REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To San José State University

April 10, 2007

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Team Roster
William B. DeLauder, Team Chair
President Emeritus
Delaware State University

Teresa M. Shaw, Assistant Chair/Team Writer
Research Professor
Claremont Graduate University

Geoffrey Chase
Dean of Undergraduate Studies
San Diego State University

Vicki Davis
Manager of Academic and Instructional Technology
Samuel Merritt College

Maryann Jacobi Gray
Assistant Provost
University of California, Los Angeles

The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution
according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional
Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for
Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and
Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW
TEAM REPORT
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I: OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Description of the Institution and the Visit

San José State University (SJSU) is a member of the California State University system and the oldest public institution of higher education in the state of California, celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. The University currently employs approximately 1,800 faculty and 1400 staff, and enrolls more than 29,000 students (22,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate). The University's most recent reaffirmation of accreditation was granted in 1995. Since that time, SJSU has submitted an Interim Report (1999), several substantive change proposals, a Proposal for the current review process (2002), a Capacity and Preparatory Report (2004, with a visit in October 2004), a Special Visit Report (2005, with a visit in March 2006), and an Educational Effectiveness Report (2006).

The site visit for the current Educational Effectiveness Review took place on March 7-9, 2007. The members of the visit team were:

- William B. DeLauder (Team Chair), President Emeritus, Delaware State University
• Teresa M. Shaw (Assistant Chair/Team Writer), Research Professor, Claremont Graduate University

• Geoffrey Chase, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, San Diego State University

• Vicki Davis, Manager of Academic and Instructional Technology, Samuel Merritt College

• Maryann Jacobi Gray, Assistant Provost, University of California, Los Angeles

William DeLauder, Geoffrey Chase, and Teresa Shaw were also members of the visit team for the Capacity and Preparatory Review in 2004, and Geoffrey Chase and Teresa Shaw were members of the Special Visit team in 2006. The team found the faculty, staff, and students to be welcoming, open, and engaged in the review process, and we would like to thank Robert Cooper especially for his organization and responsiveness during the entire review process. We would also like to thank President Don Kassing, the senior staff, the Educational Effectiveness Report team, team writer Kathleen Roe, and visit coordinators Beth Von Till and Bethany Shifflett for their hospitality and careful planning.

Quality of the Educational Effectiveness Report and Alignment with the Proposal

The team found the Report to be well-written and well-conceived, and the supporting documents and evidence were easily accessed through the Report’s website. The team felt that the Report was an honest and dramatic representation of the current energy, conversation, and activities at San José State University. Themes featured in the Report (integrative learning, inclusive excellence, and community connections) are the result not only of an inclusive process, but of the past few years of reflection, strategic planning, and campus change. A twenty-member committee, which included faculty,
staff, and administrators and brought together those who had worked previously on the WASC process with several people new to the process, prepared the Report. The committee insured wide campus participation by aligning the themes with the current Strategic Plan, focusing on key questions that came out of a recent student experience study, and encouraging broad comment and review through the use of focus groups.

It should be noted that neither the Educational Effectiveness Report nor the previous Capacity and Preparatory Report is fully aligned with SJSU’s 2002 Proposal for Review. The Capacity Review team and the WASC Commission addressed those issues in 2004, however, and the lack of alignment is not a current concern or a surprise. In short, the team felt that the Educational Effectiveness Report is the result of an appropriate, representative, and honest process at the University and is well-aligned with the understanding of the Commission and visit teams for the Capacity and Special Visit Reports.

Response to Previous Commission Issues and Preparatory and Special Reviews

As noted above, our visit followed a Capacity and Preparatory Review in 2004 and a Special Visit in 2006. The Special Visit team found that the University had made significant progress in the areas identified in the Capacity and Preparatory visit: strategic planning, assessment of student learning, and enrollment management. The team also noted the dramatic changes in culture, energy, and focus on campus, and the positive influence of recent appointments at the senior level, the strategic planning process, and the “Greater Expectations” retreat in January 2006. Our team confirmed that progress is continuing in the three areas and that the campus culture continues to be positive and energized. The Strategic Plan, “Vision 2010” is in place and is “operational” in that it
clearly drives priorities and communication, and is supported by a clear structure for planning, proposing, and funding aligned initiatives (CFR 3.5, 3.8, 4.1). The Special Visit Team Report noted that this process had been implemented; the Educational Effectiveness Visit team notes that several initiatives have already received funding through this process, including the SAIL program, the First Year Experience (FYE) programs, and Team SJSU Studies (see below). Proposals are forthcoming for Enrollment Management. Regarding assessment of student learning, the University has made great efforts over the past year to ensure that all programs have identified learning outcomes and started both to assess student success and act on the findings of that assessment. This goal has been achieved, and the University is now in a position to move all programs “to the next level” (see below for further discussion). The Enrollment Management Plan has been developed and is in progress. The Plan is ambitious, attainable, and comprehensive in that it encompasses not only setting FTE targets by college and program but also improving advising and other programs and services to increase retention and lower attrition, as well as establishing measurable targets for these goals. The ongoing Enrollment Management leadership team or “Panel” is actively monitoring progress and completion of all aspects of the Plan. In addition, the establishment of the Institutional Research Office will greatly contribute to the University’s enrollment management planning and effectiveness as well as its improving assessment process (CFR 3.5, 3.6).

The final follow-up area deals with compliance with the WASC policy on substantive change. While the August 2006 Commission letter identifies serious gaps in past compliance with the policy and approval process, the Team believes that a realistic
and effective process is now in place to ensure compliance with the substantive change requirements. The process was clearly outlined in the SJSU Educational Effectiveness Report, and the team reviewed these materials and discussed the new process with campus leaders during our visit (CFR 1.9).

In accordance to a federal mandate, a significant proportion of an institution’s off-campus programs must be visited as a part of the accreditation review. Consequently, the Team was instructed by WASC staff to visit at least six of the twenty-four SJSU off-campus programs. Team members visited the following off-campus programs:

(1) MBA programs at Rose Orchard,

(2) MA in Educational Administration program at the Monterey County Office of Education in Salinas,

(3) The graduate engineering programs at Lockheed Martin,

(4) The facilities, classrooms, and faculty offices on the campus of California State University, Fullerton that support the single SJSU Library & Information Sciences Program, and

(5) The MS in Marine Science Program at Moss Landing.

At all five locations the quality of the learning sites and the student support services were adequate for the programs. It is noteworthy to indicate that the facilities at Moss Landing are outstanding. At all sites, evidence of student learning was presented and efforts to enhance educational effectiveness are underway.
II: EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation of the Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

Our team found that the educational effectiveness inquiry at San José State University was well-directed, addressed issues critical to the institution's culture and current planning and priorities, asked questions that focused on core values of the University, involved many members of the community, and was based in research and evidence. Overall, we found a campus focused intently, passionately in many cases, on student success, quality assurance and improvement, alignment of resources, and the advancement of SJSU's mission. Moreover, we observed that the faculty and administrative leadership in particular have embraced an evidence-based approach to planning and change. While the sophistication and depth of that evidence, research and evidence gathering systems, and analysis processes require strengthening, refinement, and focus, the team believes that SJSU is prepared for ongoing success in these areas and is already demonstrating effectiveness. The following sections will discuss separately the three themes of the report and will elaborate the above observations.

Integrative Learning:

The theme of integrative learning reflects a core value of San José State University—a commitment to "learning and belonging"—at what appears to be a critical point in the development of the University. The choice of the theme offers a rich opportunity to improve educational effectiveness and brings a diverse group of faculty and staff together to build connections across and within programs and disciplines.
Integrative learning has stimulated the development or enhancement of innovative undergraduate programs at both lower and upper divisions. It also provides significant directions for self-examination and assessment of teaching and learning. The theme is ambitious and demonstrates that commitment to educational effectiveness pervades the institution. Currently integrative learning has strong leadership from General Education, Student Affairs and faculty or academic administrators who have developed or run innovative programs in different pockets of the University (see below) (CFR 1.2, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.9, 4.1, 4.7).

Integrative learning as an educational framework and goal has strong support across the University and has been woven into academic policies, structures, and curricula. For example, Vision 2010 affirms the importance of integrating theoretical and applied knowledge as well as liberal arts and professional knowledge. The Academic Senate showed its support for this theme by adopting an SJSU General Education Program integrative learning outcome in spring 2005: “Students shall demonstrate the characteristics of ‘intentional learners’ who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lifetimes.” In its consideration of integrative learning, the Board of General Studies further specified the need to incorporate ethics and values, intercultural communication, and information literacy into GE. It also affirmed the value of individual learning plans and goals for students to enable them to integrate material from a variety of experiences, in and out of the classroom.

The concept of integrative learning is very broad, which is both an advantage and a risk. On the one hand, it enables all components of the University – general education,
majors, and co-curricular programs – to collaborate in strengthening educational effectiveness at SJSU. Participants in the integrative learning session described the broad goal as breaking down silos, including both the “vertical” boundaries between lower division and upper division instruction, and the “horizontal” boundaries between disciplines and between the curriculum and co-curriculum. These faculty and staff noted that students do not always build their own connections between general education and their majors, between their first year experience and their capstone, and between their academic and extra-curricular interests. By tightening these connections, the educational experience is expected to become more coherent. The theme of integrative learning is also a tool for building community among and between students, faculty and staff. Faculty noted that this theme complements and extends the emerging institutional vision of an “educated person.” In the words of one participant in our session, integrated learning “pulls the pieces together” (CFR 2.4, 2.9, 2.11).

On the other hand, the concept is so broad that it risks losing coherence. The distinctions between integrative learning and interdisciplinarity, life-long learning, experiential learning, service learning, etc. are not entirely clear, leaving faculty and staff broad latitude to designate programs as “integrative.” For example, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, capstones or other culminating experiences were widely seen as integrative in intent; faculty also spoke to their efforts to increase continuity from course to course and to assure that certain key concepts, such as leadership or writing proficiency, were included in a number of different courses. At least some of these efforts pre-date or evolved independently of the integrative learning initiative; the extent to which the theme motivates as opposed to reinforces existing good
practice is unclear. Even in the latter situation, however, the theme may have great value in highlighting or even legitimizing activities (such as experiential education) once viewed as marginal to the core academic enterprise.

*The faculty participating in our discussions emphasized the need to develop integrative learning in a purposeful, intentional manner rather than as an ad hoc activity.* The faculty and staff need to work to understand benefits, trade-offs, balance within the curricula, the relationship to student affairs and enrollment management, differences between programs both graduate and undergraduate, and—perhaps most importantly—what difference an integrative learning experience makes in the educational effectiveness of the University, the teaching and research excellence of the faculty, and the academic success of the students. Although the assessment of integrated learning poses special challenges, most faculty members appeared to resonate with the concept, could interpret its value in the context of their own disciplines as well as in relation to the mission of SJSU, and were eager to discuss its importance and its implementation within their programs. For example, the Anthropology faculty has taken steps to “break down the silos” that exist within the field of anthropology and avoid over-specialization among students by revising the curriculum and capstone course, requiring courses outside the department, and hiring a full-time professor in the field of archaeology. The Education program understands internships and student teaching as integrative. A number of programs, for example the Engineering programs at Lockheed Martin, have capstone courses that require integration. And the upper-division “SJSU Studies” component of General Education is intentionally integrative (CFR 2.2, 2.4, 3.11, 4.1, 4.7).
In seeking to increase “integration” of various programs and experiences, the University must be careful to avoid developing yet another silo which contains those programs and services that simply do not fit easily into other silos. That said, several programs—established and new—falling under the integrative learning umbrella are very promising. The Humanities Honors program is an example of a very well established program that provides a rigorous and intellectually stimulating integrative learning experience. Many of those with whom we talked, including scientists and engineers, considered this a model of integrative learning. MUSE is emerging as another well-regarded initiative, although as the Provost noted it is too early to measure its effectiveness in promoting student academic success. The new SAIL (Students Actively Integrating Learning) program, funded through the strategic planning process, is exciting in its potential to engage students as intentional learners. The program provides opportunities for students to reflect on their own development at three critical points in time – during their first year, during their junior year (through the writing course) and during their senior year culminating experience or capstone. This series of reflections is intended to assist students in choosing courses, participating in co-curricular activities that extend learning, developing meaningful culminating activities, and establishing and working toward longer range goals. To reduce workload on faculty and promote sustainability, peer advisors supervised by faculty will support the reflection components of the program (CFR 2.2, 2.2, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11).

SJSU Studies, a twelve-unit cluster of upper division courses that is part of the General Education program is intentionally integrative across the curriculum and is required for all undergraduates. The new “Team SJSU Studies” pilot program is a
promising innovation that enables faculty from different disciplines to team-teach courses (extending over two semesters) on broad social issues such as global climate change. The intent is to provide students with an intensive, engaging, interdisciplinary, and coherent learning opportunity. The proposed leadership minor is another promising example of integrative learning, enabling student affairs professionals to work with faculty. The minor will also help students integrate academic and applied experiences by exercising their leadership skills in service-learning or other “real world” settings (CFR 2.5, 2.1, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 4.7)

With all of these continuing and new programs addressing the goal in integrative learning, assessment is a major opportunity and challenge. To date, the faculty and staff involved in developing integrative learning as a theme have devoted considerable time and resources to assessment, for much of this time before institutional research was available to provide technical support. This group has been highly pro-active in seeking out and experimenting with a variety of tools and approaches. These efforts have been instructive in themselves. They have not yet, however, generated strong evidence of student learning, nor have they been able to inform planning and program development in a consistent and systematic manner. The well-established GE assessment process has provided the base for assessment of integrated learning. In addition, the University has attempted or implemented a number of other tests and assessments. These include the University’s own Writing Skills Test, system-wide surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the ETS Information Literacy test, the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, and a variety of institutional surveys. There are also ongoing assessment tools for SJSU studies, the
Humanities Honors program, MUSE seminars, and the Success in Science program. In addition, programs are being encouraged to develop student learning outcomes and assessment plans that demonstrate integration of skills and abilities within courses and within the program (CFR 4.3, 4.6, 4.7).

Already the University has learned some significant things about SJSU students, for example that they are below the average on information literacy skills, and is acting based on those findings, for example by integrating information literacy more substantially into the first year experience. We saw and heard other examples of this process related to the effectiveness of the Success in Science program, the Humanities Honors program, and the MUSE program. Yet in the words of one participant in our interviews, “we’ve gone a little overboard” with the number of different assessment projects on campus. While there has been an impressive amount of energy and activity devoted to assessment of integrative learning; the next stage must be determining what instruments and approaches are most useful to answer specific questions and are most consistent with program goals, whether such instruments and approaches can be administered appropriately and sustained over time, and how the data generated can be used to track progress toward integrative learning and – most important – inform practice and planning.

Currently, the assessment data themselves lack integration, and problems such as small sample sizes, problems in test administration, and weak or unknown validity of some instruments are significant obstacles to interpreting and using the assessment results. Those with whom we met are aware of these challenges, however, and the University does have a strong base to work from, including course and program SLO’s
and the related assessment infrastructure, the establishment of an Institutional Research Office, leadership support, and a talented faculty eager for feedback (CFR 4.6, 4.7). We encourage all involved to reflect on their experiences with assessment, to refine methodology, and to transition from a predominant focus on data collection to a broader and more balanced focus on data collection, data utilization, and results (CFR 4.3).

Community Connection:

San José State University is continually mindful of its identity as a metropolitan university and its connection and impact to the community. This relationship has become a cornerstone of the University’s identity and mission. The team heard throughout our visit that “Great cities have great universities,” and focusing on community connections as one of three educational effectiveness themes in an illustration of that goal (1.1). This recent transformation, which embeds strategic initiatives of community connection into the priorities of the University, was best articulated by one faculty member who described SJSU in the late 1960s and 1970s as having an “invisible wall surrounding it to separate the University from the outside community.” By contrast, today’s SJSU and its learning environment were described as “exploding” into the surrounding city for reciprocal benefit to both the students and local residents.

We saw and heard about a wide variety of initiatives, established programs, and activities that establish community connections as a priority and a distinctive feature of educational effectiveness at San José State University. Nothing symbolizes and manifests this partnership more dramatically than the MLK Library, built as a joint endeavor of the University and the City of San José and serving as both the public and University library.
The impact and benefits of this unique space continue to unfold. The MLK library is a
learning space and a meeting space that brings together the residents of San José with the
student community and provides opportunities for students to build a connection to the
library as an academic resource and an arena for service learning while completing their
degrees, and after graduation as life-long learners. Graduates, seventy-five percent of
whom will stay in the San José area, will continue to use this public resource and remain
connected to the campus (CFR 2.11). In addition, the library professional staff
understands the library as a shared resource that has a benefit across campus. In addition
to being a symbol of community connection, many of its initiatives relate to integrative
learning, for example the integrative goal of information literacy (CFR 2.3, 2.13, 4.2).

The library is only one way in which the “invisible wall” between SJSU and the
city has been torn away; in a recent learning space study and in partnership with the city,
both the downtown area and the University have established free WiFi access, which
allows people to do their daily work and study in open outside spaces throughout the
downtown area. The creation of these gathering spaces further solidifies the connections
between the city and the University, bringing the community into the University and the
students out into the community with reciprocal benefits. Moreover, we heard several
times during our visit of the positive economic and social impact of current students and
alumni through the public and private sector on San José. For example, SJSU students
and graduates form a regular and consistent base of well-trained employees, student
teachers, and interns (CFR 4.8).

Connecting to the community can have both a personal and global effect on
individual students through experiences or on the institution by opportunity. One way this
can greatly impact the educational effectiveness of students is the generation of resources that allow the institution to invest in learning resources. One example of this is the Charles W. Davidson $15 million gift to the College of Engineering, the largest gift in the University's history. These monies will be used to create endowments to support initiatives and programs in the areas of student and faculty development, leading-edge engineering, innovation, and globalization (CFR 1.3, 4.8).

It was clear to the visit team that the University has built great momentum around "community connections" and understands this as a core value, an embodiment of its mission, and a potential distinction of education at SJSU (CFR 1.2, 2.4). One faculty member observed that people are now more engaged with the community and that service learning is more accepted after the building of the MLK library. This involved a "cultural shift:" until recently, community-based learning was a grassroots effort led by those who valued it, but now the University is prioritizing and institutionalizing these efforts, recognizing faculty, and supporting programs. Opportunities are provided for faculty development in the area of service learning and community development (CFR 3.4). The Center for Service Learning helps to facilitate "community connections" and integrate this into student's academic programs. This is a centralized office that provides support with service learning opportunities to both students and faculty. The definition of service learning and the mission of the Center are best described in SJSU's own words, "Service-learning is academic study linked to community service through structured reflection. Service-learning is pedagogy that answers the national call for higher education to promote civic engagement. As a metropolitan university, SJSU established the Center for Service-Learning in its commitment to building community through service and
learning.” Our team found that service learning is integrated broadly in the University and the curricula in General Education, the majors, and areas of graduate education. While additional resources are needed to facilitate sustainability and cohesion, we were impressed with both the entrepreneurial nature of some programs as well as the structured and institutionally-funded nature of others (CFR 2.9, 2.11, 3.5).

One exemplary model of service learning is “CommUniverCity,” an ambitious new project that exemplifies the melding of community, city, and University. In consultation with the neighborhood council and community members from a specific area of the city, a set of projects were developed that include walkability studies, school programs on college-going culture, voter registration, and a social capital survey. The project then aligned faculty with academic goals that could help meet the priorities of the community (CFR 1.5, 2.11). Hundreds of students and residents, two dozen faculty members, and eleven departments and institutes are participating. All seven colleges of the University are engaged and there is an environment of reciprocal learning between students, community, academic departments, and the institutional divisions. The project also includes an emphasis on assessment. Concentrating service learning opportunities into one focused neighborhood and providing a five-year commitment to this neighborhood allows for long-term measures and analysis of results; assessment systems have been put in place to begin to collect data with the expectation that this qualitative data will provide evidence of the positive impact of the University on the community and the educational effectiveness these opportunities provide to students (CFR 2.11).

We saw many other examples of students engaged in service learning and evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes through portfolios, in the
Educational Effectiveness Report, and during our campus meetings with faculty. The Chemistry Department gives students an opportunity to go to local schools and provide the children with what might in some cases be their only exposure to chemistry. In the College of Engineering there is a project working on renewable energy resources. Engineering students learn how to design a system by which they are attempting to combine the use of wind and solar. As part of this project they are required to learn and work through the city codes, providing them opportunities for real world experiences (CFR 2.5). Urban Planning students hope to negotiate with BART to build a station within the neighborhood and have already selected land for this. The success of this would have a huge impact on the neighborhood as it would be the first time BART would be accessible to this workforce and downtown San José. The College of Education’s course of “Community Action and Involvement” places two hundred students each year into community organizations and features a strong emphasis on students’ self-reflection, connections to the rest of their courses, and assessment of the effect of the course on student learning. Health Science students have developed the health trust open air fair, where local residence are provided with learning opportunities on wellness, and the Occupational Therapy Department has a faculty-based clinic and outreach program for the under-served population that is an outreach program. This is only a partial list of service learning projects at SJSU (CFR 2.11).

Until now, these efforts have often been what one faculty member described as “a labor of love,” built “on the backs of faculty.” One such faculty member said, “It is not possible to do transformative learning when you have fifty-five students in a community based service learning capstone course.” In this example, the faculty member spent only
ninety minutes every two weeks for student in-class discussion time. There was no funding for a TA and “it was impossible to grade fifty-five reflection papers every two weeks.” Several people suggested that faculty work in community-based learning should be more evenly valued across academic units and more explicitly included in the retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) process. At the same time, faculty members noted that although service learning courses do require a greater workload and commitment, colleagues were teaching courses with significantly more students, and all faculty members feel workload pressures. A shift in the culture, however, is perceptible, and some said that for the first time they are beginning to feel as if service learning is valued by the institution. Examples of institutional support included the Provost’s Award for Service Learning, and the new commitment to provide 10% of the faculty with release time for student-oriented projects. *The ongoing success and integration of community-based and service learning at the University will depend on attention to institutional support, faculty development and rewards, structure and integration of programs and resources, and assessment of the “value added” and contribution to student learning.* (CFR 2.8, 2.9, 3.1, 4.6).

The educational effectiveness of service learning was discussed frankly. While assessment varied between projects and departments, we heard numerous examples of intentional studies and the University is moving forward in its assessment of these types of educational activities at a programmatic level. Questions such as “What do we want the students to gain from this?” helped one department to completely reevaluate its student learning outcomes; the new design included four out of twelve outcomes that were explicit to service learning. In addition, we learned about the assessment of the
effect of service learning on student success in the Anthropology Department, which was able to trace an improvement in students' ability to link theory and observation, in the School of Social Work, which uses student surveys, internship supervisor evaluations, and faculty comments to track the link between community work and learning, and in several other academic units (CFR 1.2, 2.7, 4.7).

Other, broader evaluation opportunities are being embraced as the culture of SJSU is shifting to one of assessment. Data collected in the NSSE revealed that half of seniors had been involved with service learning or internships, and that 20% of SJSU students intended to participate in some type of community-based learning activity. In addition, the Center for Service Learning conducted a study. Five survey questions were developed as part of the SOTE (Student Opinion of Teaching Effectiveness) survey. Once the survey was given the results of these five questions were compared between the scores of seventy-five courses with service learning components and other courses without. The seventy-five service learning courses on average had a score of .2-.25 higher on this evaluation (CFR 2.9, 2.10, 4.3, 4.7).

Service learning has great potential for supporting and enriching integrative learning and inclusive excellence. To achieve this potential, faculty and administrators will need to be purposeful in their plans, implementation, and assessment of service-learning. It will be important for SJSU be mindful of the relationship that community connections has with both integrative learning and inclusive excellence. By its very nature service learning can be considered integrative learning, and the work done with CommUniverCity that allows multi-disciplinary interaction on projects and an integration of learning, content, discipline, theory, and real world experiences. Moreover, the
relationship between inclusive excellence and community connections is critical, particularly when looking at the success rates of under represented students. As noted in the University’s Educational Effectiveness Report, a study by the Higher Education Research Institute suggests that community-based learning improves interpersonal relations, activism, and racial respect and understanding. SJSU’s own study of the effectiveness of student learning had similar findings. We also heard that students in minority groups often achieve higher results when provided with active learning opportunities. Projects that interact with the community build relationships with the diverse population of the region and further develop student connections to the community. This integrated relationship may lead to opportunities for inclusive excellence and student retention (CFR 1.5, 2.6).

San José State University is making great strides in the area of service learning. The theme of community connections underscores the value of service learning and brings it from the fringes to the center of learning and teaching. Our team believes that SJSU is in the right location and that the University is in the right position in its development not only to make community connections a hallmark of its culture and its educational programs, but also to make a national contribution by the example it sets. SJSU is a thriving University in a thriving city, thanks in no small part to the great efforts of its faculty and staff. In moving forward with service learning and community connections, it is important to assure that students are making the “connection” between their service experience and the learning goals of their course or program. In addition, the level of effort service learning requires of faculty can be a disincentive to participation unless there is some way to reward or recognize faculty efforts in this area.
Finally, in assessing service learning, we encourage consideration of the impact of service learning on students’ learning over time, not just within a single course.

Inclusive Excellence:

The team was pleased to see Inclusive Excellence as a key theme highlighted in the Educational Effectiveness Report and greatly appreciated the candor and honesty with which the theme was addressed. San José State University has a long and important commitment to social justice and to issues of equity, thus the focus on inclusive excellence is a natural and important step for the University to take. As the Report notes, San José State University has moved from a focus solely on diversity and access, to one on inclusive excellence. The Report also describes a number of steps undertaken to transform the understanding of and commitment to diversity “into a commitment to inclusive excellence.”

Keys to this shift, also as noted in the Educational Effectiveness Report, are three core questions: (1) Are success and excellence equitably achieved among all students at SJSU? (2) Is the campus climate perceived as supportive by all students? (3) Is there continuing and ongoing engagement with the human diversity in the curriculum and co-curriculum? The Report and the team’s visit reveal that much has been done to address these questions but that significant challenges remain. The Report includes disaggregated data on graduation rates, analysis of campus climate survey results and other instruments such as NSSE to assess campus climate, and analysis of the curriculum and courses in relation to the goal of inclusive excellence.
Perhaps most importantly, the Report observes that graduation rates particularly for some groups, African American and Latino males most notably, are a cause for serious concern. Thus, while San José State University has a diverse student body, students are not graduating in a timely manner, and some groups of students have dismally low graduation rates. The campus as a whole has a six-year graduation rate of 38.1%. However, the rates for males other than Asian decline dramatically—white males (31.6%), Latinos (28.9%), African American males (11%)—while four-year graduation rates for underrepresented minorities is only 4.5%. Disaggregated data analyzed for the Report also reveal that the four-year graduation rate for African American males is 0%.

These data have already clearly had an impact on the campus. They are all the more dramatic at SJSU because the faculty, staff, and students so clearly take pride in the diversity of the student body, while these data suggest that in fact “success and excellence” are not “equitably achieved among all students at SJSU.” The University understands the severity of this challenge and this is one of the reasons why inclusive excellence has been identified as a key theme. Additionally, some research has been done to identify the data needed to make decisions about how best to address these graduation rates and a campus climate survey has been completed to learn how students, faculty, and staff perceive the general environment at SJSU. Some units are conducting additional climate surveys (CFR 1.5, 2.6, 4.3).

We saw a clear understanding of the need to unify efforts across this complex institution, in particular across the Student Affairs and Academic Affairs areas, in order to improve retention, graduation rates, and campus climate. For example, the Enrollment Management Plan clearly unites FTE and financial planning with retention and student
success. The First Year Experience “Panel” associated with the strategic planning process is focusing on integration of efforts, and activities related to student housing as a “living-learning” community, student orientation, and the MUSE program are all intently focused on issues of inclusive learning. Inclusive learning is also supported by the Center for Faculty Development, which has made this its theme this year. In January the University conducted a three-day retreat with faculty, staff, students, and administrators aimed at focusing on inclusive excellence as a primary challenge. One long-time faculty member told our team than this retreat was a “life changing experience” for him. Coupled with seeing the disaggregated data on graduation rates, he understands that “we’ve had diversity here, but we’re failing at the success of all students.” At the same time, he told us that his understanding of his role as a professor has changed profoundly, and he is committed to finding a solution (CFR 4.2, 4.5, 4.6).

Other conversations that team members had while on campus further confirmed that this focus is a clear priority. Everyone with whom the team spoke acknowledged its importance for the University. It also appeared to the team, however, that the term inclusive excellence is relatively new on campus and may not be widely understood. In the Educational Effectiveness Report it is noted that there is a commitment to inclusive excellence but not an explicit conceptual framework for the campus around that issue. *The team would agree with this self-assessment and believes that work needs to be done to establish a focus and priorities that will lead to planning which then results in specific outcomes and targets for success.*

The team also found that when faculty, staff, and students at SJSU talked about inclusive excellence, they often did so by focusing on a number of activities and
processes, but not on specific outcomes. The team understands and appreciates that the shift from a focus solely on access, that is on the number of students from diverse groups who come to the University, to a focus on creating "equitable opportunities to succeed and excel" are important. Given the graduation rates at the University however, a focus on opportunities and on creating a "process toward better learning" may not be sufficient in addressing those graduation rates. In other words, "opportunity" does not equal "success." The team suggests that inclusive excellence might be most helpful if it is used not just to describe activity and process but also to set benchmarks and outcomes related to persistence and graduation rates.

In seeking more information about what inclusive excellence means to the campus, the team heard about the need for more studies and better data. Knowing who leaves campus before graduation, knowing whether those students are transferring to another institution or leaving higher education altogether, and knowing why students leave are all important. The team believes the new Associate Vice President for Institutional Research has a key role to play in helping attain this information and the recently launched survey seeking some of this information is a positive step (CFR 4.3, 4.5). The team also believes, however, that the University needs to set priorities and specific targets, and establish focus about the information that will be the most useful in guiding action, and questions the advisability of multiple surveys and assessment instruments that seek indirect data. A great deal of assessment is being done at San José State University and while much of it is useful and worthwhile, the team had concerns that in regards to inclusive excellence completing more assessments may delay actions that need to be taken to address graduation and retention rates. The team’s suggestion is
to focus on some of the data that is already being collected through the NSSE, the Wabash Study, and student performance on the WST, for example, rather than undertake new studies or surveys. Additionally, the team found that there could be stronger use of funded programs and the assessments generally required of them, for example the SJSU McNair Program, MESA, MARC, and the Bridges to the Baccalaureate program. What can be learned from analysis of those program assessments? What strategies might be applied more broadly at SJSU? How can those programs be integrated more fully into a unified framework for inclusive excellence at the University (CFR 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)?

San José State University has recently completed the renovation of Clark Hall and has established the first floor as a student success center. Also included on this floor are a writing center, peer advising center, classrooms for MUSE, an incubator classroom, and offices aligned with the library and career services. While the addition of these facilities reflect issues related to capacity, the team believes they are worthy of mention in the Educational Effectiveness Team Report. Having these facilities in one place provides easy access to all students to the kinds of support services from which they can benefit. One dean sees this as part of “a real effort to make this a student-centered university,” and faculty members commented on the “great progress across the University” in this area. At the same time, the team heard during its visit acknowledgements that the students most at risk for leaving before graduation are the ones least likely to seek help and support. We heard from students that while many find their way at SJSU, “a lot of students don’t know about tools and resources on campus,” that “it’s not clear how to do things.” Clearly the faculty and staff with whom we met also understand this challenge and are seeking ways to overcome it. Thus, it will be important for the University to find
ways to reach out to all students so that they do get the support they need (CFR 2.3, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13).

The University has done precisely this in several key areas already. Freshman orientation, a day and a half long event, is now required of all students and provides opportunities for them and their parents to learn about the opportunities and support systems that are available. Additionally, the College of Science has created a course for entering students aimed at helping them understand what will be required of them. This course, which has now been proposed as a general education course, has proven to be one effective strategy for connecting with diverse students early in their academic careers (CFR 2.10, 2.12, 2.13).

We encourage the University to seek other ways of providing support and of connecting students early on to campus life through residence life and academic departments and to do so in ways that are clear and focused. To this end, the University should consider focusing particularly on those students most traditionally at risk (first generation, low socioeconomic status) and putting the programs in place to help those students. Several people with whom the team met noted that while diversity is an important part of the culture at San José State University, the faculty is not as diverse in terms of ethnicity or gender as is desired. Groups on campus noted the difficulty in recruiting and retaining faculty of color given the cost of living in Silicon Valley. We readily acknowledge the challenge inherent in recruiting and hiring diverse faculty but also believe it is critical for the University to do so. The team further notes that the administration is well aware of this challenge and that resources have been dedicated to extend announcements about faculty and staff positions to wider audiences. This is a
positive step but in itself may not be sufficient. Moreover, we heard from some students that having a diverse faculty is important for their academic and personal development. Some students argued that having “a professor who looks like me and who has something in common with me” is critical for success, while other students said that while faculty diversity was a goal, “it doesn’t matter at all to me whether my professor is the same race as me.” This demonstrates that students bring different needs and personal backgrounds to campus, and a university has a responsibility to try to address that breadth of perspective. The discussions about inclusive excellence will need to address the challenges with faculty excellence just as those discussions need to address excellence for all students (CFR 1.5, 3.2).

Inclusive excellence is important to San José State University and it should be integrated into many facets of the work the University is already undertaken. We suggest that inclusive excellence not be a theme for a single year, but an overriding theme that, if integrated into strategic planning, assessment efforts, retention and graduation efforts, faculty recruitment, integrative learning, student support programs, and campus climate issues, can help San José State University reach the aim outlined in Vision 2010. As one individual with whom we met said, “inclusive excellence is not a one time event. It is a core competency.” We would add that it is a core commitment the strength of which can be measured through the establishment of outcomes and targets that can be met.
Evaluation of Systems for Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness and Learning Results (CFR 2.1-2.14, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7).

San José State University has been responsive, energetic, and aggressive in building the infrastructure, culture, and habits that insure quality and measure student learning and educational effectiveness across the University. The progress in this regard is remarkable, and the team believes that real commendations are due to the faculty and administrative leaders who have made this happen. We saw and understood not only the exhaustive efforts but also the pride and accomplishment. The team believes that SJSU has a firm foundation and effective system in place. Specifically:

- Learning Objectives are in place throughout the University
- Almost every program has an assessment plan and is actively engaged in assessment.
- The outcomes for specific majors are being analyzed as they map against the graduation goals of the General Education program in order to understand how broadly the general graduation goals are disseminated through the colleges and programs.
- Divisions within Student Affairs (such as housing, counseling, and orientation) are also actively establishing outcomes and assessing their impact on students.
- There is a more intentional effort to align the work of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, especially around enrollment management and student persistence.
- A support infrastructure has been established that includes a central assessment office, assessment coordinators in every college and department, assessment retreats funded by the Provost, faculty development and training, institutional participation in special studies such as NSSE and the Wabash assessment, and so forth.
- The Program Planning (Review) process has been revised to integrate learning outcomes assessment centrally into the review process, and the new process is already operating.
- With the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research, the University is now able to be more nimble and intentional with the data it uses to understand its students. We already mentioned the use of disaggregated data on completions, and the intention is to make this available by program and even by major.
Throughout our visit, we were told that resistance to assessment is greatly reduced and that most faculty accept or even embrace assessment and recognize it is here to stay.

Given these successes, our observations are intended to help the University move forward with an efficient, useful, and sustainable approach to assessing student learning. Not surprisingly, recent and ongoing assessment work continues to impose burdens on faculty and administrators. It is important to move quickly to show the benefits that will justify the time, efforts, and cost invested in the assessment enterprise. This will occur when faculty begin to see improvements resulting from what they have learned, when they are regularly using the data to strengthen pedagogy, curriculum, programs, and student progress. We see several challenges in this regard:

- To assure long-term faculty support for assessment, the current focus on collecting and reporting data—entirely appropriate for a start-up phase of activity—will need to give way to a focus on reflecting on and applying the data. This may happen naturally, as data collection requires less time and effort, but it is critical to push it forward.
- At least in some schools and departments, faculty perceive the current approach to assessment as compliance or accountability oriented. Not surprisingly, were heard some complaints about needless paperwork that detracts from teaching and research, and suspicion that the assessment reports will just pile up in an office and not be used for change. It is important to hold faculty accountable for conducting assessment but also to enable and encourage them to do so in the manner that is most useful for them. It is important to showcase effective and meaningful assessment and to make the campus aware of successes. This may require more flexibility than the current approach provides.
- The risk of flexibility, of course, is that quality may suffer. Indeed, we saw considerable variation in the quality and sophistication of assessment. Thus, faculty will need support and guidance for some time to come.
- Considerable effort goes into course-based assessments at present. It may be time to shift the focus more toward program assessment. An aggregation of course assessments does not constitute a program assessment – often, a very different approach is needed.
Thus, the institution may need to rethink the balance between course and program assessments.

III: SUMMARY OF TEAM CONCLUSIONS AND MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

While San José State University’s Educational Effectiveness Report was structured around three themes, our visit, our conversations, and our review of exhibits and evidence results in observations and general suggestions that cut across all three areas (integrative learning, community connections, and inclusive excellence), as well as the general area of assessment of student learning and educational effectiveness. These cross-cutting observations, detailed in the above sections, include:

- The need to set priorities, streamline efforts, and focus on results
- The need for intentionality, purposefulness, and integration of programs and resources
- The need to support the work of faculty through resources and rewards

We doubt that any of the faculty and staff with whom we met will be surprised by these observations, as they flow from our conversations and from the evidence gathered for our review. In all three areas for analysis (integrative learning, community connections, and inclusive excellence), there is both a palpable and demonstrable culture of improvement—even in some cases an exuberance about what is happening and where the University is heading—as well as the risk of duplicated efforts, stretched resources, and “burn-out.” Similarly, there are enough resources, enough commitment, and enough understanding on campus related to these three areas that the greatest benefit would come
from intentional planning, decisions about what is important and what is useful to assess for related goals and questions, and a focus on good practice and results. In addition, while many members of the faculty have embraced one or all of these arenas for academic excellence as well as assessment activities, long-term engagement and continued commitment will depend on concrete support, time to do the work, and explicit value placed on these activities through rewards and the RTP process.

Finally, the team would like to reiterate that San José State University’s progress over the last few years in creating a distinctive culture of commitment to student learning, to the hallmark of “learning and belonging,” and to the advancement of SJSU as a “university of choice” is remarkable. We would echo the observation of one faculty member serving on the Educational Effectiveness Report team, who said that at one point she felt overwhelmed by “all of the things to do” discussed in the Report. But at the end of this process she realizes that “we can do all of these things. We have the people, the programs started, the understanding, and the ability.” This captures San José State University at a great moment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following specific recommendations are supported by the discussions above:

1) In order to sustain initiatives and activities over time, we recommend that SJSU sharpen its priorities and align its fiscal and human resources around the priorities needed in order to achieve Vision 2010.
2) The Team recommends that SJSU continue its assessment efforts but move from course-based to more integrative/cumulative student learning outcomes focused on results over time and on larger academic units such as programs. As the university seeks to sustain the momentum it has achieved with assessment of student learning outcomes, it will be crucial to make strategic decisions about how assessment can be used effectively to inform the broader campus community.

3) In its Educational Effectiveness Report, the University acknowledges that it is not yet an institution in which inclusive excellence is fully understood or realized. Thus, we recommend that the university further its efforts in this regard through establishing benchmarks, strategic plans, and assessment methods that transform institutional commitment from diversity to inclusive excellence. Additionally, the Team recommends that the University move forward to establish ambitious goals to increase graduation rates for all students and that it develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for achieving its goals in this area.