

20 May 2003

### **UC Davis reply to WASC team's final report**

The WASC reaccreditation process has surely had a very positive impact on the UC Davis campus. Although the educational effectiveness report issued in May 2003 is in some ways the final chapter of this reaccreditation cycle, it also offers a strong foundation for our continuing efforts to improve our institution. We have been impressed by the team's dedication to the process, and we are already modifying our practices in ways that reflect their advice. We are in substantial agreement with all of the recommendations, although implementation of some of the more costly ones must await relief from the present combination of growing enrollments and shrinking resources.

Positive effects of this process are already apparent. One broad area in which we have the momentum to continue our progress is general education, which is discussed by the team in Section III.D and in final recommendation 11. Both our capacity self-study and the team report catalog our accomplishments in this area over the last few years. The GE committee, just finishing its first year of operation, is studying ways of strengthening the GE requirement at UC Davis. They are consulting with associate deans and faculty to determine whether preventing students from "double dipping" (receiving double credit for a GE course) will slow down time to degree or otherwise pose a burden for the students and the institution that would outweigh the value that might come from changing the requirement. A decision on this point is due soon.

As we have emphasized in several places and as the team report and the WASC Standards imply, the values and goals of general education will be institutionalized in ways that encompass more than the narrowly specific recommended General Education requirements. Thus a number of projects currently underway will improve general education without dealing specifically with the General Education course requirements.

Our first educational objective (seven UC Davis goals for student learning) addresses communication skills and refers to writing specifically, certainly an essential element of general education. The Senate Undergraduate Council has completed a year-long study of writing instruction at UC Davis. Their report is due June 15, 2003. Also, compatible plans have emerged from discussions in the English Department and the HArCS division of the College of Letters and Science. Implementing these reports will have a salutary effect on the key general education goal of excellence in student writing. There would also be an improvement in the implementation of the Writing Experience element of the General Education requirements.

Another major category of the team's recommendations, and in this case, also of our self-study is student research, which is discussed in Section III.B and in final recommendations 3 and 4. The experience of working on a research project affords a student experiences that contribute toward most, perhaps all, of the educational objectives and thus to the goals for general education. We endorse the team's recommendations concerning student research and expect substantial progress in the coming years. Funding from the comprehensive campaign for an undergraduate research center will speed that progress.

The report finds the use of educational technology at Davis to be consistent with the WASC requirements and specifically validates several existing educational technology activities including programs in the Classroom Technology Support unit, Mediaworks, and the MyUCDavis team. It is valuable to have this independent review and to be reminded that these successful individual programs will be most effective if they are part of a broader explicit plan for educational technology. The campus has begun a more formal planning process, that will now be further motivated and guided by the team's recommendations.

Some of the specific educational technology recommendations numbered 5-10 in the report will be challenging to implement and will require wide campus discussion. For example, a recent editorial in the student newspaper emphasizes a thoughtful and restrained use of information technology in instruction. As well, at both the campus and system wide levels, the topic of information literacy continues to evolve. Nevertheless, since the recommendations are relevant to our situation and generally consistent with our campus culture, we expect to make good progress.

Finally, it is fortunate for UC Davis that the team's report comes to us as we are conducting the final revisions on the 2020 Vision Statement. It will serve as an additional aid as we develop implementation plans for information technology, student research, and general education.