

# WASC CAMPUS BRIEF

WASC Senior College and University Commission  
Accreditation Visit to San Diego State University

22-24 March 2016



SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

### A. *What is WASC and why are they coming to campus?*

**WASC Mission** (from [www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)): The WASC Senior College and University Commission is a regional accrediting agency serving a diverse membership of public and private higher education institutions throughout California, Hawaii, and the Pacific as well as a limited number of institutions outside the U.S. Through its work of peer review, based on standards agreed to by the membership, the Commission encourages continuous institutional improvement and assures the membership and its constituencies, including the public, that accredited institutions are fulfilling their missions in service to their students and the public good. The WASC Senior College and University Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as certifying institutional eligibility for federal funding in a number of programs, including student access to federal financial aid. (from <http://www.wascsenior.org/about>)

**Purposes of WASC Administration** (from [www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)): Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation as practiced by the WASC and the [other regional commissions](#) is a unique characteristic of American education. In many other countries the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, however, because of the recognized benefits, most of the eligible institutions in this and other regions have sought to become accredited.

The WASC accreditation process aids institutions in developing and sustaining effective educational programs and assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that an accredited institution has met high standards of quality and effectiveness.

The Commission accredits institutions, not individual programs. Therefore, in addition to assessing the academic quality and educational effectiveness of institutions, the Commission emphasizes institutional structures, processes, and resources.

The accreditation process is aimed at:

1. Assuring the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an accredited institution has demonstrated it meets the Commission's Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has been successfully reviewed under Commission Standards;
2. Promoting deep institutional engagement with issues of educational effectiveness and student learning, and developing and sharing good practices in assessing and improving the teaching and learning process;
3. Developing and applying Standards to review and improve educational quality and institutional performance, and validating these Standards and revising them through ongoing research and feedback;
4. Promoting within institutions a culture of evidence where indicators of performance are regularly developed and data collected to inform institutional decision making, planning, and improvement;
5. Developing systems of institutional review and evaluation that are adaptive to institutional context and purposes, that build on institutional evidence and support rigorous reviews, and reduce the burden and cost of accreditation; and
6. Promoting the active interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions that furthers the principles of improved institutional performance, educational effectiveness, and the process of peer review

**WASC Accreditation Visit to SDSU:** SDSU's last reaffirmation of accreditation was in 2006 (see materials at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu)). Our current reaffirmation process began with the submission of an [Institutional Report](#), a [Self Review Under the Standards](#), and an [Inventory of Educational Effectiveness](#) to WASC on 11 September 2015. Based on their review of these materials, a WASC Review Team identified twelve Commendations and four Lines of Inquiry for SDSU, which were presented and discussed via a videoconference-based Offsite Review with a SDSU leadership team on 19 November

2016. These Lines of Inquiry provide the general focus for the WASC Review Team's Accreditation Visit to our campus on 22-24 March 2016.

When responding to these Lines of Inquiry, the WASC Review Team wants to know that campus constituents are aware of, have thought deeply about, and have addressed (or have plans to address) these issues. We do not necessarily need to "have the answer" or even share their view of "the answer," but our approach should be robust, sustainable, and consistent with our institutional [Mission and Goals](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). The scheduled meetings with various campus constituents, along with the open forums for faculty, staff, and students, are opportunities for the WASC Review Team to gain multiple perspectives on their Lines of Inquiry and formulate final Commendations and Recommendations for the WASC Commission, who will use this information in their June 2016 deliberations and decision regarding SDSU's reaffirmation of accreditation.

The WASC Review Team for our reaffirmation of accreditation process is:

- [Dr. Kumble R. Subbaswamy](#), Chancellor, University of Massachusetts Amherst (Chair)
- [Dr. Jillian Kinzie](#), Associate Director, Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research and NSSE Institute (Asst. Chair)
- [Dr. Cecilia A. Conrad](#), Director, MacArthur Fellows Program
- [Dr. Francisco Hernandez](#), Emeritus Vice Chancellor for Students, UH, Manoa
- [Dr. Ralph Jay Hexter](#), Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, UC, Davis
- [Dr. Barbara Gross Davis](#), WASC Vice President (Institutional Liaison)

The WASC Steering Committee for our reaffirmation of accreditation process has been:

- Cathie Atkins, Associate Dean, College of Sciences
- Edmund Balsdon, Associate Dean, Graduate Research and Affairs
- Suzanne Bordelon, Professor, Rhetoric and Writing Studies
- Geoff Chase, Dean, Division of Undergraduate Studies (retired; former Accreditation Liaison Officer)
- Frank Harris, III, Associate Professor, Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education
- Kurt Lindemann, Associate Professor, School of Communication
- Nina Potter, Director of Assessment, College of Education
- Christy Samarkos, Associate Vice President of Campus Life
- Stephen Schellenberg, Interim Dean, Undergraduate Studies (current Accreditation Liaison Officer)

The remainder of this WASC Campus Brief largely consists of the *Commendations and Lines of Inquiry* from the WASC Review Team's [Summary of Lines of Inquiry and Guidelines: Offsite Review](#) document, with text-boxes of comments, highlights, and updates as assembled by the WASC Steering Committee through consultations across the campus community. A conscious effort has been made to minimize duplication of information previously presented within the Institutional Report and related materials; interested parties are directed to these materials for detailed information at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu). While this brief, by its very nature, cannot capture all of the great work going on within and among SDSU programs and units, we would like to acknowledge these efforts and their collective contribution to the success of our students and institution. Members of the campus community are welcome to contact the WASC Review Team confidentially to express any commendations, concerns, or comments regarding the process or campus; please see Appendix 1 for more information on this opportunity.

## ***B. WASC Review Team Commendations to the SDSU Community***

The WASC Review Team presented twelve Commendations during their videoconference-based Offsite Review on 20 November 2015. These Commendations are provided below in gray boxes followed by relevant institutional commentary.

The team commends SDSU for the following accomplishments and practices:

1. For not resting on the laurels of achievements from the previous reaffirmation cycle and continuing the positive momentum.

A commitment to continuous improvement and always moving forward and upward is a common theme across the campus, and we appreciate this overarching commendation from the WASC Review Team.

2. For improvements in retention and graduation rates while increasing the diversity of the student body and closing achievement gaps.

Over the past 15 years, San Diego State University has made significant progress in increasing graduation rates, particularly at the six-year graduation rate and with respect to closing the achievement gap for underrepresented students. In 2010, [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) noted that SDSU experienced a 17% increase, more than any other university in the United States, in its six-year graduation rates between 2003 and 2008. Two years later, the Education Trust released their 2012 [Replenishing Opportunity in America Case Study](#) that noted “from 2005 to 2010, San Diego State more than halved its graduation rate gap for underrepresented minority freshmen—from 19 to 8 percentage points.” More recently, the Educational Trust recognized SDSU for continued progress in improving graduation rates in their 2014 [Learning From High-Performing and Fast-Gaining Institutions Practice Guide](#) and highlighted SDSU as a case study in closing achievement gaps in their 2015 [Rising Tide: Do College Grad Rate Gains Benefit All Students?](#)

Over this same interval, SDSU has become more diverse (and was 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 15 of all universities in the United States for numbers of students studying abroad.

Our most recent graduation rate data for First Time Freshman (FTF) are 36.0% four-year graduation rate (Fall 2011 matriculation), 65.1% five-year graduation rate (Fall 2010 matriculation), and 68.5% six-year graduation rate (Fall 2009 matriculation). Our most recent FTF first-year retention rate is 89.3% (Fall 2014 matriculation).

3. For progress in internationalization, in particular in expanding study abroad participation rates.

Study abroad participation rates, defined as the number of students with an international experience divided by number of degrees granted, have steadily increased over the last four years from 22.2% to 31.2%. [Thirty-two](#) undergraduate degree programs currently require an international experience as part of their curricular requirements

According to the [Institute of International Education's 2015 Open Doors Report](#), SDSU is currently ranked 15th in terms of *Institutions Awarding Credit for Study Abroad* and *Total Number of Study Abroad Students: Doctoral-Granting Institutions*. Please see this recent [SDSU NewsCenter Article](#) for additional information.

The International Student Center, in collaboration with Student Affairs Communication Services, created the *Be International* initiative in 2013. The initiative has centralized opportunities for international and domestic students to interact through programmatic and mentoring initiatives and promoted opportunities for domestic students to study abroad.

Assessment of international experiences is in its nascent stage at SDSU. Programs requiring such experiences will be encouraged to align them with their Degree Learning Outcomes and develop appropriate assessment approaches. On a broader scale, the campus recently piloted the use of the [Global Perspectives Inventory](#) (used by 179 colleges and universities since 2008) as a general pre/post assessment instrument, and analyses of these results will inform our efforts moving forward.

4. For development of a comprehensive strategic plan with broad participation from university stakeholders.

Upon completion of the University's Strategic Planning Process, the final document, [Building on Excellence](#), was released in April 2013. The plan presented a diverse suite of specific initiatives within three broad institutional goals of Student Success, Research and Creative Endeavors, and Community and Communication. We have now completed the first two years of the plan's implementation. For recent updates on initiatives, please see the August 2015 Plan Update as well as the 2015-16 Priority Goals. As we embark upon the third year of the Strategic Plan's implementation, we express our appreciation to the University community for being involved in furthering the important initiatives within "Building on Excellence."

5. For remarkable success in fundraising.

San Diego State University's first-ever comprehensive *Campaign for SDSU* began on 1 July 2007 with a goal of \$500 million dollars. Despite the recession, the campaign met this initial goal in 2014, and then extended the campaign for three additional years with a new goal of \$750 million dollars. Recent reports on fundraising include the [Campaign for SDSU Update](#) (1 February 2016) and the [Culture of Philanthropy at SDSU Report](#) (September 2015). Highlights of the *Campaign for SDSU* to date include:

- \$672 million dollars raised as of 19 February 2016
- 119 individuals donated more than \$1,000,000
- Conrad Prebys donated \$20 million dollars, the largest gift in university history, to name the student union
- New facilities constructed such as the *Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center* and *Jeff Jacobs JAM Center*
- SDSU's endowment increased from \$104 million to \$188 million
- SDSU received the *2015 CASE Award for Overall Performance and Sustained Excellence in Fundraising*
- \$750 million dollar goal is projected to be met ahead of schedule, likely by December 2016
- Over the campaign, SDSU's annual fundraising increased from \$45 million to over \$100 million per year.

6. For capital improvements designed to strengthen student success, particularly the facilities for addressing the needs of commuter students.

The Commuter Resource Center opened in the Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union in January 2014. The center hired a full-time coordinator, student affairs graduate programs assistants, and a series of mentors/tutors to provide support programs, collaborative community activities and academic success initiatives. Through an active social media presence and direct mail communication to commuter students, the center quickly became a popular destination for commuter students.

Today, one-third of all visits to the Student Life & Leadership offices are for commuter services (over 3,000 visits per month.) The center collaborates with commuter learning communities to provide academic mentoring and tutoring, transition seminar courses, general education discussion and analysis courses, and academic support programming. The Writing Center offers satellite office hours in the facility and the Career Center provides intentionally focused commuter-to-career programming. The center operates a free computer printing program with several public computers to support classwork printing. In addition to programming support, the center simply provides a home base where students can refrigerate food and microwave lunches. The center's proximity to various student organizations also promotes the engagement of commuter students.

The SDSU Writing Center opened in Fall 2013 and welcomed a tenured faculty director in Fall 2014. The Center works with undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines to develop and extend their knowledge and performance of academic literacies through coaching from tutors who engage them in conversations about their writing and broaden their understanding of audience, genre, and context. The Center also works with faculty to promote success in writing instruction and to support the teaching of writing across the university. The Center has had approximately 15,629 contacts with students in the last 2.5 years, with most contacts in the form of 30-minute, individual tutorials with a tutor to discuss writing assignments. The Center also offers workshops to support students in writing personal statements, preparing for the Writing Placement Assessment exam, working on theses and dissertations, and learning strategies for academic reading and writing. The Center also has worked with faculty on designing writing assignments, including topics ranging from using writing to engage students in working on key problems in a discipline to creating rubrics to evaluate writing assignments.

The SDSU Math and Statistics Learning Center opened its doors on 12 Sept 2015, and helped 687 unique students through a total of 2,880 visits during its first semester of operation. Student visitors in Pre-calculus, Calculus I, and Calculus II courses showed significant higher average letter grades compared to non-visitors. Increased demand recently led to the Center's relocation from an 800 ft<sup>2</sup> classroom to a 2,100 ft<sup>2</sup> facility that includes three offices, a conference room, and a large open space with configurable tables and white boards for different instructional needs. University support has also enabled the purchase of additional mobile desks and chairs, whiteboards, and furniture to establish a welcoming space that supports a community of students and tutors. The Center's tenured faculty director is currently collaborating with faculty on several early intervention programs for specific courses. The common goal of these programs is to identify and encourage students who display deficits within their current skill set to build their understanding and develop the necessary conceptual knowledge to apply mathematics within a variety of STEM disciplines.

7. For maintaining a high volume of research grants and contracts in a very competitive national environment.

Since 2008, SDSU faculty and researchers have attracted more than \$1 billion in contracts and grants. The overall success rate for all proposals submitted exceeded 60%. For 2015 NIH proposals, SDSU's new proposal success rate was 33.3% and our overall proposal success rate was 58.7% (compared to 2014 national average overall success rate of 18.1%). For 2015 National Science Foundation proposals, SDSU's new proposal success rate was 17.5% and our overall proposal success rate was 25.6% (compared to the 2015 national average overall success rate of 24.0%).

8. For astute financial management to maintain the quality of the university while mitigating the deep cuts in state appropriations.

In the five years from AY08/09 through AY13/14, 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.

More recently, university and student leaders partnered to develop a student-endorsed [Student Success Fee](#) (SSF) dedicated to increasing the number of course sections, increasing the number of tenure-track faculty lines, and enhancing student academic-related activities. The SSF-supported faculty hiring plan is currently in the second of its four-year implementation plan. To date, the following outcomes have been realized:

- Hired the first two cohorts of SSF faculty
- Increased course sections every semester since implementation of SSF
- Funded 81 student-proposed academic-related programs and activities in Spring 2015 (\$453,025)
- Funded 63 student-proposed academic-related programs and activities in Spring 2016 (\$718,296)

9. For implementation of an integrated program of high impact practices and adopting policies that require these experiences for undergraduates.

Research on High Impact Practices (HIPs) demonstrates that they provide a myriad of educational benefits to participating students. Initial forays into developing HIPs on our campus have garnered wide support, and Priority Area 2 of the Strategic Plan to “Increase Transformational Educational Experiences” articulates SDSU’s commitment to a number of HIP practices. As an important Strategic Plan initiative, we have initiated assessments, surveys, and plans to develop more in-depth studies to identify how these practices facilitate student success and how they can be scaled up so that all students can participate in multiple HIP experiences.

10. For the tremendous efforts to build the infrastructure to create transparency and a data- and evidence-based decision-making culture.

Economic challenges in higher education often require making choices among several options, so it is imperative that such decisions be based upon the best evidence that a program will produce the intended outcomes. In addition, new initiatives must include a strong and impartial evaluation component to (1) assure that they produce the intended outcomes and (2) promote iterative improvement that will advance these outcomes.

11. For support of the faculty as they expand undergraduate research opportunities.

In addition to encouraging faculty to incorporate graduate and undergraduate support into their external funding proposals, we continue to invest into opportunities to engage undergraduates in research, scholarship, and creative endeavors. In addition to the annual [Student Research Symposium](#), examples include:

- In 1992, the College of Sciences created an infrastructure known as the [Center for the Advancement of Students in Academia](#) (CASA) to coordinate and encourage collaboration among seventeen STEM programs serving minority and disadvantaged (academically and economically) students. The mission of CASA is to promote the academic development of the next generation of underrepresented research scientists and health professionals in the College of Sciences (COS) and the College of Engineering (COE). These programs provide support to STEM students at all educational levels, including transfer and graduate students, through enrichment courses, seminars, workshops, and faculty/student research participation. CASA has developed into a mature program in which local and federally funded programs work cooperatively, sharing resources, developmental activities, and some infrastructure support.

- Since 2006, the [Faculty-Student Mentoring Program](#) (FSMP) annually serves 110 Pell-Grant-eligible juniors and seniors to participate in undergraduate research, scholarship and creative activities. Faculty mentors design two-semester training programs to support students to complete a research project as individuals or as part of a team. Students routinely present their work at the Student Research Symposium and at professional conferences when appropriate.
- During AY14/15, ~\$65,000 was awarded through the Undergraduate Research Program Mini-Grant Initiative to support 41 undergraduates' engagement in this HIP. All of these students presented at the SDSU Student Research Symposium, and many were presenters/authors/co-authors at 25 different professional meetings across the country.
- In Spring 2015, the College of Arts and Letters published the first volume of its [Undergraduate Research Journal in the Humanities and Social Sciences](#), the first for this disciplinary area in the California State University system.
- In Summer 2015, ~\$85,000 (~\$63,000 as student summer salary) was awarded through the Summer Undergraduate Research Program to support 36 undergraduates from across the disciplinary spectrum. After this first year of the program, many of these student will be presenting at the upcoming SDSU Student Research Symposium and plan to present at professional meetings in the future.
- Recently, new curricular proposals have been submitted to provide pathways for undergraduates to engage in research, scholarship, and creative activities through lower- and upper-division General Education courses within the different General Education Areas.

12. For outreach to underserved local communities.

We are proud of our commitment to our underserved local communities through our various programs:

- The [Price Community Scholars](#) program provides financial support for first-generation local high school students with track records of strong academic achievement and leadership from City Heights area of San Diego (primarily from Hoover and Crawford High Schools).
- 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.
- The [Educational Opportunity Program](#), with more than 4,000 students of which ~40% come from our service area, is the largest in the CSU and boasts a six-year graduation rate that 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 six-year graduation rate at SDSU.
- The [Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center](#) provides veterans, reservists, and active duty personnel, as well as their dependents, with resources to 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.

In addition to the above programs that promote access and success, we are also committed to community engagement through such programs as the [Service Learning and Community Engagement Program](#) (SLCEP), which implements the CSU California's Call to Service Initiative through courses with a focus on civic engagement, civic participation and civic responsibility, and the [Sage Project](#), which is a partnership between San Diego State University (SDSU) and a local government through which students within formal courses engage in meaningful real-world projects and contribute to pressing social needs in a community in SDSU's service area. Our outreach also extends to various programs at the K-12 level;

for example, a variety of partnerships through the [Center for Mathematics and Science Education \(CRIMSE\)](#).

### *C. Lines of Inquiry for Accreditation Visit*

The Review Team developed four Lines of Inquiry and related questions, presented below in gray text-boxes, that represent the major foci for their Accreditation Visit during 22-24 March 2016. While WASC does not require any written responses to these Lines of Inquiry or related questions, the Steering Committee conferred across the campus community to gather particularly relevant information for the benefit of the Review Team as well as the broader campus community.

**LOI 1. Educational Effectiveness and Assessment:** SDSU has made significant strides in the development of a culture of assessment and has put in place a structure and apparatus for supporting assessment activities. The University has identified institutional and departmental learning outcomes, many departments have completed curricular maps and assessment plans, and several departments have collected evidence of student learning and reflected on the findings. Almost all programs have submitted formal reports on their assessment efforts and the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Committee is providing helpful oversight and guidance to programs. However, the team notes there is still much work to be done to ensure that all programs are fully participating in the assessment process, including closing the loop and documenting improvements to student learning. In addition, the team is interested in learning more about how co-curricular programs that contribute to learning and success are assessed and how data about the quality of programs and evidence of student learning are used to inform educational improvements. The first line of inquiry is related to the extent to which investments in strengthening assessment have resulted in a culture of improvement, including using data in decision-making.

1.1. The team would like to know more about what you have learned from your recent efforts to assess general education and how you concluded that a different strategy was needed. What does this mean for evaluating general education and determining the path for general education assessment going forward?

*History of GE Assessment* – In response to recommendations from SDSU’s 2005/2006 WASC reaffirmation of accreditation, a General Education Task Force was appointed in September 2006 to focus on (1) developing a clearer set of GE goals and outcomes, (2) achieving a greater sense of GE coherency and transparency, and (3) developing a GE assessment strategy. In spring 2007, the Task Force presented recommendations to the University Senate that (1) presented a new GE outcomes framework, (2) required all GE courses to emphasize the coherence and intent of GE through common syllabus language, and (3) proposed a GE assessment for implementation through the GE Program Committee and three sub-committees (GE Area Goals, GE Essential Capacities, and GE Curriculum; see *SDSU Institutional Report*, p. 10-11).

In June 2009, the GE Area Goals Subcommittee assessed students’ mastery of the four goals for the Communication and Critical Thinking (CCT) area of the revised GE program. The Committee found that “for the most part, our students are practicing and mastering the four principal goals,” but that more emphasis could be placed on Goals 3 and 4. The Committee recommended that the GE Program Committee work with those departments offering CCT courses “to help them develop assignments that further engage students in learning that leads more directly” to the practice and mastery of Goals 3 and 4. The committee also recommended that the GE Committee “facilitate yearly or biennial meetings with representatives from participating departments so that faculty from across the disciplines can share best practices and compare notes” (see Annual Report of GE Area Goals Assessment Subcommittee, June 2009).

From 2008 to 2014, state appropriations for SDSU declined by \$78 million, and this dramatic 50% reduction led to a widespread and organic focus on major-required courses across the university. In addition, while the GE learning outcomes were broadly embraced, the adopted structure of the GE committee structure proved unsustainable. Thus, in 2014, the Senate revised the organizational structure for GE assessment 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 (GECAC). While GEGAC workload has largely remained focused on curriculum proposals, various programs and colleges have moved forward in assessing GE, and these are presented below.

*GE Assessment within the College of Arts and Letters (CAL)* – In Spring 2013, a CAL faculty team initiated a collaborative project to develop and pilot rubrics to assess student performance levels with respect to different GE Area Goals. In a series of workshops, twenty faculty members from across CAL used authentic student work to generate rubrics for assessing student learning in lower- and upper-level tiers of the GE program in the areas of Communication and Critical Thinking (CCT), Humanities (HUM), and Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). A summary of the results from these initial efforts is available in the [CAL GE Assessment Project Executive Summary](#).

During the 2013–2014 academic year, these efforts continued through an extensive assessment of nearly two-thousand samples of major written assignments across these GE Areas, with each sample being independently evaluated by two trained faculty raters. Subsequent analyses demonstrated the effectiveness of this community-generated rubrics-based approach, an improved inter-rater reliability, and a baseline distribution of proficiency levels in lower- to upper-division GE courses. These efforts not only provide a baseline for conversations and improvements moving forward but also contributed to the broader Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) through a [peer-reviewed publication](#) (Csomay, E., E. Pollard, S. Bordelon, and A. Beck. “Researching Student Learning in a Two-Tiered General Education Program.” *Journal of General Education* 64.3 (2015): 171-195.).

*GE Assessment within the School of Communication* – Since 2009, the School of Communication has been assessing learning in their COMM 103 Oral Communication course, which fulfills the Oral Communication GE Requirement for ~ 90% of SDSU undergraduates. The *Interactive Media Package for the Assessment of Communication and Critical Thinking* (IMPACCT), a proprietary scale and software program, has been administered to approximately 15,000 COMM 103 students and results from the 200-item Time 1 and Time 2 surveys and peer assessments demonstrate that students perceive themselves to improve in their communication skills over the course of the semester. This 360-degree assessment has helped the School of Communication better connect curriculum design, learning objectives, and assessment.

Faculty in the School of Communication also recently developed a “[Communications Presentations](#)” white paper as a common resource for all faculty and students. The white paper 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.) 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.

*GE Assessment within the Natural Sciences* – Lower- and upper-division GE courses within the Natural Sciences span a wide range of scientific sub-disciplines. In spring 2013, a College of Science team formed to pursue a metadisciplinary assessment of science literacy. The team collaborated with Dr. Ed Nuhfer (Emeritus, Humboldt State) and colleagues to deploy their then in-development *Science Literacy Concept Inventory* (SLCI) instrument; SDSU’s participation significantly increased their sample population, and their peer-reviewed work will be published in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Microbiology and Biology Education*. SLCI survey results from seven lower-division courses and six upper-division GE Natural Sciences courses (i.e., 2,509 students; 81% response rate) were combined with

institutionally-derived student data to explore the landscape of SLCI scores with respect to student demographics. Modest freshman-to-senior gains were seen in SLCI scores accompanied by numerous confounding variables related to student demographics. For example, incoming academic preparedness (i.e., SAT/ACT) and general university performance (i.e., GPA) were strong predictors of total SLCI score for both lower- and upper-division courses (Atkins et al., 2013, Keck Project Kaleidoscope Meeting). With the formal publication of the SLCI instrument, we plan to reboot this SLCI-based work, combining it with another instrument (*Test of Science Literacy Skills*; Gormally et al., 2012) and mapping SDSU's GE Area Goals and Essential Capacities onto items in each instrument to provide greater insight into student achievement and opportunities for program- and course-level improvements.

*GE Assessment for Quantitative Reasoning* – Assessment of Quantitative Reasoning is being addressed by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics as part of the strategic plan for student success. This assessment focused on first-year mathematics courses taken largely by students in STEM majors. Analysis of course data from 2011-2014 found that success rates in many of these courses were relatively low and that student attrition was high. As indicated on pages 45-48 of the [Institutional Report](#), significant changes have been made to 1) address structural and pedagogical challenges to improving student success, 2) to insure consistent learning expectations and common outcomes and tests across multiple sections, and 3) to inform broader discussions about and support for quantitative reasoning for all students. Iterative improvements will be informed by learning analytics. More recent developments have included the use of ALEKS, which is an online adaptive learning program and placement tool to assure appropriate course placement and to establish proficiency in prerequisite material. Supplemental Instruction has been introduced in some sections and tutoring and math workshops are now available through the Math and Statistics Learning Center. This effort to improve student success in math and quantitative reasoning is intentional, and iterative improvements and innovations will continue through second-year quantitative reasoning and for courses designed for non-STEM majors.

*Moving Forward in GE Assessment*– A common challenge for GE assessment will be in encouraging faculty to engage in clarifying their learning expectations for students and using assessment data to inform curriculum changes at the course- and program-levels. Building acceptance, cooperation, and collaboration among faculty across disciplines is critical to accomplish the essential analyses and required changes. Deciding on the most appropriate and useful assessment instruments and methods also remains a challenge. Relationships among demographic factors and academic performance are clearly complex, and we are developing strategies to explore these further. Aligning course- and program-level learning outcomes is an iterative process requiring leadership and institutional support. These decentralized GE assessment efforts have generated renewed faculty interest in the GE program. We plan to capitalize on this momentum by:

- Developing a more sustainable process for assessing GE as a university-wide commitment.
- Reviewing syllabi to see how the GE goals are being integrated into GE courses.
- Facilitating biennial meetings with representatives from participating departments so that faculty from across the disciplines can share best practices (as recommended in 2009 by the GE Area Goals Subcommittee).
- Planning Center for Teaching and Learning events focusing on GE assessment, as has been done in the past with a variety of faculty (most recently by School of Communication faculty in Spring 2016).
- Supporting key faculty in GE assessment to participate in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Summer Institute on GE Assessment, which will be held 4-8 June 2016 at Boston University.

1.2. How will you ensure greater faculty engagement in the assessment process, specifically the use of WEAVE in documenting and guiding the work? The team will want to discuss with faculty their thoughts and reflections on assessment, their views of WEAVE, and what they have learned from assessment results for instructional improvement.

SDSU's Strategic Plan makes clear that student success is a core institutional value, and helps us envision ways we can better prepare students for the challenges they will face throughout their careers. One of the chief ways to ensure this ongoing commitment is to embrace intentional and collaborative processes through which we can reflect on what our students need to achieve to be truly distinctive upon and beyond graduation. Assessment is an intentional process that affords this reflection, and also provides the opportunity to share our educational expectations and our students' achievements with various stakeholders, including the students themselves, their families, potential employers, accrediting agencies, and the broader public. As with our Strategic Plan, our commitment to assessment *for* student learning builds on what we have accomplished.

The WEAVE online relational database system for reporting, managing, and tracking assessment efforts was adopted by the University in 2011. Based on feedback from the campus community, the Student Learning Outcomes Committee subsequently developed the [Program Assessment Primer](#) to streamline WEAVE reporting via annotated workflows and refocus faculty efforts on using assessment to increase student achievement via curricular improvements. As programs continue their assessment efforts, we recognize the need to evaluate whether WEAVE is meeting our evolving institutional needs and providing the necessary transparency and flexibility to demonstrate student achievement and program responsiveness. In the meantime, to facilitate assessment efforts across campus, we have now consolidated all assessment resources into a single [assessment.sdsu.edu](http://assessment.sdsu.edu) website.

Designed to serve as a program-level version of WASC's [Educational Effectiveness Framework](#), the SDSU *Program Assessment Inventory* was most recently deployed in Fall 2015 and evoked responses from 75 assessment coordinators across the campus. Highlights of results from this inventory include:

- Nearly 80% view their *Degree Learning Outcomes* as “*Developed*” or “*Highly Developed*,” but only a third post their *Degree Learning Outcomes* on their program websites; comments also revealed continuing confusion regarding the relationship between Course Learning Outcomes and Degree Learning Outcomes.
- In response to the prompt of “*Where Findings merit, resulting Action Plans are evidence-based, designed to improve student learning, and implemented as planned followed by re-assessment (i.e., loop-closing)*”, 53% of respondents characterized their program's efforts as “*Highly Developed*” or “*Developed*.” While these self-reported characterizations appear broadly accurate with respect to the posting of *Action Plans* within WEAVE, they appear overly optimistic with respect to the actual implementation of *Action Plans* and their subsequent reassessment, which are essential steps for ensuring program efforts have their intended result of increasing student achievement.
- Setting aside the needs for more resources (e.g., release time, etc.), respondents ranked their greatest departmental needs to support program assessment to be:
  - Engaging faculty across the department (27%)
  - Developing *Measures* and their relationship to *Degree Learning Outcomes* (21%)
  - Assistance in technical aspects of WEAVE (17%)
  - Developing and implementing *Action Plans* (13%)
  - Developing *Findings* (4%)
- Most conversations about assessment happen within programs through one-on-one discussions (64%), and less frequently as regular agenda items at program-wide meetings (47%) or through regular or ad hoc meetings of program assessment committees (53%).

Notable examples of how program assessment is being used to improve program quality and student achievement across the campus include:

- English and Comparative Literature has used assessment data from their ENGL508 Writing of Criticism course to inform faculty discussion and development of *Action Plans* at their annual fall retreat.
- History has implemented various *Action Plans* based on their *Findings* from multiple courses to create a new upper-division writing-focused course (HIST 390 Writing in History).
- Rhetoric and Writing Studies has developed a curriculum map as a framework to guide the frequency and methods by which the program assesses their curricular content and structure.
- Philosophy instructors for multi-section courses now exchange essays for scoring using a common rubric.
- The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee for the College of Business Administration has used *Findings* to develop *Action Plans* including the development of a new required major course (Foundations of Business in a Global Environment) to increase student achievement in their *Degree Learning Outcome* on global perspective and the institution of a college-wide Toastmaster's program to increase student achievement in their *Degree Learning Outcome* on oral communication.
- In response to concerns regarding assessment *Findings* related to the Degree Learning Outcomes on skills and knowledge in developing preschool curriculum, Child and Family Development created an *Action Plan* that included identifying a more appropriate textbook focused on curriculum development and revising key course assignments to include opportunities for planning preschool activities. Also, in response to concerns about the *Degree Learning Outcomes* on student teaching dispositions, the *Action Plan* included developing a rubric was developed to be used in field placement courses when students are observed as they teach children and interact with parents.
- In response to lower-than-expected scores in the *Degree Learning Outcome* in the area of academic language, the Initial Teacher Credential Program implemented an *Action Plan* that included faculty professional development to ensure that all faculty were able to support students across teacher credential programs.
- Civil Engineering assessment *Targets* that have not been met are being addressed through increased tutorial time and sample problems with specific courses.
- The School of Nursing has used *Findings* from the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) to integrate student literature reviews in a number of different areas, including a comprehensive literature search and paper on leadership. Pedagogical and curricular changes included scheduled group sessions with a librarian and active promotion of student-instructor interactions after class and during office hours. These efforts appear to have had the intended effect as recent re-assessments have met the *Target* performance expectations.
- In Social Work, *Findings* that the *Target* for their *Degree Learning Outcome* on advancing human rights and social justice were not being met led to an *Action Plan* involving faculty increasing their curricular focus on social justice within three courses and promoting at least one organized event each semester focused on social justice. Subsequent re-assessment shows that this *Target* is now being met.
- The School of Communication created standard rubric items from which faculty choose certain items for their own grading rubrics. The numbers for these particular items are reported to the School's assessment officer at the end of every semester and subsequently discussed at faculty meetings. Faculty use this information to inform future grading practices for those learning outcomes.
- To improve student achievement on the *Degree Learning Outcome* to "critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness," faculty in Journalism and Media Studies developed and implemented a comprehensive *Action Plan* that involved changes in seven courses spanning introductory to capstone levels.

- Student underachievement in Astronomy’s *Degree Learning Outcome* to “express effective scientific arguments in written or oral form to professional scientists or to the general public” led to an *Action Plan* to provide more opportunities for student practice in identifying and explicating the logic of a scientific research project.
- *Findings* by Library and Information Access demonstrated that a persistent percentage of students have not mastered basic concepts such as locating a book on the shelf or the capacity to develop an effective search strategy for their topic. Library faculty are addressing this issue by working with RWS 100 colleagues with respect to implementing new ways of teaching information literacy capacities.

Finally, as SDSU continues in its five-year Student-Success-Fee-supported hiring plan, we have a unique opportunity to establish the expectations for, and build the capacity of, new faculty to employ evidence-based, action-oriented assessment as a primary means to demonstrate the “Teaching Effectiveness” component of our Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) process, and thereby contribute to the broader educational effectiveness of their programs and academic achievement of our students. Such efforts are consistent with our established commitments to student success and high quality academic programs.

1.3. SDSU has committed to an array of high-impact practices and enriching co-curricular experiences to enhance student learning. Yet, the assessment plans for these experiences are in various stages of development and completion. The team is particularly interested in learning more about plans for assessing and evaluating programs created to enrich learning and support student success, and the how the evidence will be used to determine effectiveness and identify programs worthy of greater investment.

A core component for many of our efforts to assess and evaluate high-impact practices and co-curricular experiences has been our ability to define various sub-populations (e.g., under-represented, commuter, first-generation, low-income, non-college-ready) within our broader student population, where a given student may be a member of multiple sub-populations. Within an equity-minded framework, we are then able to assess the extent to which these sub-populations experience equal access and success at SDSU using various quantitative and qualitative approaches. Four commonly employed types of analysis employed within Student Affairs and Academic Affairs are:

*Trend Analysis* – We utilize trend analysis to identify and monitor the success of various sub-populations with respect to key indicators such as graduation rate, retention rate, and academic performance. These indicators are tracked using longitudinal cohort databases for both first-time freshmen (FTF) and transfer students. Evidence of impact resulting from this type of analysis includes improvements over time and decreasing achievement gaps with regard to various key student success indicators. The results from this analysis when paired with the timing of high impact practices and co-curricular experiences are used to assess the return-on-investment value of these practices and experiences in terms of how they positively affect retention and graduation rates, particularly for specific sub-populations.

*Utilization Analysis* – As a standard practice, our students are required to swipe in their student ID cards when they participate in workshops and programs, seek counseling and advising services, or seek tutoring at our Writing and Math Centers. These utilization data are then incorporated, at the individual student level, into our longitudinal cohort databases, which allows us to determine if any particular sub-population is disproportionately under-utilizing critical programs or services. Evidence of impact resulting from this type of analysis includes equitable student utilization of program and services through effective outreach, advising, and referral. The results from this analysis are used to: (1) identify gaps in our outreach and referral process and (2) identify student sub-groups that we need to examine further as to understanding access barriers.

*Impact Analysis* – Student engagement, sense of belonging, satisfaction and community are all enhanced through opportunities for students to participate in various High Impact Practices (Kuh, 2008), such as learning communities, internships, study abroad, undergraduate research, and service learning. Self-reported pre/post surveys are routinely utilized to assess the effectiveness of these High Impact Practices. Evidence of impact for this type of analysis includes the extent to which intended outcomes are achieved such as equitable student participation and increased self-reported levels of engagement, sense of belonging, satisfaction and community. The assessment results are also used for co-curricular collaborative dialogue with a focus on how these high impact practices and experiences can be improved.

*Predictive Analysis* – The longitudinal cohort databases described earlier are also used in developing and testing student success models through higher-level statistical modeling (e.g., structural equations, logistic regression, etc.). Evidence of impact resulting from this type of analysis includes a better understanding of factors affecting student success, particularly with regard to various target sub-populations, which in turn has allowed us to strategically allocate limited resources such that they maximize student success and achievement in an inclusive manner.

Such analyses have been standard within many programs within Student Affairs and are increasingly being adopted across Academic Affairs as a means to improve effectiveness and identify programs worthy of greater investment.

**LOI 2. Undergraduate Student Experience, Climate and Post-Graduation Success.** The institution has significantly increased the graduation and retention rates for all students with a special emphasis on the success rates of underrepresented minority students. The institution has significantly increased the number of programs and efforts that contribute to a successful undergraduate student experience. While the institution report provided rich data on graduation and success rates, the team is interested in learning more about the overall student experience. The team is also curious about student’s perceptions of and satisfaction with their undergraduate experience and beyond.

2.1. What survey data, if any, are collected to assess the quality of the student experience in areas such as advising, academic support and student services, and campus climate? In what ways, if any, does the student experience differ for subpopulations including racial-ethnic minorities, low-income first-generation students, commuter students, and transfer students?

*Survey Data* – Our most recent and consistent survey data are from those students who: (1) attended summer orientation, (2) participated in our commuter learning communities (pre/post), (3) participated in student organizations, (4) visited the counseling and psychological services, and (5) applied for graduation. However, the focus of most of these surveys was to assess the impact of these programs and services on the students in terms of their level of academic skill development, campus engagement, and personal development. Furthermore, depending on availability of demographic data, comparative analysis among subpopulations was limited.

*Studies and Analyses* – We have also conducted various studies and analyses with an emphasis on particular target populations (e.g., commuter, underrepresented, low income, first generation). Sub-population differences were examined with regard to student success indicators (e.g., retention and graduation). For example, key findings from one study comparing commuter and residential students found that first-time freshmen who lived on campus in their first year:

- Had higher 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates
- Were less likely be on probation in their first year
- Were likely to continue past their sophomore and junior years
- Had higher academic GPA’s

- When controlling for pre-academic performance, financial need, and first year academic success, living on campus remained a significant positive factor in predicting 4-, 5-, and 6-year grad. rates
- Compared to Non-College-Ready students who were commuters, College Ready residential students had significantly higher 6-year graduation rates.

*Campus Climate* – A sexual violence campus climate survey was completed at the end of AY14/15 and results are currently being analyzed. For the AY15/16 year, a campus diversity climate survey is currently in process, and results are expected shortly.

2.2. How does the university assess the quality of the student experience at the branch campuses? What have you learned about the branch campus student experience?

SDSU-IVC does not have a formal process in place to assess the quality of the student experience. However, conversations with the SDSU-IVC Associated Students indicate that:

- Students feel their experience is more like that of a private institution (personal, small class size) with the advantage of paying state fees.
- Faculty, staff, and administrators know the names of many students through their interactions in the classroom, research projects, and campus events.
- Many students are sponsored to attend conferences and conduct research.
- Students can complete their degree in a timely manner.

Moving forward, we will be exploring opportunities to coordinate with SDSU-IVC leadership to extend the various surveys conducted on the main campus to the SDSU-IVC students, and to share these results with the SDSU-IVC leadership team.

2.3. What data, if any, are collected from recent graduates and alumni regarding job placement and career success?

*Job Placement* – Career Services has conducted an [Undergraduate Outcomes Survey](#) twice a year since 2007 with an average response rate of 29%. All graduating students are sent an email invitation to complete the survey through a unique link and three reminder emails are sent during the four weeks that the survey is open. Career Services works in conjunction with Analytic Studies and Institutional Research to update these outcomes data in the [College Portrait of Undergraduate Education](#) program, which is part of the Voluntary System of Accountability. Recent efforts to increase the response rate include partnering with the Finance and Accountancy chairs to integrate the survey into their capstone courses – an approach that may be expanded to other capstone courses across campus. Student Affairs is also aligning the survey with a campaign for Aztecs Hiring Aztecs! (AHA!). The first phase of this pilot campaign is underway for May/August 2016, with efforts to urge alumni and employers to encourage students to participate in the survey. The emphasis of the campaign is to create awareness that increased response rates allow the university to demonstrate the value of a SDSU degree. Future efforts to expand this campaign will involve working with alumni and employers to demonstrate the career readiness of SDSU graduates.

*Career Success* – Career Services partnered with the Office of Alumni Engagement (formerly the Alumni Association) to create a student-alumni engagement program that focuses on career development. The Aztec Mentor Program (AMP) required a substantial number of alumni to register to allow for student-alumni mentor pairings to occur. In August 2013, Career Services and Alumni Engagement sent an email invitation inviting alumni who were established in their careers to make a difference in the career development of San Diego State University students. The incentives for alumni to participate in this program include:

- Personal satisfaction of giving back to SDSU through work with the mentee
- Exposure to upcoming graduates as potential employees

- Professional development from reflecting on their own work practices
- Investment in the future regional workforce
- Develop closer links with San Diego State University
- Develop skills in coaching, mentoring and professional development

Additionally, evidence of the ability of this program to engage alumni who perceive themselves as successful and have the confidence to use this career experience in guiding others is demonstrated in the fact that enrolled mentors have grown each semester from 40 in Fall 2013 to over 1,300 in Spring 2016. Moreover, Career Services now tracks the addition of new mentors to the program, which result from an expanded campaign that includes YouTube videos featuring SDSU's President, alumni who are mentoring students, and students who are being mentored. These efforts have helped recruit 265 new mentor in fall 2015 and 280 in spring 2016.

2.4. The team would also like to know more about the extent to which the assessment of student experiences is used in evaluating advising and different co-curricular programs.

The Student Success Committee, chaired by Provost Enwemeka and VPSA Rivera, has undertaken a number of new initiatives focused on increasing student graduation rates and enhancing students' academic experiences at SDSU. The work of this committee has been based on both formal and informal assessments. Some examples include:

*Academic Advising* – The first Provost's Academic Advising Forum was held on 11 September 2015 with more than 250 faculty and staff advisers, department chairs, and deans. The recommendations put forth from this event include (1) increased need for cross-campus adviser communication (notes and tracking), (2) improved systems for analyzing student progress to degree, and (3) greater adviser training and development. The second Provost's Academic Advising Forum will be held on 23 March 2016, and campus advisers will be updated on the progress of their recommendations. Also initiated in AY15/16 was the *Provost's Outstanding Academic Advising Awards* which garnered 53 nominations and 12 awards celebrated at a recognition luncheon. Basic- and master-level certificate workshops in academic advising began in fall 2015 and are on going. In addition, with regard to academic advising, the Academic Advising Center under the supervision of Enrollment Services conducted a survey to assess students' learning and satisfaction with academic advising services. Data were collected anonymously from more than 1,600 SDSU undergraduates during the Spring and Summer 2015 terms (see Requested Documents for survey results). These data were not collected in a manner that would enable disaggregation by student subgroups. However, future efforts to assess students' experiences and learning in academic advising will prioritize doing so.

*Super Seniors* – Lists of students with 150+ units earned and those with 120-149 units were generated by college and provided to the deans for colleges to create specific pathways to graduation for these students. This was done in 2015 and again in 2016. The interventions resulted in a significant increase in the percent of graduation and graduation applications filed.

*Swirling Pre-Majors* – A pilot project funded by the President's Leadership Fund has created an interdivisional project to identify students in specified colleges who are not making progress moving from their pre major to the major. More intrusive academic advising has forged new and more realistic pathways for these students to make progress to their degree.

*Courses with High Failure Rates* – Courses with an exceptionally high failure rates are being researched to determine possible reasons given the academic profile of SDSU's incoming students. The colleges/departments have started looking at possible changes/interventions to help support the success of students in these classes. Some of the interventions to date include changing the modality of instruction, alternative placement testing, supplemental instruction, common learning outcomes/textbooks, etc. in all sections of one course, faculty development, etc.

*Changes in Policy and Implementation* – A suite of policy and implementation changes recently have been made that are designed to improve both retention and graduation, including:

- *Incomplete Grades*: Faculty are now required to file an incomplete grade agreement with terms and timelines.
- *Cashiers Holds*: Students owing \$200 or less no longer have their registration held. Initial analysis indicates positive outcomes
- *Leave of Absence*: Students filing a Leave of Absence are now required to get their college adviser's signature before approval. Work is underway to fold the Stop Out policy in with the Leave of Absence policy.

*End of Course Crashing*: The previous practice of “crashing classes” is over. The Wait List debuted in spring 2016. The Wait List allows students who need/want a section of a class to be ranked by their need for that class/section to make progress to graduation.

2.5. The university has done much to improve the overall campus climate. Does the university assess campus climate for selected groups of students, including those from underrepresented minority populations? How is campus climate impacting overall student satisfaction?

As described earlier in LOI 2.1, a sexual violence campus climate survey was completed at the end of AY14/15, and a campus diversity climate survey is currently underway. Analysis and results from both of these surveys are pending. In addition, we are planning to add campus climate and student satisfaction items to our pre/post learning community surveys for the various student success pathways (e.g., Casa Azteca, Compact Scholars, Harambee).

**LOI 3. Graduate Education:** As the institutional report states in its very first paragraph, “SDSU offers 106 master's programs, and 22 doctoral degree programs at its main campus” and an additional master’s program at the IVC (p. 1). Data about individual programs are accessible in multiple university webpages, but we note the institutional report elsewhere says surprisingly little more about the place and role of graduate education at SDSU. (One exception: “With 21 doctoral programs, SDSU is classified as a “high research activity” institution by Carnegie Foundation” [pp. 18-19; a minor point, but is it 21 or 22?]). The team will be seeking a more holistic understanding of SDSU’s involvement in graduate education.

3.1. Is the current set of degree programs, at both the master’s and doctoral levels, likely to change, and if so, how? What are the criteria that the institution uses to determine what programs should be created or grown?

The graduate curriculum has evolved and will continue to change to meet state, national, and international demands for post-baccalaureate training. Recently developed graduate programs include Bioinformatics, Physical Therapy, and Interdisciplinary Research on Substance Abuse. A small number of strategically selected new programs are planned over the next five years. Existing programs are also regularly reformed with new course offerings, concentrations, and advanced certificates. Graduate programs training counselors and other professionals in the College of Education are constantly revising curricula to reflect the licensing requirements of the state Board of Behavioral Sciences. All of these changes are from the ground up; faculty control the curriculum. The University Senate committee structure reviews all curriculum changes for educational integrity and financial viability.

Graduate students are more costly to serve than undergraduates, with smaller specialized classes and intensive thesis and dissertation mentoring. Laboratory and studio space are also costly within the sciences, engineering, health, and arts fields. Currently, growth in programs with excess qualified

applicants is constrained by the size of the faculty and such costs. Current planning is for stable graduate enrollments, and a small number of new programs over the next five years.

3.2. What are the completion rates and time-to-degree for master's and doctoral programs, collectively and individually, and do any of these give cause for concern?

One-year retention rates, three-year graduation rates, and the median time to degree for 90 Master's and 15 Doctoral degree programs were determined and provided to the Review Team as a Requested Document, which can be accessed at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu). Completion rates and time to degree for master's programs overall are very good, with 81.5% of all students who entered a master's program at SDSU between 2005 and 2013 earning their degrees as of Fall 2015. Median time to degree exceeds six semesters for only a small portion of master's programs. The data identify some research-intensive programs that may take longer than expected for a master's degree. PhD and professional doctorate programs have retention and completion rates on par with comparable programs nationally.

3.3. Does the university track the employment of those who have completed master's and doctoral degrees?

SDSU does not maintain a central database of professional placements for graduates of our advanced degree programs. However, distributed efforts provide an arguably representative accounting of placements for individual programs, and a partial account for larger groups of alumni. A portfolio of representative efforts were determined and provided to the Review Team as a Requested Document, which can be accessed at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu).

3.4 Are all faculty involved in graduate education, and if not, has this led to challenges in faculty morale?

No "graduate faculty" designation exists for master's programs; all tenured and tenure-track faculty may teach graduate courses, serve on master's thesis committees, and chair thesis committees in their home departments. Lecturers may also teach master's level coursework, and serve on (but not chair) master's thesis committees with approval of the Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs. In practice, these roles are managed by master's program directors and department chairs/directors. Situations where faculty are denied access to master's students by department leadership could exist, but no evidence suggests that this is a widespread problem for morale.

Doctoral programs have formally designated "doctoral faculty." Nomination to a doctoral faculty role is initiated by the program chair/director, supported by the Dean of the college offering the program, and approved by the Graduate Dean. In most cases, doctoral faculty have the full range of rights and responsibilities, including chairing dissertation committees. However, policy permits a more restricted role, e.g., only to teach courses or to serve on, but not chair, dissertations. With faculty headcounts well below levels seen ten years ago, opportunities to work with doctoral students are generally available in the departments that have them. The greater threat to morale comes from the relatively small number of PhD programs: the large majority of departments do not have doctoral programs, and faculty frequently express a desire that they could.

3.5 What if any interaction is there between graduate students and undergraduate students? What role do graduate students play in undergraduate education?

A great deal of interaction exists among graduate and undergraduate students, and undergraduate instruction is just one aspect. The campus employs approximately 1,000 Graduate Teaching Associates and Graduate Assistants from the ranks of both master's and doctoral programs each term. Graduate students serve as the instructor of record for lecture courses as well as laboratory and discussion sections.

Others serve in a teaching assistant role through office hours, tutoring, grading, and review sessions. Undergraduate instruction at SDSU relies heavily on graduate academic student employees.

Graduate students also interact with undergraduates as fellow students in the single overlap course level: 500- numbered courses are open to advanced undergraduates and may be used as credit toward master's degrees. For example, coursework suitable for advanced undergraduate Statistics majors are also common methods courses for master's students in a variety of programs.

The campus is also committed to providing research experiences to undergraduates. In many cases, undergraduate research takes place within a laboratory or team of researchers that includes faculty and graduate students. Graduate students serve as mentors and role models to many undergraduate researchers.

Within the Division of Student Affairs, graduate assistants work in residential education, intercultural relations, study abroad, student rights and responsibilities, and other roles.

3.6. Has the university put in place any specific programs intended to grow diversity of the graduate student body?

SDSU participates actively in CSU programs specifically designed to increase diversity in graduate programs (e.g., Sally Casanova Fellows and Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program).

The campus also plays a leadership role in the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education and hosted the annual event in 2012. This event is both a recruiting event for graduate programs and an opportunity for SDSU undergraduates to learn about graduate programs elsewhere.

SDSU is a designated Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), allowing the research community to compete for federal grants that benefit graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. Examples include the MSI STEM Research and Development Consortium and the Department of Defense's HBCU/MI research programs, designed to enhance institutional research and education capabilities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We are also one of three founding institutions of the California HSI Research Collaboration Conference. Together with our colleagues from USDA, UC Merced, UC Riverside, and UC Santa Barbara, we have convened two biennial California HSI Research Collaboration Conferences.

The *Success in Engineering for Recent Veterans through Internship and Career Experience (SERVICE)* program is designed to engage and advance veteran students through STEM programs. Veterans, especially at the enlisted and on-base (about to separate) levels, are over-represented by ethnic and racial minorities by virtue of the demographics of that population.

Senior Director of Research Advancement John Crockett will represent SDSU at the upcoming *NSF GEO Opportunities for Leadership in Diversity Ideas Lab* in March 2016.

SDSU Professor Rebecca Lewison is a co-PI on the recently awarded UC-system/CSU-system collaborative *NSF Advance program - Center for Research Excellence through Diversity in Team Science (CREDITS)*.

SDSU continues to advance programs to support an acceleration of diversity at all levels - undergraduate to faculty - and has recently requested additional institutional funding from NSF for a program to *Support Women in Faculty Transformation (SWiFT)*.

3.7. How does SDSU's robust program of graduate education help define the university's profile?

An important part of SDSU's profile is found in the Carnegie Foundation's classification as a "research university with high research activity". The university ranks among the top 150 universities nationally in

research funding, with \$123M in contracts and grants received in 2015. Without robust graduate programs, this profile is not possible. SDSU graduate students fuel our research mission in labs, clinics, seminars, and field settings by creating new knowledge and attracting and retaining internationally renowned research faculty.

SDSU graduate program alumni go on to lead their fields by putting cutting-edge research to work as innovators in high-impact areas in the sciences, arts, education, health, and the environment. Locally, large proportions of professionals in business teaching, nursing, social work, and other fields received professional degrees from SDSU.

3.8. Does the university assess the student experience and campus climate for graduate students?

Plans are now in place to include graduate students in future campus climate surveys; they have not been included in past years.

**LOI 4. Evolution and Future of the SDSU Identity:** The team commends the work on SDSU's strategic plan notes that the plan is focused on the near-term. We will be interested in hearing more about your longer-term vision for the university and how it relates to the university's current identity. What is the essence of a San Diego State University education and how do you see that evolving in the face of a shifting educational landscape and in response to the opportunities created by technology, SDSU's designation as an HSI, and the geographic location of SDSU?

4.1 SDSU recently started a satellite campus in Tbilisi. Are there plans for other international campuses that will offer a SDSU degree? When Tbilisi was created, did you identify critical attributes of the SDSU experience that needed to be replicated in a different geographical location?

The SDSU-Georgia program was created in response to an RFP from the U.S. [Millennium Challenge Corporation](#) and the Government of Georgia to enhance STEM higher education in the country of Georgia. The program is focused upon: delivering selected SDSU B.S. degree programs in Georgia; training faculty in Georgia to deliver equivalent, internationally accredited STEM degrees; and providing STEM students and faculty from the SDSU campus with unique and enriching opportunities to collaborate in teaching, study abroad, exchange programs, research, and community engagement activities. The SDSU-Georgia program is not a separate campus — the program has a limited lifetime, uses collaborative educational spaces with leading universities in Georgia, and uses the same educational content and instructional methodologies as used on the San Diego campus. Support for this program is provided by the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Country of Georgia. Our academic leaders and faculty are committed to ensuring that our SDSU-Georgia programs replicate the academic quality of the same programs we offer in San Diego. At this point, we have no plans to create any international campuses.

4.2. How do you see the evolution of the relationship between the Imperial Valley Campus (IVC) and the main campus?

The geographic distance between IVC and the main campus has naturally occasioned communication challenges between both campuses. Efforts are underway to foster communication and bridge the gap caused by this distance. For example, video conferencing facilities are being optimized and minor capital maintenance projects are being addressed. This renewed focus on communication, and the ongoing effort to enhance the infrastructure of the campus, should remove the perception that the IVC does not receive the necessary level of support from the main campus. The CSU system has recently approved nearly \$2.0

M for capital projects at IVC, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in internal funds have been projected to support the campus.

With the search for a new Dean, we are optimistic that IVC will coalesce around the important theme of student success. In the meantime, the Interim IVC Dean, internally appointed from the IVC faculty ranks, has begun to lay the foundation for advancing student success and achievement. Furthermore, the IVC Director of Student Affairs is having routine 1:1 meeting with the Vice President's Student Affairs office and attending managers meeting throughout the year to ensure that student needs are being discussed in a timely fashion and resources are being leveraged to enhance the overall student experience.

To support these efforts, senior university officers, including the Provost, the Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, and the Vice President for Student Affairs have been visiting the IVC more regularly, and will be maintaining direct communication lines with administrative staff members on the campus. These communications will supplement the core administrative relationship and regular interactions between the Provost and the IVC Dean.

The combination of a strengthened relationship between the current Provost and the incoming IVC Dean and the referenced supplemental communication should significantly enhance the relationship between the Imperial Valley Campus and the San Diego campus.

4.3. How do you plan to allocate the newly funded 300 faculty positions? In what ways will the university leverage these positions to increase faculty diversity?

Tenure-track hires are requested by academic units, ranked by college deans, and reviewed by the Tenure-Track Planning Committee (i.e., Provost, Chair of the Senate, and Chairs of Faculty Affairs, Academic Policy and Planning, Academic Resources and Planning, and Diversity, Equity, and Outreach Committees) for subsequent recommendations to the Provost. In recent years, additional tenure-track hires have been allocated through the competitive [Areas of Excellence](#) process coordinated by the Vice President for Research to build on existing strengths in areas such as Climate and Sustainability Studies, Clinical and Cognitive Neuroscience, Viromics, Water Scarcity, Smart Health (Wearable Biomedical Sensors), Human Dynamics in the Mobile Age, and Digital Humanities and Global Diversity.

This year, the Recruitment and Representation of Underrepresented Faculty (RRUF) task force will ask the Tenure-Track Planning Committee to recommend that five faculty lines per year through the remaining years of the Student Success Fee-funded hiring phase be dedicated to the Building on Inclusive Excellence (BIE) Program. Modeled on the NSF ADVANCE-backed CAMPOS program at UC Davis, the BIE Program seeks to institutionalize our campus commitment to diversity in the hopes that our faculty—13.9% underrepresented minorities in Fall 2015—will become the most diverse among public research universities in California. Based on Fall 2013 IPEDS data on underrepresented faculty at all ranks at public research universities in California, SDSU was 6th for % American Indian professors (0.75%), 5th for % African-American professors (3.15%), and 6th for % Hispanic / Latino professors (7.51%).

The proposed BIE Program will allow departmental search committees to nominate qualified candidates from their interview/short lists who meet program criteria to be considered for one of the BIE lines. Awards will be announced in early January, and departments will have three weeks to extend the offer to the candidate or decline the award. To be nominated, candidates must meet one or more of the following program criteria:

- Is engaged in service with underrepresented populations in higher education
- Understands barriers for URM in higher education
- Has significant experience teaching and mentoring URM students
- Integrates understanding of URM populations and communities into research
- Is committed to research that engages underserved communities

- Shows potential for cross-cultural communication and collaboration
- Has research interests that contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in higher education

This initiative is one of ten new initiatives launched by the Office of Faculty Advancement and the RRUF group this year to bolster diversity, from diversity training for search committees to programs to support career advancement for diverse faculty at the Associate Professor rank.

4.4. Does the university's geographic location figure prominently in SDSU's identity today? In what ways, if any, will SDSU's geographic location play a role in its future?

As we continue in our third year of implementing our university strategic plan, we are also developing broader perspective on our long-term aspirations. In a [recent blog post](#) to the campus community, President Hirshman presented three touchstones that can be part of a broad vision of our university's future, and these are excerpted below:

*First, maintaining and increasing the quality of our academic and co-curricular programs is essential. This focus continues the decades-long tradition established by my predecessors Presidents Day and Weber and our dedicated faculty, staff, and students, who have made aspiration and achievement central to our campus' ethos. Many may debate the meaning of quality. For me, the key is that quality academic and co-curricular programs prepare students to contribute broadly to the society they will enter.*

*Today, quality programs must include a general education curriculum that helps students develop a broad range of abilities and understandings, a major program of study that immerses students in an academic discipline and professional preparation, and exposure to cutting-edge research and the vibrancy of the creative arts. Quality programs must also provide our students with opportunities for holistic development. These include high impact practices such as international experiences, entrepreneurship, internships, mentoring, leadership development, service learning, cultural diversity, engagement at national and international conferences, interaction with national and international leaders, and numerous specialized co-curricular opportunities.*

*Second, we must be a campus that welcomes students from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds, and we must ensure that students from all backgrounds succeed at the highest level – intellectually, personally and professionally. In doing this, we continue one of our university's proudest traditions and serve a critical public purpose in our region and throughout California.*

*Third, we must be financially strong. We are in an era in which universities – especially public universities – are under enormous and continuous fiscal stress. Nearly every day we read of the financial challenges and controversies affecting universities and colleges across our country. Our financial strength will provide the resources necessary to maintain the quality of our programs and serve our diverse students. Our efforts must involve increasing revenues from public and private sources, as well as prudent and effective stewardship of these revenues.*

*These three elements – a focus on quality, service to diverse students and financial strength – are broad outlines for an enduring and successful university that serves its students and our society.*

*Each element, of course, raises many questions and can be pursued in multiple ways. Let's use this spring's accreditation review as an opportunity to discuss these broad perspectives and consider how we can use them as guidelines to create the future of San Diego State.*

Within this framework, we consider our geographic location to be critical in fostering the three touchstones that will allow the university to thrive. For example, our location on the U.S.-Mexico border can facilitate international experiences that are part of a quality education. Similarly, recruiting students from our local area can help ensure that we maintain the socio-economic diversity of our student body. Further, the extraordinary climate and natural beauty of our San Diego location helps us recruit non-resident students who can help us stabilize our finances. Thus, we see our San Diego location as a continuing part of our identity even as this identity evolves in the new landscape of higher education.

4.5. Going forward, how does the university see the role of online only and hybrid courses in an SDSU education?

We will continue our commitment to promoting and supporting quality learning opportunities in all of our courses regardless of their modality. We do not view the development of fully-online undergraduate degree programs as a central institutional priority, but are developing some degree-completion-focused programs in the College of Extended Studies in which necessary courses will be online. Fully-online graduate degree programs will continue to be developed based on demand, and through either state-supported or self-supported (i.e., Extended Studies) approaches.

New course proposals are evaluated based on their intellectual merit and pedagogical soundness, and without regard to a particular instructional modality. However, the offering of hybrid and online sections is actively managed at the college level through established college-specific policies and practices. A given course is restricted to a given modality in only rare circumstances (e.g., within a fully-online degree program).

We reject generalizations that particular modalities are superior to others, but appreciate that the additional technological load of online and hybrid courses warrants additional support for both faculty and students. Such support is provided through established resources at the [Library Computing Hub](#) and through [Instructional Technology Services](#) (ITS), which maintains and manages the Blackboard Learning Management System through which the majority of our online and hybrid courses are provided.

Since 2008, ITS has provided competitively-awarded opportunities through its [Course Design Institute](#) (CDI) for 95 faculty to collaborate with one another and course designers to develop 102 high-quality fully-online course. Such courses have typically been offered during summer sessions, providing a rich variety of opportunities for students to make significant degree progress beyond the fall and spring semesters if desired. In terms of student success within these courses, an analysis of 21 cases comparing pre-CDI face-to-face sections with post-CDI online sections of the same course by the same instructor revealed no significant difference between %DFWs for face-to-face and online sections (i.e., 11.1% and 10.1%, respectively).

Our efforts to provide excellent online learning opportunities also extends beyond our institution. For example, a team of faculty, staff, and students recently submitted a manuscript for peer-review publication on student experiences as measured by the Community of Inquiry Model for courses designed and taught by CDI faculty participants (Marshall et al., *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*). In addition, the development of the [Learning Glass](#) technology has garnered interest across the nation, and ITS Director James Frazee was recently invited to talk on this learning technology at the [2016 Next Generation Learning Spaces](#) meeting.

#### ***D. Requested Documents from Offsite Review***

Following their review of the Institutional Report and during their presentation of Commendations and Lines of Inquiry at the Offsite Review, the WASC Review Team requested the following additional documents prior to their Accreditation Visit. No additional materials were requested after their review of these materials, which may be viewed at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu).

- List of workshops or faculty development activities related to assessment and the use of WEAVE, if available. (LOI 1)
- List of co-curricular, HIP, or academic support programs that have been evaluated or are scheduled to be evaluated (with the projected date for the review), if available. (LOI 1)
- The most recent four-year and six-year graduation rates, disaggregated by IVC students, student athletes, and commuter students. (LOI 2)
- Results of student surveys, if available, regarding student satisfaction with their experiences and/or with academic support and student services at SDSU. (LOI 2)
- Any Student Affairs Annual Reports more recent than 2010-11, if available. (LOI 2)
- Updates, if available, on the activities identified in the Division of Student Affairs 2015-2017 Strategic Plan. (LOI 2)
- Graduate student retention and graduation rates and time to degree by program. (LOI 3)
- Survey results, if available, of post-graduation placement. (LOI 3)
- Update on IVC strategic plan, if available. (LOI 4)
- Descriptive information about the faculty (total number; disaggregated by gender; race and ethnicity; tenure/tenure track; adjunct or lecturer). (LOI 4)
- Plans or timetable, if available, for hiring 300 new faculty members. (LOI 4)

#### ***E. Requested Meetings for the Accreditation Visit***

The WASC Review Team requested meetings with specific individuals, committees, and groups for their Accreditation Visit. A proposed schedule with minor modifications was developed and provided to the team, the team confirmed this schedule, and formal invitations were made to individuals, committees, and groups. As per the [WASC Visit Process Guidelines](#), meeting sizes were typically limited to eight or fewer campus members, with the exceptions of Open Forums for students, staff, and faculty and the Exit Presentation. This general visit schedule is appended to this brief, and the most recent and more detailed version is posted at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu).

- Senior leadership – President, Provost, VPs for Student Affairs, Business and Financial Affairs, University Relations and Development, Research and Dean of Graduate Affairs, and Chief Diversity Officer
- Open sessions with undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff
- Student leadership (undergraduate and graduate)
- College and division deans (including dean of undergraduate studies)
- Senate committees related to undergraduate education, graduate education, and educational effectiveness such as: GE Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, Instructional and Information Technology Committee, Student Learning Outcome Committee, Undergraduate Council
- Faculty Senate leadership
- Directors and staff from the division of Student Affairs
- Directors of Compact Scholars, Aztec Mentor, Honors and Arts Alive
- Directors of advising
- Director and staff from Analytical Studies and Institutional Research
- Assessment leadership and including directors of assessment in colleges, the library, and Student Affairs
- Director and staff of Center for Teaching and Learning and those responsible for faculty development
- Faculty in departments that have gone through program review (including rep. that have used WEAVE)
- Faculty and leaders involved in high-impact practices (if not included in groups and individuals above)
- WASC Steering Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee (steering committee and/or subcommittees)

## **Appendix 1. Confidential Email Account Notification**

*The following statement was provided by WASC and emailed to the entire campus community.*

*San Diego State University is hosting a site visit by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) on March 22-24, 2016, in connection with its accreditation. The team typically schedules open meetings with students, staff, and faculty to provide an opportunity for informal input from all members of the campus community about their experiences with the institution. Students are encouraged to comment on issues of academic rigor and consistency, availability of student support services, accuracy of information provided by the institution, and other matters related to the quality of the educational experience.*

*WSCUC understands that not everyone who may wish to participate can attend these meetings, and has therefore established a confidential email account to give everyone the opportunity to communicate with the team. The email account is created by a WSCUC staff member and only authorized WSCUC staff and team members have access to it. The emails are not viewed by any representative of the institution. The email account is created for this visit only and will be closed once the WSCUC team leaves the campus. Only comments made before or during the visit will be considered as part of the review process.*

*Institutional reports, on-campus interviews, open sessions, and email comments become part of the information collected and reviewed by the team. Please note that team members will not respond individually to comments provided through any of these venues, including the confidential email account. However, the input from comments, along with other forms of information, will be considered as the team undertakes its work and develops recommendations to the institution. The team is not able to meet individually with members of the campus community, so please do not use the email account to request private appointments.*

*To write to the WSCUC team, please address your email to [sdsu@wascsenior.org](mailto:sdsu@wascsenior.org).*

## Appendix 2. General Schedule for WASC Accreditation Visit

The most recent and detailed version of the schedule is posted at [wasc.sdsu.edu](http://wasc.sdsu.edu).

<b>Tuesday 22 March</b>	<b>Track One (Weber Conference Room; MH-3318)</b>	<b>Track Two (Provost's Conference Room; MH-3335)</b>
8:00-8:30	Orientation to Team Room (SSW-2640) with ALO	
8:30-9:30	SDSU President (WCR)	
9:45-10:45	WASC Steering Committee (PCR)	
11:00-12:00	SDSU Vice Presidents (PCR with subsequent mini-sessions in PCR and Provost's Office)	
12:00-1:00	Executive Session over Lunch in Team Room	
1:00-1:45	Directors and Staff, Student Affairs (incl. Chief Diversity Officer )	Center for Teaching & Learning, Faculty Dev.
2:00-2:45	Senate Executive Committee	Directors and staff, Analytical Studies and Institutional Research
3:00-3:45	Directors, Undergrad. Studies	Directors, Advising
4:00-4:45	Executive Session in Team Room	

<b>Wednesday 23 March</b>	<b>Track One (Weber Conf. Room)</b>	<b>Track Two (Provost's Conference Room)</b>	<b>Track Three (Location Noted)</b>
8:15-8:45	Campus Tour by Ambassador via Cart		
9:00-9:45	General Education	—	Associated Student Officers (State Room, Third Floor, Aztec Student Union)
10:00-10:45	—	Academic Deans Council	<b>Open Forum: Staff (LT-161)</b>
11:00-11:45	—	Student Learning Outcomes	<b>Open Forum: Faculty (WC-201)</b>
12:00-1:00	Executive Session over Lunch in Team Room		
1:00-1:45	Recent Academic Program Reviews	Undergraduate Council	Instructional and Informational Technology Committee, ITS (AH-1112)
2:00-2:45	Graduate Council	Student Success Group	—
3:00-3:45	—	—	Advisers Forum (Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center Ballroom)
3:30-4:00	—	—	<b>Open Forum: Students (AS Council Chambers, Third Floor, Aztec Student Union)</b>
4:00-4:45	Executive Session in Team Room		

<b>Thursday 24 March</b>	
8:00-11:00	Team completion of draft WASC Team Report
11:00-11:30	Pre-Exit Meeting between WASC Team Chair and SDSU President regarding Team Commendations and Recommendations (President's Office)
11:30-12:00	<b>Exit Presentation to SDSU Community (Theater, Conrad Prebys Aztec Student Union)</b>