

Section 1: Overview of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report

Overview

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Commission in its *2001 Handbook of Accreditation* outlines a three step process of reaccreditation: development of an institutional proposal, a capacity and preparatory review, and an educational effectiveness review. Sonoma State University is in the third stage of this review. The Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) report is intended to enable the visiting team and Commission to make a judgment about the extent to which the institution fulfills its “Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness: The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program levels, and employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, that assure the delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded.”

Sonoma State University selected a thematic approach to the educational effectiveness review in order to provide a rich, invigorating process for university-wide engagement. The theme of “Educating the Whole Student: Sustaining SSU’s Mission in a Time of Change” provided the university with a compelling lens through which to view the institution. SSU places the student at the core of its mission, and the thematic approach allowed SSU to engage the entire university community in the primary enterprise of the institution. SSU’s original proposal articulated five areas that needed to be addressed in educating the “whole” SSU student, including (1) the distinctive nature of an SSU education and the signature or “mark” of an SSU graduate; (2) the curriculum and student learning outcomes of GE and the major; (3) the co-curriculum and residential

life, both key components in creating the mark of an SSU graduate; (4) the faculty's roles and responsibilities in teaching, scholarship, mentoring and advising; and (5) the value of diversity in educating the whole student.

These components of educating the whole student provided an ambitious base for a strategic plan for the academic mission of the university. However, for the purposes of the WASC reaccreditation effort – and after conferring with the WASC proposal review board -- the first two areas were deemed the most closely associated with the overall theme of educating the whole student and of the standards of WASC Accreditation, which require a thorough examination of student learning. For that reason, the educational effectiveness review focuses on the first two outcomes:

- The distinctive qualities of a Sonoma State University education.
- Curriculum and the Roles of General Education and the Major.

Additionally, SSU has articulated a primary institutional goal of becoming an intentional, reflective and evidence-based learning organization. To that end, the Institutional Proposal identified four overarching outcomes that are embedded in the themes articulated above:

- Develop and utilize indicators of performance to aid in alignment of resource allocations.
- Define the signature of an SSU education.
- Conduct program review for all academic programs and begin development of a comprehensive process for review of co-curricular and other non-academic programs.
- Use assessment data and evidence as a basis for reflection and improvement.

Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR)

The CPR Review Team conducted their visit on March 12-14, 2008. The team commended the University “for a thorough commitment throughout Sonoma State to the dissemination of knowledge and the search for truth. SSU students affirm the dedication of the faculty and express confidence in the quality of the education they are receiving. We found among the faculty a culture that values scholarship and creative activity in the context of a teaching institution. The university has gained an enviable reputation for tracking and responding to the needs of its region with regard to its degree programs, and effective fundraising has secured important flexibility for the university in a challenging budgetary environment. Recent endowment increases help distinguish Sonoma State among its peers.”

The team, however, also noted six issues meriting further attention, cited in the WASC Commission letter of June 25, 2008:

1. Address systematically the elements articulated in recent expressions of concern so that it can strengthen the sense of community and enable the accomplishment of other critical aspirations;
2. Reach consensus on a clear definition of the university’s complex mission so that planning efforts are informed by this understanding;
3. Yoke disparate planning efforts into a single, respected process;
4. Assure that educational outcomes directly drive appropriate assessments that yield information used in course and programmatic improvement;

5. In the context of a clear mission and coherent planning, reach agreement on the long-proposed general education reform with a timeline and demonstrable progress; and
6. extend its diversity efforts through pragmatic strategies to reach its goals.

As a result of the visiting team's recommendations, the EER Report now includes two additional essays: an essay that describes the work that has been done in strategic planning in order to align planning with the mission and to connect various planning efforts underway on the campus, and an essay that details SSU's work in making the recruitment of a diverse student body, faculty and staff a primary institutional priority, and in educating the campus community for cultural competence.

Structure of the EER Report

The EER Report has been structured as follows:

- Overview
 - Describes the process by which the campus has engaged in the EER; outlines the approach used for EER; and describes the results of the CPR visit
- Introduction and Context
 - Provides a brief description of the university and discusses changes in the institutional context since the CPR visit, particularly with reference to the CSU budget.
- Reflective Essays
 - SSU's Planning Efforts: Describes the University Strategic Plan (USP) and the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan (AASP); details efforts to clearly

define the university's mission and to align planning efforts at the university and division levels; and provides examples of additional planning efforts, which derive from and complement the USP and AASP.

- The Distinctive Qualities of an SSU Education: Discusses SSU's mission and identity as a public liberal arts and comprehensive university; highlights elements of the USP and AASP that document SSU's distinctiveness through its key values and its residential character.
- Curriculum and the Roles of General Education and the Major
 - General Education: Describes the General Education Program Review (AY 2008-2009); discusses innovation in curriculum (FYE and Hutchins), restructuring of GE (Arts and Humanities proposals for "revisioning" of Areas A and C and English Dept. stretch initiative); and outlines future action plans for the GE Program.
 - Academic Program Review: Discusses the design, support, and implementation of program review; and reflects on the future of program review.
 - Diversity: Addresses diversity issues across the university and discusses the work of several campus groups: the President's Diversity Council (PDC), the Ad Hoc Academic Senate Committee on Diversity, the California Faculty Association's (CFA) Affirmative Action Committee, and the Management Development Academy (MDA) year-long work on diversity.
- Concluding Essay

- The Future at Sonoma State University: What We've Learned and Where We're Going
- Appendices
 - Appendix 1: WASC/ACSCU Summary Data for Sonoma State University
 - Appendix 2: SSU Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (2007-2008) – Data Exhibit 7.1
 - Appendix 3: SSU Stages of Programmatic Assessment for Educational Effectiveness
 - Appendix 4: SSU Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation and Key Performance Indicators – Data Exhibit 8.1
 - Appendix 5: Table A: SSU Supplemental Report on 2008 Changes to the CFRs
 - Appendix 6: Table B: Addressing New 2008 Requirements of the Institutional Review Process
 - Appendix 7: SSU Response to Capacity and Preparatory Review Recommendations (outlined in Commission Letter dated 6/25/2008)
 - Appendix 8: Comparison of Four SSU Strategic Planning Documents
 - Appendix 9: SSU Strategic Planning Process Schematic
 - Appendix 10: Academic Affairs Planning Process Detail Schematic

The entire report, as well as all appendices and relevant documentation, is located on the website, [SSU Portfolio \(www.sonoma.edu/aa/portfolio\)](http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/portfolio).