ESSAY 6 - QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT, PROGRAM REVIEW; ASSESSMENT, AND USE OF DATA AND EVIDENCE (CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

CSU Bakersfield has a broadly participatory, iterative, and comprehensive quality assurance system for academic programs, student affairs, and administrative units. This system is grounded upon the five strategic goals articulated during the administration of President Horace Mitchell [link: Strategic Goals]. Each goal is premised on the evolving mission of the university and the value of continuous quality improvement.

Central to our institution’s commitment to a culture of continuous improvement are the processes of annual assessment, annual review, and periodic review. These processes of data collection and analysis facilitate self-reflective and evidence-based decision-making at the unit, division, and institutional levels. In this essay, we describe our institutional approach to quality assurance and improvement, and then detail the effectiveness of this approach for sustaining a culture of continuous improvement in our academic programs, student affairs division, and administrative units. We conclude with a discussion of the role of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA).

6.1 INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT (CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

At CSU Bakersfield, quality assurance is strategically driven through the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Business and Administrative Services. Yearly reports are used to assess progress among and between division units with implementation through committees and work groups, each with its own approach. The challenge since completion of the quarter-to-semester initiative has been in disseminating information across the campus, identifying “closing the loop activities” at the unit, division, and university levels, and expanding measurement and evidence building, in regard to University Learning Outcomes (ULOs). Key to addressing these challenges are the Assessment Coordinators team; the University Program Review Committee (UPRC); the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, & Assessment (IRPA); and the University Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (USP-BAC). These committees are central to conveying University strategic initiatives and objectives to the individual units, and reporting results of compliance and quality improvement activities to decision-makers responsible for strategic management of the university.

The institution creates a culture of improvement through a three-step iterative process: annual student learning outcomes assessment, annual review, and periodic program review. First, all academic programs are expected to engage in student learning outcomes assessment activities on an annual basis, with the goal of assessing all program learning outcomes within a five-year period. Annual assessment plans, assessment findings, action plans, and status reports are posted in Taskstream, our
chosen Assessment Management System (AMS) [link: Department Assessment Webpage]. Second, at the end of each year, academic programs generate annual reports, which include a summary of the program’s assessment activities and a narrative describing and reflecting on enrollment data, faculty teaching and scholarly/creative activities, and program community engagement activities [link: Academic Program Annual Reports]. Each annual report is posted in Taskstream with space available for comments from the school dean. Third, academic programs are expected to undergo program review every seven years. Central components of the periodic program review are the activities comprising annual assessment—documenting curricular alignment, assessing student learning outcomes, and adjusting teaching and learning practices in response to the data—and the summaries presented in the annual reports [link: Academic Program Review Policy and Procedures].

CSU Bakersfield’s annual student learning outcomes assessment process is overseen by an eight-member Assessment Coordinators team: a faculty member from each of the four Schools (Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education); two faculty members who teach in the General Education program and in Extended University; the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs; and the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) [link: CSU Bakersfield Culture of Assessment].

The Assessment Coordinators team was first established in 2013 with four Faculty Assessment Coordinators (FACs) and the Assistant Vice President of IRPA. (Previously, a single faculty member served as the University Assessment Coordinator.) The role of the four FACs is to provide assessment support to the faculty in their respective schools, with a particular emphasis on promoting common discipline-based approaches to conducting assessment of student learning [School FAC MOU doc. 4.6:32]. This support is provided in the form of workshops, attendance at department meetings to discuss assessment, and one-on-one support to program faculty and department chairs. Much of the support centers on the assessment process, i.e., developing assessment plans, choosing and developing appropriate assessment tools, collecting and analyzing student learning artifacts, and closing the loop. The FACs report to the Dean of their respective school. The Assistant Vice President of IRPA serves as the Assessment Coordinators team chair. IRPA generates Assessment Status Reports multiple times each academic year [link: Assessment Status Reports], manages our campus data management systems—Taskstream and Tableau—, updates our campus assessment websites, and publishes a biannual campus assessment newsletter, Context & Meaning [doc. 2.6:02 and 2.6:03].

In preparation for the launch of our new General Education program, AIMS (Achieving Integration & Mastering Skills), an additional Faculty Assessment Coordinator was added to the team in 2014 [link: CSU Bakersfield Culture of Assessment]. The General Education Faculty Assessment Coordinator (GE FAC) provides assessment support to
the faculty teaching in General Education, with a particular emphasis on assessment of student achievement of four of the core competencies (oral communication; written communication; critical thinking; quantitative reasoning) [GE FAC MOU doc. 4.2:36]. This support includes attending general education curriculum committee (GECCo) meetings, consulting with faculty Learning Community Facilitators (LCFs) and the General Education faculty director, facilitating assessment workgroups to help faculty plan and analyze student learning artifacts, and planning professional development workshops for faculty to improve teaching and learning practices in response to assessment data. The GE FAC reports to the GE faculty director and the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs.

In 2018, the team of FACs expanded to include assessment coordinators for Extended University and Student Affairs [Assessment Coordinators Meeting 04-06-2018 doc. 4.2:35]. Their inclusion on the assessment team improves communication about student learning between academic and co-curricular units, particularly with regard to addressing the University Learning Outcomes (ULOs). (See section 6.3 for more information about assessment in Student Affairs.)

CSU Bakersfield’s periodic program review process is overseen by the University Program Review Committee (UPRC) with assistance from the Office of Academic Programs [UPRC charge doc. 4.2:28]. This committee is comprised of two faculty members from each of the four Schools (Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education), an at-large member, and a representative chosen by the Academic Senate. The committee is staffed by the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, or his representative, who also serves as an ex officio non-voting member of the committee.

The UPRC is tasked with carefully reviewing each program’s Self-Study document and feedback from an External Reviewer, and composing a letter outlining the Committee’s observations, comments, and recommendations that is addressed to the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, the Dean of the program’s School, the Provost, the Chair of the Academic Senate, and the Program. At the close of the Program Review process, the Provost meets with the Program and the Dean to set out a plan for the next seven years including any requests for new positions. This final step in the process is referred to as a MOUAP (Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan). It closes the loop on the assessment process and demonstrates the University’s commitment to evidence-based decision-making at the unit and institutional levels.

In the non-academic areas managed through Student Affairs and Business and Administrative Services, a variety of external organizations require quality improvement data on annual and periodic bases. Examples of these organizations include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. State and county annual inspections, financial audits, and
compliance training programs are also implemented. Internally, the quality improvement process has grown to include customer satisfaction surveys and need assessments.

6.2 ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

6.2.1 ANNUAL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT (CFR 2.4, 2.6, 4.3, 4.4)

In its 2016 response to our 2015 Interim Report, the WSCUC Commission praised CSU Bakersfield for "creating a well-crafted assessment process that is faculty “owned” and that integrates quality assessment practices into the fabric of the university" [WSCUC Letter to President doc. 4.2:43]. At the same time, the Commission challenged us to "increase consistency of measurement across departments and to emphasize direct assessment of student learning" [WSCUC Letter to President doc. 4.2:43].

The extent of faculty commitment to the annual outcomes assessment process is evidenced by the high levels of reporting of annual assessment plans, findings, and improvement efforts. Academic programs are consistently developing assessment plans, collecting assessment data, and reporting their assessment findings into Taskstream: in 2010-11, 42 out of 46 programs completed all tasks (91.3%); in 2011-12, 45 out of 46 (97.8%); in 2012-13, 47 out of 48 (97.9%); in 2013-14, 48 out of 49 (98.0%); in 2014-15, 48 out of 50 (96.0%); in 2015-16, 47 out of 52 (90.4%); and in 2016-17, 43 out of 53 (81.1%) [link: Department Assessment Webpage]. This data excludes programs on moratorium, run by Extended University, and the General Education program.

Furthermore, a high percentage of programs that collect assessment data complete the assessment process by developing action plans and reporting the status of those plans in Taskstream: in 2010-11, 41 out of 42 (97.6%); in 2011-12, 44 out of 45 (97.8%); in 2012-13, 47 out of 47 (100%); in 2013-14, 46 out of 48 (95.8%); in 2014-15, 43 out of 48 (89.6%); in 2015-16, 32 out of 47 (68.1%); and in 2016-17, 37 out of 43 (86.0%) [link: Department Assessment Webpage]. The dip in completing the assessment process in AY 2015-16 is likely due to the quarter-to-semester conversion undertaken that year. Most academic programs underwent curricular transformation to prepare for the semester system, and some faculty regarded their 2015-2016 assessment data as less relevant to their new programs.

Academic programs also report relying primarily on direct measures of student learning to assess program quality: in 2010-11, 175 out of 181 (97%); in 2011-12, 166 out of 175 (95%); in 2012-13, 197 out of 204 (97%); in 2013-14, 235 out of 245 (96%); in 2014-15, 116 out of 181 (64%); in 2015-16, 142 out of 167 (85%); and in 2016-17, 111 out of 155 (72%) [Assessment measures docs for each year 2.6:31-37].
One of the most significant changes to program assessment has been to the General Education program. Prior to Fall 2016, the General Education program was assessed at the course level [WASC ALA Report doc. 2.6:27]. Assessment of the student learning outcomes for each of the course requirements were coordinated by eleven different committees responsible for each of the different General Education and university-wide requirements: Area A; Area B/Theme 1; Area C/Theme 2; Area D/Theme 3; American Institutions-Government; American Institutions-History; Computer and Information Literacy; Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement; First-Year Experience; Gender, Race, & Ethnicity; Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. From 2010-11 through 2015-16, 119 of the 171 course-level outcomes were assessed at least once. Of the outcomes that were not assessed, 48 are not part of the GE AIMS program and 14 have been integrated into other learning outcomes [GE Five-Year Assessment Plan 2010-11 through 2015-16 doc. 4.2:6].

While assessing the GE program at the course level allowed instructors to reflect on whether students met the outcomes associated with the particular area requirement, it did not offer the GE faculty an opportunity to reflect on whether students met the outcomes of the program as a whole. Thus, instead of assessing at the course level, our new General Education AIMS program is assessed at the program level [GE Assessment Powerpoint ppt. 2.6:17]. On February 6, 2015, the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo) approved ten General Education Program Learning Outcomes (GE PLOs) for the AIMS program [GE Assessment Report August 2015 doc. 4.2:8]. These GE PLOs are mapped to the University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) and a curriculum map is posted in Taskstream [link: General Education (GE) Curriculum Map]. A five-year assessment plan was developed, with the aim of assessing at least two GE PLOs each year, by collecting student artifacts completed at or near the time of graduation [link: GE Assessment Plan 2015-16 through 2020-21]. Thus far, this strategy is working smoothly.

In 2015-16, baseline assessment data about General Education was collected, assessed, and reported in Taskstream. This assessment focused on the first four GE PLOs, which represent four of the core competencies (oral communication, written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning). The artifacts assessed were collected from students at or near the time of graduation. In response to the data, a number of closing the loop initiatives were implemented including, for example, the development of Faculty Learning Communities and professional development workshops for supporting the reinforcement of oral communication, written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning skills throughout the AIMS curriculum, and providing Supplemental Instruction (see Essay 5) to students in courses which introduce critical thinking and quantitative reasoning skills [link: GE Assessment Webpage 2015-16 Cycle].

In 2016-17, GE PLOs 2A (Students will apply the principles, concepts, and methods of the natural sciences, arts and humanities, and social and behavioral sciences) and 3B
(Students will explain key historical events and institutions of the United States) were assessed. These PLOs were chosen because, unlike a number of other PLOs, they had not changed much from the former GE program. The artifacts assessed for PLO 2A were collected from students at or near the time of graduation. The artifacts for PLO 3B were collected from students completing their American Institutions requirements. In response to the data, a “Just-in-Time” teaching pilot was launched in 2017-2018 to improve student learning outcomes in American Institutions courses. Additionally, a pilot assessment of GE PLO 3A (Students will employ strategies for self-knowledge and lifelong learning) was conducted to determine the feasibility of using ePortfolios to collect student artifacts [link: GE Assessment Webpage 2016-17 Cycle].

The designation of Faculty Assessment Coordinators (FACs) for each of the four Schools (Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education) and for the General Education program has helped CSU Bakersfield sustain outcomes assessment efforts across both graduate and undergraduate programs and promoted the use of direct measures of student learning. The most notable advantages of the Assessment Coordinator team model include (1) the development of a culture of assessment across academic programs, which views assessment efforts as grounded in and responsive to disciplinary methods and values, (2) improved access to and responsiveness from assessment leaders who work one-on-one with program chairs and faculty to help them develop, based on their current level of engagement in the assessment process, and (3) the proliferation of multiple, discipline-based methods for assessing student learning. The biggest limitations of this strategy include (1) turnover among the FACs, resulting in gaps in assessment efforts and confusion about who occupies the role and (2) increased costs associated with reassigned time and assessment training for a larger pool of FACs.

6.2.2 ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW (CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

CSU Bakersfield regards Academic Program Review as central to quality assurance and continual improvement. It provides the evidentiary basis for informed, transparent, and accountable decisions about programs, faculty and student needs, curricular planning, and resource management. This faculty-led peer review process utilizes evidence-based claims for academic planning and decision making. It requires that program faculty candidly reflect on their program’s mission, goals, activities, and accomplishments through outcomes-based assessment of student learning. Ultimately, the process aims to maintain and strengthen the quality of the university’s curriculum and to meet the needs of the region [link: Academic Program Review Policy and Procedures].

The Academic Program Review process requires that academic programs submit a Self-Study to the University Program Review Committee (UPRC) every seven years. The UPRC carefully reviews each Self-Study, which addresses key quality issues [link: Academic Program Review Process]. A significant portion of this Self-Study must
address (1) the mission, goals, role, and function of the program, and its relationship to
the University’s goals and mission; and (2) the program's student learning outcomes,
their assessment, and changes in the curriculum brought about by this assessment. The
Self-Study also reflects upon measures of student involvement in scholarship and/or
creative activities as well as evidence of alumni and employer satisfaction. Data on
student retention and graduation rates, time to degree, and units at graduation is
provided and analyzed in terms of program effectiveness. Finally, evidence is expected
of the scholarship and creative activity of faculty members of the program, community
service activities, internships, partnerships with the community, and grant activities.
Programs are also asked to reflect upon efforts to diversify both student and faculty
populations.

A second key component of the Academic Program Review process is to invite an
External Reviewer to assess the program, including any graduate program managed by
a department. The External Reviewer examines the Self-Study and then visits campus
to discuss issues with the Program faculty, with the Dean, with students, and sometimes
with community members. The reviewer also discusses assessment activities with both
the program and the relevant FACs. A complete External Review report is submitted,
and an Exit Interview is conducted with the Provost, the Department faculty, the Dean,
and the UPRC Chair. The reviewer shares observations and raises questions to the
Provost and university. The UPRC includes the External Review report in its
deliberations.

Following the External Review, the UPRC composes a letter outlining the committee’s
observations, comments, and recommendations. Recommendations usually address
possible areas of improvement as well as support for or reservations about program
requests concerning new positions and developments. This letter goes to the Associate
Vice President for Academic Programs, the Dean, and the Program. At the close of the
Program Review process, the Provost meets with the Program and the Dean to develop
a plan for the next seven years, including any requests for new positions. This final step
in the process is referred to as a MOUAP (Memorandum of Understanding and Action
Plan). It facilitates transparency and accountability by tying together the
recommendations for program improvement with budgeting, faculty lines, and space
requirements.

Programs with external accreditation procedures are excused from duplicating
information required for external accreditation in their program review process. Given
that each accreditation procedure is unique, certain elements of the accreditation
documents may be submitted with their program review materials as part of the Self-
Study [Academic Program Review Policy and Procedures doc. 4.6:30]. This often
includes information on students, faculty, resources, and enrollments compiled by the
office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA), which forms the
basis for annual reports, reflection on program assessment of student learning
outcomes, and strategic planning for the future.
The Academic Program Review process was particularly challenging during the quarter-to-semester conversion. Because many faculty members were occupied with the work involved in the conversion effort, the UPRC maintained its commitment to the period program review process by suggesting strategies for making the process manageable for those programs undergoing review during that time [link: UPRC Q2S Letter]. These strategies included (1) providing a Program Review Template for the Self-Study, with suggested page limits for each section, totaling a maximum of 50 pages, excluding graphs and tables, and (2) encouraging programs undergoing review in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to adapt, for the Self-Study, documents already produced for curricular conversion and transformation for the semester system.

The number of programs reviewed averages to approximately five per year [UPRC Trend Analysis doc. 4.2:27]. In 2013-2014, two program reviews were completed: Nursing and Sociology. In 2014-2015, seven were: MS Administration Online; BS/MA Business Administration; BA/MA History; BA Human Biology; BA/MA Interdisciplinary Studies; BA Philosophy; and BA Liberal Studies. In 2015-16, five were: BA Global Intelligence; MSW Social Work; Special Education; and Educational Counseling. In 2016-17, five were: BS Chemistry and Biochemistry; MA Educational Administration; BA Criminal Justice; Teacher Education Single Subject; and Teacher Education Multiple Subject. In 2017-2018, five were: BA Art; BA/MA English; BA/MPA Public Administration; BS PEAK; and the Honors program.

In May 2018, the Office of Academic Programs completed a UPRC Trend Analysis Report for 2013-2014 through 2017-2018 [UPRC Trend Analysis doc. 4.2:27]. The focus of the report is on five key data points: (1) length of time from receipt of Self Study to External Review visit; (2) length of time between External Review visit and receipt of External Review report; (3) length of time from External Review report to UPRC report; (4) total time from receipt of Self-Study to UPRC report; and (5) total time from UPRC report to MOUAP. The first significant finding was that the time from receipt of Self Study to receipt of External Report has varied widely, from as little as 1.5 months to as much as 9.5 months. In response, the UPRC requested that departments identify and schedule the External Reviewer at the time that the Self-Study is submitted. The second significant finding was that the time from receipt of Self Study to UPRC report decreased markedly, peaking at 16 months in AY 2013-14 and dropping as low as 5.5 months in AY 2017-18. In response, the UPRC requested that the recent practice of having the UPRC Chair and member responsible for drafting the UPRC’s letter attend the External Reviewer Exit session continue.

6.3 ASSESSMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS
The Division of Student Affairs engages in assessment activities that evaluate the impact of programs and services on student learning, growth, and development. Each unit is responsible for identifying the student learning outcome(s) to be measured,
developing a plan to assess student learning, and utilizing the data collected to improve programs and services provided to students.

6.3.1 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT (CFR 4.2-4.4)

Since 2013, each unit in the Division of Student Affairs is expected to submit an annual report to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). This report includes four sections: (1) the unit’s key accomplishments; (2) summary of attainment of previous year’s goals; (3) summary of goals for the upcoming year; and (4) key data points that were discovered during review of assessment data. All annual reports are condensed by the office of the VPSA. The condensed annual report is known as the Student Affairs Accomplishments Booklet [link: Student Affairs Website]. The booklet is published both online and in print, with wide distribution across the CSU Bakersfield campus, as well as to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, CSU Bakersfield alumni, CSU Bakersfield parents, and members of the greater-Bakersfield community.

Assessment support for the various units in Student Affairs is provided by the Student Affairs Assessment Council. This council includes the Director of the Student Union and the Executive Director of Associated Students, Inc. In 2018, the Student Affairs Assessment Council sponsored an assessment training attended by representatives from each unit. Following the training, the Student Affairs Assessment Council, with the support of the VPSA, amended the format of the annual report to include identifying one or more ULOs that their unit supports through its programs and services for assessment. This added structure allows each unit to monitor the learning outcomes selected for measurement, report assessment findings, and interpret results for impact on practice. The Student Affairs Assessment Council also developed a new survey for assessing the impact of the Student Affairs Division. This Annual Assessment of Student Engagement is administered with assistance from the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) using the cloud-based survey tool Qualtrics. Every CSU Bakersfield student is invited to complete the survey through an emailed link. Although results from the first survey are not yet compiled, the response rate is promising (16% of all students).

6.3.2 PERIODIC REVIEW (CFR 4.1-4.7)

Several units in the Division of Student Affairs undergo regular periodic review by accrediting agencies and national governing associations to maintain accredited status. CSU Bakersfield Student Health Services is accredited every three years by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Western Athletic Conference (WAC) sponsor various accrediting activities for Athletics. The CSU Bakersfield Counseling Center is not accredited but undergoes periodic mandatory review by the CSU Chancellor’s Office. The CSU Bakersfield Children’s Center undergoes consistent program review through
state and federal agencies. Auxiliary units in the division (Student Union, ASI, and the Student Recreation Center) also undergo constant and consistent review by independent auditors hired by the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Several internal reviews have been undertaken by CSU Bakersfield graduate students in Public Administration and Healthcare Administration. These projects have provided data for evidence-based decision making in the Division of Student Affairs. For example, a survey regarding the availability of feminine hygiene products and a report of student preferences for lactation stations were developed and submitted to the Director for Equity Inclusion and Compliance. As a result of these efforts, Student Affairs worked with Facilities Management to stock tampons and pads in the restrooms across campus [link: Availability of Pads/Tampons on Campus] and the University established two additional lactation/nursing rooms [link: Resources for Pregnant & Nursing Students at CSU Bakersfield]. Second, CSU Bakersfield Student Health Services has intern partnerships and clinical practitioners with the graduate program in Health Care Administration and the Nursing respectively. Recent studies focused on quality improvement in HPV vaccine education, sexual assault services, high Body Mass Index (BMI), and high blood pressure. Because of these quality improvement studies, Student Health Services changed both procedures and chart template notes to improve the services rendered to students. Examples include a new written policy and chart templates for responding to patients who have been sexually assaulted, and referrals for nutritional counseling for students with high BMI or high blood pressure.

6.4 ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS (NON-STUDENT AFFAIRS)

6.4.1 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT (CFR 4.2-4.4)

Annual assessment of Business and Administrative Services happens at both the middle management and the administrative levels. For the purposes of this essay, examples of assessments implemented by Facilities Management, University Police, and Information Technology Services (ITS) are featured.

Pursuant to Executive Order 847, Facilities Management submits to the Chancellor’s Office an Annual Deferred Maintenance Report and a Biennial Facilities Audit [EO 847 doc 4.2:24]. The Annual Deferred Maintenance Report provides a five-year projection of deferred maintenance and capital renewal costs of facilities and infrastructure based upon the life cycle of major building and utility subsystems, including fixed maintained equipment. The Biennial Facilities Audit assesses each facility to identify maintenance/repair requirements in the scheduled maintenance program and provides an audit and listing of fixed maintained equipment. Facilities Management also reviews the policies contained in its Policy Manual on an annual basis. These policies include those for software programs, work order backlogs, chargebacks, the Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS), completion of work requests, inventory and purchasing, key administration, utility reporting, power outage, HVAC, space heaters, and motor vehicle inspections [Facilities Policy Review Plan doc 4.2:22].
Further, Facilities Management completes customer service satisfaction surveys faculty and staff on an annual basis [Facilities Survey Report docs 4.2.37-39].

CSU Bakersfield’s University Police Department (UPD) publishes Annual Security Reports (ASRs) for both the main campus and the Antelope Valley Center in compliance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policies and Campus Crime Statistics Act. The ASR is prepared in collaboration with Student Housing and Residence Life, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Human Resources, Office of the Provost, Student Affairs, and local law enforcement agencies. Each unit provides updated information the UPD and the Office of the President for the University to comply with the Clery Act [CSU Bakersfield Annual Security Report docs 4.2:41-42]. The ASR is made available to the campus community in both electronic and print formats. Each year, the University sends an email to all current students and employees with a link to the website [link: Annual Security Reports], and the website address is included on CSU Bakersfield employment applications and job announcements for faculty positions. In addition, hard copies of the ASR are available by contacting UPD or Human Resources.

Under the organizing principle, “Excellent and Student Success,” Information Technology Services (ITS) identifies five strategic goals for its unit. ITS provides annual reports identifying the unit’s accomplishments for that year and priorities for the following year referencing these five strategic goals [link: ITS 2016-2017 Annual Report]. Starting July 1, 2017, ITS began tracking specific “S.M.A.R.T.” automated metrics that are specific, measurable, attainable, repeatable and timely to meet these five strategic goals [2017-2018 ITS Metrics doc 4.2:40]. These metrics will assist the campus in accomplishing the aims of the Graduation 2025 Initiative.

6.4.2 PERIODIC REVIEW (CFR 4.1-4.7)

Periodic review of units in Business and Administrative Services is managed through external and internal processes. Examples of external reviews include audits administered by the Office of Audit and Advisory Services regarding Emergency Management, IT Disaster Recovery, Payment Card Processing, Scholarships, Student Activities, and Construction [Audit docs 4.2:29-34]. In response to the recommendations from these audits, CSU Bakersfield has made numerous policy and process improvements. Examples including the following: (1) filling all vacant building marshal positions and developing a process to biannually confirm the accuracy of the building marshal’s roster [Audit - Emergency Management 4.2:29]; (2) creating and testing a comprehensive Information Technology Disaster Recovery (ITDR) plan [Audit - IT Disaster Recovery 4.2:30]; (3) establishing a formal governance structure charged with ensuring that all Payment Card Industry (PCI) requirements are addressed on an annual and ongoing basis [Audit - Payment Card Processing 4.2:31]; and (4) updating campus policy regarding Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Prevention (ATOD) programming, including a requirement that all student activities officers and advisors complete the training [Audit - Student Activities 4.2:33].
Internally, the University Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (USP-BAC) monitors progress towards the achievement of the University’s goals and objectives, including the review of institutional metrics and data, and provides input on the budgetary strategy to support the plan. The Committee advises the President on campus budget matters and makes recommendations for supporting the academic mission and maintaining institutional viability in light of fiscal challenges and opportunities. The Committee meets at least twice per year. The spring semester meeting emphasizes the campus strategic plan, and the fall semester meeting emphasizes the budget [link: University Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee].

The membership of USP-BAC is broad, with representatives from all areas of the university. In 2018, the Committee’s leadership was revised to replace the University President as chair with the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Business and Administrative Services as co-chairs. The other members of the Committee are: Vice President for Student Affairs; Vice President for University Advancement; Chief of Staff to the President; Assistant to the President for Equity, Inclusion and Compliance; two School Deans; Dean of CSU Bakersfield Antelope Valley; Chair of the Academic Senate; Chair of the Academic Senate Budget and Planning Committee; two Faculty Representatives; President of Associated Students, Inc.; Graduate Student Director of Associated Students, Inc.; two Staff Representatives; Director of Athletics; Chief Human Resources Officer; Chief Information Officer; Chair of the CSU Bakersfield Foundation Board or designee; and Chair of the President’s Community Advisory Council or designee. The Committee’s support staff include: Liaisons for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Advancement; Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA); Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management; WSCUC Accreditation Liaison Officer; University Budget Director; and Director of Public Affairs and Communications [link: University Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee].

6.5 INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT (IRPA)

CSU Bakersfield’s Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) provides information and data analysis in support of budgeting, operations, planning, and policy determinations at the university. This office maintains databases of historical and current facts about the University including applications, enrollments, degrees granted, demographics, test scores, grades, courses, and outcomes. IRPA conducts surveys of students and faculty for the assessment of programs and services and provides feedback for quality improvement. Planning staff also provide consultation to other campus units in conducting assessments of their programs and technical support in data analysis and reporting [link: IRPA Website]. IRPA is staffed by three research assistants, a research associate, an analyst/programmer, an administrative support assistant, and an Assistant Vice President [link: IRPA Staff].
IRPA’s mission is to support evidence-based planning and decision-making at CSU Bakersfield through a comprehensive and integrated program of research, planning, and assessment. The office is also charged with reporting official student and academic information to the CSU Chancellor’s Office and other outside organizations. IRPA accomplishes these goals by collaborating with areas across the campus, by providing data, analyses, information, and support for planning, evaluation and assessment, mandated reporting, policy development, accreditation efforts, program reviews, and other reporting needs [link: IRPA Mission Statement].

6.5.1 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING (CFR 2.10 and 4.2)

CSU Bakersfield’s Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) plays a pivotal role in collecting, coordinating, and analyzing data about and for the university and serves as the chief information clearinghouse for disseminating information and reports to campus administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as to external constituents. The reports may be standardized and regularly scheduled or may be ad hoc reports for specific purposes, such as grant applications or departmental initiatives. IRPA also manages institutional compliance and reporting obligations to federal and state agencies and the CSU Chancellor’s Office, and supplies information in keeping with university policy and privacy standards to external publications such as the Common Data Set, College Board, ACT, Peterson’s, Wintergreen Orchard House, and the US News & World Report.

Good organizational intelligence, information that looks both inward and outward, is crucial to the management of strategic change at the university. IRPA staff provide support for Taskstream, a cloud-based software that allows faculty and staff to map Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) to University Learning Outcomes (ULOs), archive course syllabi and other curricular documents, report annual assessment plans, findings, actions plans, and status reports, and generate analytics, which compile assessment data across units. In recent years, IRPA moved from producing mostly PDF reports to developing a “self-service” Tableau website. This program-planning data software provides interactive data tables on admissions, enrollment, and graduation that users can explore to drill down to the school and department levels. The data can be further broken down by student level, gender, and ethnicity. The dashboard helps faculty and administrators understand patterns of student progress and barriers to graduation.

IRPA publishes several key data sources on its website. This centralized repository includes information regarding student learning outcomes, assessment plans, activities and resources, and use of student learning evidence. Academic quality outcome measures are used for external purposes, such as the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Application; the CSU System-wide Voluntary System of Accountability; the CSU comparative analysis IPEDS; and the nine degree program at CSU Bakersfield with national accreditations—BS in Business Administration,
Chemistry, and Nursing; MS programs in Counseling, Education, Public Administration, and Social Work, and the MBA. It also includes CSU Bakersfield’s strategic planning success indicator reports; National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) findings; and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a survey conducted each year by the National Center for Education Statistics. Finally, IRPA’s website provides links to the CSU Student Success Dashboard, the College Portrait, and the Student Achievement Measure (SAM).

6.5.2 DATA COLLECTION IN SUPPORT OF REPORTING (CFR 2.10 and 4.2)

CSU Bakersfield’s Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) is an important contributor in building a culture of evidence. IRPA regularly collects and reports data using standardized instruments such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA); the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); and Common Data Set, a college guide developed by the College Board. IRPA has developed a variety of surveys over the past five years, including the Graduation Student Survey [link: Student and Campus Data]; alumni surveys with custom reports prepared for the Center for Community Engagement and Career Education (CECE) [link: CSU Bakersfield Infographics]; and degree program student satisfaction surveys. IRPA also regularly disseminates enrollment information to the President’s cabinet, deans, and the budget office for enrollment planning and budget projections, and IRPA’s program profiles serve as the data source for annual department/program reports to the deans and Provost [link: Program Profiles].

The Assistant Vice President for IRPA sits on the Graduation Taskforce, the campus group driving the Graduation 2025 Initiative, and regularly shares data about paths to improve student persistence and graduation rates. IRPA supports departments as they write program review self-studies by supplying a suite of data that correlates with the current program review template. Staff also respond to specialized data requests from departments as needed for the program review process.

Examples of ad hoc reports produced by IRPA include those analyzing student attrition/retention outcomes and engagement, and those assessing pilot programs and graduation initiatives. For instance, IRPA provided data to support institutional decision-making and student success in light of the fall 2016 graduation initiative [link: Graduation and Retention Rates]. IRPA also conducted an analysis of the block scheduling pilot program, an initiative of the Graduation Taskforce, which paved the way for the continuation of block scheduling courses for incoming freshmen [link: Block Scheduling Evaluation]. And in support of the campus initiative on advising, IRPA conducted a number of surveys to assist in planning for possible improvements to the advising system [link: Campus Conversation on Advising].

6.5.3 DATA ACCESS AND DISSEMINATION TO CAMPUS STAKEHOLDERS (CFR 4.6 and 4.7)
The Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) is a strong unit at CSU Bakersfield that has developed collaborative campus partnerships to drive decision making, develop quality assurance, and promote student success. Collecting quality data and making it accessible and actionable for the campus community has been a consistent objective. CSU Bakersfield recognizes that data-informed decision making is crucial to implementing its strategic plan, maintaining and improving the quality of its academic programs, making strides in its graduation and student success goals, and cultivating a welcoming campus community. The Assistant Vice President regularly communicates in public forums like the Department Chair Leadership Council (DCLC) and Academic Senate subcommittees, sits on the provost’s team, and manages data requests for accreditation reports at the institutional, school, and department levels.

Quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts are publicized through a newsletter, *Context & Meaning*, published by IRPA [link: Assessment Newsletter]. This biannual publication contains articles written by the members of the Assessment Coordinators team, sharing information on how programs are engaging in the assessment process and using assessment data to improve pedagogy, programs, and services at the university. The newsletter is available in both online and print format for both internal and external campus constituencies.

6.5.4 PERIODIC REVIEW (CFR 4.1)

The Assistant Vice President of IRPA and the functions related to IRPA are evaluated and reviewed annually by the Provost. The IRPA Office has not been reviewed yet. A review process is under discussion and will be implemented.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

As evidenced in this essay, CSU Bakersfield has a broadly participatory, iterative, and comprehensive quality assurance system grounded upon our five strategic goals. Our processes of annual assessment, annual review, and periodic review demonstrate our commitment to quality assurance and a culture of continuous improvement in our academic programs, student affairs division, and administrative units. Nevertheless, several areas of concern call for special attention.

First, in recent years, the state’s financial recession, a changing funding model for education, and the campus conversion from a quarter to semester system severely impacted CSU Bakersfield’s ability to recruit, hire, and maintain its workforce. In the past three years, retirements have occurred at all levels. In Academic Affairs, faculty committed to assessment and quality improvement—champions—have been lost and new leadership has emerged. Partly to address these losses, an Assessment Coordinators team was formed, bringing together the Faculty Assessment Coordinators (FACs) from each of the four Schools (Arts and Humanities; Business and Public
Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education), a Faculty Assessment Coordinator for General Education, and, most recently, Assessment Coordinators for Extended University and Student Affairs. While the introduction of unit-based assessment leaders has allowed faculty and staff to develop multiple, discipline-based strategies for assessing student learning, these strategies have not yet been fully integrated with the University Strategic Plan.

The campus shift to semesters, implemented in 2016-17, impacted assessment and other campus initiatives. On the positive side, the conversion to semesters inspired many programs to deeply reflect upon their program’s effectiveness and use assessment data to drive program transformation. On the negative side, an increased need to hire adjuncts and temporary instructors in large numbers diverted the energy and attention of permanent faculty. Part-time and temporary faculty are not oriented toward nor expected to assume responsibility for strategic objectives. New faculty hiring efforts are likely to improve tenure density and add new energy to assessment efforts. In 2017-18, 15 tenure track and 10 full-time lecturers were added. In 2018-19, hiring plans include 39 new tenure track faculty and 2 additional full-time lecturers.

Opportunities for faculty to complete assessment training have been dispersed throughout the institution. Faculty teaching online courses receive assessment training through the Quality Matters summer institute; faculty teaching in the General Education program receive assessment training through faculty-facilitated Learning Communities (LCs) and assessment workgroups; and, assessment leads within programs receive one-on-one assistance as needed from their school Faculty Assessment Coordinator (FAC). The next step for the Assessment Coordinators team is to collaborate with the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center to schedule assessment training programs for new faculty as part of the new faculty orientation, to provide regular program assessment trainings throughout the academic year, and to develop assessment themes aligned with the University Strategic Plan.

The CSU Chancellor’s Office strategic initiatives on timely graduation, degree completion, and remediation have focused campus data collection on these initiatives and requirements for new and different outcome data. Unfortunately, this emphasis on data collection has slowed down progress toward evidence-based decision making as resources for measuring, assessing, and interpreting data have not yet increased. The IRPA unit and the IRPA Director are significant in both generating data and communicating evidence.

Finally, most units at CSU Bakersfield—academic and non-academic—are engaged in either quality measurement or surveys to gauge satisfaction with service. Some areas analyze data and develop quality improvement efforts. However, these efforts are not necessarily linked across or through the structural units of the university.
To promote best practices in assessment and disseminate program assessment results, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) now publishes a biennial newsletter, *Context & Meaning*, and has created websites with assessment information for academic programs, including the new General Education program, Achieving Integration & Mastering Skills (AIMS). A webpage for Student Affairs assessment is also planned. Additionally, to improve the efficiency of the program review process, the University Program Review Committee (UPRC) produced a trend analysis on degree program completion of program reviews, and plans to implement the resulting recommendations to streamline the process. Overall, there is widespread awareness at CSU Bakersfield that information, especially data-based evidence, must be disseminated widely to internal and external campus constituencies.