

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM
SPECIAL VISIT REVIEW
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-DAVIS
April 4-6, 2018

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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

Description of the Institution, Accreditation History, and the Visit

UC Davis first opened in 1908 as the University Farm, an experimental site for the College of Agriculture at University of California, Berkeley, and was designated as a stand-alone UC campus in 1959. Themes consistent with its history as a land-grant institution, including standout academics, sustainability, and particularly solving problems related to food, health, the environment and society, mark it as one of the top public universities in the United States. The 5,300-acre campus is in the city of Davis, a college town of about 68,000 located in Yolo County, and the state capital is 20 minutes away. More than 23,000 academic and administrative staff are employed at the institution.

The UC campuses stand out among national and international rankings of colleges and universities. UC Davis's undergraduate programs were 12th among public universities and 52nd in the world in the 2018 *US News and World Report* rankings. Important to the UCs and UC Davis, are the high enrollment and graduation rates of Pell grant recipients, with 82 percent of these student graduating within six years. UC Davis is particularly proud of its high proportion of first-generation faculty, and the significant increase in first-generation students since 2010 (44% of enrolled students were first-generation in 2017). In addition, as of fall, 2017 UC Davis reached the threshold of 25% enrolled Hispanic students to be eligible for the designation of Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education.

UC Davis comprises four colleges—Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Biological Sciences, Engineering, and Letters and Science—as well as a graduate studies program and nationally renowned professional schools, including the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, Graduate School of Management, School of Education, School of Medicine, School of Law, and

the top-ranked School of Veterinary Science. The university offers a wide range of academic options within its undergraduate, graduate and professional schools and colleges. More than 37,000 students are currently enrolled in more than 100 different undergraduate majors. UC Davis serves increasingly diverse student populations in top-ranked agricultural and engineering programs, biological sciences, mathematical and physical sciences, as well as the social sciences and humanities. The common thread across schools and programs is the shared goal of solving society's problems, and the institution's success is evident in its growth both in size and in prominence.

The University of California system has undergone significant moments of financial stress and instability in its recent history. However, in 2014 the system was provided new revenue to increase state support and financial predictability, including a 4 percent base budget increase for each of four years following the agreement; a one-time infusion of \$436 million over three years for UC's pension obligation from funds set aside under Proposition 2; and an allocation in 2015-2016 of \$25 million for deferred maintenance. UC Davis has already taken steps to increase its enrollment of new undergraduates, and launched the 2020 Initiative in 2013, a long-range plan to increase financial stability by growing enrollment and reducing reliance on state funding. The university developed a draft long range plan to accommodate potential population growth and facility needs. The plan is scheduled for adoption in July 2018.

Since April 2014, UC Davis has seen significant senior leadership transitions: five new deans have been hired, and in August 2017 a new chancellor was appointed.

UC Davis's last WSCUC visit took place April 9-11, 2014 and the institution was reaffirmed for a ten-year accreditation cycle in the Commission Action Letter of July 7, 2014. The Commission letter outlined that the university had made significant progress since its last

comprehensive review and interim reports, and specifically that the institution had a visionary strategic plan, student learning outcomes for all degree programs, a revamped general education program and assessment plan, and strong opportunities for undergraduate research, among others. However, the Commission identified the need for a Special Visit to focus on assessment, program review, and the “2020 Initiative” (the UC Davis strategic enrollment growth plan).

More specifically, the action letter specified the following issues for the Special Visit:

- a. Assessment: More information about how data are gathered about student learning outcomes and are used consistently across all departments to guide improvement. (CFRs 2.6, 4.4)
- b. Program Review: How direct evidence of student learning has been incorporated into the program review process and how the results of program review are used in the allocation of resources. (CFRs 1.8, 2.5-2.7)
- c. 2020 Initiative: An update on the implementation of the 2020 Initiative with specific attention to the faculty/student ratio; ladder rank vs. non-ladder rank faculty; faculty diversity; level of course impaction; changes in staffing; advising; academic support and student services and facilities. (CFRs 3.1.3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 4.1-4.3)

This report offers a synthesis of findings and recommendations following the team’s review of UC Davis’s Special Visit Report and the campus visit conducted April 4-6, 2018.

Description of the Team’s Review Process

Prior to the on-site Special Visit, team members reviewed all report materials, completed a visit worksheet to identify strengths and areas for inquiry, worked with the institution’s accreditation liaison officer to arrange the visit schedule, and discussed these matters during a one-hour conference call. During the visit, the team pursued lines of inquiry specific to the three

topics identified, discussed interpretations on site, and worked collaboratively to synthesize findings and recommendations and complete this report. The four-person team and the WSCUC liaison met with about 100 people, including individuals and committees central to the three issues specified for the Special Visit. Given that the purpose and scope of the Special Visit was to review the issues that gave rise to the Special Visit, it is appropriate that the team focused its attention on these matters. This report represents the collective impressions, findings and recommendations of the team, and was approved by all its members.

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

UC Davis prepared a thorough and candid Special Visit Report that comprehensively described the progress made on the three Special Visit issues: assessment, program review and strategic planning. The report engages thoroughly with each of the major areas. It presents clear evidence that assessment processes and approaches to strategic planning have been strengthened since the last WSCUC review. Overall, the team determined that the report thoughtfully demonstrated institutional engagement with the major issues and provided a frank discussion of the challenges and areas where improvement is still needed.

The institution report was prepared by a Joint Administration/Academic Senate WSCUC Special Visit Committee comprised of appropriate subject matter experts from across the campus, including Senate committee chairs, select faculty, and key administrators. A draft of the report was submitted to the Academic Senate for consultative review and formal responses were collected from relevant committees and councils. The approach to report production suggests that relevant groups participated in a reasonable process. The team's meeting with members of the steering committee provided additional evidence that the Special Visit report was prepared

by many individuals and that the university made the process manageable by involving relevant Senate Committees, administrators and faculty and staff who had a stake in the three Special Visit topics. Members of the steering committee reported that the process was smooth and well-coordinated, and that report writing used an interactive approach that provided multiple occasions for review.

The evidence collected and analyzed in the production of the report was relevant and persuasive. Data on enrollment trends, retention and graduation were well-presented with accessible visual displays. A strong effort was undertaken to gather and report assessment efforts and to analyze data effectively despite the heterogeneity of decentralized efforts. However, while the assessment section of the report is a dutiful discussion of assessment improvements and ongoing challenges, it fell short of fully demonstrating claims about direct student learning assessment and the difference this has made for teaching and learning. The team observed that the assessment mandate may not have been in effect long enough to see the full assessment cycle through and to assess the integrity of the process. In addition, while the report presents evidence related to the strategic plan, much of the landscape remains unclear because of uncertainties surrounding state funding and tuition increases, and contingency planning is not yet clearly spelled out. The team also noted that several forms of evidence specific to the issues of concern identified with the strategic plan, for example data on student-faculty ratio changes through time and projections, diversity data on faculty overall and by school, and the distribution of teaching load between ladder and non-ladder faculty and by school, were omitted from the report. The team requested these documents and received them prior to or during the visit.

SECTION II: TEAM'S EVALUATION OF THE ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

This section discusses the team's evaluation of the three issues of assessment, program review and strategic planning identified as the focus for the Special Visit. Although the UC Davis Special Visit Report reasonably presents the first two related issues in a blended section, the team elected to discuss them separately. As a result, some natural overlaps exist between the discussion of assessment and program review in the first two sections of this report.

Issue 1: Assessment

Information about the quality of student learning, including what students know and can do, and the use of this evidence to improve teaching and learning, is foundational in higher education today. As the 2013 WSCUC Standards of Accreditation for teaching and learning indicate, to achieve these expectations, it is critical for institutions to have stated learning outcomes, and approaches that demonstrate that graduates achieve these outcomes, and that these standards are embedded in what faculty use to evaluate student work. It is also essential that sufficient assessment infrastructure is in place to assess student learning at program and institution levels. Finally, the information collected for assessment must also be put to use by leaders and faculty in support of academic and co-curricular objectives, to help inform improvement initiatives and guide institutional planning processes.

UC Davis has articulated a strong assessment practice in its vision to establish a "universal direct assessment of student learning outcomes," and a "culture that values assessment as a way of improving curriculum and instruction" (Special Visit Report, p. 6). More specifically, the assessment strategy at UC Davis was described as striving for a blend of "campuswide and grassroots cultural change." This approach seems to capture the spirit of collaboration that has been fostered among the Davis Division of the Academic Senate and the

Office of the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education (UE) as charged by the faculty and the provost, respectively, to implement policies for direct assessment of student learning, while the Academic Senate, central administration and the college Deans' offices have promoted direct assessment with faculty and staff working in small groups and individually to design and carry-out assessment projects. The mutual campuswide and grassroots approach honors UC Davis's commitment to respect disciplinary differences and interest in allowing programs maximum flexibility in electing assessment tools and structures that align with their program learning outcomes, while at the same time assuring a centralizing function for assessment.

The team found clear strengths of assessment practice at UC Davis, including: the flexibility afforded to programs and departments to develop tailored outcomes rather than enforcing a top-down directive; the creativity involved in developing technology tools such as those developed in the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) and the Learning Outcomes for Continuous Improvement (LOCI) tool; and the establishment of the Assessment Showcase to support and share good practice. The process for the review of assessment materials at the program and general education levels by members of the Undergraduate Instruction and Program Review Committee (UIPRC) and General Education Committee (GEC), whose role it is to read the departmental assessment materials and the review team reports, analyze the findings as a committee, and write a summary report for each major that highlights key recommendations and areas of concern, is sound and provides an established structure for accountability. A faculty member described the approach as a "thoughtful, built-in process for getting helpful feedback." The creation of an embedded assessment process with meaningful peer review is a solid foundation for building a culture of assessment. (CFR 4.4)

Several UC Davis administrators described the emergence of an assessment culture beginning in 2014, after assessment was put into program review and faculty began looking at evidence of student learning and aligning it with program learning outcomes. The inclusion of Question 8, “How does the program monitor and evaluate its success in achieving its Program Learning Outcomes?” in the Program Self-Review demands that the program aligns outcomes, completes a curriculum matrix, employs indirect and direct data to assess student achievement of the PLOs, reflects on evidence, and identifies action to address the evidence. According to an administrator, “faculty who have been through program review think about assessment and look at student work differently.” A faculty member on the Undergraduate Council added that there was some concern that UC Davis faculty would treat assessment as a compliance activity, but the process has evolved to be about “answering questions important to you” coupled with the expectation for accountability to address the needs presented in program review. Although UC Davis acknowledged that assessment is still in its early stages of taking root, the institution has enacted policies and practices to provide support to the emerging culture of assessment, including the incorporation of direct assessment into the seven-year review cycle for every major, a graduate qualifying exam to assess student learning outcomes, the UIPRC and GEC review processes, and the function of Undergraduate Education’s Assessment Coordinator. (CFRs 2.6, 4.4)

Over the past few years, UC Davis has made important refinements to its assessment processes. For example, since 2015-16 the program review template includes a discussion of processes/examples of direct assessment of student work, and since 2014-15, there is more direct engagement between programs, deans, and the provost regarding the connection between assessment results and resource allocation. Incorporating assessment results into the program

review process seems to have helped facilitate improvements in programs. During the visit the team learned about several specific examples of what programs valued. For example, the history program had 10 recommendations from their program review, which helped them prioritize and implement practices including a new supervised research experience early in the curriculum to address concerns about students' preparation for capstone work. Another interesting by-product from the program review process and the use of reviewers from other departments is that faculty learn more about other programs. For example, a computer science faculty member was pleasantly surprised to learn about the computing needs of history majors that allowed him to consider how his department could contribute to the history program. As one faculty member commented, the assessment process and program review are "vehicles for the program to discover some things about themselves." Another faculty member asserted that "just thinking about outcomes has had a positive effect on my teaching and students' learning." These statements suggest that UC Davis is on the path to develop an assessment culture that moves beyond compliance and is a process for meaningful reflection and educational improvement. (CFR 2.6)

It is also noteworthy that UC Davis has made explicit connections between outcomes assessment results in program reviews and budget meetings between the provost and deans. Integrating program review results in the annual budget meetings creates a vital accountability mechanism for assessment. Although this aspect of the assessment protocol was described as an advantage during the visit, the team heard only a few, vague references to budgetary decisions that were truly influenced by assessment results. Materials provided to the team, specifically the Cluster 2 Program Review Closing the Loop Document, confirmed that the review of undergraduate programs was incorporated into the budget meetings of each of the four colleges.

Provost responses from the “Closing the Loop” meetings documented specific program review recommendations and demonstrated budget allocations. However, very little if any of this documentation referenced specific assessment findings or the student learning outcomes evidence that informed the recommendations or the responses.

The Cluster 2 Closing the Loop letters included many reasonable recommendations for funding lab courses, updating lab equipment, expanding faculty numbers, and devoting resources to advising, among others, but the connection to assessment evidence was not clear. Team questions about examples of budget allocations based on assessment and program review findings during the visit elicited similar, general responses. It is possible to imagine the connection between an assessment finding indicating that students were not acquiring particular lab skills and the recommendation to fund additional lab courses or additional equipment, yet this link was not evident in the “Closing the Loop” materials. Tying program review findings to budget allocations increases accountability for thoughtful program review, but the connections between assessment findings and specifically, student learning outcomes, needs to be made more explicit to truly reinforce the influence of assessment to improve the quality of teaching and learning in programs. (CFRs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)

Higher education has seen significant proliferation of assessment management systems and a variety of technology tools to provide communication and resource hubs for institutional outcomes assessment and continuous improvement initiatives. These systems and tools should facilitate the documentation and demonstration of the contributions of academic programs and support services towards achieving institutional goals for student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. UC Davis has invested in the development of several technology tools to support assessment activities including the College of Biological Sciences online reporting

tool, Learning Outcomes for Continuous Improvement (LOCI) a centralized assessment tool, and assessment tools integrated with Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) created by the College of Engineering.

The College of Biological Sciences developed an online tool that allows for the streamlining of the annual reporting of indicators. Their assessment repository allows them to easily share data across majors and departments, as well as aggregate data at the program level. Notably, the tool they developed asks faculty to briefly state how the outcome of the assessment will influence future offerings of the course. A link to the results in all the program matrices where their course appears allows faculty and the assessment coordinator to see the results of assessment. This has enabled the College of Biological Sciences to begin to ask good questions about their assessment, and as the tool rolls out, the fact that it is internally built for and by UC Davis is a distinct advantage.

Modeled on the College of Biological Sciences (CBS) tool, Undergraduate Education is working with the college associate deans to develop a centralized, web-based tool, LOCI, that that can be used for assessment outcome reporting in all four colleges. The team learned that these processes hold some promise and that some faculty, particularly those in engineering and biological sciences, are particularly enthusiastic about their potential. The team had a chance to review LOCI and found it to be a straightforward, not-overbuilt, tool for recording and organizing assessment results. Although some of faculty responses to prompts in LOCI indicate very basic engagement with assessment, there are also responses that suggest faculty are willing to participate in this process and learn from it. Assessment technology like LOCI seems to hold promise for the management and organization of assessment processes and data, but the technology must develop alongside meaningful processes and approaches to assessment.

Further demonstrating the grassroots approach to assessment is the College of Engineering's success with the development of assessment tools integrated with Canvas. This approach appropriately places assessment tools closer to faculty, students and the instructional level where results could more quickly influence changes in instructional practice and improvements in student learning. Engineering faculty members seem to have used Canvas effectively to measure PLOs using well-developed rubrics. However, assessment data in Canvas are associated with courses, and it is unclear how data in other programs would be aggregated to influence curricular or program decisions. The university's institutional report also emphasized high expectations for validity and reliability of Canvas data. The team encourages UC Davis to consider how these elevated expectations might be an obstacle to the effective use of assessment results for improving student learning and instructional practice and to ensure appropriate oversight and support for Canvas assessment data use.

The assessment of General Education (GE) is a particular emphasis for UC Davis. Currently, GE assessment is integrated into the regular program review process. The first effort related to GE data collection and interpretation were described as "overwhelming" to the General Education Committee (GEC). Assessment of GE course syllabi indicated that only about 60% of GE courses met the standards for the GE literacy for which they were approved. The report indicated that not all GE instructors understand GE goals, and challenges were identified to enforcing GE literacy goals due to academic freedom concerns. These concerns and shortcomings in the achievement of GE literacy goals were confirmed during the visit. A faculty member stated it plainly: "GE literacies are not well-understood." During the visit, faculty on the General Education Committee expressed the need to assure GE standards in courses and to educate faculty on GE literacies. Although the structure of reviewing GE as part of program

review seems reasonable this may be insufficient to address the problems of GE outcomes and evidence of student achievement. (CFR 2.6)

Staffing and support for assessment at the institution level and across colleges seems quite varied, including some Lecturers with Potential Security of Employment (LPSOE) leadership, graduate student help, and cost sharing with Undergraduate Education. Although the team asked why the proposal for a 50/50 split to fund support for assessment was declined by deans, there was no clear answer as to why this reasonable idea was not taken up. UC Davis needs to determine the most viable and sustainable models for supporting assessment at UC Davis. Undergraduate Education continues to advocate for cost share of additional support positions, whether housed in UE or the colleges or at the professional staff or graduate student level. The team saw some merit in this option as the approach most likely to expand the assessment culture at the institution. However, there does not seem to be a conclusive sense from faculty and staff that this is the preferred approach.

Co-curricular program assessment is an expectation for assessing student learning outcomes. However, the university's institutional report was mostly silent on this dimension of assessment. Only the Center for Student Affairs Assessment (CSAA) report included in the Special Visit Report as appendix J2 addressed student learning. Additional materials provided to the team including the CSAA Draft Report demonstrated strengths in co-curricular assessment and studies of student learning and success conducted by groups like the Student Retention Advisory Committee were well-done. In addition, given the references to advising quality in the 2020 Initiative the team also expected to see some reference in the institutional report to the assessment of academic advising. During the visit, the team learned about the intentional work underway to assess advising goals during Orientation, to encourage advisors to ask assessment

questions at the end of their advising sessions, and to focus on assessing the quality of informational guidance. The team encourages UC Davis to develop a more integrated assessment program that places assessment of co-curricular programs on par with academic program review.

The UC Davis Special Visit Report offered a frank appraisal of the state of assessment on campus, indicating that “assessment is slowly getting buy-in” and that given the severe lack of resources (time, funds, personnel) in some departments, there is little to “devote to a thorough and useful implementation of data obtained through meaningful assessment of student learning” (p. 11). The team confirmed these conclusions during the visit and encourages greater documentation of what can be learned about programs and student learning through assessment. The team heard a few accounts of the value of assessment during the visit, but given the limited examples of faculty use of assessment results featured in the Special Visit Report, and the few examples from the visit, there is only a thin narrative and demonstration of the value of assessment. UC Davis has an emerging view of assessment driven by a genuine interest in inquiring into student learning, and using assessment to inform improvements and to know what is working well. Yet, there is more the institution can do to foster creative problem-solving in teaching and learning that would take advantage of assessment results. (CFRs 1.8, 2.6)

The team concluded that UC Davis has made significant progress in establishing more routine processes for student learning outcomes assessment since the last WSCUC visit. Although results are not yet used consistently across all departments to fully gauge effectiveness and to guide improvement, progress is being made to make assessment meaningful. Yet, it is not clear how the assessment mandate will be monitored in hundreds of decentralized places with the only rigorous check being a seven-year program review. The team also has concerns about the impact of assessment activities on workload and the sustainability of the institution’s approach to

assessment. Notably, as the university develops its capacity around assessment, these demands are likely to increase. The team recommends that UC Davis determine and provide the type and level of support needed to keep the assessment workload manageable and meaningful.

Issue 2: Program Review

At its core, the process of program review is designed to assist programs in their ability to respond to future challenges and opportunities, to evaluate their strengths and opportunities, to determine priorities, and to help shape a program's planning. Used this way, program review provides institutions with an opportunity to do more than simply take stock of the status of a program and convey resulting information to relevant constituencies. Program review can improve the quality of individual academic units and the university as a whole. It provides opportunities to generate in-depth conversations between representatives of the program and the administration, offering a vehicle to inform planning and decision-making. By stimulating planning and encouraging strategic development, program reviews can be an important mechanism to advance a university mission.

UC Davis has two bodies that are responsible for the review and assessment of its programs: the Undergraduate Council (and its subcommittees), and the Graduate Council (and its subcommittees). The team found well-defined procedures for the review of both undergraduate and graduate programs, and that UC Davis has continued to refine and improve its efforts with an eye towards reducing administrative burden and focusing on student learning and assessment (CFR 1.8)

Undergraduate Program Review. For undergraduate programs, the review process occurs in a seven-year cycle, and programs pass through the cycle in clusters. Programs draft a self-study guided by a detailed template that asks departments to respond to institutional data and

questions. Review teams, including at least one external reviewer, are asked to review the self-study and spend 1-2 days on campus speaking with faculty, staff and students in the department. The review team then authors a report that, along with the self-study, is forwarded to the Undergraduate Instruction and Program Review Committee and the General Education Committee. Both committees evaluate the materials and submit reports with specific recommendations to the Undergraduate Council for further review. The Undergraduate Council drafts a cover letter with specific recommendations and concerns to the Office of the Provost, which provides a written response to the program. While UC Davis highlights that the materials are used in budgetary decisions between the deans and provost, this approach has the additional advantage of ensuring that materials generated for program review are part of conversations at multiple levels of the institution.

At UC Davis, the program review process is continually evaluated to allow for changes that improve the effectiveness of the process. As a result of this continuous improvement process, there have been recent structural changes to program review that UC Davis asserts, and the team concurs, have led to a more efficient process: the self-review template completed by programs now includes a review of program data and a section that asks for a discussion of processes/examples of direct assessment of student work; there is a clear timeline and flowchart of the review process to guide programs through the process in a timely (one year) manner; and the program review process has been set up to encourage engagement between programs, deans and the provost.

In conversations with departments who had participated in the revised program review process, the team heard clear support for the program review process, with those in attendance saying it was going well and describing it as “helpful” and “thought-provoking.” The team heard

examples from programs that described deeper understandings of student learning as a result of program review. For example, the philosophy department described their work looking at student writing and how they determined that while students in their courses wrote well, they needed further help understanding how to make an argument. The history department also looked at writing and made a similar distinction between the quality of writing and the quality of argument. They discussed the fact that this led to a recommendation in the review and as a result they have thought about the structure of their major and moving individual supervised research to an earlier point in the major, allowing students to practice writing and argumentation skills earlier, and leading to more sophisticated research questions in capstone work.

UC Davis explicitly states that a goal of assessment, whether part of the program review or not, is to “make sure that assessment strengthens instruction and student success” (p 6), and it is clear that this is happening within the program review process for some departments. However, in an effort to respond to the aforementioned structural changes, the team did hear from departments that have prioritized collecting large amounts of data as evidence of compliance with the process, and that at times the PDF of data from Budget and Institutional Analysis was restrictive, leaving departments wishing they had access to more granular or dynamic data to respond to questions they generated at the program level. UC Davis candidly acknowledges that there are programs that are engaging in important assessment activities, but there is “little room left for a creative response to any problems those initiatives will identify” (p 11). The team heard this from departments as well. As UC Davis continues to improve program review processes, it may benefit from a focus on using smaller amounts of quality assessment evidence to determine what students are learning and to ensure that factors that improve learning

are bolstered, and that areas where student learning are not as strong receive the attention they warrant.

The team also heard concerns about the unique needs that interdisciplinary and interdepartmental undergraduate programs have within the process. Because their curriculum by definition is offered across a variety of departments and programs, the process of program review for interdisciplinary or interdepartmental programs is more diffuse and therefore structurally more complicated. For example, standard program reporting from Budget and Institutional Analysis may not necessarily take into account all the courses, faculty or students that are involved in interdisciplinary or interdepartmental programs. The team recommends that to further enhance the utility of program review, UC Davis explicitly attend to the reviews of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental programs by establishing a point of contact among senior leadership for each program to counsel program members as they navigate the process. This includes clarifying what the program should expect from the process of program review and clearly defining what resources are available to support interdisciplinary and interdepartmental program review. (CFRs 2.5-2.7)

The next step in incorporating assessment in program review is to help more departments and programs move beyond the presence of student learning outcomes and whether or not they were assessed on a regular cycle towards having programs focus on the quality of the assessment evidence generated and the inferences made from that evidence. The assessment coordinator has considerable responsibility for support and professional development around assessment, and this shift will require more work “down and in” with departments and programs. The assessment coordinator’s current responsibilities include offering workshops, consultations, online resources, and organizing an annual showcase for the exchange of ideas. By all accounts the

assessment coordinator has shown a deep willingness to work in partnership with faculty. As conversations move from developing learning outcomes and learning how to use assessment tools to understanding and evaluating evidence of student learning, the role of the assessment coordinator should evolve and grow. The assessment coordinator, for example, might oversee dedicated faculty support within departments or programs.

In addition to the changes UC Davis has made to more deliberately incorporate assessment into the program review process, they have also worked to align results with the budget process. Program review outcomes appear on the agenda during the annual budget meetings between the provost and deans, creating a shift in attention and accountability. The associate deans confirmed that they use program review for alignment, and that it allowed them to have better and richer conversations with departments and programs about their priorities. Examples shared included addressing issues of staffing and campus space. Although the connection between budgeting and program review is important, it also raised concerns for the team. UC Davis should consider steps to ensure that budgetary implications of program review do not overshadow the impact program review can have on improvements in student learning. (CFR 2.5)

The level of institutional attention and support have had a meaningful impact on the development of program review in general. Although UC Davis will need several more years to ensure a full understanding and appreciation of the impact of the multiple strategies and changes they have made with respect to program review, the results are promising. These structural changes to the program review process have led to a more efficient process that ensures assessment is front and center in program review. (CFR 2.7)

Graduate Program Review. Graduate education also has a robust program review process in place. Program Learning Outcomes for graduates in any field are established, governance of graduate education is accomplished by the Graduate Council through two subcommittees, and graduate programs are reviewed and assessed every 7-9 years. Program reviews consider a large amount of data organized in 24 different elements, which allows them to address their program learning outcomes.

Student learning assessment differs appropriately from the undergraduate level, in that it emphasizes the creation of original knowledge and expression. Individual Achievement Assessments (IAA's) occur within a student's committees, and are formally specified within each program's requirements for a Master's or PhD. (CFR 2.6)

As with undergraduate education, there have been improvements to policies and procedures at the graduate level as well: graduate programs have been incentivized to attend holistic evaluation workshops to improve appraisal of applicants from underrepresented communities (p. 15), standardized test scores have been de-emphasized, and increased space in the personal statement has been afforded for students to articulate diversity activities.

In sum, UC Davis's plan for program review going forward stresses continued development of technological tools; continued emphasis on building a culture of assessment; and creation of new pathways for providing data, reporting, and closing the loop. While improvements in technology and the process of program review are important, they can also give faculty the impression that program review is a bureaucratic assignment that is in opposition to their "real work." Program review has an equally important part to play in creating a culture that embraces evidence in guiding decision-making. Rewarding engagement in the process, offering capacity building opportunities, helping programs use evidence to communicate their impact on

student learning to others, and celebrating successful outcomes, even small ones, that stem from making data on student learning visible on and off campus, are all integral pieces of the process that will lead to a thriving culture of evidence at UC Davis.

Issue 3: 2020 Initiative

UC Davis's strategic enrollment growth plan, the 2020 plan, was formulated in 2013. Its implementation has taken place at a time when the entire University of California system has been facing significant and unanticipated challenges. These challenges have resulted from the state's disinvestment in higher education, a process that has been occurring nationwide, accompanied by constraints imposed by the state on the university's ability to raise revenue.

The 1960 Master Plan for California Higher Education envisioned that 12.5% of California's high school graduates would attend the University of California (UC). As California's population has increased, enrollment has expanded enormously, new campuses have been established and existing campuses have expanded. Yet the state's recent study on eligibility indicated that about 14 percent of high-school graduates are eligible for UC, and growing numbers are leaving the state to attend college; according to the Public Policy Institute of California, California's higher education system is not keeping up with the need for college-educated workers, and by 2030 the state will have a shortfall of approximately 1.1 million college workers. The State Assembly's Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education in California, established in March 2017, is currently reviewing the status of the Master Plan.

There is thus a substantial public interest in expanding undergraduate enrollment at UC, and corresponding pressure from the governor and legislature to increase enrollment. Yet successive administrations and legislatures have not only limited state funding but in addition

have constrained the ability of the university to obtain the resources needed to support increased enrollment. The university has been unable to convince the state and the public that its “high-tuition high-financial aid” model increases access for low-income students, or that out-of-state students provide support for in-state students. Instead, under agreements between the governor and the university, there has been a six-year freeze on tuition, and limitations on the enrollment of the out-of-state students who are a source of net revenue for the university.

UC Davis’s 2020 plan has been impacted by these external constraints. The plan was predicated on the assumption that campus growth and an increase in student enrollment would be a source of new revenue for the institution. To the extent that it has been able to increase the enrollment of out-of-state (national and international) students, who are net revenue generators, this has indeed been the case. But the increase in enrollment of in-state students has not been fully funded by the state, and with tuition frozen and out-of-state enrollment capped at 18 percent the institution has had to draw on reserves to make the necessary investments in faculty, staff and facilities required to accommodate this expansion.

At the same time that the institution was facing these financial challenges it was also facing significant leadership problems and turnover. The former chancellor was placed on administrative leave in April 2016 and resigned as chancellor in August of that year; a year later following a national search a new chancellor was appointed. There have also been significant changes in other institution leadership positions. However, with the appointment of a new chancellor the leadership structure has now stabilized, and in October 2017 the chancellor initiated a new ten-year strategic planning effort bearing the Star Trek-inspired split infinitive title “To Boldly Go.” This planning effort is still in its early stages, with a draft report expected by April, and a final report by July 2018. The chancellor has made it a priority to involve the

campus community in this effort, and the team views this initiative as a very positive development. However, because this planning exercise is still in its early stages the team is unable to provide a detailed evaluation. Instead in this report the team has focused on both the accomplishments and difficulties of the 2020 plan and the challenges that lie ahead. (CFR 3.6)

The 2020 Initiative: Undergraduate Enrollment and Campus Finances. The 2020 plan envisioned both increased undergraduate enrollment and concomitant increases in the numbers of graduate students, faculty and staff, plus investments in facilities to accommodate this expansion. To the extent that there was an increase in the numbers of national and international students, implementation of the 2020 plan did increase revenue to the institution, and improved its financial situation relative to what it would have been without this increase in out-of-state students. UC Davis was able to make some much-needed investments in classrooms and classroom buildings, faculty hiring, and advising and other services for students. To that extent the 2020 Initiative may be judged a success. Yet because of the state-imposed constraints noted earlier – the tuition freeze and the cap on out-of-state students – the institution was obliged to draw on reserves and run a deficit of some \$25 – \$30M / year, and in 2017 to reduce budgets by 1 – 2%. It is evident that current strategic planning efforts must take into account these new state realities, and both the institution report and frank discussions during the visit indicate that its leadership is well aware of this necessity. The team commends UC Davis for its openness and candor during these discussions, and acknowledges that these challenges are not unique to UC Davis but are also faced by the entire University of California system. (CFRs 1.8, 3.4)

It should be noted however that this growth, accompanied by the tuition freeze and the cap on out-of-state students, has also had unanticipated, and in some cases negative, impacts on the institution and on academic excellence. As discussed further below, under “Facilities,” the

institutional report notes (p. 39) that recent growth has “contributed to inadequate classroom and laboratory facilities that sometimes hinder the ability of the institution to achieve the fullest impact of its teaching and research mission.” As discussed below, student housing is also an issue, although the campus is making a strong effort to address this problem through a public-private partnership. Of particular concern is the fact that the increase in ladder-faculty hiring has lagged behind the increase in undergraduate enrollment, with an apparent shift in the ratio of ladder faculty to lecturers, although with little overall change in the faculty to student ratio (UC Davis Special Visit Report Figure 8, p. 30, and data on student faculty ratios by College / Division supplied by the institution). The team would like to emphasize that these comments are not intended to denigrate the important contributions that lecturers make to the academic mission of the university. However, lecturers and ladder-faculty play distinct albeit overlapping roles, with lecturers primarily focused on pedagogy and undergraduate education, and ladder faculty having in addition primary responsibility for graduate education and the research mission of the university. The team therefore recommends that the institution explicitly consider the appropriate balance between lecturer and ladder-rank appointments, consistent with UC Davis’s research and teaching missions. (CFRs 3.1, 3.2)

The extent of the lag in ladder-faculty hiring should not be exaggerated, since 130 of the planned 200 ladder-faculty hires have already been completed. Nevertheless, during the course of the visit a number of faculty and administrators commented that in some departments the delay in ladder-faculty hiring had caused difficulties for graduate education, with decreases in graduate student recruitment or graduate students having problems in identifying research mentors or dissertation committee members. It is not clear to what extent the lag in ladder-faculty hiring was due to constraints on space and start-up resources or to institutional inertia:

both explanations were offered during the visit, and undoubtedly both factors were contributors. Irrespective of the cause of the lag, the team recommends that the university complete the faculty-hiring component of the 2020 plan in order to maintain an appropriate balance between lecturers and ladder-faculty, the strength of its graduate education and research missions, and appropriate student:faculty ratios.

During the visit the team was impressed by the creative use of LPSOE (Lecturer with Potential Security of Employment) appointments to advance pedagogy and assessment at UC Davis. The team heard about LPSOE appointees with research expertise in these areas who had played significant roles in advancing pedagogy and assessment practices in their home departments or even more widely. However, there seemed to be some uncertainty across the institution about the extent to which LPSOEs should be expected to play these roles. The team therefore recommends that the university define more clearly the role that LPSOEs should play in carrying out research into disciplinary pedagogy and introducing pedagogic innovations into the community at large, and clarify expectations for LPSOE merit reviews and promotions. The team anticipates that this can be done while maintaining the flexibility to adapt appointments to specific circumstances, and without imposing inflexible standards or unrealistic expectations. (CFRs 3.1, 3.2)

Looking back at the 2020 plan, then, it seems that its overall impact on the institution's budget has been positive, although perhaps not to the extent originally expected, and that the effects of increased undergraduate enrollment can be addressed by continuing investments in faculty hiring and both research space and teaching facilities. During the visit, the team learned that following the budget cuts of last year the campus budget is now balanced, with no structural deficit. At the time of writing, however, negotiations are in progress between the state and the

university on increased state funding and a tuition increase. UC Davis will remain dependent on non-resident enrollment, and indeed is hoping that the 18% cap on out-of-state enrollment might be raised; but even if that is the case, the recruitment of international students is not without costs and risks. (CFR 3.4)

In addition, the institution, like other UCs, is under some pressure to increase overall enrollment, but it is not clear whether it would be able to do so without resorting to alternative modes of delivering instruction, such as dual degree programs with other institutions, study abroad, the use of UC Extension programs, internships, on-line learning etc.; indeed during the visit university representatives argued that none of these alternative modes of instruction, individually or in aggregate, would have a significant impact on the cost of instruction, or allow a significant expansion of the university's educational mission. In any event, it seems that the institution is in a position to meet the financial challenges of the next few years, but at this point the nature of a long-term sustainable budget plan remains unclear, given the constraints imposed by the state and the likelihood that state investment and tuition revenue will not keep pace with the cost of increasing enrollments and the ongoing pursuit of academic excellence.

One important source of new revenue is development, and the institution has clearly recognized the importance of fundraising and enhanced its investment in its Office of Development and Alumni Relations (DEVAR). DEVAR is continuing its Big Ideas campaign, the goal of which is to identify interdisciplinary transformative ideas that will become signature fundraising priorities. The first call for proposals led to the selection of thirteen proposals, and the campus is currently conducting personal interviews with key stakeholders to determine their appetite for supporting the proposed projects; a second call for Big Ideas proposals is planned. However, the relationship between this "Big Ideas" campaign and the campus' "To Boldly Go"

strategic planning process is not entirely clear. In particular, it is not clear whether these projects will actually relieve the campus budget by substituting for campus funding, be budget neutral, or even be a drain on the institution budget should donors expect some form of matching campus investment in them. The team would like to encourage the institution to consider ways in which the Big Ideas campaign and other development efforts could be structured so as to relieve the campus budget rather than impose additional financial burdens. Also, discipline will be required to assure that the number of Big Ideas projects does not exceed the institution's ability to fund them adequately to achieve excellence and impact. (CFR 3.6)

Faculty Growth and Diversity. The increase in faculty hiring accompanying the growth in the size of the institution has provided an opportunity to increase faculty diversity. UC Davis already has a strong record in this area, with 400 self-identified first-generation faculty on its roster (out of a total of 900 for the entire UC system). A new First Generation Faculty Initiative creates connections between first-generation faculty and first-generation students using a website with a searchable database listing UC Davis faculty who had been first-generation college students, plus other resources, and a first generation faculty forum to connect students with instructors. The team commends this innovative initiative, as well as the campus' strong commitment to first-generation student enrollment and success.

An Associate Vice Provost – Faculty Equity and Inclusion (AVP-FEI) oversees diversity efforts during the faculty recruitment process, and a number of new procedures have been put in place to enhance opportunities to identify and hire diverse faculty candidates. With the support of a five-year NSF ADVANCE institutional Transformation Grant, the institution has created a number of programs to support diversity in faculty hiring. Data submitted by the UC Davis Office of Budget and Institutional analysis indicate that of new hires (5-yr cumulative) 47% were

female, 13% Chicano / Latino/ Hispanic, and 4% African/African-American; the first two figures, for female and Chicano / Latino / Hispanic faculty, are encouraging, while the latter figure, for African American recruits, although disappointing, reflects national trends. In addition, a faculty salary equity program addresses inequities resulting from changes in market salaries or retention offers; this program is particularly important for women faculty, who are often less likely to seek the outside offers that can elicit a retention offer. The team concluded that the institutions' commitment to diversity in faculty hiring is strong. Although the team did not pursue this issue during the visit, it would like to suggest that continued attention needs to be paid to the hiring of women into engineering and the mathematical and physical sciences, fields in which the recruitment of women lags nationally at all levels. (CFR 3.1)

Student Success: Academic Advising and Support. Increased enrollment can place additional stress on student advising and support services, and UC Davis has gone to some lengths to minimize such impacts. Notably, the institution invested considerable resources to improve undergraduate advising, under the leadership of the Executive Director of Academic Advising, a position newly created in 2014. The result has been a significant decrease in the overall student / advisor ratio from 373 in 2013 to 255 in 2016. Accompanying this improvement in the overall student / advisor ratio has been the introduction of a new online planning tool (MyDegree) that allows advisors to focus on academic guidance rather than compliance with requirements.

Advisers in the different colleges are collaborating to change the campus advising culture from bureaucratic compliance towards a focus on student learning, adviser training and professional development, and improvement of advising processes and organization. The team commends both the investment in improving student / advisor ratios and this change in campus

advising culture. In addition, a new Office of International and Academic English has implemented several programs to support international students and teaching assistants as they transition to a new culture and meet new language challenges. Notably, a Student Retention Advisory Committee (SRAC) has been working with various campus partners to analyze existing data and, by building on existing programs or establishing new ones, promote the adoption of High-Impact practices as outlined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities; these efforts are accompanied by an assessment component to determine which of these practices most effectively improve student learning and retention. Finally, the Division of Student Affairs plays an important role in supporting co-curricular programs, student development and campus community. The team commends UC Davis for its commitment to the retention and academic success of all students. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Despite this progress, challenges remain, some no doubt resulting from the recent enrollment growth, others antedating them. Detailed graduation rate and achievement gap data with an accompanying thoughtful analysis are presented by the Student Retention Advisory Committee in appendix I of the Special Visit Report, pages 4 – 7 and Figures 1 – 10. The four year graduation rate at UC Davis rose from 43% in 2000 to 61% in 2012, which is a significant accomplishment, but still lags behind that at several peer UCs, including Irvine, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and Berkeley; it is not clear to what extent this lag reflects differences in the composition of the undergraduate body. Furthermore, as the committee notes (appendix I, page 6) “unfortunately the gaps in achievement between traditionally more and traditionally less advantaged groups are stubbornly persistent.” Even after adjusting for incoming academic metrics (SAT, GAP and AP credits) the lag in four-year graduation rates for Blacks vs Whites is 12%, for Hispanics vs Whites is 10%, for 1st Gen vs Non-1st Gen is 5%, and for Pell recipients

vs non-recipients is 6%; when no allowance is made for incoming academic characteristics, these gaps are approximately two-fold higher (appendix I, Figs 7 – 10).

Of course this achievement gap between more and less advantaged groups is a national problem that is not peculiar to UC Davis. Nevertheless, the persistence of this problem and the gap between UC Davis and its sister institutions indicates that continued efforts by the Student Retention Advisory Committee and its partners will be necessary if these gaps are to be closed. The team would encourage the university to continue its support of these and related efforts, and for links to be established between the Student Retention Advisory Committee's work and the larger efforts for assessment and improved student learning outcomes, as well as to the overall strategic planning process. SRAC may also wish to consider the effects on student retention of some of the problems noted earlier, such as course impaction, limits on majors, and inadequate classroom and laboratory facilities. (CFRs 4.2, 4.3)

Facilities. Perhaps not surprisingly, it seems that significant increases in undergraduate enrollment took place before new classrooms could be constructed; for example the UC Davis Special Visit report states (p. 37) that “UC Davis’s substantial growth has created pressure on classroom space, particularly the largest lecture halls” and notes (p. 39) that recent growth “contributed to inadequate classroom and laboratory facilities that sometimes hinder the ability of the institution to achieve the fullest impact of its teaching and research mission.” The campus has embarked on a building program to address this problem. More than 490 new classroom seats have been added since fall 2016, another 579 will open in summer 2018, 740 by summer 2019, and an additional 2000 by summer 2021. Further construction projects are planned (a 425 seat classroom, two 150 seat classrooms, and 15 smaller classrooms). The institution estimates (Table 2, p. 38) that if all of these projects are completed then by 2030 capacity utilization would

actually be less than in 2016. Thus it appears that, although planning and construction times have imposed a significant lag, sufficient classrooms are being generated to accommodate the existing enrollment growth. This conclusion is however tempered by the uncertainties surrounding the university's finances and future enrollment growth. (CFR 3.4)

Another pressing need is for faculty office and research space. During the visit, the team heard that in some instances faculty hiring had had to be delayed because of limitations in research space. In order to complete the faculty hiring component of the 2020 Initiative the university will need to generate more faculty office and research space, and the team recommends that this be pursued in order to derive full benefit from the plan.

As far as student housing is concerned, housing complexes completed in 2014 provided more than 1,400 beds, and another completed in 2017 provides another 500. UC Davis has raised its goal in the Long Range Development Plan from 6,200 to 8,500 beds and the Special Visit Report indicates (p. 40) that this housing plan significantly exceeds planned enrollment growth. By continuing their recent trend of engaging in public private partnerships to construct student housing, the university should be able to finance this ambitious plan without adverse affects on its debt capacity, thus allowing it to meet the housing needs generated by enrollment growth.

A final budgetary uncertainty surrounds "Aggie Square," described as "a downtown Sacramento location for UC Davis that will foster the development of research relationships with companies, create new opportunities for internships and career paths, and generate new resources for the campus, the city, and the region." A working group is attempting to identify potential city and state funding sources for this initiative, which will be developed through a public-private partnership and build on its existing healthcare footprint there. This partnership with Sacramento

would indeed be an exciting development for the university, but at this point the team is not able to assess its financial implications.

Concluding Remarks on Strategic Planning. Under new leadership, the institution is engaging in a planning process to develop a strategic framework that will guide the campus over the coming decade as the plan developed under the 2020 initiative reaches its conclusion. Because this planning process is still underway, the team is not able to provide any assessment of the new plan. Nevertheless, it is clear that planning for the future will be taking place in an environment in which the state provides limited funding and constrains tuition increases and the student mix, a recipe that if continued indefinitely will lead to loss of competitiveness of the entire UC system. The new chancellor and his colleagues at the other campuses will need to collaborate with the president to strengthen political and public support for the university.

SECTION III: COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM

REVIEW

UC Davis represents a high-quality, land-grant institution. As was made clear during this visit, the institution has been thoughtfully addressing the issues of assessment and program review and updates on the 2020 Initiative that prompted this Special Visit. The team's Commendations and Recommendations follow.

Commendations

UC Davis is to be commended for:

1. Making significant progress to address the three areas identified for the Special Visit: assessment, program review and strategic planning;

2. Discussing the challenges facing the institution openly and candidly, including the financial challenges that face the entire UC system;
3. Maintaining a strong commitment to first-generation student enrollment and success, establishing the First-Generation Faculty Initiative, and, more generally, demonstrating its commitment to the retention and academic success of all students;
4. Implementing an effective procedure for program review that includes a thoughtful process for reflection and feedback, attention to “closing the loop,” mechanisms for linking assessment results to budget decisions, and holding departments accountable for making changes based on program review;
5. Establishing a decentralized approach to assessment that allows each program to define its own assessment criteria, empowers the faculty to feel ownership over the assessment process, and increases its usefulness in enhancing pedagogy.
6. Investing in advising and its success in reducing student:advisor ratios and advisor caseloads, and in changing the campus advising culture from bureaucratic compliance toward a focus on student learning, advisor training and professional development, and improvement of advising processes and organization.

Recommendations

1. Institutional attention and support have been important to the development of a culture that values assessment. Support from the assessment team includes workshops, consultations, online resources, and an annual Assessment Showcase. Valuable assessment tools have been developed (e.g., LOCI, Dean’s Dashboard, Canvas) and show promise in assisting programs with their assessment work. However, the team has concerns about the impact of assessment activities on workload and the sustainability of

UC Davis's approach to assessment. As the university continues to develop its capacity around assessment, these demands are likely to increase. The team recommends that UC Davis determine and provide the type and level of support needed to keep the assessment workload manageable and meaningful. (CFRs 2.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)

2. UC Davis has well-established procedures for the review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. However, the team noted that interdisciplinary and interdepartmental undergraduate programs have unique needs that necessitate different kinds of support. The team recommends that UC Davis enhance the reviews of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental undergraduate programs by establishing a responsible point of contact for each program among senior leadership, clarifying what the program should expect from the process, and defining what resources are available to support assessment in this context. (CFRs 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.2)
3. The university has made progress on the assessment of general education. The team recommends that the university:
 - a. establish a rigorous process of GE course approval;
 - b. ensure that GE courses meet and maintain the standards for the GE literacies for which they were approved;
 - c. make certain that all GE instructors understand these goals and that courses deliver promised outcomes. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.6, 4.1)
4. The team was impressed by the creative use of LPSOE appointments to advance pedagogy and assessment at UC Davis. The team recommends, however, that the university:

- a. define more clearly the role that LPSOEs should play in carrying out research into disciplinary pedagogy and introducing pedagogic and assessment innovations into the community at large;
 - b. clarify expectations for LPSOE merit reviews and promotions;
 - c. explicitly consider the appropriate balance between lecturer and ladder-rank appointments consistent with UC Davis's research and teaching missions. (CFRs 3.1, 3.2)
5. The team recommends that the university complete the faculty hiring component of the 2020 Initiative to maintain appropriate student: faculty ratios in the setting of its successful growth in enrollment. Additional faculty office and research space along with increased and enhanced teaching facilities will be necessary to derive full benefit from the 2020 Initiative. (CFRs 3.1, 3.4, 4.1)