

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM

SPECIAL VISIT

To the University of California, Riverside

February 9-11, 2022

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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.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, as relevant, and the Visit

Description of the Institution:

The University of California Riverside (UCR) is one of ten campuses in the University of California system. Founded in 1954, UCR is a public land-grant research university. It was initially accredited in 1956. The main campus is located in Riverside, a suburban, inland city in Southern California. A small branch campus housing a creative writing program is located in Palm Desert, CA.

The campus houses three colleges and four schools: the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (CNAS), the Marlan and Rosemary Bourns College of Engineering (BCOE), the School of Business (SOB), the School of Education (SOE), the School of Public Policy (SPP), and the School of Medicine (SOM). CHASS and CNAS serve the largest number of students, accounting for 75% of undergraduate and 50% of graduate students. The BCOE, SOE, SPP and SOB also offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees whereas the SOM focuses on graduate and professional degrees. UCR offers 49 undergraduate programs and 52 graduate programs (*Programs and Program Review List, provided during the SV by the ALO*).

Currently there are 26,847 students (3,981 graduate level), 1,800 academic personnel (844 are ladder-rank), and 2,922 staff (*Institutional SV Report, page 4*; UCR website <https://ir.ucr.edu/>) at UCR. According to UCR's institutional research website, the ethnic composition of its students is Chicano/Latino (37.8%), Asian (31.5%), White (12.8%), International (7.9%), and Black/African American (2.9%; https://ir.ucr.edu/#student_demographics).

Changes since the last review. The four-year graduation rate for first-year students is at 65.2% (up 9.2% since the 2018 review); the six-year rate is at 76.4% (up 1.4%). Research awards have increased by 26% to \$182M (net of HEERF funding). These increases have occurred in an environment in which there has been a significant turnover in several key leadership positions. Thirteen key administrators have changed, including the provost and executive vice chancellor, the vice chancellor of business and administrative services, the vice chancellor for research and economic development, the associate vice chancellor and chief information officer, the associate vice chancellor for enrollment services, the director of evaluation and assessment, and the accreditation liaison officer (*Institutional SV Report, pages 5-6*).

Pandemic Related Issues. UCR was the only UC campus to be ordered “closed” by its County Public Health Officer, in March 2020. Instruction was primarily remote (>95%) from spring 2020 through summer 2021. In Fall 2021, the campus returned to primarily in-person instruction (80%). Despite limitations imposed by the pandemic, the campus returned to normal research capacity as of June 2021 (*Institutional SV Report, pages 6-7*).

The total financial impact of the pandemic to the campus is estimated to be approximately \$150M in lost revenues and pandemic-related costs. Due to the improvement in the state budget, budget cuts were replaced and UCR was provided an additional 5% increment effective in fall 2022, although the campus still experienced a budget shortfall due to accumulated cost increases. UCR also received a new \$25M permanent state funding increment for the School of Medicine (*Institutional SV Report, pages 6-7*).

Recent Accreditation History:

Since the last AV, UCR submitted requests for subchanges to four programs: Biophysics, Business Analytics, Data Science, and Robotics. WSCUC Staff determined that subchanges were not required for these programs.

Special Visit Issues:

The Reaffirmation of Accreditation review took place October 23-26, 2018. The subsequent Commission Action in February 2019 was to receive the AV team report, reaffirm accreditation for a period of eight years, and schedule the Mid-cycle review to begin May 1, 2023. A Special Visit was scheduled for spring 2022 to address the following four Commission-identified issues:

1. An enhanced and expanded assessment initiative
2. A stronger campus commitment to accreditation processes that promotes the relationship between accreditation review and such significant campus efforts as strategic planning and student achievement initiatives.
3. A modified budget model that embraces current changes to campus success
4. A re-calibrated Cash-based Operating Performance Model.

The Commission has scheduled the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2026 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2026.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

UCR uploaded their Institutional Special Visit Report on December 2, 2021, as required. The team chair met with the team assistant chair to determine deadlines and writing assignments for the team. The team was given until January 4, 2022 to read and evaluate the report and supporting materials from UCR and to complete their individual worksheets. These worksheets were submitted to the assistant chair on January 4, 2022; information was returned to members on January 6, 2022. A team meeting was held via Zoom on January 7, 2022 to discuss the report, identify lines of inquiry and draft the visit schedule. The team carefully read, evaluated, and discussed UCR's self-study for the visit and reviewed supporting documents in the team folder and on UCR's website. The team identified areas of strength and progress since the AV; it also identified remaining questions and requested some additional documents. Specifically, the team requested (1) a list of all degree programs, including dates for the last review of each degree program; (2) information on operating budgets to indicate improvement from budget model changes, and (3) additional information regarding improvements implemented to have more realistic projections in operating performance model. All items were provided prior to or during the Special Visit.

Prior to the visit, the team chair collaborated with UCR's ALO to establish a schedule for the visit. Two of the team members were designated as leads on the assessment issues (1 and 2) and two members took the lead on the budget and finance issues (3 and 4). All information was shared and discussed among all 4 team members. Adjustments to the schedule were made in collaboration with UCR's ALO.

The team met with a variety of individuals and groups on February 10, 2022 including university, assessment, and budget leaders. The assistant chair monitored the team's confidential email account; all emails were read, assessed, and if warranted, explored during the visit. The team met February 11, 2022 in the morning to review/edit commendations and recommendations, prior to the exit meeting.

Each section of the team report was assigned a first and second writer. Team members who were first writers drafted their respective sections of the report and completed revisions after the visit. They shared their sections with their second writers and incorporated additional information/edits. Team members submitted their sections to the assistant chair who compiled them into the report. The chair and assistant chair reviewed and edited the final draft of the report.

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

UCR's Special Visit report demonstrates significant engagement with the issues raised from the AV. It is clearly written and addresses the key issues in a forthright manner. UCR provided evidence to support the changes they made in response to the AV recommendations. They were candid when discussing their reflections on the evidence and have had a clear sense of both their strengths and areas in need of improvement. They have also provided a number of action items to help guide them in their progress going forward. The three team members who had participated in the 2018 review process were struck by the obvious improvement in attention and rigor paid to the accreditation process.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

- A. Issue: Commence a strong and coherent assessment initiative to include both undergraduate and graduate programs, professional development for faculty and staff in assessment best practices, and appropriate allocation of financial and human resources capital.

A significant concern of the 2018 team was the lack of a strong and coherent assessment process. There were questions about the number of programs/degrees that UCR offers, how annual assessment and program review were integrated, who reviewed the data, and, most importantly, whether faculty were engaged as true stewards of their curricula through active participation in assessment and program review. UCR notes that they have a "robust" outcomes-assessment at the undergraduate level (*Institutional SV Report, page 13*), and acknowledges that their graduate programs are not as advanced as undergraduate programs. Evaluation of their progress in this domain focused on the following issues: (1) the infrastructure for assessment and program

review; (2) the process for assessment/reviews; (3) undergraduate program faculty participation in assessment/program review; (4) graduate program faculty participation in assessment/program review; (5) Core Competencies and General Education Program assessment and review; (6) Student affairs assessment/review; and (7) appropriate allocation of financial and human resources.

(1) The infrastructure for assessment and program review (CFRs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Since the AV, UCR has revised their infrastructure for assessment and program review by elevating the ALO and DEA positions to the provost's office. This created a centralized institution level assessment structure and signals to the campus the importance of continuous evaluation of degree programs.

As noted in their report (*Institution SV Report, page 10*) UCR's assessment structure includes:

- WSCUC Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO): This person reports to the provost and supervises assessment and accreditation activities.
- Director of Evaluation and Assessment (DEA): This person reports to the ALO and is responsible for implementation and support of assessment and accreditation activities.
- Manager of Student Affairs Assessment & Research (MSAAR): This individual reports to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and is responsible for implementing and supporting assessment of co-curricular programs.
- Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC): This joint Senate-Administrative committee advises on all campus assessment and accreditation activities.
- Meta-Assessment Committee (MAC): This committee is comprised primarily of faculty with strong assessment experience. It provides feedback to departments and programs on their assessment activities.
- Campus Finance Committee (CFC): This committee is comprised of vice chancellors, deans, chairs of the Academic Senate and Staff Assembly, chair of the Senate Committee on Planning and Budget, and a student leader. The committee reviews unit-level performance data during the annual campus budget process.

There were a number of positive changes because of this reorganization. In addition to the elevation of the ALO and DEA to the provost's office, the new MSAAR position was created to oversee assessment in student affairs.

Committee collaboration and website information was also improved. The Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC) was reconstituted with broader and larger membership to promote communication and assessment across the campus. The membership of the Campus Finance Committee (CFC) was expanded from 10 members to include 21 key leaders from across the campus. Their discussions of unit-level performance data in budgeting decisions and leadership appraisals have allowed them to use data more effectively and to engage in ongoing work on the revision of the campus strategic plan. Additionally, a new UCR Assessment Website was developed to provide assessment-related communications, schedule meetings and collect assessment material for the core competencies. Collectively, UCR's actions to revise their assessment infrastructure clearly illustrates their commencement of, and commitment to, a strong

and coherent assessment infrastructure. They are encouraged to think about how to better integrate student affairs assessment and decision making into the structure.

(2) The process for assessment/program reviews (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7)

There has been significant improvement in the organization of the assessment process since the AV. Particularly impressive is the work of the new DEA in which greater direction and professional development opportunities in assessment are being provided to faculty. The DEA and ALO have held multiple meetings since the AV to discuss assessment findings, develop workshops, and engage in personal communication with individuals conducting assessments. The collaboration among groups represented on the AAC and co-chaired by the DEA and ALO is exactly the kind of structure that is needed for improving efforts to assess and close the loop. A “long term assessment plan” has been developed with specific areas in need of improvement, potential solutions, and status reports over three time periods (immediately, within one year, and within 2 years). This approach provides a clear plan for moving the campus forward in assessment activities.

An assessment workshop series was instituted to provide training and support on assessment activities to faculty. However, only 45 individuals from 18 units/depts attended at least one workshop and only 12 people from 12 units/depts attended two or more. Twenty-three faculty from 17 graduate programs attended workshops. This attendance pattern was consistent over the past two years (*Institution SV Report, page 12*). This issue was raised during the SV. The team had discussions with the members of the various assessment committees, the DEA and ALO, and the faculty regarding who attends these trainings and whether they have sufficient evidence that faculty are “buying into” assessment as a means of addressing program quality. Whereas they report significant improvement since the AV, they have not kept records on who has attended from which programs. They did note that this would be good information to collect and the team agrees. Anecdotal evidence provided by individuals attending these meetings acknowledged that there are still some faculty who do not participate; however, they are seeing new people attending workshops over these past three years. The team recognizes that changing a culture takes time and was impressed by the changes that have already taken place. The emphasis now needs to be on continuing on this path and bringing more faculty into assessment activities, especially at the graduate level.

A key concern from the last review was that it was difficult to determine how many degree programs UCR offers and the schedule for program review. During the visit, the ALO provided the team with documents outlining the schedules of undergraduate and graduate program reviews. The review schedule is not clear to the team, based on the dates provided in the documents. It appears that reviews can take place any time from 5 to 9 years. What is the rationale for this timeline and what factors are considered in determining when a program is up for review? It would be beneficial to UCR faculty and to future reviewers to have a clear document illustrating the timeline for program reviews at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

A laudable change in UCR’s assessment process is that all programs are now required to submit annual assessment of learning outcomes data. These data are “rolled up” into program review. This change will serve UCR well by increasing their understanding of the alignment between student performance and key learning outcomes for their programs.

(3) Undergraduate program faculty participation in assessment/program review (CFRs 2.2, 2.2a, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7)

UCR provided good evidence that their Meta-Assessment Committee (MAC) has been working collaboratively with faculty in undergraduate programs. The newly developed Undergraduate Annual Assessment Report guidelines and rubric provide important tools for faculty to use in assessment efforts. The fact that the report was revised to place more emphasis on assessment rather than document collection supports UCR's assertion that they are taking assessment seriously at the undergraduate level. Moreover, these changes have led to higher assessment completion rates (high report completion rates of 90% in 2019-20 and 91% in 2020-21), thereby underscoring the undergraduate faculty's commitment to evaluation of student learning.

The increased collaboration of academic senate committees over assessment issues is also promising in terms of integrating assessment into the fabric of UCR's curriculum. They note that undergraduate programs did very well in identifying and analyzing evidence for assessment but still need to improve on reflecting on assessment results, targeting interventions, and closing the loop. With the assistance of the new DEA, it is evident that they have appropriate support for learning how to do this. The quality of the feedback the DEA provides the program is exceptional.

(4) Graduate program faculty participation in assessment/program review (CFRs 2.2, 2.2b, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7)

As noted by UCR in their Institutional SV Report (*page 14*), the graduate program assessment process has continued to lag behind the undergraduate program. There seemed to be confusion and perhaps some reluctance on the part of the faculty to assess graduate programs. According to the data provided by UCR, graduate program compliance with providing assessment reports was 55% in 2019-2020 and rose to 100% in 2020-2021 (*Institution SV Report, page 15*). Consequently, data regarding the quality of programs reported currently reflects only 55% of programs. However, it is expected that there will be much more information gleaned in the coming months from the reports that were completed in 2020-2021.

When the DEA was hired in 2019, he immediately began addressing issues with graduate program assessment by working with the graduate dean, associate dean for academic affairs, and the director of graduate academic affairs to address this issue and find a way forward. At the same time, the Academic Senate Graduate Council began requiring outcomes assessment as part of program review. These actions clearly point to UCR's serious commitment to improving assessment of graduate programs. They altered their assessment instructions and template to better address assessment at the graduate level. They had graduate programs revisit their student outcomes and maps. During the fall of 2019, almost 90% of programs submitted revised outcomes/maps. Importantly, the DEA reviewed all outcome and maps and provided formative feedback to the faculty in support of their continuous improvement efforts. The DEA and the Center for Teaching and Learning have provided program-specific workshops to support this work. The DEA saw moderate improvements in reports provided over this time and recognizes more work needs to be done. The DEA is currently building a process for graduate programs to link individual student-level assessment data to program review (*Graduate Level Assessment Alignment Process*).

Additionally, UCR will be focusing on collaboration, reflection, closing the loop, and creating a multi-year assessment plan (*Institutional SV Report, page 15*). This evidence clearly indicates that UCR has built an appropriate, efficient, and informative system for undergraduate programs. They are on the right path to providing such a structure for graduate programs, as well.

(5) Core Competencies and General Education Program (CFRs 2.2, 2.2a)

In 2019 UCR created a new long-term plan/methodology for assessment of core competencies and they began by focusing on information literacy in 2019-2020. They developed a “map” of the courses in which information literacy is taught. They identified 98 courses for the assessment, however data was only provided by 21 distinct courses (21.4%) for the assessment. Samples of student work were made available to the DEA. A total of 310 samples of student work were evaluated using the AACU Value rubric. A 10 member UCR team that consisted of senate faculty and UCR professionals with expertise in information literacy conducted the evaluation. Interrater reliability was established and each team member rated 28-32 artifacts. The report describes findings and provides important reflections on what the data mean. Importantly, the report outlines “next steps,” a critical component of closing the loop. The use of standardized rubrics, training faculty raters, and providing informative and insightful reports on the meaning of the findings represents best practices in assessment. UCR is to be commended for this significant work. It will be highly informative to see the data on the remaining core competencies at the next review.

A recently drafted proposal from the academic senate outlines a new GE structure that incorporates the core competencies as “skill development features” of the new curriculum. (*Institution SV Report, page 17*). The team’s inquiries during the special visit indicated that progress on this proposal has stalled. Changing GE will have significant budgetary implications on most programs. Progress on this proposal should be addressed during the next review.

(6) Student affairs assessment/program review (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)

Since the AV, UCR has worked actively to establish and integrate student affairs assessment into the campus culture. As part of the new 5-year strategic plan, an objective to establish and staff an assessment office in student affairs was included. They created the Student Affairs Assessment and Research Office, instituted a Student Affairs Assessment Committee, and developed a Student Affairs Assessment and Research website. The new MSAAR oversees this office. They created workshops on assessment for the unit and established their own assessment report templates, rubrics, and toolbox. Their 2019-2020 report shows that 20 out of 29 departments completed assessment reports (68.9%). The 9 departments that were given a “pass” were not required to submit individual assessment reports because they are a part of a larger unit, however they will be required to submit individual reports going forward. During the visit, information was provided regarding the significant assessment training being conducted by the new MSAAR. This is a positive step forward. Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that UCR has made significant progress in making assessment of student affairs an important part of the culture of assessment.

(7) Appropriate allocation of financial and human resources. (CFRs: 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)

It is clear from this report that UCR has invested significant finances and human resources into assessment since the AV. They have created positions and offices focused on assessment. They have revised the infrastructure to better allow for review of data in support of evidence-based

decision making (e.g., expanded use of dashboards, more integration of various committees and individuals focused on assessment). They have established quarterly assessment and accreditation update meetings among campus leadership, so they are fully aware of the status of assessment and program review. Importantly, UCR recognized a disconnect between assessment and accreditation at the executive level and activities in the units. An example they provide is the discrepancies they found in their list of degree programs, an issue that the team identified in 2018.

It is also clear that assessment and program review were integrated into the current draft strategic plan. They emphasized accountability and aligning resources with objectives; this would support the campus efforts to more fully embrace a culture of assessment. The campus paused its strategic plan initiative during the pandemic and with academic leadership turnover. They are now restarting that work (see next section), so the next review should consider how assessment and program review are considered in the new strategic plan when it is completed.

- B. Develop a stronger and more meaningful campus commitment around accreditation that provides campus-wide understanding of the processes and expectations. (CFR 1.8)

The 2018 review raised a concern about UCR's commitment to the accreditation process. Questions were raised regarding their responsiveness to accreditation requirements and their commitment to ongoing review of UCR's performance under the Standards. Consequently, the team's evaluation of their current commitment to this work focused on the following issues: (1) the campus leadership turnover; (2) the development of the campus strategic plan; (3) the graduate program review compliance; and (4) the general education proposal.

(1) The significant turnover in campus leadership (CFRs 3.6, 3.8)

Sections 1.2 (*page 5*) and 4 (*page 33*) of the Institutional SV Report highlight the significant leadership turnover during the last three years. This issue could raise concern about stability and leadership succession process. However, during the SV, UCR's administration responded that new leadership in fact brought in new talents and fresh perspectives. This provided the opportunity to revise their infrastructure and reorganize key positions that led to improvement in assessment, accreditation, and communication.

(2) The development the campus strategic plan (CFRs 3.10, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6)

Section 1.1 of the Institution SV Report (*page 5*) indicates that the current strategic plan was adopted in 2010. The update of the strategic plan that had taken place since the winter 2019 by five faculty-led workgroups, a steering committee, and campus community produced a penultimate draft in February 2021. During the SV, the provost indicated that the planning process has been slow due to the pandemic and the desire to ensure that the strategic plan update would exhibit better alignment with unit-level implementation plans, linkage with student success, and more explicit expectations about objectives, goals, and metrics. Due to the many changes currently occurring in the higher education landscape, UCR needs to finalize the new strategic plan to guide the future direction and to align the institution's vision with measurable goals and objectives for the current decade.

(3) The graduate program review compliance.

Section 3.1.5 of the Institution SV Report (*pages 14-15*) acknowledges that graduate program assessment is in need of more attention and that its progress has lagged behind undergraduate program outcomes assessment. The strong evidence from the Institution SV Report and the SV shows that various actions (discussed previously in “Graduate program faculty participation in assessment/program review”) have been implemented since 2019, illustrating a strong commitment to improve graduate program assessment. It is important to continue improving the process with appropriate resources.

(4) The general education proposal (CFRs 2.2, 2.2a)

Section 3.1.7 of the Institution SV Report (*pages 16-17*) indicates that a draft proposal integrating the core competencies into a new general education structure was proposed to the Academic Senate by the Academic Senate’s General Education Review Committee. Additionally, common UCR-specific rubrics for assessing progress in the five core competencies were created and assessment of the first core competency (information literacy) has been completed. Although the Academic Senate has not yet discussed and approved the proposal, these efforts demonstrate the commitment to the ongoing review of General Education curriculum and core competencies. The progress on this proposal should be addressed during the next review.

- C. Issue: Assure that the current activity to modify the campus budget model addresses issues that challenge campus success, including staffing, facilities, and the differential costs of varied instructional modalities. (CFRs 3.1, 3.4)

The team reviewed the narrative provided in Section 3.3 of the Institution SV Report (*pages 23-29*) and associated attachments including UCR Decentralized Budget Model Key Considerations and Questions (September 2018), Updated Version of the UCR Decentralized Budget Model Key Considerations and Questions (December 2018), and Chancellor Approved Budget Model Recommendations (January 2019).

It is clear from the report that UCR has made significant improvement to the budgeting process since the 2018 AV. The report and documents highlighted the broad, consultative process UCR engaged in with the campus community in fall 2018 to explore refinements to the budget model, which resulted in 22 recommendations for improvement. Since that time, many of the recommendations have been implemented including the option for a sliding scale approach leveraging central core funds to cover salaries and benefit cost increases, a cost-share approach to support facilities projects, and successfully securing an additional \$25 million in ongoing state funding to stabilize support for the School of Medicine.

Specific to the 2018 AV issue regarding the need for the model to consider differential costs of varied instructional modalities, UCR established a committee to explore credit hour weighting methodologies and implementation is forthcoming on a methodology that is reflective of significant campus engagement and data informed via Delaware Cost Study peer comparisons. Of note for future consideration, the budget model was not developed to support a budget decline scenario, so consideration should be given to this possibility in future model iterations whether and how the model can be used during periods of decline as well as growth.

During the Special Visit, two team members met with three different groups to discuss the budget model, including campus financial leadership, deans and administrative leadership, and faculty leadership. The general tone regarding the budget throughout the meetings was positive and much of the anxiety about the budget model that was expressed during the 2018 AV had dissipated. Concerns regarding the budget centered more around a lack of sufficient resources rather than the budget model itself. Specific concerns continue to be raised about adequate staffing, although there was acknowledgment of the progress made. Some faculty raised concerns about support for graduate students. And there was concern about the extent to which resources are following student enrollments given the substantial historic component of budget allocations.

A resounding theme throughout all three budget model meetings was the benefit the establishment of the Campus Finance Committee (CFC) has had on UCR's budget process. This expanded group, consisting of all the deans, all the vice chancellors, two faculty senators, and staff and student representation, has significantly improved campus engagement and inclusion in the budget process. The CFC has enhanced transparency and clarity around the campus budget, created a space for two-way communication and greater collaboration, and established a systematic approach to addressing concerns raised regarding the budget model. The team also found significant appreciation of the flexibility given to deans and chairs in how they use their budgets once allocated.

Overall, UCR has made remarkable progress on transparency and collaboration in campus budgeting, and the team recommends that UCR continue to improve budget processes collaboratively and transparently with the commitment to shared governance that has been developed.

- D. Issue: Review the multi-year "Cash-Based Operating Performance Model" provided in the institutional report to assure that revenue projections are realistic and make modifications to expenditure projections as necessary. (CFR 3.4)

The Team reviewed the updated Cash-Based Operating Performance Model, Forecast as of June 2021 (*Forecast*) provided in the appendices to the Special Visit Report. The Team also reviewed the narrative provided as Section 3.4 (*pages 29-31*) of the Institution SV Report.

During the SV two team members engaged in a robust discussion of the 2017 Forecast provided for the 2018 visit that raised prior concerns and the 2021 Forecast provided for the 2022 visit. UCR quickly clarified that the differences the team had noted between the two Forecasts in the actuals for FY16 and FY17 were the result of errors in the 2017 Forecast that had been corrected in the 2021 Forecast.

Of greater importance, Team members reviewed with UCR financial leadership the assumptions underlying the current (2021) Forecast. Discussion included revenue assumptions and aspirations:

- The recent shrinkage in credit load and COVID impacts resulting in more conservative project enrollment projections, noting plans to increase non-resident and graduate enrollments;

- The new cohort-based tuition plan with increases approved by the UC Board of Regents;
- Expectations of restoration and hope for growth in state funding based on the strong recovery of the state economy and gubernatorial pronouncements; and
- Expectation of some growth in F&A cost recovery.

In addition, the discussion with UCR Financial Leadership covered cost considerations including but not limited to:

- Modest increases in costs of salaries and benefits; and
- Increased utility costs, which are being contained through greater investment in photovoltaic generation on campus and conservation measures and renovations being undertaken.

Team members also discussed the UCR approach to financial balances and reserves, consistent with UC System policies and practices.

The team observed that the 2021 Forecast was more conservative than the 2017 Forecast and believe the 2021 Forecast is credible as the basis of forward-looking financial planning. The Team is also comfortable that the balances are adequate and appropriate to support UCR through the coming years. Overall, the Team believes that the concerns underlying the 2018 findings have been addressed through the Special Visit Report and discussions during the visit.

SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team was impressed with the seriousness and rigor with which the campus approached all aspects of the Special Visit process and with the preparation and arrangements for this remote Special Visit.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The team was impressed with the University leadership's acceptance of the last report and their commitment to meaningfully address the issues raised. Response at every level has been thoughtful and engaged.
2. The campus has built a strong infrastructure for and culture of commitment to assessment. Especially notable are: the elevation of the DEA and ALO positions to the Provost's Office; the professionalism of the current assessment team and their effective support for faculty; the formal and deep engagement of the Academic Senate; and bringing graduate studies into the overall assessment program.
3. The campus has made remarkable progress on transparency and collaboration in campus budgeting through the Campus Finance Committee, including a systematic approach to addressing concerns raised regarding the budget model.
4. The campus has now adopted a much more realistic multi-year financial projection to shape campus expectations and planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UCR needs to ensure continued progress on the advancements in assessment at the undergraduate and graduate levels, including evidence of student mastery of learning outcomes.
2. UCR needs to formalize its list of programs with an established schedule for undergraduate and graduate program review. The campus must ensure that resources continue to be available to support faculty participation.
3. UCR must ensure that the core competencies are fully integrated into campus assessment activities.
4. Noting that the campus is still operating under the 2010 strategic plan (UCR 2020) and changes in the campus and the higher education landscape, UCR needs to adopt a Strategic Plan for the current decade.
5. UCR needs to continue to improve its budget processes collaboratively and transparently with the continuing commitment to shared governance that was clearly evident.