

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

PREPARATORY REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

February 4-6, 2004

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

# **UC SANTA CRUZ PREPARATORY REVIEW**

## **Team Report**

### **SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

#### **IA – Description of Institution and Visit**

UC Santa Cruz was founded in the 1960s, following approval of the California Master Plan for Higher Education, when the University of California opened new campuses to accommodate the state's growing population. This institution has had an interesting history. Originally conceived as a campus that would place particular emphasis on undergraduate education, UCSC has developed into an accomplished research university with highly regarded graduate programs, while preserving its original focus on offering a special undergraduate experience. This experience is centered on residential colleges, living and learning environments which put students, organized in cohorts, in contact with faculty members and which function as centers for cultural and social activities. Narrative performance evaluations, enhancing personal interactions between faculty and students, have been another characteristic of UCSC. Although both residential colleges and narrative performance evaluations have evolved over time, they remain in place and continue to be distinct features of the campus culture. Across the country, the campus has come to be identified with these elements.

UCSC was accredited by WASC in 1967. The most recent review, in 1994, was very positive and resulted in a recommendation to reaffirm

accreditation, along with thirty-seven specific suggestions about how to diversify and strengthen the faculty, improve academic programs and foster research, scholarship and creative activity. These issues were considered by the Preparatory Review Team, which visited the campus in February of 2004. The present report constitutes a summary of the team's observations and recommendations.

### **IB – Quality of the Preparatory Report**

UC Santa Cruz worked long and hard to prepare for the review. A campus steering committee met with faculty, students, administrators and alumni to choose an approach to the review and to examine the various drafts of the preparatory report. The steering committee decided to focus its accreditation on three main issues: 1) increasing the number of graduate students, 2) enhancing undergraduate students' engagement, and 3) reforming program review. This process has benefited from a recent long-range planning effort, embodied in the Millennium Committee report, which it complements. The team was very pleased with the institutional presentation, which demonstrated that the campus was involved in effective self-review and identification of key trends.

UCSC's final preparation review document includes four chapters, each addressing one of the four standards for accreditation. These candid essays, which explore strengths and weaknesses and suggest paths to a better future, are accompanied by a wealth of supporting documents. The campus obviously did not spare any effort in providing evidence of its activities and plans and exceeded

the team's expectations in terms of both the quantity and quality of the data it supplied for the review. The campus was somewhat less good at linking data and analysis. For example, on research funding, there needs to be an illustration of funding increases by sources of funding over time, which can be used to plan growth in graduate student support. The educational effectiveness review should provide UCSC with an opportunity to make more such connections.

### **IC – Response to Previous Commission Issues**

The team was pleased to see that the campus had made considerable progress on the issues identified by the 1994 review. It is worth noting that the campus is facing a budget crisis again. Thus, financial issues are as important as they were ten years ago and, in many ways, more challenging.

## **SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS**

### **IIA - Organization and Strategy**

A team of five members paid a two-day visit to the campus and met with a large number of campus committees, groups and individuals. The meetings were very informative and provided many interesting insights for the team, which was impressed by the campus's open and friendly atmosphere. After a thorough examination of the evidence gathered, the team found no areas of significant concern under the preparatory review standards. The observations and

recommendations the team offers here are intended to assist the campus as it moves into a new stage of its development.

## **IIB – Core of the Review**

### **Standard 1**

#### *Institutional Purposes*

The team reviewed the statements of mission and practices of UCSC, discussing these with faculty, students, and administrators. These accurately define its institutional purpose, which embeds a unique commitment to undergraduate education through residential colleges and extensive faculty engagement within the rich intellectual resources of a high quality research university. This mission was clearly defined during its founding and has shaped its evolution. It is strongly endorsed by its faculty and communicated to its various constituencies.

UCSC has developed numerous mechanisms to ensure that its educational objectives are met, including the use of capstone courses, comprehensive examinations, and senior research projects to assess undergraduate student learning. The quality of the student learning experience is utilized in an ongoing program review process to inform administrative decisions and resource allocations. In the past there has been a strong self-selection process that attracts both students and faculty who are particularly committed to this unique form of undergraduate education. Here the team would note, however, that many of the new

faculty members are focused increasingly on moving to the vision of “a major research university”. Several students raised similar concerns to members of the team. These conversations suggest an increasing tension between the stated mission of “an uncommon commitment” to undergraduate education and the reality of an increasingly graduate-research-intensive university.

### *Integrity*

UCSC functions with integrity and autonomy, demonstrating commitment to academic freedom, diversity, and the protection of the rights of students, faculty, and staff. The major challenge to the integrity of the UCSC mission lies in the shift in mission from an innovative pioneer in undergraduate education to a major research university. While the assumed goal is to meld the best features of an outstanding undergraduate education together with a growing reputation for graduate education, the danger lies in emulating existing models of major research universities. The team encourages UCSC to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity to develop a new creative model of higher learning.

### **Standard 2**

#### *Teaching and Learning*

At the undergraduate level, the campus focuses on developing the whole student. This is accomplished through a partnership between the 10

residential colleges and the 33 academic departments, as well as through close cooperation between the faculty and the professional staff who do much of the advising. The campus offers regular core courses for freshmen and capstone seminars for seniors. In addition, there are freshman discovery seminars, as well as a variety of research programs for upper-division students. Service-learning courses are also available, and most students engage in community service activities. The undergraduate experience, thus, eases the transition from high school to college, as well as that from college to society at large, while focusing on research.

Graduating seniors display a high degree of satisfaction with the Santa Cruz experience and matriculate in graduate schools at a higher rate than at any other public research university in the country, with the exception of Berkeley. It is also worth noting that UC Santa Cruz ranked eighth nationwide in the total number of graduates who have served in the U.S. Peace Corps, sending the highest percentage of volunteers of any campus in the country, a tribute to the sense of purpose of its undergraduate education.

The team noted that freshmen core courses offered in the colleges were not taught by tenure-track faculty and that freshman discovery seminars taught by tenure-track faculty were not offered in the colleges. Further involvement of tenure-track faculty in the intellectual life of the colleges would enhance what already is a very fine undergraduate experience.

The campus is seeking to increase the number of graduate students, and to improve the environment for them, by offering more and better services. The number of tenure-track faculty certainly justifies many more graduate students than the campus presently possesses. Even if the number of graduate students doubled, their percentage would still be lower than at most research universities.

The biggest challenge the campus faces in terms of increasing its graduate student body is funding. Although RAships and TAships are available, there is not enough money for fellowships, or, more importantly, to cover fees and non-resident tuition, which have escalated in recent years and are expected to rise even more in the near future. It is not clear how the campus intends to fund this enrollment increase. Although fundraising for graduate fellowships could be expanded, this is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the need for additional monies in the near future. That need could be met in a relatively short period of time only by reallocating resources, a step difficult to take at a time when the campus is dealing with serious budget cuts. The team suggests that all existing student support funding sources (endowment funds and financial aid money, including grants and work-study) be examined with a view toward potential reallocation of resources. In addition, there needs to be careful planning, so that when new funds become available to the campus, a significant percentage of the increase is dedicated to facilitating graduate enrollment growth.



In the meantime, the campus should focus on improving other aspects of graduate education, such as mentoring and professional development of graduate and postdoctoral students and laying the groundwork for expansion. The team was particularly intrigued by the discussion about possible ways of integrating graduate education into the fabric of the campus. There appears to be two perspectives on this. One is to integrate graduate students into the existing undergraduate colleges. The other is to create a graduate college to serve as a meeting place for graduate students, as well as a residence for some. Both would extend to graduate education some of the best features of the undergraduate experience that has made UC Santa Cruz famous. The team strongly encourages the campus actively to explore these options and suggests that, if the graduate college model is chosen, post-docs and visiting scholars be included in it, along with graduate students. If strategically located and endowed with lecture halls and dining facilities, such graduate college could become the physical and spiritual center of the campus, a gathering place for graduates and undergraduates alike and a locus for cultural activities of interest to the entire university community.

Both undergraduate and graduate programs are evaluated on a regular basis. The team was pleased to see that the campus is examining ways to make these evaluations more effective and standardizing procedures that would facilitate comparison of findings. Also worth

noting is the recent campus initiative to implement block scheduling, which should be helpful to students and faculty alike.

### *Scholarship and Creative Activity*

During the last decade, UC Santa Cruz has made a real effort to acculturate its new faculty by emphasizing from the start the importance of teaching. In fact, the campus tends to hire first-rate scholars with a particular interest in pedagogy, and a demonstration of teaching ability is an important part of the job interview process in many units. Once faculty members are hired, they receive an unusual amount of support, including two years of monthly brown bag seminars, which often focus on teaching. Teaching is an important part of the tenure, promotion and merit system and is examined critically at all levels. The Center for Teaching Excellence helps faculty members and other instructors improve their skills, which are recognized by various teaching awards. The campus appears to pay more attention to its teaching mission than do most other research universities. Teaching is complemented by a very wide array of advising activities, and it is closely associated with the campus's research enterprise.

The quantity and quality of research on campus is very high, as is the volume and visibility of its creative activity. By all measures, UCSC is a very successful research university already. As more of its programs reach critical mass, the team expects to see considerable increases in extra-

mural funding, enhanced graduate program rankings and greater national and international visibility.

UCSC shows a particularly strong engagement of students, both graduate and undergraduate, in research. The specific character of the undergraduate research experience varies substantially by disciplinary areas, ranging from a capstone experience through a senior thesis in the natural sciences and engineering to an oral examination or a paper in the social sciences and humanities.

UCSC's plan to expand its graduate student body carries, on the positive side, an expectation of greatly enhanced interactions among graduate and undergraduate students, more and larger graduate programs and increased research funding, while at the same time raising some concerns about impact on faculty workload, which already appears to be heavy. A concern among some faculty is whether there has been enough central campus planning in light of the expected budget tightening and demographic growth in California.

#### *Support for Student Learning*

UCSC has formulated a specific plan for support services with 70% delivered via self-service, 20% through professionally staffed offices, and 10% for special individual cases. This seems a reasonable target for long-range planning. The work accomplished and in progress on support for student learning is impressive, and staff and faculty are dedicated to using information to improve learning outcomes. In general, programs to

support student learning are well established. The writing program, in particular, is universally admired and respected. The challenge will be to maintain this and other programs at a high level of effectiveness in the face of impending budget cuts.

UCSC has established a partnership office to work with community colleges to promote successful transfers. The coordination and cooperation with other institutions in the area is commendable as is the three-day summer program to give students an experience with university education. The STARS (Service for Transfer and Re-entry Students) is another program that deserves special mention for its support of student learning. With the emphasis on collecting data on and from students, it will be useful to break out information on transfer students to see if and how they differ from other students on instruments such as NSSE and SERU21 or the graduating senior surveys.

### **Standard 3**

#### *Faculty and Staff*

The faculty and staff at UCSA with whom we met were articulate, enthusiastic and committed to the institution. Although faculty nominally divide their time equally between teaching and research, there appears to be a heavy committee service load. The approximate number of twenty senate committees extracts a heavy toll on faculty time, which can detract from the primary role of research and teaching. Upon query, it does appear

that release time from teaching because of major committee service makes the workload bearable, although it really does not fully compensate for the lost time from research. One faculty member said that the campus had, “two administrations,” that is, senate committees plus administrative committees that include faculty members. The team suggests that some attention be given to this aspect of time usage.

The ratio of approximately 2300 staff to 700 faculty does not seem excessive, and some faculty and administrators confirmed that staff shortages were impacting the ability of faculty to be as productive as expected. The approach to reduce staff, primarily via attrition, together with centralized administrative models has cast a worry among staff.

#### *Fiscal, Physical and Information Resources*

Since its founding, UCSC has enjoyed a significant level of support from the State of California and has developed teaching and research programs that rank among the best. While UCSC has experienced budget difficulties in the past, they have always been viewed as temporary, and real systemic planning to maintain excellence under sustained economic distress is necessary. The State has provided generous support, and student fees have remained relatively low.

Today, however, the State faces a major budget problem that is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from the past. Even the most optimistic believe that a return to the generosity that marked the years of

extraordinary growth of the University of California is not likely either in the near term or longer. Accordingly, many, perhaps most, of the campus leadership and faculty understand that UCSC's place among the great institutions cannot be maintained and enhanced without making fundamental changes in its revenue mix. More will be expected from other sources including a sizable fractional increase in the costs that must be borne by students. Fund raising is another opportunity, but developing private giving plans do not usually provide quick payoffs. Nevertheless, the State must continue to provide the major portion of the resources, and it is in the State's economic interest to do so. Its investment over the past several decades is simply too important to let deteriorate.

UCSC's campus is one of the most beautiful in America with buildings situated among the redwoods in college clusters that enhance the living and learning nature of the curriculum. Construction has marked the history of the University and never has the activity been at a greater rate than now. Yet, despite this beauty, the campus lacks a physical focus, such as Berkeley's campanile and square, or Stanford's quadrangles. The proposed graduate college might provide a rare opportunity to create just such a focus if designed as a striking architectural complex that pulls together both academic and residential functions.

### *Organizational Structures and Decision-making*

The organizational structure of the campus is consistent with that of a residentially based research university. The Chancellor and Executive Officers demonstrate a genuine concern for the welfare of the institution. Although there is a considerable degree of coordination, decision-making seems centered on the affected units.

### **Standard 4**

#### *Strategic Thinking and Planning*

The team reviewed many planning documents and met with numerous faculty members, administrators, and students involved in the university's various planning councils to assess UCSC's strategy development. UCSC has a functional plan to insure critical thinking about the future of the institution, and there are numerous opportunities for faculty to engage in the process, although this can be uneven at times. There are extensive databases and decision support processes. These processes have been substantially strengthened by the development and implementation of a sophisticated Academic Information System that enables the institution to collect and maintain accurate data essential to strategic planning. Although the databases available on the web are numerous and complete, there should be consistent and intuitive links so as to insure an easy and seamless flow from one thread to the next.

While strategic planning in the past was conducted within the constraints imposed by the University of California system and the state legislature, the

uncertainty imposed by today's financial climate and state demographic changes have motivated UCSC to engage in bolder long-range strategy development. There is a strong tradition of bottom-up planning originating within the academic units with active faculty participation. When accompanied by creative leadership, this has been quite effective. However as the institution grows and diversifies, such a grassroots planning process may need more direction from university leadership to avoid balkanization. A number of faculty expressed concerns that there needed to be a better linkage between planning activity and budget, perhaps less reliant on assumptions of the status quo (e.g., assuming that enrollment growth will necessarily be accompanied by the traditional UC system resource allocation formula and success in attracting state support of capital facilities).

### *Commitment to Learning*

UCSC is continuing to develop a system for collecting information about the characteristics and satisfactions of students. It systematically gathers information via NSSE, which permits comparison of UCSC students with comparable institutions nationwide regarding student perceptions of their engagement with learning. UCSC also uses a UC designed instrument SERU21 enabling comparison of Santa Cruz students with other UC campuses. A local survey of graduating seniors provides information on satisfaction with their learning experiences at UCSC.

Indeed, the array of survey instruments to collect data from students is impressive, and the development of institutional databases



useful for planning is extensive and ongoing. The challenge will be how to link key sources of information so that they have implications for improving practice. As work proceeds on collecting and integrating databases, UCSC will need to give careful consideration to such questions as: How, when, and to whom should data be distributed and interpreted to have the greatest impact on student learning outcomes? How will the information influence curriculum development? What implications does it have for faculty development and the improvement of teaching? How will change be tracked?

Since UCSC is in the process of making major change, and policy is under continuous review and discussion, we suggest that data might be accessed and made more useful by an explicit commitment to develop brief analytic papers on the implications for decision making of data already collected. Any university committee working on the improvement of student learning should be able to request a brief analysis of relevant data from the numerous data banks that are being developed. Since funds for such activities are short, we suggest that such analyses might be good ways to involve students in research.

### **SECTION III – MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The team agrees with the statement in the Preparatory Review Proposal that UCSC is at a critical point of its evolution. Its unusually strong commitment to high quality undergraduate education in the living-

learning environment of residential colleges, coupled with numerous opportunities for student development through research projects, public service and international experiences within the environment of a research university engaged in graduate education and research of the highest caliber is unique among public universities. In fact, UCSC has long served as a role model for American higher education. Yet today, the financial realities and economic needs of the State of California, coupled with the changing nature of scholarship (e.g., the interdisciplinary character of new knowledge and the impact of digital technology), have caused UCSC to expand its graduate programs and introduce new professional degree programs (e.g., engineering and business administration) while enhancing still further the academic engagement of undergraduates.

This process is well underway, as evidence by the remarkable growth of the institution over the past decade. Most of this growth has been sustained by generous state support during a period of unusual prosperity for the State of California. Yet the current weakness in the state's economy, together with a structural imbalance between tax revenues and ongoing mandates (e.g., health care, K-12 education, and corrections) raise the very significant possibility that the state support of the University of California may not fully recover from the current budget crisis and instead experience a long decline similar to that projected for most other flagship public research universities throughout the nation. This possibility, coupled with the massive demographic changes

experienced by the state, call into question the most fundamental assumptions about the future of UCSC, including the viability of the Master Plan, which has guided the evolution of higher education in California for almost half a century.

While most of the faculty and administrators we interviewed at UCSC seem to understand this possibility and its implications, we sense that many have not really absorbed it into their behavior and their planning activities. For some there appears to be a lingering hope that prosperity will soon return and the status quo will be restored, leading to a certain degree of procrastination in developing policies and procedures capable of focusing limited resources on highest priorities and generating substantial new non-state resources. The team believes it important to emphasize that the economic future for UCSC is likely to be dramatically different from its past. Attempting to preserve a revenue mix that continues to rely disproportionately on the State of California might be a prescription for disappointment.

It seems clear that to sustain its reputation for high quality undergraduate education in a unique living-learning environment and expand its activities in graduate education and research, UCSC must stimulate a more entrepreneurial spirit on the part of its faculty and extend its reach beyond Santa Cruz, exploiting the unusual opportunities presented both by Silicon Valley and the Monterey Peninsula, where much of its future growth is likely to occur. And it must build a more risk-

tolerant culture in which failure is accepted as critical to institutional learning and evolution.

The team believes that the objectives proposed in the institution's recent planning exercises are all appropriate and achievable and that the faculty and the leadership of the university have the energy and creativity to achieve this vision. The team also believes that the institution understands the importance of protecting the distinct character of UCSC in American higher education, particularly its unique approach to undergraduate education and strong faculty engagement, as it expands its graduate, professional, and research programs.

The brief history of UCSC has been characterized by extraordinary innovation, driven both by the vision of its founders and its capacity to attract energetic, creative faculty, students, staff, and administrative leaders seeking such a pioneering spirit. This may, in fact, be the strongest asset of the university as it faces an increasingly uncertain future, since institutions characterized by innovation and flexibility, based upon enduring traditions and values, seem best able to transform challenge into opportunity during a period of rapid change. We believe that UCSC is remarkably well positioned not simply to adapt to this future with its fundamental values and character intact, but to shape its further evolution into a leading research university with an extraordinary commitment to undergraduate education.

## **SECTION IV – PREPARATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT AND REVIEW**

The team commends UCSC faculty and administration for an outstanding effort in preparing for the WASC Preparatory Review. The people, processes, organizations, and evidence gathered were impressive and made the task of the review committee quite straightforward. This effort has also laid a solid foundation for the Educational Effectiveness Review next year. We recognize that this latter review will address challenging issues: 1) the growth and improvement of graduate programs, and 2) the enhancement of undergraduate academic engagement, with both topics focused on educational goals and the capacity to measure and assess learning outcomes.

The team recommends that particular attention be paid to the interaction between these two objectives. For example, as graduate enrollments grow, will the pressures on faculty members not simply to supervise graduate students but generate the resources necessary for their support erode their capacity to participate in the highly effective living-learning communities characterizing undergraduate education at UCSC? How will UCSC balance the pressures to move to more cost-effective undergraduate teaching paradigms with the desire to maintain the institution's unusual commitment to faculty-intensive undergraduate education? As sponsored research grows, there is likely to be a considerable increase in postdoctoral students and researchers. Might there be a way to link them with the teaching enterprise? How can the institution better develop and implement the measurement of learning outcomes to assess if there is an erosion

in the quality of the undergraduate experience as the UCSC becomes more graduate-research intensive? In sum, how can the University of California, Santa Cruz protect its unique character, particularly as exemplified by its undergraduate programs and its strong tradition of faculty engagement, as it expands its graduate, professional, and research programs?