effectiveness; design and implementation of instructional development programs; in-depth study of special themes; discovery of patterns of student success that can be used in admissions; definition of characteristics of students most suited to success at UCR.; and a comprehensive strategic plan.  Not all of these goals have been achieved, but work has been carried out on all of them.

The institution's report was well organized and written, was self-reflective, included evidence of widespread faculty involvement, and seemed to provide an accurate picture of the progress made since the Capacity and Preparatory Review.  It also is clear that the process of preparing for the review has led to a much wider appreciation of educational effectiveness and the improvement of student learning. The team appreciated the clarity of the Educational Effectiveness Report and found

that the report, augmented with materials provided prior to the visit, in the team room, and at various meetings, gave members a broad view of the status of the institution's response to WASC standards.

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

The Visiting Team and the Commission letter of June 24, 2009 set forth four recommendations following from the Capacity and Preparatory Review. The first recommendation entailed **Strategic Planning:** "There is a need for the inclusive and comprehensive strategic planning process that has already begun. (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3) This planning process should build on the quality planning that led to the proposal for the medical school and should incorporate the ways that this new initiative will complement existing programs."

The team was pleased to learn that, responding to the leadership of Chancellor White, the university has begun the strategic planning effort in earnest under the direction of the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost Dallas Rabenstein. A set of seven subcommittees has been created that involve over 150 members drawn from the entire campus community to develop position papers covering a wide range of areas. The Chancellor is scheduled to produce a draft report for presentation in March 2010 to the Board of Regents, with a final report completed by the end of the Spring Quarter 2010.

The second recommendation dealt with **Student Learning and Assessment:** "The time between now and the Educational Effectiveness review is critical in developing student learning outcomes and measures of assessment. This process must include developing means of educating faculty about 'best practices' in assessing learning. Most programs will have to show that they are engaging in assessment and the team will expect to see that a number of departments are assessing student learning and making informed judgments based on that information. The institution must move beyond the planning stage with regards to assessment to the implementation phase. (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.6, 4.7)"

The team was somewhat disappointed to learn that the institution had not made greater progress in the implementation of assessment of student learning. While the university has provided faculty development on methods of assessment and was pleased that every department had developed student learning outcomes and chosen means of assessment, it is clear that few programs have moved beyond the planning stage and have actually begun to gather assessment data. The institution's plan is to begin gathering data this academic year.

The third recommendation related to **Diversity:** "The team urges the University to continue to support efforts to diversify the faculty and monitor the hiring of faculty in all disciplines and at all ranks. The team further recommends that the University set benchmarks for achieving a faculty that more closely reflects the student body both in terms of ethnicity and gender. The University should be able to demonstrate

concrete steps being undertaken to achieve the goals that have been set. (CFRs 1.5, 3.2)"

The university reported that it is using the National Opinion Research Center data and the National Science Foundation Survey of Earned Doctorates to provide benchmarks of the number of people with Ph.D.s.  Faculty diversity at the university should then broadly reflect the numbers of people who hold doctorates in the various fields.  Some progress has been achieved.  The proportion of women faculty members has increased campus-wide in the past four years, particularly in STEM fields; the number of underrepresented minority (URM) faculty members has increased above benchmarks in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; and the university has moved from sixth place in the proportion of URM faculty to third place among all ten UC campuses (see, e.g., Figures 26 and 27, Appendix A of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report).

During the CPR visit, one of the diversity-related issues that surfaced involved perceptions on the part of campus and external community members that the Graduate School of Education (GSOE) was not offering a welcoming environment to diverse students and faculty.  The campus and the GSOE took this feedback seriously and embarked on a comprehensive set of external evaluations.  In addition, full-time faculty members from underrepresented groups were appointed between the two visits.  Whereas community members dissatisfied with the GSOE sought an

opportunity to express their concerns to the WASC team in the CPR, during this (EER) visit the team did not hear any negative comments regarding the GSOE.

Finally, the team made a recommendation regarding **Expanding Graduate Programs:** "To ensure success of the goal to expand graduate and professional programs, the team recommends that the University carefully align expectations with an analysis of current resources and explore supplemental funding. The team recommends setting fundraising goals, providing support to meet those goals and ensuring that the campus continues to grow its advancement activity. Finally, the team recommends that the goals set by advancement closely reflect the goals being identified through the strategic planning process. (CFRs 3.5, 4.1, 4.2)"

Given the current financial environment in California, this recommendation takes on even more importance. The university has recently hired an experienced person as Vice Chancellor for University Advancement to head its advancement efforts. The strategic planning effort will impact this arena very directly through the Subcommittees on Research and Graduate Education and Resources, Budget Planning, and Management.

**SECTION II – EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER THE STANDARDS**

**A. Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry**

**Theme 1: Learning within a Campus Culture of Diversity (CFRs 1.5, 2.10, 3.2)**

UC Riverside (UCR) has made commendable progress in pursuing the objectives related to this theme. In its Path to Preeminence 2020, the UCR Strategic Planning Steering Committee identifies diversity and access as key features of its anticipated identity as a first-tier research university. One of the eight planning subcommittees is charged with campus climate and community, an indicator that the final strategic plan will reflect UCR's diversity priorities. The inclusion of diversity and access issues as central to strategic planning is commendable and reflects the institution's overall long-term commitment to diversity.

A selection of the evidence the team reviewed to support its positive findings regarding the campus's execution of its diversity theme includes:

1) The senior leadership on campus clearly prioritizes this dimension of UCR's profile. Diversity is a component of the annual performance evaluation of the senior leadership team.

2) The campus compiles and publishes a comprehensive annual diversity report.

3) For undergraduate students, UCR established the FastStart program specifically designed to improve graduation rates of underrepresented minority (URM) students in the sciences. Result: FastStart students are

almost twice as likely to graduate from UCR with a science degree as non-FastStart students.  For example, of the 56 total FastStart students in the 1999-2002 cohorts, 83 percent graduated from UCR, 62 percent earned a BS in a science field and 14 percent are in medical school.

4) UC Riverside has developed toolkits and prepared search committee chair training to assist faculty in recruiting diverse faculty colleagues.  Prior to the current financial crisis, departments were frequently authorized to make offers to more than their first choice candidate when the second or third choice was a woman or underrepresented minority.  Department chairs also authorized cluster hires in order to increase the number of underrepresented minorities.

5) Both the data provided to the team and our observations at meetings and in the campus's public spaces indicate an excellent climate for diversity.

6) Staff members are encouraged to enroll in a Diversity Certificate Program. Program evaluations for 2008-09 show that participants benefit from the program and the interaction that they have with colleagues around diversity issues.

The inventory above is selective; the team was provided with other examples relevant to this theme.   Clearly the hard work of multiple campus constituencies over a period of several years positions UCR well to establish and sustain this vision. The WASC team is pleased to note the significant accomplishments within the realm

of the institution's diversity theme and notes that UCR has achieved what few institutions are able to develop.

In the conclusion to its thematic essay, the institution acknowledges the additional work that needs to be done. It outlines five concrete goals that build on the current foundation. The team finds these goals commensurate with the campus's vision. Not surprisingly, the team did hear from some members of the workforce who have made UCR's aspirations for diversity a reality, express concerns that budget reductions would undermine the success of the programs they have seen to fruition. We know that California's budget situation is so severe that no corner of the campus will be immune from cuts. However, the Team strongly encourages the administrative and senate campus leadership to preserve the best practices that have been developed at UCR and to pursue the goals that will take the campus to the next level of inclusion and community.

**Theme 2:  Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs (CFRs 2.7, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, and 4.7)**

Four years have passed since UCR established this theme. Despite a radically changed environment, the institution has maintained its focus on this theme and made admirable progress. UCR identified a number of "researchable questions" related to graduate and professional education.

**1.) Identifying and promoting best practices in graduate and professional program development and graduate and professional student success.** The team combined its analysis of this question with its response to another important question UCR posed -- **developing better strategies for graduate student recruitment.**

UCR is to be commended for its efforts to attract and retain a diverse cadre of graduate students. Consistent with national trends, there is a smaller proportion of African American, Chicano and Latino students in the graduate student body than the undergraduate student body; nonetheless UCR is notable for diversity in graduate education and is likely to play a major role within California and beyond in supplying diverse candidates for positions in education and other professions requiring advanced degrees. To further increase diversity, the campus has a number of programs underway and in the planning stages, including mentoring programs, bridging and academic preparation programs (that might enable more students from CSU or other non-traditional feeder institutions to enter and succeed in UCR graduate programs), active recruitment efforts, and attention to creating/maintaining a "welcoming culture."

The team was impressed by the innovative and proactive manner in which UCR is developing best-practice programs to promote graduate student success. Some of these programs are adapted from successful undergraduate interventions; others emerge directly from observations and data. Of particular note is UCR's recent

success in receiving a FIPSE grant to recruit and retain socio-economically and educational disadvantaged students. (CFR 2.10, 2.12, 2.13) This significant accomplishment is indicative of UCR's commitment, capacity, and innovativeness.

The Team notes the intention of UCR to be a major sponsor of the annual conference of SACNAS (The Society for the Achievement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science).  That conference brings together nearly 3000 undergraduate and graduate students, nearly all of whom are students of color and many of whom are first-generation college students along with their faculty mentors to present papers, network, and prepare for future university work or academic positions.  This opportunity provides wide exposure for UCR as a research university supportive of a diverse group of graduate students.

The long-term success of these and related programs requires a commitment to cooperation among the Graduate Division, academic programs, support services, and feeder institutions.  UCR leadership is encouraged to monitor and as needed to facilitate such cooperation because these units often manifest very different cultures and priorities.  The team notes that UCR's capacity for and practice of program evaluation is important to the long-term success and efficiency of its programs for graduate student recruitment and success.

Issues of program development and student success were also addressed through a compilation of best practices reported by graduate advisors.  The summary of

responses is unremarkable, but when pressed, interview participants indicated that one response – inviting admitted students to visit the graduate program as a group rather than individually, to build a sense of camaraderie – is proving to be effective and useful. (CFR 4.4, 4.7)

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Best practices in program development and student success at the graduate or professional level should include the systematic, empirical assessment of learning objectives and student outcomes.  To date, UCR has made little progress in articulating outcomes and assessment plans at the graduate level.  We note, however, that it uses a variety of indicators to measure effectiveness, including retention rates, time to degree, and student outcomes.  Academic program reviews offer an in-depth examination of program quality, including recommendations for improvement. (CFR 2.7)

The institution's Educational Effectiveness Review Report states that student placement is an important measure of success.  The data provided indicate that over half of the graduates from CHASS and 40 percent of the graduates from CNAS have obtained academic positions – these percentages must be interpreted with caution due to the likelihood of response bias.  In addition, relatively few BCOE graduates (roughly 16 percent) report academic placements.  These data reveal that over half of doctoral degree recipients are either choosing or being forced into non-academic positions.  The implications of this trend for curriculum, counseling and assessment must be considered – it is even more important to use these data to raise (or revisit)

questions about the purpose and objectives of graduate programs, the answers to which can then guide the development of student learning outcomes.  Attention to data quality is also indicated – results of voluntary surveys are difficult to interpret and should perhaps be supplemented with other data including the Survey of Earned Doctorates. (CFR 4.4)

**2.)  Other "researchable questions"**

UCR chose to explore in its Educational Effectiveness Review Report strengths and weaknesses of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary graduate programs relative to departmental, more specialized programs; and increasing the success of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary graduate programs.  There appears to be strong interest in interdisciplinary graduate-level education among both faculty and students, especially in the sciences.  The challenge, as the report makes clear, is in managing the competition for resources that ensues because interdepartmental programs require faculty time that could otherwise be used for teaching within a department.  In addition, some faculty find it difficult to balance the demands of both a traditional disciplinary program and an interdisciplinary program -- a tension that is particularly acute for those seeking tenure and promotion, which is determined within the department.

In this time of constrained resources, increased competition for resources can threaten the strength or even survival of some interdepartmental programs.  The team encourages UCR to use the strategic planning process to (a) establish

priorities; and (b) align resource allocations – including faculty time, teaching assistantships, counseling and other staff, and operating funds – with these priorities. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)  Opportunities for interdisciplinary study surely represent a "best practice" in graduate education and research – to fully implement this best practice and ensure that interdisciplinary education can flourish, Academic Senate and administrative leaders must collaborate in reviewing incentive systems, workload policies, and resource allocations, all of which can erect barriers to success individually and collectively.

UCR has been especially challenged to establish a structure for the biological sciences that supports interdisciplinary programs.  The team received mixed opinions about the effectiveness of prior re-organizations and appropriate directions for the future.  One respondent described the current organization as "intellectually sensible and structurally unworkable."  Others described a "devolution" to traditional departmental structures.  We trust that this issue will be included in the strategic planning process.

### 3.) Discovering the best ways in which to expand professional education and programs on the campus.

UCR has been expanding graduate and professional degree programs, and the number of graduate students has also grown.  The Chancellor indicated that growth in graduate enrollment to between 15 and 20 percent of overall enrollment would strengthen UCR by providing a richer intellectual environment, enabling

undergraduate students to see and understand post-graduate options, enhance undergraduate education, and support research and scholarship. Anticipated/planned growth at the graduate level ranges from the daunting task of developing a school of medicine to smaller efforts such as establishing a Ph.D. program in women's studies. As of March 2009, five new graduate programs had been approved, and another dozen were in different stages of development. Although the proposed school of public policy was approved, establishment has been delayed; UCR is continuing to progress toward a medical school and has announced the appointment of a new dean of medicine.

Clearly the medical school is the by far the most significant and challenging issue related to the growth of graduate and professional education at UCR; its development promises to be transformative for both the campus and the region. At least two respondents used the term "full court press" in referring to the campus efforts to move this initiative forward. Private support will be essential as well as continued state and system advocacy.

In the current fiscal environment, the team urges UCR to carefully consider how, where and why to increase graduate programs. Interview respondents described the goals of growth in graduate education as "prestige," "student interest," "faculty interest," and "state need." More than one pointed out that UCR's diverse student body can provide a pipeline into graduate school and from there to the professoriate. Resource demands of even small programs, however, are significant

and include faculty time for administrative matters such as admissions, staff, student support, space, and, in some cases, specialized facilities or equipment.

Furthermore, UCR must balance its aspirations for growth in graduate education against its longstanding commitment to undergraduate education. The provost and others with whom we spoke noted that strong graduate programs improve undergraduate education and contribute to the campus intellectual climate. One vice chancellor, acknowledging the need to balance the institution's AAU aspirations (which involve growth in graduate education) against its responsibilities as a land-grant institution, described this as a "good tension." (CFRs 1.1, 4.1)

While the team is in full agreement, we also note that acute resource limitations require institutional leaders to make hard choices, and that new programs increase competition for limited resources. Again, it is essential for the strategic planning process to establish a framework within which questions about the pace, direction, and level of growth in graduate education can be explored, including the trade-offs that will inevitably result. The Graduate Division appears committed to meeting regional interests and needs. The Palm Desert campus provides self-supporting programs such as the MFA in Creative Writing and the EMBA. This campus might also become the locus for PSM (Professional Science Masters) or MBA/Engineering degrees that expand UCR programs without incurring additional cost. Such programs respond to workforce needs as do programs such as the M Ed and demonstrate that the campus remains committed to regional needs. Programs that

place graduate students into teaching positions in community colleges also reflect a commitment to the region and to supporting all segments of education. Cooperation with CSU feeder campuses also demonstrates that the Graduate Division is committed to broader regional goals that support students.

UCR's approach to graduate education appears to be reasoned and analytical. Efforts align well with the diversity theme. Shared governance is evident in policy-making, program review, and program planning. While UCR as a whole has made impressive progress with regard to the establishment of learning outcomes, assessment work has focused almost exclusively on undergraduate programs (with exceptions for programs in management, engineering and some other fields that have been sent down this path by disciplinary accreditation agencies). Over time, graduate programs, too, will need to establish and assess student learning outcomes. (CFR 2.2b, 2.3, 2.4, 4.6, 4.7)

UCR has a foundation for this in program review, the data it reviews on graduate student outcomes (e.g., the NRC data, program reviews, evaluation of special programs such as UCR-SEED). Additionally, the strategic planning group on graduate education intends to develop an evaluation framework for graduate programs that can be applied systematically (with flexibility for disciplinary differences). In sum, as UCR continues its progress in graduate education, it must be mindful that the WASC standards for learning outcomes and assessment apply to graduate as well as undergraduate programs. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.4)

**Theme 3: Improving Undergraduate Student Engagement, Experience, and Learning Outcomes (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 4.6,)**

This theme is divided into three parts; the first focuses on faculty aspirations for students, the second on first-year experience, and the third on criteria for undergraduate admissions.

In addition to the thematic essay itself, the team examined a broad array of documents in the team room listed under the heading "Special Theme: Undergraduate" as well as other documents supplied during the visit. The team acquired additional information, including answers to a number of outstanding questions, in face-to-face meetings with individuals and groups.

### 1.) Faculty Aspirations for Students

Because all of the undergraduate programs in the Bourns College of Engineering (BCOE) and the recently renamed School of Business Administration (SoBA) are assumed to have learning outcomes and assessment processes in place to satisfy the requirements of their accrediting agencies (ABET and AACSB, respectively), the focus of the thematic self-study essay is on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (CNAS). The undergraduate programs in these colleges have made significant and impressive progress in developing learning outcomes and assessment plans during the past 18 months; at the time of the CPR visit, nothing was in place, whereas today every undergraduate program has learning outcomes and most have assessment plans.

These outcomes and plans are readily accessible via the OATS database. (CFR 2.3, 2.4)

When asked about the prospects for sustaining the progress already made, the team was assured that learning outcomes and assessment are being institutionalized not only by their incorporation into program review but also by an insistence on the development of, and adherence to, assessment plans by each program or department; by having OATS submissions routinely reviewed and evaluated (with feedback given) by staff in Undergraduate Education and Computing and Communications, in consultation with a newly established Faculty Advisory Committee on Learning Outcomes Assessment; by gaining the endorsement of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers; by the provision of extensive support in the form of materials, workshops, and other training programs; and by having the Committee on Education Policy provide oversight. A faculty attendee at one of the team's meetings offered one explanation for the faculty's rapid adoption of learning outcomes and assessment: "it has been made easy for us." (CFR 2.7, 3.4, 4.6, 4.7)

The faculty's aspirations for learning at the institutional level appear in the essay as the institution's "goals of an undergraduate education." The essay mentions the contribution of general education (known more commonly at UCR as "breadth") to the achievement of these goals, but nothing is said about progress in assessing this important component of a student's education. Members of the Educational Effectiveness Review Subcommittee stated that they had no idea they were expected

to assess the outcomes of general education separately from the outcomes of the majors, some claiming that that, in their opinion, such assessment would be impossible to conduct.  Apparently, they were unaware of the considerable progress made in addressing this challenge at other institutions, including research institutions, around the country.

From the essay and meetings during the team visit, it became apparent that, for the most part, the development of learning outcomes and assessment plans to date has not led to "results," meaning that the assessment methods have not yet produced data for analysis and interpretation by the faculty, which would lead to improvements in student learning through purposeful changes in curricula and other components of educational programs.  The team was informed that, at least within CHASS, initial results would become available by the end of the 2009-2010 academic year.  However, it seemed likely to the team, based on the current status of implementation, that significant "closing of the loop" based on learning outcomes assessment would not occur in most programs for at least another year or more.

The team applauds the recent progress in relation to learning outcomes and assessment, especially recognizing the institution's deliberate decision to "bring along" simultaneously all of the programs in CHASS and CNAS rather than selecting just a few for initial attention.  The team understands that the fiscal crisis makes this an especially difficult time to increase faculty work (while also recognizing that outcomes assessment, skillfully designed, need not be particularly onerous).

Nevertheless, in view of the fact that WASC has been asking institutions to implement outcomes assessment for more than a decade, the team is disappointed that the overall effort has not progressed further. UCR needs to move forward with assessment work as quickly as possible; students deserve no less than the improvements in learning that would be expected to result.

The team recommends that a system of review be established jointly between the Academic Senate and the Office of the Provost to track future progress in assessing student learning outcomes. An element of this system of review must be regular feedback to departments regarding progress and completion of this effort. The team also recommends that a group be assembled immediately to address the omission of general education from the current process of defining and assessing outcomes and to demonstrate the alignment between departmental and General Education goals.

### 2.) Improving the First Year Experience of Undergraduates

Based on what it learned from the essay and from the visit, the team was impressed by the institution's considerable efforts to improve the first-year experience of undergraduate students at UCR, starting with research on who these students are and what challenges they might face. Among the findings: roughly 90 percent of the first-year students are from the surrounding four counties; many are the first in their families to go to college; and more than 50 percent do not meet the entrance writing requirement. Most first-year students are finding that the expectations at college are rather different from those encountered at high school, where they were typically the best students.

A variety of techniques are being used to help these students succeed, including summer bridge programs, learning communities, supplemental instruction, and early warning systems. The team especially applauds the energy, commitment, and collaborative spirit demonstrated by those in Student Affairs working together with their colleagues in Academic Affairs, particularly within CHASS, to develop, offer, and assess these programs. In many cases, their assessments have demonstrated that the programs are indeed effective in improving performance (e.g., grades) and/or retention. The assessments have also suggested how limited resources can be deployed to do the most good (e.g., which courses to offer in bridge programs). In at least one case (CHASS Connect), the quality of the assessment work is evidenced by the award of a FIPSE grant to conduct a rigorous evaluation with double the number of students in the program.

### 3.) Criteria for Undergraduate Admissions

In studying predictors of success at UCR, the institution has concluded that high school GPA is especially important, much more so than scores on standardized tests. This finding, which is consistent with findings nationally, will be used in admissions decisions and is already being used to target applicants for aggressive recruitment.

**B. Institution's Systems for Enhancing Educational Effectiveness and Student Learning**

Given the emphasis in the Educational Effectiveness Review on undergraduate success, the institution's report discusses the process the campus has used to create student learning outcomes and a mechanism for the assessment of learning. The OATS system provides the structure to record learning outcomes and ultimately will be the locus for the record of success in each department and, when it is developed, the success of learning outcomes in General Education. The process of developing the assessment tools will also be the way that teaching and learning will ultimately be measured. At this point in the process, it is not possible to determine the extent of student learning outcomes. While the process has been discussed for many years, the conclusions are not yet obvious. The OATS process will need ongoing monitoring and assessment by deans, chairs, and the CEP. That evidence will need to be what is used to assess the success of student learning. Given the primacy of the current assessment process, it is clear that each unit has goals and that the student learning outcomes will be assessed to direct changes in academic courses and programs.

However, with the exception of departments that already have external accreditation requirements, such as engineering, almost no departments have actually gathered data for evaluation of student learning purposes. Thus, while student learning outcomes have been established, they are not widely published nor routinely used by faculty. The team judges this effort to be in an initial stage (CFRs

2.1 and 2.4). Expectations for student learning do appear to be well developed (CFRs 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5). While assessment plans are in place, neither curricular nor program assessments have occurred to date, and the team judged the institution to be in the initial stage in terms of actually conducting assessments (CFRs 2.4 and 2.7). Faculty members are beginning to discuss student learning expectations and outcomes, but findings of assessment are not yet available, leading the team to judge the institution to be in the emerging level (CFR 2.6). With respect to curricula, pedagogy, and other aspects of the educational experience, as well as support for faculty to develop expertise in assessment of student learning, the team believes the institution is at the developed stage (CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.11, 2.13, and 3.4).

The current budget situation may hamper some efforts to enhance faculty support systems such as teaching and learning workshops, time for curricular development and revision, and opportunities to incorporate best practices such as smaller classes, team-teaching, enhanced laboratory sections, undergraduate research, and internships; however, the plans are in place to provide such learning opportunities when funds are available.

### C. Student Success

The team believes that the institution has demonstrated a strong commitment to student success dating back at least to the Student Success Task Force that reported in 2006. At a meeting of team members with faculty and staff, this report was described as an "amazing document … right on." The team was told that its recommendations had the support of the former executive vice chancellor (EVC)

and retains the support of the present EVC. The student success effort now has a budget, albeit one that has been reduced in the present budgetary climate.

As observed in the CPR report, indicators of success such as data on retention, time to degree, and graduation, are readily available. UCR publishes a "Riverside Portrait" modeled after the College Portrait used by institutions participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability. Unlike the other UC campuses, UCR has participated in and published the results of the Collegiate Learning Assessment. Assuming the validity and reliability of this test (which is still a matter of some controversy nationally), the "value added" as students proceed from being freshmen to seniors in the areas of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and written communication would appear to be "above average."

A component of the undergraduate theme of the self-study focuses on a set of programs and initiatives targeted at first-year students with the goal of improving student success. Given their recent introduction, it is still too early to measure their impact on graduation rates, but there is already evidence of a positive impact, in many cases, on retention and grades.

The six-year graduation rate of 64.7 percent for the entering class of 2002 is significantly lower than the equivalent rates achieved by most other UC campuses (typically close to 80 percent or above). However, as pointed out in the self-study, UCR's rate is high for an institution with over 40 percent of students on federal aid.

Furthermore, given the profile of the institution's student body and the fact that most do not live on campus, it might be expected that time to degree would be greater for these students than for those at other UC campuses (with the exception, perhaps, of UC Merced). Indeed, the data show higher seven- and eight-year graduation rates.

The institution has set itself a target of a 75-percent six-year graduation rate. Given efforts to improve the academic profiles of entering students (for example, by targeting special recruitment efforts at those with high school GPAs in the 3.5-3.9 range) as well as the first-year programs and initiatives already mentioned, it would seem that the target – while ambitious in the short term, perhaps – is ultimately within reach.

UCR's graduation rates do not vary much across the students' different demographic categories, although women tend to graduate at a higher rate than men. There appears to be greater variation when one disaggregates the data for individual colleges (e.g., Latino students appear to graduate from CNAS at lower rates than other students) but caution in interpretation may be needed because the calculations not take into account out-migration to other colleges (in other words, students entering CNAS who fail to graduate from that college but would nevertheless be considered successful because they do graduate from another college at UCR).

### D. Program Review

UCR has a well-established program of academic program review at the graduate level (under the purview of the Graduate Council of the Academic Senate); the process has more recently been extended to the undergraduate level (under the purview of the Committee on Educational Policy). At both levels, program reviews includes self-studies, external reviews, the generation of recommendations for improvement, and a provision for progress reporting. (CFR 2.7, 4.4)

The program review process demonstrates the institution's commitments to educational quality and effectiveness, shared governance, and continuous quality improvement. The process is data-rich, triangulating objective indicators of productivity and quality, survey and interview results, and curriculum review. Participants in a session on program review indicated that a wide range of faculty members within their departments were engaged in the process, in some cases preparing the self-study but more generally meeting with the visiting team, reviewing the report, and implementing recommendations. (CFR 3.11, 4.3, 4.4)

The WASC Standards (in particular CFR 2.7) call for the integration of student learning objectives and the direct assessment of student learning into the program review process. The UCR guidelines for undergraduate program review were recently modified to include student learning outcomes; to date, insufficient time has passed to assess the impact of this change. Two reports that the team reviewed

described learning outcomes and assessment plans, but they were ancillary to other components of the review.  The team did not find any evidence of the integration of student learning objectives and assessment into graduate program review.  Thus, despite a robust program review process, considerably more work is needed to align with WASC expectations.  On the rubric WASC provides for "the integrating of student learning objectives into program review," UCR is categorized as "initial" or "emerging" on most elements including required elements of the self-study, review process, and feedback on assessment efforts.

While faculty members involved in program review (from both Senate and program perspectives) expressed overall satisfaction with the process, they also provided some suggestions for improvement or further consideration:

1) Although five to seven years was described as a "desirable" cycle, in reality the time between reviews is now eight to 10 years.  As more graduate and interdisciplinary programs are established, the cycle time could become even longer.  Additionally, the integration of student learning outcomes and assessment into program review could make the process more time-consuming and labor intensive.  In an attempt to mitigate this problem, more members have been added to the Graduate Council.  Clearly, the value of the process depends to a large extent on timeliness; moreover, accountability is undermined by long cycle times.  The team encourages the Senate to actively work toward shortening the cycle time, which may mean involving more faculty colleagues in the process or evaluating the feasibility of the process under current conditions.

2) Opinions differed about conducting graduate and undergraduate program reviews at the same time.  On the one hand, undergraduate and graduate programs influence each other and face many of the same issues; on the other hand, their goals are different, and in a research university there is a risk that graduate programs will be perceived as more important than undergraduate programs.  This is an issue for the Graduate Council and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to further consider, especially as the number and workload associated with reviews increases.

3) Several faculty members noted that recommendations should not be imposed in a heavy-handed manner but rather filtered through a department process of "self-reflection."  Although this point seems inarguable, it is equally important to maintain a strong follow-up process to ensure that this process of self-reflection has occurred in a rigorous and open-minded manner.

4) Program review is the purview of the academic senate at UCR.  As a result, its ties to budgeting and resource allocation are indirect since these are largely administrative matters.  The nature of shared governance at the institution ensures that faculty "own" this peer review process, but it does increase the challenge of using findings in administrative decision-making.  Most faculty expressed concern that the administration pays inadequate attention to the review results.  There have been some promising responses to this situation.  For example, CEP has now

designed an action/implementation meeting at the end of the review process that culminates in an action plan signed by the chair of CEP and the program chair.

The involvement of deans and central administrators, however, is disappointing to many if not most of the faculty participating in the program review session.  In particular, some faculty participants in our discussion noted that recommendations made a decade ago appear again in the more recent review because they had not been addressed.  Many such recommendations, however, address resource needs of departments and programs.  For example, a member of the Graduate Council noted that program reviews provide "ammunition" for departments and programs to argue for increased resources.  In this time of scarce resources, program reviews that primarily recommend funding, staff, FTE lines, facilities and the like are likely to have little impact unless they (a) are coupled with an unblinking assessment of program quality that is specific, direct, and constructive; (b) are related to (preferably aligned with) institutional and decanal priorities; (c) are realistic; and (d) offer convincing evidence of or arguments for cost-effectiveness.  (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)

When asked how the discussion about program review could be helpful, UCR faculty members responded that they were interested in identifying exemplars of program review at other institutions.  What we find most admirable about program review at UCR, however, is that it is designed and managed by UCR faculty – it is an expression of faculty values, expectations, and commitments.  While other institutions may

approach the task in different ways, such methods might have limited effectiveness within UCR given its unique culture and strongly felt sense of mission.

### E. Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs

When the visiting team first came to UCR, then-UC chief operating officer Rory Hume predicted a four-percent budget cut for UC campuses and optimistically projected growth funds for UCR. Since that time much has changed for higher education in California. The WASC visiting team was well aware of the current budget situation in California and for the UC system, so prefaced many meetings by acknowledging that these are not "normal" times for higher education, recognizing that the situation required setting priorities for the institution. Members of the team commented that UCR staff and faculty—and even students who were facing increased fees—all recognized the situation and intended to maintain the momentum of the campus priorities despite the budget situation. There was no moaning and groaning and no excuses about why the campus could not achieve its goals. The announcement of the hiring of the new dean of the nascent School of Medicine was greeted as a positive sign for the future growth of the campus. (CFR 3.5)

UCR's share of the budget reduction is $51 million, and the team was presented with the summary of how that cut would be handled. The decisions were strategic and supported UCR's goals as well as responding to system directives. While progress toward the School of Medicine is slower than originally planned, the campus commitment remains unwavering. Other graduate programs such as the School of

Public Policy are on hold; at least one senior vice chancellor noted that proposed

graduate programs could be approved but not immediately funded. Hiring is

minimal, furloughs are in place, and administrative costs have been reduced. There

is discussion about consolidation of some programs; the Chancellor's decision not to

rehire the Administrative Vice Chancellor was viewed as forward thinking. The

various committees for the Strategic Plan will address academic, student, and

research issues as well as other sources of funding, and the addition of a seasoned

Vice Chancellor for Advancement is a positive move toward securing additional

external funds. The "spirit" of the campus was positive with faculty indicating that

they are committed to serving students and support the directive not to take

furlough days on teaching days. We commend them for that action. (CFR 3.5, 4.1)


Although the team recognizes and applauds the energy at UCR that prevails in spite

of the budgetary situation, we would be remiss if we didn't address the possibility

that the California and UC budget may not right itself in another year. Conversations

with Chancellor White and UC President Yudoff regarding the budget addressed the

substantial cuts ($800 million for the system), the reductions in OP staff, and

system-wide actions such as furloughs, increased student fees, and new efforts for

scholarship dollars. Most of these efforts assume a short-term fix, with everyone

assuming that furloughs will cease by 2010-11. With increased fees and the

potential of a $1 billion scholarship pool, certainly the pressure will be lessened;

however, ARRA funds will disappear, financial assistance for low-income students

(many of whom are at UCR), and support for areas such as deferred maintenance,

new facilities, and filling vacant positions will require a return to an adequate funding base.  For UCR, the creation of a School of Medicine will require much more than the $10 million pledged and the hoped-for $10 million state match.

A special concern of the visiting team is the potential effect of the budget cuts on the availability of courses, so that students can graduate in a timely manner. Fewer part-time faculty can mean fewer course sections and larger classes; fewer TA's can have negative effects for both graduate and undergraduate students; and increased faculty workload, while arguably necessary, will have effects on research and service. Although insufficient time has passed to empirically measure these factors, the team appreciates the awareness and concern manifested by senior leadership and faculty across the board.   As the institution stretches to support a new medical school and other new graduate programs, leadership must be mindful of the imperative to enable timely progress to degree for undergraduates.  (CFR 1.2, 1.7, 3.1)

The team unanimously applauds the institution's administration, faculty, and staff for their optimism in a difficult budgetary time, but we also caution that there must be a strong strategic plan to guide future priorities.  The core mission of the campus has always been to educate a diverse population of undergraduates, to build strong graduate and research programs, and to meet the needs of a growing and more diverse community.  It will be incumbent upon the leadership and faculty to stay the

course so that the campus does not lose ground during this time.  (CFR 1.1, 1.5, 3.5, 4.1)

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

The team believes the institution can best be described as committed to educational effectiveness.  UCR is actively using assessment in many of its co-curricular educational programs and has developed a comprehensive educational effectiveness program for undergraduate education at the program level.   However, it has not yet implemented the assessment process of student learning outcomes, it has not yet begun to develop a program of assessment and evaluation of graduate student learning, nor has it tackled the issue of assessing general student learning outcomes for the undergraduate students as a whole.   (CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)

Overall, the team judged the institution to be at the emerging level with a significant number of areas that need attention.

In terms of the original goals the Educational Effectiveness Subcommittee of the WASC Steering Committee set for UCR at the Educational Effectiveness Review (as enumerated in its Proposal in October 2005), the team finds that, while many have been achieved, some important ones remain to be accomplished.  The institution expected to establish student learning outcomes for all of its programs and did so.  It also expected to carry out assessment of progress towards achieving the outcomes and has not yet collected the information to do so.  It expected to "close the assessment loop" by analyzing the results of the assessments and it has not done so.

It intended to provide faculty workshops to educate faculty regarding assessment and evaluation programs and methodologies, and bolster this effort with faculty development programs to improve teaching. It met the workshop goal (although several years behind schedule). It expected to develop better understanding of the characteristics of successful students at UCR and use such understanding in admissions decisions. Considerable progress has been made in accomplishing this goal. It also set out to achieve a comprehensive strategic plan for future development and improvement of student learning on campus. Many aspects of this plan have been established, but more needs to be done in terms of graduate education and general education as well as strategic planning in general. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 4.6, 4.7)

The team commends the institution for its commitment to diversity and to the way the campus has embraced both diversity and inclusion in its student body. Of equal concern is the need to retain women and minority faculty members during a time of limited hiring, so existing programs that support the retention of current faculty need to be pursued. Given the difficult fiscal environment, it would be easy to cut back on the efforts that support access and diversity. We urge the campus to continue to prioritize those programs that facilitate the success of all members of the University community. (CFR 1.5, 2.10, 3.2)

Additionally, the team commends the institution for the significant collaborative activities between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Programs such as Learning Communities, Supplemental Instruction, Summer Bridge, and Early Warning demonstrate the important nexus between the academic and social life of students and acknowledges that student success at the institution is dependent on these interconnected efforts. (CFR 2.10, 2.13)

The team identified several recommendations.

UCR has demonstrated its commitment to teaching and learning and to the culture of evidence and has demonstrated its capacity to generate and utilize data. Through a self-reflective process that utilized program review and continuous improvement, the campus has embraced student learning outcomes and further made a decision to develop measures across all departments and has created a data base to track progress. The visiting team was disappointed, however, that the analysis and assessment of student learning outcomes was not further along. While the team applauds the creation of the OATS database and acknowledge that departments are populating the site, we had anticipated that the campus would have accomplished more. Some units have clearly made significant changes in capstone courses, in creating plans for portfolio review, and in defining clear learning outcomes, and those departments deserve commendation for that progress. What remains to be done is the <u>collection of data, analysis of that data, and the use of the analysis to improve student learning</u>.

To implement this recommendation, <u>the team recommends that a system of review be established jointly between the Academic Senate and the Office of the Provost to track progress on student learning outcomes.</u>   An element of this system of review should be regular feedback to departments regarding progress on this effort. Further, the team recommends that a plan and timeline be developed for the assessment of General Education.  (CFRs 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8)

A part of the institution's plan for success addresses the expansion of graduate programs and the creation of a School of Medicine.  As UCR strives to grow the number of graduate and professional students, it will be critical that the institution <u>incorporate student learning outcomes into the graduate program reviews</u>.  (CFRs 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7, 4.6, 4.7)

The campus has embarked on a strategic planning initiative that will be well along by March when the Chancellor presents the plan to the Board of Regents.  The subcommittees appear to be aligned with the mission and goals of the University, and the process is engaging a large group from within the campus community.  The campus has ambitious plans to achieve success consistent with that of AAU institutions.  It will be critical that as the campus moves toward the expansion of research and graduate programs, it must retain its commitment to undergraduate success and a culture of diversity.  To that end, <u>the Team recommends that the strategic plan include metrics related to student learning outcomes at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.</u>  (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 4.1 and 4.3)