4. Special Topics

I. Educational Effectiveness in an Era of Slow Growth

**Strategic Planning Focus:** Enrollment at California State University, Long Beach is growing at a rate that cannot be sustained. During the past year alone the campus has added more than 1300 full-time equivalent students. At that pace enrollment will exceed physical plant capacity within three years. Therefore, the University must implement measures to reduce very significantly the recent rate of enrollment growth. Because it has very little remaining undeveloped land, overall enrollment will have to be gradually stabilized to yield a condition closely approximating steady state. And, since the CSU system bases funding primarily on enrollment, the campus will also have to adjust to a steady-state budget.

**Researchable Questions:** (1) The California Master Plan for Higher Education mandates that upper-division transfer students from California community colleges have the highest priority in CSU admissions. Fortunately, that mandate should leave the Long Beach campus substantial freedom to deal with the first-time freshmen applicants who have contributed most to the enrollment surge. First-time freshmen from the geographical area closest to the campus will be given priority in admissions and a higher index of eligibility applied to all other freshman applicants to reduce the number who are admitted. But what is the optimal balance between freshmen and transfer students? (2) To the extent feasible, the campus would prefer to admit those students it is most likely to serve successfully, but how should they be identified? (3) How should the supplemental criteria for admission be tailored to make sure that they do not unfairly discriminate against low-income students, first-generation college students, or students from high schools that already have lower-than-average rates of college attendance? (4) To what extent can computer technology, distance education, and year-round operation of the campus be utilized to accommodate more students without compromising educational quality? (5) With the University recovering from the destructive budget reductions of the early 1990s and able now to add substantial numbers of new faculty, what is the proper balance between full-time and part-time faculty? (6) How should the campus support the efforts of its faculty in teaching, research, and service so as to maximize their effectiveness, maintain their morale, and assure their retention? (7) Can the campus ensure the availability of staff with the necessary skills to provide optimal support for the learning process? (8) Once the current rate of growth tapers off, what must the campus do to make sure that it is still able to respond to shifts in the job market by offering new programs when students need them?

**Supportive Data:** (1) through (3) A wealth of data is available from the Offices of Enrollment Services and Institutional Research about applicants to CSULB and also the success rates of matriculated students, making it possible to model the effects of supplementary admission criteria before they are implemented. It will also be possible to monitor with great precision the effects of the supplemental criteria after they are put in place for the Fall 2001 applicant pool. (4) Some information is available about the use faculty have made of both computer technology in instruction and distance education, since Academic Computing Services is usually involved in some manner with the former and University College and Extension Services with the latter. The University has not made a systematic effort to compile data on these matters, and it has no prior experi-
ence with a state-funded summer term. (5) Detailed information is available, by college and department, on past and current utilization of tenured and probationary faculty, full-time and part-time lecturers, and graduate teaching associates. (6) Detailed information can be obtained on sources of support for faculty endeavors, but until now that has not been done. (7) Some information is available through the budgeting process on identified and anticipated needs for additional or differently trained staff. (8) It is not clear what kinds of data will be required to address this question, but it would be possible to project several years into the future the probable rates of both enrollment growth and the additional resources that growth will generate; from this information a model of campus funding during the period of deceleration could be constructed.

Existing Analyses or Interpretations: (1) through (3) A committee on enrollment management appointed by President Robert C. Maxson has been analyzing these types of data and will continue to do so. Working from the analyses completed thus far, the campus expects to propose to the Office of the Chancellor that the freshman class be declared impacted for the Fall 2001, that applicants from an as-yet undefined geographical area in close proximity to the campus continue to be admitted on the basis of standard CSU criteria, and that California applicants from outside that geographical area be admitted on the basis of a higher eligibility index than the CSU standard. (4) Some preliminary work is being done to prepare the campus for conducting a limited state-funded summer program in a single discipline, in an effort to identify any administrative systems that might have to be modified to accommodate state-supported and self-supporting summer terms simultaneously. Little systematic study has been undertaken of the application of technology or of distance education as a means of increasing campus enrollment capacity. Computer technology has been employed only for the purpose of enhancing the quality of instruction for students already enrolled. (5) None to date. (6) The campus is currently becoming engaged in a discussion about this issue. Three years ago the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion policy was revised to make it more flexible and to require a more substantial evidentiary basis for personnel decisions. Exploring ways to support the faculty in their assignments is the next logical step to take. (7) Colleges have conducted some studies of existing or anticipated staff vacancies, including projections of future needs. The Office of Staff Personnel also has information on applicant pools and availability of applicants with specific skills. (8) None to date.

Key Academic and Administrative Offices: (1) through (3) Office of Enrollment Services, Committee on Enrollment Management, Provost, President in consultation with Academic Senate. (4) Academic Computing Services, University College and Extension Services, task force appointed by President Maxson to study year-round operation, others to be determined. (5) Provost, academic deans, leadership of Academic Senate. (6) President, Provost, ad hoc committee to be appointed by Academic Senate. (7) Office of Staff Personnel, college offices. (8) Academic Affairs Budget Review Committee, Resource Planning Task Force.
II. Building Academic Skills through General Education

**Strategic Planning Focus:** After a 5-year campus-wide discussion of ways to improve the CSULB General Education program, including extensive debate over the fundamental goals of General Education, a major revision was adopted in 1998, with implementation beginning in fall 1999. The major shift was from a purely menu-driven program to a sequenced program with defined expectations for development of academic skills at each level. To introduce additional coherence while taking advantage of the rich variety of courses that have been developed for general education, the new program encourages the creation of Pathways – subsets of courses, organized thematically, that will also meet a student’s general education requirements. The multi-year implementation requires a coordinated effort involving the faculty who must design and offer the new curriculum, advisors responsible for guiding students through requirements, academic administrators responsible for allocating resources, and staff and administrators in the enrollment area who must apply the rules and ensure that the transition occurs smoothly for our students. A particular challenge will be developing an ongoing assessment plan (as mandated in the policy) to determine whether program goals are being met as well as to foster continuous improvement in the program.

**Researchable Questions:** (1) To what extent are the goals of the General Education program being met? Are students and faculty aware of these goals? Do students think the program is meeting these goals? How do graduates evaluate their experience? (2) What effect will the new requirements have on student success in terms of measurable advancement of skills, retention, and progress to degree? (3) Will general education reform produce meaningful changes in general education courses in terms of instructional approaches, classroom assessments, and opportunities for students to develop important skills? (4) The new program calls for the completion of courses in the “Foundation” (four core areas of English composition, oral communication, critical thinking, and mathematics) within the first 36 units. Can the University deliver this new mix of courses over the short and long term in sufficient supply to accommodate expected growth in the entering classes? (5) Are new courses and curricula being proposed in response to the initiatives in the program calling for courses focused on “Advanced Skills”, “Service Learning”, and “Global Issues”? (6) Have Pathways been created? Is there significant interdisciplinary cooperation in the design of Pathways and learning communities? (7) How can we best stimulate faculty and staff “buy-in” and support ongoing faculty innovation? (8) In what ways do the changes to general education and the policy requiring early remediation support each other? What challenges are posed by the ongoing need to provide remedial instruction in English and mathematics? (9) Does the new general education program take advantage of appropriate technology throughout the curriculum in ways that enhance student learning? (10) Does the curriculum include consideration of the role of technology in society, as well as ways in which technological change has led to change in particular disciplines?

**Supportive Data:** (1 and 2) The University tracks retention and graduation data. In the area of skill development, the University has an exit writing exam from which data can be obtained. Additional assessments need to be developed in other areas, notably communication and critical thinking, quantitative skills, and information competency. A major effort is needed to produce a fully developed assessment
plan for General Education. Some information on these points, especially information about our graduates, is now available in program review reports from individual departments. (3) The course review process is underway; the “product” from this process can be analyzed for changes. Follow-up assessments are planned for all courses. A challenge remaining is ensuring consistency across all sections of courses when many of the faculty teaching a course may not have been involved in developing course changes. (4) We have a single year’s experience at this point (in which between 5 and 10% of first semester freshmen could not be placed in schedules that complied with the new requirements). Over the next several years, it should be possible to track the extent to which students are able to enroll in these requirements. (5) and (6) Because the new program has just been implemented, answers to these questions are generally some time off; however, the data can be collected as courses and curricula appear. (7) Some data is available from assessments of annual workshops over the past several years. Other data include rates of participation in faculty incentive programs such as Educational Innovations Awards and Assessment Grants. (8) Data is available on the number of students who complete remedial work within the allotted time. We should collect data on the schedules elected by students while they complete remedial work, as well as the extent to which these students complete the Foundation on time. (9 and 10) The General Education course approval process asks course developers about the extent and nature of use of technology in their courses. The Standard Course Outline provided for each course describes the extent to which content addresses question 10. Additional information, possibly from a survey of faculty and students regarding the effectiveness of the integration of technology into the General Education curriculum would be helpful.

Additional sources of data: for the last several years, the Academic Advising Center has collected data for first semester freshmen who come in for a mandatory advising visit midway through the fall semester. The survey asks students about courses in progress as well as such issues as how much time the student spends studying. The GE Coordinator has analyzed freshman performance in several key classes in the fall of 1998; a similar analysis is underway for fall 1999, focusing on success rates in Foundation courses.

**Existing Analysis and Interpretation:** A wealth of analysis leading up to the adoption of the General Education Policy exists, much of it addressing the development of program goals. In 1996, when the outlines of the plan that was eventually adopted were being developed, a subcommittee looking at assessment issues developed a detailed assessment plan that can form a starting point for current efforts. However, with only one cohort now in the first year of the program, not much opportunity for evaluation of program efficacy has yet occurred. The General Education Governing Committee (GEGC), which reviews all courses in the program, has developed course approval guidelines and sponsored the development of “position papers” on desired outcomes as well as the teaching of skills in the four Foundation areas. A number of groups have been engaged in analysis of the above issues or development of implementation strategies.

**Key Academic and Administrative Offices:** Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and other senior administrators in Academic Affairs; Deans; PEP Council; GEGC; Center for Faculty Development director; GE Implementation Coordinator; Academic Advising Center; SOAR/STARS director; Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services and staff.
Institutional Proposal

III. Services to Students

**Theme:** Providing a student-centered, co-curricular learning environment that promotes student satisfaction, retention and graduation during a period of marginal enrollment growth.

**Strategic Planning Focus:** Enhancing the University’s ability to successfully serve additional students, with minimal increases in fiscal and human resources, while improving student satisfaction with the college experience and contributing to improvements in retention/graduation rates and time to degree.

**Researchable Questions:** (1) The recent increase in the number of traditional, full-time freshmen and residential students places an increased demand for a variety of student services. These include personal and social development opportunities, health and psychological services, and sports, athletics and recreational opportunities. How well are we meeting that demand? How satisfied are students with the services and opportunities available? (2) The University has been making an effort to improve advising and to see that all incoming students receive advising before enrolling in classes. Two recent changes have made this especially critical for freshmen: the new General Education policy and the requirement that remediation be completed in the first year. There are also a number of institutional initiatives designed to strengthen the first year experience for entering students. Is timely advising available to students? Are students being placed in the correct classes? Are retention rates improving? Have graduation rates improved? (3) For many years, dissatisfaction with Enrollment Services appeared high on the lists of student complaints. The University has made substantial effort to improve all administrative services to students. The implementation of the new Common Management System will require both a large amount of money and a large amount of staff time, but should provide further improvements in services. Are students now receiving information and assistance on a timely basis? How well satisfied are students with the services now? (4) Heavy usage of our aging physical plant presents a challenge in maintaining classrooms and providing a safe, orderly and attractive campus grounds and facilities. We are finding ourselves with insufficient residential space to meet the current demand. How well satisfied are students with our facilities? How well are we planning for future maintenance and improvements? How will we meet the increasing demand for on-campus housing?

**Supportive data:** (1) The Student Services Division has implemented a process to conduct regular assessment of its services through its ongoing program review process, and the Division has data from the accreditation reviews of the Counseling and Psychological Services and Student Health Services programs. The University also has data gathered during the 1999 SNAPS survey and during the NCAA certification review of its Sports, Athletics and Recreation programs. (2) Both the Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) program and the Academic Advising Center have been conducting systematic surveys of participating students. The University has a wealth of data on student retention, completion of remediation, and time to degree. (3) The SNAPS survey and the Blue Ribbon process provided guidelines to student satisfaction. (4) Academic Affairs has data on classroom improvements, Physical Planning and Facilities Management can provide data on improvements to the University’s physical plant and the Office of the Vice President for Student Services can provide information regarding the demand for additional on-campus housing.
Existing Analysis and Interpretation:

1) Reports from the Student Services Division’s program review process are available for the Summer Bridge program, the SOAR program and the Disabled Students Services program. The final reports for the NCAA Certification Review, the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Services to Students and the accreditation reviews for Counseling and Psychological Services and the Student Health Service contain extensive analysis. These documents may be obtained from the Office of the Vice President for Student Services.

2) Data collected from the follow-up on students participating in the CSULB Freshman Survey are available on the Student Services Division web site and in document format from the Office of the Vice President for Student Services. Data and analyses regarding student retention, completion of remediation and time to degree are available from the Office of Institutional Research.

People expressing concern about time to degree are really discussing three different issues: elapsed time, total units, and units since transferring from a community college. Evaluating our success in assisting students to complete the degree requires separating these issues.

Elapsed time from entering the University until completion of the degree is quite a different matter from the issue of excessive units. One of the University’s missions is serving part-time students who must limit their programs because of family or job responsibilities. These students take more than four years to complete the degree because that is exactly what they plan to do.

Some students need extra units to complete a degree program because they change majors or decide on a major relatively late in their college careers. A few years ago, after a study of factors affecting graduation rate, the University instituted a policy requiring students to declare a major by the junior year. This probably shortened time to graduation for a small number of students, but the effect is difficult to measure. Of more concern are students who continue to enroll but do not make any progress toward a degree. At this stage we have no systematic way to identify such students, and have hesitated to make a policy that would affect only those who happen to come to the attention of some office.

We believe that effective advising helps shorten time to degree, both for our native students and for students transferring from a community college, by helping students select the correct courses in the correct sequence to insure that all requirements can be completed in a timely fashion, depending on the student’s needs. Assessing the effect of advising on time to degree is difficult because it is not possible to disentangle the other issues.

3) The University has participated in a system-wide benchmarking process, seeking to identify best practices in administrative services. There is data on the change in time to process applications for admission, financial aid, and graduation. The institution can show a number of procedural changes that have improved service to students.

Analyses of the 1999 and 1994 SNAPS surveys are available from the Office of Institutional Research, as is the report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Services to Students, and results of customer satisfaction surveys.

4) Copies of surveys and reports on improvements to classrooms and academic facilities may be obtained from the Office of Physical Planning and Facilities Management and/or the Office of the Pro-
vost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Statistics concerning occupancy rates and the demand for student housing may be obtained through the Office of Housing and Residential Life.

**Key Academic and Administrative Offices:** 1) Office of the Vice President for Student Services; Office of Student Life and Development; Office of the Director of Sports, Athletics and Recreation. 2) Office of the Vice President for Student Services, Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Instructional Programs; Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Academic Programs, Office of Institutional Research. 3) Office of the Vice President for Administration and Finance; Associate Vice President for Student Services, Outreach and Educational Support; Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services; Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Instructional Programs; Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Academic Programs. 4) Office of the Associate Vice President for Physical Planning and Facilities Management; Office of the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Office of Housing and Residential Life.