
Institutional Report

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SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Leadership Starts Here

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I. Introduction**A. Context and Overview****B. Response to Previous Actions****C. Compliance Under the Standards****I. Introduction****A. Context and Overview**

San Diego State University is the oldest and largest higher education institution in the San Diego region. Founded in 1897, the university has grown to enroll 35,000 students and to become a leading public research university—classified by the Carnegie Foundation as one with high-research-activity—that offers 100 undergraduate majors, 106 master's programs, and 22 doctoral degree programs at its main campus. Additionally, SDSU offers 11 undergraduate degree programs and one master's program at its Imperial Valley Campus. Since reaffirmation of its accreditation by WASC in 2006, SDSU has received national attention for increasing graduation rates more than any other university in the United States, while at the same time becoming more diverse (see 2010 Chronicle of Higher Education article, 2014 Education Trust article, and 2014 SDSU NewsCenter article) and being recognized in 2012 as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Committed to serving the highly diverse San Diego region, SDSU ranks among the top universities nationwide in terms of ethnic and racial diversity among its student body, as well as the number of bachelor's degrees conferred upon students of color. Additionally, SDSU ranks in the Top 25 of all universities in the United States for numbers of students studying abroad and the university received more than 80,000 applications for 2015 (CFR 1.2, 1.5).

San Diego State University is particularly proud of these and other accomplishments, which have been realized even as the university faced significant fiscal challenges. In the five years from 2008-2009 through 2013-2014, state appropriations for SDSU declined by \$78

million dollars—a 50% cut—and the state portion of the university’s budget dropped to less than 20%. SDSU managed these cuts effectively by stabilizing enrollment, utilizing roll-forward funds, and increasing class sizes, which made it possible to weather these cuts without laying-off faculty or staff. Additionally, during the same period, the university exceeded its campaign goal to raise \$500 million by 2014, and having now raised over \$628 million, is currently on track to meet a new target of \$750 million by 2017 (CFR 1.7).

Dr. Elliot Hirshman became the eighth president of San Diego State University in 2011 and engaged the campus community in a strategic planning process that resulted in “Building on Excellence,” the strategic plan that outlines three broad institutional goals: (1) student success, (2) research and creative endeavors, and (3) community and communication. The broadly inclusive process in developing the strategic plan involved students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members and led to concrete recommendations that have resulted in significant developments and initiatives on campus, which include the Susan and Stephen Weber Honors College, the Writing Center, the Math Center, the Arts Alive SDSU program, the Elymash Yuuchaap Indigenous Scholars and Leaders Program, the Harambee Scholars Mentoring Program, the SDSU LGBTQ Pride Center, and the Commuter Resource Center housed in the new Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union.

“Building on Excellence” also highlighted past progress in student success since 2006, and provided a sharper focus on four-year graduation rates while also calling for increased expectations for student achievement. Several Strategic Plan Working Groups—focusing on undergraduate research, learning analytics, integrative diversity, commuting students, alcohol and drug abuse, and the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students—address challenges and opportunities directly related to increasing these graduation rates while also

increasing student diversity and promoting academic achievement. Consistent with the student success goal outlined in the strategic plan, the university has invested over \$30 million in one-time funding and over \$11 million in base budget funds that support student success strategic plan initiatives and address critical support needs (CFR 2.13, 3.7).

San Diego State University also prides itself on being a leader in engaging the local community through various programs. The Price Scholars program provides financial support for first-generation local students with track records of strong academic achievement and leadership in high school. The Guardian Scholars program provides support, including academic mentoring and year-round housing, to students leaving the foster-care system. The Compact Scholars program provides support for more than 600 students who enter the university each fall from the Sweetwater Union High School District, a predominantly Latino district in San Diego County, and the Sage Project engages more than 35 faculty and 1500 students a year in community-based learning (CFR 2.10, 2.13).

SDSU has also been committed to renovation and building projects that enhance campus life, student engagement, and sustainability. The Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union, completed in December 2013, is the first LEED Platinum certified student center on a university campus in the United States, and South Campus Plaza, scheduled for completion in summer of 2016, will provide additional housing for 600 students. Over the past decade, the university has completed facilities totaling more than \$430 million and is currently engaged in efforts to construct a new Engineering and Interdisciplinary Sciences building scheduled to open in January 2018.

This Institutional Report addresses the WASC Standards and Criteria for Review through a narrative designed to convey the distinctive culture of the institution, its commitment to students, and the established goals for continual improvement. Section I, this Introduction,

provides the background and context for this re-affirmation review, summarizes the “Response to Previous Actions,” and describes “Compliance Under the Standards.” Section II, “Engagement,” describes the distinctive culture and learning environment of the university, including how students are engaged through undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity, community-based service learning, and study abroad. This section also presents examples of how the institution engages the regional community through partnering with school districts and building connections with regional alumni and professionals. Finally, Section II outlines some of the key ways the university promotes and supports high expectations for students.

Section III, “Achievement,” addresses retention and graduation accomplishments, current efforts being undertaken to build upon these accomplishments, and how a focus on high expectations and student progress is distributed across the university to include students with varying levels of academic risk factors and from different communities. The university provides evidence of student success by focusing on and analyzing data to create strategic interventions for student populations who stand to benefit most from additional support, such as commuting students, Compact Scholars, Price Scholars, students in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Guardian Scholars, and veterans. Section IV, “Learning,” describes how assessment activities—such as developing Degree and Course Learning Outcomes, using evidence to increase educational effectiveness, and focusing on student achievement—are an integral component of the university. This section provides evidence drawn from the General Education program that concentrates on core competencies and describes how assessment is fully integrated into campus, programs, and beyond. The institution uses evidence of student learning to increase

student achievement and ensure that programs provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they will need to address challenges after graduation.

Section V, “Financial Viability and the Future,” describes the steps San Diego State University takes to ensure that even within the dramatically challenging environment facing all higher education institutions, the institution will continue to improve and to meet the needs of both its students and community. Finally, Section VI, “Looking Forward” reflects on the degree to which the university understands the challenges and opportunities faced as being inherently interconnected, and that responsibility for student success is shared. Retention and graduation, for example, is linked to student learning and assessment, to engagement in high-impact-practices, and to student achievement. We approach student success from multiple starting points (e.g., maintaining access, target populations, programs, student characteristics, undergraduate research, setting high expectations, and study abroad) knowing that all of these are critical to ensure student success.

B. Response to Previous Actions

During the previous reaffirmation of accreditation (2001 to 2006), SDSU focused on (1) retention and graduation, (2) student learning and assessment, and (3) the impact of participation in research, scholarship, and creative activity on undergraduate student learning. The decision to focus on these themes emerged from campus-wide discussions about increasing educational effectiveness and charting pathways for the future. The WASC Commission, citing a number of commendations noted by the Visiting Team chaired by John Casteen, subsequently reaffirmed accreditation for ten years and set spring 2017 as the date for the next Educational Effectiveness visit. Given changes in the WASC process, as well as guidelines set by the Department of

Education, however, this Institutional Report has been written in preparation for the Offsite Review in fall 2015 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2016.

In addition to the commendations noted above, the Commission (2006) also provided recommendations regarding (1) Assessment and Learning-Centeredness, (2) General Education Reform, (3) Analyzing and Improving Graduation and Retention Rates, (4) Improving Services to Transfer Students, and (5) Sustaining Progress on Integrating Imperial Valley and Brawley Campuses. An update on institutional efforts to fulfill these recommendations is provided below:

(1) Response to 2006 Recommendation regarding Assessment and Learning-Centeredness: All departments and programs at SDSU are now responsible for semi-annual reporting of how they assess established Degree Learning Outcomes and use findings to identify and implement potential programmatic and curricular improvements. The Student Learning Outcomes Committee (SLO), which contains an assessment representative from each college, is charged with facilitating this process and providing constructive feedback and guidance on recent, current, and future assessment efforts. This process is increasingly being viewed favorably—a change in perception suggests a significant change of culture—and it is evident that programs are becoming more knowledgeable about using assessment *for* student learning and increasingly incorporating a number of direct measures to assess student learning (CFR 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Other actions taken in response to these recommendations include:

- By the 2007-2008 AY, more than 90% of programs submitted formal reports on their assessment efforts and received feedback from the SLO Committee. This percentage now approaches 100% for each reporting cycle through the use of the online WEAVE assessment management program, which was adopted in 2011. Over the years, the SLO

Committee commended a number of programs for their reports as part of their review and feedback process.

- The Division of Undergraduate Studies promotes and supports program assessment efforts through collaborations with each college's leadership and SLO Committee representatives. In turn, these college leaders work with program Chairs/Directors and Program Assessment Coordinators to develop, promote, and implement effective assessment.
- The Division of Undergraduate Studies also provides SLO committee representatives with funding for professional development and to support logistics for college-level assessment meetings, workshops, and materials.

A focus on assessment of student learning has also been furthered by requiring that course learning outcomes be included in all course proposals submitted to the senate-appointed Curriculum Committee and General Education Committees (University Senate Policy File), and in all syllabi along with other course information critical to promoting student success such as instructor contact information and office hours, and major assignment due dates (CFR 2.3). Since the last review, the SDSU Curriculum Guide, which faculty rely on to develop syllabi, course proposals, and program proposals, has been revised and rewritten to ensure that learning outcomes are well understood and widely used. As we currently transition to an online course proposal process, this guide is being redesigned to support and facilitate course-based High Impact Practices (e.g., collaborative learning, service-learning, etc.).

The University Senate also implemented a policy in June 2014 requiring that all syllabi be posted to the library-hosted SDSU Syllabus Collection so that course content and learning outcomes are readily available to students and other stakeholders (CFR 2.3). Additionally, the

Center for Teaching and Learning aligns its activities and programs with the institutional focus on student learning, articulation of learning outcomes, and assessment of learning outcomes for faculty reflection and pedagogical refinement. From the outset, this alignment enables the university to include new faculty in discussions about student learning, and helps them to embrace the university's culture of learning. The Center for Teaching and Learning also works closely with ongoing and permanent faculty around assessment and learning, and other issues such as large class sizes, online courses, learning analytics and curricular mapping (CFR 4.4, 4.7). Section IV of this Institutional Report, describes more background regarding assessment, student learning, and standards of performance.

(2) Response to 2006 Recommendation regarding General Education Reform: Following recommendations made by the Site Team in 2005 and in the Commission action letter (2006), Provost Nancy Marlin and Fred Hornbeck, Chair of the University Senate, appointed a General Education Task Force in September 2006. The GE Task Force was charged with responding to concerns that had been raised and to develop recommendations for Senate consideration. The Task Force focused on (1) developing a clearer set of goals and outcomes for general education, (2) achieving a greater sense of coherence and transparency regarding general education, and (3) developing a means for assessing student learning in the program. In spring 2007, the Task Force proposed to the University Senate a new framework of outcomes for all courses in GE and recommended that all GE courses and syllabi reflect a common language that emphasized the coherence and intent of GE and clearer statements regarding GE learning outcomes. Additionally, the Task Force proposed a plan for assessing student work in GE. Throughout its work, the GE Task Force members met with departments and committees, provided regular updates at Senate meetings, and maintained an active website to keep the university community

informed about the development of the recommendations. The Senate unanimously adopted the recommendations at its meeting in March 2008 (CFR 3.10).

In the seven years since these recommendations were adopted, the learning outcomes designated for General Education and for each of the areas within GE—Communication and Critical Thinking, Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Humanities and Fine Arts—have provided an effective framework for articulating the broad outcomes all students should achieve regardless of major. Additionally, since 2008, the GE Curriculum Committee reviews all new course proposals to ensure that the student learning outcomes adopted by Senate are addressed.

While the learning outcomes adopted for GE have been widely accepted, the committee structure originally proposed and adopted by the Senate for assessing student learning in GE was not sustainable or particularly effective. Thus, in 2014, the Senate revised the organizational structure designed to track assessment in GE and reduced the number of committees involved from four to one, renaming the General Education Curriculum Committee to the General Education Curriculum and Assessment Committee. Assessment of student learning in GE continues to be a priority, however. For example, School of Communication faculty have embedded a highly developed measure for assessing oral communication in the course through which ~75% of student fulfill the oral communication GE requirement. Within the College of Arts and Letters, faculty and administrators have been engaged in a multi-year collaboration aimed at assessing written communication within multiple courses that span three areas of GE. Finally, faculty teaching within the natural sciences area of GE have been administering the Science Literacy Concept Inventory (SLCI) as a means to explore how to improve science literacy and promote critical thinking. While all of these efforts have been effective, the

university continues to explore how to support and engage the large number of faculty teaching GE courses across the university to help improve student learning (CFR 2.2a, 2.4).

(3) Response to 2006 Recommendation regarding Analyzing and Improving Graduation and Retention Rates: When the accreditation visit took place in fall 2005, San Diego State University had already made progress in this area, and that progress has continued. The six-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen rose from 44% for the class that began in 1998 to 66.9% for the first-time freshmen who enrolled in 2007. Continuation rates for full-time students have risen from 81.3% for those who began in 2008 to 88.2% for those who began in 2013 (CFR 2.13). These gains are a result of a number of initiatives including:

- Development of the online Academic MAPS (My Academic Programs) guide to program requirements for all majors;
- Creation of the Office of Undergraduate Research, which links students with faculty involved in research and academic engagement activities;
- Development of the Student Research Symposium, which involves more than 400 students annually;
- Expansion of student-centered programming by the Center for Intercultural Relations, and increased functions in student and adviser web portals that allow both students and advisers to see real-time evaluations in their respective web portals; and
- Changes in university policy to ensure that students do not drop or add courses after the end of the second week of the semester.

Additionally, the university established programs, support mechanisms, and opportunities for increased student engagement at all levels (CFR 2.10, 2.11). These include:

- Requirement by 32 majors that students complete a study abroad experience;

- Development and promotion of a culture dedicated to Honors;
- Implementation of a required early start program, the Freshman Academic Success Track (FAST), for all entering freshmen who need remediation in English and/or math;
- Mandatory placement in the Yocoya Learning Community (linked courses with sections of university seminar) with special emphasis on critical reading skills for students with lowest English Placement scores;
- Implementation of a Bounce Back program for students on academic probation;
- Increased emphasis on new student orientation with addition of Personalized Information Sheets, GE presentations based on composition and mathematics placement levels, creation of Wish List for registration, and a signed Aztec conduct pledge by each student;
- Creation of interest-based Residential Learning Communities open to all students regardless of English Placement scores;
- Development of New Student and Family Convocation to introduce new students and their families into the SDSU community;
- Requirement for campus residency for all out-of-area freshmen; and
- Establishment in 2012 of an Undergraduate Campus Advisers Group that meets monthly to provide training and updates on advising related issues, policies, and best practices related to advising.

(4) Response to 2006 Recommendations regarding Improving Services to Transfer

Students: In 2006, WASC requested that the university review its policies and increase student success and achievement for transfer students. SDSU responded to this charge, focused attention on new transfer students and had made the following adjustments by 2008 (CFR 2.10, 2.13, 2.14):

- Produced and provided degree audits for all transfer students attending New Student Orientation (in the past, degree audits were given following orientation and, in some cases, once their first semester was underway);
- Extended the meeting time that transfer students have with departmental advisers at New Student Orientation to 90 minutes;
- Created a college-specific university seminar for transfer students within College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts; and
- Created transfer student receptions hosted by deans and faculty in the colleges at the start of each semester.

As a result of these changes, the two-year graduation rate for transfer students rose from 26.5% for the cohort beginning in 2002 to 32.8% for the cohort beginning in 2005—a 6.3% gain. This positive progress has continued—the two-year graduation rate for transfer students beginning in 2011 was 37.1% (an additional 4.3% gain) and the three-year graduation rate for the same cohort is 77.7%—and the university is focused on improving these rates further.

(5) Response to 2006 Recommendation regarding Sustaining Progress on Integrating the Imperial Valley and Brawley Campuses: In response to the earlier WASC Commission Action Letter, an SDSU-IV Task Force was assembled during the 2008-2009 Academic Year. The Task Force's June 2009 report offered a series of recommendations for addressing WASC's concerns for further integrating the branch and main campuses, and improving the processes, structures, and technology communication that support higher education in the Imperial Valley.

Considerable progress has been made in the areas of program alignment, integration, and coordination. Programs, learning outcomes, and methods of assessment at the branch campus parallel those at the main campus to the maximum extent possible, with any differences based on

clearly defined Imperial Valley needs. Three of the branch campus' signature programs, Nursing, MPA, and Social Work, rely heavily on direct participation of faculty from the main campus.

Recent branch campus development in the area of renewable energy will soon provide additional opportunities for course and program offerings serving faculty and students on both campuses.

Faculty hiring and evaluation are conducted jointly between the main and branch campuses, and branch campus faculty serve on committees and in the Senate on the main campus. Students take advantage of cultural and athletic events at the main campus, are involved in annual research symposia, participate in student government, and will soon participate in the Honors College. Some students take a portion of their coursework at the main campus. Branch campus staff members participate in training and professional development on the main campus, are involved in academic and cultural events.

Upgrading technology and communication infrastructure has also been important. The Imperial Valley Campus has developed and upgraded two videoconferencing rooms, one each in Calexico and Brawley, which are used for classes, committee meetings, recruitment, and other activities. In order that courses on both campuses be made available to all SDSU students, the branch campus has supported its tenure-track and adjunct faculty to participate in the university's Course Design Institute to develop effective online courses.

C. Compliance Under the Standards

Both the Self-Review under the Standards and the Compliance checklist (see appendix) were completed by the members of the WASC Steering Committee on campus with input from other stakeholders including the Student Learning Outcomes Committee, Academic Policy and Planning, the Undergraduate Council, the Student Success Working Group, and the Academic Deans Council. As the Compliance checklist shows, SDSU is in compliance with the Standards

and the Criteria for Review, however campus discussion regarding the Self-Review under the Standards has been a useful means for (1) noting where San Diego State has fully-developed and clear processes in place as well as (2) identifying areas on which to focus and build. A brief review of the Standards follows.

San Diego State University has clearly established and articulated its educational objectives and these are regularly reported to the broader community (CFR 1.1). Additionally, the university has readily available policies on academic freedom (CFR 1.4) and clearly demonstrates its commitment to diversity in multiple ways (CFR 1.5). San Diego State has also continued to focus on educational outcomes—these are reviewed in all new course and program proposals and during academic program reviews—and regularly shares data on student success in regards to retention, graduation, and time to degree (CFR 1.2). San Diego State was also part of the WASC R&G Dashboard Pilot and continues to use the dashboard, along with IPEDS data to gauge its overall effectiveness.

San Diego State has clearly defined programs (CFR 2.1, 2.2, 2.2a) that ensure the university's ability meet its core functions related to teaching and learning. All degrees at baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels are defined by levels of student achievement (CFR 2.2, 2.2b) appropriate for those degree levels. As noted later in this Institutional Report, students are held to high expectations, and these efforts have resulted high levels of achievement for graduates (CFR 2.5, 2.6).

San Diego State University is also especially proud of the support provided to students (CFR 2.13) and continues to make additional changes, some of which were noted earlier in this Introduction, to provide additional support as a result of data on student engagement and success that is regularly shared with Student Affairs and Academic Affairs (CFR 2.1).

During the recession that began in 2008, San Diego State lost significant funding from the State of California and yet moved strategically to guarantee that students would have access to required courses. This meant increasing class sizes while ensuring that faculty with appropriate qualifications are responsible for all program levels (CFR 3.1, 3.2). San Diego State University has also maintained a strong level of support for faculty and staff development opportunities. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), housed in Undergraduate Studies, and Instructional Technology Services (ITS), a unit within Academic Affairs, work together closely to provide workshops and discussions for faculty and staff. ITS offers a Course Design Institute for faculty moving to teach on-line or hybrid courses, and CTL hosts the One Day in May every year after commencement to share ideas about teaching and learning innovations. Guest speakers at this event in the past three years have included Paul Gaston, George Kuh, and Bill Buskist (CFR 3.4, 3.7, 4.7).

San Diego State University has a longstanding commitment to shared governance and has in place committees—the Senate and its respective committees, on which faculty, staff, students, and administrators participate—and policies that place a high priority on academic quality and educational effectiveness (CFR 3.8, 3.11). Issues related to student learning emerge from committees and, occasionally, from Senate appointed task forces formed to address particular concerns or challenges. As noted throughout the Institutional Report, the university has adopted strategic goals and makes regular use of data to improve retention and graduation rates, as well as to improve the overall levels of student learning (CFR 4.1, 4.3). This attention to data is possible because of the institutional research capacity in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (CFR 4.5).

II. Engagement

A. Student Success and Achievement

i. Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

ii. Community-Based Service Learning

iii. Study Abroad

B. Community and Communication

i. The Sweetwater Compact for Success

ii. Aztec Mentor Program

C. High Expectations

II. Engagement

San Diego State University’s integrated and comprehensive approach to student engagement, learning, and achievement grows directly from its commitment to being an institution engaged with local, regional, and international communities through research, study abroad, and community-based service learning. Thus, the primary components of the strategic plan, “Building on Excellence”—student success and achievement, research and creative endeavors, and community and communication—do not stand as separate initiatives but, instead, are pursued as mutually reinforcing components of student success and reflect campus culture as a whole. These commitments, along with setting high expectations for academic and personal achievement, create a distinctive and meaningful experience for students that also increases graduation rates. With this in mind, San Diego State University has focused in particular on ensuring that the students who benefit the most from these kinds of activities take part by making them an integral part of the curriculum and in co-curricular programs (CFR 2.10).

A. Student Success and Achievement

i. Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

The university has a long commitment to research, scholarship, and creative activity with 21 doctoral programs, SDSU is classified as a “high research activity” institution by Carnegie

Foundation, and, in the past ten years, has on average received \$127 million a year through grants and contracts. This commitment to research, scholarship, and creative activity translates directly into opportunities for student learning and engagement at the undergraduate level. As noted in the strategic plan, graduate students are an essential component in accomplishing the mission of providing “well-balanced, high quality education for undergraduate and graduate students and to contribute to knowledge and the solution of problems through excellence and distinction in teaching, research, and service.” Specifically, graduate students contribute in multiple ways including: advancing research in labs, clinics, seminars, and field settings; creating new knowledge; and attracting and retaining international research faculty.

Additionally, building on one of the themes identified in the previous accreditation cycle—research and undergraduate education—the university created the Student Research Symposium (SRS) in 2008, which now provides an annual forum for students from multiple disciplines to present their work. More recently, due in part to the focus on research and creative activity in the strategic plan, as well as the sustained focus on supporting activity, the interest in the SRS has risen dramatically. More than 450 students presented their work at the SRS in March 2015, and 10 of these received President’s Awards, which provided support for them to present again at the California State University Research Symposium in May 2015 (CFR 2.8).

Additionally, undergraduate research is promoted and supported in multiple forums, including the Undergraduate Research Program (URP), which provides mini-grants through a Faculty-Student Mentor Program that supports student engagement in undergraduate research, scholarship, or creative activities. Faculty receiving mini-grants serve as mentors, seminar leaders, and General Studies 490 instructors. This program, funded with lottery funds from the State of California, targets first-generation, low income students and has been intentionally

designed to focus on the very students who may not seek out research opportunities early in their undergraduate careers, and to ensure they work with effectively faculty members across the disciplines. In 2014, funding was provided to increase the number of Faculty Mini Grants for undergraduate research and creative activity. As a result, more than 20 additional faculty members each year now take part in this program. Mini-grant funded projects support students to meet research and creative activity learning outcomes and present their work to peers and faculty in campus, regional, and international forums. Faculty and student participants are encouraged to collaborate for at least two semesters and additional resources are available for student travel to professional and disciplinary conferences. Similarly, a newly created Summer Undergraduate Research Program funded 35 undergraduates to work on research projects up to 20-hours-a-week over the course of the summer with faculty mentors across the campus. This program serves students who do not have the time or resources to experience research during the academic year.

The Undergraduate Research Working Group, established during the strategic planning process, is focused on furthering undergraduate research opportunities through (1) increased support for faculty mini grants to work with undergraduates, (2) a mini-grant program for undergraduates, which is also supported by the Vice President for Research, and (3) developing and administering a survey of faculty regarding opportunities for research and engagement in existing courses. Developed after extensive interviews, this survey aimed to capture the variety of research, scholarship, and creative activity embedded within the curriculum. Responses to the survey also provided critical insights regarding the developmental levels—initial, emerging, developed, and high developed—through which students acquire the skills and abilities to contribute to a broader discourse community in their areas of focus and specialization. The survey was distributed by email in spring 2015 and was completed by more than 150 faculty

members. Their responses provided the basis for a discussion led by the Center for Teaching and Learning on research opportunities for undergraduates and also helped the Undergraduate Research Working Group develop proposals to extend more opportunities for engagement with research, scholarship, and creative activity in all fields. Finally, the survey provides a baseline that will provide better data on how many students are engaged in research, at what level and, most importantly, how this important means for engaging students can be extended throughout the curriculum (CFR 2.8).

In addition to the focus on research and scholarship as they are constructed in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts (PSFA) provides undergraduate and graduate programs in fields such as Music and Dance, Art and Design, Hospitality Tourism Management, among others, and the college is home to the only MFA musical theater program in the United States. Through the strategic plan, funding has also been provided to support Arts Alive SDSU, which engages faculty and students in music, art, and dance events in more than twenty public spaces on campus. Through these and other art related events, more than 100,000 faculty, students, alumni ,staff, and community members experience Arts Alive every year and this, too, has become an important aspect of getting students engaged and involved with campus life.

ii. Community-based Service Learning

San Diego State University also has a sustained commitment to increasing community engagement and service learning. Based on this commitment, SDSU was awarded the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification for the year beginning in 2015.

The Service Learning and Community Engagement Program (SLCEP) that implements the CSU California's Call to Service Initiative and these initiatives are designed and

implemented for fostering civic engagement, civic participation and civic responsibility. Specifically, the goals of the SLCEP are to integrate service learning with other high-impact practices, scholarship of engagement, such as study abroad and participatory action research (PAR); to document student learning in community contexts; and to continue developing a system to track SDSU community service contributions and partnerships. The SLCEP supports service learning courses that are purposefully created with the intent to provide community-based opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct research related to solving real-world problems; strengthen the community service and civic engagement curriculum through clearly articulated student learning outcomes and aligned assessments; and identify local, regional, national and/or international community initiatives, agencies and partners, that are engaged in social justice practices/services. The SLCEP continues to strengthen and increase the number of community partnerships at SDSU that support service learning.

One quintessential example of an SDSU service learning, internship, and practicum experience is the Sage Project, which partners SDSU students with local government to address sustainability issues. Housed within the Division of Undergraduate Studies, the Sage Project is modeled after the Sustainable City Year Project at the University of Oregon. As communities in the region generate ideas, projects, and opportunities for municipal improvement, faculty voluntarily adopt these projects and then ask students through their course work to engage in meaningful real-world projects via service learning, interning and practicum. Students and faculty thus become connected with high-priority, high-need community projects, thereby generating interest and fresh ideas that create momentum and provide real service to the community.

The Sage Project embodies the university's commitment to the local community and to serving students, engaging alumni, and contributing to the public good by focusing thousands of hours of course-based student involvement with high-impact practices in a community in the SDSU service area. More than 1500 students in more than 30 courses took part in these projects during the 2014-2015 academic year. Further, the program ensures that the many ideas developed by students through their course work – that might otherwise only be appreciated by a faculty member – are distributed to a wider audience. The impact on local communities and on the students involved is significant. In addition to strengthening civic ties, students in diverse academic programs—including in the colleges of Arts and Letters, Business, Engineering, Health and Human Services, Professional Studies and Fine Arts, and Sciences—have opportunities to meet with city staff and leaders, present their work to boards and councils, and get immediate feedback on the efficacy of their projects. Additionally, because the projects are embedded in the courses they take, students across the disciplines are engaged whether or not they seek out such opportunities. The benefit of the program is the positive attention, collaborative learning, the new momentum the partnership provides for students, faculty, city staff, and residents and, just as importantly, the opportunities students have to apply their abilities to write, speak, and think critically in relation to real and significant challenges (CFR 2.8).

iii. Study Abroad

San Diego State University's commitment to study abroad reflects the institution's understanding of the critical importance of global perspectives and student engagement in a High Impact Practice that can improve student retention and graduation. Currently, the university rank 22 in the nation for the number of students who study abroad, with more than 2,400 participants in 2014-15. Of approximately 85 SDSU majors, 32 require an international

experience as part of the curriculum and in 2015, 27.7% of students graduating from the university had taken part in a study abroad experience.

In addition to servicing international students who come to SDSU to pursue their studies, the university has established a wide array of programs that provide students opportunities to meet their study abroad requirements. Further, as a result of being awarded a \$30 million grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, SDSU began working in Tbilisi, Georgia to establish four-year SDSU degrees primarily in STEM fields. This program, which received WASC Commission approval, will begin enrolling students in fall 2015, and will provide an opportunity for SDSU students to study within Georgia.

SDSU's decentralized model of study abroad administration includes at least one staff member representing study abroad in each of the university's colleges, a fully-staffed Study Abroad Office, and a Faculty-Led Study Abroad Office. SDSU's central study abroad database, *Aztecs Abroad*, houses information about all study abroad program opportunities and allows students to search and apply for any program in one place.

The institution's *Be International* campaign, launched in August 2014, provides centralized communication about all study abroad opportunities through provision of a "first-stop" for students, both physically and virtually. Physically, all programs are represented at a mobile, on-campus study abroad information kiosk. Virtually, the campaign's extensive website is linked to the university's homepage, features stories about international programs and students abroad, and links to the *Aztecs Abroad* database as well as all the colleges' study abroad websites. The site has had more than 14,000 unique visitors from 113 different countries since its launch. The *Be International* blog is also linked from this website and features SDSU students

telling their international educational stories from abroad. The blog has received consistent, regular traffic from visitors from 47 countries since its inception.

As SDSU's international trajectory with study abroad participation continues, the university works toward creating an even more inclusive study abroad environment. These activities include:

- increasing access to student populations currently underrepresented in study abroad;
- integrating semester-length study abroad programs into major curricula;
- assessing student study-abroad learning outcomes;
- providing formal training sessions for faculty-led program leaders;
- providing affordable, yet intensive short-term programs; and
- improving pre-departure and re-entry support for study abroad students.

For example, the university's EOP students, who are low-income and historically underrepresented in study abroad, now have a dedicated study abroad adviser within the EOP office. This adviser works directly with EOP students to plan for studying abroad and overcoming barriers to participation. In 2014-2015, 270 EOP students studied abroad. The College of Business initiated a curriculum integration model by which students can choose to participate in pre-approved semester courses at various SDSU program locations abroad and stay on track toward graduation. SDSU's College of Health and Human Services has implemented a cost-effective embedded model through which students engage in a semester-long course each spring about comparative health care perspectives that includes a 10-day spring-break intensive experience overseas at one of up to ten different locations. Finally, in spring 2015, study-abroad staff collaborated with the institution's faculty and staff to conduct workshops, devise a

comprehensive international incident communication plan, and begin a pilot study abroad assessment project using the Global Perspectives Inventory.

B. Community and Communication

i. The Sweetwater Compact for Success

As noted in Section I, over the past 15 years, SDSU increased its diversity – no majority population currently exists on campus and designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution came in 2012—and erased the achievement gap for six-year graduation rates. These successes are significantly related to a sustained, strategic, and focused set of partnerships with local communities. The first of these partnerships, the Compact for Success, was established in 2000, and set goals to increase college-going rates for students graduating from the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD), the largest secondary school district in California, for whom only 33% of their graduates were CSU-Eligible in 2001. Over the next several years, faculty, administrators, and staff from both SDSU and SUHSD worked to align curricular expectations, set goals, provide advising, and to engage with families to make four-year higher education a reality. These efforts paid off. In 2006, 203 students from the Sweetwater District entered San Diego State University as Compact Scholars and in 2014 the number of incoming freshmen from the district grew to 542. Today, over 1,900 Compact for Success students are at SDSU in the Compact Scholars Program and their continuation and graduation rates are commensurate with overall graduation rates at the university (CRF 4.6).

Building on the success of the Sweetwater Compact, SDSU has also undertaken other initiatives aimed at increasing the college-going rate of local students and improving graduation rates. The City Heights Collaborative, established in 2007, focuses on supporting students residing in City Heights, a highly diverse community with a large immigrant population that is

home to many low-income families who, collectively, speak more than 40 languages. Like the Sweetwater Compact, the City Heights Collaborative has as its goal increasing access *and* increasing 4-year graduation rates. These efforts reflect SDSU's sustained focus on increasing overall graduation rates, time to completion, awarding more baccalaureate degrees to diverse groups, and establishing pathways for success in the local communities (CFR 4.7).

Although the university is pleased with the success achieved so far, the plan, "Building on Excellence," details key benchmarks and goals for further gains and inclusivity. The strategic plan outlines activities aimed at increasing student success within the Compact Scholars Program and City Heights Collaborative, and it underscores commitment to a broad range of underrepresented students, including foster youth, veterans, and low-income students, beyond these communities including commuter students.

Analyzing data, the institution learned that commuting students experience more challenges and that their persistence rates, even when accounting for levels of academic preparation, are lower than those of students who live on campus in their freshman year. Based on this information, the university has undertaken several initiatives aimed at increasing the support for these students, and to increase their engagement in campus life. A student study lounge is provided in the Division of Undergraduate Studies for Compact Scholars, 90% of whom are commuters and, with the completion of the new Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union, the university has added a larger Commuter Resource Center staffed by a director who provides programming for students. With a focus on academics, the Compact Scholars Program also established learning communities in English and math and hired an additional academic adviser to work with commuting students (CFR 2.10, 4.4, 4.7).

Many of the commuter students not in the Compact Scholars Program are also first-generation, Hispanic, or come from other underrepresented student backgrounds. A student survey conducted in fall 2013 provided more information about the challenges they face, and chief among these were financial stresses, balancing family, employment, and academic obligations, a lack of understanding about how to navigate the system, poor time management and study skills, lack of academic self-confidence or preparation, lack of support from their family not understanding the college-going experience, and feeling disengaged with the campus community in comparison to the experiences of their peers who lived on campus in the residence hall. Working with these data and building on national research about the factors that most impact persistence and graduation among underrepresented students, SDSU established a Student Success Work Group drawn from academic and student affairs, which has led to new initiatives to engage more students in study abroad, undergraduate research, community-based student learning, and in learning communities.

The university also analyzed data about student progress, and focused on changing those factors—financial challenges, satisfactory academic progress, and time to the degree—that can make an immediate difference through financial and academic advising, and, more importantly, establish policies and practices that address systemic issues impeding student progress (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2).

ii. Aztec Mentor Program

From the analysis of student persistence on campus, as well as national data collected through the National Survey of Student Engagement, the university recognizes that engagement is a critical component of completion and time to degree, and thus has also added programs to increase the connection and engagement that students have with SDSU alumni. The Aztec

Mentor Program, which was first established in the College of Business, pairs juniors, seniors, and graduate students in one-on-one mentorships with established alumni professionals in San Diego and beyond. This program provides an opportunity for students to gain valuable guidance on a variety of career-related topics including one-on-one advice, networking, interviewing and job shadowing. In spring 2014, the Aztec Mentor Program had a yield of 245 successful mentor pairs, and Career Services Staff conducted an initial assessment to document the impact of the program through pre- and post-surveys for students and alumni. Initial assessment efforts focused on networking and an awareness of SDSU alumni as a resource for career development. Based on the survey results (64% response rate for 245 students), Career Services and the Alumni Association worked together to move from a regional focus to one that allowed for participation regardless of location.

C. High Expectations

The focus on high expectations, on ensuring that the students who benefit the most from involvement with High Impact Practices, such as those identified by George Kuh and his colleagues, have been integral to retention efforts. This focus is reflected in a number of policy changes that, taken together, constitute a sustained set of initiatives to clear pathways to increase student engagement. Each department in the university, for example, developed and maintains a web-accessible “MyMaps” for each undergraduate degree so that at any point students can access the list and sequence of courses they need to complete to graduate in four years. In addition, the university adopted a standard course time matrix to ensure that beginning and ending times of courses offered in one college did not conflict with courses in another as well as a policy that prevents students from changing classes after the second week of the semester. Additionally, in 2010, the university began requiring all students needing remediation in English

or mathematics to enroll in the Freshman Academic Success Track (FAST) Program, which requires them to attend classes in either or both areas, as needed, in the summer so that they resolve their remediation needs before enrolling in the fall, which in turn prepares them to succeed academically.

When introduced, many of these changes were controversial and led to campus discussions about student readiness, the support the university provides to students, and expectations for academic achievement. These discussions were also opportunities for the institution to analyze data, look carefully at disaggregated success rates for students, and to make determinations based on clear evidence. As a result of these discussions, some programs, such as the dual-admit program were discontinued, while others showed increasing success each year. Over time, the shift in culture was to some extent a shift from a focus on programs to a focus on student success driven by a thoughtful reliance on data. In terms of the FAST Program, for example, because the university demonstrated that the academic probation and disqualification rates for these students declined significantly, the program is more widely accepted on campus. One outcome of the success of SDSU early start programming is that other campuses now apply this work to their early start programs and, consequently, SDSU work has informed other CSU campuses as well as helped students in the CSU system as a whole.

Another culture shift has involved an increase in expected unit loads. In 1996, the average unit load for FTF freshmen was 12.5. Given the implications of such unit loads on graduation rates, opportunity costs, and access, the university established an integrated effort, through orientation and other advising sessions, to establish an expectation that students enroll for a 15 unit load each semester. This change was controversial as well. Some argued that signing up for 15 units meant asking students to do more than they were capable of doing.

However, over time the culture shifted and by 2014, the average unit load has increased to 14.8 units and contributed to improved graduation rates.

While increasing engagement opportunities for all students, the university has also been supporting high expectations through the development of its Honors Program. This program, open to all majors at the university, requires study abroad and active engagement through a range of opportunities including Undergraduate research, leadership, internships, and service and/or community-based learning. Because of the growing interest in this program and because of the support it has received, the Honors College became the Susan and Stephen Weber Honors College in spring 2015.

III. Achievement

A. Retention and Graduation

i. Course-level Opportunities

ii. Program-level Opportunities

iii. University-level Opportunities

B. Commuter Student Support Programs

C. Residential Student Support Programs

D. Cross-Cutting Student Support Programs

III. Achievement

A. Retention and Graduation

The Office of Analytical Studies and Institutional Research at San Diego State University produces annual retention and graduation reports that are shared campus wide through the Undergraduate Council, Academic Policy and Planning, and the Senate, which is comprised of students, staff, faculty, and administrators. In addition, the institutional results from the pilot WASC Retention & Graduation Dashboard project have also been shared to examine success rates and challenges through multiple lenses. These reports are used to keep the campus informed of progress, note specific recommendations for improving further, and identify particular challenges that need to be addressed. More recently, the strategic planning process engaged students, faculty, staff, and administrators in identifying targets and goals for further increasing student success and achievement (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

Over the past 15 years San Diego State University has made significant progress in increasing graduation rates particularly at the six-year graduation rate. In 2010, The Chronicle of Higher Education noted that SDSU experienced a 17% increase, more than any other increase at a university in the United States, in its six-year graduation rates between 2003 and 2008. Two years later, in the 2012, the Education Trust released a report noting that *“from 2005 to 2010, San Diego State more than halved its graduation rate gap for underrepresented minority*

freshmen--from 19 to 8 percentage points.” By 2013, the six-year graduation rate for all students was 66.9% and the retention rate from freshman to sophomore year increased to 88.1%. During the same period, diversity at the university increased, SDSU was designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, and student demographics evolved such that no majority population exists among students on campus. Additionally, the calculated “absolute” graduation rate, reported in the WASC Retention and Graduation Dashboard, is 89%.

The significant increase in graduation rates is tied to to a cultural shift at the university over the last 15 years, as noted in the previous section, based on a commitment to high expectations and a focus on academic excellence as a means to increase student engagement, learning, and completion. In the last two years, because retention, graduation, enrollment management, and student achievement are so inextricably linked, the data on student success gathered and shared with the community both on and off campus has been collected into a single document, the Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Compendium. This compendium, which includes disaggregated information about student persistence and completion, is updated annually so that faculty, staff, and community members can track important trends over time and make better informed decisions about where to invest resources. The compendium is accompanied by an Executive Summary jointly written by the Undergraduate Council and Academic Policy and Planning, two committees of the Senate (CFR 4.1, 4.3). This Executive Summary, the AY14/15 version of which may be found here, replaces three separate reports produced prior to 2014, and provides (1) an overview of key findings, (2) notes retention and graduation targets adopted for the California State University system, (3) and identifies key opportunities for increasing student success at the course, program, and university level. The

AY14/15 Executive Summary identified a number of key opportunities to increase graduation rates further at the course level, program level, and university level:

i. Course-level Opportunities:

- Examine classes with traditionally high DFW rates to understand the nature of the challenges to student achievement and address course-specific challenges through appropriate changes that will improve retention and graduation while maintaining (or even increasing) achievement; such changes could include course redesign, supplemental instruction, and learning analytics.
- Implement additional tutoring and mentoring within courses and the broader university through the Writing Center and Math Center.
- Promote and support the development and integration of High Impact Practices as appropriate within courses (e.g., community-based service learning, writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research and scholarship, collaborative assignments), especially in those courses that typically fall within students' first 45 units.

ii. Program-level Opportunities:

- Promote and support program-centered discussions on the shared responsibility of students, programs, and the broader university in student retention, graduation, and achievement. Such discussions would help faculty understand how students enter their programs, why they persist or depart from their programs, and what actions and adjustments could improve their retention, graduation, and achievement.
- Focus the role of evidence-based, action-oriented program assessment and periodic academic program reviews as mechanisms for improving the student learning experience and thereby students' engagement and achievement, which in turn should improve

graduation and retention rates across the university. Such efforts should include direct examples of student work that established expected and exemplary levels of student achievement.

- As within courses, the development and integration of High Impact Practices should also be promoted and supported at the program level (e.g., capstone courses, study abroad, internships, etc.)

iii. University-level Opportunities:

- Develop an integrated outreach and advising program for non-transferring students who depart after one semester or one year in good academic standing, with the program triggered on evidence of non-enrollment, ideally prior to start of classes.
- Modify the leave of absence procedure so that students must file for a leave if they stop out for one or more semesters. This process would establish the student's reasoning and, while ultimately respecting their request, provide the opportunity to present alternatives or initiate a plan to return.
- Increase the availability and efficacy of financial aid counseling for students with financial holds. Pilot efforts in this area have already brought 17 students back to campus. Scholarship funds could be targeted to support students close to graduation.
- Continue to address bottlenecks and backlogs in course availability across disciplines through a course scheduling approach that develops steady-state course offerings that can meet student demand based on a four-year graduation plan. Strategic application of student success fee funds for critical faculty hiring can play a natural role in this endeavor.

- Engage in “intensive advising” for students who have earned more than 150 units and for students who have earned over 100 units but who are taking leaves of absence. As noted above, advising these students can help them complete a degree in a timely manner.
- Analyze the historical retention and graduation rates of students who maintained pre-major designation with 70+ units to assess the degree to which such student swirls negatively impacts time to degree; engage faculty in developing solutions for completing degrees in more timely manner.

These recommendations, which are also reflected in “Building on Excellence,” inform strategic initiatives and several have already been achieved. For example, in 2014-15, SDSU modified the leave of absence policy, increased financial aid availability, and paid close attention to students who earned 150 or more units, yet still had not graduated. Thus, the university regularly uses overall student data to gauge success and also makes use of data related to particular populations of students who may experience additional challenges. As the compendium demonstrates, the university disaggregates data by levels of academic preparation, ethnicity, gender, local and out-of-area students, but also by cohorts including the Compact Scholars, freshmen commuting students, EOP, Guardian, and Price Scholars, and other important demographics. This disaggregation allows the university to focus strategic initiatives where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

B. Commuter Student Support Programs

In terms of levels of academic preparation, graduation rates for students at all levels have increased. Students who began at San Diego State University in 1999 with a CSU eligibility index between 2900 and 3399 had a six-year graduation rate of 29.1%, whereas students with the

same eligibility index scores who began in 2008 had six-year graduation rate of 40.7%. Thus, the improvement for all students, regardless of eligibility index score has been consistent.

Focusing on the Compact Scholars provided an opportunity to review disaggregated data and to make strategic decisions and investments to increase student success further. Thus, although the six-year graduation rate for Compact Scholars is commensurate with the overall graduation rate, efforts are being undertaken to increase rates further. As a result of reviewing the progress of the Compact Scholars, two additional positions, a coordinator and an adviser, have been added to provide more integration and earlier interventions for students experiencing challenges. Additionally, the orientation for the Compact Scholars includes a conference format where students take part in small workshops to learn about opportunities for becoming engaged through High Impact Practices. Finally, the Compact Scholars Program established a learning community that incorporates Rhetoric and Writing Studies 100 and Political Science 100, two courses identified as a particularly challenging course for these students.

While college-ready Compact Scholars who live on campus succeed, the engagement and success rates of the non-Compact-Scholar local, freshman commuter remain a challenge. With these challenges in mind, the university created several learning communities to support specific populations. For example, Casa Azteca and the Aztec Freshman Connection are student success programs designed specifically for students needing remediation in English or mathematics living at home or off-campus in their first year. These programs support students by helping both parents and students transition to a dynamic university environment. Casa Azteca is a collaborative effort between SDSU and Casa Familiar, a community resource center in the San Ysidro area of southern San Diego County. Students in these learning communities take a predetermined set of courses that are linked to a university seminar course, which focuses on

test-taking skills, applying for scholarships, transitioning from high school into college, and managing time effectively. Results from retention assessment of 2013 students enrolled in learning communities in developmental education indicated that 90% of the students passed their developmental requirements and were eligible to return to SDSU. 82% of those developmental students actually returned. Half of the eligible students who did not return indicated finances and work were the reasons for their departure.

Such learning communities for first-year students not living on campus have doubled annually for the past three years. Those students enrolled in developmental packages have grown from 40 in 2012 to 86 in 2013 and to 172 in 2014. Taken together, the Compact Scholars Program and the Aztec Scholars Initiative, which focuses on recruitment and retention of college-ready Native Americans and African Americans, now involve more than 500 commuter students in learning communities (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 4.3).

C. Residential Student Support Programs

SDSU Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) are designed to enhance the experience of students living on campus by introducing academic resources in students' living environment, improving their university experience, and providing a strong foundation for student academic success. The Residential Education Office (REO) offers eighteen different RLCs. The office enrolls students in courses during their first semester based on their declared major and that department's Major Academic Plan (MAP) or in courses that correspond to an interest area or passion, such as SAGE (Social Activism and Global Engagement). REO also provides an undeclared learning community for career exploration and provides tutors, academic resource centers, and academically oriented events in the residence halls. All RLC's have dedicated staff members, known as Academic Mentors, who live on their floor, and these mentors are

responsible for peer mentoring and intrusive counseling on academic issues with the students within their learning community. Faculty-in-Residence in each residence hall provide workshops (e.g., “Professors Don’t Bite”), a Lunch and Learn discussion series, take students on field trips to places like Museum of Tolerance, Balboa Park and theater productions, and do outreach to students on academic probation.

D. Cross-cutting Student Support Programs

In addition to these commuter and residential programs, the university provides a broad spectrum of student support programs to ensure student success across a broad demographic spectrum as demonstrated by the following programs.

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), with more than 4,000 students, is the largest in the CSU and the six-year graduation rate in this program has risen from 38.3% for students who entered in 1999 to 63.1% for students that entered in 2008 – a percentage commensurate with the overall graduation rates at SDSU.

The Price Community Scholars Program provides scholarships to recruit and support fifteen high-achieving SDSU first-time freshman students from City Heights area of San Diego (primarily from Hoover and Crawford High Schools). In turn, these high-achieving students each mentor three City Heights middle school students selected from the top 20% of their class at Monroe Clark or Wilson Middle Schools over a period of four years. This initiative provides support programs for both mentor and mentee that assists in building a community that enhances the path to higher education through academic success, self awareness, cross-cultural exchange, and civic engagement. The program also provides mentees with academic support in critical subjects, and access to information and opportunities that helps them prepare for higher education by enhancing their academic knowledge, higher education planning, community

engagement, and self-reflection. Accomplishments of this relatively new program, which started in 2012, include:

- Fifty percent of mentee parents enrolled in and graduated from the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) certificate program, where parents learned critical information necessary to support their child's path to higher education (e.g., A-G requirements, college exams, financial aid, etc.).
- Mentors and mentees have engaged in community service events (e.g., canyon clean-ups) in the City Heights area, with mentors working closely with their assigned mentees on specific restoration projects.
- During their spring breaks, mentees and their families have toured the SDSU campus and been engaged in discussions regarding the college preparation process. Students and parents received a copy of the Department of Education's *College Preparation Checklist* to help support their college planning during grades 8-12.
- Mentees have received information about college admission, college types, financial aid and scholarships, career types, and A-G requirements through "*Within My Reach, Your Future is Now*" workbooks.

The university also supports military veterans through the Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center and foster youth through the Guardian Scholars Program. Both programs received generous philanthropic gifts, and SDSU now provides significant and ongoing financial support to assist students. In the Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center, veterans, reservists, and active duty personnel, as well as their dependents, utilize resources that help with applying to the university, accessing military benefits, and finding housing and employment. SDSU is also home to the Veterans House, the nation's first on-campus housing facility exclusively for veterans,

which offers a unique living experience for students with a large meeting space, study spaces, a full kitchen, and patio. The co-ed complex offers priority residency to SDSU veterans, active duty personnel, reservists, and dependents.

IV. Learning

- A. General Education and Core Competencies**
- B. Program Assessment and Student Outcomes**
 - i. WEAVE**
 - ii. Academic Program Review**
- C. Community Engagement and Student Learning**

IV. Learning

San Diego State University has made strides in supporting and engaging student learning outcomes and assessment. Because SDSU is a large, decentralized university assessment to ensure the integrity of the degrees and to improve instruction takes place across campus in different ways. In some instances assessment involves groups of faculty across departments who focus on core competencies such as writing, oral communication, and quantitative reasoning that are fundamental to General Education outcomes (CFR 2.2).

In other instances, however, faculty are engaged in formal assessment processes at the program level. These processes require that departments and programs identify program and degree learning goals and outcomes, evaluate student work and report on the changes they make both annually and during the Academic Program Review process that takes place every five years. The Senate also established the SDSU Syllabus Collection, which can be surveyed to identify learning outcomes for courses in General Education as well as for those in the major.

San Diego State also focused on the engagement of students with high-impact educational practices such as undergraduate research, community-based service learning, and study abroad. This emphasis increased expectations for student involvement and by focusing on the learning students experience as a result of these practices. The assessment work that emerges from these expectations is widely shared and helps inform how these experiences (1) reflect a set

of standards regarding exemplary work, (2) describe how these experiences influence student learning, and (3) help provide feedback to students from stakeholders outside the university.

This section of the Institutional Report, Section IV, addresses each of these areas—General Education and Core Competencies, Program Assessment and Student Outcomes, and Community Engagement and Student Learning—to describe key efforts in each area.

A. General Education and Core Competencies

As noted earlier in this Institutional Report, the university has responded to questions raised in the previous re-affirmation for accreditation cycle with regards to General Education. Although the initial committee framework developed at that time was not sustainable, programs and departments offering general education courses, particularly those related to oral and written communication, and quantitative reasoning, focused on student learning both at the broad level of essential capacities for all students and within each foundation area (natural science and quantitative reasoning, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities and fine arts). The focus at both levels—essential capacities and area learning goals—is on broad learning outcomes established by the General Education Task Force and adopted by the Senate (CFR 2.2).

Oral Communication

Because most students take Oral Communication in their first year to fulfill the GE Communication and Critical Thinking requirement, this course provided an opportunity to develop baseline assessment for oral communication upon which additional efforts have been built. Through the cooperation of several faculty and Graduate Teaching Associates, the School of Communication assesses the learning that occurs during students' time in the course using a proprietary scale and software program, called the Interactive Media Package for the Assessment of Communication and Critical Thinking (IMPACCT), developed by a faculty member in the

department. Since 2009, approximately 12,000 SDSU students taking COMM 103 completed the 200-item Time 1 and Time 2 surveys (CFR 2.4). Results show that students perceive themselves as having improved their communication skills over the course of the semester. Additionally, since COMM 103 students are required to send out a shorter survey regarding their communication skills to two peers to complete, faculty have a concrete idea of how others rate the students' communication competence. This multi-perspective, indirect measure helped better connect curriculum design, learning outcomes, and assessment (CFR 2.3).

The results of this survey have been widely shared on campus through the Center for Teaching and Learning. In October 2014, faculty from the School of Communication contributed to a CTL "Lunch on Learning" entitled "Rubrics: Powerful Tools for Instructor Efficiency, Student Achievement, and Program Assessment" (content for this and other [AY14/15 CTL](#) events is available). In addition, based on conversations with the Division of Undergraduate Studies, School of Communication faculty members recently developed a "Communication Presentations" white paper. This common resource for all faculty and students provides an overview of best practices and recommendations drawn from COMM 103, and helps promote effective oral communication within and beyond courses across the campus (e.g., thesis presentations, Student Research Symposium, etc.) (CFR 2.2a). In addition, the document's appendix includes a variety of oral communication rubrics, including those endorsed by the National Communication Association, to facilitate successful presentations, constructive feedback, and evidence-based assessment. This work is posted on the university's [Program Assessment](#) website and will be the focus of a CTL workshop in Fall 2015 (CFR 2.4).

Quantitative Reasoning

During the most recent Academic Program Review undertaken by the department of Mathematics and Statistics, faculty focused in part on student success rates in the first year mathematics courses completed by STEM majors. The department acquired a list of all students enrolled in math courses from fall 2011 through fall 2014 and found that the success rates in these courses were relatively low, and that there was significant variability across sections. This initial analysis also revealed a high level of attrition as students progress through the calculus sequence and that the median grade for students tended to drop by one full grade point. The most surprising result was that the median grade in Math 151 for students who had to retake Math 150 (because of failing the first time) was D, independently of the second grade in Math 150. Similar results held for Math 150 after retaking Math 141 (CFR 2.7).

As a result of these discussions and the analysis of the data, significant changes have been made. SDSU designed these changes to (1) address structural and pedagogical opportunities to improve student success, (2) to ensure consistency of learning standards and outcomes across sections, and (3) to inform broader discussions about and support for quantitative reasoning for all students.

One of the most important changes Mathematics made after reviewing data on student success focused on Math 140, the Pre-Calculus course. In spring 2015, this course, which had been offered online, became a face-to-face course in which all sections shared a common syllabus, textbook, and homework assignments. Additionally, Teaching Assistants (graduate and undergraduate) met weekly to discuss the course and establish objectives, breakout sessions were limited to 25 students, and these sessions involved more active engagement through experiments,

discussions and written work. The assessment and evaluation for the course was also changed to include common major exams scheduled outside of class time (CFR 4.3, 4.4).

The department also adopted a more robust placement procedure to place students into Pre-Calculus. Beginning in fall 2015, any student who fails the Pre-Calculus proficiency exam—a static paper and pencil multiple choice test that SDSU used for placement in Math 150—will be given the opportunity to use ALEKS, a well-established online adaptive learning program for mathematics, to improve their needed skills and then repeat the placement test to demonstrate mastery. During the first week of class, all students will take a proctored placement (either ALEKS, if they are already using it, or a department assessment using WebWork), and these data will be used to advise students on whether to continue in Math 150 as well as to track their subsequent success.

ALEKS is also being recommended in fall 2015 to students majoring in life sciences as preparation for Math 124 (Calculus for the Life Sciences). By fall 2016, the goal will be for every student planning to take College Algebra, Pre-Calculus, Business Calculus, Calculus for Life Sciences, and Calculus for Science and Engineering will be required to use ALEKS to establish proficiency in prerequisite material.

Along with the focus on Pre-Calculus, the Mathematics department also formed a task force during the 2014-2015 academic year to focus on the Calculus sequence of Math 150 and 151. This task force of two math education professors, five math professors, and two engineering professors assessed the calculus program and set ambitious objectives for improvement. As in the case with pre-calculus, the Task Force recommended pedagogical changes tied to more support for students and instructors, more consistency across sections, and shared student learning outcomes. Each class now has a coordinator who will convene periodic meetings and

take primary responsibility for writing the syllabus, writing the tests, and creating/selecting problems for breakout sessions. All instructors will contribute problems to the exams and the syllabi, and agree upon the standards for assigning grades. Each instructor will mentor and supervise the TAs assigned to his or her lecture and the supervision will include at least two class visits during the semester (CFR 4.1, 4.4, 4.5).

Mathematics also participates in several campus-wide initiatives to improve student learning particularly in relation to quantitative reasoning. One way this occurred is through participation on the Class Size Task Force appointed by the SDSU Academic Senate. The Task Force, while recognizing the university's financial limitations, also developed a series of recommendations focused on improving student learning outcomes while maintaining the efficiency of large lecture delivery of courses. The report also emphasized the need to support changes through improved coordination of courses and training for teaching assistants. These innovations were accepted in principle and will be phased in beginning in fall 2015 when Math 141, Math 150, and Math 151 will be offered. Thus, the Academic Program Review for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics illustrates the intentionality of the campus to identify areas of student learning and areas that need improvement. Because there is strong support for this process, Math was able to share the learning with the campus and implement identified changes. The results of these changes will be studied and used to plan further improvement to those courses and to innovations for 200-level math courses and for courses designed for non-STEM majors (CFR 4.6, 4.7).

The focus on quantitative reasoning for students in STEM areas helped inform the development of "Building on Excellence," the strategic plan, and led to the recommendation to establish a Mathematics Learning Center, which will open in fall 2015. The center will be

directed by a full-time faculty member from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics who will not only coordinate the Pre-Calculus course, but will also train TAs for both Pre-Calculus and Calculus. Thus, the work of the MLC will be tightly coordinated with efforts in the department. The MLC will focus primarily on STEM courses (Math 124, 141, 150, 151, 245, 252, 254, and possibly Stat 250). An advisory board including representatives from engineering, the sciences, and coordinators of learning communities will also provide input to the Mathematics Learning Center (CFR 4.5, 4.6).

Written Communication

In Spring 2013, the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) initiated a collaborative project to develop rubrics for the assessment of student achievement in different GE Areas based on written communication, a WASC Core Competency. Over a series of workshops, the four project leaders and twenty additional faculty examined a representative collection of 500- to 2,500-word student papers drawn from lower- and upper-division courses in the GE Areas of Communication and Critical Thinking (CCT), Humanities (HUM), and Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) (CFR 2.2, 2.2a).

Once developed, these rubrics were piloted using a larger set of 297 student papers drawn from CCT (n = 23), HUM (n = 166), and SBS (n = 108) courses at the lower-division (n = 120) and upper-division (n = 177). Scoring results indicated that 26% of all lower-division papers were Proficient or Advanced (i.e., score 3 or 4) and 43% of all upper-division papers were Proficient or Advanced. By disciplinary subcategories, 21% of the lower-division and 50% of the upper-division CCT papers were Proficient or Advanced, while these measures were, respectively, at 35% and 35% for HUM, and 22% and 44% for SBS. Although some sample sizes were relatively small, performance in upper-division courses was, on average, higher than

in lower-division courses across all three GE Areas. Additional information on this project, including detailed results and the developed rubrics, may be found in CAL's GE Assessment Project Executive Summary. We are particularly proud that these college efforts will be contributing to the broader assessment community through a peer-reviewed article recently accepted for publication in the *Journal of General Education*¹(CFR 2.4, 2.9).

Building on these GE Area rubrics for written communication, a much larger CAL assessment project was undertaken during 2013-2014 AY to examine nearly 2,000 student papers randomly collected in roughly equal amounts from the Fall and Spring semesters and from lower- and upper-division courses across the three GE Areas. In May 2014, over a four-day reading/scoring session, each paper was independently scored by two of twenty faculty. As in the pilot project, student achievement in upper-division courses was, on average, higher than in lower-division courses across all three GE Areas. The faculty leads are currently using multivariate statistical methods to account for multiple factors that could impact student achievement in the skills measured by the rubrics, including student-specific factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity, level of study, residency), course-specific factors (e.g., GE level, Fall vs. Spring course, modality, class size), and assignment-specific factors (e.g., type of task). These efforts will ultimately serve to assess the impact of a two-tiered GE program on student learning of such “core competencies” of a liberal arts education as well as identify the relationship of student achievement to the various student-, course-, and assignment-specific factors (CFR 2.4, 2.6).

¹ Csohay, E., E. Pollard, S. Bordelon, and A. Beck. In press. Researching Student Learning in a Two-Tiered General Education Program. *Journal of General Education*.

This CAL assessment project broadly impacted the GE program. One important result has been to re-familiarize faculty with the GE Area Goals. Although these goals are printed in the SDSU General Catalog and required in course syllabi, the workshops and readings helped re-introduce them to the faculty and thereby encourage better alignment of GE Area Goals with faculty's specific Course Learning Outcomes. In surveys conducted after the May 2014 multi-day reading, faculty members seemed positive about the experience and concurred that participating made them much more aware of the GE Area Goals: *"It was a great experience for me to meet faculty from other departments and especially to read the papers from other departments to see what kinds of questions they ask and what kinds of things students are learning,"* wrote one faculty member. Another reflected on gaining a better understanding of the GE Area Goals: *"This process has certainly opened my eyes to what the general education goals really are. Like so many people, I paid lip service to it, but had not really thought about it, and now I am approaching my assignments with a different or rather a more informed mindset."* (CFR 4.4, 4.6).

In addition, this assessment project informs learning at the department level. For example, the Director of Lower-division Writing in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies used input from lecturers to revise the content and assignments in both RWS 100 Rhetoric of Written Argument and RWS 200 Rhetoric of Written Argument. In this context, the treatments to the content and assignments increased alignment with GE Essential Capacities, particularly "Negotiate Differences." The institution shared this learning through departmental workshops so that RWS faculty can better integrate and align the GE Essential Capacities and Area Goals into their specific assignments (CFR 4.6). Notably, the RWS faculty who participated in the May 2014 reading/scoring session observed that students seemed to be doing a

better job of addressing this Essential Capacity in both RWS 100 and 200. Also, the preliminary data appear to support this finding. Thus, this assessment project is leading by example in terms of how direct evidence in the form of student work can be used to enhance curriculum alignment and “close the loop” in terms of program assessment (CFR 2.4).

After the May 2014 reading, other departments are also promoting greater awareness of the GE Area Goals based on the survey. As one faculty member shared, *“My department already worked on revamping syllabi to better include GE goals. I would like to now see a workshop and or/better open discussion of how to make our assignments more responsible to GE goals and broader learning objectives.”* Other faculty members also noted the need for further workshops to enhance alignment of the goals with assignments. For example one faculty member said, *“I would like to attend a day-long workshop with all faculty in my department to explain why this is important and how we can improve the educational experience for the students as well as become more effective as teachers (working smarter rather than harder).”* Additionally, a group of faculty organized their own sessions after the CAL series of workshops to examine and redesign the assignments they implement in the GE classes to better meet GE goals. Such faculty comments reflect the momentum that generated by the CAL GE assessment project and the need for further faculty professional-development opportunities related to general education. As a result of the two years of work and capitalizing on the momentum created in CAL, the four faculty members leading these GE assessments recently submitted a grant proposal to broaden the professional development of SDSU faculty as well as to support collaborations with regional community colleges and CSUs on the broad issue of evidence-based GE assessment techniques (CFR 2.4).

In accordance with one of the key recommendations that emerged from the strategic planning process, SDSU established a Writing Center in 2014 to support writing across the curriculum. In addition to providing tutoring at its centrally located position in the university Library, the Writing Center initiated a program through which it provided orientations and trainings for classes and departments about the effectiveness of “peer conversation” in successful tutoring activities. The Writing Center and the Center for Teaching and Learning also offered a joint week-long workshop on writing across the curriculum for faculty during summer 2015 (CFR 4.6).

B. Program Assessment and Student Outcomes

Background

Since the last reaffirmation of accreditation and during the economic recession, the university continued to invest in the institutional assessment infrastructure. During 2011-2012, the university transitioned to the WEAVE online relational database through which programs plan, report, and share their standards and findings for determining and improving the quality of their degrees in a more explicit, transparent, and accessible way. While WEAVE provides a process to contribute evidence of student achievement related to the General Education program, the primary institutional focus for WEAVE is to build capacity for the assessment of Degree Learning Outcomes as outlined below.

i. WEAVE

WEAVE provides the framework and structure for departments and programs to develop their mission, program learning goals, and degree learning outcomes. The mission establishes the educational values, priorities, and expectations that are common across the various degrees within a department. The learning goals describe the *general intentions* with respect to student

learning for degrees being offered. Degree learning outcomes, which essentially “start at the end,” establish what students should be able to do as a result of earning their degree. Thus, these learning outcomes map the curricular responsibilities of the faculty as well as the expectations for what students should be committed to achieving. Using this framework, faculty provide (1) a summary of the results, analysis, and interpretations of their assessment and (2) examples of authentic student work, as appropriate, that help illuminate expected and exemplary levels of student achievement. Instructors apply established goals and outcomes to analyze student work in order to develop plans intended to facilitate student achievement. The exact nature of the plans across departments varies in form and content, but they are all designed to offer a programmatic view of learning and achievement beyond the course level (CFR 2.1, 2.3, 2.4).

The assessment work and the focus on student learning captured in WEAVE provides evidence of thoughtful changes, based on what programs learned and how to improve instruction and learning. In Child and Family Development, for example, faculty aligned their learning outcomes with standards adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and then collected portfolios of student work. Based on assessment of the portfolios, faculty adopted a new text book more focused on curriculum development, revised assignments to include opportunities for planning preschool activities, and developed a rubric for use in field placement courses where students interact with children and parents. Utilizing WEAVE enabled these changes to streamline alignment between learning outcomes of the institution and with NAEYC, ultimately creating a rich, strategic environment for learning (CFR 4.1).

Another example of how SDSU student learning benefits from WEAVE is in the School of Nursing. Here, faculty reviewed student performance on the National Council Licensure Exam

and, based on what they learned, students are now expected in multiple courses to produce literature reviews in a number of different areas, including a comprehensive literature search and paper on leadership. Additional changes included developing more detailed syllabi, scheduling group sessions with librarians, and active promotion of student-instruction interactions after class and during office hours. These efforts had the intended effect and a higher percentage of students are now meeting learning expectations.

An exemplary use of WEAVE is found in the College of Business Administration (CBA). Through multiple rounds of assessment, all of the CBA undergraduate degree programs undertook a wide variety of steps to increase student learning. The outcomes established by the College cover range of expectations that include: performance on standardized tests that assess essential business knowledge and ethical reasoning; course-embedded assignments and rubrics that assess oral communication; critical thinking; and global perspectives.

As part of these efforts, CBA initiated the production of curricular maps for all of its academic programs in 2012. This process began when the Director of Assessment for the College introduced the purpose and value of curricular mapping at departmental and curriculum meetings, and then actively engaged the faculty in the process of developing worksheets that identified the degree learning outcomes for all courses. For each course regularly taught, faculty identified whether a given outcome was a primary focus of a course and the relative intensity of coverage within a course (i.e., Introduced, Reinforced, Applied in a Group Setting, and Applied Individually). In the case of courses with multiple sections taught by multiple instructors, faculty members were encouraged to work together, discuss what each did in their section(s), and produce a single common worksheet for the course that all faculty agreed upon.

The completed worksheets taken together produced one curricular map for required courses and another for required and elective courses, with both versions depicting how the various courses contributed to meeting the goals and outcomes for the major. Departmental and curriculum committee meetings reviewed these curricular maps and discussed curricular design and delivery. For example, the maps showed that global perspectives were not a major focus of any required course, even though they were introduced in a number of courses, and thus lacked adequate coverage within the curriculum, which reinforced previous assessment findings. As a result, the faculty determined that students needed greater emphasis on global perspectives and developed a new core course, BA 310 Foundations of Business in a Global Environment, which is now a required course. More broadly, these curricular mapping efforts reinforced the reality that curricula are dynamic, which led to a new college requirement that new courses or course change proposals include a contextualizing mapping worksheet, which in turn provides an effective means to maintain up-to-date frameworks for guiding broader program assessment efforts (CFR 2.4, 4.6).

The curriculum mapping efforts in CBA helped build the capacity for institutional programs to engage in and benefit from this approach, and a section on curricular mapping was included in the Program Assessment Primer. Also, in fall 2014, the Center for Teaching and Learning hosted a workshop attended by over forty faculty and staff on using mapping to more effectively align Course and Degree Learning Outcomes. Given the productive and constructive conversations that emerged from these efforts, the university incorporated curricular mapping of undergraduate degrees as a formal component of Academic Program Review starting in AY 2015-2016. A number of programs, such as Rhetoric and Writing Studies and Sociology, subsequently initiated curricular mapping for the mutual benefit of their program and students—

another sign that we continue to build a culture of assessment for student learning. As a result of this work, AACSB International recognized the college as doing an excellent job at assurance of learning and going above and beyond AACSB requirements by assessing programs at the major level (CFR 3.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Another department that uses assessment effectively to inspire student learning is the School of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS). As part of their ongoing work, JMS faculty developed a “JMS Assessment Exam,” which is derived from a pool of 426 multiple choice questions coded with respect to their learning outcomes, the courses in which those outcomes exist, and the relative question difficulty. The assessment exam was initially administered to all students in the capstone course in the major but is now also given to incoming majors to afford a pre/post (i.e., “learning gains”) approach. Reviewing student performance on the exam, faculty determined that students had difficulty meeting the following outcome: “Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness.” To improve student achievement and degree integrity for this outcome, the JMS faculty developed and implemented a comprehensive action plan that involved changes in seven courses spanning from introductory to capstone levels. During the 2014-2015 academic year, given curriculum evolutions, JMS faculty realigned assessment matrices for all majors, adjusting courses in which capacity is increased to improve student achievement.

In the College of Sciences, the Department of Astronomy developed an embedded-assignment-based measure within an introductory majors course that aligns with four DLOs common to their BA and BS degrees. For the assignment, students produce an outline of the scientific research presented in an astronomy-focused news article as a means for students to examine the nature, context, and communication of scientific research. The resulting outlines are

scored using a rubric, and findings revealed that students had the most difficulty with the writing of an outline with logical flow—a skill aligned with their DLO to “express effective scientific arguments in written or oral form, to professional scientists or to the general public.” Since students were already provided with an example outline as part of the assignment, the faculty’s action plan involves providing more opportunities for student practice in identifying and explicating the logic of a scientific research project. The students can now also go to the interdisciplinary Writing Center work with experts in writing (CFR 2.3, 4.4).

All of the assessment activity of 76 programs that are captured in WEAVE is reviewed by the Student Learning Outcomes Committee established by the Senate. In 2014, in an effort to understand the needs of programs with respect to assessment, and after having reviewed entries in WEAVE, this committee developed a nine-item, four-scale Program Assessment Rubric that connected assessment-related items in the WASC Educational Effectiveness Framework to the terminology and architecture of WEAVE. The results of this work, along with associated comments and subsequent discussion within the committee, helped inform the production of a Program Assessment Primer, which provides core principles and processes of assessment with the basic architecture, operation, and terminology of WEAVE. This primer was well received and will be revised further based on feedback during the 2015-2016 AY (CFR 4.3, 4.4).

In addition, in recent years, SDSU refined and improved various aspects of the assessment process, such as transitioning from an annual to a semester reporting cycle that is more aligned with ongoing assessment efforts. Moving forward, the Program Assessment Rubric will inform college-specific peer-review workshops to continue to build the expectation that programs include authentic examples of student work, where appropriate, with an appreciation that these assessment efforts and evidence of student achievement can also support student

recruitment, development, community engagement, and workforce collaboration. This focus on identifying and contextualizing student work that exemplifies expectations for student achievement is also promoted through an inaugural CTL Learning Community established in 2014, which focuses on digital communication through collaborative sessions, special seminars, and course-based projects intended to develop and assess High Impact Practices (CFR 4.5, 4.6).

ii. Academic Program Review

While assessment and a focus on learning is an ongoing practice at SDSU, all departments, schools, and programs undergo a periodic Academic Program Review on an approximately five-year cycle. The process starts in the preceding spring semester with an APR orientation session with all of the chairs, directors, and advisers of programs undergoing APR in the coming academic year. At this orientation, the APR guidelines and related materials and resources are provided and discussed. Each program then develops a Self-Study that addresses such topics as their programmatic goals and outcomes, curricula, retention and graduation rates, class size, assessment, high impact practices, and faculty research and scholarship productivity. This Self-Study is reviewed by the university for completeness, and then shared with the Program Review Panel, which typically consists of two external disciplinary leaders recruited from aspirational programs and one internal senior faculty member recruited from a different college at SDSU (CFR 2.7).

The two-day Panel Visit begins with an orientation meeting with the administrative leadership team (i.e., Provost, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate Division, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, College Dean), followed by individual and small-group meetings and discussions, as appropriate, with faculty, lecturers, staff, and students as well as at least two committee work sessions, and concludes with an exit interview with the same

university leadership. Based on the Self-Study and their visit, the Program Review Panel produces and submits within one month a Panel Report to the university leadership, who share this report with the program so that they may provide a written response if desired. The process concludes with a capstone meeting between the program and the university leadership team, where the panel recommendations and program responses inform a discussion of opportunities and challenges.

In recent years, the university the APR process has been revised so that it aligns with and connects to semester-to-semester assessment efforts as reported and managed in WEAVE. In addition, programs have been asked to move from a simple declaration of their recent assessment efforts and to provide evidence of a more reflective and aspirational approach that focuses on changes and improvements made as a result of the assessment of student work over time. The APR process also provides opportunities when departments that offer General Education courses focus on student learning in GE as well as in the major (CFR 2.7).

The Department of Political Science, for example, used their 2015 APR to gauge their assessment progress over the previous four years. This enabled the department to identify strengths and challenges with respect to their majors, and in those classes that help students meet general education requirements. In respect to majors in the department, an undergraduate committee formed to make recommendations about how to increase scores for greater numbers of students.

As part of the academic program review process, reviews of course syllabi revealed a need for more specificity with regard to how courses in general education contributed to helping students acquire the skills outlined at the GE program level. This extensive assessment of general

education resulted in creating an assessment schedule; redefining the mission; establishing program goals and student learning outcomes for the BA (CFR 2.4, 2.7, 4.1).

Whereas the APR processes in Political Science led to establishing a structured assessment plan, the School of Music and Dance used APR to assess its current Degree Learning Outcomes and assessments to align them with a professional organization. For example, in 2012, an assessment of the piano class curriculum utilized a national Yamaha consultant to evaluate the music program. Findings included: “Music is moving in the right direction, but suggested a stronger presence of project-based instruction.” Also, the APR revealed that although Course and Degree Learning Outcomes exist, they are still in progress. When WEAVE was established, Dance and Music were lumped together. Now, they are distinct and separated. Degree Learning Outcomes will be parsed between the two degrees during the 2015-2016 cycle.

C. Community Engagement and Student Learning

While the focus on core competencies, program-level assessment, and academic program reviews have sustained a focus on student learning within departments and programs, the emphasis at San Diego State University on high-impact practices and community engagement have created opportunities to focus on and share standards for student learning more broadly. Two particularly notable examples of this include the Student Research Symposium and the Sage Project.

Student Research Symposium

In their site report, the WASC team in 2005 recommended that SDSU “consider sponsoring a university-wide research symposium that would celebrate the fruits of student faculty collaboration.” The university welcomed this recommendation and established the Student Research Symposium in 2008, which is now an annual, campus-wide event that includes

students from the sciences, social sciences, and the arts. Presentations take the form of panel reports, poster presentations, and, in the arts, students perform dance, music compositions, monologues, and present films to highlight the work they have accomplished (CFR 2.8).

While not strictly designed as an assessment activity, the SRS plays a key role in extending discussions and conversations regarding outstanding student work. The presentations, reports, and performances are judged by faculty and community members and thus infuse a broader understanding of what constitutes research, scholarship, and creative activity.

The focus on research and creative activity, which is highlighted through the SRS each year, also played a critical role in the development and implementation of the strategic plan, “Building on Excellence.” Emerging from the strategic plan, the Undergraduate Research Working Group sought ways to increase the number of students engaged in research and creative activity. Also, along with broad faculty input, the committee developed a rubric to 1) identify current courses that utilize research and creative projects and 2) determine how to further integrate such activities into existing curricula. Once developed, this rubric was also used to survey faculty—more than 120 faculty responded—to begin to identify where undergraduate research and creative activity was already occurring, and to seek input on how to extend more opportunities for such activity. The rubric and the survey both contributed to further conversations about student outcomes (CRF 2.8, 4.6).

The Sage Project

The Sage Project was launched in Fall 2013 in partnership with the City of National City. As part of the pilot partnership, the City and San Diego State University agreed to participate for two full academic years: 2013-14 and 2014-15. In those two years, the partnership engaged 35 faculty members from 55 courses in 23 disciplines, and over 2,000 students. We estimate that

each student contributed at least 10 hours towards these projects, and that collectively they have put in over 20,000 hours of effort toward National City projects. Because of this partnership, nearly 50 students have been hired to serve as interns, student assistants, project managers, or report writers. Additionally, more than 100 students have presented their work to the campus and city communities via our annual symposium and/or city council presentations. As support for this project increases, we will be able to have an even greater impact.

Both graduate and undergraduate students participated from multiple disciplines including anthropology, audiology, city planning, civil engineering, geography, graphic design, homeland security, political science, public administration, public health, and speech, language, and hearing sciences. Students engaged interdisciplinary projects such as 1) a wayfinding system to communicate cultural identity and a sense of place, 2) redevelopment of the marina district, 3) a long-range property management plan, 4) industry and freeway noise and air quality impact mitigation, 5) green street designs, 6) annexes to the city's Emergency Operations Plan, and 7) policy evaluation and alternatives for addressing homelessness.

New partnerships have also been established with non-profit organizations in National City (including A Reason to Survive, Ocean Connectors, and Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center), and new research opportunities have emerged for SDSU faculty. In addition, the program has drawn positive attention locally as well as nationally from the Environmental Protection Agency (CFR 2.5, 4.5).

V. Financial Viability and the Future

As noted in the Introduction to this Institutional Report, like all the state-supported institutions in California, San Diego State University experienced a significant decline in State support following 2008. In the five years from 2008-2009 and 2013-2014, state appropriations for the university declined by \$78 million dollars and the state portion of the university's budget dropped to less than 20%. As vacant positions were not filled, this impact was felt by faculty and staff; however, during this difficult period, the university was able to avoid layoffs. Still, the university entered a period in which a structural deficit within Academic Affairs needed to be addressed (CFR 3.4).

In the face of this challenges, SDSU took several key actions to ensure that students were able to enroll in the classes they needed to meet program requirements. These actions included increasing class size, constructing 500-seat lecture halls, and supporting the development of hybrid and online modes of instruction. At the same time the university implemented these actions, there was a sustained focus on student learning and assessment as noted earlier in the Institutional Report and processes for the approval of hybrid and online courses have been implemented to ensure those opportunities meet the university standards for student learning (CFR 4.7).

During the period between 2008 and 2014, the university also experienced several fee initiatives that provided additional support. The first of these, initiated in 2009 by the Associated Students, ensured the construction of the Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union, a state-of-the-art LEED Platinum building, and provided scholarship dollars—\$250,000/year—to support study abroad experiences for students. In 2010, the California State University Board of Trustees approved a two-step fee increase needed to sustain enrollment, classes, and services for current

students at the time. The Trustees also approved a recommendation to the state university fee by 10% (i.e., \$444 per academic year for undergraduates) for 2011-2012.

Following recommendations contained in San Diego State University's Strategic Plan, Building on Excellence, completed in 2013, Associated Students worked with faculty, staff, and administrators on campus to adopt a fee increase that would lead to the hiring of more tenure-track faculty to help refill positions that had been vacant. This fee initiative was adopted in 2014 and will lead to 300 hires over the next five years.

Under President Hirshman's leadership the university recognized that it can no longer rely solely on state support—state appropriation for San Diego State is less than 20% of the total budget of the university—and that it must adopt a public-private partnership funding model. These private sources include philanthropic support from alumni, community supporters, and corporate partners, tuition fees paid by students and their families, and revenues from auxiliary organizations.

SDSU has also sought to increase revenues and support for students in other key ways. The university met its goal through the Campaign for SDSU to raise \$500 million by 2014, and the campaign has been extended by three years with a new goal of raising \$750 million dollars by 2017. During the 2013-2014 fiscal year alone, the fundraising campaign raised a record \$90 million and, as of August 2015, campaign contributions stand at \$625 million.

Over the past several years, private revenues have continued to grow from fund transfers from auxiliary organizations, tuition from out-of-state and international students, and reimbursements from Continuing Education Programs. At the same time, the university has managed enrollments to ensure that moving to a public-private funding model does not reduce the commitment to socioeconomic diversity and inclusive excellence. Indeed, financial aid

allocations increased by 67% between 2010 and 2014 and the proportion of students eligible for Pell Grants also rose, while the six-year graduation rates rose by 10% from 2007 to 2013 (CFRs 1.4, 1.6, 3.4, 4.7).

These funding revenues have provided resources to support the initiatives and goals articulated in the Strategic Plan. In addition to the student success fee already noted, additional revenues have been used to help fund the Susan and Stephen Weber Honors College, undergraduate research initiatives, a working group using learning analytics to increase student success, the Pride Center, a center for commuting students, and a writing center. Thus, there has been close alignment between resources that have come to the university and its educational effectiveness (CFR 3.4, 4.3).

VI. Looking Forward

San Diego State University has developed and built upon a distinctive culture, one that has led to increased levels of student engagement and achievement. And, the university continues to improve. Going forward it will be critical, given the pressures on higher education, declining state support, and the challenges that graduates will face throughout their careers, that SDSU continues to evolve as it has since its last re-affirmation for accreditation cycle. “Building on Excellence” has already provided positive steps in this direction and has enabled the university to take significant steps forward as noted in this Institutional Report.

In the past year, the university has focused on developing and streamlining process to assist with retention and graduation. These efforts have included asking colleges to explore how best to (1) assist students who have earned more than 150 units but who have not filed for graduation, and (2) to develop process and procedures aimed at ensuring that students earlier in their academic careers receive appropriate advising. To achieve this second goal, the Provost has launched an advising initiative that will include advising forums throughout the year, an advising certificate program, and recognition annually of outstanding academic advisors.

At the same time, the institution recognizes that it will be important for programs and departments to link retention, completion, and graduation data more explicitly with evidence of student learning. As a step in this direction, the university has already undertaken the development of standard data sets that departments can use to track retention and graduation rates for their students from the time at which they enter the major, either as incoming students or as students who have changed their major. Such data sets will allow departments to make strategic decisions about how best to support students. However, the university also knows that while graduation rates are critically important, it is equally important to use direct measures of

student learning to inform the development of outcomes, standards, degree expectations and program development.

While SDSU has made significant progress in both areas—retention and graduation, and assessment—the goal is to link these more explicitly particularly through a focus on high expectations and student engagement in research, study abroad, community engagement, and the arts. Focusing on the connection between graduation rates and learning will also allow for strategic decisions regarding student success in a time when state resources continue to decline.

The university will also continue to develop and extend the assessment of all five core competencies—writing, oral communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and information technology—in general education and across the curriculum. As part of these efforts the institution will seek to develop ways to collect and disseminate useful information in about student learning in general education and in departments to faculty and other stakeholders.

These directions grow naturally from the commitment to students, and from San Diego State University’s aspirations, and they are captured in the strategic plan. This plan provides both the directions the university wishes to pursue, and the steps that will allow us to achieve the goals. These steps include specific goals related to student success, multiple measures of how SDSU will gauge the progress, and they address how resources will be effectively allocated to ensure that the institution meets its goals.

The strategic plan also reflects the degree to which the three components it outlines—student success, research and creative endeavors, and community and communication—are inextricably linked. Perhaps most significantly, the university website for the strategic plan, allows us to share progress through regularly provided updates to the campus and broader community. Thus, the university can point to specific accomplishments, such as increased

numbers of faculty, numbers of students engaged in learning communities and other high-impact practices, the establishment of a writing and a mathematics centers, increased undergraduate engagement with research and the arts, and show how resources are being allocated to increase the effectiveness further. With such work already well underway, and building on previous achievements, the university is confident that it will continue to make significant advancements in meeting its goals to provide students with the skills, abilities, and habits of mind they will need to be successful personally and to make important contributions to our society.