OFFSITE REVIEW (OSR)

SUMMARY OF TEAM FINDINGS – REPORT TO INSTITUTION

Institution under Review: UC – DAVIS

Date of Review: May 12–13, 2013
Team Chair: Gerald Bepko

The Offsite Review team recommends the following actions be taken:

_X_ Proceed with the Accreditation Visit scheduled in: ___SPRING 2014___

___ Reschedule the Accreditation Visit to: ___________________________

The reason(s) the Team recommends rescheduling the visit is/are:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Comments and follow-up for the Accreditation Visit:

I. The Team commends the institution for the following accomplishments and practices:
   a. Preparation of an excellent and thorough institutional report within a shortened timeline and in a context of process transitions at WASC. The essays demonstrate that academic and administrative leaders are working together to define and achieve educational effectiveness and student success.
   b. A planning process that is proactive, transparent and consultative. The appendices include illustrations of the process including the Joint Administration / Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education," the CA & ES report, and the 2020 Task Force Report.
   c. Strong, visionary leadership, particularly given the difficult fiscal context. Leadership is aggressively garnering resources for the campus and reacting quickly to shifts in financial resources.
   d. An excellent graduate program review process with an institutionalized feedback loop - the Program Review Closure Committee.
   e. Accomplishment of the goal of 100% of undergraduate programs with defined learning goals, although there is still a need for greater transparency.
f. Establishment of best practices for undergraduate education including placement exams for writing, math, physics (without these exams – there would be a lot of churn); Writing in the Disciplines; well-articulated undergraduate research program; educational objectives adopted by the Academic Senate; and ongoing collection of student data.

g. Improvements in the undergraduate completion rates.

h. National leadership in professional development for graduate students.

i. The creation of an office of assessment to serve as a resource to departments as they establish and implement assessment plans.

II. We have identified four primary areas of inquiry for the accreditation visit. The four topics loosely parallel the essays in the institutional report: Governance and Institutional Context (Introduction), Educational Effectiveness (Essay 1-2), Student Success (Essay 3), Budget & Finance (Essay 4) and Managing Growth (Essay 4). Under each heading we’ve listed specific questions that the team discussed during the OSR. We discussed many of these questions during our conference call and look forward to further conversation during the onsite visit.

We do not expect or invite a written response to these questions before the onsite visit. The only documents that we expect from UC Davis before the campus visit are those listed under Roman numeral III: “The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents of information before the visit.”

a. Governance and Institutional Context

   i. What does being a land grant institution mean to UC Davis in 2014 and for the future?

   ii. Is it possible that even in a complex multi-campus university system UC-Davis can develop a new kind of faculty oversight and administrative effectiveness that would streamline, accelerate, and lower the cost of decision-making? In turn this could increase student achievement and research outputs.

   iii. We note the turnover in leadership for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Are there plans to change the organizational structure? How does this office collaborate with the Academic Deans to facilitate student success?

   iv. The team would be interested in UCD’s reactions to whatever is in the US Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action in college admissions expected to come down prior to the onsite visit in 2014.

b. Educational Effectiveness

   i. We look forward to seeing progress in the development of the assessment plan for General Education at the time of our visit. The team would like to know more about the process for certification of General Education courses. The report notes that 4000 courses have been approved. How many courses were reviewed and not certified?
What is the plan to avoid curriculum drift over time as faculty or syllabi change?

ii. As of the Offsite Review, it seems clear that UC-Davis is moving in the right direction with respect to undergraduate program review. The team will be interested in the outcomes of efforts to strengthen the undergraduate program review process, especially the outcomes of the pilot program with external reviewers and in the institution’s response to the concerns outlined in Exhibit 20: reviews that are behind schedule, recommendations that get lost at the administration level, issues that are common across departments that should get addressed at the university or school level. The team would like to see examples of program reviews to accompany the table on pages 26-28 of the institutional report.

iii. By the time of the onsite visit the team should be able to see data and hear additional perspectives on the implementation of learning outcomes assessment for the undergraduate programs.

iv. The institutional report documents resources for improvement of teaching, but the team would like more information about how widely and heavily these resources are used, beyond the initial required orientation for incoming faculty, and especially for non-ladder faculty.

v. The Joint Administration/Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education recommends collection of annual data, including a survey asking graduate students to assess their experience at the university. We understand the impetus for this recommendation – long time between reviews and the new budget model. However, this strikes us as a resource intensive process. As UCD considers this recommendation, it would be useful to comment on this issue concerning the resources requirements both for the collection of data and its review.

vi. The team would like to learn more about the decision-making process for opening new graduate programs and would like to receive an update on the 15 new programs, including the College of Nursing.

vii. UC-Davis is collecting a lot of data, i.e. yearly surveys of students. The team would like to learn more about how you are using the information. Are there examples that you could offer about the use of data to strengthen a program?

c. Student Success

i. UC-Davis, like most of us, believes that there is value in refining and improving advising. We look forward to a progress report during our campus visit. We are particularly interested in the relative merits of peer advising, staff advising and faculty advising and on the plans to address the unevenness of advising across departments and programs. How is the advising portal working? What is the feedback from students?
ii. The team applauds the strong improvement with respect to graduation and retention. However, we note that UC-Davis has drifted towards a norm of a 6-year graduation rate rather than the historic 4-year rate. The team would like to hear how the UC-Davis family is thinking about this metric.

iii. The UC-Davis institutional report specifies different goals for graduation and retention rates for students from under-represented groups than for other students. Why is there a different expectation? Has there been an analysis of why there are racial & ethnic differences in graduation and retention rates?

iv. The team would like to learn more about the orientation and academic support for transfer students, especially those from community colleges.

v. The institutional report does not discuss program review for co-curricular programs and non-academic units. The team will want to learn about reviews and assessment of those activities.

vi. Do you have plans to institutionalize the Mentoring Critical Transitions program for graduate education once external funding ends?

d. Budget & Finance
   i. How do you envision funding the planned increase in faculty?
   ii. How are you handling re-benching?
   iii. What will be the impact of the new budgeting model? At the time of our visit, the team will be interested in learning more about how the new model is working. We are also interested in the rollout of the model to graduate programs and the professional schools.
   iv. What’s the plan for sustaining the high level of extramural funding in the current state and federal fiscal environment?

e. Managing Growth
   i. What are your plans, including timeline, to implement planned growth in the undergraduate population? Are you still in a position of playing catch up? How will you manage the impact of growth on physical plant, student services, gateway courses, etc.?
   ii. What are the plans for graduate student growth? Will you need to grow the number of graduate students to recruit new faculty?
   iii. At the time of the visit the team will be interested in hearing about your progress in integrating the needs and visions for graduate and undergraduate student education in planning.

III. The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents or information before the visit:
a. Projected enrollments/trend-lines for number of faculty, undergraduate students and graduate students
b. Report from Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience once completed
c. Analyses, if available, of racial and ethnic differences in completion rate at the undergraduate and graduate levels
d. Data on faculty participation in teaching and learning activities.
e. Any plans for on-line learning/course offerings.
f. An update on extramural research funds (with distribution by units)
g. Information on the program review process for non-academic units and co-curricular programs