ESSAY 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS: REVIEW UNDER THE WSCUC STANDARDS AND COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS; INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATOR

In this essay, we describe the process through which CSU Bakersfield completed the Review under WSCUC Standards (RUWS) and the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI). The essay describes the process of self-study, as well as the broad and collaborative efforts of faculty, students and staff to comply with and exceed WSCUC standards. We also refer to the Federal Checklist necessary for successful reaffirmation. In sum, the evidence shown throughout this institutional report shows that CSU Bakersfield has numerous systems and structures for tracking, evaluating and improving learning for the students CSU Bakersfield serves.

2.1 REVIEW UNDER THE WSCUC STANDARDS (CFR 1.8)

For CSU Bakersfield, the Review under WSCUC Standards was an opportunity for the university to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses as well as its future direction as the only four-year university within 100 miles in the southern San Joaquin Valley. As described in Essay 1, the reaffirmation and self-study process began with the formation of the WSCUC Steering Committee in November of 2016 [link WSCUC Meetings]. The Steering Committee also created and oversaw several subordinate WSCUC reaffirmation committees, including the WSCUC Workgroup, which collected documents, data and information pertaining to the WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR), and the WSCUC Writing Teams [Team Organizational Chart doc. 1.8:07]. Over the course of several months, the WSCUC Workgroups collected over 600 documents, included in the appendices, to reflect on as supporting evidence that CSU Bakersfield complies with WSCUC Standards. The Steering Committee then formed the Writing Teams to draft the essays for the Institutional Report. Together, the subordinate reaffirmation committees (with 58 members, including faculty and staff from all four of CSU Bakersfield's academic schools) are referred to as the “WSCUC All Team.”

Consistent with the RUWS instructions, the RUWS was utilized for planning for the Institutional Report. The Steering Committee finalized the distribution, analysis and refinement of Review under WSCUC Standards (RUWS) at the meeting on January 16, 2018 [link WSCUC Meetings]. At that meeting, the Committee approved the multi-step process of institutional self-study, detailed in the Reaffirmation 12-month Flowchart [doc. 1.8:09], and provided the RUWS to the WSCUC All Team. Each member of the WSCUC All Team had the opportunity to rate CSU Bakersfield's performance according to the RUWS over the course of two weeks, as shown in the Reaffirmation 12-month Workflow.
For each CFR, fifteen WSCUC All Team members rated how well CSU Bakersfield is doing (“Reviewer Rating”). They also identified the importance of addressing each CFR as an aspect of the review (“Importance to Address”). These responses to the RUWS, referred to as RUWS data, were compiled and analyzed in a spreadsheet, for ease of reporting, by members of the Steering Committee in the Office of Academic Programs [RUWS data xls. 1.8:11] (Note: Our RUWS data spreadsheet is distinct from the federally required RUWS form [doc. 1:8.17]). In addition, the participating All Team members provided qualitative comments about CSU Bakersfield’s self-assessment. On the RUWS data spreadsheet, the results include the percentage of response for each rating, and the qualitative or open comments. The results are briefly summarized in this section of the essay.

The primary analysis identified those CFRs with a low Reviewer Rating or “We do this well” coupled with a High Importance to Address, or “High Priority” rating. For example, the analysis of CFR 1.1 indicated that 75% of the respondents saw that CSUB has a appropriate and clearly defined statement of purpose, or mission. One respondent wrote the following: “CSUB has a clear and appropriate institutional purpose, its educational objectives are aligned with that purpose, and it operates with integrity and autonomy.”

In another example, the RUWS spreadsheet shows that CFR 1.2, which relates to educational objectives being widely recognized throughout the institution, received a 6% Reviewer Rating (“We do this well”) and a 38% Importance to Address rating. One of the respondents commented: “CSU Bakersfield does have this information readily available, but information is not always in a centralized location.” The respondents also saw the need for CSU Bakersfield to improve its professional developmental resources available to faculty and staff. In reference to CFR 3.3, the respondents noted that, “The campus provides more training opportunities to faculty and staff.” Particularly, 3 of the 15 respondents (20%) indicated that CSU Bakersfield “Does this Well,” while 4 of the 15 respondents (25%) felt this item was a “High priority.” In another area for improvement, the analysis showed that CFR 4.7 institution considers changes in the higher education) should be addressed by CSU Bakersfield. Only 19% of the respondents indicated that CSU Bakersfield is achieving CFR 4.7 well, while 19% rated CFR 4.7 highly for Importance to Address. In reference to CFR 4.7, one respondent commented: “There needs to be systematic strategic planning throughout the university; some units do well; others not as well and some not at all.” The RUWS data spreadsheet provided a rich dataset in support of CSU Bakersfield’s self-study. The data was used to promote reflection and continuous improvement campus-wide.
The WSCUC All Team met on February 14, 2018, to discuss the RUWS dataset, as shown in the Reaffirmation 12-month Flowchart [doc.1.8:09]. This was a formative conversation among members of the WSCUC Steering Committee, the WSCUC Workgroups and the WSCUC Writing Teams. The 58 members of the WSCUC All Team, who had collected over 600 documents, were in the best position to recommend improvements to CSU Bakersfield. At the February meeting, participants were asked to complete a worksheet, called the CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry Worksheet, to organize their thoughts and provide qualitative feedback for the RUWS [CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry Worksheet doc. 1.8:05].

Based on worksheet responses at the February WSCUC All Team meeting, the CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry [doc. 1.8:06] were drafted. The CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry, not to be conflated with the WSCUC Lines of Inquiry, are a vital part of the institution’s self-study and were used to identify areas of improvement before the WSCUC Team visit. It both provides a summary of areas of improvement [doc.1.8:06] and a project plan to develop solutions [doc. 1.8:06]. The CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry comprise eight areas of institutional improvement to be addressed before the visiting team arrives on campus.

1. CSU Bakersfield recognizes the need to develop a better system for collecting data, analyzing results, and communicating findings related to each goal and objective in the strategic plan to the university community.

2. CSU Bakersfield will seek to improve organizational structures and data generating practices to facilitate decision making in all matters within the context of the changing institutional and higher education landscape.

3. The institution will be able to provide, publicly, timely information about the University’s finances; and share information regarding how financial resources are being managed in accordance with best business practices.

4. CSU Bakersfield will provide additional assessment workshops and training institutes to ensure that student learning outcomes are measured and that the findings are used to improve standards of performance across every department and program.

5. In preparation for its WASC review, CSU Bakersfield will continue to develop and strategies for improving graduation rates by working with the Graduation Initiative Committee. The campus will also make public all data related to the graduation initiative including student learning.
6. CSU Bakersfield will strengthen its efforts to promote the success of all students, including international and transfer students. As a university that serves many transfer students, CSU Bakersfield will provide a smooth and seamless transition for transfer students.

7. During the next several months, CSU Bakersfield will close the loop on the program review cycle by completing outstanding MOUAPs.

8. CSU Bakersfield will intensify its efforts to promote and advertise faculty research and creative activities, including those scholarly activities that involve students as co-participants.

With the CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry in development, broad campus participation was sought in the self-study process. To that end, two WSCUC campus open forums were conducted and recorded. During each one, the face-to-face and live-stream audience was provided with the RUWS [link: WSCUC RUWS Open Forums].

The comments from the campus open forums were used to develop the final CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry, which became the basis of a Project Plan [doc. 1.8:06]. The Project Plan serves as a guide for CSU Bakersfield’s continuous improvement throughout the self-study process, to address areas of concern while preparing for the visiting team over the next year. Overall, the CSU Bakersfield self-study process was a collaborative campus-wide journey that yielded the RUWS data spreadsheet, RUWS Federal Worksheet, the Lines of Inquiry and the Lines of Inquiry Project Plan.

2.2 INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS (CFR 1.8)

CSU Bakersfield reviewed and finalized its Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI) in 2016, in parallel with the institution’s mid-cycle review. At CSU Bakersfield, the IEEI was coordinated through the Office of Institutional Research Planning and Assessment (IRPA). The Assistant Vice President for IRPA also serves as CSU Bakersfield’s Chief Assessment Officer, and oversees the Council of School Assessment Coordinators. Individually and collectively, the School Assessment Coordinators encourage and coordinate assessment activities within each of the four academic Schools [link: Assessment Coordinators Minutes]. These activities include: ensuring each program has developed learning outcomes and that the outcomes are published and widely available, and supporting faculty in evaluating learning outcomes [Sample Assessment Coordinators Responsibilities doc. 1.8:12].
Beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year, the Council of School Assessment Coordinators began developing the campus’s IEEI for submission. The Council worked closely with academic departments to collect information for the IEEI. In total, the IEEI shows that 100% of the 62 degree-granting programs listed have formal learning outcomes [IEEI doc. 1.8:16], which are available for review [link: Department Assessment Webpage]. Importantly, the Departmental Assessment Webpage is password protected. The IEEI also indicates that 100% of the 62 degree granting programs have published learning outcomes in the catalog [link: CSU Bakersfield catalog] and on each departmental assessment webpage. Also, the IEEI shows that 93% (58 of 62) of the degree-granting programs have been scheduled for program review as of 2011.

In addition, the IEEI summarizes department and school assessment reports over multiple years. As an example of how evidence is used to determine how graduates achieve learning outcomes, the Biology Department in 2015-2016 undertook an evaluation of the volume and depth of content that graduating seniors retained over the course of their years of study [NSME Fall 2017 Assessment Report doc. 1.8:13]. A prior analysis had indicated differences in student recall of content, based on “..where students had taken their freshman-level coursework, with CSU Bakersfield students generally outperforming transfer students, particularly in botany-related topics.” To further analyze this observation, the department conducted an assessment of student content recall using a pre-posttest design. The assessment instrument was administered to entering Biology students in the 2000-level courses, and then in the senior seminar course. Though the final data was unavailable as of this writing, this evaluation of an outcome over several years demonstrates the Biology department’s commitment to using powerful methodologies to evaluate student learning at various stages of their matriculation and to consider the transfer student population in particular.

The IEEI also details how evidence gained about student learning is used by departments and programs. In one example from the IEEI, the Counseling Psychology (CPSY) Department had been using an in-house comprehensive examination involving the successful analysis of case studies as an end-of-degree evaluation. However, the analysis of the comprehensive exam data indicated that the in-house measure was not aligned with current programs learning outcomes. With this in mind, the faculty “in the CPSY Program have recommended that the current exam be replaced with the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam. This exam better reflects the learning outcomes for the program. Further, it is nationally normed, so CSU Bakersfield scores can be compared to scores from other programs.” By switching to a nationally normed instrument to better align with program outcomes, the Counseling Psychology faculty
demonstrate a data-driven orientation to improve evaluation of student learning [IEEI doc. 1.8:16].

In all, the IEEI is a summary of the consistent and deliberate work of the CSU Bakersfield faculty to set rigorous student learning objectives. These objectives are widely shared with and disseminated among both students and faculty. Moreover, the faculty show the capacity, desire and determination to evaluate student work according to those student learning outcomes. The evidence derived from these evaluations of student learning has been used to close the loop and ensure learning. Lastly, it is clear that nearly every program at CSU Bakersfield has been scheduled for program review.

2.3 FEDERAL CHECKLISTS

CSU Bakersfield evaluated the four Federal Checklists in July of 2018. In preparation for the team visit, CSU Bakersfield completed an initial review of compliance to the Federal Checklist. The bullets below link to each document listed on the Federal Checklist for, and a blank version of the checklist is available as part of the documents for this report [doc. 1.8:17].

- Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
- Marketing and Recruitment Policy
- Student Complaints Policy
- Transfer Credit Policy Form

2.4 CONCLUSIONS

CSU Bakersfield has used its self-study process and the Review Under WSCUC Standards document to engage the entire community of students, faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders in a broad and deep review of compliance to the WSUC standards of accreditation. The campus was engaged in the self-study process through numerous campus updates [link: WSCUC Campus Updates] and open forums.

From the WSCUC All Team meetings, the campus has developed its own CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry to foster coordinated improvement in advance of the WSCUC visit in the Fall of 2019. These CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry range from the following: improving data collection and reporting, improving transparency of financial information, promoting student success and closing the loop on program review. With this information in hand, the senior leadership has committed to addressing these CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry, while keeping the campus notified through the CSU Bakersfield Lines of Inquiry Project Plan. In Essay 3, the authors will
elaborate on the meaning quality and integrity of CSU Bakersfield’s academic programs.