

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

The self-study for the WASC reaccreditation review provided an occasion for the campus to reflect on and analyze its ability to meet the challenges and the opportunities presented by two decades of change and projected growth, 1990-2010. The results of those deliberations are described in our accounts of the way we have responded to recommendations of the earlier WASC review (Chapter One); of our attention to activities associated with the three themes we have chosen for this self-study (Chapters Two through Four); and of our plans to enhance UCI's academic mission through the rapid expansion of enrollment predicted over the next decade (Chapter Five). This concluding chapter identifies some key issues from those earlier sections, and it explains how those issues are connected to our more general sense of where the campus is now and how we might best approach planning over the next 10 years.

### **OVERVIEW AND RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS WASC REVIEW**

The most general and potentially serious challenge described by the 1991 WASC review was "the silent drag of habit" that characterized our planning—a combination of policies and practices based on the precedent of a much younger and smaller institution that "could be ill-suited for the budget realities of the future." The threat that inspired that concern—the mid-1990s budgetary crisis that caused drastic constraints on resources and growth—has come and gone. Fortunately, UCI weathered that storm better than the reviewers feared we might, in part because of the same decentralized, local planning by units that had caused the reviewers concern. Delegating the responsibility for meeting this crisis to UCI's schools and departments allowed those individual units to make the

mandated reductions in ways most appropriate to them, and the campus survived with minimum negative impact on the quality and effectiveness of its academic programs.

Unpleasant as that experience was, it proved our ability to adjust to rapid and radical changes in the general pattern of growth, an ability that has characterized UCI since its opening in 1965. It also confirmed the general wisdom of planning and administration that places the greatest responsibility for decisions and innovation closest to the heart of the University—in the laboratories, libraries, studios, and classrooms where our teaching and research are done. In particular, this experience demonstrated the extent to which academic planning at UCI *does* interact with budgetary decisions by setting priorities that guide the campus productively in “bad times” as well as good (a concern expressed by the 1991 report). We are confident that this integration of academic and fiscal planning will enable us to adjust equally well to negative fluctuations in the projected growth over the next decade. (Chapter Five presents a detailed account of those projections and plans, especially as they involve graduate and undergraduate enrollment.)

Crisis management is not necessarily the best strategy for better times, of course. Preparing for the present WASC review did help us to identify and understand better the institutional mechanisms by which planning takes place on our campus, and to distinguish more clearly among those strategies more appropriate to support the rapid expansion projected for the next decade. In the past, much of the interaction among faculty, administration, budget officers, and staff responsible for gathering and disseminating data has focused on specific questions and issues, as described in Chapter One, Section Four. Among the most essential issues are those associated with the assessment of undergraduate education, and

we chose that topic as one of the three themes for this review (Chapter Two). Chapter Two describes in detail how we measure the effects or outcomes of our educational efforts and the way those measurements affect our decisions about academic programs and curricula. The strengths of this system are clearly flexibility and focus, which allow for the quick generation of reliable data for specific objectives. In addition to allowing the campus to adapt to rapid changes in the levels of resources and growth, this way of connecting information and decisions enables the campus to identify and address significant problems such as the communication skills of its students, another theme for this review (Chapter Four).

The specificity and focus that are the strengths of this process also limit its efficacy, however. Although this process does in fact integrate "vision, priorities, programs and resources" to a greater extent than previous WASC reviewers suggested (1991 WASC Self-Study, p. 3), that integration occurs mostly on a case-by-case basis. That basis does not present a problem when the highly specific planning is contextualized and supported by the precedent of our first 30 years, or when a budgetary crisis requires extremely flexible and adaptive thinking instead of more comprehensive long-term planning. Nevertheless, reflecting on the opportunities presented by the scale and pace of growth projected for UCI in the next decade, we realize that this process is not the most effective way to do large-scale, innovative planning, especially when that planning must reach across present institutional boundaries and not only accommodate but encourage new schools, new programs, and more extensive interdisciplinary cooperation in research and teaching.

In this light, we consider in Chapter One particularly significant developments over the past two years that have established new venues in which such broader,

more integrated planning is taking place, and in which a much wider range of faculty and staff are participating: (1) the creation of two new Associate Executive Vice Chancellorships (AEVC) charged with multiple aspects of planning (i.e., the AEVC for Space and Enrollment, and the AEVC for Academic Planning); (2) the combination of administrative and Senate faculty committees in the new Academic Planning Group, which is chaired by the Executive Vice Chancellor and includes the Deans of Undergraduate Education and of Graduate Education, as well as the Director of Analytical Studies and Information Management and the new AEVCs; and (3) the initiation in 1999 of campuswide calls for proposals that resulted, that year, in our present consideration of four new professional schools and/or programs (This call will be repeated in 2000 under the aegis of the Executive Vice Chancellor and the Academic Planning Group.) We are confident that these developments will facilitate greater and more systematic integration among research, academic, administrative, and budgetary perspectives, and this increased integration among planning factors will enable us to realize fully the promise of our projected growth.

The other, more specific issues identified by WASC reviewers in the 1991 report are discussed separately in Chapter One of this self-study. In particular, UCI has greatly improved students' access to courses necessary for graduation, and through the expansion of the Campuswide Honors Program (CHP) we have focused significant financial resources and the time and energy of our faculty on the goal of realizing our ambition to "greatness" in undergraduate education. That objective is as difficult to describe in detail now as it was 10 years ago, but it surely must include two notable successes of the CHP: an increased ability to attract students to this program who would be the envy of any campus in the UC system or among private universities, and an excellent record of placing CHP graduates in the best graduate and professional schools, often with prestigious

fellowships and awards. It must also include our campuswide success in two of the other criteria mentioned in the 1991 report—increased opportunities for research by all undergraduates, and enhanced literacy across the extraordinarily wide range of language abilities represented on our diverse campus. We are proud of our success according to these latter two criteria for greatness, and we chose them as special themes for this review (see Chapters Three and Four).

Unfortunately, we cannot claim such success in our efforts to increase the diversity of our faculty. The report describes modest increases among women and other underrepresented groups on our faculty and staff, but it rightly describes these gains as "too small and too slow." Compounding our frustration at these disappointing results of our efforts, legislative actions by our State and resolutions by The Regents of the University of California have now made it illegal to use race and ethnicity as criteria for consideration in making new appointments. That restriction has further undermined our efforts in this area over the past few years and has made it even more difficult to imagine more effective strategies. Along with the entire UC system, however, UCI is exploring new avenues for enhancing diversity of all sorts on our campus. The Executive Vice Chancellor and the Assistant Executive Vice Chancellor for Equal Opportunity and Diversity have redoubled efforts on this front recently, and we hope to establish more effective incentives to make increasing our diversity a top priority for planning and recruitment in all parts of our campus. In addition, data regarding this factor will be available to the Academic Planning Group when it considers the allocation of FTE this year, so this objective will influence the distribution of FTE from the beginning of the campuswide planning process, rather than just at the stage of recruiting within the various departments and offices.

## **ASSESSMENT**

As explained in this self-study (Chapter Two, p. 38), there are two principal sources of data collection and analysis for the campus: the Office of Analytical Studies and Information Management, and the Division of Undergraduate Education. Staff from these offices regularly provide data to the central administration and to individual units in support of planning at all levels. Those reports include information about admissions, retention, and graduation, as well as more general data regarding the demographics of our campus, past trends in enrollment, and statistical projections into the future. These data help ensure a close connection between the academic plans of our units and a reasonably specific and concrete sense of who our students are and what their careers at UCI actually look like in terms of course selection for majors, minors, and electives. They also help us ensure that our requirements and expectations are compatible with more general objectives regarding retention and time-to-degree.

The quality of our academic programs and plans is assessed on a regular schedule using external reviewers who are specialists in the fields under review. Graduate and undergraduate reviews had been conducted separately until recently. Now, however, they are combined, in an effort to gain a more comprehensive perspective on all of the academic programs offered within a unit. The quality of teaching is also assessed on a quarterly basis through student evaluations and at times through direct observation in the classroom. These evaluations are reviewed by the units and forwarded as part of the dossier in personnel reviews to support evaluations of individual instructors, and they are used to determine the success of separate courses and course sequences. In addition to use by the campus and by our academic units, some of the results of these evaluations are published and

distributed to students in *TEACH*, the *Teacher Evaluation and Course Handbook*. The campus also offers a series of teaching awards that contribute to the assessment of successful teaching on the campus, though on a narrower basis focused on exceptional performance.

The performance of students is assessed regularly through various means, most obviously grades, which are reviewed in periodic degree checks by academic counselors in the units and by faculty advisors assigned to the students in most majors. In addition, there are other forms of regular assessment of specific skills, such as the Subject A examination of writing, and there are other special assessments conducted in association with other topics, as described in Chapter Two. In particular, some units administer alumni/ae surveys that focus on placement of graduates and their degree of satisfaction with their UCI education, and other units and programs solicit that information less systematically through more general communication with alumni/ae. The UCI Career Center conducted a campuswide survey regarding post-graduate education and employment of our alumni/ae in 1993-94, but no survey of that scope had been conducted since then until this year when the Center launched an annual on-line, Web-based survey to solicit data from the Class 2000 graduates. The *UC Irvine Graduating Students Survey 2000*, now in progress will be completed at the conclusion of fall quarter 2000.

Clearly we need to know more about what happens to our graduates campuswide, and to conduct those surveys on as regular a schedule as possible. We also need to centralize more of the assessment conducted on our campus in order to make better use of information that is now too often fragmented or narrowly focused on a specific issue and that is often restricted to a single unit or office. Chapter Two

makes the recommendations listed below to improve assessment on our campus and to enhance the effect of assessment on academic planning:

- Consider forming a campuswide taskforce or committee to continue the discussion regarding assessment of undergraduate education
- Consider conducting regular, periodic surveys of entering, continuing and graduating students
- Consider disseminating results of effective practices more widely

These recommendations would effectively shift the role of assessment on our campus. Presently, assessment most often serves as support for specific programmatic planning and evaluation, and as a source of information about our students. Assessment is thoroughly integrated into the academic planning of separate units, and it informs central administrative decisions directed toward specific objectives. If these recommendations are followed, assessment would continue to serve those functions, but it would occupy a more central role in planning on the campus by establishing a more systematic and continuous statistical perspective on our students and the effect of their education on their lives from matriculation to long after graduation. Some groundwork has already been laid for a movement in that direction, as noted in Chapter Two: The Division of Undergraduate Education has recently created a campuswide student database and the Office of Analytical Studies and Information Management is thoroughly integrated into all review processes (as exemplified by the data supporting this report on the Web). Further systematic assessment on our campus would provide a statistical perspective on our students and programs that is even more comprehensive and useful than our present one. It would also ensure greater continuity between localized and centralized planning on the campus, and it

would improve the connection between our pedagogical aims and the intellectual, artistic, and scientific objectives associated with our research.

## **UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH**

As a major research university, UCI makes research central to the intellectual life of all our faculty and students. Most faculty teaching is directly inspired by the faculty's research and scholarship, and most courses provide students at least some engagement with the products of that research by way of textbooks, articles and monographs, and, of course, interaction with the faculty themselves. As Chapter Three indicates, about two-thirds of the courses at UCI provide students with the opportunity to conduct research, either in partnership with faculty or independently (Table 2). Furthermore, a survey in 1994-95 found that most students at UCI take at least six to nine units of independent study (i.e., at least two to three courses) in which they conduct research under the personal supervision of their faculty mentor (Table 1).

In addition to course work devoted to research, there are at least eight separate programs at UCI devoted to encouraging research among our undergraduates (pp. 79-80). These programs receive funding from the UC system and from our campus; that funding has averaged over \$100,000 per year since 1993-94, the year we launched our Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. Results of these programs are impressive and fill not only the pages of a substantial *UCI Undergraduate Research Journal* each year but also a day-long symposium where the results of students' research are presented to a wide audience.

In addition to these campuswide efforts to support individual research, all of the academic units at UCI sponsor more specialized research programs, including

specialized projects, honors seminars, capstone courses, etc. (pp. 83-91). There are also campuswide programs that require research of all their students—most notably, the Campuswide Honors Program—and since the last WASC review there have been several other programs designed to reinforce the use of research or "problem-based learning" (PBL) in the classroom, including on-going support services by our Instructional Resource Center; the Hewlett PBL Faculty Institute; and the NSF Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology Education Project (SMET). At the lower division, two lower-division courses in particular have integrated research thoroughly into curricula that satisfy breadth requirements and (between the two courses) enroll all first-year students: Writing 39A-B-C, the sequence that satisfies the lower-division writing requirement; and the Humanities Core Course, which satisfies the requirements both for lower-division writing and for the Humanities breadth requirement. Writing 39A-B-C, which is required of all first-year students not in the Core Course, is dedicated to teaching the research paper, and research has gained an especially prominent place as well in the Humanities Core Course over the past two years. The Core Course now requires a research paper for all of its 1,000-plus students in spring quarter. In support of that assignment, it has instituted a year-long series of exercises and assignments designed to teach research methods in the humanities, and in all quarters it incorporates a Web-based instructional program that significantly extends the range of material available to its students in lectures and outside the classroom.

These various activities make research an integral part of our students' education, from introductory courses in their first year at UCI to the independent, individualized projects that often serve as a capstone of their academic experience here. We are proud of our success at providing our students the opportunity to do genuine research throughout their careers at UCI, and we are impressed by the

degree to which many of them exceed even our highest expectations. Our participation in the Hewlett PBL Project and the NSF-SMET Project further enhanced the research experience of our students by assisting faculty interested in developing this aspect of their courses. To maintain this emphasis on research in undergraduate education, we must be careful to maintain (at least) our present student/faculty ratio during the projected growth of the next decade, to continue our efforts to keep most of our courses small enough to encourage problem-based learning, and to continue supporting extra-curricular opportunities for more students through our campuswide research programs.

#### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

The extraordinary diversity of our students creates unusual challenges in the development of their communication skills. Chapter Four describes this situation in detail: our students' mean SAT Verbal scores usually rank second from the bottom of all UC campuses; we have the highest number of freshmen in the UC system who have failed to satisfy the Subject A requirement; 59 percent of the undergraduate students who entered in UCI in 1999 indicated that English was not their primary language; and 13 percent of our students must take English-as-a-second-language courses before they can enter our first-year composition courses. Nevertheless, despite the fact that these students have further to go than do many UC students toward reaching fluency in writing and even spoken English, UCI has some of the most ambitious requirements in composition of any UC campus: students who have not fulfilled Subject A must take an entire year of freshman composition (Writing 39A-B-C), and those who have passed that requirement must take two quarters. Students meeting our composition requirement through the Humanities Core Course must take three quarters of Core, regardless of their Subject A status. All students, including transfers who have otherwise fulfilled

our breadth requirements elsewhere, must fulfill one quarter of upper-division writing on our campus. A campuswide Writing Board oversees activity in this field at all levels, and a newly-created Lower Division Writing Committee handles the administrative issues at that level.

This contrast between the relatively low level of English-language skills among our incoming students and the high expectations of the campus that are reflected in these substantial requirements, has been a point of discussion for many years. The contrast was behind the unsuccessful effort to establish a "Gateway" examination of writing skills for our students. It also was noted by the two recent external reviews of our writing programs, one of which focused on lower-division courses and the other on upper-division courses offered by departments across the campus. Reviewers generally complimented our composition programs, but they pointed out several weaknesses, including (1) the lack of consistency in requiring and teaching "Standard Written English" in all courses; (2) the inadequate coordination among the various composition courses meeting the requirement; and (3) uneven development of upper-division writing across the campus-as-a-whole. (These reviews and our responses to them will be available in the WASC workroom during the reviewers' visit.)

As a result of those reviews and of discussions with experts on our campus, the Gateway Exam was abandoned as unworkable. Some curricular revisions were made which addressed more specific complaints made by the writing program reviewers, especially the observations that the Humanities Core Course did not pay enough attention to writing, and that the Writing 39A-B-C sequence lacked a clear sense of coherence and purpose across all three quarters. To address some of the broader structural issues raised by the writing reviews, a Writing Workgroup was convened in 1999 and headed by the Dean of the Division of Undergraduate

Education. The most dramatic result of that group's work has been the recent approval of a senior-level position in composition, the "Campus Writing Coordinator," to be filled by a scholar whose research agenda will be accompanied by significant administrative responsibilities and authority in the area of composition on our campus. This search is currently in process. (In addition to this senior-level position, several years ago the Department of English and Comparative Literature devoted a tenure-track, junior-level FTE to this field. The position has recently been vacated, but the line remains open and will be filled again in the near future.) In addition, our Learning and Academic Resource Center (LARC) plans to hire a specialist in oral communication to work with students through that office.

In choosing "Communication Skills" as one of the themes for review, we intended to highlight an area in which UCI faces unusual difficulties and to which we have devoted a great deal of time and attention in the past decade. The situation described in Chapter Four represents our continuing determination to deal with this apparently intractable problem, and that chapter is honest in its assessment of the mixed results that have stemmed from our earlier efforts. We believe that responses to the two external reviews have been quite effective in solving some specific problems associated with our composition courses, however, and the prospective appointment of a senior scholar in this field should focus the general goodwill of our faculty toward this objective and catalyze the energies of faculty and graduate students interested in teaching and research in this field.

## **CHALLENGES**

The principal foreseeable challenge facing UCI in the next decade is the rapid growth projected for our campus, as described in Chapter Five. We are projected

to grow over the next 10 years by about 10,000 students, to a total enrollment of 27,600. At least 15 percent of those students are projected to be graduate students, and our projected increase in faculty FTE over that time is 550. Senate and administrative groups are planning ways to accommodate that growth in a manner that enhances the academic mission of the University by increasing the size of many existing programs where possible and appropriate, and by developing new programs and professional schools. Chapter Five describes specific plans for units across the campus, including an effort to balance our academic mission with the interests of incoming students, with the demands of the marketplace for employees with particular kinds of training, and with our capacity to appoint enough highly qualified faculty to meet teaching needs in various areas. We are also considering less predictable factors such as the migration of students from one major to another during their careers at UCI, the admission of an increasing contingent of "Undecided/Undeclared" students, the growth of the Campuswide Honors Program, and the vagaries of fashion among undergraduates for one field or another. In addition, we hope to manage our growth to increase the quality of our undergraduates and to achieve greater diversity among some underrepresented groups on campus. Coordinated efforts are underway to increase the number of transfer students, to make better use of our Summer Session, and to cope with our perennial lack of adequate parking and student housing facilities.

Our greatest general challenge during this period undoubtedly will be planning to use the projected growth as an opportunity to realize our academic objectives, rather than to be in a situation of having to respond to the sheer pressure of enrollment. It is imperative that UCI provides enough support for graduate students so that we can seek out and recruit the best candidates for our graduate programs, and so that we can offer adequate salaries and training to make these graduate students effective assistants in our undergraduate courses. The

management of undergraduate enrollment will also require careful attention to the development and clear articulation of majors and minors that are academically strong, and that reflect students' interests while responding to the needs of industry and commerce.