Integrative Essay

Preparing these essays for the WASC reaccreditation process has given us an opportunity to reflect as a group on our university's strengths, accomplishments, and goals. As a result, the following priorities have emerged: the improvement of advising; the integration of graduate education into campus academic and strategic planning; and continued improvements in assessment of undergraduate education. These priorities, our current challenges in these areas, and our plans for the future are enumerated below.

Undergraduate Advising

Improve the advising that undergraduate students receive [CFRs 2.12, 4.3, 4.6]

> *Undergraduate students at UC Davis should receive strategic advising from faculty on career choices as well as benefit from transactional advising from professional staff advisers who work in tandem across units.*

A major university with a huge range of opportunities can present a challenging landscape of academic options to undergraduates, especially those not certain of their objectives or of the consequences of decisions. To most fully benefit from their time on the campus and to reach their full potential, many students will benefit from access to both strategic and transactional advising on key decisions.

With their knowledge and experience, faculty are well prepared to provide advice on strategic decisions related to career goals, choice of major, relative importance of courses, and interpretation of prerequisites. Strategic advising by faculty benefits students who have not yet settled on a major, and in the current system those students are not likely to be referred to a faculty adviser. For students in a particular course, especially those near the top and bottom of the achievement spectrum, the faculty instructor can offer the most authoritative advice on options for extra academic enrichment and how best to recover from initial stumbles. Faculty are widely available for informal advising, however faculty participation in advising is not encouraged across all sectors of the campus and so students' access to faculty advisers, especially at crucial early stages in their academic experience, is uneven.

We currently have staff advisers located within departments, within the college deans' offices, within Student Affairs offices and in on-campus housing for first-year students. This structure presents opportunities and challenges for students. They benefit from having easy access to a wide range of individuals. Yet the students can receive inconsistent advice across the spectrum of advisers, and sometimes have difficulty determining which of these individuals is most crucial when they are in academic difficulty. Professional staff advising services will need to be provided such that it is clear to students where they should seek academic advising, primarily given in deans' offices and departments, and psychological advising to meet their special needs. Even in the case of academic advising, there must be a clear distinction between the type of academic advising that can occur at the deans' offices and at the departments/program level, and this requires a better understanding

between these units. Current advising staff numbers are relatively small in comparison to student numbers; hence, the staff advisers strive to meet the needs of students in academic difficulty and cannot devote much time to the creation and implementation of proactive advising. For example, in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), there is one academic adviser to 1,380 students and at the department level, the ratio is about one academic adviser to 600 students. Career level academic advising (from majors or colleges) is absent in the residence halls. The primary advising in the halls is delivered by peer (student) advisers trained by staff advisers. Peer advising cannot be a substitute for quality academic advising from staff and faculty; it can only supplement to quality advising at the other levels.

The training, position descriptions, professional development and supervision of these many different kinds of "advisers" is not consistent, which in turn contributes to the variation in the advice provided to students. In a recent University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), our students reported that they are "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the advising they receive. Although this result compares favorably with our sister campuses, our faculty and the administration agree we can do better. An internal survey (see [Ex. 52](#)) of undergraduate academic advisers reveals that in our academic units, advisers continue to have difficulty serving all students in a timely manner; they have insufficient access to continual training; and they report technology limitations that hamper their ability to work with students effectively. Not all advisers have the same advanced technological systems providing access to student records, online forms, and online scheduling. Our highly decentralized system leaves adviser training and resourcing uneven, and constrains our ability to work effectively with students across all colleges, and as they move from one major to another. Excellent advising benefits the campus at large as it invests in the education of its young people to produce the greatest benefit to both them individually and the larger society.

We have launched a number of steps to provide high quality academic advising accessible to all students.

Improvements at the central level: A large portion of our students know what they want to achieve, and need practical recommendations about which courses they need to take next quarter etc. so they can graduate in time. For the majority of such students, these needs could be met by a reliable, directly accessible web-based software application. By Fall 2013, UC Davis will have a virtual portal designed specifically for students to deal with advising in a more holistic and comprehensive manner. This virtual student portal, coordinated by the Registrar, will allow students to register for courses, look at their financial aid, pay their bills, track their progress to degree with academic advising tools, file for commencement and graduation, and connect with many of the student life activities such as internships, student clubs, and cultural events. With over fifteen units on campus participating, the portal also will provide a wealth of information in a central location. Students will be able to pose questions, and receive answers, using a knowledge-base query system developed to directly address 80% of inquiries. Another 15% of student questions will be asked and answered through the portal by internal routing of questions to the right unit on campus, which then provides an answer electronically. We anticipate that 5% will remain more complicated cases, requiring in-person appointments. With the release of this tool, UC Davis will be among the first universities in the country to integrate an online academic advising, registration, financial aid, student accounting,

student life, and electronic question-contact tools.

Improvements at the College and Department level: i) Last year, the provost's Allocation funded the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) to launch a pilot to determine whether a model that created a centralized pool of trained peer advisers would be useful to expand academic advising, standardize services provided by peer advisers (students) and increase the quality of peer advising. Academic counselors in the Dean's Office collaborated with faculty master advisers and departmental staff advisers in selecting peer advisers. These students participated in a class offered by Student Housing Services for peer advisers on the Residence Hall Advising Team (RHAT) and orientation leaders. They then worked in rotation between the departmental majors, RHAT in the residence halls and the Dean's Office. The CAES Dean's Office took responsibility for oversight, hiring and quality control. CAES recently surveyed the departmental majors participating in the pilot and found a high level of satisfaction in the pilot. Consequently, CAES will expand the pilot to include more majors in the next academic year. ii) An online Student Advising Portal (SAP) (discussed briefly in Essay 3) has been developed by the CLS for use by advisers. In its initial version, the SAP was primarily focused on streamlining processes and information management for advisers, and integrated access to current official student records. The second phase, in development now, will improve the tools for advisers but also extend access to students, so that they can review their own information and examine their degree progress. iii) The College of Biological Sciences is launching, this year, their Biology Academic Success Center (see Ex. 41), which will consolidate all services into a single site and expand the range of services for faculty interaction, career guidance, and support networks. This will dramatically improve student access to information across the college's five departments and nine majors, create a single place for information with common hours of operation, and enhance information sharing among the college's advising staff.

Undergraduate mandatory academic advising: Mandatory advising is already occurring in the College of Engineering[3] and would be desirable in all colleges, although resource constraints make such an expansion challenging. This fall, the College of Biological Science piloted mandatory advising for their freshmen. The advisers met with about three hundred students to talk about topics such as how to succeed in class, time commitments and time management for serious academics, and how to read a syllabus. The academic success of this student cohort will be monitored.

Incentives will be needed to encourage involvement of faculty in student advising. The role of faculty advising should not duplicate but complement that of the trained advisers, who have specific expertise in identifying student needs and the resources available on the campus to meet those needs. While it is recognized that advising by faculty greatly benefits students who have not yet settled on a major, in the current system those students are not likely to be referred to a faculty adviser; moreover, such advising by faculty is time-consuming and at present given very limited consideration

[3] Advising is mandatory for all College of Engineering students. Once a year, registration holds are placed on students, who must then meet with their departmental staff adviser for an advising session to have the hold removed. Departments in the college require varying procedures to remove the hold but all require that an academic plan be completed and signed by the departmental staff adviser and/or a faculty adviser. Students who do not clear their advising hold are unable to make changes to current registration or register for future quarters.

in the faculty merit and promotion process. The Academic Senate will have to play a more active role in defining, promoting and acknowledging the value of faculty undergraduate advising.

Long term strategy: In January 2013 the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs launched the Blue Ribbon Committee for Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience that includes a focus on Academic Advising. The group's objective is to define, within the next five months, a long-term strategy for improvement of academic advising on the campus. One project already launched is to assess and enhance training across campus staff advisers, with the objective of developing a shared sense of collaboration as advisers better understand their part of the total advising project, and how they contribute to an effective whole. More consistent and broader training needs to occur for most advisers, some of whom have never had formal training in such areas as how to appropriately engage students. The intent is to map the staff advisers across functional areas and different reporting lines, and identify the advisers who are most qualified to address different components of student advising. With such an "advising map" in place, an approach can be implemented to most efficiently and sensibly provide students with high quality, proactive advising appropriate to their situation.

Graduate Education and Planning

Increase integration of graduate education into campus academic and strategic planning [CFRs 1.2, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8]

Graduate education is a core part of UC Davis's mission as a public research university. Our graduate students contribute to the research and teaching missions of the university in many ways. However, recent campus planning efforts have been uneven in terms of addressing graduate education. Most notably, the Joint Report of the 2020 Task Forces report excluded graduate students from its discussion of future enrollment scenarios or examine graduate education explicitly. While there was a separate task force addressing graduate education, the separateness of the exercises illustrates the problem. Successful graduate education is characterized by its linkages with research and undergraduate education. Campus planning must recognize these linkages and set goals that strengthen them, by addressing the campus as an integrated body.

Over the past two years, total graduate enrollment has been consistent at 6,545 students in Fall 2010 and 6,537 in Fall 2012. At the same time, undergraduate enrollment has increased from 24,560 to 25,608. As a consequence, the proportion of graduate and professional students to undergraduates has declined from 1:3.75 to 1:3.92 in a two-year period without any structured consideration of possible implications for the institution. Planning for future enrollments should encompass academic graduate and professional student enrollments as well as undergraduate enrollments. Integrated planning across all student types is necessary to maintain an appropriate balance in the campus's ability to serve the educational needs of all student populations.

Finally, as discussed in the report of the Joint Administration/Academic Senate Task Force on Graduate Education at UC Davis and in the recent report "Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers," there is a national need for institutions to focus more attention on preparing academic graduate students, particularly doctoral students, for jobs outside of academia. These students are the

next generation of knowledge creators. Effective graduate education must develop their ability to innovate so that they can create knowledge independent of their future occupational setting. While campus efforts in this area have been initiated, as discussed in Essay 3, there is room to increase these efforts and to experiment with innovations in delivering this type of advising and mentoring.

The administration and faculty have recognized the need to improve in this area and initiated steps to promote improvement. In 2011-12 the provost, in partnership with the chair and Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, created a Special Task Force on Graduate Education at UC Davis. In Fall 2012, the Task Force report was made available and distributed to the campus for comment by mid-Winter. The overarching recommendation of the Task Force is that "In order to achieve this vision of the task force, UC Davis must strengthen graduate education and make it a priority. Graduate education should be integral to UC Davis's strategic planning, resource allocation, and faculty development." Three other reports were prepared and released more or less concurrently with that of the graduate education task force: the Joint Report of the 2020 Task Forces, the International Advisory Committee Report, and the Self-supporting Degree Program Task Force report. The input received is being reviewed by the provost and Academic Senate. An Implementation Advisory Committee will be appointed no later than Spring 2013 and will be charged with positioning graduate education higher among campus priorities; the committee will provide advice for implementing the recommendations of the task force and those made in other reports relevant to graduate education over the next several academic years. As discussed in Essay 1, the ongoing assessment of the educational effectiveness of graduate programs is a core responsibility of the Academic Senate, and is undertaken through a rigorous program review process. Greater integration of graduate education into campus planning should not reduce the centrality of academic quality and student outcomes for educational effectiveness. The Implementation Advisory Committee's role will be to identify actions that can meet that criterion. The challenge is to embed the prioritization of graduate education to a similar degree in all aspects of campus planning while maintaining the culture of academic assessment that is a current strength.

Undergraduate Educational Assessment

Continue to improve our current process of undergraduate educational assessment [CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.10, 4.4-4.8]

> *Effective assessment of undergraduate education requires leadership by the Academic Senate. Methodology and implementation will require a partnership between the Academic Senate and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and recognition of the time required by department faculty and staff, as well as a commitment from the administration to provide adequate resources, including the expertise of the Office of Academic Assessment.*

Program review has long been an important site of ongoing evaluation of student learning. The Undergraduate Council (UGC) and Council of Deans and Vice Chancellors have jointly declared that learning assessment methods will be developed consistent with the AAHE "Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning," and Graduate Council affirmed that its program review practices and objectives for graduate education are consistent with these principles.

In recent years the Academic Senate, with support of the administration, has moved all undergraduate program reviews onto a standard seven-year cycle, a system further strengthened by the fact that reviews are performed in clusters grouped by common disciplines. However, undergraduate program reviews could be more effective to the degree that they are coordinated with ongoing administrative assessments of units, the availability and distribution of resources, and the establishment of benchmarks by which resources are provided. At present there are too many layers of bureaucracy through which the reports move prior to reaching Undergraduate Instruction Program Review and the UGC. Meaningful feedback does not effectively flow back to the programs after the review is completed and recommendations have been developed, while the lack of coordination with administrative oversight functions compromises the possibility that reviews inform resource allocation decisions. Finally, it is imperative that more faculty see the value in the undergraduate program review process; in the absence of notable impact, faculty are reluctant to contribute in a meaningful way to program review.

In Fall 2012, the Academic Senate Executive Council charged UGC to review their criteria for evaluating educational effectiveness and make modifications to the ongoing program review process to assess how effectively student learning outcomes are achieved. These efforts are initiated by the Academic Senate with the assumption that the campus administration will be able to commit to creating a supportive environment that includes adequate resources for departments, programs and the Academic Senate to implement learning outcomes assessment for the campus. The UGC has launched two efforts to establish campuswide standards for student learning outcomes assessment. First, steps have been taken to initiate learning outcomes assessment at the program level in a manner that respects the maximum autonomy of departments and programs (see Ex. 26). Even so, programs will be required to develop their plans consistent with AAHE guidelines on outcomes assessment. Programs will report to the Academic Senate on their outcomes assessment planning by Fall 2013. In 2010-11, the efforts initiated by the GE subcommittee of UGC to develop initial testing of procedures for GE assessment was limited by a lack of resources. This year, the UGC has approved a resolution which formalizes the assessment of campuswide GE requirements by integrating the assessment at both the program level and campus level. The approach complements program review, as much as possible using similar methods and overall goals. To facilitate this similarity, campus programs are encouraged to consider aligning program learning outcomes with the GE requirements. The UGC resolution contains a broad timetable to evaluate each of the eight literacies that make up GE. It also establishes mechanisms whereby samples of student work will be included in the assessment. In the near future, the UGC will present a proposal for streamlining program and learning assessment to the Academic Senate Executive Council; one component of this proposal will be how GE will be assessed. Once Executive Council adopts the plan, the Academic Senate and Administration will begin to discuss the resources necessary for the implementation of such a plan.

Currently, the Senate is conducting a pilot with external reviewers for undergraduate program review to inform decisions about how the regular program review could be improved. External reviewers may become standard practice in the future if resourced sufficiently.

The provost and the chair of the Academic Senate have agreed upon a new method of ensuring that program review recommendations will reach those able to provide resources and change practices,

with accountability directly to the provost and Academic Senate. Responses to recommendations made to program faculty will come directly to the Academic Senate. The provost will coordinate responses from deans and higher-level administrators, and provide those responses to the Academic Senate, so that administrators will be accountable to both the provost and the Academic Senate. A mechanism is needed to close the loop between undergraduate program review findings, administrative recommendations, and ultimate program change. Here the Graduate Council's Program Review Closure Committee (PRCC) may be a useful model for UGC, as it fulfills precisely that function for graduate program reviews. The PRCC of Graduate Council is a subgroup of faculty specifically charged to review with care responses to recommendations, clarify any outstanding issues, and then make a recommendation for action to Graduate Council. In the event that there remain concerns about a response, Council can exercise an option to bring in the provost, Deans or Program Chair for an explanation to Council.

Further steps have also been taken, in the midst of this report-writing process, to enable the new OAA to serve as a resource for faculty and departments who seek strategies for using direct evidence in evaluating student learning. This includes a new pilot for the assessment of undergraduate student work to be facilitated by the OAA and the Academic Senate. This will enable the OAA staff to continue, with Senate partnership, regularly supporting faculty in a faculty-led process of assessing student learning.

As indicated in this concluding essay, continued attention to advising, graduate education, and assessment is among the campus's top priorities. While participation in the first WASC pilot of the new review process has been a true challenge given the short timeframe, it has helped to focus our ongoing discussions about maintaining institutional standards of excellence in these and other areas. The campus has welcomed the opportunity to explain the meaning of our degrees, how well our students are learning, and how our institution can more effectively meet student needs. We appreciate the time and effort that reviewers have taken to read this far, and we look forward to responding to further inquiries in the offsite review and especially to demonstrating our progress at the Spring 2014 onsite review.