May 2010 RESULTS SUMMARY:
Questionnaire to Assess Impact of External Review Processes on Graduate Program Educational Effectiveness

I. Response rate:

Three graduate groups completed the questionnaire (Appendix 1), equivalent to 100% of the graduate emphasis areas currently engaged in CCGA and WASC Substantive Change review processes as of May 2010.

II. Program Progress in CCGA and WASC Substantive Change Review Processes

As of May 2010, all three graduate programs have submitted a graduate program proposal to the UC's Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) and are preparing the application for WASC Substantive Change review (Table 1).

III. Reported Impacts of Preparation for CCGA and WASC Review Processes

A. Curriculum & Program Policies and Procedures

All three programs reported that preparations for these two review processes had affected their program's curriculum and policies and procedures. Specifically,

- All three developed anew or revised the following aspects of their curriculum - program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and the alignment of these two foundational components of the curriculum (Table 2)
- One developed dissertation criteria (Table 1)
- Two revised their required courses (Table 1)
- All three developed assessment plans (Table 3)
- All three revised their policies and procedures with respect to evaluating student progress (Table 3)
- Two revised requirements for advanced degrees (Table 3)

The significance of these developments is supported by the following responses to a question asking about changes that have, or are anticipated to have, the greatest positive impact on student learning and success.

- "Probably the greatest positive impact has come from the development of program-level and course-level learning outcomes (which were more or less entirely a response to WASC requirements). Several faculty have acknowledged that the development of course-level learning outcomes has clarified their thinking about their courses."
- "Further developing the graduate curriculum, but it was not sufficiently developed beforehand. The process just forced us to make the time to work on it."
- "Multi-year assessment plan for student learning. The CCGA process made us realize that we needed a better way to assess student progress in our graduate program."

Additionally, one program noted that "The process has improved our graduate program significantly. It allowed us to identify support and assessment mechanisms for our students and to better prioritize and organize our goals."

B. Alignment of Resources with Program Needs

One program indicated that the budgeting process affected the alignment of resources with program needs in the areas of faculty lines and financial support for graduate student research (Table 4). A second program indicated that budgeting had not affected the alignment of resources with program needs as budgeting is currently focused mostly on undergraduate needs. Independent of CCGA and WASC reviews, the Vice Chancellor for Research has established a committee to address support for graduate education.

IV. Student Success Metrics Considered in Program Preparations for Review

Programs considered a variety of student success metrics during their preparations for CCGA and WASC substantive change reviews with two of three programs explicitly considering retention and graduation and time-to-degree rates (Table 5).

Programs specifically highlighted post-degree employment, degree progress, and publications and scholarly presentations as the metrics that figured most prominently in preparing for external review, noting, for example, that the "ultimate success [post-degree employment] is of the utmost importance" and that publications and scholarly presentations are the "measure[s] of success in academic scientific research." The third program noted that considerations of degree progress had resulted in changes to the way the program monitors student progress.

V. Other Thoughts Regarding the CCGA and WASC Substantive Change and Review Processes

One program noted that "The WASC process is entirely too burdensome and redundant with the CCGA process. These need to be streamlined into one process, and WASC needs to accommodate the CCGA process. It has been honed over decades, and has the rigor and expertise needed for PhD level review. WASC needs to learn from this process and leverage it, rather than duplicating it, which adds no value to education. The cost and redundancy of the WASC process makes it a net loss of value for graduate education."

Table 1: Summary of program progress in relation to CCGA and WASC Substantive Change reviews (N=3).

	Developing application	Submitted application	Review concluded
a) CCGA		3	
b) WASC Substantive Change	3		
c) Other_____			

Table 2: Curriculum. Self-reported impacts of the CCGA and WASC Substantive Change review processes on select components of program curriculum (N=3).

	Newly Developed	Revised	Unchanged
a) Program learning outcomes (PLOs)	2	1	
b) Course-level learning outcomes	2[1]	2	1
c) Required courses		2	1
d) Dissertation criteria	1		2
e) Co-curricular support for learning			3
f) Graduate student support related to			
• Career planning		1	2
• Teaching		1	2
• Mentoring		1	2
g) Alignment of program's curriculum with PLOs	3		
h) Alignment of program's curriculum with UC Merced strategic planning documents		1	2
i) Graduation requirements		1	2
j) Time table for degree completion		1	2
k) Other_____			

Table 3: Program Policies and Procedures. Self-reported impacts of the CCGA and WASC Substantive Change review processes on select components of program polices and procedures (N=3).

	Newly Developed	Revised	Unchanged
a) Multi-year assessment plan for student learning	3		
b) Admissions			3
c) Requirements for advanced degrees		2	1
d) Evaluation of student progress		3	
e) Student financial support			3
f) Program governance			3

[1] One program selected multiple responses.

Table 4: Resource and Program Need Alignment. Self-reported impact of the institutional budgeting process on the alignment of resources with programmatic needs (N=3).

Areas of Impact	Number of programs reporting
Faculty lines	1
Financial support for graduate student tuition and fees	0
Financial support for graduate student research	1
Financial support for the curriculum	0
Library resources	0
Space resources	0
Other: *No, budgeting is mostly based on undergrad programs right now. The connection with grad programs is an issue that needs attention moving forward. The VCR put together a task force on graduate education that is addressing it. But this task force is not in response to CCGA or WASC, it is just a necessary thing to do.*	1

Table 5: Metrics of Student Success. Metrics of student success considered in preparations for the CCGA or WASC Substantive Change Review (N=3).

Student Success Metrics	Number of programs reporting
Retention and graduation rates	2
Time-to-degree rates	2
Student satisfaction	1
Post-degree employment	1
Other: *Publications and scholarly presentations*	1

Appendix 1: Questionnaire to Assess Impact of External Review Processes on Graduate Program Educational Effectiveness

For the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review, UCM must analyze its program review processes, including impacts on program effectiveness in relation to student learning and success. At the graduate level, program review will consist mainly of the CCGA and WASC Substantive Change processes for the approval of new graduate programs for the next several years. To help UCM demonstrate the effects of these external review processes on program effectiveness, please respond to the brief set of questions below.

1. Has preparing for the CCGA, WASC, and other external reviews, if applicable, affected any of the following aspects of your program's curriculum? Please check all that apply, indicating whether the specified element was newly developed and/or revised or left unchanged as a result of preparing for external review.

	Newly Developed	Revised	Unchanged
a) Program learning outcomes (PLOs)			
b) Course-level learning outcomes			
c) Required courses			
d) Dissertation criteria			
e) Co-curricular support for learning			
f) Graduate student support related to			
• Career planning			
• Teaching			
• Mentoring			
g) Alignment of program's curriculum with PLOs			
h) Alignment of program's curriculum with UC Merced strategic planning documents			
i) Graduation requirements			
j) Time table for degree completion			
k) Other_____			

2. Has preparing for the CCGA, WASC, and other external reviews, if applicable, affected any of the following aspects of your program's policies and procedures? Please check all that apply, indicating whether the specific element was newly developed, revised or left unchanged as a result of preparing for external review.

	Newly Developed	Revised	Unchanged
a) Multi-year assessment plan for student learning			
b) Admissions			
c) Requirements for advanced degrees			
d) Evaluation of student progress			
e) Student financial support			
f) Program governance			

3. In response to preparations for the CCGA, WASC, and other external reviews, if applicable, has the institutional budgeting process affected the alignment of resources with the program's needs in any of the following areas? Please check all that apply.
   a) Faculty lines ____
   b) Financial support for graduate student tuition and fees ____
   c) Financial support for graduate student research ____
   d) Financial support for the curriculum ____
   e) Library resources ____
   f) Space resources ____

g) Other_____

4. Has preparing for the CCGA, WASC, and other external reviews, if applicable, involved explicit consideration of any of the following metrics of student success? Please check all that apply.
   a) Retention and graduation rates ____
   b) Time-to-degree rates ____
   c) Student satisfaction ____
   d) Post-degree employment ____
   e) Other_____

5. Please indicate the external reviews your program is engaged with and the stage of the process.

	Developing application	**Submitted application**	**Review concluded**
a) CCGA			
b) WASC Substantive Change			
c) Other_____			

6. Of the changes identified in questions 1-3 above, which has or is anticipated to have the biggest positive impact *on student learning and success*[2] and *why*? What considerations led to this change?

7. With respect to question 4 above, which metric of student success figured most prominently in preparing for external review and why? If none, why? Is there an alternative?

8. If you have any other thoughts about how preparations for the external reviews reported in question 5 have impacted your program, please share them.

Thank you!

[2] Success can be considered from pre and post-degree perspectives.