WSC Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To the University of California at Merced

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Candidacy

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and Core Commitments and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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SECTION I - OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

IA - Description of Institution and Visit

The University of California, Merced is the tenth campus of the University of California. Planning for UC Merced began in 1988. Its first students were graduate students admitted for academic year 2004-05. In September 2005 the campus officially opened and enrolled its first undergraduates: 706 freshmen and 132 transfer students.

UC Merced currently offers fourteen baccalaureate programs through three Schools: Engineering; Natural Sciences; and Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts (SSHA). Undergraduate general education is under the authority of a separate academic unit, College One, with which all faculty and students are affiliated. The Graduate Division currently offers a single Individual Graduate Program, leading to the master's and doctorate. Graduate concentrations in the various fields have been created within this flexible inaugural program while specific disciplinary graduate programs have been developed and submitted to local and system-wide academic senate review for approval.

As a general campus of the University of California, UC Merced inherits the University's mission of teaching, research, and service. Under the California Master Plan for Higher Education, it will select its undergraduates from among the top 12.5% of California high school graduates. In support of its missions highlighting research and graduate education, it will work toward UC's long-range target of 20% graduate student enrollment.

UC Merced's founding Mission Statement (November 2005) infuses the UC mission with themes appropriate to "the first American research university of the twenty-first century":

celebrating the diversity of its community members; meshing its graduate and research programs with high quality undergraduate education in a "student-centered" learning environment; fostering interdisciplinary practice in research and experiential education; and reflecting its location in California's San Joaquin Valley.

This report is the final stage of a Candidacy review. The Commission granted Eligibility to UC Merced on May 22, 2003 for a period of three years. UC Merced submitted its Letter of Intent for Candidacy Review in March 2005, noting that the official opening of the campus had been delayed by one year from its original target of Fall 2004.

UC Merced submitted its Capacity and Preparatory Review Report in December 2005. Following the comprehensive model, it directly addressed the Standards for Accreditation and provided an extensive portfolio of supporting materials. The team visited the campus March 9-11, 2006 and submitted its report to the Commission in April 2006.

UC Merced submitted its Educational Effectiveness Review Report in August 2006, which aligned well with the institution's proposal and gave an initial response to issues raised in the team's Capacity and Preparatory Review report by providing a variety of case studies of assessment data. In October 2006 the team requested that the Educational Effectiveness Review visit be postponed until spring 2007. In making the request, the team was motivated by two considerations. First, experience at other institutions within the region has shown that at least twelve months should intervene between the C&PR Visit and the Educational Effectiveness Review. In the opinion of the team, the original timeline, which allowed only six months between the two reviews, put the institution at a disadvantage. That disadvantage was compounded by leadership transitions at the campus. Founding Chancellor Tomlinson-Keasey had announced her retirement just before the C&PR visit. At the time the Educational Effectiveness report was submitted, UCM reported that there had been transitions in several key

administrative positions: Executive Vice Chancellor (chief academic officer), Vice Chancellor for Administration, and Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts. By the time of our visit in April 2007 the leadership team had been refreshed by new appointments and assignments, including Chancellor Sung-Mo (Steve) Kang and Executive Vice Chancellor Keith Alley.

The postponement of the return visit allowed the team to request that UC Merced supplement its original Educational Effectiveness Report by further developing its institutional perspective on the case studies and grounding it in the WASC standards and criteria for review. UC Merced submitted its supplemental materials in January 2007, which included a letter from Executive Vice Chancellor Alley addressing issues posed by the team, a supplemental essay, "Connecting UC Merced's Educational Effectiveness Report to Organizational Structures and Processes," and a table explicitly relating the material provided to the WASC Standards and CFRs. This review is therefore based upon the originally submitted report, the supplemental materials, and our observations during the visit to the campus on April 4-6, 2007.

All of the materials and revisions to the visit schedule that were requested by the team were readily and effectively accommodated. In all of our discussions, the faculty, staff, and students with whom we met were frank and forthcoming in their responses. The team wishes to express its gratitude for the efforts of all who were involved in the review and particularly Assistant Vice Chancellor Tanaka and Senior Analyst Moody.

IB - Quality of the EE Presentation and Alignment with the Proposal

Following the guidelines for a Candidacy Review, UC Merced organized its C&PR Report as a comprehensive assessment of its current plans and initial operations in relation to the four Standards and their Criteria for Review. The materials reflected faculty engagement in the

process throughout. At this stage of their development, some aspects of the campus programming were necessarily reported as "construction in progress."

The Educational Effectiveness Report focused on the topics outlined in the C&PR Report by describing the initial results in five case studies of assessment in educational effectiveness (Part III). In addition, it directly addressed eight issues raised in the team's C&PR Report (Part II). The supplemental materials further developed the institution's emerging approach to educational effectiveness by detailing the steps taken by the leadership to ensure that the results of the various individual assessments would be integrated to influence future developments. The cover letter of the supplemental materials also directly responded to the issues raised by the team about the role of campus leadership in educational effectiveness and the development of the campus Teaching and Learning Center.

During the visit, the team confirmed that the institutional presentation accurately reflected the engagement of the faculty and campus leadership in assessing educational effectiveness. We probed to find indications that the level of engagement shown in this initial period of review would be sustained through full accreditation.

The team found that the materials accurately reflected the condition of the institution at the time of the visit. The assessment activities and reports from the reflective retreats conducted on several critical topics indicate the beginnings of a culture of evidence regarding educational effectiveness. During the visit the team inquired how UCM would build its capacity for more strategic self-reflection. We also asked how they would develop institutional processes to marshal the data from their various assessment activities to address larger questions of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. We were also concerned with their capacity to sustain these models as the campus grows.

The Educational Effectiveness report and its exhibits together with the conversations during the visit highlighted faculty perspective in several direct and indirect ways. Exhibits 1.2-2b, 3.4-2b, 4.1-8, and 4.5-1b, 4.6-3, and 4.6-4 all report faculty perspectives on matters relevant to this review. We spoke directly to faculty involved in the administration of the general education course and its writing component, in lower division math courses, and in the design of service learning. Indirectly, through discussions with deans and vice chancellors, we heard about the ways in which faculty had participated in the activities reported.

There are several examples that focus on student learning. A prime example was the decision to initiate for three years the practice of faculty providing mid-term grades in lower division courses. In collaboration with Student Affairs learning support services, this technique has proven to be an effective feedback loop for students. It confirms the students' level of understanding early enough in the course for them to receive assistance and reinforcement through interventions that improved their outcomes. In the notable case of a key gateway mathematics course (Mathematics 5) in the first term, review of midterm grades and student feedback led to immediate and substantial revision of the course format. In each of the Schools, faculty developed program-level objectives and learning outcomes, which have been published on the school websites. (We address this process in more detail below.) Throughout the campus, the faculty and academic support staff are mindful of and inquisitive about the success of their students.

In all respects, the team found the institution responsive to our questions and concerns, and sincerely engaged with the process of review for accreditation. The faculty with whom we spoke seemed genuinely engaged in inquiry about the learning environment that they had created for their students and how attention to student learning could guide the development of their university.

It is clear that the faculty of UC Merced have begun thoughtfully designing academic programs appropriate for "the first new American research university of the 21st century." In crafting their educational objectives and organizing themselves into administrative units, they have positioned themselves to address the critical issues in their research and to educate their students, both undergraduate and graduate, in an environment of scholarly inquiry that will have positive impacts locally and globally. We found evidence of their commitment to being a "student-centered" research university in the actions that they have taken during these first two years of operation in giving attention to student learning results even as they work to meet the many other challenges of starting up a complex organization.

UC Merced has been responsive to the opportunities and challenges of its location in California's Central Valley, both in choosing its research foci and in delivering its educational programs. Below we review the evidence of their commitment to educational effectiveness, indicating how UC Merced meets at least minimally the Criteria for Review and the Standards at this stage of Candidacy and give advice that we hope will be useful to them as they plan for a future review for Initial Accreditation.

IC - Preparatory Review Update

From the beginning of the visit, it was clear that UC Merced had advanced in the year since our first visit. The faculty and the students were very conscious of the effects of the full occupancy of the Science and Engineering building and the completion of the Recreation Center. Another theme was the refreshing effect of taking on new colleagues: the pioneer students stepping up their roles as guides and mentors for the new entering students, the faculty relieved to have new colleagues to further develop their curricula and research groups, and the administrative staff supported by new colleagues appointed to new positions and the

appointments of new senior leaders, who will guide the development of the institution beyond its inaugural year. The campus community has been refreshed by the opportunity in its second academic year cycle to repeat, rather than invent, good practice and to improve, based upon their reflection on the outcomes of their first year. Though they have much creating and building left to do, and serious challenges of planning and implementation ahead, the team was pleased to encounter a general sense that the campus had moved beyond the "adrenalin rush" of the first year toward sustainable levels of involvement and innovation in their work.

UCM's EE Report engaged the issues that were raised in the team's C&PR Report. The team made two major recommendations: (i) to move forward with appointment of a Director of their proposed Teaching/Learning Center in order to support faculty attention to student learning and (ii) to reflect on the outcomes of their first year to inform planning for the second year. These are addressed both in their original EE report and the supplemental materials. The EE Report also identified several points expressed in the team's C&PR Report as "global recommendations" and provided responses to them as well.

Progress on the Teaching/Learning Center

At the time of the C&PR Review, the campus was planning to create a Teaching/Learning Center to support on-going attention to educational effectiveness. Our report noted (p. 30):

"The team is concerned that the campus has not yet hired a Director for the envisioned Center of Teaching and Learning. It is already clear that this will be an important position. The faculty need and deserve support from this Center and the leadership that will assist them in developing and delivering effective courses and assessing student learning, especially during this formative period."

In the experience of other universities, such centers are not only effective ways of providing resources to faculty seeking to improve their teaching. They can also be a focal point for inquiry that assesses the effectiveness of curriculum in achieving faculty objectives for student learning and also help bring the institution into the broader national community inspired by research on the scholarship of teaching and learning.

According to the EE Report (p. 10, Exhibit 3.4-2b), in May 2006, then Executive Vice Chancellor Ashley convened a day long planning retreat in which faculty and staff met with three center Directors from other UC campuses to develop their plans for the center and inform the search for a Director. The notes from the retreat reveal that the discussion raised a number of substantive questions about assessing educational effectiveness and providing instructional support. The initial EE Report does not convey any conclusions that resulted from the retreat.

EVC Alley's January letter (p. 3) acknowledges that the retreat "failed to provide answers" that would allow his predecessor to proceed with establishment of the center and confirmed that resources had been allocated for it. He noted his concern that it be founded in a way that would ensure faculty participation. Following further faculty consultation, he had concluded that this would more likely be achieved if the center were conceived as "a research-based support entity that analyzes the effectiveness of different teaching approaches and applies that knowledge *with* the faculty to UC Merced's teaching programs." The position of center Director was reconceived as "a position with stature in the Academic Senate."

At the time of our visit, the new Director of the center had just been appointed, and plans were not yet formulated for the programs and services that the center would offer. The experience of centers at other research universities suggests that the following could be of considerable value to the campus:

- Bring to the faculty and the schools a sophisticated understanding of the effective uses of technology in instruction
- Establish connections and involvement in the growing national network of centers for the improvement of student learning. (The POD network (www.podnetwork.org), the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (www.carnegiefoundation.org) and the annual conferences sponsored by WASC itself are examples of readily available resources.)
- Provide assistance to graduate teaching assistants for their current teaching assignments and also as preparation for their possible future roles as scholars of teaching in academic institutions.
- Provide assistance as appropriate and desired for the assessment of student learning and the development of teaching evaluation.
- Conduct orientation workshops for teaching assistants and new faculty to the institutional expectations of UC Merced.
- Conduct periodic workshops for faculty on developing knowledge about student learning.

UC Merced has the opportunity to develop such a center in an environment where there are several faculty in the schools engaged in attention to educational effectiveness. It appears to have support at the highest levels of the administration. The center can have effective collaborative relationships with the Center for Advising and Student Learning administered by Student Affairs. They have a unique opportunity to record, from the beginning of the institution, their effort to draw on data about student learning to develop their approach to assuring quality in teaching and learning.

Institutional Reflection

The Educational Effectiveness Report and the supplemental material describe several retreats on important topics: management of enrollment growth, the future role of a college system, and a Student Affairs retreat. The transition in leadership at both the level of chancellor and provost allowed an unanticipated type of institutional reflection as the leadership changed from the individuals who had framed the founding of the institution to those who would sustain

and shape its development. The report contains (e.g. Exhibits 3.4-2b, 4.1-8) examples of the types of reflective discussions among faculty and administrative staff. Provost Alley reviewed with the team the outcomes of these and other planning meetings and developments over the past year. In light of the progress made since our first visit, the team considers that our recommendation for institutional reflection was responded to appropriately.

Response to other suggestions in the report

Part II of the Educational Effectiveness Report responds to several suggestions in the body of the team's C&PR Report. These responses are evidence of engagement with the review process and in each case UCM has been willing to adopt or adapt the traditional organizational structures, hierarchies, and resource allocation models in appropriate ways for their mission and context.

The Educational Effectiveness Review, in conjunction with the supplementary materials submitted, provide a complete picture of the steps taken to address the issues contained in the Capacity & Preparatory Review Report and WASC's letter of October 11, 2006. Direct connections were made between the issues identified in the C&PR Report and their responses were structured to parallel UCM's Educational Effectiveness Review for continuity. In fact, the concerns from the C&PR Report were reproduced in list form in the EER (pp. 1-3). The responses are at an appropriate level of detail with substantial detail provided in the Exhibits section. In the context of the constraints imposed on a new institution with consequent limitations on faculty and staff size, UCM has demonstrated a sincere and practical approach in providing responses for the reviews, supplementing those materials upon request and following through on recommendations made by the review team and WASC. The attention (discussed above) to establishing the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence [4.7] is also evidence of UCM's use of the results of the previous stage of the review.

SECTION II - EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

In this section we describe how UC Merced meets the Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness by reviewing the case studies offered in the report in which data drawn from the first year's operation are used to evaluate the design and delivery of their programs and student outcomes. Given its brief existence, UC Merced cannot yet have on-going systems for enhancing teaching effectiveness and learning results. However we have interpreted the data available as indicative of their emerging approach to intentional self-review and on-going improvement in these areas.

Part III of the EE Report offers six case studies to illustrate UC Merced's commitment to educational effectiveness:

A1. Review and revision of the core course sequence.
A2. Review and revision of the Engineering service learning program.
B. First year assessment of the writing program.
C. Progress in developing graduate programs.
D. Departmental assessment plans in Student Affairs
E. Review of the first year of results from the administration of NSSE and UCUES.

Most of these topics are directly engaged with student learning and experience. The approach taken in the review is appropriate for the stage of development of the campus. The cases cover a broad range: curriculum in general education and foundational skills, service learning, graduate program development, student services and student engagement. Each is a key area of institutional operation. At the time of the C&PR Visit UC Merced was fully engaged in responding to the emerging circumstances of its inaugural year. During the EE Visit, we explored the case studies provided and probed for indications of how UC Merced would develop its on-going and intentional processes based upon the conclusions that the faculty and staff had drawn from the cases considered in the review.

The team was mindful that only five months elapsed between the time of the C&PR Visit and the submission of the EE Report. By scheduling the EE Visit for a year after the C&PR

Visit, the team was better able to see the outcomes of these case studies and to get a sense of the conclusions of the faculty and staff (and some students) on how this type of inquiry will be sustained.

IIA - Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

Assessment for Continuous Improvement in Three Academic Programs

The EE Report provides three detailed case studies of the process of assessing the educational effectiveness of a program and faculty response to their findings. These three cases relate directly to Standard 4, particularly CFRs 4.6-8.

Assessment and Revision in the Core Course

As part of the UC Merced general education program, first year students enroll in a two-term core course sequence (Core 1). An upper-division course (Core 100) provides a general education experience for junior transfer students and is intended to continue the goals of the first year course for native frosh. Exhibit 4.6-4 provides an overview of the course design in terms of student learning objectives and their assessment and discussion of the process by which the faculty responsible for the organization and delivery of the courses reviewed and revised it, addressing Core 1 and Core 100 separately. In each case faculty reviewed the course at the end of each offering, identified issues and took steps to respond to the perceived problems in the next offering (Tables 3, 4 and 8). Initial review through discussion of the perceptions of the organizing faculty resulted in the institution of midterm and final surveys of student perceptions of the course (Appendix H) and a collaborative peer teaching evaluation (Appendix I) as ways of drawing on additional types of data. In a year-end review, the faculty worked with a consultant to clarify the relation between the general education learning objectives, course outcomes and assignments, and the probes for assessing student learning. Data from the administration of the

University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES) provided additional student feedback on the effectiveness of the course.

Discussions during the visit with faculty involved in the course confirmed the general character of the reflective process described in the report. We also discussed their plans for sustaining the course and ensuring continuity as new faculty participate and founding faculty rotate out of the course.

This case represents a thoughtful engagement of a multi-disciplinary faculty in assessing their educational effectiveness in a key foundational undergraduate course. Their assessment was guided by their explicitly formulated educational objectives and data on student learning (assessment of work) as well as students' reflections on the course. The faculty included peer observation of teaching as well as the data from student perceptions in their review. Specific issues were identified and concrete steps were taken to respond to each issue in the next offering. This case presents a sound model for continuous improvement in educational effectiveness in the general education program.

Engineering Service Learning Program

The majors in the School of Engineering incorporate participation in a formal service-learning program to achieve some of their educational objectives. Exhibit 4.6-5 provides an overview of the program, its objectives relevant to Engineering learning outcomes and their relation to UCM principles of general education as well as the process through which student learning in the program is assessed. Students are organized into teams under the general supervision of a faculty member to work with an external client organization to solve practical engineering problems.

Student responses and perceptions of their abilities in pre- and post- surveys provide data that bear on the effectiveness of the program. In this case, the availability of the assessment of

the value of the delivered projects by the external client provides an additional type of data for outcome assessment. The first year of operation was reviewed and issues were identified for improvement, including the need to develop infrastructure to support the program, to find a good balance between the effort devoted to assessment and the value to the students, and to develop institutional research to routinely provide information about the program's operation. (EE Report pp. 35-36).

First Year Writing Program

The Writing Program faculty delivered foundational first year courses in writing (Writing 1 and 10) and collaborate in the core course assessment. Exhibit 4.6-3 details the student-based, faculty-based, and program-based assessments of the effectiveness of their curriculum. Of note here are systematic classroom observations for all faculty, processes to ensure that faculty were consistent in their assessment of student work, and an outcomes assessment of pre- and post-course student writing through a "double-blind" evaluation to ensure that students' writing improves during the course. The report describes the issues to be addressed as faculty reviewed the results of student focus groups and responses to surveys by both students and faculty.

Summary

In each of these cases we saw faculty engaged in an intensive, intentional process of evaluating their initial curriculum for effectiveness. This inquiry was carried out with attention to how their assessment could be related to their explicitly formulated educational objectives and learning outcomes. Each case resulted in concrete responses that were intended to improve student learning and satisfaction. In this regard, each shows the faculty taking responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and the use of results for improvement [4.6]. In the case of the Engineering service-learning program, evidence from external stakeholders is incorporated into the assessment [4.8].

During our visit we found evidence in syllabi and conversations with faculty of similarly responsive assessment of student learning outcomes and pedagogy in the lower division mathematics curriculum. These faculty efforts are supported by campus leadership [4.6, 4.7]. The intense focus on these critical programs is natural at the stage at which the initial design of programs are being tested during start-up by faculty developing collaborative relationships. As the faculty grows and these particular programs achieve stability in their effectiveness, it will be important for the leadership to encourage the faculty to undertake similar (if less intensive) activities in all programs.

Effectiveness in the Co-curriculum and Student Affairs

UC Merced is uniquely positioned to foster an environment of planning and informed decision-making based on assessment data, both in the classroom and in the co-curricular environment. Having inculcated the value of assessment to the success of the students and the campus from before the first day of classes suggests that UCM's established practice will be sustained into the future. This circumstance is an advantage to the university as it represents the founding culture of the campus—avoiding the problem of introducing assessment into a culture that has functioned for decades using assessment selectively [1.2]. This is a tremendous advantage that UCM appears to be utilizing consciously and throughout the various existing and planned organizational structures, including Student Affairs [3.8].

Crossing Traditional Divides

At UC Merced, the responsibilities assigned to the Division of Student Affairs include an organizational bridge between Student and Academic Affairs. Having responsibility for the Student Advising and Learning Center places Student Affairs in direct partnership with Academic Affairs in supporting student success in the classroom [2.4]. Student Affairs staff is actively involved the curricular operations of the campus as evidenced by the highly

collaborative efforts described in the report section, *Sustaining Student Success Interventions and Providing Seamless Student Advising* (EE Report p. 20). Several assessment-driven outcomes are listed, including the pivotal decision to provide mid-term grades in lower division classes and the impact of the analysis of those grades in the modification of the Student Success Workshops [2.5, 4.1]. The evidenced need was compelling to the point of Registration Fee funding being allocated to support the Workshops. The Academic Senate will receive a full report on mid-term grades to aid in their decision about continuing the practice [4.3]. A further consequence of the analysis of mid-term grades led to freshman orientation being restructured to emphasize the academic demands of university life and ensure that incoming students were fully aware of the services available to support their success [2.3]. These examples provide direct evidence of program modifications based on outcomes assessment [4.4].

The June 2006 Enrollment Summit represents another major example of how UCM is incorporating WASC standards in the management of the university [4.1]. As a direct consequence of data presented at that summit, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs appointed two committees to probe freshman retention and the sophomore year [4.2, 4.3]. UCM used what they characterized as "experience, good data and student input—and the benefit of internal planning" to renegotiate enrollment targets to more closely coincide with realistic enrollment levels [4.2, 4.3]. In addition, UCM is in the process of recruiting an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management with an expected start date of July 2007 [3.1]. Enrollment planning is a central challenge for UCM to address, as the campus will establish a new tradition in the Valley for community college transfers and high school students, and in graduate study.

Assessment Within Student Affairs

The Educational Effectiveness Review, in combination with the supplemental materials, show that the Division of Student Affairs at UC Merced has a firm grasp of the

purposes and utility of assessment, both theoretically and in practice. This is shown in their stated purpose for gathering data within the division, "This information ... is designed to enable th[e] division to effectively encourage students to utilize support services, refine those services to meet student needs, and provide an adequate level of service..." [4.4]. While it is common to find the last two functions listed among the purposes for assessment, UCM is to be commended for correctly identifying a key function of assessment in student affairs, that of effectively encouraging students to use those services.

Student Affairs has also adopted the practice of retreats to allow staff across the division to reflect on data and make informed decisions [4.1]. A notable outcome of this practice is the "intentional collaboration" between Residence Life, Career Services and the Student Advising and Learning Center in creating a "tool box series" to support academic performance and retention [2.13]. This is another exemplar of UCM divisions using their start-up advantages by creating a culture of cross-unit collaborations—a practice that will prevent the "silo" effect so frequently apparent in established institutions. Data collection is also cited as a factor in building strong faculty-Student Affairs relationships, with questions raised by concerned faculty leading to improvements in student advising [2.13].

Two of the strongest indicators that Student Affairs has incorporated WASC standards into their daily practices is the development currently underway of a five-year strategic plan for the Division and the collaboration between the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Institutional Planning & Analysis in taking NSSE and UCUES data to the faculty and deans, to both inform and to solicit input about other analytical needs to ensure student success [2.10, 4.5, 4.6]. It is encouraging to note that these presentations are audience-focused, a technique that reinforces the utility to various stakeholders on the campus. The proposed sessions, designed to allow faculty to "compare their expectations about students to what the students are actually

saying," is an excellent example of traditionally different structures of the university working in tandem to improve both pedagogy and the co-curricular experience [2.11].

As stated in the Educational Effectiveness Review, all Student Affairs units and departments are in the process of developing assessment plans [4.3, 4.4]. The mission and vision statement for the division has been developed as well as specific strategic goals that are well aligned with the academic priorities of the campus. A general learning outcomes framework has also been designed directly related to the needs of their students. What remains to be completed are the departmental plans assessing these initiatives. Many of the results fall into one of two categories, utilization and satisfaction. It may be important for future development to include items directed at learning outcomes for at least some of the programs offered. In addition to the current uses of these data, they should be archived for the future as so few colleges and universities have histories as complete as UCM is in the position to establish. The example included in the EE Review shows how one unit (the Career Services Center) plans to use their assessment results to both shape the services and programming offered by the center and how they will use it for resource allocation [4.8]. The workshops offered by the center represent an opportunity to include learning outcomes assessments when collecting student input.

To further strengthen Student Affairs' efforts in assessment, and to ensure that resources directed to assessment deliver the greatest effectiveness, it may be advisable to have an assessment consultant work with the division to complete the departmental assessment plans, adding theoretical structure to the plans to support the comprehensive effort invested by the division [4.6].

Use of Comparative Survey Data

UCM has employed three student surveys, two national and one UC systemwide, to collect information about their undergraduates at two time periods. Utilizing a New Student

Survey, UCM gathered information from incoming students concerning their high school background and college expectations. The students were surveyed again in spring semester of their first year using both the National Survey of Student Engagement and the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). Both surveys include the benefit of comparisons, the first to national data and the second to UC data. As noted above, these data are the core of information that UCM is using to both inform and query faculty about the congruence between faculty expectations and students' perceptions [4.3]. Again, these data are part of the founding classes of UCM and should be archived for the future in addition to being used in formative processes. The UCUES cycle is biannual and NSSE annual, so the opportunity for longitudinal tracking of students' experience is rich and has been included as part of the Student Affairs strategic plan. UCM also plans to fully utilize the opportunity to tailor questions in UCUES for campus planning purposes—questions that will emerge from the planned data presentations to the faculty at large [4.3].

As a new campus, Merced can take pride in the evidence from NSEE and UCUES that demonstrates that students are "engaged" in constructive and desirable ways with their academic programs and with the faculty. Students report, at rates comparable to national norms, that they are encouraged to develop higher-level learning skills such as making interpretations and judgments, organizing and analyzing ideas and applying theories to practical problems. Moreover, satisfactory majorities of both freshmen and transfers reported that if they had it to do over again, they would definitely or probably attend Merced. Most of the student criticism seemed to be directed at "not enough"–courses, majors, or campus activities–problems not surprising for a growing, developing campus. In this regard, we note that the students with whom we spoke during the visit were very aware (and appreciative) of the expanded curriculum and available activities during the second year.

There do appear to be broad and realistic plans in place to report and interpret the extensive data on student reactions to their Merced education to appropriate offices and personnel. However, much of the use of student data to improve instruction will presumably fall under the aegis of the newly established Teaching/Learning Center.

Planning for Continuous Improvement

The changes at the highest level of campus leadership have provided a visible marker of the shift from initial planning for start-up to planning for continuity and development. The campus notes (EE pp. 25-26) the importance of putting in place an infrastructure to routinely develop data in support of strategic planning and tactical response [3.8, 4.1-5]. Exhibit 4.5-2 overviews the development of institutional planning for a reporting infrastructure and communication plan that will provide the results of institutional research to the relevant constituencies. These efforts are critical in developing the capacity for sustaining assessment and continuous improvement beyond the intensive activities of the start-up phase.

The team's C&PR Report noted "[t]he campus should take the review for initial accreditation as an invitation to make certain that the realization of its program review process ensures that the faculty's initial attention to clarity of objective and focus on student learning are maintained and reinforced [2.7]." The outcomes of these activities and plans will form the context in which future program reviews will be conducted. As they plan for the next accreditation review, the development of their guidelines and practices for program review will give UCM its best opportunity to sustain, spread, and entrench the most effective aspects of a culture of evidential reflection and self-improvement that are exemplified in the cases reviewed above.

IIB - Evaluation of the Institution's Systems for Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness and Learning Results

The examples discussed above provide indications of the character and orientation of UCM's emerging intentional systems of quality assurance. The decision by the faculty to provide midterm grades in lower division courses to allow for early intervention indicates a serious commitment of effort to support student learning, one which should provide useful evidence in the review for full accreditation. Whether these commendable points develop into sustained intentional systems of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning will depend upon two things: UCM's success in providing infrastructure for inquiry and analysis to support the faculty and the acculturation of new faculty to on-going commitment. The effectiveness of the newly established Teaching/Learning Center discussed above will be one factor. The orientation of the program review process will be a second important factor. How will they ensure that sufficient attention is given to assessing the quality of teaching and learning in their programs (both undergraduate and graduate) in addition to developing measures of impact and productivity in their research and service missions?

The examples considered here reflect consideration of actual student work in assessing learning results. The Writing Program assessment of effectiveness is grounded in examination of student papers. The Engineering service-learning program has the realia of the project deliverables, assessed both internally and externally. In the core courses and foundational math courses, the problem sets, essays, and exams have been directly examined in this initial phase of course review.

We did not have evidence that would indicate whether these practices are characteristic of the full range of programs and faculty practice. The faculty has articulated educational objectives and learning outcomes for each of its undergraduate major programs as well as general education principles for all students. Student Affairs has developed general learning outcomes aligned with the mission of the campus and consonant with those of the academic

programs. As the program review procedures are developed, it should be possible to include regular review of the effectiveness of campus general education and the programs in Student Affairs in achieving their educational objectives in a framework comparable to that developed for academic programs.

In the case studies provided for this review, learning outcomes are explicitly invoked in the faculty assessment activities described. The goals and objectives for each program are published on the websites of the Schools, though not given a profile in the catalogue. There were indications in our review that programs differed in the degree to which their outcomes and objectives were taken seriously by their faculty. To a certain extent this is evident in the variation across programs in how specific or formulaic their statements are. The team requested sample syllabi and course evaluations for lower division courses from each school. In these, only the syllabus for Math 5 gave objectives and outcomes for the course. The course evaluation forms used by the Schools varied greatly and in general did not engage students in assessing their learning with respect to the objectives of the course. The evaluations for Natural Science courses engaged the students in a structured response around aspects of the course and their learning. The Engineering course evaluation posed only a single prompt for a numerical assessment and unstructured narrative responses. The SSHA form used several questions as prompts for student responses but did not engage questions about their learning.

After the C&PR visit, the team expressed (p. 17) the concern that "Virtually everyone involved in the hiring process … said that teaching evaluations and other evidence of teaching interest and performance were collected and utilized in making hiring decisions. … The emphasis currently seems to be more on accountability. However, attention should also be paid to using the process formatively, to assist faculty in improving teaching and learning." Based upon the evidence provided in the EE Review, we would encourage the faculty in the Schools,

the Committee on Academic Personnel, and the administration to engage in serious consideration of how the evaluation of teaching effectiveness will be related to the stated program goals for student learning and used formatively to improve teaching as well as summatively in the personnel process.

Both UCM's focus on serving students from the San Joaquin Valley and the expectations for institutional reporting to the UC Office of the President ensure that data regarding retention and graduation rates will be disaggregated on several dimensions. Institutional Planning and Analysis is seeking guidance from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs on the appropriate inventory of demographic data elements as they design their Data Warehouse (Exhibit 4.5-2, section 7).

Summary Comments

We conclude by commenting on the criteria provided in the framework for evaluating educational effectiveness. In all but one area, we find evidence that UCM has moved beyond initial steps to show signs of emerging good practice.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes have been established for every undergraduate major program and the general education program. Student Affairs has formulated general learning outcomes for their guidance that are consistent with the campus mission and academic objectives identified through student input. Program objectives and outcomes are referenced on the websites for each of the Schools. The general education principles are published on the website and in the catalogue. These outcomes are used explicitly by some faculty in the design of their syllabi and assessment of their effectiveness.

The learning outcomes are assessed principally by surveys and self-reports in addition to their role in determining grades for student work and in courses. In the case studies reported above, attention to student learning has led to revision of pedagogy and content.

The faculty has devoted a good deal of attention to the issue of whether students are achieving the objectives for learning. The decision to provide midterm grades in lower division courses and proactive interventions for learning support are signs that the faculty are committed to ensuring that students achieve an appropriate level of learning.

Teaching and Learning Processes

Curricula and pedagogy are beginning to be aligned with the established learning outcomes. As program requirements are developed and the curriculum is expanded with the growth of the faculty, it will be important that the objectives and outcomes of new courses remain aligned with the program level outcomes.

The case studies highlighted in this review have engaged in questions of good learning practices in their review. The responses to the assessments of first year have included attention to student learning.

Organizational Learning

All of the case studies considered here are focused on the results of the first year of instruction in individual courses or programs. The report on the use of midterm grades using the data gathered in support workshops uses GPA-based indicators of effectiveness. The first year assessment of improvement in writing is drawn from sample student work evaluated under a consistent rubric. These are initial steps in developing a general framework for indicators of program effectiveness.

Because the campus must currently focus on the development of new programs and the hiring of additional faculty, formal program review is not yet well developed. In this regard,

they are at the very initial stages of envisioning how their program review process can deliberately and systematically improve teaching and learning in all programs.

In the case studies presented in this review, performance data are considered in making improvement decisions at the program level.

With respect to accreditation processes, the institution is seriously engaged, taking actions to implement advice from the Commission and the visiting team. Leadership and faculty (and students) are mindful of the critical role that candidacy and full accreditation play in their future institutional success.

In sum, UC Merced shows promising commitments to Educational Effectiveness in most areas. They are aware of the need to make further progress in building capacity for institutional reflection and continuous improvement and by entrenching their emerging culture of evidence about student learning as part of their distinctive mission within UC.

IIC – Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs

In this section we will pull together our observations from both stages of the review to give a comprehensive view of UC Merced's relations to the WASC Standards and Criteria for Review.

1. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes

UC Merced's Mission Statement (C&PR Exhibit 1.1-2) expresses the University of California's mission of teaching, research, and service with a particular focus on serving the San Joaquin Valley [1.1]. From this focus, the institution derives its aims as "the first American research university of the 21st Century" and it values in celebrating diversity, building a "student-centered" learning environment, in academic programs that integrate undergraduates as well as graduate students into their research and service missions. These values are communicated

widely and clearly reflected in its publications and in the way that faculty, staff, and students talk about UC Merced to both internal and external constituencies.

During the period of academic planning preceding the campus opening, faculty developed mission statements and educational objectives for the inaugural undergraduate academic programs as well as the general education component of the baccalaureate degrees [1.2]. These are published for every program through the websites of the three Schools and have been updated as programs are revised or created (EE Exhibit 1.2-2b). Appropriate objectives and outcomes are provided for each program though they vary in level of specificity and elaboration across the programs. In addition to the objectives for academic programs, the Student Affairs division has developed a set of learning outcomes to guide their programming which are consistent with the orientation of the institution (Handout provided during EE Visit). We reviewed above examples of how they are working to assess their effectiveness in achieving these objectives.

The campus has in place the necessary administrative roles and structures appropriate for a University of California campus. Over the two-year course of this review we observed the development and renewal of the administrative leadership team, including transitions in the chief executive and academic officers. Our observations during our visits showed that the leadership structure created is highly motivated for success [1.3] and committed to shared governance and transparency.

Institutional Purposes

UC Merced inherits from the University of California's Academic Senate public commitments to academic freedom [1.4], due process, and appropriate autonomy [1.6]. The campus commitment to celebrating the diversity [1.5] of its communities is foundational. It has formulated and distributed widely a statement of Principles of Community (2006-07 Catalog, p.

10). The C&PR Report references relevant UC and UC Merced policies on diversity and commitment to affirmative action.

The catalogs, student handbooks, and the campus website provide an accurate representation of the current state of its academic programs, goals, and services to students [1.7]. Discussions with students during the EE Visit revealed many examples of institutional responsiveness to student needs, both in curriculum and services. During this initial period, when the scale of the student community is still small and the staff and faculty focused on developing the campus, problems and issues have been addressed by timely and direct responses on a case-by-case basis. General policies and procedures regarding student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, and business processes are in place in either final or draft form.

The University of California's Office of the President (http://www.ucop.edu) references the business policies and practices with which the campuses must comply and which guide the creation of local policies and practices to insure integrity in its operations [1.8].

The C&PR Report contained a statement of commitment to WASC accreditation (Exhibit 1.8). The catalogs have reported its eligibility and candidacy status. Through its reports and the uniformly helpful and frank engagement with the team during our visits, UC Merced shows its commitment to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission [1.9].

2. Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning

UC Merced's founding undergraduate educational programs are comparable in content and nomenclature to degrees at other UC campuses. The faculty are well-qualified and is growing steadily to meet the challenges of filling in and expanding the campus curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels [2.1]. Undergraduate majors and concentrations are being created as critical mass is achieved. Graduate education was initially provided through a

single Individual Graduate Program, approved under the aegis of the UC Academic Senate's Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs, leading to Master's (MA and MS) and Ph.D. degrees. This has provided a flexible environment for initiating graduate groups across the Schools. At the time of our EE Visit, they were anticipating the approval of the first stand-alone graduate program.

Academic planning has been strategic and thoughtful in deciding the range of inaugural programs. Our conversations the Academic Senate's Undergraduate Council and Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation as well as with the Deans of the Schools indicated that curriculum support is an important factor in planning decisions for staging new hires. Each of the inaugural programs and graduate groups has defined requirements that are appropriate for this stage of campus development. They are presented in the catalog and on websites along with statements of philosophy and advice for students pursuing the programs [2.2].

The statement of Guiding Principles for General Education (2006-07 Catalog, p. 49) frames UC Merced's general education requirements in terms of educational experiences and outcomes that all graduates of the campus should attain. Requirements in English writing and quantitative reasoning are stated at the University and the campus level. In addition, an interdisciplinary core course sequence (Core 1 and Core 100 "The world at home—planning for the future in a complex world") is required of all students. All three Schools define general education requirements for students completing programs that they offer, with courses designed to shape the appropriate lower division preparation for work in the majors while achieving the goals of general education.

The graduate program is granting its first Master's degrees. The structure of the general graduate program with its graduate groups is appropriate. As part of the necessary system-wide review and approval of all UC graduate programs, the programs proposed by the Merced faculty

will be reviewed to ensure that the requirements and expectations of the programs are appropriate for their fields.

The undergraduate curriculum offered during the first two years resulted from thoughtful deliberation the faculty. The syllabi, course descriptions, and statements of educational philosophy that we saw reflected appropriate objectives and outcomes. The faculty's decision to provide midterm grades in lower division courses indicates a commitment to helping students meet their expected outcomes. The midterm assessments have been effectively used in workshop interventions by the advising and learning support services. We reviewed above examples in which evidence of student learning was used to revise course structure or pedagogy. [2.3].

The philosophy and structure of its programs have grown out of recent and on-going intense discussions among faculty. It was clear from our conversations with faculty that they are deeply invested in the development of their programs as a collaborative and collective activity [2.4].

Active learning as well as co-curricular and service learning are themes that run through the statements of philosophy and design of courses (e.g. Core 1, Engineering service learning) [2.5]. The decision to do midterm grading in the first semester and the response to that assessment indicate that the faculty are committed to supporting student learning. The material provided by the Writing Program on assessment of student work and the inclusion in the revised Mathematics 5 course of systematic assessments and interventions at the beginning of the course for "pre-Precalculus skills" are specific examples.

Before UC Merced begins to graduate the students who entered this year as freshman, the faculty should review how they ensure that their students consistently achieve the faculty's stated objectives for learning [2.6].

UC Merced has developed guidance for future program reviews. Looking forward to ABET accreditation, the School of Engineering's assessment plan includes evidence from post-graduate outcomes and external constituencies. Before the campus undertakes the review for initial accreditation a formal program review process should be instituted that will ensure that the faculty's current attention to clarity of objective and focus on student learning are maintained and reinforced [2.7].

Scholarship and Creative Activity

During our visit we found evidence that the institution values and promotes scholarship and curricular innovation [2.8]. The academic personnel process follows University of California Academic Senate guidelines and faculty experienced in personnel review on other UC campuses have been involved in the initial hiring decisions to ensure standards for evaluation of scholarship and teaching. We met with several of the faculty who are actively engaged and innovative in effective teaching.

In articulating a campus mission that involves undergraduates as well as graduate students in the research and service missions of the university, the institution recognizes the value of linking scholarship, teaching, student learning and service [2.9]. The Engineering service-learning program is a particularly well-developed example. Discussions about the establishment of a Teaching/Learning Center indicated that a primary objective was to ensure that the faculty would use the center to draw on scholarship of teaching and learning to improve their educational effectiveness.

Support for Student Learning

Several of their academic programs and institutes as well as specific interventions designed to help students are admirable [2.10]. Currently, any student in a lower division course receiving a D or F midterm grade must complete a one-hour workshop. The Academic Senate

was preparing to review the three-year pilot program of midterm grades to consider whether to sustain this type of intervention, which the team finds a particularly clear indicator of UCM's satisfaction of this CFR.

We saw in the reports and during the visit many indications of effective collaboration between Student Affairs and faculty and academic leaders to develop co-curricular programs [2.11] that are integrated with the goals of academic programs and campus mission. In particular, the service-learning program in Engineering is working closely with the Career Center regarding community placements and corporate relations. Orientation sessions were redesigned after the first year to include faculty participation and presentations informed by student perspectives. During our second visit, it was clear from conversations with students and general observations around the campus that the co-curricular and extra-curricular programs were developing rapidly and effectively.

The student handbooks and catalog included in the report and the campus websites show attention to the need to provide sound information for students on the requirements of their academic programs in support of effective academic planning [2.12]. Academic advising for undecided lower division students is provided through an integrated advising and learning support center administered by Student Affairs. Academic advisors in the three Schools are intended to provide guidance for undergraduates once they have selected a major.

The campus has an advantage in adopting information technologies in the development of support systems for learning [2.13] in that it does not have the problem of legacy computer systems. UC Merced has successfully implemented the Banner Student Information system and a campus card for housing, campus dining, and the bookstore. The campus has established a one-stop Students First Center that includes Admissions, Financial Aid, and Registrar's offices co-

located in a convenient location. Academic advising is a shared service provided through Student Affairs and the Schools.

UC Merced inherits a focus on serving transfer students from its mission to serve the students of the Central Valley [2.14]. The conceptualization of the College One core course so that it can serve to integrate junior transfers into the educational culture of the campus is creative and an indicator that this intention receives practical attention in the design of the programs. A Generalized Transfer Agreement brokered by UC Merced and the region's four-year higher education institutions with the local community colleges is a good beginning to strengthen the student transfer pathway.

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

Faculty and Staff

UC Merced's leadership was strategic in building a small administrative and faculty cohort capable of opening the campus and planning for its further development [3.1, 3.2]. The faculty grew substantially by the second year and several important additions to the administrative staff were made that filled in the capacity to sustain the development of the campus. At the time of our second visit, recruitments of additional faculty were underway. Growth of the faculty has appropriately been the priority, to ensure that academic programs have a critical mass of faculty to sustain educational and research excellence. The financial model provided by the University is tied to growth in the student population, which has put constraints on the ability to increase support staff.

UC Merced was advised early in the planning process that "hiring a stellar faculty is the best academic plan." In the appointment of the founding faculty a team of UC faculty who had chaired the Academic Senate Committee on Academic Personnel at other UC campuses assisted the Chancellor and Executive Vice Chancellor. This allowed UC Merced's administration and

faculty to benchmark their assessments of prospective faculty against the standards at other UC campuses for teaching, research, and service [3.3]. Virtually everyone involved in the hiring process that we spoke with during our first visit said that teaching evaluations and other evidence of teaching interest and performance were collected and utilized in making hiring decisions. Before the review for initial accreditation many continuing faculty will have undergone merit or promotion reviews, providing indications of how evidence of teaching effectiveness is collected and used. Student evaluations of instruction are collected systematically in formats different for each School.

For a new campus creating a distinctive culture, the process of faculty orientation to student learning and teaching effectiveness is especially important. The planning for the inaugural academic programs has provided an intense experience for founding faculty in engaging with questions about their educational objectives and the way in which their students will learn [3.4]. Above we discussed at some length the establishment of a Teaching/Learning Center, which will have a major role to play in supporting faculty development activities designed to improve teaching and learning.

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

The budget and facilities of UC Merced appear to be well aligned with campus programs and priorities [3.5]. As a campus of the University of California, UC Merced has access to sufficient funding to ensure delivery of quality instructional programs and support services to students. The pacing of funding tied to growth in student enrollments remains an on-going matter of discussion on campus and with the UC Office of the President. Important regulatory issues for long-term physical planning remain to be resolved. UC Merced is operating in a very challenging environment for capital planning and construction. The synchronization of

construction efforts with enrollment, research, and faculty hiring is critical to realizing their potential and building on their successful beginning.

The reduction in the planned level of library holdings during the first year in order to meet budgetary shortfalls gives cause for some concern [3.6]. This was mitigated by plans to restore a more robust library acquisition budget in future years and by the availability of the resources of the entire University of California system library holdings through the California Digital Library. In addition, the campus has committed to Tier One status within the University of California library system, providing on-line access to journals throughout that system. Faculty expressed no concerns about library holdings. Library staff pointed to the ease and speed of interlibrary loan from other University of California collections.

The library provides assistance to freshmen and to transfer students in using current technology to access information and even to "browse" on line. The library's automated check-out system is tied into a collection management feature that will allow it to assess the utilization of materials to allow active and effective collection management.

The campus has a chief information officer responsible for all computing, network, and telecommunications [3.7]. It has a campus network and campus-wide Internet access, both wired and wireless, serving all facilities, including residence halls. It is connected to CALREN. SAKAI is used for course management, web-based instructional information, and grading. The campus modified the version of the SCT BANNER SIS from the University of California, Davis instance and is served for its financial and payroll systems by the University of California, Los Angeles. The campus has developed its own web-based job applicant system. Financial Aid is managed under BANNER with assistance from UC Davis. Overall, the campus appears to have implemented both the approaches and the technical infrastructure to successfully support its

educational purposes, both instructional and administrative, and has the network capability to support research activities.

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The policies and practices of the University of California and its Board of Regents [3.9] as a whole have shaped the organizational structures and decision making processes of UC Merced in ways that ensure effective operation from its beginning [3.8]. The faculty has been granted the status of an independent division of the University of California's Academic Senate and have all the critical structures in place for effective governance and consultation with the administration.

Between our first and second visits, the campus underwent successful transitions in the positions of chancellor and executive vice-chancellor (chief academic officer). Chancellor Sung-Mo (Steve) Kang began his duties about one month before our second visit. Founding Chancellor Tomlinson-Keasey, who had guided the development of UC Merced since her appointment in 1999, retired in August 2006 and was succeed by Acting Chancellor Roderic B. Park. Executive Vice Chancellor Keith Alley, who served as the founding Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies, succeeded David Ashley, who left UC Merced to serve as President of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. [3.10] While its administration has "a thin bench," all of the major divisions are in place with leadership who collaborate effectively with each other and with their counterparts on the other UC campuses.

During the visits, members of the team had several opportunities to meet with the leaders of UC Merced's Academic Senate and confirm that UC Merced was building an effective culture of faculty governance and advice [3.11]. The administrative is mindful of the importance of establishing an effective shared governance relationship with the Academic Senate.

4. Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Strategic Thinking and Planning

As a new institution, the University of California, Merced, has not yet had the opportunity for strategic reflective self-review [4.1]. Planning has focused on creating capacity and initiating operations. The campus community engaged in a number of reflective retreats at the end of the first year of operation, which brought together faculty and staff around particular issues of focus and generally incorporated consultation with individuals with relevant experience from outside UC Merced. Campus leaders are actively thinking about formats that will be effective opportunities for communication and review as the faculty and staff grows.

At the time of our initial visit, the campus had in place some of the committee structures for reflection and planning and has given thought to assessment. The discussion above reviews the evidence provided in the EE Review of how they carried out some of their initial assessments. The discussion of the CFRs under Standard 3 above provides evidence that UC Merced's planning processes define strategic objectives and align the efforts of the faculty and administration with them [4.2].

As UC Merced transitions from initial planning to reflection on its operations, its planning processes will be informed by the work of the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis [4.3]. The inaugural administration of NSSE and UCUES as assessments of undergraduate engagement and experiences led to responses in the design of programming for the second year. Progress has been made on defining indicators for tracking and developing reports (EE Exhibit 4.5-2).

Commitment to Learning and Improvement

The draft program review processes provided during the C&PR and the regular review and approval processes inherent in the committee structure of the University of California's Academic Senate provide evidence that the institution will have a deliberate approach to quality

assurance [4.4]. UC Merced has already developed extensive data on student demographic characteristics [4.5]. We have reviewed cases above that evidence inquiry about undergraduate student learning outcomes and responses, by individual faculty and institutionally, to the results. In these areas, UC Merced will develop the primary evidence of satisfying these criteria as it follows the path from initial operation to planning and reviewing for sustained development and improvement. The intentions and orientation of the initial faculty and leadership are admirable.

Administration of NSSE in Spring 2006 and the UCUES survey are indicators of leadership's commitment assessing the campus environment. Both stages of the review revealed many specific examples of responsiveness to emerging data. There are ambitious plans to collect a wide range of data in many areas. The second phase of our review provided the first indications of how the campus will build its intentional systems of interpreting the data as evidence bearing on questions of institutional effectiveness [4.6]. The cases examined in this review were promising in their attention to student learning and both academic and co-curricular objectives. As they move toward initial accreditation, they will need to balance the collection of data with the clarification of the questions for institutional research. Attention to the development of their approach to the evaluation of teaching will need to connect their student evaluation surveys and other assessments to questions of achieving stated objectives for learning. The outcomes of the incorporation of new faculty and the establishment of their Teaching/Learning Center will provide important evidence of how UCM involves its faculty in inquiry about teaching and learning. [4.7]

At this early stage of its development, it is not possible for UC Merced to provide evidence of how its alumni and their career outcomes will provide evidence in the assessment of the educational effectiveness of its programs [4.8]. However, there are already indications in the drafts of program educational objectives and outcomes, particularly in those of the programs in

the School of Engineering, that the faculty understand that this is an important issue. The campus's investment in service learning programs may provide an early opportunity for feedback from external stakeholders in this period before UC Merced acquires a significant population of graduates.

In sum, UC Merced has adopted an orientation to its mission that is consonant with the WASC Standards. There are many examples in its first two years of operation that show that its faculty and campus leadership take seriously their commitment to building a learning environment in which students will succeed in achieving the faculty's objectives for their learning. Under each standard, we were able to find evidence that UC Merced satisfies the criteria for review at a level appropriate for its stage of development or that it appears to be on a course that would lead us to expect satisfaction by the time of review for initial accreditation.

SECTION III - SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOTH REVIEWS

The review for Candidacy is fundamentally a compliance review in which the institution demonstrates that it meets the expectations for accreditation at a minimum level by demonstrating that it has reviewed itself in reference to the Standards and that it meets nearly all of the CFRs, Guidelines, and Standards at a minimum level. Above we have summarized what we take to be the evidence that UC Merced has satisfied these goals.

The leadership of the campus is aware that there is work to be done before it can be said that that they have a clear and feasible plan in place to meet all the Standards and Criteria by the time of the Initial Accreditation Review. Their plan depends to some degree on the timing of that review with the full development of their academic planning and review processes. But

there are still crucial issues to be resolved in getting an approved framework for long range development and confirming that the fiscal context provided by the State and the University will allow them to develop their potential fully in the near term.

The team was also aware that beyond the areas that formed the case studies in the focus of this review, the faculty varied in their orientation to educational effectiveness in the sense intended here. As they grapple with the reality of bringing to life the stated vision of a student-centered research university in their situation, they will need to resolve many practical questions and choose among competing priorities. In these reviews, we heard a dominant voice from faculty and leadership that reflected commitment to sustaining faculty engagement with their students in a research-based educational environment, committed to educational effectiveness in student achievement. But we also heard some voices of insecurity, indications that some were ambivalent about giving priority to engaging the goals of this review. The faculty and student body will grow steadily in the next few years. The campus will settle into its habits and culture shaped by the conditions we observed in our visits. Assuming that the voices of commitment remain dominant over the voices of insecurity, UC Merced will develop successfully on its path to accreditation.

Summary of Conclusions

Throughout this review for candidacy, UC Merced has been seriously engaged with the review and kept the WASC Standards in mind as they framed and inaugurated their academic programs. The team has found our engagement with the people of UC Merced inspiring and wish them well as they continue in their development. Below we provide three major recommendations that we offer to guide their progress toward full accreditation. We also draw attention here to some of the specific points raised above.

We encourage the faculty in the Schools, the Committee on Academic Personnel, and the administration to engage in serious consideration of how the evaluation of teaching effectiveness will be related to the stated program goals for student learning.

Before the campus undertakes the review for initial accreditation a formal program review process should be instituted that will ensure that the faculty's current attention to clarity of objective and focus on student learning are maintained and reinforced.

Finally, we note that Student Affairs has a strong, reliable partnership with Academic Affairs and has proven to be an effective advocate of UCM students' needs.

Major Recommendations

We remain impressed with the progress in UC Merced's development and mindful of the many challenges that their faculty, staff, and students must meet to achieve their goals and pursue their distinctive mission within the University of California. We offer three recommendations that we believe will most contribute to their successful accreditation.

Recommendation 1:

In preparation for the Initial Accreditation review, institutionalize an integrated plan that will effectively meet all of the WASC Standards and Criteria for Review beyond the minimum level of achievement. Institutionalizing this plan will ensure that the Standards and Criteria for Review are incorporated in the strategic academic plan; thereby, entrenching the values that highlight educational effectiveness in the academic culture. The development of a formalized plan will also allow the institution to monitor their progress toward the improvement of teaching and learning and to realistically align financial resources for program development.

Recommendation 2:

UCM should confidently pursue their distinctive mission as a student-centered research university serving the present and future students of the State and the needs of the Central

Valley. The team has found their initial steps inspiring and innovative. We hope that the reflection encouraged by this review for accreditation will help them on the path to the 21st century excellence they seek.

Recommendation 3:

The Chancellor and Provost should continue to engage the Office of the President in discussions that ensure that the fiscal context provided by the University for the development of the campus is consistent with realizing its full potential. UC Merced is being required to develop in a more challenging fiscal context than any earlier campus start-up, with an environment for physical planning more constrained by regulation and a more stringent compliance environment for research and instructional operation.