3. Reflective Essay

Foreword: The Development of Campus Policies at California State University, Long Beach

California State University, Long Beach is a public university, part of the California State University system, and thus governed by the Board of Trustees of that system. Policies enacted by the Board of Trustees are either incorporated in the California Code of Regulations (Division 5 of Title 5 pertains to the California State University) or disseminated to the campuses by the Office of the Chancellor as executive orders or in coded memoranda. Executive orders currently in effect are posted on the CSU Web site. The coded memoranda concerning accounting, finance, human resources, and electronic information resources are located on the web.

Since 1970 all new policies adopted at the campus level concerning academics or academically related issues have been issued as numbered policy statements. Such policies are usually developed in one of the Academic Senate’s standing councils or committees, discussed and approved by majority vote in the full Senate, and concurred in by the President. The policy numbers are then assigned by the Curriculum Office before printed copies are distributed to every office on campus. All academic policies that are currently in effect can conveniently be found on the Academic Senate’s Web site. Most of the policies identified in response to Appendix I of the WASC Handbook are numbered campus policy statements.

Prior to 1970 policy recommendations of the Academic Senate were not issued as numbered policy statements and were often confused with the policies issued as administrative decisions by other campus offices. After the Senate began the practice of numbering its approved policy statements, the administration followed suit by creating a series of numbered administrative policy letters (APLs). Following the retirement in 1983 of the Vice President for Administration and Staff Coordination who initiated this practice, the issuance of APLs gradually ceased. Today several campus offices—including the Business Office and the Office of Risk Management—continue to disseminate occasional policy statements using their own numbering systems, but there is no longer a uniform compilation of current administrative policies comparable to the set of numbered policy statements maintained by the Academic Senate on academic matters.

The sections that follow are organized in accordance with WASC’s four standards, although the list of stipulated policies in Appendix I is not. In the course of the discussion, the standards are cross-referenced to the seven unnumbered headings of Appendix I as appropriate.

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Stipulated Policies and Data on Institutional Integrity and Educational Programs. CSULB has published policies on all of the relevant criteria for review under Standard 1. The detailed mission statement was approved by the Academic Senate and concurred in by the President in the Spring 1990; it was designated Policy Statement 90–00 and has been in effect since June 1, 1990. All course and degree offerings are published annually in the CSULB Catalog; the full text of the past 5 catalogs is available on the University’s Web site. Although the catalog stipulates that it is not a contract and warns students that requirements are subject to change, in practice the University does not apply new and
more stringent requirements to students after they have matriculated at CSULB or at a California community college, provided that they do not break residency after matriculating.

The University’s principal statement on academic freedom and the right to due process, for both faculty and students engaged in the pursuit of truth and new knowledge, is Policy Statement 00–07, Policy on Faculty Professional Responsibility. This policy is based on the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments of the American Association of University Professors, currently available on-line as an appendix to the Faculty Handbook. Additional due process protections for students are incorporated into Policy Statements 99–16, Grade Appeal Procedure, and 85–19, Cheating and Plagiarism.

The University does not have a policy statement specifically addressing the issue of diversity, but diversity is a central characteristic of campus life. There is no majority culture at CSULB. At the undergraduate level, the largest ethnic/racial category, students of Caucasian descent, account for less than 40 percent of the whole population. Women outnumber men by almost 3 to 2. By its actions on a wide range of matters, the University, through the Academic Senate, has demonstrated its awareness of diversity as a major strength. When the Academic Senate endorsed the impaction plan developed by the Enrollment Management Committee, for example, it did so with the specific requirement that the administration report back to the Senate annually on the effects of impaction on campus diversity. The plan itself was designed to minimize any negative effects on the admission of students from high schools with low rates of college participation. The General Education program, Policy Statement 00–00, requires courses on both global issues and human diversity. The fourth paragraph of the University’s mission statement addresses this issue directly:

A fundamental goal of all of the University’s programs is to prepare students to function effectively in a culturally diverse society, by developing an understanding of our diverse heritage, including the essential contributions of women and ethnic minorities. Instruction emphasizes the ethical and social dimensions of all disciplines, as well as their applications to contemporary world issues. Building upon the culturally diverse region it serves and the international character of its faculty, the University emphasizes international education in its curriculum.

In addition, Policy Statement 00–06, Principles of Shared Community, is a strong statement of the University’s commitment to nondiscrimination in all of its programs.

The University publishes in its catalog all of its key regulations affecting students. In addition, the Division of Student Services annually publishes a handbook called “REGS: CSULB Regulations for Campus Activities, Student Organizations, and the University Community.” Grievances are handled in accordance with Policy Statement 95–21, in the case of undergraduate students, and 95–06, in the case of graduate students. Research involving human subjects is covered by a substantially revised policy on Protection of Human Subjects, Policy Statement 00–03. Policies on the refund of fees are largely determined at the system level and are spelled out in detail, both in the catalog and in each term’s Schedule of Classes.

Only a small percentage of CSULB undergraduates choose to complete their degrees within the traditional four-year period. Students who typically work 20 or more hours per week by the time they are juniors and seniors generally are unable to
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carry sufficient units of academic credit to graduate in four years. Nevertheless, it is possible to do so, as shown by the fact that 6.5 percent of the freshmen who entered in Fall 1996 completed their degrees prior to the Fall 2000. The typical freshman completing a baccalaureate at CSULB, however, does so in an average of 6 years. The University is not overly concerned with the average time to graduation per se. Instead it is concentrating its efforts on removing any artificial barriers that may cause students to take longer than they plan to. In response to a change in Title 5 regulations, for example, the campus reduced by 4 the number of units required for all of its Bachelor of Arts degrees, making the total 120 effective with the Fall 2001 semester. During the next 3 academic years, it will study each of its other baccalaureate degrees to identify any other opportunities for reducing overall unit requirements.

CSULB has devoted a great deal of energy over the years to making sure that its business practices are sound and efficient. Its accounts are audited annually by an outside accounting firm. The outcome of this audit is the publication of an annual financial report, which is also posted on the University’s Website.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

Stipulated Policies and Data on Teaching and Learning, Scholarship and Creative Activity, and Support for Student Learning. Much of the information relevant to the review criteria on teaching and learning can be found in the University’s catalog, which includes full statements of the requirements for all degree programs, minors, and certificates. (See the section on Educational Programs in Part II, Section 2.b.) To make sure that academic standards in each program are consistent with accepted national norms, every program must undergo a complete program review on a 7-year cycle. External consultants are hired as a part of the program review process for all programs except those that are fully accredited by the appropriate professional associations. Program review self-studies, external consultants’ reports, and the reports of the Academic Senate councils conducting the internal reviews are kept on file in the Office of Academic Affairs and in the University Library. Efforts are currently under way to better integrate student outcomes assessment into the program review process. (See pages 55-56 of this self-study for further discussion of program review.) Course syllabi are collected and placed on file in department offices and in the University Library. Although a standard course outline must be presented to the General Education Governing Committee before a course will be considered for retention on, or addition to, the General Education Course List, the University does not otherwise prescribe the contents for course syllabi. In some fields like Engineering, however, professional accreditation requirements concerning syllabi are quite detailed. Part III, Section 2.2 of this self-study addresses the whole range of issues associated with General Education.

Faculty staffing for academic programs is discussed at length in Section 2.1 of this self-study. The goal of the University is to get back to a tenure density of 75 percent. Since all newly hired probationary faculty must either possess the appropriate terminal degree for their field or complete that degree within 2 years as a condition of reappointment, such a level of tenured and probationary faculty would certainly ensure that the campus has a sufficient number of qualified faculty for the degrees it is authorized to award. On the graduate level, the University expects any degree program to be offered with the active
participation of 3 or more regular faculty. Detailed information on faculty staffing by department is maintained by the Office of Institutional Research (IR). The Office of Academic Affairs has arrayed data obtained from IR reports to create a set of tables showing trends in both enrollment and faculty staffing for the 25-year period beginning in 1976–1977, arrayed by department and by college as well as for the campus as a whole.

CSULB is defined by the State of California as a teaching university, meaning that the campus is funded in such a way that faculty must teach far more classes per year than they would in a research university. Nevertheless, there has long been agreement within the campus community that professionally active faculty who are current in the scholarship of the fields they teach are essential at the university level. The campus RTP policy requires that faculty demonstrate the quality of their scholarship in order to earn reappointment, tenure, or promotion. Similarly, long-established policy specifies that sabbatical leaves be awarded only on the basis of meritorious proposals for research or creative activity. Given this expectation, the University devotes several million dollars a year to the support of faculty scholarship, some of it from campus-wide resources, some of it in college and departmental funds, some of it in the form of indirect cost returns from the University Foundation. The amount of funding dedicated toward this end has grown substantially in the last 2 years. The section on Research in Part II, Section 2.b cites many policy documents that illustrate aspects of the University’s research infrastructure.

The Office of Institutional Research collects a great deal of information about the characteristics of the University’s entering students. This information is made available to appropriate campus offices in an annual series of reports and increasingly by posting on the IR Web site. (Please see the section on Students on page 27.) Of course, making the information available does not by itself offer assurance that it will be used to shape a learning-centered environment or promote student success. As the discussions in all three essays in Part III, Section 2 of this self-study demonstrate, however, the academic achievement of students is the primary focus of all the key decisions being made at CSULB. Whether it is a question of how best to ensure that students get the classes they need, or what skills and knowledge should be developed by the General Education program, or what service areas still need attention to make them more available or more user-friendly, student well-being is the goal. The essays in Part III, Section 2 all contain references to the most relevant sources of data bearing on their respective topics and illustrate how those data are being used to guide campus decision-making.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

Stipulated Policies and Data on Faculty and Staff; Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources; and Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes. As noted above, CSULB possesses detailed information on the number and distribution of its faculty positions. The data are compiled annually by the Office of Institutional Research and posted on its Web site; several key data elements have also been arrayed in an historical time-series by the Office of Academic Affairs. Data on staff positions are maintained by the Office of Management and Budget and are published annually in the volume known as the Internal Budget, which lists every posi-
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In recent years the President, following the advice of the Resource Planning Process Task Force (please see Part III, Section 2.1, page 56, for a description of the Resource Planning Process), has allocated all of the new faculty positions that have come to the campus as a result of rapid enrollment growth directly to Academic Affairs. State formulas for generating resources for the CSU do not specifically identify a portion of the revenue generated by new enrollment for the hiring of additional staff. Support positions, therefore, have to be proposed to the RPP Task Force, which considers them in the context of all other competing priorities. The University disproportionately reduced staff positions during the budget cuts of the early 1990’s, as it sought to protect direct classroom instruction, so one of the challenges in recent years has been to identify those service areas most in need of rebuilding. It is fortunate that, with the growing power of technology, many staff positions are more productive than was formerly possible.

The Institutional Portfolio section on Faculty (Part II, Section 2.b, pp. 24-26) contains a wealth of information about the evaluation of both regular and temporary faculty for appointment, reappointment, tenure, promotion, merit salary increases, and sabbatical leaves. All of these matters are governed by numbered policy statements. Most are also the subject of articles in the Unit 3 collective bargaining agreement. This same section of the Institutional Portfolio contains information on salary and benefits for staff as well as faculty, citing provisions of the agreements with employee unions and campus Web pages that amplify the contract provisions. The University has benefitted greatly from the activities of the Faculty Development Center, which conducts workshops and discussion groups on a variety of topics of interest to faculty, including special activities for the lecturers who teach many lower-division courses and some advanced courses in professional programs. Clearly, this is an area that is well documented.

The primary documents illustrating the University’s fiscal resources are the annual report to the President from the RPP Task Force, the President’s budget message, the Internal Budget (sent with the Self-Study), and the external audit. All have been discussed previously and are readily available in both hard copy and on line. The physical resources of the campus are covered in depth in Section 2.3 (pages 120-125) of this self-study.

The University Library houses more than 2 million volumes and provides access to an extensive array of microform materials, specialized collections such as maps, children’s books, and jazz recordings, and a large and growing set of electronic data bases. Its budget was severely reduced in the early 1990s and has never been fully restored, although incremental funds have been provided in the last several years. Without a doubt, the power of the new, more efficient approaches to interlibrary document delivery has been very helpful in compensating for the gaps in the library’s own collections, but most faculty would like to see the acquisitions budget restored to a par with the other large campuses in the CSU system. The section on the Library in Part II, Section 2.b (page 26) contains several key policy documents related to the maintenance of the Library’s collections.

During the summer 2001 the University implemented the Finance and Human Resources components of the new Common Management System purchased from PeopleSoft. These components replaced an aging financial management system and a patchwork of locally developed spreadsheets that served in lieu of an integrated human resources system. The new software is very
powerful, should become more user-friendly when it is upgraded to a Web-based version, and will hopefully serve CSULB for at least a decade to come. The planned implementation of the even more complex Student Administrative component, which is just getting started, is discussed at length in Part III, Section 2.3 (pages 114-119) of this self-study. When fully implemented, CMS will provide a wealth of functionality the campus has not previously enjoyed. Academic computing resources, from hardware and software to personnel, are all described in detail on the Academic Computing Services’ web site.

Two of the 5 major recommendations made to CSULB as a result of the 1982 accreditation visit concerned the often acrimonious relations that then existed between the faculty and the administration. There could not be a more dramatic contrast to the conditions of 1982 than the one a visitor to campus will experience now. Indeed, the best evidence the University can present of its concern for well defined institutional purposes and the strength of its institutional integrity is the health of its governance processes. CSULB is committed to defining its own future on the basis of sound public policy, is focused on identifying ahead of time the challenges it will face, and is searching for the best solutions to those challenges. It is engaged in a process of dialogue, not between faculty and administration, but among all campus constituencies. Its regular employment of open decision-making does not necessarily assure consensus on all issues, but does reflect a common commitment to the broadest possible participation. The evidence of its institutional health is the high morale of faculty, staff, and students; the sense of confidence in the future; and the mutual respect campus constituents show to each other.

Thus, the governing processes of CSULB are now one of the campus’s principal sources of strength. The mutual respect shown by the faculty and the administrative leadership has created an environment where difficult issues such as goal setting, allocation of scarce resources, and personnel policy can be discussed freely and conclusions reached without straining the fabric of the governance system itself. The result is that the Academic Senate’s handbook is not merely a paper document, but an accepted way of structuring the conduct of the University’s essential decision-making.

**Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement**

*Stipulated Policies and Data on Strategic Thinking and Planning, and Commitment to Learning and Improvement.* The attention CSULB has devoted to enhancing its financial planning efforts is as important as the availability of the raw data upon which that planning is based. For the past 15 years all major budget initiatives proposed for the next fiscal year by the University’s operating divisions have been presented to the Resource Planning Process Task Force, a University-wide committee that prioritizes the proposals and makes recommendations directly to the President. The RPP report is published and widely distributed on campus. It forms the basis for the President’s budget message each August, in which allocations for new or enhanced expenditures are discussed. The details of the year’s general fund expenditure plan are then compiled in a large document called the Internal Budget.

In the last several years the campus has focused on the development of an additional layer of planning to bridge the gap between the strategic plan, which addresses long-term goals and objectives, and the annual RPP cycle, which looks only one year
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ahead. The Division of Academic Affairs acted first, developing an annually updated Multi-Year Plan, since retitled “Mid-Range Goals,” which identifies unmet needs and new initiatives and establishes priorities for addressing them. Most recently, the divisional vice presidents have worked to create a set of Mid-Range Goals, extending this same type of exercise to the University as a whole and setting priorities for the forthcoming 5-year period. All of these enhanced planning activities have recently been codified and regularized in Policy Statement 01–08, Policy on Strategic Planning, signifying the fact that they are emerging out of the experimental stage and becoming an accepted part of the campus culture. A full description of the current intermediate and long-term planning processes can be found on the Planning Web Site.

Much of the essay in Part III, Section 2.1, pages 51-62, provides further detail about the University’s efforts to fine-tune its approach to planning.

Conclusion

In summary, the evidence amply documents the fact that California State University, Long Beach, not only is operating in compliance with WASC’s standards, but has matured as an institution. It has developed a well considered set of policy statements on all essential issues. It has generated a rich body of data on which to base its decision-making. And it has drawn on these data to guide its consideration of the key challenges presently before it: the need to adjust its admissions policies to reflect the reality that enrollment is rapidly approaching the campus’ physical plant capacity, the need to recruit a large contingent of new faculty, the need to complete the process of General Education reform and to make sure that the revised plan fulfills the goals that guided its writing, and the need to make sure that support services meet the identified requirements of students. No one is so naive as to believe that the University functions perfectly, but there is a widespread confidence that it functions well and that it is open to suggestions on how it can be further improved. That confidence enables the faculty, staff, and students to face the future hopefully.