ESSAY 3 – DEGREE PROGRAMS: MEANING, QUALITY, AND INTEGRITY OF DEGREES (CFRS 1.2, 2.2 – 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

This essay addresses the meaning, quality and integrity of the baccalaureate, master, and doctoral degrees at CSU Bakersfield. The meaning of each degree is defined in terms of its alignment with the university’s mission. The quality and integrity of the degree programs are demonstrated through our rigorous degree and course approval processes, as well as the consistent evaluation of student learning outcomes at all levels. Further, this essay explains how CSU Bakersfield’s curriculum and co-curricular structures support the development of our students on their path to graduation. This essay demonstrates how resources are deployed strategically to facilitate an academic experience of the highest quality, and to ensure that this experience meets the standards set by the Commission and the faculty of CSU Bakersfield.

3.1 THE MEANING OF DEGREES AT CSU Bakersfield (CFRs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.8)

The meaning and value of a degree from CSU Bakersfield—whether undergraduate or graduate—arises from the campus commitment to bettering the lives of each student and improving our community and region. As mentioned above, CSU Bakersfield is the only four-year university within 100 miles. Its service area includes part of Los Angeles County (the cities of Antelope Valley, Lancaster, Palmdale) as well as the counties of Inyo, Kern, Mono, and Tulare. In terms of square miles, CSU Bakersfield has one of the largest service areas in the CSU System. Kern County alone is home to over 900,000 people.

Working closely with local schools and community colleges, CSU Bakersfield provides access to higher education for a rapidly growing and increasingly at-risk population of low-income and first-generation students. Nearly a decade since the Great Recession ravaged California and the nation, the rate of local childhood poverty has increased each year since 2008 [Kern County Report Card doc. 1.8:18]. In fact, 32 percent of all children in Kern County were living below the federal poverty threshold in 2015. This level of economic hardship directly influences the type of student CSU Bakersfield serves. According to the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, in the 2017 academic year, just 40 percent of elementary and secondary school students met or exceeded standards in English Language Arts, while only 27 percent met or exceeded standards in math [link: CAASPP Results].

By focusing on providing students with a well-rounded skill set, including strong foundational skills, ethics, appreciation of diversity, and interdisciplinary knowledge, CSU Bakersfield aims to develop the intellectual and personal potential of each student.
By educating our students and collaborating with partners in the community, we also aim to improve the region’s educational advancement, quality of life, and economic development.

3.1.1 THE MEANING OF THE BACCLAUREATE DEGREE (CFRs 1.1, 1.4, 2.1 and 2.2a)

The meaning of the baccalaureate degree at CSU Bakersfield must refer to the value the degree confers upon the recipient. Ultimately, of course, that value is determined by widespread expectations of what the student knows and is able to do by virtue of having earned the degree. On our campus, expectations for graduates are most clearly demonstrated in the University Learning Outcomes (ULOs), in place since the spring of 2010. The ULOs are comprised of five goals, with multiple learning objectives, focusing on “critical reasoning and problem solving,” oral and written communication, “discipline-based knowledge and career-based learning,” “numerical literacy” and “engaged citizenship” [CSU Bakersfield ULOs doc. 2.2a.09].

- Goal I. Students will show critical reasoning and problem solving skills.
- Goal II. Students will be able to communicate orally and in writing.
- Goal III. Students will demonstrate discipline-based knowledge and career-based learning.
- Goal IV. Students will possess numerical literacy.
- Goal V. Students will become engaged citizens.
- Goal VI. Students will develop a well-rounded skill set.

These ULOs, which specify the knowledge and abilities the CSU Bakersfield graduate is expected to demonstrate, are based on the framework provided by CSU Bakersfield’s Mission Statement. The statement highlights the campus’s focus on the betterment of each student through “a commitment to scholarship, diversity, service, global awareness, and life-long learning” [CSU Bakersfield Mission doc. 1.4:03]. Students are expected to reach these goals progressively over their entire course of study, which typically consists of 48 units of general education, a major course of study, and a minor or collection of elective classes, totaling 120 units. Their course of study is complemented and supported by a variety of campus activities. Thus, the ULOs identify the knowledge and abilities our graduates acquire through their General Education courses; disciplinary courses in their major and minor or elective choices; and their involvement in extra and co-curricular activities. Each component of a baccalaureate degree has its own Student Learning Outcomes, directly mapped to the ULOs. The current General Education program, implemented in 2016 and closely aligned with the ULOs, focuses on teaching and reinforcing foundational skills and achieving integrated knowledge across disciplines.
3.1.2 THE MEANING OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE (CFRs 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3)

As a comprehensive public university, CSU Bakersfield is dedicated to offering excellent graduate programs that advance student learning and support economic development in the service region. CSU Bakersfield’s pledge to provide quality post-baccalaureate programs is embedded in our vision and value statements and undergirds the University Learning Outcomes for Graduate Programs, ULOGP [ULOGP doc. 2.3:16]. Every post-baccalaureate degree program at CSU Bakersfield has developed learning objectives that align with the ULOGP, while the discipline-specific meaning of graduate degrees varies with the array of graduate programs offered.

- Students will demonstrate broad, integrative knowledge.
- Students will develop specialized knowledge.
- Students will practice intellectual skills such as analytic inquiry, use of information resources, engaging diverse perspectives, quantitative fluency, and communication fluency.
- Students will conduct applied learning.

The ULOGPs were developed following the Degree Qualifications Profile which outlines, in broad terms, what graduates at each degree level should know within the following areas: specialized knowledge; broad and integrative knowledge; intellectual skills; applied and collaborative learning; and global learning. The ULOGP presuppose the acquisition of literacies, breadth and subject-matter knowledge at the undergraduate level and build upon that knowledge at the master’s level. For example, our ULOGP emphasize intellectual skills that are also articulated in our undergraduate curriculum, but the expectation is that, upon graduation, our graduate students’ proficiencies will demonstrate the principle of incremental challenge and cumulative accomplishment.

Our post-baccalaureate programs allow students to develop and demonstrate analytical skills, use of information resources, engagement with diverse perspectives, and quantitative and communication fluency that strengthen learning and deepen understanding. Our popular masters’ programs include business and public administration, nursing, social work, geological sciences, English, Spanish, education, and counseling. Overall, all our graduate programs are known for developing students’ integrative and specialized knowledge. All graduate students engage in real-world, problem-solving experiences such as practicum, work, community, or research activities and are encouraged to apply the insights gained from field experiences to address the most pressing global, national, and regional issues of the times.
Our steadfast commitment to graduate programs has earned CSU Bakersfield national recognition by the Washington Monthly (2017) as one of the top ten master’s granting universities in the country [Washington Monthly Ranking doc. 1.8.19]. The Washington Monthly ranking is based on a variety of factors, including CSU Bakersfield hold a top 15 rankings related to student earnings and net price for the degree. According to CSU Bakersfield president Dr. Horace Mitchell, “This national recognition is a tribute to the passion and commitment of our faculty, staff, and administrators to excellence and the success of our students.”

As a result of the rich, coherent, and challenging educational experiences CSU Bakersfield provides, our master's and doctoral graduates become leaders in their fields – researchers, teachers, mentors, policy makers, and entrepreneurs. The success of these graduates speaks eloquently to CSU Bakersfield’s vision for providing a quality educational experience that transforms students and improves the quality of life in the region and beyond.

### 3.1.3 THE MEANING OF THE DEGREE IN INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (CFR 2.3)

The undergraduate degree programs at CSU Bakersfield provide students with breadth and depth of knowledge, preparing them to serve as educated citizens in Kern County, California, and the world. Led by a distinguished faculty, CSU Bakersfield programs lead to undergraduate Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, with these three components: 1) General Education or broad exposure to bases of knowledge; 2) study of one or more fields in greater depth, and 3) a minor or elective courses. CSU Bakersfield graduate programs, designed to meet important student and regional needs, culminate in the award of a master’s degree, an advanced teaching credential, a special post-baccalaureate certificate, post-master’s certificate or doctoral degree. In all cases, the meaning of a degree at CSU Bakersfield is indicated through development of clear and relevant student learning outcomes, crafted by the faculty, evaluated consistently, and refined continuously to foster student achievement. Statements of and links to student learning outcomes are made available and communicated to students through the university catalog [link: 2016-18 Catalog] as well as department websites and course syllabi. In addition to these sources, the student learning outcomes for both undergraduate and graduate programs are available publicly on the CSU Bakersfield Program Assessment website [link: Student Learning Outcome Statements].

Student learning outcomes for each academic program—Program Learning Outcomes, or PLOs—map to the University Learning Outcomes. For example, the Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication sets out in Goal 4 that, “Students will develop a critical
understanding of communication law.” This goal is further elaborated by the intended learning outcome that “Students will explore, understand, and critically assess the knowledge of laws governing communication.” These goals and outcomes within the Communication degree map to the following University Learning Outcomes: 1A: Ability to read critically, 1B: Ability to write critically, 1D: Ability to think critically. 1F: Critical problem solving, 3A: Knowledge in the major discipline, and 3B: Ability to apply knowledge of discipline.

Beyond simple mapping, the undergraduate degree programs assess their PLOs through a variety of methodological approaches. For example, the Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology provides an excellent example [link: CSU Bakersfield Department Assessment]. The department expects students to be able to “Demonstrate knowledge of the biological and physical processes that inform our understanding of physical activity, nutrition and health.” To evaluate this outcome, the department embedded faculty designed items into in-class examinations. In sum, the department found the following: “There were a total of 51 students that took the exam. Embedded questions labeled 1 and 2 were correctly answered correctly by 90% of students. Questions 3, 4, and 5 were answered correctly by 83% of the students.” In closing the loop, the kinesiology department determined that, while lectures were a sound means to prepare students to achieve the above outcome, introducing more frequent quizzes to confirm student achievement would improve student learning.

Graduate programs similarly demonstrate the meaning of the degree through the careful development of student learning outcomes and their related measurement. For the graduate program in English, the department has set an outcome for students related to X-bar theory, a theory of syntactic relationships between two independent claims [link: CSU Bakersfield Department Assessment]. It is stated as the following: “Students will be able to accurately reveal the grammatical relationships of constituents in sentences using X-bar theory.” This outcome maps directly to the University Learning Outcomes for Graduate Programs [ULOGP doc 2.3:16]: “Students elucidate the major theories, research methods and approaches to inquiry. Students perform analytic inquiry.”

With this context, the English department evaluated student achievement of this outcome by developing a pre-test examination related to X-bar theory and its application, taken during the first week of class. Students were re-tested during the mid-term. In the 2016-2017 cycle, the results of the assessment showed the following: “The average score on the pretest was 53.7. The average score on the midterm exam was 92.9, a significant increase. On the midterm, students displayed not only knowledge of the conceptual framework of X-bar theory, but also how to apply the theory in treeing complex sentences to reveal their true constituent structure.”
Though the faculty of each undergraduate and graduate program demonstrate the
meaning of CSU Bakersfield’s degrees in different ways, the degrees are built with
thoughtful and directed student learning outcomes that are used to measure student
performance and encourage and support student achievement. Furthermore, the quality
of each degree program is assessed annually by program faculty with the support of
four school-based Faculty Assessment Coordinators (FACs). Department chairs and
program coordinators summarize their assessment efforts in annual reports, which are
submitted to School Deans and utilized in the program review process.

3.1.4 THE MEANING OF THE DEGREE IN GENERAL EDUCATION (CFR 2.2A, 2.3,
2.4 and 2.5)

General Education (GE) is a vital component of the Bachelor’s degree, and thus the
meaning of the degree is largely connected to knowledge and skills expected of
students who complete the GE program. These expectations are outlined in the General
Education Program Learning Outcomes, a collaborative effort of teaching faculty
throughout the GE program [link: GE Program Learning Outcomes].

The AIMS (Achieving Integration & Mastering Skills) GE program was implemented in
Fall of 2016, and along with a great number of other innovations designed to improve
student learning, it was the first GE program instituted on the campus with learning
outcomes and assessment at its core. Early in 2014, after the new program was
approved by the Academic Senate [link: Senate approval of GE] and the campus
President, faculty who taught courses in the various GE areas gathered to determine
the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for each area. By the end of spring term, all of
the SLOs for the GE program were in place, ready for courses to be submitted for
approval. Then, the GE Assessment Coordinator began to work with the multitudinous
outcomes created for the various GE areas to develop GE Program Outcomes. This
question guided the effort: What did we expect graduates to know and be able to do?
Afterwards, many discussions took place with the relevant teaching faculty, which led to
the completion of the GE Program Outcomes. The new GE program explicitly requires
assessment participation by all faculty who teach GE courses.

The GE Program Learning Outcomes are organized around three goals: “1. Students
will attain competency in the skills that are foundational to a liberal arts education; 2.
Students will develop a well-rounded knowledge base across a broad range of
disciplines; 3. Students will develop the grounds for engaged citizenship.” Accordingly,
in support of Goal 1, GE courses focus on the practice and reinforcement of four
foundational skills: oral and written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative
reasoning, with the addition of information literacy. The four foundational skills are practiced in the Area A1-A4 courses, and reinforced in a variety of Area B, C, and D courses (Areas B1: Physical Sciences, B2: Life Sciences, C1: Arts, C2: Humanities, and D: Social and Behavioral Sciences) at the upper- and lower-division level [link: GE Program Description]. In support of Goal 2, students are also expected to learn disciplinary knowledge in GE courses, especially in the Area B, C, and D breadth courses. Finally, Goal 3, which focuses on the hallmarks of the engaged citizen, including lifelong learning, self-knowledge, the history and government of the US, and diversity, is supported by GE Area B, C, and D courses that develop integrated knowledge across disciplines under three themes—Quality of Life, Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations, and Sustainability and Justice—and by courses in American Institutions and the Guidepost series, including the First-year Seminar, Junior-Year Diversity and Reflection courses.

All of these GE Program Learning Outcomes overlap with the University Learning Outcomes. While this GE program is new, we are confident that it is already contributing significantly to the knowledge and skills developed by CSU Bakersfield graduates, and we are tracking student learning in GE courses through systematic assessment.

To help GE faculty ensure that students achieve the program’s goals, the GE program also offers frequent professional development opportunities to assist faculty in reinforcing the skills practiced in the Area A (foundational skills) classes. In addition, the GE Faculty Assessment Coordinator brings together teams of GE faculty from across the four academic schools to develop common tools and rubrics in order to assess the quality of the GE program and implementing strategies for improving student learning.

3.2. THE MEANING OF THE DEGREE AND COCURRICULUM AT CSU Bakersfield (CFRs 2.9 and 2.11)

The Division of Student Affairs leads the way in cocurricular opportunities for students at CSU Bakersfield with a mission that was developed in 2016, and vetted widely with students, staff, and faculty:

The CSU Bakersfield Division of Student Affairs is dedicated to developing the intellectual and personal potential of every student by providing programs, services and co-curricular activities that are essential to student success. While serving students through meaningful experiences and enhancing the community united through diversity, we inspire students to become informed, active and engaged global citizens in a complex, rapidly changing world.
Central tenets of this mission include providing programs and services that promote intellectual and social development, enhance student success, and prepare students for a complex world. Thirteen units across the Division that provide these opportunities. Each of these units has an established mission [link: Student Affairs Mission Statements], along with advisory boards that include students, staff, faculty and community members who provide guidance and support to departments. Since 2012, the entire Division of Student Affairs has engaged all staff members in staff development, day-long, themed retreats. Retreat themes have included: “Student Affairs, the key to Student Success,” “Partnering with Faculty,” “Fun with FERPA,” “Navigating Legal Issues,” and more. The benefits of these retreats were recognized as enhancing the student experience so much that in August 2016, staff training was expanded to include the beginning of the academic year and all staff in the Divisions of Student Affairs, Business Affairs, University Advancement, and the President’s Office.

The theme of the expanded 2016 staff training was to focus on enhancing the student experience by improving service to students and effective communication in the workplace. In August 2017, in a concerted effort to “reconsider” the overall philosophy and approach in supporting the CSU Bakersfield community, and to move away from a “deficits” culture to encourage a “strengths-based approach” to helping students, all 750 CSU Bakersfield staff were engaged in a full-day of “StrengthsQuest” training. This was the single largest training event ever conducted by the StrengthsQuest/Gallup Organization.

All Student Affairs units are actively engaged in linking their work supporting students to the CSU Bakersfield University Learning Outcomes (ULO). These measures of success from Student Affairs units are reported alongside the success measures of other university divisions. More recently, Student Affairs has begun to focus on additional priorities as a result of the CSU Chancellor’s Office Graduation Initiative 2025, which is sharpening the focus on student success. The role and impact of the Graduation Initiative 2025 will be detailed in Essay 5.

3.2.1 THE UNDERGRADUATE CO-CURRICULUM (CFRs 2.2a, 2.9 and 2.11)

In an effort to provide a framework for engagement with other members of the CSU Bakersfield and Bakersfield community, through a deliberate, considerate, and inclusive multi-year process [link: Student Affairs Guiding Principles], the Division of Student Affairs facilitated the development of the CSU Bakersfield Guiding Principles. The assessment efforts in most student affairs units include program, activity and service evaluations. These evaluations provide affirmation of student learning, growth and
development, which guide program planners in ongoing efforts to improve activities, enhance the CSU Bakersfield student experience and promote student engagement and success. Overall, the co-curricular activities and programs at CSU Bakersfield strive to recognize and support academic success, develop students’ interpersonal and leadership skills, connect students with the campus and local community, and attend to the basic needs of a largely low-income student population.

Student Union and Organizational Governance is responsible for supporting the growth and development of Recognized Student Organizations at CSU Bakersfield. Over 100 active organizations are categorized as academic, social, multicultural, religious, and political [link: Runnersync club listing]. CSU Bakersfield Student Organizations provide rich opportunities for students to apply and develop skills and abilities learned in the classroom, as well as valuable leadership, interpersonal, communication, and organizational skills. In order to be officially recognized, student organizations must have a faculty or staff member serve as the advisor. In most instances, the advisor becomes a mentor and an important resource to the student members.

To advance and celebrate the development of leadership skills at CSU Bakersfield, Student Union and Organizational Governance has developed the LEADER Program and the Student Leader Hall of Fame. The LEADER Program is a series of leadership skill development workshops that culminates in participants receiving leadership certification, which appears on students' co-curricular transcripts. The Student Leader Hall of Fame celebrates the top student leadership talent among Student Organizations, Athletics, each of CSU Bakersfield’s four schools, and the student government, Associated Students, Inc., with student inductees being permanently memorialized, with name and photograph, on a plaque in the main hallway of the Student Union.

Since 2012, the Campus Programming Office has rapidly expanded program offerings to engage students in fun and educational co-curricular activities that complement the academic mission of CSU Bakersfield. One of CSU Bakersfield’s newly established signature programs is called Sensational Sophomores. At the end of the freshman year, students who have earned a 3.0 GPA or above and 30 credits or more receive an invitation from the Vice President for Student Affairs to join this exclusive student honorary group. Sensational Sophomores form a tight-knit community and are involved in regularly scheduled leadership training, along with community service activities, including building homes for Habitat for Humanity. At the end of the second year, a number of the Sensational Sophomores advance to the Junior Year Experience, and through very close work with the CSU Bakersfield Division of University Advancement, learn about organizing special events, engaging with the media through arranging campus interviews and writing press releases, and developing a senior class
Campus programming has also created “Runner Nights” as a late-night alternative to social activities involving alcohol. These events allow CSU Bakersfield students to enjoy carnival rides and games, along with the largest outdoor dance floor in Bakersfield.

Each day, 25% of all CSU Bakersfield students miss a meal because they do not have sufficient resources to obtain food. In 2016, in response to the alarming number of students experiencing food and housing insecurity, CSU Bakersfield formed a cross-divisional Food and Housing Security Committee. The committee immediately launched, in collaboration with the Food Pantry of Kern County, a food distribution program. Since the inception of the CSU Bakersfield Food Pantry, a total of 1,395 individuals and their families have benefited from the program. The food security needs of students located at the Antelope Valley campus are addressed through partnership between CSU Bakersfield and Antelope Valley College. The overwhelming success of the monthly distribution implied that more support was needed, so the committee worked expeditiously to establish the CSU Bakersfield Food Pantry which is open daily Monday through Friday, with additional hours on some evenings. The committee initially anticipated that approximately 200 students would utilize the Food Pantry each month in the Antelope Valley, with utilization data showing that 200 students obtained food from the pantry each week. Despite the comparatively low cost of living in Bakersfield, the committee acknowledged that the most difficult challenge will be addressing the housing insecurity issues in a state with the highest housing costs in the United States.

Community & Civic Engagement closely aligns CSU Bakersfield with the greater-Bakersfield Community. The Center for Career Education and Community Engagement (CECE) facilitates the successful inclusion of service learning in the curriculum, including 159 courses in 2017-2018, which engage students and benefit numerous community partners. A Service Learning Faculty Coordinator position was established in 2017 [Service Learning Coord. Description doc. 2.5:04 and 2.3:06] to cultivate and support faculty interests and efforts in developing service learning opportunities for CSU Bakersfield courses. In addition to service learning, CECE is actively engaged in creating internships in the Bakersfield Community for CSU Bakersfield students.

CSU Bakersfield has been recognized nationally for its success in engaging with the community, most notably by the Carnegie Foundation, as it received the Carnegie Classification of Community Engaged [Carnegie letter doc. 1.1:01] in 2015. The importance and effectiveness of these CECE initiatives have also been acknowledged by the CSU Chancellor’s Call to Service Grant Program. Funding from the CSU Chancellor has helped CECE maintain a high level of service and support for CSU Bakersfield students in terms of career development and connections to the community.
3.2.2 THE GRADUATE CO-CURRICULUM (CFRs 2.2b, 2.9 and 2.11)

Graduate students at CSU Bakersfield take advantage of numerous co-curricular opportunities to expand and augment their learning. They can participate in a paid or unpaid internship with a local agency through CSU Bakersfield’s Center for Career Education and Community Engagement (CECE). In addition, students serve as teaching assistants under the guidance of a mentor teacher. Students also serve as research assistants with a faculty member on training grants funded by The National Science Foundation, The National Endowment for the Humanities, The US Department of Education, The California Department of Food and Agriculture to name a few. Research fellowships are also available through the Graduate Student Center (GSC) [GSC Funded Research doc. 2.11:02]. The GSC annually sponsors several skill-building workshops that support student achievement of intended program and institutional outcomes. These workshops scaffold the entirety of the graduate co-curricular experience. Sample workshops include support for thesis development, such as literature-review writing [Literature Review Workshop doc. 2.11:01], as well as financial competency, career preparation, and stress management [Stress Management Workshop doc. 2.11:03].

A unique feature of CSU Bakersfield’s graduate co-curriculum is the flagship Graduate Student Leadership (GSL) Program which is a paid, cohort-based experience comprised of first and second year master’s degree students. The GSL program provides participants with hands-on learning experiences in Student Affairs administration; supportive, and meaningful connections with peers and administrators; self-management, supervisory, and leadership skills; and marketable expertise.

3.3 ENSURING THE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE DEGREES (CFRs 1.2 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.9 and 2.11)

At CSU Bakersfield, several processes support the quality and integrity of the undergraduate and graduate degrees. These include the procedures and guidelines for establishing new degree programs; for reviewing and approving new courses and revisions to program curricula; for annually assessing student learning outcomes; and for conducting consistent and deliberate program review. In each case, the processes are governed by both campus and CSU policy. Details relating to the scope of CSU Academic policy can be found on the Academic Programs and Faculty Development website [link: CSU Academic Programs]. The processes ensuring the quality of the degree programs at CSU Bakersfield involve faculty and administration to build,
maintain, update and deliver curricula and evaluate the student learning outcomes that
guide student achievement.

3.3.1 APPROVING NEW DEGREE PROGRAMS (CFRs 1.7, 2.2, 4.1 and 4.3)

As mentioned above, the integrity and quality of CSU Bakersfield’s undergraduate and
graduate programs is framed by policy at both the CSU Chancellor’s Office and
institutional levels. The current structure for developing and approving new academic
programs and revising existing programs is guided by the 1985 Chancellor’s Office
memorandum EP&R 85-20 [1985 CO Memo doc. 2.2:21] and subsequent policy
developments. As shown in the CSU Degree Program Proposal Process Flowchart [link:
Process Flowchart], the faculty of CSU Bakersfield begin by conceptualizing new
degree programs to serve different student populations within the CSU Bakersfield
service region. Faculty are encouraged to coordinate with the Office of Academic
Programs during this first of three phases of new program development.

In the first phase, the Office of Academic Programs assist faculty by guiding them
through the Academic Planning Manual [link: Academic Planning Manual], which
contains most institutional guidelines and policy related to new program development
and program modification. Faculty interested in developing new programs are asked to
complete a Program Projection Form [Program Projection Form doc. 4.1:37], an initial
prospectus for a new degree program that has not been approved. The Program
Projection Form is used to alert the campus governance bodies (the Academic Senate,
the Provost’s Council, and the President’s Cabinet) that the faculty are considering a
new program. This prospectus or Program Projection is vetted by the Academic Senate
and its subcommittees as necessary. In the fall of 2017, for example, the Academic
Senate approved Program Projection Forms for the 2017-18 academic year [AMP
Senate Resolution doc. 1.7:11].

In the second phase, Program Projection Forms approved by the campus are forwarded
to the Chancellor’s Office for inclusion in the system-wide Academic Master Plan (AMP)
[link: CSU Academic Master Plan], a system-wide list of potential new academic
programs, both graduate and undergraduate. The AMP is then reviewed by the system-
wide CSU. If the Board of Trustees approves a potential new program (as shown in the
CSU Degree Program Proposal Process Flowchart), CSU Bakersfield can now begin to
develop full degree proposals.

In the third phase of program approval, CSU Bakersfield faculty develop full degree
proposals. As with the first phase, the Office of Academic Programs provides support to
faculty. The Chancellor’s Office provides a variety of templates to support full degree
proposal development [Degree Proposal Checklist doc. 4.3:25]. The full degree proposal is then vetted and approved by the respective academic department, school curriculum committee and the Academic Senate.

Consistent with the Program Proposal Process Flowchart, CSU Bakersfield’s full program proposal is then sent to the Chancellor’s Office. The Chancellor’s Office submits the proposal for external review to determine the viability of the proposed new degree program and its relation to both similar and dissimilar academic programs in the system. After the external review, a recommendation is made the Chancellor’s Office staff to the Chancellor as to whether approve or deny the proposed program.

In developing new academic programs, CSU Bakersfield takes into account the needs of the region and of students, as well as trends and developments in academic disciplines. For instance, local industry had long hoped that the campus would develop programs in engineering and agriculture, a desire underscored by the Community Stakeholders Report in 2008, which aggregated responses to a survey and focus group drawing on local businesses. By Fall 2011, despite historic budget cuts to the CSU, fourteen new academic programs were introduced, including Bachelor of Science degree programs in Computer Engineering; Biology with a Concentration in Biotechnology; Business Administration with a Concentration in Agricultural Business; and Business Administration with a Concentration in Supply Chain Logistics. An additional Bachelor of Science program in Electrical Engineering was introduced in 2012.

3.3.2 COURSE APPROVAL PROCESSES (CFRs 2.2, 4.1 and 4.2)

To ensure the quality and integrity of program curricula, proposed new and revised courses undergo a thorough approval process. Normally, there are three different pathways for approving new courses and course revisions. During the quarter to semester conversion (Q2S), an additional pathway was opened and existed for about a year.

All pathways begin with new course/course revision proposals developed and reviewed by a department or program, which are then sent to their school curriculum committee for review. School curriculum committees accept proposals in slightly different formats [School Curriculum Forms doc. 2.2:22], but each committee requests the same basic information. This information includes 1) a description of the proposed changes, including catalog copy, 2) a rationale for changes, including ties to learning outcomes, how the changes fit with the rest of the curriculum, and how the changes improve the curriculum, and 3) the impact of the proposed new course or revision on resources.
If the proposal is acceptable and a) does not involve the General Education program or, b) does not have resource/curricular implications for other schools, the committee chair and dean sign the proposal and the review process ends. A signed Request for Approval New Course/Course Change form is sent to Academic Operations, where changes are made to the course catalog and PeopleSoft management system.

If the proposal for a new course/revision involves a General Education course, the proposal receives an additional level of review by the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo), which assesses the course for compliance with GE requirements and GE student learn outcomes. Courses that require inter-school cooperation and oversight (e.g., required courses in interdisciplinary majors) are evaluated by the Academic Affairs Committee within the Academic Senate, after successful reviews by the relevant school curriculum committees [link: University Handbook pg. 12]. During the quarter to semester conversion, this Senate committee, also referred to as the Conversion Curriculum Committee, had the additional charge of approving or denying petitions for course unit exceptions.

### 3.3.3 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES (CFRs 2.6 and 2.7)

Each undergraduate major and graduate program is expected to assess student achievement of at least one Program Learning Outcome (PLO) on an annual basis, with a goal of assessing all PLOs within a 5-year cycle. Similarly, at least two PLOs from CSU Bakersfield’s General Education program are assessed on an annual basis, with the goal of assessing all PLO’s within a 5-year cycle [link: GE Assessment Cycle]. CSU Bakersfield harnesses these assessment results and planned actions to improve student learning. In addition, department chairs are expected to summarize and reflect upon their program’s progress through the assessment cycle in each program’s annual status report [link: Department Assessment].

Annual assessment is overseen by a team of five Faculty Assessment Coordinators (FACs), one for each of the four academic schools and one for the General Education program, with support from the Office for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA). The school and GE FACs provide assessment support to the faculty in the form of workshops, attendance at department or program meetings, and one-on-one interactions [link: Culture of Assessment]. The FACs support faculty with assessment processes (i.e., developing assessment plans, choosing and developing appropriate assessment tools, collecting and analyzing evidence of student learning, and closing the loop). The FACs also provide summative descriptions of the assessment activities within their school and GE in an annual report [link: Assessment Status Report].
Through the annual assessment process, all faculty members examine aggregate evidence of student learning and consider its implications for curricular design, pedagogy, and student support. Essay 4 describes what annual assessment has revealed about student learning at CSU Bakersfield and, thus, the meaning, quality, and integrity of our degrees as reflected in learning outcomes. Essay 6 describes how annual assessment is utilized in the program review process, including the allocation of resources, program planning, and shaping curricular changes to support student achievement of faculty-established expectations.

3.3.4 PROGRAM REVIEW (CFRs 2.6 and 2.7)

Periodic program review at CSU Bakersfield is a faculty-driven process in which evidence-based claims are used to assess and ensure the quality, meaning, and integrity of the university’s degree programs [Program Review Charge doc. 2.7:24]. The University Program Review Committee (UPRC) is comprised of eight members, including faculty elected to represent each of the four schools, two at-large faculty members, one member of the Academic Senate selected by the Executive Committee and, as a non-voting member, the ex-officio designee from the office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs (AVPAP) [link: Program Review Cmte.] All undergraduate and graduate programs, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programs, and externally accredited programs, as well as the General Education program and the Helen Louise Hawk Honors program, are subject to program review at CSU Bakersfield following a seven-year schedule outlined in the University Academic Master Plan (AMP). (Accredited programs’ review schedule is adjusted to match their accreditation schedule.) The AMP is updated every year and submitted to the CSU Chancellor’s Office for review and approval, thereby ensuring that program review remains a transparent and accountable process [link: CSU Academic Master Plan].

CSU Bakersfield Academic Senate policy notes that program review “provides a critical reflection of who we are, where we are going, where we should be going, and how we should get there. It involves a program’s commitment and willingness to candidly evaluate goals, objectives, and activities, through outcomes-based assessment of student learning. Consequently, ever improving decisions on curriculum and budgeting of scarce resources are made when faculty use program review data to inform the decision-making process” [UPRC Policy and Procedures doc. 2.7:20]. Sequentially, the required elements of a program review are (1) the self-study that includes, among other indicators, an examination by the program faculty of the program’s data profile, prepared by the office of Institutional Research, Planning, and assessment (IRPA) [Public Administration Profile doc. 2.7:19]; (2) an external review; (3) the UPRC report; (4) the Provost’s review; and (5) a culminating Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan, also known as a MOUAP [Progress Toward MOAUP ppt. 2.7:25].
To prepare for program review, a program is required to select a committee of at least three members who, in consultation with program faculty and representative students, writes a Self-Study report which is reviewed and approved by the entire program faculty. In December or January, the Vice President for Academic Programs designee communicates with all the programs scheduled for review the following academic year, to remind them of the review schedule and submission dates. At the same time, authors of the self-study are invited to a workshop to receive guidance on developing the report and future action plan [UPRC Workshop doc. 2.7:25]. Each program is provided with a packet containing the review guidelines [link: Program Preview Template]; all responses to the previous program review; and additional information, such as model examples of reports. The title page of the program review document must indicate when the program faculty approved the Self-Study and the Program Plan. Three self-study reports included with this report demonstrate the rigor and reflection embodied in this process, one from an externally accredited program [Chemistry/Biochemistry self-study doc. 2.7:06], another from an undergraduate and graduate program [Sociology self-study doc. 2.7:23], and one from an undergraduate program with concentrations [Philosophy self-study doc. 2.7:17]

An external review of the program provides additional analysis and evidence of degree quality, meaning, and integrity. Typically, the program recommends available and well-qualified external reviewers to the Vice President for Academic Programs and the dean of the respective school. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs maintains a fund to pay for the external reviewer, who assists the program faculty by providing a new, comparative, and broader perspective on the program, its last seven years of operation, and its plans for the next seven years [Program Review External Reviewer Report doc. 2.7:12]. The external reviewer’s report includes comments and recommendations regarding the program, and may be used by the dean to assess degree alignment with the discipline, the academic school and the university.

The UPRC examines the self-study, external reviewer’s report, the Dean’s response, and all other documents developed during the review. Two illustrative response letters from the UPRC, attached to this report, indicate that the committee reports on the quality of the degree, including student learning outcomes, retention, and success; curriculum relevance and relationship to best practices and trends in the field; faculty productivity; and community engagement and service [Criminal Justice UPRC response letter doc. 2.7:07]. In addition, the UPRC describes program viability and sustainability by analyzing student enrollment trends; faculty and financial resource utilization; and the seven-year forward-looking plan that anticipates curriculum modifications and resource needs to impact program effectiveness. The UPRC is concerned with the program’s
response to previous recommendations and its alignment with the university’s mission and vision. Thus, a mandatory dimension of the self-study and the UPRC report is the program’s engagement in a continuous cycle of quality improvement.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs’ review is the final step in the assessment of degree quality, meaning, and integrity. The Provost meets with the program coordinator, the chair of the UPRC and other individuals with roles in the resource allocation and planning process (e.g., the department chair and school dean) to discuss the program review and recommendations. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, through active negotiation with the program faculty and appropriate school dean, prepares a Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan (MOUAP) for allocation of resources and recommendations to be implemented, as well as the resources that will be provided to support those recommendations during the next seven years [MOUAP examples doc. 2.7:03, 2.7:16, 2.7:18]. The concluding Memorandum of Understanding Action Plan (MOUAP) is distributed to the Academic Senate, the appropriate school dean, the chair of the UPRC, and the chair of the program self-study committee. In this way, the results of program review provide a transparent and evidence-based foundation for assessing degree quality, developing a forward-looking plan, and managing resource allocation.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

As shown throughout Essay 3, CSU Bakersfield has thoughtfully developed academic degree programs, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, which possess meaning, quality and integrity. The meaning of CSU Bakersfield degrees is directly related to the university’s mission as a regional comprehensive university that serves the southern San Joaquin Valley. As faculty deliver instruction and develop new academic programs, the institutional focus is on the underserved population that constitutes the CSU Bakersfield student body. The academic programs are continually developing to lift this population intellectually, socially and economically. Particularly, the development of the new General Education program, with its emphasis on practicing and reinforcing foundational skills, and its interdisciplinary thematic emphases on Quality of Life, Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations, and Sustainability & Justice was designed to impart deeper meaning to the CSU Bakersfield degree. In addition, CSU Bakersfield’s graduate programs, developed under the Degree Qualifications framework, have been shown to increase the socio-economic standing of graduate students.

The quality and integrity of CSU Bakersfield’s academic programs are demonstrated through the processes of new program creation at both the institutional and system
levels. These processes ensure that new and existing programs are supported by thoughtful student learning outcomes. Moreover, the programs are reviewed through an extensive program review process that dovetails with CSU Bakersfield’s strategic and resource allocation processes. In Essay 4, the authors will elaborate further on the student learning and graduation performance of CSU Bakersfield.