ESSAY 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0 ABOUT CSU BAKERSFIELD (CFRS 1.1 and 1.8)

CSU Bakersfield is a comprehensive regional university located on a 375-acre site in Kern County, California, in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Since its founding in 1965, CSU Bakersfield has continuously expanded, and remains the only comprehensive four-year regional university within a hundred miles. CSU Bakersfield is committed to transforming the lives of its students and community, in one of the poorest regions in California, through its established excellence in academia, diversity, service, and community engagement. The world-class faculty, with nearly 75% holding terminal degrees, represent nations from all over the globe. The University provides academic opportunity to more than 11,000 students at both the main campus in Bakersfield and the satellite campus in Antelope Valley, with 50,000 alumni from the four academic schools: Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education. The University offers undergraduate degrees, master’s degrees, as well as a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. Moreover, the University offers teaching credentials, numerous post-baccalaureate certificates and numerous post master’s certificates. CSU Bakersfield’s Extended University serves the community by offering additional professional development, certificate, and degree programs. With over 70 percent of its alumni remaining and working within the Central Valley, CSU Bakersfield supports ongoing social, cultural and economic development in the region. The University also participates in NCAA Division I athletic competitions. Since 2012 CSU Bakersfield has competed successfully in the Western Athletic Conference (WAC), and in the coming years will enter the Big West Conference. Proudly, CSU Bakersfield is a recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), and the institution is a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). HACU represents more than 400 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America and Spain.

1.1 OUR VISION FOR CSU BAKERSFIELD: CURRENT PRIORITIES AND SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE INSTITUTION

CSU Bakersfield is a comprehensive public university committed to offering excellent undergraduate and graduate programs that advance the intellectual and personal development of its students. An emphasis on student learning is enhanced by a commitment to scholarship, diversity, service, global awareness and life-long learning. The University collaborates with partners in the community to increase the region's
overall educational attainment, enhance its quality of life, and support its economic development.

In order to honor its purpose and commitment to achieving a vision of excellence in all areas, the University is guided by a set of core values that shapes its work with students, faculty, staff and the region. These core values include the following six commitments: (1) developing the intellectual and personal potential of every student; (2) supporting the intellectual and professional development of all faculty and staff; (3) nurturing a civil and collegial campus environment that values the diversity of persons and ideas; (4) engaging one another with respect, trustworthiness, ethical behavior, and self-reflection; (5) promoting active and informed engagement of faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders in shared governance; and (6) being accountable to the public, alumni, students, and one another for achieving the mission, vision, and goals of the university.

Located in Kern County, CSU Bakersfield draws the majority of its students from within this region. Kern County High Schools have long been characterized as educationally underserved, with low Academic Performance Index (API) scores and low college-going rates. In the area of educational attainment, the local adult population’s education rates are significantly lower than the rest of the state. Regional middle schools and high schools face considerable challenges in graduating students and preparing them for college. CSU Bakersfield has always been challenged to provide a high quality university education to a service area with a long tradition of low educational attainment. As a result, creating the conditions that foster student success in college has never been more important. Student success is promoted when students gain greater awareness of their learning styles, learning habits and thinking patterns and realize that learning is not static.

Under the administration of President Horace Mitchell, the University adopted five strategic goals: (1) Extend Faculty and Academic Excellence and Diversity; (2) Enhance the Quality of the Student Experience; (3) Strengthen Community Engagement; (4) Develop an Excellent and Diverse Staff; (5) Develop a Campus Culture with a Sense of Community and a Commitment to Organizational Excellence. These goals supported the University’s plans for student population growth, with an emphasis on enrolling more first-time freshmen directly from high school and attracting students from neighboring counties, states and other countries. To meet the changing student, community, and economic development needs of the region, many new academic programs and student services have been developed, most dramatically during the campus conversion from a quarter to a semester system.
1.2 CONTRIBUTION TO PUBLIC GOOD

Based in California’s southern San Joaquin Valley—where rates of higher education rank among the state’s lowest, and rates of poverty and health problems among the highest—CSU Bakersfield serves an especially vital role in the community. As one campus among the 23 in the CSU system, CSU Bakersfield fully supports the mission of the CSU, including these goals: “to advance and extend knowledge, learning, and culture, especially throughout California;” “to prepare significant numbers of educated, responsible people to contribute to California's schools, economy, culture, and future;” “to encourage and provide access to an excellent education to all who are prepared for and wish to participate in collegiate study;” “to prepare students for an international, multi-cultural society;” and “to provide public services that enrich the university and its communities.”

Not only does CSU Bakersfield’s overall mission emphasize community engagement, so too does the mission of each of CSU Bakersfield’s academic schools. The School of Arts and Humanities “connect[s] the arts and humanities to everyday life” in order to help students “create better communities for themselves and their families” [link: School of Arts and Humanities]; the School of Business and Public Administration prepares graduates “to address the challenging issues facing businesses and organizations in our region” [link: School of Business and Public Administration]; the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering “prepare[s] students for leadership roles in the community” [link: School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering]; and the School of Social Sciences and Education “address[es] local, regional, and state needs” and “prepare[s] future leaders, professionals, and community advocates” to “work toward increasing the community's understanding and acceptance of complex social, racial, and gender issues and toward creating positive social change” [link: School of Social Sciences and Education].

CSU Bakersfield’s faculty, staff, and students contribute to the public good in a variety of ways. The University trains the teachers, nurses, police officers and business leaders who ensure a brighter future for Kern County, and through community service, field work and internships, CSU Bakersfield students put theory into practice while learning valuable skills outside the classroom. The Center for Community Engagement and Career Education (CECE), founded in 2009, works with nearly 700 local businesses and nonprofit organizations, coordinating service learning, academic internships, direct service and volunteer activities associated with academic credit, and has overseen consistent growth in service learning courses. In 2011, CECE received a Gold Award from Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.
CSU Bakersfield highly values the many ways that its faculty, staff, students, and community members contribute to the public good. This includes a variety of campus awards and celebrations such as the Faculty Leadership and Service Award, the venerated President’s Medal, the CSU Bakersfield Alumni Hall of Fame and Rising Runner award, the Outstanding Community Service and Outstanding Educational Program student awards, the Outstanding Community Service faculty and student awards, the CSU Bakersfield Athletics Community Service team award, the John Brock Community Service Awards, and the Wendy Wayne Awards for Exemplary Ethical Behavior.

In 2015, CSU Bakersfield was one of only 83 colleges and universities nationwide honored for the first time with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s Community Engagement Classification. This hard-won honor is built on the collective strengths of numerous innovative university-community partnerships that engage a far-reaching array of constituents and interests. Local business and industry executives, non-profit, education, and community leaders, and alumni sit on the CSU Bakersfield Foundation Board, the President’s Community Advisory Council, the Council of 100 (business leaders), the Alumni Association, the Big Six (local superintendents and community college chancellors), CSU Bakersfield Industry and Education Roundtable, the Enrollment Advisory Council, and the Executive Advisory Councils of each of the four academic schools. Valuable dialogue and collaboration occur in these groups, which also include representatives of University departments and units across Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Athletics, University Advancement, Business and Administrative Services, and Extended University.

1.3 ACCREDITATION HISTORY AND RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS ACTION LETTERS (CFRs 1.1 and 1.8)

CSU Bakersfield has been continually accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission or WSCUC since its inception in 1970. For this decennial evaluation, the CSU Bakersfield WSCUC Steering Committee revisited the documents created a decade ago to ascertain trends in the Commission’s commendations and recommendations. The documents included in this review were the Capacity and Preparatory review [doc.1.8:24], the WSCUC Campus Letter from 2010 [doc. 1.8:22], the WSCUC Campus Letter from 2012 [doc. 1.8:21] and the WSCUC Campus Letter from 2016 [doc. 1.8:20]. As the Steering Committee and others reviewed these past action letters, two themes emerged: assessment of student learning and student retention and graduation.
The Commission’s attention to CSU Bakersfield’s assessment processes spans the decade. In 2010 [doc. 1.8:22], the Commission’s Campus Letter stated that “While the University has areas of excellence and promise in its work on assessment, it also has areas that lag behind… Responsibilities for assessment need to be clearly defined, coordinated, and funded.” Due to the Commission’s critique in 2010, CSU Bakersfield began an intensive process over the next five years to revise and restructure its learning outcomes assessment process. The results of this restructuring are detailed in the subsequent essays. In 2016, the Commission’s evaluators found that “CSU Bakersfield provided ample evidence of its educational effectiveness: impressive systems are in place for regularly collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reviewing assessment data at the undergraduate and graduate levels; the institution has clear university level goals for student learning and the means to measure them; student progress in meeting these goals is carefully tracked; and General Education has its own assessment mechanisms.” The panel praised CSU Bakersfield for creating a well-crafted assessment process that is faculty “owned” and that integrates quality assurance practices into the fabric of the university” [WSCUC Campus Letter 2016 doc. 1.8:20].

Over the decade, the Commission has also highlighted the campus’ efforts to improve its retention and graduation rates. In 2012, the Commission’s Letter to Campus authors, “Given the University’s relatively low graduation rates in comparison to other CSU campuses, real progress on increasing degree completion must continue to be a high priority. Ongoing attention is needed to monitor retention efforts at both undergraduate and graduate levels, to conduct further analyses of attrition patterns (including those of transfer students and other subpopulations) in order to inform further refinements, and to sustain initiatives focused on this vital concern” [WSCUC Campus Letter 2012 doc. 1.8:21]. As shown throughout this report, CSU Bakersfield is undertaking dramatic actions to improve its retention and graduation rates through the CSU system-wide Graduation Initiative 2025.

1.4 PREPARATION FOR THE REVIEW (CFRs 1.1 and 1.8)

This review was an opportunity to engage the entire campus community in the process of continuous improvement. In preparing for the review, a representative body, the WSCUC Steering Committee, has overseen the reaffirmation effort over several years. After consultation with the Provost, the WSCUC Steering Committee members were selected to represent students, faculty and administrators from both the main campus and the university’s Antelope Valley Campus [WSCUC Team Organizational Chart doc. 1.8:07]. Chaired by the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, the Steering
Committee held its first meeting on November 4, 2016 [link: WSCUC Meetings, Team Organizational Chart doc. 1.8:07].

The WSCUC Steering Committee serves as the organizing, consulting and decision-making entity for reaffirmation, and has coordinated the activities of the nine WSCUC Workgroups, which were organized to collect documents, data and information pertaining to the WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR). The Workgroups worked collaboratively for six months to amass the hundreds of documents referenced in the Institutional Report. The WSCUC Steering Committee also oversaw the work of the WSCUC Writing Teams, which drafted each section of this Institutional Report. Together, the multiple reaffirmation committees (roughly 45 people) are referred to as the “WSCUC All Team.”

After the WSCUC Workgroups collected documents, the Steering Committee formed the Writing Teams to draft each section of the Institutional Report. The Writing Teams worked throughout 2017-2018 to develop the first drafts, which were completed by May 2018. Over the summer of 2018, the drafts of the Institutional Report were revised by the editor, Marit MacArthur, a Professor of English at CSU Bakersfield, in consultation with the Accreditation Liaison Officer Dr. Vernon B. Harper Jr. and the Associate Dean of Graduation and Undergraduate Studies Dr. Debra Jackson. Subsequent to the editorial revisions, the Institutional Report was made available to the campus electronically and in physical form [link: WSCUC Institutional Report Draft] for review. Moreover, the draft was provided to the Academic Senate for their review and comment.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

In preparation for the self-study and the Institutional Report, the WSCUC Team consulted the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation. As prescribed in the Handbook, this report is organized into eight essays (the University chose not to write a ninth essay on an institution-specific theme). Each essay provides detailed descriptions and refers to supporting documents as evidence related to CSU Bakersfield's compliance with the WSCUC Criteria for Review (CFR) and other policies. The citation format used throughout the report is intended to provide easily understood and speedy access to more than 600 supporting documents.

Each citation conveys important information to the reader. The bullet point below shows a sample citation: a hyperlinked phrase describes the document, followed by a CFR number and a document number. (In some cases, the description of the supporting document appears in the preceding sentence, and so the description is omitted from the citation.) The citation also indicates the type of document, spreadsheet, or slide
presentation. The first two digits of the citation number, in this example “1.5,” refer to the CFR this document is intended to reference. The last two digits, in this example “09,” refer to the number of documents supporting the respective CFR. In other words, the sample citation refers to CFR 1.5 and it is the 9th document in the sequence.

- [Description of Document doc. 1.5:09]

Beyond the citation format, each essay begins with a brief introduction to set the stage for the topic. Each essay concludes with a summary and foreshadow the content of the next essay. The Institutional Report includes a Table of Contents at the beginning and a List of Acronyms in the Appendix.