University of California, Merced

Capacity and Preparatory Review Report for Initial Accreditation

Submitted July 3, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Since admitting our first undergraduate class in 2005, our campus has undergone rapid growth in our student, staff, and faculty populations and in the services and support structures that promote student and research success. This self-study report will highlight our accomplishments as a new student-centered research university, emphasize our pride in many of those achievements, and outline our continuing challenges. Four years after the UC Merced campus site officially opened for our undergraduates, we now enroll 2718 students and function as well as or better than other universities of comparable size. Complementing an excellent 15 to 1 ratio of students to faculty, we have a remarkably high percentage of undergraduates who have self-reported their plans to pursue post-baccalaureate education, 62% from UC Merced versus 37% at all other UC campuses. Our distinguished faculty has a commendable record of securing external funding for research projects, including those with undergraduates as research collaborators. Faculty research ranges from topics of universal to local importance (e.g., physics experiments to documenting the formation of UC Merced) and many address issues relevant to the future of the San Joaquin Valley (e.g., identifying sources of high nitrate concentrations in the Merced River). The educational enterprise is supported by an array of student support services, activities and organizations. See Appendix 1.1.1 for further introduction to our campus.

Highlighting our strengths, our institutional reflection, and our efforts to address predictable challenges, this report presents evidence and plans that demonstrate our "Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity" as prescribed by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in its revised 2008 Handbook (p.50). Consistent with Handbook guidelines for new institutions (p.53), we are using the Comprehensive approach that lists all Criteria for Review sequentially. Weaving these criteria into a cohesive representation of our University, we also examine evidence that addresses several institutional goals, ultimately citing "actions taken in order to improve performance" as required for this review.

Goal 1: Student-Centered Research University. Among our institutional goals, we continuously strive to meet or exceed the high standards of quality that shape our identity as a member of the UC system. Consistent with our mission as a student-centered research university, our undergraduates expect us to offer a rigorous curriculum with co-curricular support that enables them to become competent student scholars and researchers. Our faculty and their graduate students not only promote this learning, they exemplify it in their own scholarship that advances and refines domains of knowledge. Indeed, we aspire to apply research in ways that are socially responsible, as clearly demonstrated in the design of our "green" [1] campus.

Goal 2: Value Added in General Education. As a new research university in the formative stages of our development, we have the opportunity to define—and redefine—our evolving institutional identify. We aim to surpass the traditional model of a menu-based system by offering a "core" of value-added courses (the exact model is evolving). Our eight guiding principles of general education provide the value of integrated learning within each approved general-education course. As is discussed in this report, our ability to sustain the core-curriculum model for general education has been the focus of considerable faculty attention. Regardless of the outcome, this ongoing review affirms the University's commitment to careful, systematic, evidence-based planning for general education. The same commitment is shown in our assessment plans for all major programs, as learning outcomes are aligned with the guiding principles of general education. Before our Educational Effectiveness report is due, we will have already completed one cycle of assessment review that will investigate the relationship(s) among major-program goals, learning outcomes, and broader institutional objectives that distinctively define a UC Merced "general" education for our students. In this respect, we are closing the assessment loop twice to inform educational practice, first at the program level and then at the institutional level of review for curricular reform.

Goal 3: Interdisciplinarity and Strategic Planning. UC Merced was conceived to promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and teaching ("the research university of the twenty-first century" as described in our Mission [2]. Our faculty have reaffirmed this commitment in the Strategic Academic Vision [3] for the campus. UC Merced does not have academic departments, although we have well-defined undergraduate majors and graduate programs. All faculty tenure and promotion recommendations are made in interdisciplinary school units (as specified by Bylaw 55 in the Regent's Standing Orders). Most of these units include clustered membership from multiple disciplines. For UC Merced undergraduates, high enrollment in traditional and familiar academic degree programs clearly articulates their interests, and for that reason we are evolving to traditional academic undergraduate departments. Graduate programs, however, remain interdisciplinary, as does the core curriculum for general education. These differences in interdisciplinarity at the undergraduate and graduate levels of education require careful planning that is consistently aligned with the 2009 Strategic Academic Vision. Since implementation of the Strategic Vision is forthcoming in AY2009-2010 and thereafter, we are addressing the topic of interdisciplinarity in our Educational Effectiveness report rather than this CPR report. Our concept of interdisciplinarity for students is articulated in the College One Handbook [4] which notes "that complex questions are best understood not from a single, decoupled perspective, but by insights gained from different—even seemingly widely-disparate—approaches." Similarly, the "idea of a network" defines interdisciplinary faculty research [3, p.10] since "New knowledge increasingly depends on links among the disciplines, working together on questions that transcend the traditional subject boundaries." Also, forthcoming results from our ongoing academic assessment will enable the University to plan more strategically, for instance, by using comparative evidence of student learning in discipline-specific and interdisciplinary programs.

Routinely discussing Goals 1 and 2, this report provides summary evidence of the University's careful attention to capacity issues. Our commitment to clarity, honesty, and transparency is evident in all University operations; in our ability to manage a difficult challenge in leveraging enough financial support for fiscal and infrastructure stability; in the active engagement of faculty, administrators, staff and students in assessment initiatives that inform and refine teaching and learning; and in curricular planning and co-curricular support based on learning outcomes. Based on this evidence, we demonstrate our readiness for Educational Effectiveness Review, and affirm our commitment to long-term planning that is guided by the Commission's Standards.

Our unifying purpose and our primary metric of achievement is to ensure that UC Merced offers a UC-quality level of education for undergraduate and graduate students while also supporting our vital research mission. These are complementary objectives, but they require long-term planning that starts with a thorough analysis of our initial capacities as a start-up university compared to other UC campuses that are already well established. A UC-quality education, for instance, must be defined in the context of our limited number of major programs thus far, which can be variously listed as 17-20 depending on the inclusion of majors being phased out and/or those pending approval (see Appendix 2.1.5 for an explanation of the campus' strategy for launching new academic programs). Despite these complications, and despite our limited number of majors, we can cite indirect evidence showing that our undergraduates positively characterize their UC Merced education in ways that typically match or exceed their peers at all other UC campuses. Similarly, the success of our faculty in procuring external grants [nearly $62 million over six years; 5, p. 2] is remarkably high on a per capita basis, and compares well to other campuses in the UC system. This is particularly notable given the high percentage of untenured faculty at UC Merced (69%) versus other UC campuses (the system average was 18% in 2007-2008) [6].

Insights derived from this self-study have consistently enabled us to identify areas of strength and weakness. The latter concerns will be discussed in the report's conclusion. Despite these challenges, the evidence provided in this report consistently demonstrates our capacity to excel in key areas of student learning, co-curricular support, and faculty-sponsored or student-generated research.

Organization of the Report:

In organizing this report, we have complied with the WASC requirement for a new institution such as ours to take the 'comprehensive' approach, addressing each CFR separately. Supporting evidence for each CFR is provided in portfolio formats that include Exhibits and Appendices. Exhibits are comprised of tables, pdf documents, and data spreadsheets; where our response to a CFR requires additional narrative for elaboration, we have created Appendices, which may also include supplemental Exhibits. Many of our Exhibits are available online and, when connected to the internet, can be reached by clicking on underlined text in this report (i.e., hyperlinks). All Exhibits, including those with hyperlinks, also can be accessed in the absence of an internet connection by clicking on numbers presented in brackets. These hyperlinks take the reader to the document on the thumb drive as per WASC instructions. Appendices can also be accessed by clicking on underlined text.

Administrative Structure for Generating the Report

Overseen by the WASC Steering Committee and reviewed and approved by the campus community, this institutional self-study is the product of faculty and staff across the institution, particularly Faculty Accreditation Organizers (FAOs), one for each undergraduate and graduate program, and Evidence Providers, one for each co-curricular unit that has academic-support responsibilities. As a result of this effort, key policies related to establishing a system to ensure attention to and improvement in teaching and learning have been revised or developed, and nearly all academic programs (except those being phased out or restructured) have submitted plans for assessing program learning outcomes. In their reports, FAOs have also indicated how their academic programs support the University's broader institutional goals of incorporating the guiding principles of general education and being a student-centered research university. Results of these reports have been noted for Standards 1, 2, and 4.

Regarding other matters of capacity, previous concerns noted in preliminary WASC reviews are addressed in each Standard. The CPR conclusion and Appendix A: Response to the Commission's Action Letter also address these topics in detail. The next sections of this report describe our capacity for each of the Criteria for Review (CFR) and our institutional Data Portfolio. A brief Reflective Essay summarizes key CFR evidence; Appendices provide additional supporting evidence.

STANDARD ONE: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

CFR 1.1 *The institution's formally approved statements of purpose and operational practices are appropriate for an institute of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character.*

Formally endorsed in November 2005, the mission of UC Merced [2] places students at the intersection of research and learning in a "student-centered research university." This educational mission distinctively links student learning in the undergraduate curriculum with the idea of the "apprentice scholar" engaging in graduate studies. In support of this mission, all UC Merced constituents share responsibility for creating a new university that unites the curricular with co-curricular for student learning and that supports opportunities for faculty and students to work together in a "network of scholars," frequently collaborating in interdisciplinary research teams [7]. Consistent with our recently adopted Strategic Academic Vision [3] we currently function without traditional academic departments, relying instead on cross-disciplinary groupings of faculty, especially for graduate education. Appendix 1.1.1 provides additional information about the university.

CFR 1.2 *Educational objectives are clearly recognized throughout the institution and are consistent with stated purposes. The institution develops indicators for the achievement of its purposes and educational objectives at the institutional, program and*

course levels. The institution has a system of measuring student achievement, in terms of retention, completion, and student learning. The institution makes public data on student achievement at the institutional and degree level, in a manner determined by the institution.

The defining objectives of a UC Merced undergraduate education are expressed in our guiding principles of general education [11]. Throughout the undergraduate curriculum, and supported by co-curricular activities, our students acquire a solid foundation in these eight principles: scientific literacy; decision-making; communication; self and society; ethics and responsibility; leadership and teamwork; aesthetic understanding and creativity; and development of personal potential. Each undergraduate program has specific educational goals supported by learning outcomes and aligned with some or all of the eight guiding principles of general education [12].

As intended, our two "core" courses for general education (Core 1 and 100) address all eight guiding principles [13]; significantly, one-third of the 18 majors also cover all eight guiding principles, and 61% (11 of 18 majors) cover seven of these eight principles for general education [12]. Overall, we have a solid foundation for implementing these principles in our major programs, with a realistic goal in the next two years of having two-thirds of the programs incorporating at least seven principles. We recognize that breadth of coverage must be considered with depth of instruction for each principle.

For instance, the general principle of "aesthetic understanding and creativity" receives the lowest coverage among programs [10 of 18, or 56%, 12], although this inattention may reflect a basic misunderstanding about the role of creativity as being limited to artistic expression when it should also include innovative forms of academic inquiry. A similar matter of interpretation might apply to "leadership and teamwork" (11 of 18 majors, 61%) since students in some majors convene regularly in informal study groups or complete group projects as homework. These two points must be more carefully explored with faculty along with the idea that the eight principles of general education may be supported by co-curricular activities.

The guiding principles ensure that UC Merced undergraduates become responsible members of an academic community who can articulate the ethical practices of their academic discipline. As responsible citizens in an increasingly interconnected world, they learn to collaborate in teams to address complex social problems such as environmental stewardship that is sustained locally and globally. They also acquire enduring values from their education, enabling them to participate as responsible citizens in a vibrant democratic society. The lifelong value of this general education is also supported by their co-curricular experiences in activities such as service learning [14], which is required of all Engineering students, research internships [15], research publication [16], and community-focused outreach [17]. Supporting these objectives, the UC Merced Strategic Academic Vision [3], the mission of each School [18], and related information about individual academic and administrative programs are available online.

Educational goals of each academic program appear in the University's Catalog [19] along with the guiding principles of general education. Other university documents such as the Schedule of Classes [20], Student Handbook [21], and Graduate Brochure [22] provide important information for our students and other constituents such as parents, high school advisors, and prospective transfers.

As foundational elements of a coherent system for measuring student learning, program learning outcomes (PLOs) have been established for each undergraduate program[1] [23]. These PLOs appear on each program's website [23] and in the University catalog beginning with the 2009-2011 edition. PLOs have also been

[1] Excepting two minors, American Studies and Services Science, each with fewer than five students.

developed for the Environmental Systems graduate program [24] and are in development for the eight graduate emphasis areas [25] within the second approved graduate program, the Interim Individual Graduate Program. Beginning in fall of 2009, these emphasis areas will need PLOs to have new courses approved [26] by the Academic Senate. At the course level, student learning outcomes (SLOs) will have been established for all courses by Fall 2009 and are already prominently displayed in over 80% of syllabi in two Schools [27]. (See also Appendix 2.2.1.) Both forms of student learning expectations, as well as their alignment, will be refined as faculty implement multi-year, programmatic assessment plans [28][2,3] and more generally gain experience using these tools to guide student learning (see CFR 2.4). Commitment to these processes is supported by undergraduate [29] and graduate [30] program review policies, which expect annual assessment of PLOs. (See CFR 2.7.)

This work to assess, and as necessary establish, essential components of an infrastructure to ensure systematic engagement with indicators of student achievement is supported by several key academic and administrative units. These include the WASC Steering Committee, which is tasked to develop assessment policies and oversee implementation of those policies. The broad range of membership [31] on this committee enables us to develop and implement assessment practices that are comprehensive. During AY2009-2010, these responsibilities will be transferred and expanded into an overarching structure supporting integration of assessment efforts across the institution, including an Assessment Committee with broad institutional membership.

Recognizing the essential role of formative and summative teaching assessment in sustaining a system of outcomes-focused evaluation, at the behest of the WASC Steering committee chair, the Academic Senate and its Committee on Academic Personnel have begun examining ways to strengthen summative evaluation of teaching, with reference to the University of California's Academic Personnel Manual [32]. Similarly, two high-level administrative positions have been recently created and filled, both attending to critical issues of teaching and learning. The Vice Provost for Academic Personnel oversees compliance with UC and campus policies [Merced Academic Personnel Policies and Procedures, 33] for faculty recruitment, promotion and review for merit. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education has specific responsibility for supporting general education and promoting the advancement of historically underrepresented students to graduate studies through the McNair Scholars Program [34].

Supporting the assessment of teaching and learning, the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence [35] was established in spring 2007. Each semester it conducts frequent workshops on best practices for student-centered instruction and the assessment of learning. Among other incentives, the Center awards mini-grants and fellowships [36] to faculty and lecturers that engage them in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Similar support is provided to teaching assistants who qualify for Instructional Internships [37] after they have attended five Center workshops.

A final piece of our evolving system for measuring academic student success, the office of Institutional Planning and Analysis [38] tracks student achievement with respect to retention and degree completion for both freshman [39] and transfer [40] students, making these data [41] available to internal and external constituencies. As downloadable publications, the UC Merced Profile [42] and the UC Merced Accountability Profile [43] (see

[2] All undergraduate programs except the Management and Economics majors (the latter are undergoing realignment as joint programs) and the Services Science and the American Studies minor have drafted multi-year assessment plans.

[3] Each of the eight graduate emphasis areas will develop and implement multi-year assessment plans, including PLOs, as they prepare for approval by the UC system's Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs and by WASC through the substantive change review process.

CFR 1.3) facilitate broad dissemination of a wealth of metrics related to student success and learning outcomes including matriculation in graduate school and post-graduate employment.

CFR 1.3 *The institution's leadership creates and sustains a leadership system at all levels that is marked by high performance, appropriate levels of responsibility, and accountability.*

In 2008, under President Mark C. Yudof's leadership, the UC implemented an accountability framework [44] to share publicly the assessments of the University's progress in meeting goals for teaching, research and service. The annual reporting requirement [43] provides that UC Merced's progress will be regularly assessed and contextualized within the University as a whole.

On January 17, 2007, Dr. Sung-Mo "Steve" Kang was appointed as the second Chancellor of UC Merced, succeeding Dr. Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, who served in that capacity from 1999 to 2006. Roderick B. Park served for one year, 2006-2007, as Acting Chancellor until Kang took office. In his capacity as Chancellor, Kang has affirmed the importance of "building infrastructure to last for UC Merced to be a leading research university of the 21st century. This requires that we continually recruit top talent for teaching, research and public service…." His views about leadership for our campus are highlighted on the chancellor's webpage [45]. Other senior administrators [46] comprise the University's administrative system of leadership. The Merced Division of the UC Academic Senate [47] provides complementary academic leadership.

Collaborating with the Academic Senate's Committee on Academic Personnel [48], the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost [49] oversees campus review of academic personnel, adhering to specific policies and procedures [32, 33]. Similarly, the Division of Administration [50] headed by Vice Chancellor Mary Miller [51] conducts systematic reviews of administrative personnel, typically through the performance appraisal process of the Human Resources [52] department. Under UC system regulations, senior administrators are also routinely evaluated for their job performance [53]. Emphasis is placed on professional development to enhance performance and to create future leaders throughout the organization. The Senate has also requested the administration to set up a mechanism for faculty review of the effectiveness of administrative units in promoting the academic mission of the university.

Financial accountability is the responsibility of all UC Merced's departments, and is overseen by the Business and Finance unit [54]. Campus leaders recognize their accountability for goal attainment, for compliance with relevant regulations and policies, and for stewardship (see CFR 3.5).

CFR 1.4 *The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and in their writing.*

The Academic Senate of the University of California convenes a standing committee [55] on Academic Freedom with faculty representatives from all 10 campuses. This bedrock principle of the University of California is also addressed in the system-wide Academic Personnel Manual (APM) - APM 010 [56]. Due process protection for all faculty—including Non-Senate lecturers [57] —as well as other academic staff is published in APM 016 [58], while Academic Senate Bylaws 334-337 [59] spell out due process provisions further for Senate members. For lecturer appointees, more specific provisions are provided in APM-150 [60] and relevant collective bargaining agreements.

The UC Merced Privilege and Tenure Committee [61] is the Senate Divisional Committee that carries out Senate responsibilities for due process, as needed. Due process and grievance procedures for students are compiled in Part VII of the Student Handbook [21]. Staff protection appears in the UC system's Complaint Resolution

Process for Staff Personnel [62], which covers timelines, appeals, hearing and fact-finding and protection from reprisals. Protection against discrimination is also set forth in Resolution of Concerns—Managers [63] and Senior Professionals and Senior Mangers Group—Resolution of Concerns [64].

At orientations, new faculty and entering students are introduced to and/or receive university publications, including the UC Academic Personnel Manual [32], UC Merced Faculty Handbook [65], and the Student Handbook [21] with information about academic freedom. In support of academic freedom and in compliance with State of California law, all UC employees in a supervisory position, including faculty, are responsible for completing sexual harassment prevention training [66] every two years. Each academic School also maintains faculty Personnel Policy and Procedures for members of individual faculty voting units.

CFR 1.5 *Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity in society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, and its administrative and organizational practices.*

Among the state's research universities, UC Merced enrolls a distinctively diverse population of undergraduates [67] that reflects our location in the Valley and the emergent demographic trends throughout California. As of Fall 2008, 6.4% of our undergraduates are African American, the second highest percentage next to Riverside at 7.8% and approximately two times the unweighted average of the remaining seven campuses. At 30.2%, UC Merced also has the largest Hispanic undergraduate population on a proportional basis among the UC's. Again, this number is approximately twice the unweighted average across the seven campuses excluding Riverside at 27.9% [67]. Nationally, we qualify as one of the few research universities for designation as an Hispanic Serving Institution [68].

UC Merced is committed to fostering this diversity among its students, with a related emphasis on diversity among staff [69] and faculty, where among UC campuses we have the highest percentages of Native American, Hispanic and Asian faculty [70] and an average male/female distribution [71]. The first Korean-American to head an American research university, Chancellor Kang in his inaugural address emphasized that "Our diverse campus culture is a perfect representation of our State, and we should set an example in our strength of community." UC Merced's commitment to diversity is affirmed in our mission [2] and "Principles of Community" [72], both of which appear in each publication of the university's catalog [19, p.11 in 2008-2009]. UC Merced's promotion of diversity also extends beyond the campus; our representative [73] on the University of California Diversity Council [74] is an active participant and has served as co-chair, presenting to the Regents recommendations for creating an inclusive and welcoming culture on UC campuses.

Consistent with the University of California's Diversity Statement [75] and commitment "to achieving excellence through diversity in the classroom, research lab and the workplace," UC Merced's Human Resources mission and vision statements [76] emphasize our focus on promoting a diverse workforce. Specific efforts to increase applicant and employee diversity include advertising broadly and developing staff recruitment materials [77] that emphasize UC Merced's "commitment to a culture of inclusion…that is driven by our diversity." Success is assessed by tracking applicant and new hire demographics, including ethnicity, through our recruitment website. Resultant applicant and hiring patterns inform future recruitment efforts. Appendix 1.5.1 describes specific efforts to ensure, support and increase diversity on our campus.

CFR 1.6 *Even when supported by or affiliated with political, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.*

The Constitution of the State of California, the University of California Office of the President and the UC Board of Regents ensure political autonomy for our campus. Regents Bylaw 5.1(f) [97] specifically protects faculty and

staff from political interference. As a public university, our campus avoids making any institutional statements of political or religious affiliation.

CFR 1.7 *The institution truthfully represents its academic goals, programs, and services to students and to the larger public; demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion; and treats students fairly and equitably through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, and refunds.*

Our campus provides clear, accessible and accurate information about academic goals, programs and services that are intended for students, faculty and other UC Merced constituents. The primary document for this purpose is the *University of California, Merced Catalog* [19] readily available online, regularly updated and distributed to students and faculty in paper copy. Supplemental course information is available online in the Class Schedule and Final Exam Schedule [98]. For each major program, the catalog depicts a sample plan of study [99] towards timely completion of a four-year undergraduate degree. For prospective and current students and their parents, the catalog (2008-2009) [19] also contains summary information about financial support (p.39), including a tuition and fee schedule (p.25), standards of conduct (p.17), and refund policies (p.27), with reference to sources of more detailed information in other documents such as the *Student Handbook: Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (2007-2010)* [21] and the *Student Housing Handbook* [100] This information is also available online (Appendix 1.7.1).

The Office of Judicial Affairs maintains judicial records including student complaints for seven years. The Student Handbook [21], which is being updated to reflect practice, currently states (p.121) that "Disciplinary records regarding academic misconduct will be maintained in the Office of Judicial Affairs as long as the student is enrolled and for a minimum of five years thereafter. Records will then be destroyed unless the Office of Judicial Affairs determines there is good reason to retain the records beyond that date."

For graduate programs, catalog descriptions are supplemented by each program's Policies and Procedures document [101] that articulates progress and graduation requirements. The Graduate Division website [84] provides publications [102] documenting expectations for faculty and graduate students, required forms [102], and financial support [103] information and resources. Each School also has a dedicated graduate-student program coordinator to support graduate student success and, in particular, the operations of the individual graduate groups, each of which has its own organizational structure and student support mechanisms.

On matters of non-academic campus policy and procedures (e.g. student conduct, grievances), the University seeks input from the student-elected members of the Associated Student Union [104]. The campus also includes undergraduate- or graduate-student representatives on university-wide groups such as the WASC Steering Committee [31], planning committees, Academic Senate committees [105] and other administrative and academic governance committees.

The official UC Merced transcript provides an accurate and complete record of academic units accrued for a university degree (non-credit coursework does not appear on the transcript). The Office of the Registrar communicates and enforces policies and procedures [106] that maintain the integrity of grades while also ensuring that students have a clear process to follow when appealing a grade [106]. Transcript and grade policies are informed by best practices outlined by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [107]. Transcript data, including grades, are stored in the Banner database using appropriate security measures. Student access [108] to transcript data [109] is managed via secure sign on to a password protected portal. Appendix 1.7.2 describes the infrastructure of student advising, the Academic Senate, Student Judicial Affairs and the UC Merced Institutional Review Board that ensures students are treated fairly and equitably.

CFR 1.8. *The institution exhibits integrity in its operations as demonstrated by the implementation of appropriate policies, sound business practices, timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas.*

UC Merced provides readily accessible on-line [124] guidance for campus-specific business policies and procedures. Links on this site also direct employees to relevant system-wide policies maintained by the University of California Office of the President. The latter include the UC Accounting Manual [125], a searchable compendium of policies and practices covering accounting structure, records and reports, cost accounting, cash and banking operations, accounts receivable and payable, payroll, student financial aid and fund accounting and the UC Business and Finance Bulletins [126], which update the Accounting Manual. System-wide internal and external auditing procedures are described in the Outline of the University of California Audit Management Plan [127].

Annual Financial Audits at UC Merced are conducted by the national accounting firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, in accordance with University system-wide policy [127]. Audit results are publicly available [128] and, to date, no significant deficiencies in the campus accounting or financing polices or practices have been identified. In addition, usually at the request of the campus, University of California internal auditors conduct topic-specific audits to ensure compliance with appropriate policies and standards.

UC Merced operates under a University of California system-wide philosophy for the awarding of Financial Aid. The overarching goal is to ensure that all financially-needy students have the financial resources to enroll and complete their degree objectives. The University of California Education Finance Committee, of which UC Merced is a member, is primarily responsible for this policy to see that the University of California remains affordable and accessible to eligible students. At the campus level, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships [129] regularly assesses UC Merced's financial aid strategies [130] to affirm that we use our University resources as effectively as possible, including types of funding that influence student decisions to enroll [131].

Appendix 1.8.1 outlines our grievance policies that provide for timely and fair responses to complaints.

CFR 1.9 *The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission, to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor, to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution, and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.*

In his August 2007 letter to the Commission indicating UC Merced's intent to undergo Initial Accreditation review, Chancellor Kang expressed a strong commitment to "comprehensively address all of the WASC Standards for review in both our Capacity and Preparedness Report and our Educational Effectiveness Report. The campus is fully aware of the importance of the accreditation review process and is prepared to participate fully in these efforts." Appendix 1.9.1 describes the policies faculty promulgated to ensure we abide by all substantive change policies.

STANDARD TWO: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

CFR 2.1 *The institution's educational programs are appropriate in content, standards, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery, and are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.*

As a new campus that became fully operational in Fall 2005, UC Merced has engaged in creating new educational programs while also carefully growing existing programs. In contrast to more established universities, this early stage of our development has been characterized by rapid growth from year to year, especially for the increasing number of students enrolled [145, 146; see Appendix 2.1.1], faculty hired [147], and programs offered (see Appendix 2.1.5). Appendices 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 elaborate on the governance and review policies and procedures by which appropriate content and standards are ensured for undergraduate and graduate program and curriculum development. Appendices 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 provide the analysis supporting the conclusion that we have sufficient numbers of qualified faculty to meet curriculum needs.

CFR 2.2: *All degrees --undergraduate and graduate--awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and in terms of levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits.*

Official entry-level requirements for all undergraduate and graduate degrees are available in paper and electronic versions of the UC Merced Catalog [19] and on University's websites for freshmen [285], transfer [292], and graduate students [169]. Each undergraduate major lists a sample plan of study [99] for degree completion. Related program and course information are also provided in other formats including recruitment brochures [170], program newsletters [171], and campus announcements.

To foster degree programs that represent more than an accumulation of credits (see CFR 2.3), program learning outcomes (PLOs) and multi-year assessment plans have been established for each undergraduate minor and major[4] [28], for General Education [28], and for the Environmental Systems graduate program [24][5]. The Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators summarizes each program's multi-year assessment plan in tabular form [172]. For programs within the School of Engineering, student learning outcomes reflect expectations outlined by ABET Inc., engineering's recognized accreditor. PLOs are readily available to students, parents, employers, and the public via the General Catalog and prominent positions on websites [23]. Starting in fall 2009, new faculty will be introduced to them during orientations.

Appendices 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 disaggregate summary data [27] and provide descriptions of policies and practices to show how we are moving toward the inclusion of competencies for graduation in all syllabi, as expressed in the form of course-level student learning outcomes by Fall 2009. Appendix 2.2.3 describes general education across the institution including challenges and efforts toward solutions, while Appendix 2.2.4 articulates the governance structures, policies and practices demonstrating that our graduate programs meet the educational expectations of WASC and the UC.

CFR 2.3 *The institution's student learning outcomes and expectations for student attainment are clearly stated at the course, program and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and expectations are reflected in academic programs and policies; curriculum; advisement; library and information resources; and the wider learning environment.*

As described in CFRs 1.2 and 2.2, the educational expectations of each program (PLOs) appear on campus websites and in the University's most recent catalog. Faculty curriculum committees in each School affirm that new courses and programs have clearly conveyed this information to students and other constituents. At the

[4] All undergraduate programs except the Management and Economics majors and Services Science and American Studies minors have drafted multi-year assessment plans.

[5] Multi-year assessment plans will be developed and implemented as each of the remaining eight graduate emphasis areas within the Individual Graduate Program degree prepare for approval by the UC system's Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs and by WASC through the substantive change review process.

institutional level, policies promulgated by the Undergraduate Council [141, 150] and Graduate and Research Council [26, 142] require that learning expectations be developed for all new programs and courses. As described in CFR 2.2 and related Appendix 2.2.1, we are working to ensure that learning outcomes are integrated into the syllabi of all courses offered at both graduate and undergraduate levels by Fall 2009.

As is more fully described in CFR 2.12, the University's professional academic advisors assist undergraduates in selecting a major, completing general education requirements, and making timely progress towards graduation. PLOs are being integrated into these advising practices. Through its instructional support services for faculty, staff [197] and students [198], the Library is committed to enabling and assessing student achievement of information literacy learning outcomes [199; see Appendix 2.3.1] and, in turn, the eight guiding principles of general education. Information Technology supports student achievement and assessment of learning outcomes through vital co-curricular services (see Appendix 2.13.5) and collaborative support of an e-portfolio initiative [200; see Appendix 2.3.2].

CFR 2.4 *The institution's expectations for learning and student attainment are developed and widely shared among its members (including faculty, students, staff, and external stakeholders). The institution's faculty takes collective responsibility for establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating attainment of these expectations.*

UC system-wide policy [204] invests faculty with sole authority over curriculum. In that capacity faculty are responsible for establishing, reviewing, fostering and demonstrating attainment of learning expectations at course, program and institutional levels. Faculty involvement in and commitment to these responsibilities is demonstrated through the policies, processes and practices described in CFR 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.6 and associated appendices. New faculty are introduced to these responsibilities during orientation [205], and faculty curriculum committees in each School see that learning outcomes are developed for new courses and programs and that this information is conveyed to students and other constituents via syllabi, campus websites, and the University's catalog. Under the leadership of Faculty Accreditation Organizers (FAOs), one for each undergraduate and graduate program, the faculty of each program have also developed and are implementing multi-year assessment plans [28] focused on faculty-developed program learning outcomes (See Appendix 2.4.1). In sum, faculty have both created the policy infrastructure for outcomes-based assessment and are implementing it.

Sharing expectations for student learning and success is a high priority, particularly given our large population of first generation college students [206]. An examination of campus efforts in support of this goal revealed a diversity of initiatives targeting a range of audiences. For example, at each summer orientation the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education presents UC Merced's academic expectations to parents to help those who themselves have not attended college better understand what their child must do to be successful. Similarly, student orientation includes a session on academic success [207] that over 80% of participants found "useful and engaging" in summer 2008 [208, question 6]. At the mandatory freshman assembly, freshmen are introduced to UC Merced learning expectations [209] and principles of community [72] and those that are identified as academically under-prepared, as well as other students on academic probation due to low GPA, are encouraged to enroll in Introduction to Undergraduate Studies (USTU 10) [210] to learn about social adjustments to college life and related academic demands of being enrolled at UC Merced. Appendix 2.4.2 describes the need, faculty support for and success of the mandatory success workshops [211] for freshmen earning a mid-semester grade lower than a C-.

Beyond freshman year, the School of Natural Sciences Excel! Program [212] requires Natural Sciences majors on academic probation and/or subject to dismissal to participate in NSED 98 [213], a one unit course to build academic skills, as well as to sign a contract requiring them to use campus resources once a week to help them achieve their academic goals. In Engineering, undergraduates are strongly encouraged to participate in

professional societies [83], where faculty and staff involvement provides active mentorship encouraging retention and success while forming the foundation for students' professional career development.

Two final means of fostering student, staff and stakeholder understanding of learning expectations are to develop meaningful, measurable program (PLOs) and course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs), and to educate faculty, students and co-curricular staff to use them to guide student learning and achievement.

To evaluate our level of development in regard to these intentions, we reviewed all PLOs and SLOs using respectively the WASC *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Academic Program Learning Outcomes* [214] and a *Rubric for Creating and Aligning Student Learning Outcomes* developed by the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence (CRTE) [176]. Based on WASC standards, 33% of all PLOs are rated 'Emerging' and 53% as 'Developed' with respect to the comprehensiveness of the PLO list [215: Table A]. Similarly, 43% and 47% are judged to be 'Emerging' and 'Developed' in terms of their degree of 'assessability' [215: Table B]. None can be judged to be 'Highly Developed' because our PLOs are in essence new; the rapid addition of faculty has required programs to reconsider the goals and outcomes developed originally by a small set of founding faculty. Consequently, programs are now elaborating criteria and standards and identifying representative examples of student performance as they enact their multi-year assessment plans. The Interim Individual Graduate Program was judged 'Initial' with respect to both categories, reflecting the intention to develop PLOs as each emphasis area eventually applies for full, independent graduate-group status (see CFR 2.2).

With respect to Fall 2008 SLOs, 14% were judged to be 'Emerging' and 62% 'Developed', reflecting the difference between unspecific, unmeasurable SLOs that do not seem aligned with course work and those that articulate relevant skills and knowledge, most in a measurable way, and are to a fair degree implicitly aligned with course work [216: Table A]. In Spring 2009, the percentage of emerging syllabi declined to 10% while the percentage of developed rose to 67% [216: Table B].

The collective results of these PLO and SLO assessments indicate that we need to improve the specificity of PLOs and SLOs to better share expectations with all stakeholders, to define more precisely the elements of student success and thus to increase the 'assessability' of outcomes, and to improve alignment with student work at both program and course levels. This final point is particularly significant as alignment can be expected to parallel the degree to which outcomes are used actively to further learning by faculty, students and relevant co-curricular support offered by tutors, mentors, and advisors. At the syllabus level, this means we must increase the fraction of syllabi, and consequently courses, that are constructed around descriptive, measurable SLOs that are linked explicitly to course work and mechanisms of assessment, i.e. are 'Highly Developed' [176]. Such work will also foster the refinement of programmatic and institutional alignment.

We also gauged our capacity for implementing programmatic assessment. Based on the WASC *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Academic Program Learning Outcomes* [214], 30% of program assessment plans are judged to be 'Emerging', 43% 'Developed', and 10% 'Highly Developed' with respect to the capacity implications of the assessment planning criterion [175: Table A]. Evaluating the implementation aspects of this criterion must wait until programs have engaged in multiple cycles of assessment. Additionally, 100% of assessment plans were developed by faculty and are designed to be implemented by them. Over 90% involve direct and indirect evidence and multiple tools for assessing student work and include curriculum maps showing the alignment of SLOs and PLOs [175: Table B]. This data, however, cannot account for areas that commonly require further improvement, including the need to triangulate evidence more thoughtfully and increase the efficiency of assessment work.

The faculty development matters described above will continue to be addressed by the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence through workshops. Additionally, program-level consultations with CRTE and Institutional Planning and Analysis staff have been recommended formally by the WASC Steering Committee [217].

CFR 2.5 *The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, challenge them to achieve high expectations, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.*

As a student-centered research university, UC Merced recognizes that knowledge is best learned through active engagement in inquiry. As such, it encourages students to prepare for, participate in, and/or disseminate research, all of which support achievement of the higher-order intellectual skills described by program learning outcomes [23]. The required CORE 1 general education course [220] exposes students to a wide range of research that orients them to the ways in which research and analysis respond to fundamental human needs. Academic advisors in the Schools encourage students to work with faculty, either on faculty research projects or on independent inquiry. Faculty actively seek students and community partners for research, and UC Merced has extended this commitment through its participation in a national committee [221] sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education that promotes community engaged scholarship for both faculty and students. While the creative work of research virtually demands pedagogies of engagement, faculty teaching courses that do not require student research are also encouraged to use these pedagogies by way of faculty development workshops and consultation offered by the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence [222, p.2]. UCMCROPS, our course management system, enables the provision of formative and summative feedback and is used nearly universally by our faculty (see Appendix 2.3.2).

Beyond everyday course work, UC Merced supports a diversity of academic and co-curricular programs and initiatives that actively challenge students to excel academically and provide feedback designed to improve their performance. These include History's proposed capstone honors thesis [223; Appendix 2.5.1], the Natural Sciences Education Minor (Appendix 2.5.2), Registrar student progress reports (Appendix 2.5.3), freshman summer 'bridge' programs (Appendix 2.5.4), Excel! (CFR 2.4), Success Workshops (Appendix 2.4.1), learning communities (Appendix 2.5.5), and the Student Health Service's H.E.R.O.E.S (Health Education Representatives for Opportunities to Empower Students) program that promotes a holistic approach to health for academic success (Appendix 2.5.6). Over 80% of graduate student respondents to a 2008 survey [224] to assess the quality of the academic and co-curricular environment strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Feedback on progress toward degree is ongoing and constructive." Large majorities also indicated satisfaction with the intellectual caliber of the faculty (94%) and with the program's ability to keep pace with recent developments in the field (86%).

CFR 2.6 *The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated levels of attainment and ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards faculty use to evaluate student work.*

The May 2009 commencement ceremony marked the four-year graduation milestone for our founding freshmen class of 2005. Evidence of their educational attainment will provide a baseline for annual assessment of student learning (e.g., PLO attainment, average GPAs, persistence towards degree completion, etc.). Expectations for student learning are conveyed in each course syllabus in the form of learning outcomes [174; see also Appendix 2.2.1]. Appendix 2.6.1 summarizes how assessment of learning outcomes will occur and how expectations of that learning will be embedded in evaluation standards.

CFR 2.7 *All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes analyses of the achievement of the program's learning objectives and outcomes, program retention and completion, and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.*

At a new institution, program review has properly involved to this point the review of new programs, most recently for an Anthropology BA that also underwent successful WASC substantive change review in May 2009[6] [242]. The practices guiding the review of new undergraduate and graduate programs (see Appendices 2.7.1 and 2.1.1) provide a solid foundation for devising and implementing review policies for existing programs, particularly to include assessment practices described in CFRs 1.2, 2.1, 2.2., 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6. In June 2009 the Academic Senate generated separate but complementary guidelines for review of existing undergraduate [29] and graduate programs [30]. As noted in the Senate chair's letter [243], these guidelines reflect careful consideration of practices at other UC campuses, and specifically at UC Davis, after being appropriately "modified to include program learning outcome assessments and structure at UC Merced." Although these guidelines are pending formal approval by Divisional Council, faculty are proceeding with assessment plans.

Review of existing programs will commence at the undergraduate level in Fall 2009 with the Applied Mathematics B.S. and, at the graduate level, in 2013 when the Environmental Systems group anticipates its first review. As stated in the Program Review Guidelines for our 2005-2006 Application for Candidacy, "For undergraduate academic degree programs offered at UC Merced opening (i.e., in 2005), reviews will be scheduled beginning in 2009-10." Our university is on pace to meet that timeline. The main reason for waiting until Fall 2009 is that our first cohort of 2005 freshmen will have graduated in the spring of 2009. Appendix 2.7.2 analyzes our program review policies with respect to the expectations stated in this CFR and those outlined in the WASC *Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning into Program Reviews* [244]. (See also Appendix 2.2.4.)

The Division of Student Affairs has developed, and plans to pilot, its program review process with three programs in summer 2009. Guided by the Division's Program Review Guidelines [245], this process involves self study and external review of each unit's performance and improvement with respect to mission, objectives and strategic plans. The review will likely occur on a five year cycle.

CFR 2.8 *The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, as well as their dissemination at levels and of the kinds appropriate to the institution's purposes and character.*

Section 210 [247] of the University of California Academic Personnel Manual codifies procedures and criteria to evaluate the scholarly and creative activity of faculty. The primary criterion by which scholarly or creative activity is judged is "evidence of a productive and creative mind . . .in the candidate's research or… artistic production." The criteria insist that review committees take each case in its own right, looking for unique circumstances and changing social needs as elements of a candidate's portfolio. The scholarship of teaching and learning is explicitly listed as legitimate as long as such scholarship "present[s] new ideas or original scholarly research" [247, p.8 highlight].

Established as a premier research university, and self-designated as a student-centered research university, UC Merced values original scholarship because it defines our institutional identity—and affirms our heritage as a constituent member of the prestigious UC system. In this system, faculty are supported in multiple ways to create and disseminate knowledge through professional presentations and publications; through the classroom; and to the public at large. Notably, we also identify our graduate students as "apprentice scholars" and encourage our undergraduates to engage in research projects and creative activities, with their best efforts publicly acclaimed during Research Week and through publication in campus journals, among many other forms of recognition. (See CFR 2.2.)

[6] Approved by the WASC Substantive Change Review Committee; awaiting Commission ratification of Committee's decision.

Founded on models of 19th and 20th century research universities, UC Merced has the special opportunity of being new that allows us to invent a new research university of the 21st century—with value added. That extra value inheres in the traditional strengths of research faculty who inculcate students in the enterprise of creating knowledge and who also apply their research expertise to assess student learning as an interconnected and mutually supportive form of their faculty scholarship. The distinctive opportunity at our campus is to establish a robust tradition of faculty-supervised student involvement in all aspects of this scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning. Two initiatives that support this opportunity are described in Appendices 2.8.1 and 2.8.2.

CFR 2.9 *The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning and service.*

As a key example of integrated scholarship and learning, the Foster Family Center for Engineering Service Learning [14] places undergraduates from any of the university's major programs into multidisciplinary teams. Supervised by a faculty member, these teams establish ongoing client/consultant relationships with local and regional not-for-profit service organizations to conduct real engineering analyses and problem resolution, with students receiving course credit as well as generating portfolio entries within a strategic teamwork environment.

A similar linkage of teaching, scholarship and student learning is offered in semester-long freshman seminars [251] in which first-year students convene with a faculty member to discuss aspects of that person's research or to examine other research topics of mutual interest. In all major programs students may undertake faculty-supervised research by enrolling in individual- or group-study courses numbered 098/099 and 198/199. According to the latest UCUES survey in Spring 2008 [252, slide 7], over 60% of UC Merced seniors, compared to 47% of seniors at the other UC campuses, indicated that they had enrolled in at least one independent research course. An example group-study course is the book-project, *The Fairy Shrimp Chronicles* [188], about the founding of UC Merced. Written entirely by undergraduates majoring in history or minoring in writing, this book was published and distributed free to all seniors graduating in Spring 2009—our university's inaugural freshman class of AY2005-2006. Appendices 2.9.1 and 2.9.2 describe other examples of linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning and service.

CFR 2.10 *The institution collects and analyzes student data disaggregated by demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and campus climate to support student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students and assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences.*

A crucial function of planning at any university, but especially at a new one like ours, is the thorough and systematic collection of student data. Lacking decades of historical trend data that inform decision-making at more established universities, we must gather as much information as we can about our students—without burdening them with constant requests to complete surveys or participate in focus-group sessions. As a practical necessity, we must therefore rely on comparative data with our sister campuses in the UC system and other peer institutions while noting that few research universities nationally enroll as diverse an undergraduate population as ours, or one that has as many economic, educational and linguistic challenges to address. The Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA) [38] benchmarks retention and graduation rates and student and personnel demographics, for example, against other UC campuses using publicly available data via the Web (Statistical Summary of Students and Staff [266]; StatFinder [267]).

IPA functions at UC Merced as the central clearinghouse for student data; it also safeguards the integrity of any official information about our students that is distributed for internal or public review. IPA collects comprehensive learning outcome, student satisfaction, engagement, and other data on our undergraduate students by using both external survey tools [268] such as the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey

(UCUES) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and numerous internal measures that disaggregate our student demographics [41]. IPA also helps other units conduct surveys, such as the annual Graduate Student Survey, which examines student academic and co-curricular satisfaction [224; CFRs, 2.5, 2.12]; surveys of alumni and graduating seniors [241, 240], which focus on career/education plans and experience after graduation; as well as satisfaction with their experiences at UC Merced [42, p.6]. This information is distributed to relevant academic programs and constituents in Student Affairs to improve the University's programs and services. Profiles [269] of graduating seniors highlight their accomplishments and career plans.

As appropriate, data and analyses are posted on IPA's Website[7] [38], including information about student cohorts that enroll in undergraduate majors and graduate programs. IPA also sends its reports [130] to relevant constituencies.

Some UC Merced academic programs also develop program-specific surveys [270; see CFR 4.8] or use other data collection means such as diagnostic exams [271], interviews, focus groups or portfolio reviews to obtain information about student cohorts.

CRF 2.11 *Consistent with its purposes, the institution develops and assesses its co-curricular programs.*

Appropriate to our mission, programs, and needs of all students, the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs [272] oversees the University's co-curricular units, all of which are regularly assessed to determine their effectiveness and to improve delivery of services. Evidence of that assessment is provided in annual Year End Reports [273]. At a retreat held in Summer 2009, Student Affairs initiated efforts to develop outcomes-based assessment, noting that satisfaction-based assessment was a necessary first step in developing programming at a new university. As noted in CFR 2.7, in summer 2009 Student Affairs units also will pilot a version of program review to continue on a five year cycle [245]. Development of co-curricular programs and services is guided by the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2007-2012 [274], which outlines five strategic imperatives and associated supporting initiatives. Implementation of these initiatives is overseen by specific staff coordinators in order to monitor the Division's collective efforts. Specific examples of Student Affairs programs, services and related assessment initiatives are provided in Appendices 2.11.1 to 2.11.4.

CRF 2.12 *The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and regular information and advising about relevant academic requirements.*

Each School at UC Merced has a professional staff of advisors [114] who provide timely and relevant information about academic programs to new and current majors. Students who have not yet declared a major are advised by staff in the Student Advising and Learning Center (SALC) [115]. The SALC professional staff also hires and trains undergraduate peer advisors [278]. Advisors meet each semester with students to review their schedules and to discuss other matters of their education. Important updates and information are posted on the Schools' websites [114] and advisors keep students informed through bi-weekly e-mail updates. General information sessions are held throughout the year to increase the number of students served. Through this frequent contact, advisors can encourage some students to take advantage of academic-support services (e.g., tutoring [96] and peer mentoring [95]), or refer them to counseling and psychological services [280] or disability

7. Sensitive data, especially when student or employee identities might be revealed (e.g., cell sizes under 5), are protected according to FERPA and other State, federal and UC System laws or guidelines.

services [281] To maintain campus-wide consistency, advisors from all three Schools and SALC meet every one to two weeks to discuss and revise policies and practices [282].

Graduate student advising is provided by graduate coordinators located in each of the Schools and by faculty advisors in each of the graduate programs and emphasis areas. Over 80% of respondents to the 2008 Graduate Student Survey indicated satisfaction with the quality of interactions related to advising and guidance whereas 65% agreed that program staff is knowledgeable about the rules and regulations that affect graduate students [224]. Graduate student targeted advising and career-related support is also provided by the Career Services Center [283].

UC Merced's official publications and websites are fully developed, frequently updated, and easily accessed, providing information for student needs. The University's admission's pathways [284] and eligibility requirements [285], catalog [19], academic calendar [286], and schedule of classes [20] are accurate and complete sources of information on academic programs and course offerings. The Students First Center website [287] functions as a portal to many of the services that students find useful or interesting. These include links to registration, financial aid and scholarships, billing, housing, and the bookstore as well as connections to other UC Merced students through Facebook and MySpace.

The Office of Admissions [288] provides prospective students and their parents with brochures [289] about UC Merced, up-to-date information regarding admissions and events in calendar format [290] and tailors information for the different needs of freshmen [291] or transfers [292].

CFR 2.13 *Student support services--including financial aid, registration, advising, career counseling, computer labs, and library and information services--are designed to meet the needs of the specific types of students the institution serves and the curricula it offers.*

As noted in CFR 2.12, the University provides a broad range of advising, counseling, and other co-curricular services that respond to student needs as a first priority. Many other services also address these needs including intercultural programs [91], housing (on-campus and off-campus) [293], dining [294], recreation [295], veteran's services [296] and education abroad [89], to name a few—all based on a guiding "principle of community" [72] that attends to the "individual and collective behaviors of students, faculty and staff." Appendices 2.13.1 to 2.13.8 describe how the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, the Office of the Registrar, advising, Career Services, Information Technology services, the University Library, the Student Health and Wellness Division and Graduate Division address the specific needs of our students.

CFR 2.14 *Institutions that serve transfer students assume an obligation to provide clear and accurate information about transfer requirements, ensure equitable treatment for such students with respect to academic policies, and ensure that such students are not unduly disadvantaged by transfer requirements.*

UC Merced welcomes and supports transfer students. Clear and accurate information about transfer requirements can be found in the UC Merced Catalog [19, p.34] and on our website for transfer students [292]. Equitable treatment for this cohort is ensured through several official policies, including the Transfer Admission Guarantee contracts between California Community College students and UC Merced [313]; also, the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) [314] describes in detail how transfer students can fulfill lower-division general education requirements at both CSU and UC campuses. All three Schools also have staff that work directly with transfer students to ensure access to all educational and co-curricular resources. Additionally, all three Schools support and participate in the organized transfer orientation day.

A program coordinator assists current and prospective transfer students and directs them to relevant campus organizations and services such as the Transfer Student Association and the Student Transfer Outreach Mentor Program (STOMP). The coordinator also maintains the accuracy of the transfer admissions page [292], as well as the transfer student wiki [315] that contains information about student life in Merced, a listing of businesses and restaurants, a growing repository of facts and statistics about transfer students, among other topics. A distinctive feature of UC Merced's curriculum is an upper-division requirement for general education fulfilled by all our undergraduates—including transfers. Currently designated as Core 100 or its equivalent, this requirement provides opportunity for every student to experience our guiding principles of general education.

STANDARD THREE: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

CFR 3.1 *The institution employs personnel sufficient in number and professional qualifications to maintain its operations and to support its academic programs, consistent with its institutional and educational objectives.*

Our campus employs distinguished faculty, professional administrators, and a dedicated staff in sufficient numbers to support the University's mission. As a crucial part of our mission, the University attends carefully and consistently to the delivery of our educational programs. In Fall 2005 the University faculty [316] numbered 45 ladder-rank appointments and 20 lecturer appointments. In Fall 2008, those numbers had increased to 112 and 90 respectively; a 200% increase in academic personnel. This growth keeps pace with a 200% increase in student enrollment [317] during this four year period (from 875 total to 2,718 total), allowing us to maintain a faculty to student ratio of 1:14 for undergraduates in 2008-2009 [148] and to tie Berkeley for the lowest ratio in the UC system, 1:15, for undergraduates and graduates combined [149]. During this time staff employment [318] increased 70% from 359 to 611 support personnel. These increases in faculty and staff were proportional to the needs of our undergraduates to complete their baccalaureate in four years (e.g., about 50% of our "pioneer" 2005 freshman class graduated in 2009). CFR 3.2 reviews faculty qualifications and diversity; CFRs 1.3 and 3.10 consider operational capacity of university personnel.

CFR 3.2 *The institution demonstrates that it employs a faculty with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution sufficient in number, professional qualifications, and diversity to achieve its educational objectives, to establish and oversee academic policies, and to ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs wherever and however delivered.*

Planning for new faculty appointments originates with the faculty who are organized into School-based voting units or 'Bylaw 55' [319] units for the purposes of hiring and promotion. In consultation with School Deans, each Bylaw 55 unit submits a five year strategic plan [320] to develop, grow, and sustain its academic programs, which is then updated annually in response to changing conditions. Each year the Schools also forward hiring recommendations to the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation, which reviews [321] justifications for new positions, and then forwards its recommendations to the EVC/Provost, who makes the final decision to add faculty. Currently, Bylaw 55 units offer all undergraduate degrees, and faculty from these units populate the fundamental governance committees. At the School level this governance is exemplified by the School of Social Science Humanities and Arts bylaws [322] and, at the institutional level, by various faculty Senate committees [323] responsible for establishing and overseeing academic programs and policies to ensure the integrity and efficacy of these programs. As UC Merced grows, we anticipate the formation of smaller Bylaw 55 units many of which will be more discipline-focused.

In compliance with UC-system standards [75], our hiring procedures [324] guarantee that diversity receives appropriate attention while also ensuring that candidates who are recruited and interviewed for positions meet high professional standards. In AY2008-2009, 84% or 170 faculty, Senate and non-Senate (lecturers) combined,

had full-time instructional positions [325]; 38% were women [326]; 28% were minority [326]; and 85% who were full time had earned a doctorate or equivalent terminal degree [327]. CFR 1.5 addresses cross-campus comparisons of Senate faculty diversity.

Non-Senate instructional faculty (NSF) are hired as lecturers in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) [328] endorsed by the University of California system and the University Council-American Federation of Teachers union. Article 24 [329] of that MOU agreement defines instructional workloads and Appendix H [330] provides guidelines for work such as program assessment that is considered an instructional-workload credit (IWC) equivalent. Our campus abides by this MOU, conferring IWC credit or other compensation so that a majority of full-time lecturers can participate in program assessment, program review, and faculty development activities (see Appendix 3.2.1). All lecturers are given the opportunity to participate in professional-development activities [261] sponsored by the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence; in compliance with Article 9 of the MOU, our campus allocates $135 per NSF Full Time Equivalent (FTE) into a professional development fund pool, administered by the UC-AFT local in partnership with Human Resources.

As is the case for most research institutions, delivery of undergraduate education is a collaborative activity involving all Senate faculty (tenured and tenure-track), non-Senate faculty (lecturers) and graduate student teaching assistants. The hiring of non-Senate faculty and teaching assistants is managed by each School with administrative oversight by the Academic Personnel Office. Positions are advertised in UC Merced's Personnel Application Web-based System (PAWS), relevant professional journals and online employment listings. Applicants are carefully reviewed by individual faculty, hiring committees, and/or supervisory administrators.

CFR 3.3 *Faculty and staff recruitment, orientation, workload, incentive, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation processes are systematic, include appropriate peer review, and, for instructional faculty and other teaching staff, involve consideration of evidence of teaching effectiveness, including student evaluation of instruction.*

Policies and procedures for all academic-related actions including recruitment, orientation, workload, incentive and evaluation are in line with institutional purposes and educational goals. Hiring of new Senate faculty (CFR 3.2) is based on strategic plans that outline the educational and research priorities of each School over five year intervals [320]. The dean and faculty of each School have established, are revising, or are developing workload policies [337], taking into account types of instruction and equivalences for types of courses. Annually, the Academic Senate offers awards [338] recognizing distinguished contributions by faculty to the institution's tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service and that support key aspects of our mission as a student-centered research university. Faculty orientations [205] and orientation materials introduce new faculty to instructional resources and policies and procedures [65, 339, 340] that govern instruction as well learning outcomes [205]. Senate faculty are also introduced to the University of California Academic Personnel Manual (APM) [32] and the UC Merced Academic Personnel Policies & Procedures [33], the latter explicating and supplementing the system-wide policies. These documents govern all aspects of faculty appointment and promotion.

As a requirement for tenure and promotion review, all ladder-rank faculty must provide "clearly demonstrated evidence of high quality in teaching" (APM 210-1-d-1, p.4) [247, p. 4 highlighted]. APM 210 sets high standards for teaching excellence, and insists that "more than one kind of evidence" [247, p.5 highlighted] (e.g., annotated syllabi, samples of responses to student projects, videotaped instruction, teaching portfolios, among other options) must be documented and analyzed to demonstrate teaching quality. All student-course evaluations [341] must be submitted for peer review [247]. Review occurs at multiple independent levels, with the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) [48] providing the highest level of objective peer review. CAP reviews both the procedure and the evidence on appointments and promotions and deliberates independently on

the evidence provided. Any dossier not in compliance with APM 210 is returned to the originating unit for additional information. For compliant dossiers, CAP forwards its recommendations to the Chancellor on "all matters related to the quality of the faculty." To ensure that dossiers delivered to CAP provide rich evidence of faculty quality, CAP sends, as needed, administrative comments to appropriate officials or faculty members explaining how to prepare compliant dossiers. In addition, CAP meets with faculty [342] and with Bylaw 55 unit personnel chairs twice a year, answering questions about personnel processes and evidentiary expectations. This process provides opportunity for all faculty to understand all criteria for review. A recently appointed (February 2008) Vice Provost for Academic Personnel offers administrative support for this review process.

For non-Senate faculty, recruitment, orientation, workload and evaluation practices are governed broadly by policies outlined in the MOU between the University of California and the University Council-American Federation of Teachers (see CFR 3.2). Reappointments and continuing appointments [343] are made in accordance with specified criteria that involve peer review and consideration of teaching effectiveness.

As described in CFR 1.5, the recruitment of staff is also fully attentive to diversity and institutional mission [76], by providing "services to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce within a respectful and collaborative work environment." Through the office of Professional and Organizational Development [344], new staff members can attend orientation sessions [345] and current managerial and other staff appointments can participate in an expanding menu of campus-wide training [346]. Employee performance appraisal [347] is conducted annually, involving self-appraisal and supervisor appraisal with respect to job performance expectations and goals. Supervisors may also solicit additional performance-related information from colleagues. As is the case for faculty whose contributions to the University in teaching, research and service are publicly recognized, staff who maintain a "level of exemplary performance" qualify to receive a Top Cat Award [348].

CFR 3.4 *The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching and learning, consistent with its institutional objectives.*

The Center for Research on Teaching Excellence sponsors a Teaching and Technology workshop series [349] intended for all instructors, including TAs. The purpose of this series is "to introduce new tools and pedagogies related to technology [and] to foster discussions about the intersection between teaching and technology." Other Center workshops [260] and services [261] are routinely offered to improve teaching and learning. Our library also offers workshops for faculty, staff [197] and students [198] that address teaching, learning, and related instructional technology. Other faculty development initiatives [350] address the needs of local K-12 teachers.

UC Merced's Staff Assembly has formed a standing Mentor/Staff Development Committee [351] to plan a new staff development program. The Human Resources Department continues to increase its training and staff development offerings, including both in-house and external programs. The previously mentioned Top Cat Awards include opportunities for funding career-growth professional development for staff. All staff in Student Affairs convenes in subdivision groups every two weeks to coordinate "a team response to problems and issues" of co-curricular functions that support student learning. The department of Information Technology [352, p.5] provides faculty, lecturers and teaching assistants with three forms of support for the University's course-management system (Sakai/UCMCROPS) – School sponsored orientation training sessions, generalized classroom training, and one-on-one sessions. Furthermore, IT provides orientation for new students, and training on a per request basis for other services such as Banner and the Open Source Portfolio Initiative. Additional IT services are noted in Appendix 3.4.1.

CFR 3.5 *The institution has a history of financial stability, unqualified independent financial audits and has resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives. If campus has an accumulated*

deficit, it has realistic plans to eliminate the deficit. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources.

The projections for the University's Operating Budget provide the framework to guide annual and future budget decision-making. UCM works closely with the Office of the President to monitor allocation of sufficient funding to meet critical goals [see Appendix A]. Enrollment support, a State Funding Supplement, and loans provide resources to continue to build and enhance the university. Prudent resource management, strategic cash flow management, and annual savings have helped the campus operate within total revenue/fund sources to date. There is a projected deficit for 2008-09; however, strategic cost savings measures have been implemented and it is expected that the reduction in expenditures will help balance the budget.

While the Operating Summary projections [355] depict shortfalls in the coming years, there are many variables that can alter the actual balance: aggressive pursuit of extramural funding opportunities in order to boost revenue, continued cost savings from reduced spending and slowed faculty recruitment. Also, it is expected that the Auxiliary Enterprises at UC Merced will help to balance the budget overall with continued success and expansion. With a combination of efforts to increase revenue and curtail expenditures, as well as negotiating with UCOP regarding adequate resources level, UC Merced intends to bring actual shortfalls in any given year to a minimum and to have a realistic plan in place for swift action to guard against serious accumulated deficits.

On an annual basis, the campus budgeting process [356] aligns resources with educational purposes and objectives. Guided by the Budget Office [357], this process is initiated with the Call letter [358] for resource planning to Deans, Vice Chancellor's, the Chief Information Officer and the University Librarian. The strategic plans [195, 274, 320, 359] that are gathered provide the context for crafting the Operating Budget and allocation of new money. Concurrently, the Campus Budget Committee [360], charged "to ensure that the relationship between the mission of the university and budgetary decisions is reinforced", identifies Campus Funding Principles [361] to provide guidance for assuring that funding decisions align with the campus priorities and accountability and performance measures. Using these materials, as well as supplemental information from campus units, the Campus Budget Committee with integral support from the Budget Office develops budget recommendations that are submitted to the Chancellor for review and approval. (See also CFR 4.1.)

Annual Financial Audits are conducted by the national accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers in accordance with University system-wide policy (See Appendix 3.5.1.) To date, audits [362] have not identified any significant deficiencies [363, 364]. The 2008 Management Letter [364] includes observations and recommendations to which management has responded with specified actions [364, p.5-7]. There is no accumulated deficit, nor has there been in past fiscal periods.

To maintain stability and long term viability of financial aid in service to our educational purposes, UC Merced's financial aid office is regularly audited by the Department of Education and the California Student Aid Commission, among others, and has participated in six such audits since 2005. UC Merced also regularly assesses its financial aid strategies to ensure effective use of University resources so that every student who is eligible to attend UC Merced is financially able [130]. Appendices 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 describe the processes for aligning fiscal and physical resources with institutional purposes.

CFR 3.6 *The institution holds, or provides access to, information resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind to support its academic offerings and the scholarship of its members. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the campus' educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes. For both on-campus students and students enrolled at a distance, physical and information resources, services, and information technology facilities are sufficient in scope and kind to support and maintain the level and kind of education offered.*

Supporting the University's academic programs and related learning outcomes, the UC Merced Library houses or enables access to information resources with online and in-person services for students, faculty, and staff. These services equal or exceed those available at other UC campuses. Primarily through its participation in the California Digital Library [379], the Library provides access to 14 information resources [380]. UC Merced librarians also provide individual research assistance to students [198], faculty and staff [197] via email, Web pages, text messaging, chat services, and face-to-face consultations. From the opening of campus in Fall 2005 through the end of 2008, UC Merced librarians have taught 304 class or group sessions that tallied 7,111 members of the UC Merced community, primarily students.

The information contained in "Information Resources by Format" [380] table demonstrates that students and faculty at UC Merced have ready access to research information resources that equal and even exceed those of the premier research universities. This is a significant accomplishment for any university, but it is probably beyond possibility for any other small or new university. UC Merced is the singular exception. The category of "UC Library digitized print books" is of particular note. These are digital full-text books being created through Google and Internet Archive [381] projects led by the UC University Librarians. A more detailed description of these resources, related Library services and their alignment with our educational objectives is provided in Appendix 3.6.1.

CFR 3.7 *The institution's information technology resources are sufficiently coordinated and supported to fulfill its educational purposes and to provide key academic and administrative functions.*

In response to a 2007 internal audit [383], the department of Information Technology conducted a year-long, campus-wide "listening tour" [308] to gauge user needs, including those for key academic and administrative functions. Based on results of this tour, IT adjusted delivery of services as allocated resources [384] allowed. One key outcome of this initiative has been implementation of IT 2.0 [385] as phase two of campus IT campus development, and upgrades of the University's course management system, Sakai/UCMCROPS [386]. These upgrades provide several new teaching and learning tools, including an e-portfolio function (see CFR 2.3 and Appendix 2.3.2).

Another important outcome of the listening tour was recognition of the need to map IT services against multiple providers of IT services across campus: primarily Central IT, the School of Engineering [387], Business and Financial Services [388] and the Library. The goal of this mapping is to identify services that can be leveraged broadly and other services that should remain under local control.

Most of UC Merced's administrative computing systems [389] and data, including, cashiering, epay/ebill, accounts receivable management, personnel/payroll, purchasing, general ledger and data warehouse are managed by Administrative Computing & Systems (ACS) [388]. It is responsible for the design, development, maintenance, production support, and security of these central systems, servers and associated technical support services. ACS works in partnership with the office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Information Technology as well as with the central administrative offices and academic units who are the stewards of the university book-of-record data. Application services for these key functions are housed at the campus data center at UC Merced and Data Services Center at UCLA, under a service agreement. ACS provides information technology leadership, delivers innovative and reliable systems and services for strategic administrative functions, and supports UC Merced instruction, research and public service missions by providing reliable information on a 24/7 operating schedule.

Descriptions and analysis of computing resources available to students for both instructional and walk-in purposes are provided in Table 5.1 of the Required Exhibits [390] and Appendix 2.13.5. Appendices 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 provide specific examples of research and instructional information technology applications.

CFR 3.8 *The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision-making, and place priority on sustaining effective academic programs.*

Under the UC system of shared governance [153] the Academic Senate [47] and Academic Administration [154] work together on key issues of educational policy, resource allocation and implementation of the university's mission. One means by which this collaboration occurs is a system of ex-officio appointments on relevant decision-making committees. As one example, several senior administrators serve ex officio on the Undergraduate Council [116] a standing committee of the Academic Senate. They advise on curriculum issues, but the faculty members exercise final voting authority. The senior management group meets monthly with the Divisional Council [47] of the Academic Senate to discuss and solve major operational challenges of the campus. Under the same principles of shared governance, and as appropriate, members of the Staff Assembly [393], Associated Students [104], and Graduate Student Association [394] also participate in administrative [395] and academic [105] University decision-making including their membership as part of the campus budget and physical design committees. Organization charts, available online [396], provide clear lines of authority for campus operations and a standard job description template [397] promotes clear job descriptions [398].

CFR 3.9 *The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer. The governing body regularly engages in self-review and training to enhance its effectiveness.*

In 2007-2008 the Board of Regents and the president of the University of California undertook a major effort to assess the organization and operations of the Office of the President (UCOP) [399]. This review reaffirmed three basic issues of governance in the UC system: The Board of Regents provides fiduciary oversight and broad policy determination; the UC President provides executive leadership of the university as a whole; the 10 UC campus chancellors play a dual role in providing executive leadership to their respective campuses and supporting the President in meeting UC-system goals.

The California State Constitution establishes the University of California as an autonomous public corporation. The Regents' Bylaws [400] present the authority and organization of the Board, including its meetings, procedures, officers and their duties. Their Standing Orders [401] spell out the authority delegated to the President with sections on Officers of the University, including Chancellors, faculty and other employees; the authority of the Academic Senate; academic units; retirement systems; and amendments to the Bylaws. The President recommends and the Regents consider and take final action on the Hiring of Chancellors [402]. Evaluation of campus chancellors [403] is a shared responsibility of the system-wide Academic Senate and Office of the President.

CFR 3.10 *The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibility is to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.*

Succeeding the University's founding Chancellor Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, our second Chancellor [404], Sung-Mo "Steve" Kang, was appointed in 2007. He serves full-time as the chief executive of UC Merced. The chief operations and academic officer is the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Keith Alley [154]. The University's chief financial officer is the Vice Chancellor for Administration, Mary Miller [405]. Nearly all senior administrators [406] with appointments as vice chancellor, head librarian, chief information officer and dean have full-time appointments. Two vice provosts have split appointments as administrators and faculty

members (VP for Academic Personnel and VP for Undergraduate Education), and one vice provost (VP for Academic Planning and Resources) also has an interim split-appointment as acting dean. After an unsuccessful 2008 search for a SSHA dean, the University has hired a professional agency to help conduct this search.

Many senior administrators, including the deans, the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost, Vice Chancellor for Research, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and Vice Provost for Academic Personnel, teach and hold faculty appointments. Biographical information about these senior administrators [407] demonstrates that they are well-qualified to serve the University. We also have sufficient numbers of administrators to enable all programs and services to function effectively as indicated by our student to administrator ratios, which are the lowest in the UC [408]. This administrative support is reflected in the organizational charts of our administrative units [396].

CFR 3.11 *The institution's faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure both academic quality and the appropriate maintenance of the institution's educational purposes and character.*

Through the UC Merced Division of the UC-system Academic Senate [409], the faculty establish and maintain high standards for academic quality throughout the campus. Through related committee [323] functions, the faculty also exercise effective leadership in developing, managing and evaluating our educational programs, services and mission.

All tenured and tenure-track faculty are members of the Academic Senate with collective responsibilities that are defined in its Division Bylaws [410]. Evidence of this engagement, and summary results of faculty attention to key issues of University academic governance, are published in the Annual Reports [411] of all standing Senate committees. Important "items under review" [412] are also posted for general access. Open forums [413], surveys [414], and website access [413] enable all faculty and, in some instances, all other University constituents to participate.

As defined in the Academic Personnel Manual (APM-238) [415] and the MOU [328], non-Senate instructors are hired as lecturers whose main responsibility is teaching. In that instructional role, lecturers have opportunity to help refine the University's educational mission, especially through their assessment of student learning. (See also CFR 3.2.)

STANDARD FOUR: Creating and Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

CFR 4.1 *The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including faculty, in institutional reflection and planning processes which assess its strategic position; articulate priorities; examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions and resources; and define the future direction of the campus. The institution monitors the effectiveness of its plans and planning processes, and revises them as appropriate.*

In 2002 UC Merced completed its first Long-Range Development Plan [416] laying the foundation for much of our existing campus infrastructure. Continuing this planning process, in 2008 the University revised its original plan for a 910 acre campus by resizing our "footprint" to 815 acres, a reduction intended to preserve wetlands and minimize the environmental impact of campus growth as we move towards total enrollment in 2035 of approximately 25,000 students. Students, faculty, staff, and the general public have been fully involved in this planning process, most recently updated in 2009 [375]. This updated LRDP was informed by enrollment planning and the campus' most recent Long Range Enrollment Plan [417], an effort that also involved multiple UCM constituents, including the Senate Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA).

Extensive planning, with full participation of the faculty [418], has produced a Strategic Academic Vision [3]. In Chancellor Kang's "vision statement" [419] about this planning process, he identifies seven points of emphasis that scaffold the University's educational mission [419, p.2-3 highlighted].

With Chancellor Kang, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Keith Alley co-chaired this planning process to ensure that it was open and transparent. Faculty served as chairs and had majority membership on all three planning subcommittees: academic organizational structure [420], graduate and professional programs [421], and undergraduate programs [422]. News about the Strategic Academic Vision was routinely conveyed to the campus and general public through the University's online Panorama newsletter [423]. Through town hall forums [413] and surveys [424], all faculty were regularly consulted.

Each School (Engineering, Natural Sciences, and SSHA) [320], most graduate groups [195] (but not yet the entire graduate division), the Division of Student Affairs [274], the Division of Administration [359] and other major organizational units have developed their own strategic plans. These include plans for a medical school [425] and school of management. Development of the Gallo School of Management is in the proposal phase and is undergoing university-wide review.

The annual planning cycle is initiated in the fall of each year, and is characterized by three critical, distinct, yet interrelated components: the faculty recruitment plan, the instructional budgets, and the administrative/operating budgets. In the fall, the Schools receive essential data from Institutional Planning and Analysis to update their strategic plans. The annual review and updating of these plans assures that they remain aligned with educational objectives and are being appropriately implemented. All educational planning undergoes thorough review by the Academic Senate through its appropriate standing committees [323] including the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation which has established criteria [192] for evaluating these plans. A faculty recruitment plan is submitted to the EVC/Provost, generally in December. This review moves forward to the annual Campus Budget Process. A Call is released that includes specific details on submittals for both instructional budgets for the Schools, as well as operating budgets for all campus entities. The recently established Campus Budget Committee [360] begins the review of documents in early spring and develops recommendations regarding campus resources to be forwarded to the Chancellor for approval. The Committee serves to provide a comprehensive review of the overall investment of campus resources and ensure that these align with the university's mission and highest priorities. (See also CFR 3.5 for related information about the budgeting process.) In effect, institutional planning is coordinated at several levels: the Cabinet [426]; the Planning Workgroup [427], and relevant Faculty Senate Committees (DIVCO, CAPRA, UGC, and GRC).

CFR 4.2 *Planning processes at the institution define and, to the extent possible, align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological needs with the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution.*

As a shared responsibility of faculty and administrators, planning processes are aligned through the efforts of key committees that have broad campus representation, often including undergraduate and graduate students as well as staff. Routinely, the Chancellor's Cabinet [426] convenes senior campus administrators to discuss a broad range of strategic objectives for such matters as resource allocations that support educational initiatives and operational policies that sustain the campus infrastructure. Monthly, members of the Cabinet meet with all deans and directors in an intra-campus forum that allows multifaceted discussion of institutional needs and priorities [428]. Additionally, the Chancellor meets monthly, and the Provost biweekly, with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Academic Senate. At divisional levels, vice chancellors, deans, directors and other administrators conduct planning within their units based on the larger context of established or emerging strategic objectives for the campus. Appendix 4.2.1 provides examples of campus planning committees.

Based on essential, relevant planning documents, such as the Strategic Academic Vision [3] and the Strategic Plan for the Division of Administration [359], the campus is preparing an outline for the development of a comprehensive business plan to support long-term planning efforts and to provide structure for the investment of campus resources in support of overarching goals and highest priorities. This business plan will support the alignment of funding with the agreed-upon campus funding priorities, the allocation of annual increases and new funding, and annual budgeting recommendations made to the Chancellor by the Campus Budget Committee [360]. By promoting the identification of performance metrics that are used to review prior year allocations, use of funds, and expenditure patterns, this document also ensures that future planning and budgeting efforts will be shaped by analysis and reporting.

The Academic Senate also engages in campus planning and implementation of policy through several of its standing committees. With faculty representation from each School, as well as the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Undergraduate Council [116] oversees the academic quality and coherence of the undergraduate curriculum as reflected in its 2007-2008 Year-end Report [429]. Working with the Dean of the Graduate Division, faculty on the Graduate and Research Council [117] provide similar oversight for the integrity of all graduate programs. This work is exemplified in its 2007-2008 annual report [430]. Among other responsibilities, the Committee on Academic Personnel [48] ensures that all faculty undergoing review for tenure and promotion are productive scholars and qualified teachers [431], consistent with our mission as a student-centered research university. The Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation [151] scrutinizes resource requests and educational plans of all academic programs. Annually, the chairs of these Senate committees submit reports [411] to the Academic Senate that summarize and, when possible, integrate academic planning and objectives with institutional planning.

CFR 4.3 *Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness, including student learning.*

Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA) also coordinates University data collection from many campus sources [486], analyzes that evidence, and prepares summary reports for University administrators and planning committees as well as UC-system, state and federal agencies. This information includes our participation in UC-system and national surveys of student learning. Results of the University of California Undergraduate Experience Surveys (UCUES) [438], the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) [450], the Common Data Set (CDS) [41], retention [439] and graduation statistics [440], and other qualitative/quantitative measures [42, p.6] provide evidence of educational effectiveness. Consideration of this evidence and similar educational data informs University decision-making on a broad range of matters including enrollment management [321]; curricular [441] and co-curricular planning [442], and instructional training [443].

Our University assessment plan at the course and program levels attends directly to evidence of student learning, as described in CFR 1.2, 2.4 and 4.6. We are now developing a plan for institutional-level assessment that is built atop the course and program levels of assessment (see CFRs 1.2 and 4.6).

CFR 4.4 *The institution employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes at each level of institutional functioning, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, ongoing evaluation, and data collection. These processes include assessing effectiveness, tracking results over time, using comparative data from external sources, and improving structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy.*

As outlined in the Undergraduate Council policies and procedures for review of new undergraduate courses [150] and programs [141], new course and program review begins within each Bylaw 55 unit [444]. In consultation with their School dean, faculty consider the merits of new course proposals which, if approved, are then submitted to the School's curriculum committee. At this stage of review, all University faculty can access,

follow the status of, and offer comments on a proposed course via the Course Request Form Management System [445] website. Approved courses and programs are forwarded to the Undergraduate Council for final consideration. Substantive changes in existing programs are flagged for WASC Substantive Change review as stipulated in curriculum committee policy [143].

Review of new majors undergoes further quality assurance by the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation and the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost who attend to institutional issues of campus mission and resource allocations. All program proposals provide comparative data with other UC campuses and comparable research universities as exemplified by the recently approved (05/2009) Anthropology proposal [446] featuring past and projected longitudinal enrollment data.

Graduate degree programs are under the authority of the system-wide Senate Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) [447]. Review of new UC Merced graduate courses [26] and programs [142] begins within a graduate group. Endorsed proposals are submitted to the Graduate and Research Council and, for new programs, the Committee on Academic Personnel and Resource Allocation, with parallel review by the Graduate Dean and EVC/Provost. Once approved, new program proposals are submitted to the CCGA for system-wide approval leading to a degree conferring status.

Program Review policies for established undergraduate [29] and graduate programs [30] have been developed and are pending implementation. As described more thoroughly in CFR 2.7, these policies require programs to conduct learning assessment annually, summarize these results during program review, benchmark comparable programs, and use results of assessment to inform instructional practice. Our campus has not proceeded sooner with program review because no data have previously been available about the four-year cycle of degree completion for undergraduates. Now that our first class of Fall 2005 freshmen has graduated in Spring 2009, we can proceed with program review.

As previously noted, the Division of Student Affairs has developed its own Program Review Process [245] and will begin administering it with three units in the summer of 2009. The University has also initiated planning for review of administrative units. Since 2005, the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis has collected information and summarized data about all UC Merced students. Using these data, IPA has also conducted numerous comparative analyses with other universities that will inform program review and guide curricular changes for student learning.

CFR 4.5 *The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and objectives. Institutional research addresses strategic data needs, is disseminated in a timely manner, and is incorporated in institutional review and decision-making processes. Included in the institutional research function is the collection of appropriate data to support the assessment of student learning. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the research function and the suitability and usefulness of data.*

The mission [448] of the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA) is to support campus planning and decision-making and to help advance the educational mission and effectiveness of the institution. In fulfilling this mission, IPA has developed reporting systems and processes to support the analysis and use of institutional data/information in areas of enrollment management [449], resource allocation, campus performance/benchmarking, UCM compared to other UCs [487], UCM Peer comparisons [488], and assessment of academic and co-curricular environments [450, 252].

Integrating the campus' administrative data systems to support effective and efficient decision-making is a high priority, as evidenced by the leadership's support of the data warehousing initiative [451, 452]. This initiative will expand on IPA's student and personnel snapshot processes [453] that were implemented in Fall 2005.

Working with the appropriate functional offices (e.g., Admissions, Office of the Registrar, Graduate Division, Payroll/Personnel), IPA also has implemented edit processes to help ensure data integrity, accuracy and consistency.

Serving as the primary source for official campus statistics, especially historical and projected enrollments and employment of faculty and staff [454], IPA integrates and analyzes campus and external data and makes the information and analyses available to administrative and faculty operational and planning committees. Examples include the campus' Long Range Enrollment Plan (LREP) [417] and the establishment of a detailed UC Merced Enrollment Projection Model [449]; the development of a prototypical model to project classroom and class labs for capital and facility planning [455]; faculty workload analyses [456] to inform resource allocations; and analyses of student applications, admissions [439, 440], and enrollment trends to support recruitment and financial aid strategies [41]. Routine and specialized reports are shared with the Campus Planning Group (Budget, Capital Planning, IPA), the EVC Coordinating Committee, Faculty Senate committees (CAPRA, UGC), the Council of Deans, and other ad hoc and permanent committees. Preparing for its role in academic program reviews, IPA analyzes and shares enrollment, retention, survey and other institutional data by School and program areas.

IPA also has spearheaded the establishment of a campus survey infrastructure. The Director chairs the Survey Coordinating Committee (SCC) [457], which is charged with establishing guidelines for safeguarding quality of survey practices so that students/faculty/staff are not over-surveyed, response rates are maximized, contact information and survey results are protected and secured, and results are disseminated and used on campus to improve services. The SCC also helps develop a campus survey assessment plan. The campus already has used results from NSSE and UCUES surveys that indirectly assess student learning and engagement, and benchmark UC Merced student responses against other institutions (both UC and others).

IPA supports a campus-wide online survey application (SNAP) and helps other units gather information via surveys. IPA has partnered with the Graduate Division to do an annual survey of graduate students [224], with Career Services and the Alumni Office to conduct both senior exit surveys [240] and alumni surveys [241], and has helped the Library and the Writing Program obtain information via surveys to help them evaluate their services/programs.

CFR 4.6 *Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation and assessment used throughout the institution. The faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and uses the results for improvement. Assessments of the campus environment in support of academic and co-curricular objectives are also undertaken and used, and are incorporated into institutional planning. The institution has clear, well established policies and practices for gathering and analyzing information that leads to a culture of evidence and improvement.*

Our approach to inquiry, evaluation and assessment has been incremental, starting in 2005 with select co-curricular programs such as service learning, and student advising and learning, and academic programs in general education, writing and mathematics.

These initial efforts have established a firm foundation for development of a campus-wide culture of evidence and improvement at course and program levels. The program review policies for undergraduate [29] and graduate programs [30] will help ensure that assessment plans are implemented and evidence of student learning is gathered and analyzed each year. Annual learning results will be submitted to the appropriate Dean whose office, working in partnership with the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence, will provide constructive feedback to strengthen the quality of this assessment work.

To ensure that annual learning results also inform processes at an institutional level and to improve integration of curricular and co-curricular assessment, the university's WASC Steering Committee will coordinate a campus-wide level of assessment until permanent institutional infrastructure in the form of a University Assessment Committee with broad campus representation is established as expected in 2009-2010. This Committee will consolidate the results of academic and co-curricular assessment reported by School deans and Student Affairs and facilitate campus-wide review, discussion, and integration of conclusions into institutional planning. Working closely with the Academic Senate, the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost will also support development and implementation of policies for data collection with Institutional Planning and Analysis serving as clearinghouse for this information.

Under shared leadership of senior faculty and senior administrators, the University has initiated course- and program-level assessment with two thematic foci for the improvement of academic programs. Specifically, through annual assessment of program learning outcomes, faculty of each undergraduate major are responsible for demonstrating how its program aligns with our institutional mission as a student-centered research university and our eight guiding principles for general education. This campus-wide attention to the scholarship of teaching and learning will not only guide curriculum reform within individual undergraduate programs but also inform broader objectives for institutional planning, with particular emphasis on evidence-based reform of the curriculum.

Other planning occurs under the leadership of the Dean of Graduate Division in collaboration with the Graduate Research Council. Similarly, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, appointed in 2008, provides administrative leadership for the general education curriculum [429; see Appendix 2.2.3], supports student engagement in research through the McNair Scholars program [34] and promotes faculty-development initiatives through the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence [261]. The Vice Provost for Academic Personnel, also appointed in 2008, works closely with [431] the Senate Committee on Academic Personnel to ensure that appropriate evidence and procedures are used in evaluating faculty for their teaching, research and service. Each unit of Student Affairs also undertakes regular assessment of its programs and services [273].

The Division of Student Affairs undertakes a range of approaches to assessment depending on the unit and activity involved. Units within the Division have been using the outcomes of their assessments to modify, expand, or initiate programs and services. For instance, the Director of the Student Advising and Learning Center collects information every semester from freshmen who must attend Success Workshops. These data [219] were procedurally reviewed by the Faculty Senate's Undergraduate Council resulting in its decision [218] to extend our mid-semester grade policy.

Through coordination provided by Institutional Planning & Analysis (IPA), the campus has participated, in alternate years, in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). These surveys focus on student engagement in academic and co-curricular activities and provide benchmarks with various comparison groups. IPA shares analyses of these data with the campus community (EVC Coordinating Committee, Deans meetings, VC Student Affairs directors) and online [268] in summary reports [42, p. 5-6]. UCUES data also constitute part of the UC system-wide Accountability Framework [44] and in our campus contribution [43] to the framework. In 2008, IPA facilitated the 2008 Graduate Student Survey to assess graduate perceptions of the quality of our academic and co-curricular environment. Results [224] are being shared with resource providers to improve service to this clientele (see CFR 2.5).

CFR 4.7 *The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, as well as into the conditions and practices that promote the kinds and levels of learning intended by the institution. The*

outcomes of such inquiries are applied to the design of curricula, the design and practice of pedagogy, and to the improvement of evaluation means and methodology.

Our University's assessment plan has faculty fully engaged in systematic, iterative, and comprehensive evaluation of student learning, with application of results to improve the curriculum (see CFR 4.6). Although this institutional assessment plan includes review of grades, it deliberately emphasizes other direct and indirect measures of learning, including embedded exam questions, pre- and posttests, writing samples, mid-term surveys, focus-group interviews, and course portfolios, among other formative and summative tools to assess learning [28]. Based on evidence generated by these assessment tools, informed changes in the curriculum will ensue, starting in Fall 2009.

The Center for Research on Teaching Excellence supports faculty in this assessment effort [178], offering workshops [260], individual consultations, and access to online resources [441] that highlight best practices. A specific outcome of this support has been the restructuring of a foundational course in economics with a relatively high failure rate and history of poor student performance so that its curriculum will be revised to incorporate principles of active learning, with the goal of significantly improving student performance. The Center has also promoted similar evidence-based, faculty-led adjustments to improve curricula in Anthropology, Foreign Languages, Biology, and Mathematics. As shown in the Center's initial 2008 Annual Report [458], there has been substantial engagement of faculty, administrators and staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Student Affairs also attends to student learning, for instance, based on the results of mid-semester grades in all freshman courses and mandated attendance of some students in academic-success workshops [211]. A related intervention enrolls freshmen on academic probation in USTU 10, Introduction to Undergraduate Studies [210], a course co-sponsored by faculty and staff. Preliminary results suggest that USTU 10 will enable these students to improve as learners.

IPA compares, on a regular basis, the grade distributions of other UC campus with those of UC Merced. These data show the percentage of letter grades in each category to determine any large scale discrepancies [459]. Not surprisingly, so far UC Merced's distribution shows greater percentages of lower undergraduate grades (in the C-F range) than the other campuses.

CFR 4.8 *Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, and others defined by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment of educational programs.*

Following the graduation of our inaugural 2005 class of freshmen, in AY2009-2010 the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis will begin publishing in the UCM Profile [42, p. 6] results of Alumni [241] and Graduating Seniors surveys [240]. Previous surveys [268] of UC Merced freshmen will provide educational benchmarks for longitudinal comparison of results and related benchmarks for strategic academic planning.

Surveys also constitute an integral part of programmatic assessment plans. Of the 25 programs (majors, stand alone minors, and graduate) submitting multiyear assessment plans [28, 24], 13 will implement senior exit surveys or use select results from UCUES, NSSE, the Graduating Senior survey or the School of Engineering's graduating senior survey [460]; ten will conduct alumni surveys using student/alumni contact information maintained by the Alumni Association and Office of the Registrar. The School of Engineering also will use pre- and post-surveys of students [461] (individually and as part of a team) and faculty, and client surveys to assess its Service Learning program. Currently, the small number of clients [462] makes it difficult to draw population-level conclusions. Engineering evaluation of students is pegged to a clear set of course learning outcomes, and adjustments to the program are informed by responses of external stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The Criteria for Review (CFRs) provide evidence of our commitment to and growth in Institutional Capacity. To assemble this portfolio of evidence, we have carefully researched our academic and administrative capacity as an institution and, as guided by the Standards and CFRs, identified areas that function effectively and those that need development. Whenever possible, the metric for determining this effectiveness has been direct evidence represented in outcomes. Otherwise, we have used indirect measures such as satisfaction surveys or comparison to other UC campuses in a manner that is scaled to account for our early development as a research university. In the remainder of this CPR conclusion, we will highlight the successes that distinguish UC Merced's development as a relatively new research university, our emerging areas of strength, and ongoing concerns that we will continue to address in the years ahead.

Successes/Points of Pride

The road to establishing a functional research university, especially in light of California's protracted budgetary problems, has been strewn with many potholes that have slowed but not thwarted campus movement towards becoming a world-class institution. The campus continues to make steady progress on engaging undergraduates in research, recruiting distinguished research faculty, and developing research projects relevant to the Central Valley. By attracting and retaining a diverse student body, we now serve over 50% who are "first generation" college students. In the years since the Candidacy visits UCM enrollment has grown by nearly 110%, research expenditures have more than doubled, two new academic research and instructional buildings are either under construction or in planning and 400 dormitory beds have been added, while the operating budget has only increased by 20%.

Above all else, UC Merced is a community bound by learning, discovery and engagement of scholars at all levels. It embodies the mission of the University of California in its claim of being the first American research university founded in the 21st century. Our undergraduates experience education both inside and outside the classroom, applying what they learn and create through undergraduate research, service learning and leadership development in and beyond the Merced community. Results from student surveys indicate that our undergraduates interact regularly with faculty in settings other than the classroom. Interdisciplinary practice in research nourishes undergraduate learning, building a foundation to connect the ways that academic disciplines analyze, understand and engage with society's problems while providing students with a baseline understanding of the process of discovery as it is used by different disciplines. This has allowed nearly 70% of our undergraduates to become involved with faculty in research projects that extend their classroom learning experience and provide clear evidence of the value added by attending a student-centered research university. For our Educational Effectiveness review, a relevant theme for us to consider will be how to scale the engagement of undergraduates in research activities as the campus grows, with the goal of sustaining and strengthening this distinctive opportunity for our students.

In the four years since UC Merced opened its doors, the campus has added significantly to both the breadth and depth of the educational opportunities offered to our students. This has come as the faculty has grown from the initial 45 ladder-rank faculty to over 112, including a renewed focus on recruiting additional senior leadership to the academic ranks. Increasing the proportion of senior faculty helps to redistribute service-workload responsibilities so that junior faculty can attend to their main responsibilities for teaching and research.

With the overall growth of the faculty has come significant progress in building the breadth and depth of educational offerings while also establishing a strong research presence that is identifiable with each University of California campus. The substantial educational and research commitment to environmental and cultural

sustainability is especially notable in response to the critical issues that so profoundly affect California's Central Valley. In addition, the campus focus on individual and environmental wellness is represented in our research, educational and co-curricular offerings. This also manifests itself in the strong campus commitment to green building (LEED certification) [1] alternative energy utilization and minimal waste production and water usage. All of these are significant advances in creating a sustainable campus footprint that honors the region we serve.

Preparing students to succeed is our immediate goal; improving conditions that support their success is a long-term goal. As one notable accomplishment, but also one that is not initially self-evident, we are changing the educational culture of the San Joaquin Valley. A casual glance at the data may raise concerns as, compared to other UC campuses, UC Merced has the lowest retention rate for freshmen, with 80% returning for their sophomore year. In contrast, UC Berkeley and UCLA retain 97% of their freshman class [252, p.3, slide 4]. This difference masks a key feature of our entering students since over 50% are first-generation college students, far more than UC Berkeley or UCLA enroll. Nationally, first generation students have the lowest retention rate of any college-going cohort, with only 24% persisting for a baccalaureate degree (Chen, 2005). Myriad factors have a negative effect on retention rates for first-generation students, including lack of family support, a perceived need to enter the workforce, and negative cultural reactions to being a college student. At UC Merced, we have focused our retention efforts to offset, whenever possible, some of these obstacles to degree completion. Although it is too early to establish a pattern that shows the impact of this effort, we can affirm that 64.5% of our first generation students from 2005, when the campus first enrolled undergraduates, have progressed to year four of degree completion in 2009. In that context, while also allowing for other factors such as prior academic success in high school, first-generation students at UC Merced are progressing to completed of their bachelor's degrees at more than double the success rate of other first-generation students nationally (Chen, 2005). This is a remarkable accomplishment.

Given the strong representation of underserved, poor and first generation students, UC Merced has indeed performed remarkably well in retaining students and in providing a platform for future success. In Spring 2009 our first four-year cohort of students graduate and move on to life after college. The senior-survey data provide evidence that these young adults aspire to advanced education in graduate and professional schools in proportions far beyond what is seen on other UC campuses. This did not happen by chance. Through the commitment of our faculty and staff the campus has placed a high premium on the success of our students not only while they are in residence but also as they enter the next phase of their lives. Midterm grades, Success Workshops, the availability of faculty, and a deep commitment by instructional support staff including advisors, counselors, and residential aides provide the safety net that has enhanced retention for a student population that is at high risk for dropping out. Problems specific to a new university, such as the lack of accreditation, have presented obstacles that had to be overcome so that qualified students aspiring to professional schools would be judged on their merit and not on our lack of accreditation status. This required an administrative commitment to call each institution to which our students applied and explain the nature of the campus and the accreditation process. It has worked and we have students entering the premier medical, veterinary medicine, and pharmacy programs in the country.

Emerging Areas

Institutional Planning and Analysis: (CFRs 2.4, 2.10, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)

In support of this accreditation effort, the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA) has emerged as a clearinghouse for official data about our campus, issuing reports on key aspects of student academic achievement, satisfaction with their education, retention, and demographic characteristics that influence decision making. In anticipation of its accreditation responsibilities, and its other reporting requirements, IPA has spearheaded a data warehousing project that will ultimately centralize data and thereby enhance opportunities for

sharing information among campus constituents and consolidate findings for different academic purposes, including institutional-level assessment. Through the Survey Coordinating Committee, IPA intends to identify more clearly the questions underlying the data needs of its constituents in order to tailor reporting more precisely.

Center for Research on Teaching Excellence: (CFRs 1.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3.2, 3.4, 4.6, 4.7)

Through its newsletter, website, workshops and orientations, the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence (CRTE) has promoted initiatives that establish the CRTE as a campus "center" for teaching and learning. In this pivotal role it joins and engages faculty, lecturers, graduate teaching assistants, and even some undergraduates in assessment of learning outcomes and in broader institutional discussion of what it means for our campus to be a student-centered research university. However, since the University also needs to build faculty and staff skills for course, program, and institutional assessment, the CRTE will assume primary responsibility for promoting this expertise, supplemented by the developing competence of Faculty Accreditation Organizers and Evidence Providers working with their colleagues.

Program Review: (CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.11, 3.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)

Our program review policy complies with the capacity implications of the "developed to highly developed" categories on the WASC rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning into Program Review. As our University proceeds annually with its assessment initiatives, the program review policy will support and represent the growing institutionalization of a systematic, evidence-based assessment culture.

Areas of Concern

General Education: *What are the best options at a new university with limited capacity?* (CFRs 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.14, 4.6)

Despite laudable ambitions for an innovative approach to general education, our "core" curriculum is difficult to sustain, especially at the upper-division level. For instance, the competing need to staff new majors as the University grows essentially limits the number of faculty available and willing to teach outside their discipline. This problem applies most clearly to the upper-division general education course, Core 100, which has not been taught since Spring semester 2007. In lieu of that course, a limited number of upper-division "core" courses have been offered that address all eight of the guiding principles of general education. In Spring 2009 an ad hoc General Education committee of faculty documented alternative approaches and their concomitant resource implications.

Timeline for Resolution: Pending the recommendations of an ad hoc General Education committee, Core 100 will be revised or some other form of general education will emerge by or before Fall 2010.

Student-Course Evaluations and Assessment of Learning: *How can a robust system of assessment emerge that investigates learning at the course, program and institutional levels, including co-curricular learning?* (CFRs 1.2, 1.3, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.11, 3.3, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

Currently, each School develops and implements its own student-course evaluations to gauge quality of teaching in its programs. These course evaluations do not directly address learning outcomes or ask students to reflect on the quality of their learning experience or otherwise provide information that would enable the University to evaluate teaching and learning at levels beyond the course.

Timeline for Resolution: Before the Educational Effectiveness report is submitted in Fall 2010, the University will have established a uniform set of questions about teaching and learning that will appear in all student-course questionnaires. The University's assessment procedures will ensure that students evaluate learning outcomes as part of course evaluations.

Academic Success and Retention: *Given our university's high percentage (50%) of first-generation undergraduates, what curricular and co-curricular initiatives will provide optimal academic support?* (CFRs 1.2, 2.4, 2.7, 4.3, 4.5)

Entry-level courses for prospective science, engineering and social science majors have relatively high failure rates, in some cases exceeding 30% of the students enrolled. Often these failing students are freshmen who must retake the failed course(s), thus delaying their progress to completion of an undergraduate degree; or, when they become discouraged at needing to retake foundational courses, they leave the University. Through early intervention, and with mandated participation in academic-support programs, some of these at-risk students have already been helped to remain at UC Merced and ultimately to have the opportunity to succeed in completing their baccalaureate. Also, through adjustments in course delivery, especially to allow for different modalities of learning, the pass rate of at-risk students might be improved. As more majors are offered at our campus, students who need additional support to be successful learners can be advised to consider alternate degree pathways that may provide better opportunities for their academic success. This initiative, which has just been started as an advising effort to "re-major" some low-achieving students, will be closely monitored.

Timeline for Resolution: By or before Fall 2010, every lower-division course with a recurring failure rate of 25% or higher will have opportunity to embed a program of co-curricular support that includes peer tutoring, peer mentoring, and supplemental instruction. Staff advisors can also counsel students on their options for alternative majors. To obtain consistent evidence of successful retention efforts, three areas of "high impact" on retention will continue to be closely monitored: first-year programs, academic advising, and learning support. (See p.9 of Appendix B: Student Success Essay for more detail about these high impact initiatives.)

Engaging Lecturers in University Operations: *How to ensure that lecturers have the opportunity to participate fully in the assessment of teaching and learning?* (CFRs 1.2, 3.2, 3.4, 3.11)

Approximately half the full-time lecturers at UC Merced participate in program assessment and review. Some lecturers may choose not to participate, but for those who are not systematically given these opportunities, the University will provide opportunities for their elective participation.

Timeline for Resolution: Before Fall 2010 all lecturers will receive notices of program assessment and program review procedures.

Challenges Ahead

Campus Physical Facilities: *Over the next five years, how will UC Merced manage growth of programs in relation to the available space for teaching (lecture classrooms and laboratories) as well as laboratory space for research?* (CFRs 1.5, 1.8, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.9, 4.2)

Given the economic downturn in 2009, UC Merced must adjust its growth to allow for reductions in state funding and other forms of revenue that support infrastructure development. In particular, we face a shortage of space for teaching classrooms, student extracurricular activities, and research labs. The latter might require adjustments in hiring new faculty by focusing on those faculty that have little or no need for lab space.

Timeline for Resolution: Annually, a newly formed Enrollment Management Council will address matters of enrollment, retention and graduation targets as part of budget and space planning.

Centralized Assessment: *In a system of shared governance, how will assessment evolve?* (CFRs 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.11, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

The University does not have a centralized means of coordinating assessment results for institutional planning, but we are implementing key pieces of an assessment system with plans for further development at the institutional level of data gathering and analysis.

Timeline for Resolution: In Fall 2009, well before our Educational Effectiveness report is submitted in Fall 2010, the University will have established an oversight committee for institutional assessment. Working with constituents throughout the University, that committee will have devised and implemented an institutional system of assessment that integrates curricular and co-curricular functions.

Faculty and Staff Workload: *How can UC Merced sustain and advance our campus-wide accreditation effort for the Educational Effectiveness Review?* (CFRs 2.4, 3.2, 3.3, 4.5)

Compared to an established research university, the workload requirements of a new research university are extreme and unsustainable. Everyone is overworked, but perhaps most of all in service functions because many routine matters of University operations are in various stages of underdevelopment and subject to frequent change as the campus evolves. Despite these workload demands, faculty and staff have distinguished themselves as thoughtful agents of progressive change in curricular and co-curricular operations, particularly through the efforts of nearly all the Faculty Accreditation Organizers and all the (staff) Evidence Providers. To date, only two FAO reports remain to be submitted, and these are in academic programs (economics and management) that are undergoing restructuring. Overall, faculty and staff have assumed workloads that define the limits of tolerance, while also demonstrating a commendable engagement in the Capacity and Preparatory Review.

Timeline for Resolution: Over the next five years UC Merced will stabilize in its routine operations, particularly when delayed funding for administrative-support personnel becomes available and can match the previously accelerated pace of faculty hires during the early years of campus development.