

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

To: University of California, Merced

Date of Visit: February 26-March 1, 2018

Chair: Michael V. Drake, President
The Ohio State University

Assistant Chair: Cathie Atkins, Associate Dean and Professor
San Diego State University

Team Member: Howard Daudistel, Retired Professor, Former Senior Executive Vice President
and Interim Provost and VP for Academic Affairs
The University of Texas at El Paso

Team Member: Francisco J. Hernandez, Emeritus Vice Chancellor for Students
University of Hawaii, Manoa

Team Member: Matthew Hull, Associate Vice Chancellor, Financial Planning and Analysis
University of California, Riverside

Team Member (Offsite Review): Panos Papadopoulos, Professor
University of California, Berkeley

WSCUC Liaison: Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President
WASC Senior College and University Commission

The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT	2
IA. Description of the Institution and its Accreditation History	2
IB. Description of Team’s Review Process	5
IC. Institution’s Reaccreditation Report and Update	6
SECTION II: EVALUATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS	7
IIA. Component 1: Response to Previous Commission Actions	7
IIB. Component 2: Compliance with Standards and Federal Requirements.....	8
Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes	11
Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives	15
Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Structures	19
Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance.....	24
IIC. Component 3: Meaning, Quality and Integrity of Degree	27
IID. Component 4: Educational Quality	31
IIE. Component 5: Student Success	35
IIF. Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement	39
IIG. Component 7: Sustainability	43
IIH. Component 8: Reflection and Plans for Improvement	48
SECTION III: COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	51
APPENDICES: Federal Requirements	
Appendix 1: Credit Hour and Program Length Review.....	54
Appendix 2: Marketing and Recruitment Review	56
Appendix 3: Student Complaints Review	58
Appendix 4: Transfer Credit Policy Review	59

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

IA. Description of the Institution and its Accreditation History

The University of California, Merced (UC Merced) was opened to its first undergraduate students in the fall of 2005 as the newest University of California campus in 50 years. In a relatively short period of time all essential elements of the university have emerged from the ground up. Faculty and staff have been recruited, undergraduate and graduate degree programs created, while classrooms, laboratories, student housing and campus infrastructure to support a research university serving 10,000 students by 2020 have been constructed or are being built.

Initial WSCUC accreditation was granted in 2011 when undergraduate enrollment was 4,938 students. By the fall of 2016 undergraduate enrollment grew 38% to 6,815 enrolled in 22 undergraduate majors and 23 undergraduate minors. During this same period of time, graduate enrollment has doubled to 521 students pursuing graduate degrees in 16 graduate program areas with 90% of the graduate enrollment at the Ph.D. level. All of the degree programs are offered on site and in face-to-face modality and are spread across the three original Schools: School of Social Science, Humanities, and Arts (SSHA), School of Natural Sciences (SNS), and the School of Engineering (SoE).

As student enrollment has grown and degree programs developed, the number of faculty has also grown. Between fall of 2011 and fall of 2016 the number of Senate faculty has increased 65% (from 130 to 220). Similarly, the number of non-Senate faculty has grown from 20 in fall 2011 to approximately 150 in fall of 2016. The ratio of students to instructional faculty in fall of 2017 fell to 19.8:1, which is slightly better than most other UC campuses. Although there has been rapid growth of faculty to support increased enrollment, the ratio of pre-tenured to tenured faculty is high. Nearly 45% of ladder rank faculty are in the pre-tenured category, placing more

workload on the senior faculty in terms of service and curriculum development. The addition of so many new faculty has also stretched resources such as space and start-up packages. Hiring faculty in fields that require wet lab space has been a challenge because of space and resource limitations.

In addition to the challenges of launching and developing an entirely new campus, in its first decade of existence, UC Merced faced many challenges over which it has no control. Most notably this included opening its doors during the historic economic downturn of 2008. In addition, UC Merced is located in one of the poorest regions in the state, which is home to a population of students with great potential but limited educational and economic opportunities. Nevertheless, UC Merced has accomplished a great deal. In the face of these challenges and as part of the reaffirmation preparation in 2016, the entire campus participated in a visioning process with the intention of developing a unified strategic planning process.

Core to the UC Merced vision is to “build a UC-caliber research university that serves a historically underserved student population.” The institution no longer sees itself as just an overflow campus for students seeking enrollment in other UC campuses; UC Merced is becoming a destination campus for talented first-generation students who appreciate the student-centered culture that characterizes the campus and the faculty and staff’s dedication to their success.

New institutes and centers along with an expansion of core research facilities have helped propel UC Merced to be named a Carnegie “doctoral-granting university with higher research activity” (the second highest classification for U.S. research universities) and to be nationally recognized as the youngest university to receive this recognition.

UC Merced aspires to grow its enrollment to 10,000 students and its faculty to 350 and to become an “exceptional research university.” UC Merced has engaged in several initiatives to plan and facilitate this growth and a key cornerstone is the 2020 Project, a commitment by the State of California and the University of California to increase access to the UC system. The 2020 Project will nearly double the size of the campus and includes resources to provide key enhancements to academic and research space, student life facilities, residential and classroom space, recreation space and a wellness center among other improvements.

Wishing to significantly contribute to the public good, UC Merced has committed itself to doing all that is possible to provide high-quality higher education opportunities to a student body that is more racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse than any other UC campus. For example, in fall 2016, 77% of UC Merced’s undergraduate students identified themselves as ethnic minorities. More than 60% of UC Merced students were Pell Grant recipients; 71% first-generation college students; and 35% came from families living in homes where English is not the primary language spoken. UC Merced embraces the general UC mission of teaching, research and public service in the context of a higher risk population of students not served as extensively by other UC campuses. By finding ways to address regional needs and conducting research that appeals to outside investors who are interested in contributing to the development of the region, students are provided with opportunities to directly impact their communities. For example, in the Venture Lab students are exposed to guided mentoring and access to resources that will allow them to explore entrepreneurship as a career option. While most of the research at UC Merced is not necessarily specific to the region, it does contribute to the region’s economic and educational diversification and thus adds value.

Particularly noteworthy is UC Merced's Triple Net Zero Commitment in which the campus has pledged to consume zero net energy, produce zero waste and zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. All of the campus buildings are LEED certified and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (ASSHE STARS) has awarded UC Merced with a Gold Rating. The STARS rating system includes four categories: academics, engagement, operations, and planning and administration. Thus, UC Merced embraces sustainability throughout the campus from its curriculum and co-curriculum student engagement programs to its planning and administration.

IB. Description of the Team's Review Process

Members of the team began their assessment work in advance of the Offsite Review (OSR) on October 2 and 3, 2017, by not only reading reports and documents provided by UC Merced, but also completing worksheets that helped team members focus on critical elements of UC Merced's institutional report. The Offsite Review included a 45-minute video conference call with key UC Merced administrators in which the team shared the areas for further exploration (lines of inquiry) during the Accreditation Visit (AV), February 26-March 1, 2018. The lines of inquiry were sent to UC Merced and the team was later provided with the additional information requested and a draft visit schedule.

Prior to the Accreditation Visit the team prepared a worksheet for the pre-visit accreditation conference call that outlined specific questions and areas for further inquiry along with people or groups to interview. During the pre-visit conference call on January 30, 2018, the team reviewed and discussed the materials the institution provided at the team's request and finalized the visit schedule with respect to individuals and groups with which the team wished to meet. A final draft visit schedule was prepared by UC Merced's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and sent

to the team prior to the actual visit. A confidential email account was established to allow for greater participation from the campus community and to provide any information that might be deemed sensitive. It was monitored by the assistant chair and, ultimately, shared with all of the team members.

The Accreditation Visit began with a team executive planning session on Monday, February 26, 2018 in which the team reviewed the final visit schedule, considered the areas of inquiry and identified specific questions to be pursued during each group or individual meeting. The campus visit started on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 with a meeting with the chancellor, followed by a meeting with WSCUC steering committee. These meetings helped to set the context, the challenges and the opportunities for UC Merced by virtue of its unique student population and its mission. During the next two days, the team met with various constituencies and individuals and learned a lot more about the institution, its organizational structure, its values, the faculty, staff and students. The visit ended on March 1, 2018 with a private meeting between the team chair and chancellor followed by a public exit meeting in which the final commendations and recommendations were read. Every session was productive and positive, and the team was very impressed by the level of commitment among participants in each of the sessions.

IC. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

UC Merced's institutional report was a comprehensive and transparent document that was presented in a thoughtful and thorough manner. A source of commendation from the team, the report provided an honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses and articulated the paths UC Merced wishes to pursue in the future. Perhaps most importantly, the institutional report also provided helpful descriptions of the campus culture and processes used to develop and plan programs as well as plans to continue the development of the campus infrastructure. The report

also provided links to various documents and addressed how the institution is responding to each of the WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR).

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

IIA. Component 1: Response to Previous Commission Actions

The Commission in its 2011 letter granting Initial Accreditation identified three areas to be addressed by UC Merced—(1) Financial, Strategic, and Academic Planning, (2) Assessment of Student Learning, and (3) Student Success—and asked the institution to report on its progress in an Interim Report in 2014. The Interim Report Committee concluded UC Merced had made “meaningful and significant progress” in these three areas. The institutional report for reaffirmation outlines the progress made in each of the above areas.

In addition, the 2011 team report for Initial Accreditation made six major and two minor recommendations. The six major recommendations were: (1) provide information to demonstrate that UC Merced is financially viable and sustainable, (2) continue to pursue the integration of assessment (in administrative units, graduate programs, General Education) throughout the campus and use data to inform decisions to create a consistent practice of assessment across the university, (3) consider a self-assessment by the Academic Senate, (4) develop the necessary flexibility and creative approaches to the development of facilities planning and build-out, especially as related to student support facilities, (5) in the tenure and promotion process, consider research on teaching as a standard, acknowledging the firm foundation of assessment and (6) incorporate non-ladder (non-Senate) rank faculty in the academic planning of the campus, especially where they provide considerable services or coverage for the institution. The two minor recommendations were: (1) make sure that external committees in program reviews are composed primarily of experts external to UC Merced, and

(2) continue to strive to make the results of each assessment and program self-assessment and review easily accessible online throughout the campus for others to use.

With respect to the above recommendations, the team has determined that UC Merced has satisfactorily addressed all of the recommendations in the 2011 team report and the Commission letter and has made an honest and transparent assessment of its progress in each area through the essays in its institutional report.

Notably, UC Merced has established 17 new graduate degree programs since 2011, which have undergone successful WSCUC Substantive Change reviews. These reviews have resulted in better differentiation of master's and Ph.D. learning outcomes and in strengthening program rubrics and curricular maps. UC Merced has also responded to recommendations on ensuring that students receive sufficient feedback on intended learning outcomes by establishing both formal and informal interaction with their faculty advisors and program faculty with respect to coursework, seminars, and research collaborations. All in all, the team is impressed with the responsiveness of UC Merced to the recommendations it has received, and the university continues to make impressive progress toward its goals.

IIB. Component 2: Compliance with the Standards and Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

UC Merced did a meticulous job assessing compliance with the Standards and federal requirements as well as completing the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators.

UC Merced's Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI) indicates that 100% of programs have developed Program Learning Outcomes (PLO's) that are published in a variety of places accessible to students, faculty, staff and others. These inform the planning processes and ongoing quality enhancement efforts. A comprehensive set of indicators is in place for undergraduate and graduate programs in all schools. In addition, the programs are using multiple

forms of direct evidence of learning outcomes. Ninety-five percent of undergraduate majors and 100% of graduate programs have identified more than one type of direct evidence such as embedded assignments, exams or capstone projects to measure learning outcomes. In addition, 100% of both undergraduate and graduate programs have used or are planning to use more than one type of indirect evidence such as self-report surveys, focus group interviews, etc. Finally, according to the IEEI, all programs have used the results to make changes in the program, curriculum or assessment strategies, and the results are often used to stimulate faculty discussions on learning outcomes, pedagogy or resources. The assessment of student learning has been incorporated into program review efforts.

UC Merced has demonstrated compliance with all four federal requirements: credit hour policy and program length, marketing and recruitment, student complaints policy, and transfer credit policy. The team's reviews of these federal requirements are shown in the appendices of this report.

The Review under the Standards was conducted in a very thoughtful manner and was undertaken in two steps. In spring 2015 the UC Merced WSCUC steering committee engaged the campus in a formative self-analysis using the Standards to identify and communicate campus strengths and areas of weakness and generated a document identifying areas and themes for improvement. Using the WSCUC worksheet, the institution completed an initial review in spring 2015 providing its own self-rating (1-area of strength, 2-aspects that need attention, 3-needs significant development or 4-does not apply) for each Criteria For Review under the Standards, assessed the importance of each CFR to UC Merced, made relevant commentary, and provided links to where the evidence could be found. This initial review revealed that the campus met all of the expectations but with some varying levels of strength. In the 2015 Review

under the Standards, 47% of the criteria were identified with a score of 1, 45% of the criteria were given a score of 2 and only 6% received a score of 3.

In spring 2017, the Review under the Standards was revisited and scored again. In this more recent iteration, 58% of the criteria were identified with a score of 1, with only 3% obtaining a score of 3. In addition to looking at the self-rated score on each Criteria for Review, the campus steering committee also rated each CFR on the importance for the campus to address with an eye toward those that were more urgent and those that needed ongoing attention as part of 2020 initiatives. Nearly a quarter of the criteria were rated as areas for urgent attention. In general, the areas ranked as more urgent were Standard 2 CFRs. UC Merced values the need to continue to develop core functions through teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity to achieve its educational objectives. On average, self-review ratings on Standard 2 tended to be high (a strength) and the importance of each Standard 2 area also tended to be rated as high priority to maintain as a strength and to consider for ongoing attention and improvement. Several areas that were rated as 1 (a strength) were deemed to be medium or lower priority because they were areas that have been addressed or solved with ongoing policies or requirements (CFR 2.2). Areas rated as a 2 (aspects that need attention) and the one area rated as a 3 (this item needs significant improvement) were identified as areas in which ongoing attention for improvement was being addressed.

Finally, as further evidence of the value that UC Merced has placed on the WSCUC review process, the steering committee identified three strengths that would facilitate the campus as it matures in its dual goal of becoming a UC-quality research university that serves historically underserved populations. These three strengths as articulated in its institutional report are: “(1) the faculty’s commitment to student learning outcomes; (2) commitment to UC Merced by

faculty, staff, and leadership; and (3) commitment to quality assurance and improvement.” The steering committee also identified six major themes it needed to continue to address: “(1) defining the meaning of the undergraduate degree and, separately, General Education reform; (2) developing inclusive institutional planning; (3) strengthening data/evidence informed planning and decision making; (4) developing a campus plan for data reporting; (5) utilizing strategic, goal-aligned communication; and (6) ensuring IT resources are sufficient to support, and are deployed in support of, the campus’s teaching and research mission.” As a final note, the steering committee identified the need for campus-level strategic planning and resource allocation. These themes and gaps are addressed throughout the essays in the institutional report.

It is clear that committees, processes, and mechanisms to facilitate data collection are in place to ensure 100% of the UC Merced programs have developed and published program learning outcomes that are accessible to students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders.

The team’s finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that UC Merced has provided evidence of compliance with all four of the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and has demonstrated a strong commitment to use the Standards consistently and conscientiously as the institution continues to mature. The sections below describe the results of the team’s review of each Standard.

Standard 1. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

UC Merced faculty and staff are dedicated to building high caliber undergraduate and graduate programs that serve historically underrepresented student groups (especially those from the San Joaquin Valley) enrolled in three Schools—Social Science, Humanities and Arts; Engineering; and Natural Science.

Institutional Purposes (CFRs 1.1, 1.2). UC Merced’s published mission statement clearly indicates that the university strives for “excellence in carrying out the university’s mission of teaching research and public service, benefiting society by discovering and transmitting new knowledge and functioning as an active repository of organized knowledge” (CFR 1.1).

The faculty, staff and administrators seem genuinely focused on a set of core values and a widely shared vision of the future. These values support change and encourage university faculty and administrative leaders to adroitly adapt to rapid enrollment growth and unique conditions occasioned by the school’s transition from a “start-up” university to a mature research focused undergraduate and graduate institution. For example, the Academic Senate Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation has noted that the university mission should be updated to make it a more relevant planning document. Potential changes and updates to the mission will not be considered, however, until after a self-study, which has yet to be launched, is completed. The team did not find evidence that future revisions to the mission statement will significantly impact core elements of the current mission statement. The team observed a high level of confidence among campus leaders that the institution can grow and change without challenging or abandoning UC Merced’s mission and core values.

Educational objectives are widely understood throughout the institution and inform activities at the program level (CFR 1.2). Nevertheless, it is well understood by campus leaders that continuous improvement fueled by an inclusive reflective process is valuable and that it is necessary to more effectively communicate refinements of objectives to all university constituents. The team notes that campus leaders are not only dedicated to clearly communicating educational objectives as well as indicators of student achievement—including retention and graduation rates—they are also committed to student success at all levels. For

example, UC Merced faculty are working to ensure that clear and consistent educational objectives characterize the undergraduate experience in degree programs, General Education program, and co-curricular activities. Retention and graduation rates are improving and higher than one would predict for a student body characterized by many first-generation college students facing resource challenges. The first-year retention rate for first-time freshman in fall 2016 was 80.5%. As per the institutional report, the “four-, five- and six-year graduation rates for entering cohorts 2012, 2011 and 2010, respectively, have all shown improvement over the analogous data for the 2005 cohort (38% compared to 33%, 60% compared to 52%, and 66% compared to 58%.” Similarly, UC Merced’s one-year retention rate for transfer students was 91.6% for the fall 2015 cohort. Graduation rates for transfer students have steadily increased with modest gains in two-year rates at about 40.6% and significant increases in three-year (81.4%) and four-year rates (86.6%). UC Merced also looked at the WSCUC Absolute Graduation Rate (AGR) and noted an increase over time. However, because UC Merced has experienced rapid enrollment growth, the AGR is not particularly useful to the institution. The AGR is more reflective of graduation rates for institutions with relatively stable enrollments and those with non-traditional and part-time students. Since UC Merced is 95% first-time, full-time, the WSCUC graduation rate dashboard does not contribute significantly to the university’s understanding of student success. The team is impressed by the retention and graduation rates that UC Merced has attained but wondered how progress will be sustained. Therefore, the team recommends that UC Merced develop a comprehensive plan that will help the campus to efficiently focus current and future academic support and student services on student success. Although full integration of co-curricular programs managed by the Division of Student Affairs

and academic units has not yet been achieved, the team found that appropriate efforts to develop fully unified student success plans are underway.

Integrity and Transparency (CFRs 1.3-1.8). There is no doubt that since its inception, UC Merced has embraced the value of academic freedom (CFR 1.3), diversity (CFR 1.4), educational purpose and autonomy (CFR 1.5). This commitment is evident in several UC Merced public documents and reinforced by UC system policies and standards related to academic freedom, ethical conduct, recruitment codes, equity, and non-discrimination. The team is particularly impressed by the university's commitment to the value of diversity, service to underserved populations, and enhanced regional development buoyed by benefits derived from research.

UC Merced has published truthful representations of its academic policies, standards, degree requirements, and costs. The university serves a first-generation college student body 60% of whom are Pell Grant eligible and face financial and life challenges. It is apparent to the team that the university is dedicated to expanding support programs that maintain high academic standards and yet are sensitive to the financial and social realities faced by students—especially those from less privileged backgrounds (CFR 1.6). However, the team did not find evidence that all offices providing student support and financial services are currently sufficiently resourced to fully address the issues, especially financial ones that impact student retention and progress toward degrees. This is not to say that resource limitations will completely derail progress, rather only to suggest that it is especially important to leverage student service and academic resources, for example, dedicated to student advising as much as possible.

UC Merced exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations, as demonstrated by the adoption of appropriate policies and procedures and strong support from the UC Office of the

President (CFR 1.7). In addition to an MOU with the UC President that outlines a commitment to continued funding and long range financial planning, UC Merced's 2020 Project for infrastructure development as well as a campus-based long-range financial analysis has been completed to help ensure sound ethical business practices guide resource allocations in support of enrollment and infrastructure growth.

Although financial challenges and growing pains associated with building a UC campus from the ground up have contributed to some communication challenges and created uncertainties and anxieties among faculty, staff and students, throughout its development and growth, UC Merced has demonstrated a commitment to honest, open and professional communication to WSCUC. The university has created and sustained structures, personnel and processes to ensure that they are fully compliant with WSCUC standards (CFR 1.8).

Conclusion. The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1.

Standard 2. Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

UC Merced has established educational goals through core functions of the institution in a reflective and analytical way. As indicated above, UC Merced has made extensive use of the Review under the Standards worksheet and has done a very transparent and honest assessment of the various CFRs and those that need improvement

Teaching and Learning (CFRs 2.1-2.7). UC Merced's educational policies and academic degrees are concretely defined and practiced with appropriate processes and academic reviews to ensure integrity of educational delivery. The team determined that the content, standards of performance and rigor are appropriate. Syllabi articulate learning outcomes, grading standards and topics to be covered. Degree programs are subject to rigorous peer review when they are

proposed and once every seven years during program review. Faculty members are well-qualified with faculty to student ratios that are appropriate. The institution engages in integrative planning to support a goal of 10,000 students by 2020 (CFR 2.1).

A real strength of UC Merced has been in the attention to entry level requirements and in the development of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for every major and stand-alone minor in the undergraduate level programs. At the graduate level, the meaning of the degree is defined by overarching PLOs for the Ph.D. and master's degrees respectively. PLOs and rubrics are used to define the levels of student achievement required for graduation. UC Merced has developed an impressive document called the Hallmarks of a Baccalaureate degree, which outlines a coherent philosophy that guides the meaning of their undergraduate degrees. The Hallmarks philosophy is strongly connected to distinctive features of UC Merced as a research university that serves a unique student body (CFR 2.2) and is used to build awareness among students, faculty and staff. In addition, the Hallmarks are integrated into the planning and new program proposal process.

UC Merced has been in the process of revising General Education (GE) so that it is integrated throughout the curriculum. GE implementation is a priority and one that the institution sees as high priority with ongoing attention (CFR 2.2a). Since all new graduate programs have undergone WSCUC Substantive Change review, they all have established clearly stated objectives and assessment plans (CFR 2.2b).

Academic programs receive needed attention from faculty and administration. Assessment of student learning outcomes is well-integrated in a process of continuous improvement, and outcomes appear in the syllabi of most courses (CFRs 2.3, 2.4). Moreover, UC Merced has a strong academic assessment infrastructure, and faculty use results to inform both their teaching

and curriculum development. In addition, all academic and co-curricular programs are subject to program review on a seven-year cycle (CFRs 2.6, 2.7).

Scholarship and Creative Activities (CFRs 2.8, 2.9). Scholarship and creative activity is viewed as a priority. UC Merced adheres to the UC system-wide policy on Appointment and Promotion, more specifically AMP 210, which stipulates that the criteria for appointment, promotion, and appraisal is contingent upon the performance in (1) teaching, (2) research and other creative work, (3) professional activity, and (4) university and public service. Faculty also engage students in informal learning, mentoring, and advising activities, and instructional and curricular innovation is encouraged as is the application for training grants.

Student Learning and Success (CFRs 2.10-2.14). Assessing and improving student success is an important goal for UC Merced. At the undergraduate level the university is actively assessing disaggregated data to try to understand some of the barriers to completing a degree in four years with the goal of improving four-year graduation rates. The team visit revealed that these efforts could benefit from better campus coordination and improvement in data gathering. Although the campus has invested in Tableau, the Institutional Research and Decision Support team has only recently started to use Tableau to improve the usability of data for campus decision makers. At the graduate level time-to-degree and degree-completion rates have demonstrated modest increases. For example, in the fall 2007 cohort, the percentage of students receiving a Ph.D. in six and seven years is 53% and 60%, respectively. These data compare favorably to national average of about 50-60% seven-year graduate rates for Ph.D. students. Similarly, 78% of master's students enrolled in the fall 2007 cohort received master's degrees, and over 85% of those who graduated did so within two years. The campus is making efforts to further systematize data collection at the graduate level with the goal of using these data in annual

assessment reports and program review. The team encourages the campus to explore further training opportunities for program level staff to use these data to adjust program services especially those for low-income students.

Co-curricular programs are designed to support student development and the campus has created many of these excellent programs; however, the campus is still working on ways to better integrate co-curricular activities with academic programs and to assess their impact on student learning and success. In a similar vein, there is an effort to reorganize and coordinate undergraduate advising in the first year to ensure that all students understand what is required of them. It is clear that faculty and staff are committed to student development and success and the team encourages the campus to continue to review its mandatory advising and interventions and consider developing additional active intervention strategies that could benefit the UC Merced unique student body. As UC Merced develops these models they could be useful to other campuses that enroll many first-generation and low-income students. UC Merced's four-year and six-year graduation rates are lower than desired, and more attention to advising might improve the rates. In addition, while UC Merced provides academic and student support services as per CFR 2.13, the campus has acknowledged that the unique nature of their student population requires additional student support services. The team encourages the campus to review and assess the current offering of student services to ensure that these services meet the needs of the first-generation, low-income students who will continue to be attracted to the campus. The team recognizes the continuing improvement of the data collection functions associated with planning for campus growth and especially with student success. The team encourages the campus to ensure that data collection and analysis are integral to the training and development of the entire campus leadership charged with student and academic support services. The team acknowledges

the different support services for transfer students and encourages the campus to focus attention on the growing needs as the campus meets its enrollment goals (CFR 2.14).

Conclusion. The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 2.

Standard 3. Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

UC Merced has grown considerably since it was initially accredited. Increases in faculty, staff and students have led to growth in facilities, technology, and infrastructure. As UC Merced has grown, its organizational structures and decision-making process have come to reflect more mature campuses.

Faculty and Staff (CFRs 3.1-3.3). While UC Merced continues to experience rapid student growth (undergraduate enrollments increased by 38% between fall 2011 and fall 2016), the growth in Senate and non-Senate faculty has also been significant. Over that same time period, Senate faculty increased by approximately 65% to 220 and non-Senate Faculty grew to 150. Additionally, while there was a small decrease in non-Senate faculty in fall 2017, the data show that an additional 29 Senate faculty were added between fall 2016 and fall 2017. Growth in the faculty has allowed UC Merced to change the mix of Senate to non-Senate faculty. In fall 2013 that mix was 51% Senate to 49% non-Senate. By fall 2017 that mix had changed to 64% Senate faculty to 36% non-Senate faculty.

UC Merced noted that its ratio of students to instructional faculty was 20.3:1 in fall 2016. UC Merced was able to slightly lower that ratio to 19.8:1 in fall 2017. According to the University of California 2017 Accountability Report, the General Campus average student-faculty ratio for the system in 2015-16 was approximately 21:1, thus UC Merced has a slightly better faculty to student ratio than the system-wide average.

UC Merced staff headcount has also been increasing. Data from UC Merced's Institution Research and Decision Support Website show an increase of 127 (14%) from fall 2013 to fall 2017. As a developing campus, UC Merced's staffing levels are lean, but as the campus notes, its workforce planning efforts help "...to align existing and planned positions with campus priorities and increase operational efficiencies to make best use of staff."

Data from UC Merced's Institution Research and Decision Support Website show that in fall 2017 UC Merced's staff is very diverse, with 40% of its 1,025 staff members being underrepresented minorities (URMs) and 62% women. Similarly, 45% of the instructional faculty are female and approximately 20% are URMs. These figures show that UC Merced is well positioned nationally; however, the effort to improve the number of URMs in the faculty ranks needs to continue. It is important to note that UC Merced has a dedicated website to support its diversity efforts (<https://www.ucmerced.edu/diversity>) further illustrating the importance of diversity at UC Merced (CFR 1.4).

UC Merced has well-documented recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation policies, procedures and processes. At the core of this is the UC system-wide established policies and procedures with which all campuses must comply, such as the Academic Personnel Manual (APM) and the Personnel Policies for Staff Members (PPSM), which govern a variety of issues such as recruitment, compensation, responsibilities and performance management, etc. UC campuses will often develop local implementation guides such as UC Merced did with its Merced Academic Personnel Policies and Procedures (MAPP). UC Merced has policies in place to ensure that the hiring of faculty and staff is in alignment with the strategic goals of the campus and its Strategic Academic Focusing Initiative. Recent staff hiring has been governed by the Workforce Planning exercise.

UC Merced has developed Faculty Handbooks (one for Senate faculty and another for non-Senate faculty) as part of its orientation for new faculty hires. These handbooks provide useful information about UC Merced, its core values, information on teaching, research and service as well as other relevant information. New Employee Orientation for staff is provided monthly and the campus has developed a New Employee Handbook (eBook) to provide important information about the campus, services available, short-term expectations, and other relevant information.

Similar to other UC campuses, faculty evaluations are guided by the Academic Senate Committee on Academic Personnel. This evaluation process is well established in the UC system and UC Merced has published on the web “General Standards in Faculty Review” and a dedicated section on the required “Review Materials” to provide some general guidance on the process. The effort and effectiveness of teaching is heavily integrated into the faculty evaluation process. With respect to staff evaluation practices, UC Merced staff are evaluated annually and UC Merced has deployed the Halogen eAppraisal Tool to help ensure that managers and employees are focused on achieving identified performance outcomes.

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources (CFRs 3.4, 3.5). As discussed in more detail in Component 7, UC Merced is subject to annual audits with respect to the expenditures of federal funds and as part of the UC system its financial statements are audited annually on a consolidated basis. UC Merced has executed an MOU with the University of California Office of the President, which will be in place through July 1, 2020 that provides additional financial support and stability. In addition to the stability provided by the MOU, UC Merced is actively engaged in long-range financial planning as evidenced by the planning model provided which shows, among other things, actual and projected revenues, expenses, cash reserves, student enrollments, and faculty, staff, and student employee counts through fiscal year 2030. There

appears to be strong alignment with campus administrative leadership and the faculty as part of shared governance.

With respect to information technologies, UC Merced's Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning provides resources to support online and hybrid classes, as well as providing resources for the deployment of new teaching technologies. Based on the team's observations and the conversations it held with campus stakeholders, the team would encourage better communication and the sharing of data between the English Language Institute (ELI) and Students Assessing Teaching and Learning (SATAL) to improve services and to better utilize existing resources. Additionally, while it is the impression of the team that the infrastructure and physical, fiscal and technological and informational resources that the campus possesses are adequate for continuing its growth, the team heard from several faculty members that the deployment of consistent instructional technology solutions, regardless of the physical location, would enable better system maintenance and improved service to the instructional faculty. Different technology solutions require additional training and thus act as an impediment to the effective use of technology in the classroom.

UC Merced uses a new cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS) for the delivery of online courses. Additionally, the Office of Information Technology – Academic and Emerging Technology within campus IT has been established to assist faculty in identifying and deploying innovative technological solutions with respect to face-to-face, online, and blended learning. UC Merced faculty also participate in the UC system Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) funding program, which provides grants to faculty to develop online and hybrid courses and to develop cloud-based video streaming. As already noted by UC Merced, the campus must

identify on-going funding to continue to maintain its existing course content and to develop additional content.

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes (CFRs 3.6-3.10). UC Merced has expanded its leadership team over the last several years to resemble the more mature UC campuses. In 2012 the campus added a full-time chief financial officer; in 2013 it added a full-time vice provost and dean of undergraduate education; in 2014 a full-time vice provost and dean of graduate education was added; and in 2015 a full-time vice provost for the faculty was appointed. UC Merced has a strong senior leadership team in place that appears to be well respected by campus stakeholders.

Like all UC campuses, the chancellor reports to the president and then on to the external Board of Regents (established under Article IX, Section 9 of the California Constitution) that provides oversight of the system.

The UC system has clearly defined shared governance structures. The membership and authority of the Academic Senate is established by The Standing Orders of the Regents, which defines a system of shared governance between the Academic Senate and the administration in the management and operation of the University of California. Additionally, UC Merced's Academic Senate has developed a Manual of the Academic Senate for the Merced Division of the Senate. Shared Governance is well exercised at UC Merced and the faculty are actively involved in the decision-making process.

Conclusion. The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3.

Standard 4. Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Although UC Merced is a relatively new and rapidly expanding campus operating in a dynamic and often very challenging growth and fiscal environment, the university's leadership, faculty and staff are committed to student success as well as on-going institutional learning and planning and improvement. University leaders in partnership with faculty and professional staff have implemented robust processes dedicated to quality assurance in all areas.

Quality Assurance Processes (CFRs 4.1, 4.2). The university has developed and engaged campus constituents in several quality-assurance processes that are grounded in the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation. Learning outcome assessments, data collection, processes for systematically evaluating and improving new curricula, periodic program reviews and strategic planning are highly institutionalized and part of the fabric of campus life.

Addressing the extraordinary challenges of opening and building (from the ground up) all aspects of a new UC university, UC Merced admitted students in 2005. Motivated by the distinct vision to serve the higher education needs of students from underrepresented groups, while also coping with major downturns in the state and global economy, to no one's surprise, limited resources initially "stunted" the university's ability to fully implement all aspects of a vigorous quality assurance program. Nevertheless, university leaders have maintained their strong commitment to achieving success through transparent decision-making processes informed by the principles of data driven quality assurance and program planning. As part of the self-study leaders launched a campus wide survey using the Review under the Standards to identify campus strengths and areas that need improvement. Faculty, staff, students and campus leaders did not shy away from candidly articulating weaknesses. Using data gathered from all campus constituents, the campus WSCUC steering committee prioritized areas of concern and pledged to

monitor progress in all matters, but especially those identified as urgently needing attention. The university identified six quality assurance, institutional learning, improvement and strategic planning themes in need of improvement. Campus groups focused on the areas needing greatest attention and reaffirmed their dedication to further strengthening data gathering and evidenced-based decision-making, as fully implementing a data collection plan. The campus steering committee also identified two “overarching gaps” in the campus’s ability to address these needs—the need for a campus-level strategic academic plan as a framework for integrated planning and decision-making, and more routine strategic planning processes. A recent spring 2017 campus survey suggests that the collective focus on quality assurance processes has helped faculty and staff improve academic and other campus programs.

Significant steps have been taken to better coordinate and integrate assessment activities across the university and the Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC) provides campus wide oversight for both administrative and academic annual assessment and periodic program review. Efforts to improve access to data that assists decision-makers also have been informed by an independent review of the Institutional Research and Decision-Making Office. In addition, the team notes that the collective development of a “vision and associated change alignment map” is a direct action in response to the steering committee’s review of UC Merced’s quality assurance processes.

Nevertheless, work remains to be done to improve access to useful assessment data. Therefore, the WSCUC team is somewhat concerned about the possibility of data overload within the multilayered and labor-intensive campus quality assurance structure and process. But, as evidenced by their support of the creation of a data dashboard (which is now being tested and

revised), university leaders appear to be strongly committed to quality assurance, institutional learning and improvement processes.

Strategic Thinking and Planning (CFR 4.1-4.5). Institutional and past team reports as well as the team's assessment of UC Merced confirm that the university has sustained a campus climate in support of strategic thinking, planning, and visioning exercises guided by empirical evidence and analyses, and annual and periodic assessment of academic programs, student affairs programs and administrative services.

The 2020 Project is a powerful example of a strategy that has effectively guided the development of a physical infrastructure in support of the dramatic growth of academic and research programs and consequent increases in student enrollment. In addition, the 2013 Strategic Academic Focusing Initiative was a successful way to quickly guide academic program development and increase research capacity through interdisciplinary cluster hiring. The more recent Workforce Planning Initiative likewise illustrates that university leaders fully appreciate the importance of adding professional staff needed to support all operations related to core institutional functions. The team notes that 2020 will soon be here and recommends that UC Merced develop a strategic plan beyond 2020.

Institutional Learning and Improvement (CFRs 4.3-4.7). UC Merced is committed to institutional learning and improvement. The team believes that the university's progress and development would not have been possible without this commitment. Inclusive and transparent improvement processes and a commitment to quickly adjusting to rapidly changing circumstances and needs, appear to be hallmarks of the UC Merced decision-making culture.

Campus assessment process are overseen by the PROC, a committee for review of PLO reports, and a campus working group on assessment which is focused on building institutional

research capacity. Annual student learning outcome assessments, seven-year academic program reviews, a Student Affairs Assessment Team, surveys of students and graduates, and an expanding Institutional Research and Division Support Office are a few examples of the university's commitment to institutional learning and improvement. The team suggests that these highly productive assessment and improvement strategies may be difficult to sustain as the campus continues its rapid growth.

Conclusion. The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.

IIC. Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality and Integrity of Degree
(CFRs 1.2, 2.2-2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.12, 4.3)

The meaning of all degrees at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels are grounded in UC Merced's identity as a "research university serving a diverse student population in the San Joaquin Valley." UC Merced strongly identifies itself as fulfilling the mission of the University of California to increase access to higher education including those from the most underserved areas of California. Within this context a broadly representative group of faculty and staff drafted the Hallmarks of Baccalaureate degrees at UC Merced in 2014, which was intended to provide a framework for revising the GE program. The Hallmarks include five dimensions of preparation including (1) intellectual development, (2) cultural awareness, (3) community engagement, (4) self-awareness and intrapersonal skills, and (5) interpersonal abilities. Each of these five dimensions has a subset of skills, knowledge, orientations and dispositions that a student graduating from UC Merced should "embody" to "bear the unique imprint of having attended UC Merced." When the team met with undergraduate students they confirmed familiarity with the Hallmarks and agreed with their importance.

The Hallmarks are considered to be a set of overarching outcomes that are integrated into the major, General Education, and the co-curriculum. These dimensions or components are further defined through the PLO's (CFR 2.2). The campus is still in the beginning stages of assessing the impact of the Hallmarks, but in early work to align the relatively new GE program with the major PLO's suggests that majors contribute to Hallmarks 1, 3 and 4. The GE program is intended to support all five Hallmarks while it is anticipated that the co-curricular program, still under development by the Division of Student Affairs, will support Hallmarks two through five.

Student feedback gathered through student focus groups in spring of 2014 suggested that the Hallmarks were already a part of the student experience, particularly Hallmarks 1, 2, 4 and 5. Over 90% of seniors included in the focus group felt they embodied those Hallmarks. Community engagement and citizenship was ranked a bit lower as an attribute that was descriptive of their experience. As indicated in essay five, the Division of Student Affairs is reorganizing its services to better address this Hallmark. Importantly, the student focus group activity validated that the Hallmarks were embraced as important attributes for future UC Merced graduates and the continued work on the GE program and connecting curricular and co-curricular experiences is seen as important for student achievement and success.

At the graduate level the meaning of the degree is aligned with the research mission of the University of California and UC Merced places a high priority on engaging its graduate students in original research. With a current Carnegie Classification as high research (R2) the university aims to become a high research (R1) within the next 10 years.

Graduate degrees at UC Merced emphasize research and that emphasis is articulated in the general catalogue, program websites, recruitment materials, policies and procedures and in the Graduate Advisors Handbook. The graduate degrees offered at UC Merced generally reflect the

standards established by the Council of Graduate Schools. Given the unique circumstances of UC Merced it is very fitting that the institution focuses on interdisciplinary research and training as it addresses applied and pressing problems confronting society. Graduate student interdisciplinary opportunities are facilitated by the structure of the graduate groups with core and affiliated faculty who are trained in multiple disciplines. The campus also has a growing number of grant-funded research centers and training grants that reflect the interdisciplinary mission of UC Merced.

Individual academic programs are all defined by each program's learning outcomes (PLOs). These PLO's, communicated through program websites, general catalog and course syllabi, are subject to regular review and revision by program faculty. In each degree program the meaning of the degree is also defined by the rubrics used to assess student achievement of the PLO's. In developing these rubrics many programs have looked to already published rubrics such as the AAC & U VALUE rubrics, while others have been locally developed. Programmatic rubrics outlining standards of performance for each criterion are increasingly used to assess programs.

Program learning outcomes articulated in the various courses are used to plan a coherent, scaffolded curriculum through the development of curriculum maps that are required for all new proposals. Thus, for every PLO each course must either introduce, develop or provide mastery appropriate for graduation. In this manner, course learning outcomes (CLO's) are aligned with PLO's. Moreover, this alignment of CLO's and PLO's allows for the assessment of intended program outcomes and courses can be assessed, modified or re-sequenced in an effort to strengthen student performance. The GE curriculum development provides a nice example of how program assessment can lead to the development of a re-designed curriculum and one that

now serves as an institutional program with an explicit mission to reinforce the Hallmarks of the UC Merced degree.

This new GE program is set to be implemented with the first-time freshmen and transfer students in the fall of 2018. First year “Spark” seminars will be developed in which a contemporary problem will be used to engage students with research questions, facilitate academic success and introduce them to the concept of a research university. In the upper division GE courses interdisciplinary teams of faculty will teach “Crossroad” courses that are intended to “extend and integrate knowledge, understanding, and skills of research, reasoning, communication, cultural and global awareness and citizenship.” In their fourth year, each student will engage in a culminating experience that integrates their work in the major with their experiences of GE.

At the site visit, several groups made reference to the fact that the vote in support of the new GE program was very tight. In most instances faculty apprehension about the GE program was related to concerns that the Spark and Crossroads seminars will take away resources from the departments. The team encourages UC Merced to keep faculty apprised of the process as the GE program is rolled out in fall 2018 and to keep track of the resources required. As one faculty member put it: “Resource constraints are ubiquitous and it often seems like there is inequity in providing resources.”

The co-curriculum offered at UC Merced also plays an important role in supporting student development of intended outcomes. The co-curriculum is delivered by several units across campus including the library, the Office of Undergraduate Education, the Division of Student Affairs and the schools. The various co-curricular offerings are also engaged in aligning programs to the Hallmarks in an effort to reinforce student achievement of campus educational

priorities. Graduate students also have diverse co-curricular opportunities to further strengthen and broaden their skills as outlined by the graduate program and institutional outcomes.

Overall, there are four processes at UC Merced that ensure the quality, meaning and integrity of both undergraduate and graduate degrees. These include the process by which new programs are established, the process by which new courses are developed and existing courses are revised and approved, the annual assessment of program learning outcomes and the periodic program review of units. Each of these processes is governed by the campus and by UC system policy. These processes further engage the faculty and administration to ensure they are designed and resourced to support intended student outcomes. The processes yield self-studies, team reports and action plans to strengthen student learning and success. Further, these processes allow for continuous improvement and iteration and closing the loop in the assessment process. All in all, the team is impressed by the various processes in place at UC Merced to intentionally describe the meaning of its undergraduate and graduate degrees through its curriculum and co-curriculum. Quality and integrity are also ensured through the detailed review processes that are in place.

IID. Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation (CFRs 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

It is evident that UC Merced has taken seriously the quality of students' educational experiences. In the institution's Interim Report Committee letter in 2014, UC Merced was commended on several areas of progress the institution had made since it received Initial Accreditation in 2011, in which it was noted there was a "need for further progress in institutionalizing and sustaining program review and assessment of student learning and the need for increased attention to student success." The 2014 Interim Report Committee noted "meaningful and significant progress in each of these areas." That report praised UC Merced for substantially strengthening and institutionalizing its assessment and program review processes

and using the results to make improvements. Based upon its institutional report for reaffirmation, it is clear that UC Merced has continued to improve this practice and, in an effort to make sure assessment impacts student achievement, the faculty have focused on promoting “locally owned, program specific assessment practices.” This is intended to allow for a diversity of approaches to assessment across programs that can utilize different forms of evidence, rubrics, criteria and standards of performance that reflect the programs and their PLOs.

In 2014-15 the campus began publishing a summary of undergraduate student learning outcome learning results for each academic year. These summaries include student self-perceptions of their knowledge and abilities, faculty conclusions about student learning achievement (in majors, minors and GE), actions to improve student learning and any budget implications for proposed improvement interventions. Student learning is aggregated across all undergraduate programs and each program can evaluate the evidence of student achievement. (Impressive websites include <https://assessment.ucmerced.edu/campus-principles> and <https://assessment.ucmerced.edu/academic/2015-2016-undergraduate-learning-outcomes>).

UC Merced’s Assessment Website makes assessment very transparent and shows the institution’s commitment to making assessment a priority. Posting annual summaries of student learning outcomes on its assessment website shows transparency and a commitment to improved outcomes.

In general, the most recent years of data indicate that both faculty and students consider students to be proficient in the skill sets outlined by the major or minor PLO’s. Similarly, 92% of seniors taking the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey in 2014 and 2016 rated their understanding of a specific field of study as excellent, very good or good. Similarly, 83% of programs submitting annual PLO reports concluded they were pleased with

student learning. In making this assessment of PLOs, diverse forms of student work were considered including final papers; final exam questions; oral presentations; homework; group projects; diagnostic examinations; and capstone projects. Because of the array of student work being assessed, actions to improve student learning can target a subset of skills for improvement. In several cases, where warranted, curricular revisions led to improved student learning. In other cases, there were areas for improvements that were common across several programs. For example, quantitative data analysis, data presentation, the ability to discuss real world applications and develop research questions or hypotheses were common areas for improvement across programs. In response, programs have developed strategies that can be shared across programs and have improved the coordination of these efforts between instructors and courses.

UC Merced is one of the first institutions that must assess all five WSCUC core competencies (written communication, quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy and critical thinking) by describing how the undergraduate curriculum addresses each core competency, explaining learning outcomes in relation to core competencies and providing evidence of student performance and the extent to which competencies are achieved at or near graduation. In order to meet this expectation, all undergraduate degree programs at UC Merced were asked to align the WSCUC competencies to their PLO's and to submit a plan to assess these competencies at or near graduation. This effort resulted in 22 assessment plans (one for each major) to guide assessment of core competencies (<https://app.box.com/file/200947006342>). All majors in the Schools of Engineering and Natural Sciences and Social Sciences support the development of all five competencies at or near graduation. Exceptions to this included humanities majors in English, History, Spanish and Global Arts Studies. These majors did not

include core competencies in quantitative reasoning. For students in these majors, the GE curriculum will support the development and assessment of quantitative reasoning skills.

Emerging results are an important starting point for discussion and action and provide opportunities to focus on well-defined goals for student learning. The use of rubrics has been particularly helpful in providing constructive feedback to programs. In general, program conclusions regarding student performance suggests that programs are pleased with student performance in written communication (73%), oral communication (80%), and critical thinking (71%). However, performance in information literacy (63%) and quantitative reasoning (60%) are lower than expected. These results provide programs with opportunities to strengthen student performance by revising pedagogies, focusing on essential skills related to intended learning outcomes and increasing the number of assignments to better scaffold the learning. This seems like a reasonable plan given that a majority of UC Merced first-time freshmen matriculate needing additional development in core academic skills. During the site visit, some faculty expressed frustration with the lack of preparation of their students, but most embraced the opportunity to work with the UC Merced population of students and they enjoy their ability to make a difference in the lives of their students. UC Merced has developed a comprehensive system of program review that includes academic units as well as administrative and support operations.

With respect to graduate student learning program assessment, data suggest that graduate programs are defining and assessing intellectual competencies that are foundational to each field through PLO's. While faculty are satisfied with student achievement, they also want to continue to strengthen that achievement. Examples of PLO's include: "the capacity for self-directed learning to advance knowledge; the ability to apply the underlying principles, philosophies,

ethical norms, and research methodologies of their fields to produce new knowledge; proficiency with the communication formats of the field; and the possession of professional skills necessary to lead productive careers.”

UC Merced has done an outstanding job of focusing attention on student learning, core competencies and standards of performance at graduation and their respective assessments. The high priority placed on student learning and in fostering a vibrant assessment culture that includes a transparent and easily accessible assessment website is commended.

IIE. Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation
(CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.13, 2.2 4.3, 4.7)

The institutional report reveals a significant commitment to student success throughout the entire UC Merced Campus. Student success was a hallmark of the campus’s creation and has been reaffirmed both at the initial accreditation review and most recently after the 2014 interim report. The campus has been able to involve the entire campus in creating the foundation and building the programs necessary for assuring success for future students (CFRs 4.3, 4.7).

The report further reveals a deep commitment to student success as witnessed by the campus mission statement and campus-wide planning efforts focused on improving the student experience. In fall of 2015, UC Merced reports first-year retention rates of 85.8% for freshman, which is strong when compared to national comparative data for the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students that attend UC Merced. The university is constantly adjusting the scope and direction of programs based on student needs found in directed student surveys (CFR 4.7).

The institutional report documented the different programs especially those designed for sub-groups of students who need additional or specialized services. Of equal importance are the descriptions of the many services and programs that provide direct and individualized services to students. Of special note is a unique and innovative program designed specifically to engage

commuter students more directly with campus life. Evidence presented indicates that this program has been successful by providing services and activities to meet the needs of commuter students. This effort will continue to be important especially as the campus grows the number of students who will need to live off-campus (CFRs 2.14, 2.11).

At both the undergraduate and graduate level the campus has steadily increased campus co-curricular services to meet the needs of a rapidly growing student body. The campus is commended for developing additional programs and services to meet the needs of underrepresented students from underserved populations in California. The data for the Fiat-Lux program already reveals that participating students graduate at a higher rate than those not exposed to the program's academic support activities. As the campus enrolls more students in need of this type of support the campus may wish to consider expanding the program's reach (CFR 2.11).

Noteworthy are the programs for entering students that provide additional orientation and acculturation to campus life and intellectual pursuits that have had a significant impact on retention for first-year students at all entry levels. For example, there are the special-focused programs for incoming transfers that have produced exemplary results for first-year retention of these students.

UC Merced has already developed the base programs necessary for success among enrolled graduate students. Although a young research university, the campus has already recognized the need to direct activities to increase graduate student acculturation to the campus, support for research opportunities, creation of peer support groups, and academic support during key times of a graduate student's academic cycle (CFR 2.12).

As mentioned at the initial accreditation review the campus deserves recognition for retention and graduation rates that are higher than would be predicted for entering students with the demographics like those at UC Merced. The campus data show that Latino and Black students graduate at the same rate as other enrolled students (CFRs 2.10, 4.2).

UC Merced is to be commended for continuing to increase the number of enrolled students while maintaining the same graduation/retention rates for both graduate and undergraduate students (CFR 2.10).

In an effort to increase the graduation/retention rates, the campus has launched several initiatives based on best practices. These initiatives include: better data collection and analysis to predict the success rates for entering students; changes in campus policies and procedures to eliminate barriers to success; efforts to involve the entire campus in student success; and new programs for sub-groups of students (CFRs 2.10, 2.11).

The team was very interested in the development of new efforts to create mandatory activities and advising for students at risk at different points in their academic experience. The development of mandatory advising programs for at-risk students is a relatively new effort within US higher education and the team looks forward to any innovative findings resulting from the new programs at UC Merced. The team observed that while UC Merced offers many tutorial programs, they often provided overlapping services; have different staffing certifications levels; and there is no clear roadmap or documentation for students to help guide them to the most appropriate program for their specific need. The team recommends that UC Merced improve and simplify mechanisms for undergraduate students to easily access appropriate tutoring services (CFR 2.13).

The team observed that while the Academic Policy Study Group is working diligently to identify and resolve impediments to undergraduate student success it suffers from a lack of ability to mandate change. Thus, the team recommends that a mechanism be established in which the work of the Academic Policy Study Group is shared periodically with the chancellor and the provost so that appropriate changes designed to improve student success can be implemented (CFRs 2.10 and 3.7). The team learned that the Academic Policy Study Group has been studying D, F, W rates in STEM courses to help identify barriers to student success in STEM fields; this effort has been focused at the course level. While this work is important and relevant, the team notes that analyzing data by instructor (not just by course) can sometimes be useful in further identifying and mediating barriers to student success (CFR 2.10). UC Merced has implemented a mid-semester (8th week) identification and intervention program for students at risk. UC Merced is encouraged to focus on the 2nd or 3rd week since waiting until the 8th week may be too late in the term for effective intervention (CFR 2.10).

The campus is commended for creating so many co-curricular learning opportunities for the growing student population, including expanded research and internship opportunities and opportunities for students to learn leadership and life skills. The team was pleased to see the number of programs available to graduate students to increase their professional skills (CFR 2.13).

As the student body has grown, the campus has increased student services, developed new services, and reorganized existing offices all with the major goal of increasing student success. The campus also has plans to expand the student services to meet the student demand (CFRs 2.13, 4.7, 4.5).

The team expressed concern about the absence of a comprehensive plan to increase graduation rates among UC Merced students. The initial accreditation team stated that it is “important for UCM to achieve better alignment of retention strategies with resources and admission processes that enhance the educational effectiveness expectation of the campus.” The current team believes that it is important for the campus to use its experience during the intervening years to develop a retention/graduation plan that includes goals and timelines. The campus has excellent resources available including student services grounded in best practices and student performance data that can be used to develop a retention and graduation plan. The university also has student experience research that can best inform a goal-driven plan to increase student success. The team also encourages UC Merced to conduct an analysis to determine why students enroll at UC Merced and why students leave the campus prior to graduation as these data may be useful in the development of effective retention and graduation rate improvement plans.

Of special concern for the team is the significant difference in 4-year graduation rates between males (28.6%) and females (47.7%). The team encourages the university to investigate further the reasons for this difference and use a comprehensive retention/graduation plan to address this disparity.

IIF. Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review, Assessment, Use of Data and Evidence (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

UC Merced has created structures and processes dedicated to quality assurance and program improvement through the effective use of data and analysis. The team has no doubt that the university leadership and a clear majority of faculty and staff are dedicated to continuously improving all aspects of university operations as they strive to effectively serve students and improve the lives of all constituents.

UC Merced leaders, key staff and faculty have demonstrated that they are dedicated to efficiently and effectively planning programs and monitoring progress through self-studies and reviews. Moreover, the university has made several adjustments to support operations, committees and administrative offices that support quality assurance activities. There is a plethora of information, committees, processes and data that inform the development of degree programs and courses, research initiatives and other critical university operations. Fortunately, these complex quality assurance processes are buoyed by a widely shared and palpable dedication to a distinct institutional mission and commonly shared values in support of providing all students, including those who are first in their families to attend college, with access to a high-quality education delivered within and enhanced by world-class research-intensive activities.

Launching a university de novo that meets University of California expectations while also establishing a unique mission and goals, UC Merced has incorporated exhaustive and demanding quality assurance and improvement initiatives throughout critical campus operations. Sustaining this data-driven quality assurance environment has been possible (in part) because faculty, staff, and students seem to share common aspirations. Of course, not everyone agrees on what the university's future should look like. Nevertheless, most faculty and staff appear to understand the value of evidence-based quality assurance processes and participatory program reviews and planning activities.

Results generated by program reviews and learning assessment are further available to help improve instruction and student learning. For example, since 2013-14 on average 76% (of the undergraduate programs reporting) are taking steps to improve student learning; and over two-

thirds of academic programs have attempted to improve their assessment methods. In 2015-16 85% of graduate programs report that they acted to improve student learning as well.

To increase the likelihood that faculty are properly rewarded for supporting and engaging in assessment work, assessment activities are now included as part of teaching performance reviews.

The team was impressed by efforts to integrate program review information with some personnel processes. The team is aware that there are many performance expectations, including planning and assessment demands, placed on the university faculty, especially senior tenured faculty. And the team is encouraged by campus efforts to improve the usefulness and accessibility of assessment data. University leaders appear to fully understand that if data are not perceived as helpful or readily accessible to decision-makers, it will be difficult to sustain the quality assurance and improvement processes that have characterized UC Merced operations since 2011.

The team is encouraged by the work of faculty and campus support teams intended to improve the quality of assessment methodologies and ultimately university instruction and degree programs. Nevertheless, extraordinary workload demands on faculty and staff may make it increasingly difficult to maintain the elaborate quality assurance systems that have been developed without additional investment in support personnel.

Alumni self-report studies reveal that most graduates are satisfied with UC Merced academic programs. This high degree of satisfaction is not only testament to the quality of instruction provided by faculty but reflects the strategic use of academic program reviews and student learning focused self-studies that have had a demonstrable impact on degree programs. In some cases, quality assurance initiatives have identified the need to add discussion sections, and revise

program requirements—which has been done. The team is confident that campus leaders will monitor the long-term impact of these changes as a growing number of UC Merced graduates enter the workforce or continue to post-graduate studies.

Periodic and annual program review protocols in Student Affairs have been well developed since 2009. Despite workload demands on staff, and the need to serve the immediate needs of a growing student population, the leadership of the Student Affairs division appears to be fully committed to continuously assessing the quality of their programs and implementing data driven improvements.

All of UC Merced’s administrative units are expected to undergo periodic review. These reviews draw on the results from self-studies and site visits by teams of evaluators. Despite delays in fully completing all reviews, several administrative units have been evaluated and reorganized. There is clear evidence that reviews have contributed to change and in some cases the creation of new administrative units. The team is confident that university’s leadership appreciates the importance of dedicating administrative resources needed to strengthen support staff capacity and improve data services.

The rapidly changing higher education environment and the many fiscal, economic and social demands on public higher education now require perhaps more than ever, that schools sustain highly developed and institutionalized quality assurance programs. The team is pleased to find that the UC Merced has created a positive quality assurance culture on the campus. It is important, however, that the campus continue to reflect on the efficiency of these process and strive to avoid “assessment overload.”

Despite a common tendency within the higher education community to treat teaching and research as mutually exclusive enterprises, by developing and using assessment strategies that

align with all core university functions, UC Merced leaders appear to view improved educational outcomes and increased research productivity as highly interrelated core academic functions.

The team encourages representatives from Student Affairs and academic programs to continue to collectively integrate their student success programs and identify the many ways to support and enhance learning and professional development.

II.G. Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability, Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment (CFRs 3.4, 3.7, 4.1,4.3-4.7)

The team verified that UC Merced has developed appropriate planning and goal alignment processes to allow the campus to accommodate its planned growth trajectory and its highest academic priorities.

As discussed above, UC Merced is the newest campus in the UC system and continues to be supported by the strength of the overall system. UC Merced provides monthly financial reporting to the UC system and is subject to annual audits as part of the system. The university's expenditures of federal funds are audited annually in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 and annual financial statements for the University of California are prepared and audited on a consolidated basis. These audited financial statements are then included in the University's Annual Financial Reports. As with the financial statement audits, the Single Audits are conducted on a consolidated basis and reports on all campus locations (CFR 3.4). UC Merced has a full time CEO (Chancellor) and has added a full time CFO as well as additional senior staff who provide effective leadership and management to guide the campus (CFR 3.8). Shared governance is strong at the institution and the faculty are actively involved in the decision-making process, both at the campus and system-wide level (CFR 3.9).

For much of its history, UC Merced has benefited from the financial support provided by the system, particularly pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of California Office of the President. The initial MOU expired at the end of fiscal year 2013-2014, but provided UC Merced with much needed stability during a time of considerable fiscal uncertainty in the State of California and for UC as a whole as UC Merced correctly notes, “.... appropriations from the State of California general fund to the University of California had fallen from \$3.26 billion in FY 2007-08 to \$2.59 billion in FY 2009-10, a \$666 million reduction...” While a small portion of this reduction was offset by increases in student tuition, the stability provided by the MOU not only allowed the institution to reach its student growth expectations, but to balance its operating budget (CFR 3.4).

The campus, effective July 1, 2015, executed a new MOU with UC Office of the President which will be in place through July 1, 2020. This new MOU continues the systems’ commitment to provide an additional level of financial support and stability to UC Merced (CFR 3.4). The MOU provides \$10k per student FTE (which is higher than that which is provided the other UC campuses under the rebenching formula. This allocation formula is designed to ensure that enrollment driven funding is normalized on a weighted per-student enrollment basis across the system) for an annual growth rate of 650 students. An additional \$5 million per year will help fund start-up packages for 18-25 new research-active faculty per year over the next seven years, and “[a] commitment in principle to form a clear partnership between the Office of the President and UC Merced for the financing of the 2020 Project as well as its near-term capital development needs...” The additional funding allocated under this MOU will provide the funding to support UC Merced’s faculty hiring plan (CFRs 3.4, 4.6).

Another positive aspect of the second MOU is the expressed identification that UC Merced

“...must meet three challenges:

- To mature as a research university in the same intellectual class as the other UC campuses, which will require focused attention and investment in graduate programs and the research enterprise;
- To continue to play an important role in fulfilling the UC's Master Plan commitment to find a place for every eligible student; and
- To preserve the unique academic and cultural character of a campus intentionally placed in California's San Joaquin Valley.”

These statements, being part of the MOU, stress the important connection between the MOU and the development of UC Merced’s academic programs, its need to become a “... full-fledged University of California-quality research university,” service to the State of California’s Master Plan, and the recognition of the important role that UC Merced has in the San Joaquin Valley (CFRs 3.4, 4.3).

Note that the planning model provided by the university (discussed in more detail below) shows that UC Merced remains fiscally viable after expiration of this second MOU. However, given the reliance on revenues being generated by auxiliary enterprises (which are primarily provided by UC Merced students) in the 2020 plan, the relative youth of the campus, UC Merced’s unique role helping the UC System honor its obligations under the State’s Higher Education Master Plan, and the lack of other ancillary funding sources at UC Merced that are available to older more mature campuses, the team encourages UC Merced to seek a third MOU with the UC System to extend well past the completion of the 2020 Project. While there is every indication that the UC Office of the President and the other campuses in the UC System are fully

committed to the success of UC Merced, UC Merced finds itself vulnerable to that level of commitment, and the stability provided by the MOU will allow the campus to continue to be successful in meeting its mission and ensuring the success of its unique student population.

UC Merced is actively engaged in long-range financial planning as evidenced by the planning model provided which shows, among other things, actual and projected revenues; expenses; cash reserves; student enrollments; and faculty, staff, and student employee counts through fiscal year 2030. That model, while perhaps aggressive in certain areas (for example, Auxiliary Enterprise net revenues in the out years in the model are increasing at a very high rate and are what is generating the positive margin for the university), reflects a forward looking planning process not only focused on viability today, but also into the future. While long-range planning models are never accurate in the long term, having a process whereby the model is updated regularly provides value to financial management as it can signal to an institution that proactive fiscal or operational changes are required to avoid shortfalls. Importantly, UC Merced indicated that should the model's financial assumptions not be met, that the campus is prepared to tap into reserves, cut costs, or identify additional revenue streams. UC Merced has also indicated its desire to develop and implement a new campus budget model to incentivize financially feasible decisions designed to realize the academic goals of the institution and to help ensure long-term financial sustainability, and to better enable the institution to respond to changes in higher education (CFRs 3.4, 4.7). The outcome of this effort will be of interest to future review teams.

The funding model provided was used to develop the finance plan for the 2020 Project (discussed below) and has been reviewed by not only campus leadership, but also by the UC Office of the President, and was presented to the Board of Regents in support of the 2020

Project. Thus, the plan has undergone a number of reviews and can be considered to be viable. As noted by the institution, the process for updating this model and the discussion of outcomes and operational impacts must be incorporated into the campus planning budget processes. That being said, UC Merced, like many state supported institutions across the nation, is heavily reliant on state support and student tuition and fees and can be materially impacted by downturns in the state's economy. A third MOU with the system could help mitigate some of this risk. Like similarly situated institutions, UC Merced must continue to diversify its revenue portfolio.

Many aspirational growth plans solely focus on operational needs while ignoring the substantial financial burden of providing necessary academic and support space. UC Merced did not fall into that pitfall, as its 2020 Project includes 1.2 million gross square feet of critically needed academic and student life space. UC Merced indicates that this project will enable the campus to accomplish its enrollment goal of 10,000 and its faculty hiring plans. What is truly unique about this project is the use of a design-build approach with long-term operations and maintenance obligations. This approach not only allows for the faster delivery of facilities and increased fiscal certainty, but also addresses deferred maintenance costs typically not well funded by higher educational institutions as demonstrated by the national backlog. This project is also reflected in the UC Merced financial model and thus is shown as being financially viable for the campus (CFR 3.4).

To ensure that its allocation decisions were aligned with the campus's strategic objectives, in 2016 the campus engaged in what it called "The 2020 Visioning and Change Alignment Process." This was a campus-wide initiative designed to shape the future of UC Merced initiated by the chancellor and supported by campus senior leadership (CFRs 4.6, 4.7). Out of this campus-wide consultative process, five "pathways" were agreed upon to guide campus strategic

investment: 1) Support and hire the best faculty, 2) Recruit and support talented students, 3) Retain, attract and develop exceptional staff, 4) Refine and modernize its tools for assessing and measuring success and processes for improvement, and 5) Successfully implement the 2020 expansion and a space planning process tied to its teaching, research and public service mission (CFR 4.3). Continuing to allocate resources according to these “pathways” should result in the long-term alignment of resource allocations and campus goals evaluated in the context of available resources (CFRs 3.2, 4.7) as demonstrated by the recent UC Merced Workforce Planning Initiative, which resulted in the allocation of up to 44 (FTE) new staff positions in focused areas of Research Excellence and Academic Distinction; Student Success; and Organizational Efficiencies and Sustainability and included the participation of a wide variety of campus constituents including senior administrative leaderships, deans, and faculty. The team observed that UC Merced’s leadership has made an improved effort to improve transparency, particularly with respect to the allocation of resources and planning functions.

Nevertheless, a consistent theme in discussions among faculty and staff groups was that the level of communication from senior leadership and upper-level management to the campus community and to the broader non-university community would benefit from enhancements. A lack of communication was referenced in concerns raised about incompatible IT systems used between different units or even within the same unit between different buildings. Another recurring theme was the opportunity for more clarity regarding the university’s role in the development and growth of the city. The mayor’s recent State of the City address referenced the important role of the university and community development, and this was seen as a positive sign. The team, therefore recommends more active communication among senior leadership, faculty, staff and students on issues of broad campus importance. Town hall meetings, brown

bag lunches, or technology enhanced presentations may facilitate regular communication to further improve student success (CFR 4.6 and 3.5).

III. Component 8: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

UC Merced was established in 2005 with a vision of exemplifying a 21st century research university. Its primary mission was to provide a pathway to college for one of the most underserved populations in California. The San Joaquin Valley, home to UC Merced, had been one of the most educationally underserved regions in the nation—given the number of people who live there, its geographical size and the relative lack of a four-year public research university.

To reach its full impact, the nascent university needed to reflect the strengths and opportunities unique to its geographical location—the intersection of the agricultural valley and the incredible natural resources of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Beyond broadly educating the workforce of the future, UC Merced’s strategic mission included a focus on the region’s agriculture, agricultural infrastructure and research disciplines vital to the area. The university was launched with a founding belief that it would play national and international roles in academic research and programs focused on environmental issues and sustainability.

The initial growth of the university was challenging. First, it was part of a state system of established campuses. It required resources that were also needed by the strongest collection of public research universities in the history of the world. As a new campus, UC Merced was competing for resources with the other state campuses. In short, the UC system had to divert resources from other campuses and give them preferentially to UC Merced based on a promise—rather than proof—of success. Every dollar was contentious—UC Merced’s siblings could all rightly claim that they, too, had pressing unmet needs. Nevertheless, UC Merced was founded

and began to grow and prosper. Unfortunately, it found itself squarely at the epicenter of the bursting housing bubble and the financial crisis of 2008.

It was sustained during these times through the commitment and support of the system's other campuses and the UC Office of the President, but this was a very challenging winter for a seedling institution to prosper. The other universities in the system also were financially impacted and, at the same time, were asked to extend local support for UC Merced.

In the aftermath of the recession, UC Merced has once again turned its attention to growing appropriately, although at a rate slower than its initial strategic plan directed. UC Merced's continued success against these headwinds is laudable but has remained a daily challenge.

It is the impression of the team that the infrastructure and physical, fiscal, technological and informational resources that the campus possesses are adequate for continuing its growth. However, the team notes that the path forward remains uphill, and the road is not yet smooth.

Given these challenges, every indication is that the faculty and leadership of UC Merced are enthusiastic, fully engaged and capable of being successful. They are clearly focused on the issues that are important to its campus and development. They demonstrate a high level of engagement with issues that will continue to lead to real improvement.

In the UC Merced institutional report, it is clear that the institution has been vigilant in gathering evidence and analyzing it carefully. As a new and growing campus, it is using this evidence to support its actions, decision-making and claims. The institution has made a series of important recommendations for improvement resulting from its self-study, and the report lists these in an organized and easy-to-follow fashion. This has, in particular, led to visible improvement since the university received initial accreditation in 2011.

The assessment of teaching and learning has improved and is producing positive results. The faculty and administrative staff take seriously the responsibility for assessing whether or not the students are doing well.

UC Merced continues to honor its vital land-grant mission of educating the people of the region. It has done an admirable job of graduating and supporting first-generation, lower- and middle-income students and students from diverse backgrounds.

As a national leader in this area, UC Merced deserves recognition and should continue its commitment to greater access. At the same time, UC Merced continually works with the challenges of educating underrepresented and first-generation students, which, in many cases, are greater challenges than educating legacy students with robust family resources.

Finally, the team encourages the continued support of UC Merced by the University of California system, its sister campuses, and the California state legislature. UC Merced is vitally important to the region. As the first American research university of the 21st century, UC Merced is making an impact today—and is positioned to make an even greater impact in the future.

SECTION III– COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations: The team commends UC Merced for:

1. A comprehensive, well-organized and highly informative institutional report that describes the unique nature of the student body and documents the university's commitment to student learning and continuous improvement.
2. Committees, processes, and mechanisms that facilitate data collection, and that ensure 100% of the UC Merced programs have developed and published program learning outcomes that are accessible to students, faculty staff and others.

3. The high priority placed on student learning and for fostering a vibrant assessment culture including a transparent and easily accessible assessment website.
4. A comprehensive system of program review that includes academic units and administrative and support operations.
5. The involvement of senate faculty in the decision-making process and ensuring a robust system of shared governance, particularly in the last 3-4 years.
6. An ambitious growth plan that encompasses the physical space and intellectual footprint necessary to become a major research university.
7. Effective communication of the 2020 Project in a way that has generated enthusiasm and engagement of campus stakeholders.
8. New and innovative academic support and student services that address the needs of a growing diverse student body including a large number of low-income and first-generation students.
9. Its all-hands approach to providing opportunities to ensure student success despite less access to ancillary funding sources that are typically available to many larger or mature institutions.
10. The significant commitment and dedication of its teaching faculty, administrators, and staff to the success of its diverse student body as evidenced by much higher than predicted retention and graduation rates.

Recommendations: The team recommends that UC Merced:

1. Create a comprehensive data driven retention and graduation plan with timelines, goals and periodic assessments to help the campus focus current and future academic support and student services (CFR 2.10).

2. Implement a strategy for more active communication among senior leadership, faculty, staff and students on issues of broad campus importance. The strategy could include town hall meetings, brown bag lunches and technology enhanced modalities or other approaches (CFRs 4.6, 3.5).
3. Establish a mechanism in which the work of the Academic Policy Study Group related to undergraduate student success is shared periodically with the chancellor and the provost so that appropriate changes to improve student success can be implemented (CFRs 2.10, 3.7).
4. Improve and simplify mechanisms for undergraduate students to easily access appropriate tutoring services (CFR 2.13).
5. Develop a strategic plan beyond 2020 (CFR 4.6).

Appendix 1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, where is the policy located? On the resource websites for Undergraduate Council and separately Graduate Council . See Credit Hour Policy .
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Credit hour assignments are reviewed during the process by which new courses are requested or existing courses are revised, following procedures established in policies promulgated by Undergraduate Council and separately Graduate Council .
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The schedule is available here https://mystudentrecord.ucmerced.edu/pls/PROD/xhwschedule.p_selectsubject
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 5
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? both
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Mechanical Engineering, Math, Earth Systems Science, Environmental Science, Engineering
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: All syllabi were complete with learning outcomes, assignments, grading information and expectations about how much time students needed to spend.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)	How many syllabi were reviewed? 11
	What kinds of courses? Lab and independent study courses
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? ME, EECS, CSE, PSY, Econ, Chem, QSB, BIO, COGS, SOC
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

<i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	Comments: Syllabi contained learning outcomes, expected work outcomes, meeting schedules, grading standards. Unit values were typically a range.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 5
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Biology BS, Chem BS, Econ BA, Cog Sci Ph.D., Public Health Ph.D.
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s) Biology BS, Chem BS, Econ BA, CogSci Ph.D, Public Health Ph.D.
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<p>Comments: For undergraduate majors, information on the number of credits required for undergraduate degrees is available in the catalog by school and major: Engineering, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. This information is also available on school advising websites: Engineering, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts.</p> <p>For graduate degrees, this information is available on program websites and/or in the program's Policies and Procedures posted on websites. Program websites can be reached from the Graduate Division website. Minimum requirements for the master's and PhD degrees are described in the Graduate Advisor's Handbook (campus level policies and procedures), also available from the Graduate Division website (See menu under Current Students).</p>

Review Completed By: Cathie Atkins
Date: 3/18/18

Appendix 2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	<p data-bbox="350 718 1104 745">Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students?</p> <p data-bbox="350 747 483 774">X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p data-bbox="350 783 1429 842">Comments: UC Merced follows federal regulations when recruiting students as well as the following policies and regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="396 848 1250 909">- Undergraduate Recruitment Practices (effective date: 12/18/2014) http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2700628/UndergraduateRecruitmentPractices <li data-bbox="396 959 1120 1020">- University of California Conflict of Interest Code http://www.ucop.edu/general-counsel/ files/uc_coi_code.pdf <li data-bbox="396 1071 1356 1131">- University of California Statement of Ethical Values and Standards of Ethical Conduct http://www.ucop.edu/ethics-compliance-audit-services/ files/stmt-stds-ethics.pdf <li data-bbox="396 1182 1247 1243">- University of California, System wide Policy Office http://www.ucop.edu/ethics-compliance-audit-services/policy/index.html <li data-bbox="448 1293 1003 1354">- PPSM-82-Conflict of Interest http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4010421/PPSM-82 <li data-bbox="448 1404 1445 1505">- BUS-43: Procurement Services. See section on conflict of interest and employee-vendor relationship http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/3220485/BFB%20BUS-43 <li data-bbox="396 1556 1255 1656">- California Political Reform Act (updated 2016) http://www.fppc.ca.gov/content/dam/fppc/NS-Documents/LegalDiv/The%20Political%20Reform%20Act/2016-act-final.pdf <li data-bbox="396 1707 1039 1768">- Federal Higher Education Act. http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/edpicks.ihtml <p data-bbox="350 1801 1442 1892">University admission staff are also guided by the NACAC (National Association of College Admissions Counseling) Statements of Good Practice: https://www.nacacnet.org/advocacy--ethics/statement-of-principles-of-good-practice/</p>

Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Information on the cost of the degree is available on UC Merced's financial aid website , which can be directly accessed following the Financial Aid link from the UCM Admission's website . Information about the typical length of time to degree can be accessed at http://irds.ucmerced.edu/student.htm from the FAQ and Academic and Majors sections of the http://admissions.ucmerced.edu/ website.
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Information about careers available to particular majors is provided on UCM's Admission's website . This information is also listed in the in the School of Engineering, School of Natural Sciences, and School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts undergraduate publications. These school publications are available in print and online: SOE: https://ucmerced.cld.bz/Admissions-Publications-and-Resources/SOE-School-brochure-2015 Natural Sciences: https://ucmerced.cld.bz/Admissions-Publications-and-Resources/SNS-School-Brochure-2015 Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts: https://ucmerced.cld.bz/Admissions-Publications-and-Resources/SSHA-School-Brochure-2015

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Cathie Atkins
Date: 3/18/18

Appendix 3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? For students, links to the policies and procedures governing the various student compliant processes are available on the Division of Student Affairs website: http://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/students/filing-complaint .
	Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, please describe briefly: Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the campus has various processes and resources in place to assist the student through the complaint. Some complaint processes are coordinated at the system level, some through assigned positions on campus as per UC policy. So the type of compliant determines the pathway for redress. For example. SVSH and campus climate related concerns are addressed through systemlevel and systemwide process. Online resources exist to enable student access to complaint processes and resources and staff are trained (and assigned to each incident) to assist students with navigating these processes.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments:
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Records of complaints to enable tracking, monitoring and ensuring disposition their disposition varies with the type of complaint. Title IX related complaints are addressed by the Office of Campus Culture and Compliance. Student Conduct by the Office of Student Life. Complaints regarding bias of any type are tracked at a system-level by the Office of Student Affairs. The campus has a database (Advocate) for tracking and maintain records of student complaints. Particular modules within this database are available to the responsible constituencies. For example, Title IX complaints are not visible to officials in Student Affairs.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: All formal complaint are entered into a campus database (Advocate) that allows the campus to monitor, track dispositions, and archive complaints. Campus climate complaints are monitored on campus and at the Office of

	the President.
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Francisco Hernandez Date: 2/25/201

Appendix 4 – TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCU is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy publically available? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? On the transfer page of UC Merced’s Admission’s website. Specifically, here .
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: UC Merced’s policy for receiving transfer credit is available on the transfer page of UC Merced’s Admission’s website.

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Francisco Hernandez

Date: 2/25/2018