

**SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY  
GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW  
2008-09**

**OVERVIEW OF PROCESS**

Every academic program at Santa Clara University is expected to engage in a formal program review once every six years. (See Appendix A: Six-Year Program Review Cycle.)

A program review typically begins at the start of a designated fall term and is completed by the end of the following academic year. Specific dates in the process are set by the appropriate Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost and the programs involved. (See Appendix B: Two-Year Program Review Schedule.)

The heart of a program review is a comprehensive self-study conducted by the program, which results in a Self-Study Report. (See Appendix C: Guidelines for Self-Study Report.) This report is reviewed with the Dean, who offers feedback to the program, and then sent to an external visiting team.

After a campus visit, the external visiting team submits an independent report to the program, the Dean's Office, and the Provost's Office. (See Appendix D: Guidelines for Visiting Teams.)

The program then discusses the visiting team report and submits a brief follow-up report to the Dean and the Senior Vice Provost. (See Appendix E: Guidelines for Revised Action Plan.)

The program meets with the Dean and the Senior Vice Provost to discuss the Revised Action Plan and the next steps to enhance academic quality.

**PURPOSE OF PROGRAM REVIEW**

The purpose of program review at Santa Clara University is to provide a regular opportunity for programs to engage in systematic self-examination in order to improve their educational effectiveness.

Several core principles guide Santa Clara's program review process:

1. Program review is intended to foster *academic excellence* in the context of Santa Clara's mission as a Catholic and Jesuit university committed to education for competence, conscience, and compassion. In the words of the University's *Strategic Plan*, "We seek an uncompromising standard of excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship. All three elements are essential to academic quality at Santa Clara."

2. Program review is aimed at *self-improvement*. Its emphasis is on how individual programs can better realize their own aspirations for teaching, learning, and scholarship within a general framework of the University's vision, mission, values and strategic goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan. Careful analysis and reporting of both strengths and weaknesses are essential for self-improvement. Programs are not punished for identifying weaknesses; they are supported for addressing them seriously.
3. While calling for serious attention to all aspects of a program, including scholarship, program review places a special emphasis on *student learning*. The University's mission statement declares that Santa Clara "makes student learning its central focus." If program review is to improve educational effectiveness, it must give particular attention to what students are actually learning.
4. An important component of program review is the *external perspective* gained by learning about the best practices of similar programs and inviting feedback from peers at other institutions of higher education.
5. Program review is designed as a snapshot of an *ongoing process* of organizational learning, assessment, and improvement that begins before program review is initiated and continues after it is completed.

## **EXCEPTIONS TO GUIDELINES**

Programs may request exceptions to the official guidelines or calendar if such changes would be conducive to a more effective program review. Such exceptions must be approved in writing by the Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost.

## **CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAM REVIEWS**

The following criteria will be used in determining whether or not a program review has been successful:

1. The program follows the guidelines provided in this document unless alternatives have been approved in advance by the Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost.
2. The self-study process reflects broad participation by program faculty in defining issues, analyzing evidence, and formulating plans.
3. The self-study is consciously designed to provide insights the program can use for self-improvement within the resources available to it.
4. The Self-Study Report relies upon pertinent quantitative and qualitative evidence, with special attention to evidence about student learning.
5. The Self-Study Report exhibits rigor and candor in evaluating strengths and weaknesses of

the program.

6. The program responds to the self-study with actions designed to improve educational effectiveness.
7. All participants in the process, including the Dean's Office and the Provost's Office, act with an understanding that the primary purpose of program review is to stimulate improvement by the program itself within the broad framework of goals set by the University and the relevant College or School.

## **RETENTION OF PROGRAM REVIEW MATERIALS**

Programs must retain documentation relating to program review in a systematic and retrievable fashion for at least six years. Such documentation includes at minimum the Self-Study Report, the Visiting Team Report, the Revised Action Plan, other reports generated or used in the self-study, and any pertinent correspondence.

In addition to these documents, programs must retain materials related to their ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes. These include a representative sample of student work products assessed by the program; questionnaires, rubrics, and other instruments used; reports of individual assessments conducted; and the Annual Assessment Report described in the separate document on [\*Guidelines for Assessment of Learning Outcomes\*](#).

These materials are important for planning purposes, future self-studies, and accreditation processes. Accreditation visiting teams will expect these materials to be available for scrutiny.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTIES**

The program is responsible for following all guidelines presented in this document, unless exceptions have been approved in advance by the Dean; for acting upon the program review to make improvements in its educational effectiveness; and for retaining all relevant materials as described above.

The Dean is responsible for offering timely feedback on documents submitted by the program, consulting with the Senior Vice Provost as indicated, and providing adequate support for the program to conduct its self-study.

The Senior Vice Provost is responsible for working with the Dean to provide feedback and support to the program, as well as for overseeing the program review process in general at the University level.

The Academic Affairs Committee is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the program review process in general and recommending changes to improve the process.

The Dean's Office and Provost's Office are responsible for ensuring that the program has adequate technical and administrative support to conduct its self-study.

## **MANDATE FOR PROGRAM REVIEW**

Program review is required by the University's accrediting agencies and mandated by its Board of Trustees and *Strategic Plan*. The current process grew out of recommendations of the 1996 faculty Task Force on Academic Program Review.

For additional information, see Appendix F: Mandate for Assessment and Program Review and Appendix G: Strategic Plan Summary.

## **ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE**

For further information or advice about program review, programs should consult with their Dean's Office or:

Don C. Dodson  
Senior Vice Provost  
[ddodson@scu.edu](mailto:ddodson@scu.edu)  
204A Walsh Administration Building  
(408) 554-2145

The Director of Assessment is also available to provide advice and technical assistance on all aspects of the assessment of student learning outcomes, which is an integral part of the program review process. Contact information is provided below.

Carol Ann Gittens  
Director, Office of Assessment  
[cgittens@scu.edu](mailto:cgittens@scu.edu)  
114 St Joseph's Hall  
(408) 551-1855

## APPENDIX A SIX-YEAR PROGRAM REVIEW CYCLE

Every academic program engages in a formal program review every six years. Programs usually participate in cohorts of related disciplines. Program reviews are scheduled between Fall 2003 and Fall 2008 as follows.

YEAR	REVIEW BEGINS	PARTICIPATING PROGRAMS
1	Fall 2003	Humanities: Classics, English, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Religious Studies <sup>1</sup>  School of Engineering: Undergraduate programs in Civil Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering
2	Fall 2004	Social Sciences: Anthropology and Sociology, Communication, Political Science, <sup>2</sup> Psychology
3	Fall 2005	Mathematics and Natural Sciences: Biology, <sup>3</sup> Chemistry, Combined Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, Physics  Non-Departmental Programs in Arts and Sciences: Ethnic Studies  School of Business: MBA Program and undergraduate programs in Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing, and Operations and Management Information Systems  School of Engineering: Graduate programs in Applied Mathematics, Civil Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering
4	Fall 2006	School of Law; Creative and Performing Arts: Art and Art History, Music, Theatre and Dance
5	Fall 2007	Non-Departmental Programs in Arts and Sciences: Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Women and Gender Studies
6	Fall 2008	Non-Departmental Programs in Arts and Sciences: Liberal Studies  School of ECPPM: Education, Counseling Psychology, Pastoral Ministries

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<sup>1</sup> History and Religious Studies conducted pilot reviews beginning in Spring 2003 and are not required to conduct additional reviews during this cycle.

<sup>2</sup> Political Science conducted a pilot review beginning in Spring 2003 and is not required to conduct an additional review during this cycle.

<sup>3</sup> Biology conducted a pilot review beginning in Spring 2003 and is not required to conduct an additional review during this cycle.

## **APPENDIX B TWO-YEAR PROGRAM REVIEW SCHEDULE**

The program review process begins in fall term and typically ends no later than spring of the following academic year. Specific dates in the process are set by the appropriate Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost and the programs involved.

Unless there is a written agreement to the contrary, program reviews include the following steps, which are to be completed sequentially:

### **YEAR 1: FALL**

1. The program resolves any questions about the scope and content of the process as early as possible with the Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost.
2. The program designs its self-study so as to be able to complete its Self-Study Report by spring. (See Appendix C: Guidelines for Self-Study Report.)
3. The program begins its self-study.

### **YEAR 1: WINTER**

- The program continues its self-study.

### **YEAR 1: SPRING**

- The program continues its self-study.

### **YEAR 2: FALL**

1. The program and the Dean identify suitable external reviewers who will review the Self-Study Report, visit the campus, and make appropriate recommendations. (See Appendix D: Guidelines for Visiting Teams.)
2. The program invites two external reviewers approved by the Dean to serve on the visiting team. (See Appendix D: Guidelines for Visiting Teams.)

### **YEAR 2: WINTER**

1. The program submits its Self-Study Report to the Dean and Senior Vice Provost. (See Appendix C: Guidelines for Self-Study Report.)
2. The Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost provides feedback on the Self-Study Report to the program.

3. The program makes any necessary revisions of the Self-Study Report and sends it, along with supporting materials, to the external reviewers, the Dean, and the Senior Vice Provost at least three weeks before the external reviewers visit the campus.
4. The visiting team conducts a campus visit and submits a report with findings and recommendations to the program. (See Appendix D: Guidelines for Visiting Teams.)

## **YEAR 2: SPRING**

1. The program discusses the Visiting Team Report and decides how to respond to it. It submits a Revised Action Plan to the Dean and Senior Vice Provost. This document is a revision of the Action Plan section of the Self-Study Report. (See Appendix E: Guidelines for Revised Action Plan.)
2. The Dean, in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost, provides feedback on the Revised Action Plan and approves it after any necessary revisions.
3. The program implements the next steps in program improvement with assistance, as appropriate, from the Dean.

## **APPENDIX C GUIDELINES FOR SELF-STUDY REPORT**

The Self-Study Report is the centerpiece of program review. This document should be no longer than 35 pages (plus required attachments and others as needed) and is to be submitted to the Dean with a copy to the Senior Vice Provost. To ensure broad participation and support, all full-time faculty on continuing appointment are expected to review and discuss this document.

The Self-Study Report must include the following sections:

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In no more than two paragraphs, present a succinct overview of your program and describe the self-study process the program has conducted in preparation of this report.

### **II. MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **A. Mission Statement**

Include the program's current mission statement.

#### **B. Student Learning Goals and Objectives**

Include the program's current goals and objectives for student learning outcomes.

#### **C. Other Program Goals and Objectives**

Include any current goals and objectives related to curriculum, pedagogy, scholarship, service, diversity and inclusive excellence, or other aspects of the program<sup>1</sup>

#### **D. Contribution to Mission and Goals of the University and College or School**

Discuss the contribution your program makes to the mission and goals of the University and your College or School; ways in which your program contributes directly to the University Core Curriculum or advances core learning goals; ways in which your program engages with the Residential Learning Communities, Centers of Distinction, or other centers or institutes; and ways in which your program responds to Future Directions themes.

#### **E. General Discussion**

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<sup>1</sup> "Inclusive excellence" is the term used by the Association of American Colleges and Universities to describe efforts to integrate "diversity and educational quality efforts and embed them into the core of academic mission and institutional functioning."

### III. CAPACITY FOR QUALITY

This section focuses on the underlying capacity of the program to achieve and sustain educational effectiveness.

#### A. Faculty Profile

Briefly summarize and discuss the demographics, credentials, areas of expertise, and teaching loads of full-time and part-time faculty. Include CV's of full-time faculty as an attachment.

#### B. Student Profile

Briefly summarize and discuss the demographics, preparation, and general performance of majors and other students served by the program. Describe any significant enrollment trends.

#### C. Course Profile

Briefly summarize and discuss the number of courses offered, class sizes, the percentage of classes taught by full-time and part-time faculty, and other relevant course data for the past three years.

#### D. Resource Profile

Briefly summarize and discuss the budget, facilities, equipment, and computing and library resources available to the program.

#### E. General Discussion

### IV. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

This section is the core of the self-study and focuses on actual performance in achieving educational effectiveness.

#### A. Curriculum

Summarize and discuss the breadth and depth of the curriculum; its coherence and sequencing; its reflection of major areas and issues in the discipline; its contribution to University and College or School goals; and its alignment with the program's own goals and objectives for student learning. Include as attachments a list of all courses offered in each of the past three years; syllabi for required courses in the major; syllabi for courses offered as part of the University Core Curriculum; and the Curriculum Alignment Matrix described in the separate document on [\*Guidelines for Assessment of Learning Outcomes\*](#).

#### B. Pedagogy

Summarize and discuss the kinds of pedagogy used within the program to foster expected learning outcomes; the teaching effectiveness of full-time and part-time faculty as reflected in course evaluations, annual performance reviews, and classroom

observations; and grade distributions compared with those of similar programs.

C. Scholarship and Creative Work

Summarize and discuss the scholarship or creative work of full-time faculty; any areas of special research emphasis at the program level; the record of the program in obtaining external grants; the involvement of students in research or creative projects; the effectiveness of the program in fostering individual and collaborative scholarship; and the extent to which the program reflects a “community of scholars.”

D. Professional Service

Summarize and discuss any notable contributions the program makes to the discipline or profession. Also summarize and discuss any notable contributions it makes to the community or the University by virtue of its distinctive disciplinary expertise.

E. Student Learning Outcomes

Summarize and discuss how the program displays intentionality about its learning outcomes, including ways in which it makes these program-level outcomes known to students and understood by them. Present evidence of actual student learning outcomes. This section should address as many of the stated outcomes as possible in an analytical and reflective manner. Include as attachments your current Assessment Plan (described in the separate document on [Guidelines for Assessment of Learning Outcomes](#)) as well as all reports of specific assessments the program has conducted in the past six years.

F. Post-Graduation Outcomes

Summarize and discuss any data available to the program about alumni satisfaction, graduate program admission, and employment after graduation.

G. General Discussion

**V. COMPARATIVE POSITION**

Analyze the comparative position of your program in relation to programs at other institutions, identifying ways in which your program can either learn from others or serve as a model for others. This section should include:

A. Comparison with Direct Competitors

Describe the most important similarities and differences between your program and three to five programs at institutions with which the University competes or with which your program directly competes for students. The 20 closest University competitors at the undergraduate level in 2005-06 were, in rank order of cross-applications, UC Davis, UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, University of Southern California, University of San Diego, Stanford University, Loyola Marymount University, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, UC Irvine, UC Santa Cruz, Boston College, University of San Francisco, University of Washington,

University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary's College of California, Pepperdine University, University of the Pacific, and San Jose State University. Graduate programs have different sets of direct competitors.

**B. Best Practices in Field**

Identify at least three issues, problems, or challenges your program is facing for which it is possible to identify "best practices" in the discipline. Describe those "best practices" and how they can inform your own program improvement efforts. Best practices do not have to be drawn from any of the institutions listed above.

**C. Unique Features**

Describe any unique features of your program that strengthen its comparative position or represent best practice within the discipline.

**D. General Discussion**

**VI. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Provide an overall evaluation of the program's strengths and weaknesses and identify the three most critical issues facing the program.

**VII. ACTION PLAN**

Based on your evaluation of the program's strengths and weaknesses, discuss where you want your program to go and what resources you need to get there. This section should include:

**A. Vision Statement**

Articulate a vision for your program that is both aspirational and achievable. This vision should guide the program in its improvement efforts over the next several years. It should be no more than three or four sentences.

**B. Improvements Using Current Resources**

Describe specific actions the program will take to improve quality by building on identified strengths and correcting identified weaknesses. These actions might entail the addition, elimination, or refocusing of program priorities or activities. Explain how the program will deploy its existing resources to carry out this plan.

**C. Improvements Requiring New Resources**

Describe improvements that are important to the program but that require additional resources. Explain how the program would obtain these resources and what help, if any, it would need from the University.

## **VIII. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Clearly articulate several questions or concerns on which you would like guidance from the external visiting team and others responding to your self-study.

## **IX. REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Entry for program in Undergraduate Bulletin or relevant graduate bulletin
- B. CV's of full-time faculty
- C. List of courses offered in each of the past three years
- D. Curriculum Alignment Matrix
- E. Syllabi for required courses in major
- F. Syllabi for courses offered as part of University Core Curriculum
- G. Assessment Plan
- H. Reports on assessment of student learning outcomes

## **APPENDIX D GUIDELINES FOR VISITING TEAMS**

### **SELECTION OF VISITING TEAM**

The visiting team will consist of two external reviewers selected jointly by the program and the Dean.

Reviewers may be faculty at other institutions or practitioners in the field. Every visiting team should include at least one faculty member.

In selecting members of visiting teams, programs and deans should look for persons of recognized accomplishment in the discipline or field who can provide honest, objective, and useful advice to the program. Reviewers should ideally have some experience with assessment of learning outcomes. Faculty members on visiting teams should ordinarily come from programs of equal or higher quality than the one they are asked to review.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRAM**

In cooperation with the Dean, the program engaging in the review is responsible for:

- Arranging the schedule for the visiting team at least four weeks prior to the visit.
- Providing the visiting team with the following materials at least three weeks prior to the visit: logistical arrangements; schedule of visit; Self-Study Report; applicable Guidelines for Academic Program Review; and any other supporting material the program deems appropriate.
- Making arrangements for transportation, lodging, and meals as needed.
- Providing meeting space for the visiting team, including access to computers and a printer.
- Making a representative sample of student work available for review by the visiting team.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF VISITING TEAM**

The visiting team is expected to:

- Review the Self-Study Report and all supporting materials carefully.
- Conduct a two-day site visit, which includes a tour of facilities and interviews with faculty, students, and administrators.
- Review examples of student work.

- Provide honest and objective advice to the program, the Dean, and the Provost about the quality of the Self-Study Report and self-study process, strengths and weaknesses of the program, adequacy of assessment activities, and opportunities for program improvement.
- Submit a final written report to the program, the Dean, and the Provost within three weeks of the campus visit.

## **CAMPUS VISIT SCHEDULE**

The first meeting on Day One should be with the Dean and the Senior Vice Provost. The purpose of this 45-minute meeting is to orient the team, discuss the purpose and structure of the visit and the program review process in general, and respond to any needs the team has.

If possible, the team should meet with tenured faculty individually. It may meet with other faculty either individually or in groups as appropriate.

A meeting with students should be scheduled at a time most convenient to students. Separate meetings should be scheduled for undergraduate and graduate students as appropriate to the program being reviewed.

Meetings with faculty or administrators from other Santa Clara programs are strongly recommended when relevant.

Meetings with staff are appropriate but are ordinarily a lower priority than meetings with faculty and students as described above.

Facilities tours should be kept sufficiently brief so as not to displace time for meetings with faculty and students.

The visiting team should be provided with sufficient private time to discuss its observations and draft its report. It is generally best to let the team dine alone at dinner on Day One and lunch on Day Two. The team should have three hours, including lunch, to begin drafting its findings and recommendations on the afternoon of Day Two before its last two scheduled meetings.

The next to last meeting on Day Two should be with the Chair and tenured faculty of the program. The purpose of this meeting is for the visiting team to discuss its findings and recommendations with the faculty. The tenured faculty, at their discretion, may invite others to participate in this meeting.

The final meeting on Day Two should be with the Provost, Dean, and Senior Vice Provost. The purpose of this 60-minute meeting is for the visiting team to inform these administrators of its findings and recommendations. Only in very rare circumstances should the team raise issues that it has not already shared with the chair and tenured faculty of the program.

The visiting team ordinarily does not submit a written report during the campus visit. This report should be completed within three weeks of the visit.

**APPENDIX E**  
**GUIDELINES FOR REVISED ACTION PLAN**

The Revised Action Plan is the program's response to the internal and external feedback it has received during the program review process. In this document, the program should comment on this feedback, update its Action Plan (Section VII of the Self-Study Report) as appropriate, identify the next steps it will take to promote program improvement, provide a timetable for these steps, and identify issues that require further discussion within the program or between the program and the Dean's Office. This document should be no more than five pages.

To ensure broad participation and support, all full-time faculty on continuing appointment should review and discuss this document.

## **APPENDIX F MANDATE FOR ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM REVIEW**

Although program review and the assessment of learning outcomes are separate processes, they are closely related and fall under a broadly consistent mandate from the University and external agencies.

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The University's mission statement, as it appears in the University's 1996 *Strategic Plan*, describes Santa Clara as an institution that "makes student learning its central focus, promotes faculty and staff learning in its various forms, and exhibits organizational learning as it deals with the challenges facing it." Building on this general commitment, the *Strategic Plan* (as revised in 2001) articulates two specific goals:

- Initiate program review to promote overall quality and consistency with the vision, mission, and values of the University. [3.E.1.]
- Assess learning outcomes and use performance indicators to improve educational quality and administrative effectiveness. [3.E.3.]

These goals are consistent with the 1996 recommendations of the faculty Task Force on Academic Program Review, which noted:

Program planning and review systematizes the process by which the interrelated activities of learning, scholarship and service are continuously observed and improved.....Preparing planning reports provides the program with an opportunity to think about where they are, where they want to go and how to get there. To know where they are, the programs need to develop methods to measure learning outcomes, scholarly production, and service. Instead of *assuming* they are doing a good job (a culture of self-evidence), programs need to *demonstrate* that they are doing a good job (a culture of evidence).

Santa Clara's stated commitment to program review and assessment mirrors a strong external mandate. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all institutions receiving federal funds engage in assessment of learning outcomes, leaving it up to regional accrediting agencies to assure compliance. Santa Clara's regional accrediting agency, WASC, as well as its professional school accrediting agencies (AACSB, ABA, ABET and CTC) have all placed increasing emphasis on assessment of learning outcomes as an accreditation requirement.

Santa Clara's 1999 Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation by WASC made several recommendations approved by the University Planning Council, including:

- Provide the expertise needed to support assessment of learning outcomes with more use of objective, longitudinal, and comparative data.
- Implement a more systematic process of assessment-based review of academic majors and co-curricular programs that allows for local experimentation guided by identified learning outcomes.

In response to these recommendations and its own findings, the WASC visiting team recommended that Santa Clara “link teaching and learning with a systematic, multi-year faculty development plan for assessment support,” “clarify administrative accountability for institutional assessment of student learning and educational effectiveness,” and “move quickly in implementing a systematic approach to program review.” More specifically, the visiting team stated that “[I]ncreased resource allocation for learning assessment should be included in budget planning.”

The subsequent Action Letter issued by the WASC Commission identified five areas of specific concern. Two of these areas were assessment and program review. The WASC Commission endorsed the recommendations of the visiting team and noted that “A broad and sustainable infrastructure is needed for the assessment of quality and student learning at the program level, Such processes and structures are vital to assure program currency and quality, and can be an important way to engage faculty in determining how well program learning objectives are achieved.”

At its February 2000 meeting, Santa Clara’s Board of Trustees approved a resolution calling on the University “to adopt a more systematic approach to program review that is centered on the goal of ‘educating for competence, conscience, and compassion.’ This approach should be based on assessment of learning outcomes distinctive to a Santa Clara education, place the focus on academic and co-curricular programs as learning programs, and support strengthening the connection between the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning.”

## **CURRENT WASC FRAMEWORK**

Since Santa Clara’s last WASC visit, WASC has revised its accreditation standards. In the revision adopted in February 2008, WASC places even greater emphasis on the importance of assessment and program review as tools for increasing educational effectiveness. The following framework appears in the *WASC Core Commitments and Standards* ([www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)) as a context for applying the specific standards of accreditation:

The institutions accredited by WASC represent a remarkable range of diversity in terms of mission, size, and relative maturity. They are bound together, however, by a common pair of commitments – to institutional capacity and to educational effectiveness. The WASC process begins by asking institutions to ground their efforts in these two commitments. In this way, each institution connects more closely to its own distinctive character and to its responsibilities to its stakeholders. By reaffirming these core commitments, the institution more fully owns both the process and the outcomes from an accreditation review.

### **Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity:**

*The institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes.*

The Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity enables the institution to consider resource issues from a holistic perspective, and to consider capacity as an institutional attribute beyond minimum compliance and a review of assets. Looking at itself through a “lens” of institutional capacity enables

the institution to reexamine what it *is* in terms of its capacity to fulfill its aspirations, and to integrate and synthesize findings and recommendations for improvement gained through its self-review under Commission Standards. While the Standards provide an opportunity to review institutional performance within a defined area, the framework of institutional capacity allows an institution to explore cross-cutting issues such as whether resources, structures and processes are aligned with the institution's mission and priorities, and whether the institution has the capacity to measure, interpret, and use evidence about its effectiveness. An important dimension of institutional capacity is the institution's readiness to define and sustain educational effectiveness. This dimension is reflected in the review cycle by the name assigned to the first review, the Capacity and *Preparatory* Review.

**Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness:**

*The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program level. The institution employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, which ensure delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded.*

The Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness provides an opportunity for the institution to explore holistically its approaches to educational effectiveness. The institution assesses whether its systems, such as course and program design, faculty support, and program review, are effectively linked to evidence of student learning and are consistent with the educational goals and academic standards of the institution. By design, elements of educational effectiveness were incorporated into all four Commission Standards, so that institutions would explore the relationships between capacity and educational quality and effectiveness. Each of the four Accreditation Standards describes key elements of educational effectiveness.

To help institutions and others interpret and apply the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and to Educational Effectiveness, the Commission has defined Standards for Accreditation ([www.wascenior.org](http://www.wascenior.org)). These Standards are intended to serve several purposes:

- To guide institutions in self-review as a basis for assessing institutional performance, and to identify needed areas of improvement
- To provide a framework for institutional presentations to the Commission and review teams
- To serve as the basis for judgment by evaluation teams in the institutional review process — for the Capacity and Preparatory Review in addressing the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity and for the Educational Effectiveness Review in addressing the Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness
- To provide a foundation for Commission actions and the basis for required institutional follow up to such actions
- To assist those involved in the accrediting process, in higher education generally, and members of the public, in defining institutional quality and educational effectiveness, and in promoting the development and sharing of practices leading to the improvement of quality.

The following excerpts from the WASC standards illustrate its expectation that all accredited institutions must have effective systems of assessment and program review in place.

**Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives**

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its

place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large. Through its purposes and educational objectives, the institution dedicates itself to higher learning, the search for truth, and the dissemination of knowledge. The institution functions with integrity and autonomy.

1.2. Educational objectives are clearly recognized throughout the institution and are consistent with stated purposes. The institution develops indicators for the achievement of its purposes and educational objectives at the institutional, program, and course levels. The institution has a system of measuring student achievement, in terms of retention, completion, and student learning. The institution makes public data on student achievement at the institutional and degree level, in a manner determined by the institution.

## **Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions**

The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. It demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in the institution's efforts to attain educational effectiveness.

2.2. All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and in terms of levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits.

2.2a. Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and a fulfilling life. These programs also ensure the development of core learning abilities and competencies including, but not limited to, college-level written and oral communication; college-level quantitative skills; information literacy; and the habit of critical analysis of data and argument. In addition, baccalaureate programs actively foster an understanding of diversity; civic responsibility; the ability to work with others; and the capability to engage in learning. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in the areas of cultural and aesthetic, social and political, as well as scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons in this society. Finally, students are required to engage in an in-depth, focused, and sustained program of study as part of their baccalaureate programs.

2.2b. Graduate programs are consistent with the purpose and character of their institutions; are in keeping with the expectations of their respective disciplines and professions; and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the several levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. Graduate curricula are visibly structured to include active involvement with the literature of the field and ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate high-level professional practice and training experiences. Additionally, admission criteria to graduate programs normally include a baccalaureate degree in an appropriate undergraduate program.

2.3. The institution's student learning outcomes and expectations for student attainment are clearly stated at the course, program and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and expectations are reflected in academic programs and policies; curriculum; advisement; library and information resources; and the wider learning environment.

2.4. The institution's expectations for learning and student attainment are developed and widely shared among its members (including faculty, students, staff, and where appropriate, external stakeholders). The institution's faculty takes collective

responsibility for establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating the attainment of these expectations.

2.6. The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated levels of attainment and ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards faculty use to evaluate student work.

2.7. All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes analyses of the achievement of the program's learning objectives and outcomes, program retention and completion, and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

2.10. The institution collects and analyzes student data disaggregated by demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and campus climate to support student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students and assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences.

2.11. Consistent with its purposes, the institution develops and assesses its co-curricular programs.

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

The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at different levels of the institution, and to revise institutional purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning, and scholarly work.

4.3. Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness, including student learning.

4.4. The institution employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes at each level of institutional functioning, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, ongoing evaluation, and data collection. These processes include assessing effectiveness, tracking results over time, using comparative data from external sources, and improving structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy.

4.5. The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and objectives. Institutional research addresses strategic data needs, is disseminated in a timely manner, and is incorporated in institutional review and decision-making processes. Included in the institutional research function is the collection of appropriate data to support the assessment of student learning. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the research function and the suitability and usefulness of data.

4.6. Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation and assessment used throughout the institution. The faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and uses the results for improvement. Assessments of the campus environment in support of academic and co-curricular objectives are also undertaken and used, and are incorporated into institutional planning.

4.7. The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, as well as into the conditions and practices that promote the kinds and levels of learning intended by the institution. The outcomes of such inquiries are applied to the design of curricula, the design and practice of pedagogy, and to the improvement of evaluation means and methodology.

4.8. Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, and others defined by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment of educational programs.

## APPENDIX G STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

The University's *Strategic Plan* ([www.scu.edu/strategicplan](http://www.scu.edu/strategicplan)), approved in 1996 and revised in 2001, provides a broad framework for generating and evaluating goals at the program level. This framework should inform but not substitute for goals that are specific to the program and discipline.

The *Strategic Plan* begins with a Strategic Vision, which states:

Santa Clara University will excel in educating men and women to be leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion. By combining teaching and scholarship of high quality, an integrated education in the Jesuit tradition, and a commitment to students as persons, we will prepare them for professional excellence, responsible citizenship, and service to society, especially on behalf of those in greatest need.

The plan then presents the University Mission, which states in part:

Santa Clara University is a Catholic and Jesuit institution that makes student learning its central focus, promotes faculty and staff learning in its various forms, and exhibits organizational learning as it deals with the challenges facing it.

Student learning takes place at the undergraduate and graduate level in an educational environment that integrates rigorous inquiry and scholarship, creative imagination, reflective engagement with society, and a commitment to fashioning a more humane and just world.

As an academic community, we expand the boundaries of knowledge and insight through teaching, research, artistic expression, and other forms of scholarship. It is primarily through discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge that we exercise our institutional responsibility as a voice of reason and conscience in society....

The *Strategic Plan* also commits the University to living out six core values, which are discussed at greater length in the text:

- Academic Quality
- Integrated Learning
- Commitment to Students
- Service to Others
- Community and Diversity
- Jesuit Distinctiveness

Following these foundational statements, the *Strategic Plan* outlines three initiatives to realize its vision, mission, and values. These initiatives, and the guiding questions for each, are:

**1. Building a Community of Scholars**

*We will foster a vital community of scholars whose members collaborate as partners in learning and scholarship.*

- 1.A How can Santa Clara with the leadership of its faculty, foster the intellectual collaboration necessary for building a community of scholars and providing an integrated education?
- 1.B How can Santa Clara support faculty in their efforts to exemplify the ideal of the teaching scholar?
- 1.C How can Santa Clara continue to enrich the quality and diversity of its community of scholars?

**2. Providing an Integrated Education**

*We will foster the education of the whole person and enable students to make connections among different forms of knowledge, faith, understanding, and experience.*

- 2.A How can Santa Clara enable students to make connections among different aspects of their educational experience and to relate what they learn to how they live as “persons of solidarity” in the real world?
- 2.B How can Santa Clara develop cohesive themes that span the curriculum and enrich learning, scholarship, and service to others?
- 2.C How can Santa Clara integrate the use of technology and information resources into its learning environment in ways that enrich learning, teaching, scholarship, and service to society?

**3. Focusing Resources for Excellence**

*We will develop the resources necessary for educational excellence and focus them more sharply on advancing the University’s vision, mission, and values.*

- 3.A How can Santa Clara enhance the quality of its human resources and their effectiveness in carrying out its mission?
- 3.B How can Santa Clara create a physical environment that stimulates academic excellence, promotes integrated education and a community of scholars, and exhibits sensitivity to the ecology and historical heritage of the campus?
- 3.C How can Santa Clara optimize its investment in technology and information resources?
- 3.D How can Santa Clara more effectively generate, manage, and conserve its financial resources to advance its mission and strategic initiatives?
- 3.E How can Santa Clara align its programs, resources, and messages more closely with its vision, mission, and values?