ESSAY 8 REFLECTIONS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Throughout this institutional report, we have shown that over the last 48 years, CSU Bakersfield has grown into a respected and valued regional comprehensive university with an important role in Kern County, California. The institution has continually strived to provide and increase access to a high quality education to students within our service area. In the preceding pages, we have presented both narratives and evidence of our efforts to achieve these goals since the last WSCUC review. In the sections below, we briefly summarize each essay.

Essay 1 describes CSU Bakersfield, the context in which the university was created, and populations the it serves. This essay also reviews previous WSCUC actions and recommendations the University has endeavored to address.

Essay 2 describes the university’s compliance with WSCUC Standards. Using the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, we confirm that each academic program has implemented an internal assessment system to identify whether students are achieving the faculty’s learning objectives. Moreover, the essay explains how program review buttresses the internal assessment systems.

Essay 3 presents the meaning of both undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded at CSU Bakersfield. Equally, the essay describes the CSU system-wide and campus initiatives and tactics employed to increase retention and graduation rates.

Essay 4 describes how the students, faculty and staff collaborate to set academic and co-curricular goals, as well as the processes and systems used to evaluate student achievement of those goals. The evidence presented indicates that, in general, both undergraduate and graduate students at CSU Bakersfield meet faculty-established standards for student learning.

Essay 5 presents the University’s approach to student success, and elaborates upon the tactics and measures implemented to support student progress to graduation. The essay also addresses how the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 Goals are being met by the campus.

Essay 6 examines CSU Bakersfield’s systems of quality assurance and evaluation, including periodic program review. Further detail is provided about the integration of the program review process with overall resource allocation and educational effectiveness.
Essay 7 describes the current financial position of CSU Bakersfield, as well as the institution’s ability to harness shared governance to chart a sustainable course for future success.

Today, CSU Bakersfield is a highly respected institution of 9,300 undergrads and 1,200 graduate students with most of those students being women and/or people of color. CSU Bakersfield offers over 50 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs spread over four schools: Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education. The University also has unique value to the region we serve, among the poorest counties in California, with a poverty rate of 22.4 percent in 2016 [link: Quick Facts Kern County]. CSU Bakersfield is known as a commuter school and transfer institution, which matches the low-income status of many of our students. Recently, the institution has been recognized for its incredible economic value [link: CSUB Economic Value of Degree] its inclusiveness [link: Top University of Student Inclusion], and for its graduate program excellence [link: Washington Monthly Rankings]. It also ranks in 38th in the U.S. among Best Universities for Hispanic Students [link: Best Universities for Hispanic Students]. Kern is also one of the most oil-rich counties in California, and the University’s award-winning petroleum geology program readies students for the energy industry. As an educational community that spans decades, we have demonstrated our excellence.

In 2020, CSU Bakersfield will honor the people, programs and students it has served for 50 years. The 50th Anniversary is an opportunity for the university to reflect upon its accomplishments, while collectively planning its future. The University has warmly welcomed Dr. Lynette Zelezny, who in July 2018 became the fifth permanent president of CSU Bakersfield and the first female President. Zelezny succeeds Dr. Horace Mitchell who retired after fourteen years in office. Zelezny has served as provost and vice president of academic affairs at CSU Fresno since 2014, and brings to CSU Bakersfield her transformational leadership as a champion for student success and diversity. As Dr. Zelezny has stated, the campus will embark on a new collaborative strategic plan that will refine its institutional direction. In sum, we appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate both our strengths and challenges as we charge into the future. Go Runners!