

Response to Offsite Review Summary of Lines of Inquiry
Line of Inquiry #13
Leadership Churn
August 2018

As we began preparing our Institutional Report and Review Under WSCUC Standards in late 2016, the campus was immersed in a challenging and tense set of circumstances. The underlying cause of this tension was the growth and development that all successful institutions undergo, but the specific changes needed to accommodate and manage this growth impacted the campus simultaneously, compounding the effects of one another. Key examples included the implementation of both a new student information system (Banner) and a new system-wide personnel system (UCPath), adjusting to a new decentralized budget model, managing rapid faculty growth (much of it through the [cluster hiring initiative](#)), and an unexpectedly large incoming freshmen cohort in Fall 2016. These changes touched every member of campus.

In addition, many members of the campus community pointed to leadership turnover as a compounding factor. Among the 15 leadership positions comprised of the Provost, Vice Chancellors and Deans, there were 10 leadership changes during the three-year period of 2013-16. While this may or may not be an objectively high turnover given that many administrative appointments are for 5-year terms, the fact that 6 of these changes were among the 7 college/school deans undoubtedly contributed to an impression among faculty that it was a high rate of churn. Moreover, in late 2016, tensions had reached a critical point with the academic senate considering a vote of no confidence in the provost that eventually led to his decision to resign in December 2016 and step down from the office in February 2017.

The tense campus environment of 2016-17 was reflected in the report and the review, as both were initiated at the same time as the turmoil that resulted in the resignation of the provost. However, the workgroup that authored the report recently reconvened to discuss how the campus has changed in the past 12-18 months, and they generally agreed that we have since moved past this unfortunate period. Members of the workgroup felt that engagement, transparency, and communication have all noticeably improved. Examples cited included the various “campus conversations” hosted by the Chancellor, workshops facilitated by the Provost, and periodic newsletters distributed by both offices. Changes in other units, such as the addition of communications officers in the colleges and schools, also were viewed positively. Members felt that communication and engagement between the academic senate and the administration also has improved.

Regarding leadership turnover, one member of the workgroup remarked that things seem to have “settled down.” Among the deans—especially within the colleges and schools—there have been very few recent hires. We recently filled the positions of Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education and Dean of the Bourns College of Engineering, replacing interim appointments, but the college/school deans appointed in the period 2013-16 all remain in place. As is normal for a university the size of UCR, there have been recent new hires among the vice chancellor and associate vice chancellor positions, and we continue to search for a permanent Director of Evaluation and Assessment. Looking ahead, this year we anticipate only one executive transition among senior campus leadership, and this is due to a planned retirement. While the general sense on campus seems to be that the tensions that contributed to the leadership change in the provost’s office and leadership turnover are behind us, we look forward to hearing the team’s analysis after speaking with the campus community.