

Educational Effectiveness Review Report
University of California, Riverside
Submitted to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Executive Summary and Table of Contents
(Site Visit: Tuesday through Thursday noon, October 27-29, 2009)

Introduction

The four-year process of reaccreditation review provided UCR with many insights, but arguably the most important is the value of institutionalizing an evidence-based approach to decision making across the campus. There is great merit in clarifying mission and setting goals; taking stock of the resources and organizational structure required to meet them; regularly exploring the extent to which those goals and desired outcomes are achieved; and then “closing the loop” by adjusting the goals, organizational structure, or resource allocation accordingly.

The Educational Effectiveness Review Report summarizes the progress the campus has made in building a culture of evidence at UCR, and specifically to:

- develop a strategic plan for the campus
- initiate departmental undergraduate program reviews that mirror the long-standing graduate review process
- establish student learning outcomes for undergraduate programs, including corresponding assessment tools, and sustainability plans
- concentrate efforts in the areas of the three special themes identified for self-study:
 - Improving Undergraduate Student Engagement, Experience, and Learning Outcomes
 - Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs
 - Learning within a Campus Culture of Diversity

Strategic Planning

UCR’s comprehensive strategic planning process received special impetus with the arrival of a new Chancellor, Timothy White, in July 2008. Moreover, systemwide accountability and planning activity accelerated under the leadership of the new UC President, Mark Yudof, in June 2008. Each of the ten campuses has submitted a College Portrait and Accountability Report. In addition, within the next academic year each chancellor will deliver his or her campus’ strategic plan to the UC Regents. To meet this deadline, UCR senior management, plus faculty, staff and student leaders will participate in a campus retreat to initiate dialogue and structure a process for strategic planning. Under the leadership of EVC/P Dallas Rabenstein, campus subcommittees will be formed to engage in planning.

Undergraduate Program Review

Formal undergraduate program review is relatively new to UCR; in 2006 the Academic Senate approved review procedures that mirrored the long-standing Graduate Council process. The Senate’s Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) is charged with conducting undergraduate

program reviews, and does so in partnership with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. In November 2008, the CEP instituted a requirement that all departments undergoing review submit learning outcomes associated with their majors, corresponding assessment measures and results, and efforts such as curricular reforms that increase educational effectiveness and lead to attainment of desired outcomes. To date, ten departments have undergone review. A future consideration is to better link the results of program reviews with resource allocations, particularly in situations where a review identifies a critical need in the program.

Program Learning Outcomes and Assessment

At the department level, the campus devoted extensive effort in developing learning outcomes and assessment processes for undergraduate majors. Multi-year assessment plans now exist for most majors in the two largest colleges where independent accreditation agencies do not already require them. Assessment processes will be fully implemented during the 2009-10 academic year and sustainability will be ensured through administrative monitoring and an Academic Senate requirement that learning outcomes and assessment results be incorporated into the program review process. This exercise proved to be a transformative experience for the faculty, involving them in the process of defining what they expect of students, how they measure whether students are achieving these expectations, and altering the curriculum and/or teaching methods in response to the assessment results. The variety of learning outcomes and approaches to assessment developed by the faculty reflects the rich array of academic fields at UCR. Graduate programs are expected to adopt formal learning outcomes and assessment measures in the next two years. Resource allocation decisions of the deans are expected to rely more and more heavily on the results of program evaluation.

The campus also invoked an evidence-based approach to strengthen various programs, most notably those designed to improve student engagement, and especially the first year experience of undergraduates. Evaluation results led to significant revisions in many first year academic support programs, most of which are new to campus and some of which are innovations recognized at the national level. Key among these are learning communities, supplemental instruction, and new student orientation programs.

Special Themes

The three special themes selected more than four years ago by the campus for its self-study remain central to the planning and activities of the campus, even with the change of the Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost, three deans, and the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education (the WASC Accreditation Liaison Officer), as well as major turnover in membership on Academic Senate and administrative committees. Each theme represents a process by which key questions and goals were addressed and further work is planned. These three themes will remain campus concerns, even in the wake of the current budgetary crisis.

The goals of the **Undergraduate Theme**, "Improving Undergraduate Student Engagement, Experience, and Learning Outcomes," were met most completely, and in large part because of the coherent vision set out for the student engagement component of this theme by the

Student Success Task Force, in addition to the gentle prodding of WASC regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and assessment. UCR's first year experience programs are attracting attention not only within the UC system but also nationally, as witnessed by the recent receipt of a U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant to double the capacity of the CHASS Connect first year program and to conduct an experimentally-based evaluation of its impact. With regard to learning outcomes, virtually every department on campus established outcomes and assessment measures for their undergraduate majors. The campus developed a new approach to breadth (general education) requirements for undergraduates, in response to a broadly perceived need, and will pilot the program in 2009-10. Comprehensive studies of the characteristics of successful undergraduate students are being used to identify and recruit those students most likely to do well at UCR.

The goals of the **Graduate Theme**, "Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs," were met to a significant extent. New programs at the graduate and professional level were developed, although the schools of public policy and medicine are on hold because of the State's budget crisis. Best practice methods for assuring graduate student success were established and disseminated to graduate program chairs. Graduate student enrollment increased in recent years, such that the percentage of graduate students among the student body is growing. In addition, progress was made in increasing the diversity of the graduate student population.

The goals of the **Diversity Theme**, "Learning within a Campus Culture of Diversity," were met to the least extent, due largely to the complexity of the issues and the lack of models or mechanisms to address them. However, significant progress was made. Measures of student success across ethnicity and gender were generated and analyzed. Baseline data were collected with respect to diversity, and programs targeting diversity issues were inventoried and evaluated. New diversity programs were developed to build capacity in students, faculty, and staff to better understand and work more effectively with diverse populations on campus and in the region. Significant advances were made in measures to attract a more diverse faculty, staff, and graduate student population, to mirror the campus diversity at the undergraduate level.

The combination of themes enriched campus identity, sense of worth, and future aspirations. The vision that emerges is an institution that excels at both undergraduate and graduate education, and does so in the midst of great student diversity. As the campus strives for membership in the Association of American Universities and grows its graduate programs, it is clear UCR will continue to value its historical commitment to undergraduate education. The campus is a leader in the study of student learning and engagement in a university of great diversity, not only in underrepresented minorities, but also in socio-economic levels and first generation students. It serves as a pilot in this regard, adding to best practice and marking the way so that other research universities may follow as they, too, become more diverse.

Sustainability and Institutionalization

Although the campus made enormous strides in addressing the three themes and in forming the building blocks for a culture of evidence on campus, there is much work yet to be done. All constituents are convinced, however, that this work will continue by virtue of having

embedded these efforts into the basic functioning of the campus. Continuing progress on the various themes was institutionalized through the appointment of key individuals such as the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Excellence and Equity; by enlisting the efforts of the larger campus community in the work of the themes (e.g., a Student Success Steering Committee, the Academic Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the Campus Vitality Committee); by involving faculty in utilizing learning outcomes and assessment; by assigning key campus leaders with oversight responsibility (e.g., the associate deans are charged with the reorganization and professionalization of academic advising); and by changing procedures (e.g., program review guidelines) to include goals delineated in the themes.

The campus is also systematically approaching the design of a Management Data System, which will make data more consistent and widely available for informed decision making by both administrative and academic units alike. The Institutional Research Coordinating Group shares across units the design of studies, collection of data and interpretation of results. Moreover, the campus community is increasingly reliant on survey data – from the University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES), for example, or a new five-year-out alumni survey – to better understand the needs of UCR students and to better devise ways of meeting those needs. And, the campus increased its capacity to engage in data analysis through the hiring of institutional researchers, as well as utilizing current graduate students and faculty expertise in empirical analysis.

Next Steps

While the “next steps” in this process, both regarding the themes and building an evidence-based approach to decision making, are not set in stone, they are established. The next steps for each of the individual themes, and for interaction between the themes, are clear. For the Undergraduate Theme, research will firmly document the link between overall student academic achievement and diversity. The evaluation of first year experience programs will be broadened, and a deeper analysis of the determinants of student success as measured by graduation rates and time to degree will be produced. Departments will implement cycles of learning outcomes assessment to reevaluate their curricula. The Academic Senate General Education Advisory Committee will work toward implementing the pilot breadth requirement concentrations.

The Graduate Dean will continue to explore strategies for diversifying the graduate student population. The Graduate Dean and the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost (EVC/P) will continue to explore ways of initiating the two new professional school proposals (Public Policy and Medicine) within the current budget environment. The Graduate Dean will continue to improve the experience and training of graduate students as teachers.

For the Diversity Theme, major research questions will be studied, such as the degree to which diversity enhances learning, and if so, how; whether approaches to one element of diversity, such as ethnicity or gender, may be generalized to other elements of diversity, such as sexual orientation or degree to which students are able bodied. A survey of faculty will be conducted that includes diversity questions. The Chancellor and EVC/P approved establishing a

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Diversity and Equity Council to enhance institutional capacity to conduct diversity activities and to analyze the impact of those activities across the campus. The Council will add benchmarks to the campus’ 2005-06 Framework for Diversity, as well as implement the Diversity Education and Leadership Initiative, the Diversity Certificate Program, and the revised UC and UCR personnel policies that focus on diversity.

The commitment to a culture of evidence is growing, and crucial “next” steps are becoming part of the institutional structure. Campus goals need to become better integrated with department and administrative unit goals. Programs must “close the loop” regarding learning outcomes and assessment to provide the basis for curricular changes and improvement of student learning. Decision makers must be provided with better information, based on more consistent and current sources of data, so they are able to make wiser decisions. This includes developing data bases and processing systems that deliver this information quickly and intelligibly.

In summary, as a result of progress achieved in the self-study, the campus has a better sense of its identity, a better understanding of its uniqueness, and clearer directions in which to continue to grow and develop. It views the coming years with enthusiasm and anticipation, mixed with the challenge of balancing improvement and excellence with the difficult budget conditions.

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