

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
SPECIAL VISIT

To California State University, Bakersfield

March 7 – 10, 2023

Team Roster

Rita Cheng, Team Chair
President Emerita
Northern Arizona University

Laura Massa, Team Assistant Chair
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic and Faculty Programs
California State University Office of the Chancellor

Albert Biscarra
Assistant Director of Institutional Research
University of California, Los Angeles

Regina Dixon-Reeves
Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Director, Center for Inclusion and Diversity
University of San Diego

Fran Horvath
Associate Vice President, Academic Planning & Inst. Effectiveness (retired)
California State University, Monterey Bay

Barbara Gross Davis, Staff Liaison
Vice President, WASC Senior College and University Commission

The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT	1
A. Description of the Institution and Accreditation History	1
B. Description of Team’s Review Process	4
C. Institution’s Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence	4
SECTION II – TEAMS’S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS	5
A. Institutional Research	5
B. Program Review	8
C. Academic Support Services	10
D. Graduation Rates	12
E. Faculty and Staff Diversity	14
F. Strategic Plan	16
G. Administrative Unit Assessment	18
SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW	20

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of the Institution and Accreditation History

California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) was founded in 1965 to serve students in the San Joaquin Valley and has remained the only comprehensive four-year regional university within a hundred miles. Currently, CSUB serves approximately 10,000 students at its two campuses, the 345-acre main campus in Bakersfield and a satellite campus in the Antelope Valley. Across its four academic schools, CSUB offers 40 undergraduate degree programs, 19 master’s degree programs, a doctoral program in educational leadership, as well as educator credentials and numerous certificates and professional development programs. CSUB is recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and is a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. With more than 60 percent of its nearly 60,000 alumni remaining within the Central Valley, CSUB supports and provides the framework for ongoing social, cultural, and economic development in the region.

The mission of the university is to be “a comprehensive public university offering excellent undergraduate and graduate programs that advance the intellectual and personal development of its students. We emphasize student learning through our commitment to scholarship, ethical behavior, diversity, service, global awareness and life-long learning. The university collaborates with partners in the community to increase the region’s overall educational attainment, enhance its quality of life and support its economic development.” From this mission, CSUB has drawn a set of six core values that shape its work with students, faculty, staff and its region:

- Developing the intellectual and personal potential of every student.
- Supporting the intellectual and professional development of all faculty and staff.
- Nurturing a civil and collegial campus environment that values the diversity of persons and ideas.
- Engaging one another with respect, trustworthiness, ethical behavior, and self-reflection.

- Promoting active and informed engagement of faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders in shared governance.
- Being accountable to the public, alumni, students, and one another for achieving the mission, vision, and goals of the university

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, CSUB suspended in-person classes and implemented alternative methods of delivering instruction and student support services. A university Emergency Operations Center, with faculty, staff and student membership, helped the CSUB community to navigate the crisis. As operations were to remain primarily remote in the 2020 – 2021 academic year, the university offered faculty a variety of professional development opportunities that were designed to help ensure instructional integrity. In spring 2021, the university opened a community vaccination center that provided more than 5,400 COVID-19 vaccinations. In person instruction resumed in fall 2021, and by fall 2022, approximately 70% of classes were in-person.

CSUB was first accredited by WSCUC in 1970 and hosted its most recent reaffirmation visit in October 2019. In February 2020 the Commission reaffirmed CSUB’s accreditation for a period of eight years, and scheduled a Special Visit for the spring of 2023 to address seven issues, including concerns related to institutional research, program review, academic support services, graduation rates, faculty and staff diversity, strategic planning, and administrative unit assessment.

For the issue of institutional research, the Commission required that CSUB further develop the capacity of institutional research to provide high quality, accurate data and analysis for use in program review, assessment, planning, student success initiatives, resource allocation, and overall institutional effectiveness. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide a proactive data reporting and analysis strategy, evidence of useable data sets to inform decision-making, and a description of data education and outreach to the campus community.

For the issue of program review, the Commission required that CSUB foster a culture of continuous improvement and re-establish a system for completing rigorous and consistent program reviews. (CFRs 2.7, 4.1) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide a description of the revised program review process and a realistic program review schedule, a list of scheduled, performed, and completed program reviews, and two examples of using program review results for continuous improvement.

For the issue of academic support services, the Commission required that CSUB ensure consistency, effectiveness, and quality of academic support services, including advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and course scheduling, to enhance student success for all students. (CFRs 2.12, 2.13) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide data on students served, disaggregated by demographic variables, organizational charts, staffing ratios, and resource allocations to units serving students, and evidence of effectiveness of academic support services.

For the issue of graduation rates, the Commission required that CSUB demonstrate considerable progress toward achieving the institution's goals for Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) first time freshman 4-year and 6-year graduation rates. (CFR 2.10) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide graduation and retention rates from spring 2019 to spring 2022, disaggregated to assess equity gaps.

For the issue of faculty and staff diversity, the Commission required that through a comprehensive institutional strategy, CSUB demonstrate substantial progress toward increasing faculty and staff diversity. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide a diversity plan or strategy and report the numbers of underrepresented faculty and staff from spring 2019 through spring 2023.

For the issue of strategic planning, the Commission required that CSUB continue the implementation of the new strategic plan by identifying key metrics of success, and aligning the plan to

budget, resource allocation, and organizational structure. (CFR 4.6) In addition, the Commission asked that CSUB provide the metrics for strategic goals, and an update on progress in meeting goals.

For the issue of administrative unit assessment, the Commission required that CSUB establish the process of regular assessment of administrative units, including external reviews where appropriate, to engage in continuous improvement and ensure effectiveness. (CFR 4.1)

Progress of CSUB in addressing these issues is described in Section II.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

CSUB submitted its Special Visit Report (SVR) and supporting documentation in January 2023. The team identified key issues for the visit based on the written materials submitted by CSUB and held a pre-visit conference call to determine the visit strategy and confirm the visit schedule. The team chair conferred with CSUB's president ahead of the visit, and the assistant chair met with the CSUB ALO to plan the remote visit details.

The Special Visit team evaluated evidence presented by CSUB to address progress on each of the seven issues noted in the Commission Action letter dated February 26, 2020. On March 7 – 9, 2023, the team held discussions with administrative personnel, the board of trustees, faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the team reviewed all submissions to the confidential email account that CSUB made available to all interested parties. The exit meeting occurred during the morning of March 10, 2023.

C. Institution's Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The Special Visit team evaluated evidence presented by CSUB to address progress on each of the seven issues noted in the Commission Action letter dated February 26, 2020. The SVR submitted by CSUB was well-organized, addressing each of the issues raised in the Commission Action Letter of February 2020. Appendices were comprehensive and easily accessible, and evidence provided with the report and during the visit supported SVR claims. All documentation requested by the Commission in their February 2020 letter was provided by CSUB.

The SVR was drafted by a Steering Committee, consisting primarily of university administration and staff. As part of its work, the Steering Committee sought contributions from a variety of faculty, staff and administrators. Before finalizing the report, feedback was sought from the CSUB community through multiple channels, including open forums, visits with standing committees, and campus-wide communications.

Overall, the SVR characterized CSUB as making incremental progress towards improvement in all the identified areas for this Special Visit. After campus interviews and the review of the institutional report and additional documentation provided during the visit, the team concluded that CSUB has generally made good progress in addressing previous Commission recommendations though more work is needed in some areas.

SECTION II – TEAMS’S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Institutional Research

As a result of the last reaffirmation review, the Commission required CSUB to further develop the capacity of institutional research to provide high quality, accurate data and analysis for use in program review, assessment, planning, student success initiatives, resource allocation, and overall institutional effectiveness. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

The team observed that institutional research at CSUB had improved considerably, but noted that Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) still had work to do to serve the university most effectively. IRPA has completed incremental enhancements to its data collection, analysis and reporting enterprise, positioning itself as a competent campus partner able to meet the basic data needs of the institution. For example, IRPA has addressed data issues related to census data not being archived, corrupt data, and the widespread use of transactional, non-fixed data for reporting. Changes that IRPA implemented include building a data warehouse in SQL server with 50 years of census data, creating nightly copies of data, leveraging the CSU data dictionary to define campus data, making available a

small set of self-service data dashboards, and generally paying greater attention to data quality. Each of these components are part of the bedrock for reliably performing institutional research, and although the reasons why these mission-critical elements were not previously in place are not clear, to the credit of IRPA they have addressed and are continuing to address these areas and are primed to move forward as a reliable campus partner. (CFR 4.1)

On the other hand, the inability of constituencies to shake their deep-seated mistrust of IRPA could impede IRPA's trajectory of improvement unless the institution proactively addresses these concerns. Despite the wide-ranging improvements IRPA has implemented, during the Special Visit the team heard multiple groups express differing levels of dissatisfaction with IRPA's work including an inability to gauge IRPA's improvement due to insufficient transparency with how IRPA collects and packages the data it disseminates, and a general sense that working with data remains a struggle.

To address community concerns, IRPA staff has engaged in outreach to the institution, such as by making themselves available to faculty to discuss what data best fulfills their needs. For example, IRPA completed a graduation rate analysis for the Graduation Initiative Task Force that examined why graduation rate gaps between Pell and non-Pell students remain stubborn and discovered that non-Pell recipients had also been using Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding (HEERF) to accelerate their degree progress. In addition, IRPA is developing a data dashboard with real-time retention and graduation data that permits levels of disaggregation that the CSU Chancellors Office dashboards do not include; until this is complete IRPA has been providing this data to the group. IRPA also annually assembles academic program data that includes faculty FTEs, salaries, and graduation and retention rates. (CFR 4.2)

CSUB has formed a Data-Informed Decision-Making Steering Group to shift the institutional culture around data. The group, commissioned by the president and provost, includes a leader from every

school as a member. The team encourages this group to explore ways to increase trust in institutional data and the good work of IRPA.

Progress made by IRPA has been in part due to improved staffing in the unit. CSUB has been able to make key hires, so that IRPA now has an assistant vice president, three senior research analysts, a data analyst and a research technician. The additional team members, and plans outlined by IRPA leadership, should help IRPA to continue to improve data, and campus access to data. Additional staffing may be needed for IRPA to fulfill its responsibilities related to learning outcomes assessment. Current activities related to assessment have included working to understand use of the campus assessment management system, and work on a dashboard that would indicate which outcomes have been assessed by each program. Engaging faculty in meaningful efforts to understand the dashboard could require considerable time and energy. (CFR 4.2)

CSUB has a decentralized, school-by-school model of learning outcomes assessment that leaves room for improving the quality and consistency of assessment across the university. As part of their assessment efforts each school is required to assign a faculty member to serve as a learning outcomes assessment coordinator. The university has offered some professional development in the last year to help faculty better understand program learning outcomes assessment, as well as included assessment within its recently updated academic program review process. Inclusion in program review led the Academic Senate in Fall 2022 to re-establish a Campus Assessment Team, whose membership includes IRPA faculty assessment coordinators and other administrators. While this is a new group, the team believed this was a positive step towards improving assessment across CSUB. (CFR 2.4, 4.3, 4.4)

The team encourages CSUB to reflect on campus use of its assessment management system. There did not appear to be consistent use of the tool by academic programs, and, while the system has a few key supporters within university administration, faculty generally reported negative experiences and perceptions of the tool.

Conclusion

The team commends CSUB for strengthening IRPA data reporting and analysis capacity by building a campus data warehouse containing historical census data, paying increased attention to data quality, leveraging the systemwide data dictionary to define campus data and creating processes to derive campus-specific variables, starting to develop self-service data dashboards, and filling institutional research staff vacancies. Great strides have been made between 2019 and 2023.

The team recommends that CSUB foster a campus culture of data-informed decision-making by promoting the use of IRPA-provided data resources, as well as by providing continued support for IRPA's initiatives aimed at enhancing data quality, accuracy and availability. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)

The team recommends that CSUB enhance the capacity for student learning outcomes assessment by coordinating the collective efforts of IRPA, the Campus Assessment Team, and faculty assessment coordinators and by making student success analytics readily available to support assessment efforts, including data-informed actions to continuously improve the student learning experience. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 4.3, 4.4)

B. Program Review

As a result of the last reaffirmation review, the Commission required that CSUB foster a culture of continuous improvement and re-establish a system for completing rigorous and consistent program reviews. (CFRs 2.7, 4.1).

Following the Commission's recommendation, the University Program Review Committee (UPRC) undertook a study of program review. This study involved both identifying the bottlenecks in the existing process and examining the program review process at other universities. In October 2020, UPRC submitted a revised policy and procedures to the Academic Senate for consideration. As part of its consideration, the Academic Senate commissioned a task force to provide input. The task force submitted its recommendation in March 2022, and the Academic Senate approved the new program

review policy and procedures in April 2022. The team learned that the new program review process has been implemented during the current academic year. (CFR 2.7)

The new program review includes several changes designed to increase clarity of the process, including the responsibilities of the various participants (e.g., external reviewers). Deans are now formally engaged in the process through being required to write their own review of the program. Programs that are accredited by professional or programmatic accreditors complete an abbreviated review about a year following their accreditation review; the abbreviated review is designed to capture those elements not already in their accreditation process. Departments are encouraged to engage all faculty in the self-study process, and there is now a signature page to indicate that the majority of the department approved the self-study.

While the team appreciates improvements to the process, during the visit the team heard multiple groups raise concerns about the meaningfulness of the program review process. A consistent concern was that program review is a lot of work, and the program does not get what it asks for as a result of the process. The program review task force explained that meaningfulness was built into the new review process through its ability to help the program understand itself and plan, and how it could use this knowledge to request resources. As not all requests for resources will be funded, the team encourages CSUB to consider how meaningfulness is built into the process and how that is communicated to the community.

As the new program review process is still within its first year, it is not yet clear whether programs will complete their reviews on schedule. A published schedule of reviews is available on CSUB's academic programs website. The schedule appears manageable for the UPRC; however, there is a form that programs can utilize to request an extension, thus altering the workload for the UPRC from year-to-year. In addition, the team learned that some programs have not been able to complete their self-studies at all, and in these cases the UPRC initiates the review without a self-study. As the first UPRC

initiated program review was taking place at the time of the visit, it is not clear what value this will produce for the program undergoing review or the university as it works to understand and improve its programs. CSUB is encouraged to carefully evaluate the practice of UPRC initiated program reviews. It will also be important for CSUB to consider the workload of the UPRC as it considers both extensions and committee-initiated reviews. (CFR 2.7, 4.1)

Conclusion

CSUB has made substantial progress in addressing concerns related to program review. It will be important that the university continue to monitor, evaluate, and improve upon its new approach to program review. (CFR 2.7, 4.1)

C. Academic Support Services

The Commission required that CSUB ensure consistency, effectiveness, and quality of academic support services, including advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and course scheduling, to enhance student success for all students. (CFRs 2.12, 2.13).

While some departments and schools have worked to improve the quality of academic advising through joint professional development of faculty and staff advisors and communication of the delineation of roles and responsibilities between faculty and staff advisors, advising overall continues to be inconsistent, disjointed and varies dramatically from department to department. There remains a high level of frustration and tension within advising, especially among professional advising staff. The team heard multiple staff express anguish and a sense of demoralization about their treatment by students, faculty, and administration. Workload ratios remain inconsistent and staff advisors report peer turnover as being both disruptive and contributing to the increased workload. Staff advisors also report a lack of resources and not having access to data they need to be able to accurately advise students. Staff advisors noted that while money has been offered for additional professional development, many

of the options were offered during peak advising times, making it difficult for them to participate. (CFR 2.12)

Professional staff reported that a very comprehensive Advising Survey was administered in the fall, but results have not yet been shared with the university community. They expressed the hope that data from this survey would not only clarify which practices and procedures may be streamlined, but also provide affirmation of some of the best practices already in place at CSUB. The team heard from multiple sources that more focus has been centered on hiring a director than revamping and standardizing the advising policies and practices between the departments and schools. (CFR 2.12)

Academic support services appear to have been strengthened with the introduction of new peer mentoring programs, enhanced collaboration with career services and improved academic support especially in math and science supplemental instruction. Many best practices have been implemented, including summer immersion programming and enhanced orientation programming. Faculty and staff spoke passionately about the improved and holistic supports being offered to students. They talked about how mentoring, food pantry, and the Caring Advocates and Response Engagement (CARE) team provided critical support to students during the pandemic. (CFR 2.13)

Conclusion

The team recommends that CSUB clarify roles and strengthen the working relationships and roles of faculty advisors and professional advising staff by implementing collaborative training, standardization of terminology, practices and policies across all schools and departments, while also allowing for some level of flexibility among disciplines, and by developing and using clear success metrics to assess the effectiveness of advising. (CFR 2.12)

D. Graduation Rates

Following the last reaffirmation, the Commission required CSUB to “demonstrate considerable progress toward achieving the institution’s goals for GI 2025 first-time freshman 4-year and 6-year graduation rates.” (CFR 2.10, 2.13, 2.14)

The California State University (CSU) system’s Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) sets forth campus goals for graduation rates at 4- and 6-years for first-time freshmen and 2- and 4-years for transfer students. At the time of the reaffirmation visit in 2019, CSUB’s rates fell short of targeted goals.

Despite the impacts of the COVID pandemic, CSUB has continued to increase graduation rates for both first-time freshmen and transfers currently estimating that system goals will be met. This is a significant accomplishment for CSUB. However, equity gaps in both underrepresented minority (URM) students and Pell grant recipients continue to exist. (CFR 2.10)

CSUB has approached improving graduation rates through two campus committees: a Graduation Initiative Task Force (GITF) and a Graduation Action Team (GAT). The GITF focuses their work through the CSU’s six pillars: Academic Preparation, Enrollment Management, Student Engagement and Well-Being, Financial Support, Data-Informed Decision Making, and Administrative Barriers. The task force distributes funding and informs the campus community about progress. The GAT works to identify and assist individual students within the GI2025 cohort to graduate by using student-specific strategies such as identifying a missing course or assisting with finances. (CFR 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)

To address equity gaps, the CSU system identified five goals: reengage and reenroll underserved students, expand credit opportunities, provide access to a digital degree planner, eliminate barriers to graduation, and promote equitable learning and reduce DFW rates. CSUB responded to each of those goals by, for example, eliminating barriers to re-enrollment by dropping requirements for reapplication, establishing summer programming with Early Start and First Year Finish, creating the publicly available Program Pathway Mapper, identifying courses with high DFW rates, and establishing a Transfer

Resource Center. Student Affairs also has strategies aimed at underserved and Pell grant students. In addition, fourteen faculty attended a system-provided course in equity-minded pedagogy. While it is possible that these efforts are still recent enough not to show results, CSUB (as with many CSU campuses) is still working to reduce equity gaps and in the case of Pell grant status, the gap has widened. Campus representatives suggested this is partly due to the increase of graduation rates for all students rather than Pell students alone. (CFR 2.10, 2.13, 2.14)

While CSUB continues to make progress in raising graduation rates, both administrators and staff expressed a need for more resources to support student graduation. Two items are mentioned in more detail elsewhere in this team report: a need for more advisors and a need for more and better data. The team noted the lack of both retention and graduation data broken down by ethnicity, first generation and Pell grant status to school level for the campus. This could help identify more clearly how specific groups are faring. Dashboards displaying this data, made available campus-wide, could be helpful. Likewise, while the Program Pathway Mapper provides basic information on courses within a program, there is no automated system showing an individual student's progress toward a degree and staff noted that currently this work must be done manually. (CFR 2.10, 2.12, 4.2)

Graduation rates are impacted by a broad range of complex factors, not all of which are within the control of the campus. Nevertheless, CSUB should continue to expand on its use of data to determine patterns and factors impacting student retention and graduation. At the same time, careful evaluation should be conducted to ensure that these measures are effective, and that the campus is not overwhelmed with too many initiatives.

Conclusion

The team commends CSUB for improving retention and graduation rates of both first-time freshmen and transfer students, with expectations of meeting Graduation Initiative 2025 targets. The efforts of the GAT and CARE Team contributed significantly to this progress. The team recommends that CSUB

continue to focus on closing equity gaps in graduation rates, particularly among Pell recipients, URM students and first-generation students while developing appropriate dashboards to effectively analyze and communicate relevant data. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10)

E. Faculty and Staff Diversity

The Commission required that through a comprehensive institutional strategy, CSUB demonstrate substantial progress toward increasing faculty and staff diversity. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1) As part of its response, CSUB formed a Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion made up of faculty, student and administrative representatives. The goal of the Commission was to draft a Diversity Action Plan, which has not yet been approved. Much of the data used by the Commission comes from the Great Colleges to Work For Survey.

During the visit, multiple groups noted that while hiring faculty is not an issue, retention is. In particular, both African American and Latino/a faculty struggle to find a sense of belonging at the campus. The university's cluster hire initiative seeks to specifically address some of these issues. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1)

Most CSUB faculty and administrators expressed excitement and pride about the diversity-focused cluster hire initiative to hire 10 new faculty. During the visit, the team heard praise for the recruitment best practices adopted for the process. Some of these practices include training on writing and placement of job ads to attract a diverse pool of applicants, bias training for search committees, and a competitive process whereby departments have to apply for inclusion in the initiative by demonstrating their readiness to receive the new faculty. The initiative includes plans for mentoring the junior faculty, transparency of promotion and tenure requirements, professional development related to managing the responsibilities of teaching, scholarship and service, and a strategy to move the new faculty as a cohort through the tenure process. New faculty hired in the cluster initiative will have an initial reduction in

teaching load, and access to additional funds for research and travel, as well as focused professional development workshops and training.

While most praised the cluster hires, the team observed some frustration with not calling the initiative a “diversity cluster hire,” and with the granting of exceptions to the requirement that search committees complete a series of DEI workshop training modules. The team learned that exceptions were granted in cases where there were concerns about tight timelines to recruit the best candidates. The lack of the word diversity in the title of the program, and exceptions made for mandated training, have raised concerns in the campus community that the initiative will not be as effective at increasing the number of faculty of color at CSUB.

At the time of the visit, cluster hire finalists were being interviewed, and some offers had been extended. The cluster hire cohort will begin Fall 2023. CSUB is encouraged to report the results of the hiring initiative to the faculty community, to track and report on the success of the initiative in retention and promotion of the cluster hire faculty and utilize results to guide improvements to future such hiring initiatives. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1)

To address a lack of diversity among university leadership, CSUB launched the Faculty Leadership Academy to attract and promote a diverse group of faculty members considering future leadership positions. A goal of this project is to prepare junior and mid-career faculty to take on administrative roles as they become available. CSUB is encouraged to measure the effectiveness of this program, and utilize results to continually improve the program. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1)

During the visit, it became evident that campus climate requires more attention to ensure a sense of belonging and well-being for faculty, staff, and students. The team heard about the inability to retain African American and Hispanic faculty, lack of transparency and empowerment among staff, and a lack of adequate support for both Native American and LGBTQIA+ student populations. (CFRs 1.4, 3.1)

An additional charge of the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is to track campus climate and determine if changes need to be made. A campus climate survey was mentioned in several meetings, but results have not yet been shared. The results of that survey might prove informative and helpful.

Conclusion

The team commends CSUB for launching the cluster hire initiative using DEI best practices to build capacity and awareness for recruiting and onboarding a diverse applicant pool. Departments participated in a competitive selection process that required demonstration of readiness through completing diversity training modules, developing mentoring plans, and thoughtfully expanding Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) criteria to appropriately assess the scholarship of the new hires.

The team recommends that CSUB finalize, approve, and put into action the Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan, including defining essential metrics of success and aligning the plan to budget, resource allocation and organizational structure. (CFR 1.4)

A welcoming and supportive campus environment is vital to maintaining a diverse community and aids retention and success not just in students, but in faculty and staff as well. The team recommends that CSUB foster a campus culture that actively promotes a sense of well-being and belonging for all faculty, staff, and students to fully engage and empower the university community. (CFR 1.4, 3.1)

F. Strategic Plan

The Commission required CSUB to continue the implementation of the new strategic plan by identifying key metrics of success, and aligning the plan to budget, resource allocation, and organizational structure. (CFR 4.6)

CSUB's strategic plan, ratified on September 18, 2019, by the CSUB Academic Senate, covers a five-year period from 2019 through 2024. The Commission noted CSUB's rigorous, inclusive and transparent strategic planning process, having engaged a broad segment of faculty, staff, students, and external

stakeholders in determining the strategic priorities and goals of the campus. The plan is guided by five goals: (1) Strengthen and Inspire Student Success and Lifelong Learning; (2) Advance Faculty and Staff Success; (3) Develop and Sustain High-Quality and Innovative Academic Programs and Support Services; (4) Recognize and Address Regional Needs in Collaboration with Our Community; and (5) Diversify, Enhance, and Responsibly Steward Our Campus Resources. Each goal identifies multiple strategies and, within each strategy, multiple sub-strategies. CSUB states that this plan guides the pursuit of the institution's vision, namely "to be a model for supporting and educating students to become knowledgeable, engaged, innovative, and ethical leaders in the regional and global community."

The team confirmed that CSUB's strategic plan has provided a platform on which academic, co-curricular, and administrative units align their activities and budget allocations to support these priorities. The strategic plan also references the regional significance of CSUB, highlights partnerships and resources, and adequately addresses current educational challenges and opportunities. The plan has helped shape the current comprehensive fundraising campaign priorities.

The team confirmed that the campus has continued an inclusive process in the implementation of the new strategic plan, adopting appropriate metrics to monitor progress and aligning budget, resource allocation and organizational structure to each of the goals. Corresponding to each goal of the strategic plan is a task force that meets regularly to direct and evaluate the progress achieved on each of the strategies and sub-strategies listed for its respective goal. These five groups are also responsible for setting and tracking metrics for evaluating campus progress on achieving the institution's goals. IRPA has developed a pilot dashboard to track progress in each of the goals and to show allocated resources. There is a commitment to posting the dashboard on the website so that this information is readily available for viewing. Each semester the university hosts a strategic plan forum during which the co-chairs of each goal task force share the progress of the strategic plan, including budget alignment, with the campus community. These forums are recorded and posted on the strategic plan website.

There is strong evidence that the development of this first campus-wide strategic plan was a comprehensive and inclusive process and that the aspirational goals of the plan are driving change and having a true impact on the campus. Examples of alignment with budget planning, resource allocation, administrative unit and division priorities, and fundraising success were provided to the team. The team encourages the campus to further tie the budget to strategic priorities. Given that the plan ends in 2024, the team encourages the university to begin the important conversations about renewing the plan and incorporating information gleaned from metrics, campus surveys, and consultant reports, and to adapt to changing campus circumstances, as well as to anticipate and respond to future changes in the higher educational environment. (CFR 4.7)

Conclusion

CSUB has made important and meaningful progress in addressing concerns related to monitoring success and aligning budget and resources to the strategic plan. It will be important that the university continue to track progress and over the next year engage the campus in visioning the next phase of the strategic plan beyond the initial 5-year time span. The team commends CSUB for developing and implementing the strategic plan through a very collaborative, inclusive, and transparent process. Working groups developed strategies and metrics to measure progress around five broad goals and a dashboard has been launched and shared widely across campus. There is strong evidence of alignment with budget planning, resource allocation, administrative unit and division priorities, and fundraising success.

G. Administrative Unit Assessment

Following the 2019 reaffirmation visit, the Commission required that CSUB establish the process of regular assessment of administrative units, including external reviews where appropriate, to engage in continuous improvement and ensure effectiveness. (CFR 4.1)

A steering committee was established in fall 2021 and consists of the leaders from each division who are charged with establishing the basic process and fostering its development within each department. While the work is still in the early stages, a significant accomplishment is the establishment of mission statements for each of the 61 administrative units. Many units had not previously created such a document.

As the institution moved to establish assessment plans for each unit, it became clear that basic concepts of assessment, particularly as it differs from strategic planning, were not clearly understood by all units. The steering committee reviewed assessment plans from each unit, returning where necessary to the unit for more work. At the time of the visit, a majority of the 61 units had approved assessment plans.

Several areas need to be addressed before the assessment of administrative units can be considered fully implemented. The steering committee will eventually evolve into a broader Committee for Administrative Assessment and Review. There will need to be formal policies and procedures drafted, approved and implemented. This needs to include lines of approval and, where appropriate, ties to budgetary decisions. Any policy should also address the focus of the process on assessment for effectiveness and improvement rather than individual performance evaluation.

The team noted that unit leaders could best be supported through additional training in topics related to the review process. Such topics as understanding assessment, appropriate data collection approaches, and procedures for using the institution's assessment management system, may help improve the process and its effectiveness.

Conclusion

The team determined that CSUB has established a strong foundation for the assessment of administrative units and has made sufficient progress in planning this process. CSUB is encouraged to continue to develop and build on this foundation towards full implementation.

SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW

Overall, the team observed that CSUB has made good progress in each of the areas identified in the February 2020 Commission Action Letter.

The team commends CSU Bakersfield for:

1. Strengthening IRPA data reporting and analysis capacity by building a campus data warehouse containing historical census data, paying increased attention to data quality, leveraging the systemwide data dictionary to define campus data and creating processes to derive campus-specific variables, starting to develop self-service data dashboards, and filling institutional research staff vacancies.
2. Developing and implementing the strategic plan through a very collaborative, inclusive, and transparent process. Working groups developed strategies and metrics to measure progress around five broad goals and a dashboard has been launched and shared widely across campus. There is strong evidence of alignment with budget planning, resource allocation, administrative unit and division priorities, and fundraising success.
3. Improving retention and graduation rates of both first-time freshmen and transfer students, with expectations of meeting Graduation Initiative 2025 targets. The efforts of the Graduation Action Team and the Caring Advocates and Responsive Engagement Team contributed significantly to this progress.
4. Launching the cluster hire initiative using DEI best practices to build capacity and awareness for recruiting and onboarding a diverse applicant pool. Departments participated in a competitive selection process that required demonstration of readiness through completing diversity training modules, developing mentoring plans, and thoughtfully expanding RTP criteria to appropriately assess the scholarship of the new hires.

5. Establishing a strong foundation for assessment of administrative units with a clear process which included the development of mission statements for all areas and an initial plan of assessment for the majority of the 61 units.
6. Leading and supporting both the campus and surrounding communities through the pandemic. In particular, successful efforts to support student well-being, prepare faculty to teach in online modalities, and establish the Community Vaccination Hub demonstrated the university's commitment to its mission and values.

The team recommends that CSU Bakersfield:

1. Clarify roles and strengthen the working relationships of faculty advisors and professional advising staff by implementing collaborative training, standardization of terminology, practices and policies across all schools and departments, while also allowing for some level of flexibility among disciplines, and by developing and using clear success metrics to assess the effectiveness of advising. (CFR 2.12)
2. Foster a campus culture of data-informed decision-making by promoting the use of IRPA-provided data resources, as well as by providing continued support for IRPA's initiatives aimed at enhancing data quality, accuracy, and availability. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)
3. Enhance the capacity for student learning outcomes assessment by coordinating the collective efforts of IRPA, the Campus Assessment Team, and faculty assessment coordinators and by making student success analytics readily available to support assessment efforts, including data-informed actions to continuously improve the student learning experience. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 4.3, 4.4)
4. Continue to focus on closing equity gaps in graduation rates, particularly among Pell recipients, URM students and first-generation students while developing appropriate dashboards to effectively analyze and communicate relevant data. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10)

5. Finalize, approve, and put into action the Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan, including defining essential metrics of success and aligning the plan to budget, resource allocation and organizational structure. (CFR 1.4)
6. Improve the recruitment and retention of all faculty by implementing strategies like those used in the cluster hire initiative. (CFRs 1.4, 3.2)
7. Foster a campus culture that actively promotes a sense of well-being and belonging for all faculty, staff, and students to fully engage and empower the university community. (CFR 3.7)