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## **WASC SELF-STUDY THEMES BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Santa Clara University is preparing for its next review for reaffirmation of accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). This review takes place in three steps: (1) an Institutional Proposal due on May 15, 2007, (2) a Capacity and Preparatory Review in Fall 2009, and (3) an Educational Effectiveness Review in Spring 2011. Each review is based on a self-study report and includes a site visit and report by an external visiting team.

Central to the new WASC accreditation process is an emphasis on gathering evidence about educational effectiveness, especially around student learning outcomes, and using this evidence to improve effectiveness. The emphasis is on results, not rhetoric.

In the context of specific WASC standards and review criteria, the University will approach this two-part review through the lens of three self-study themes that grow directly out of our Strategic Plan and Future Directions discussions. Based on extensive consultation with members of the University community, the University Planning Council has proposed these themes:

- Educating for Competence, Conscience, and Compassion
- Strengthening the Santa Clara Teaching Scholar Model
- Promoting a Community of Inclusive Excellence

The University will examine each theme as an action research project that gathers evidence of institutional effectiveness and leads to concrete actions to improve effectiveness.

### **Theme 1: Educating for Competence, Conscience, and Compassion**

*Why this is important for self-study:*

Santa Clara's vision statement declares the University's intention "to excel in educating men and women of competence, conscience, and compassion." This is Santa Clara's overarching goal for student learning. It is important that we understand what it means, know how to accomplish it, determine how successful we are, and become more effective in doing it.

*Illustrative questions for self-study:*

- What do we mean by "educating for competence, conscience, and compassion" as an integrated learning goal at Santa Clara University?

- How do we express this goal in terms of expected learning outcomes at the undergraduate and graduate level?
- What evidence do we have that students are actually achieving these expected outcomes?
- How will we become more effective in educating for competence, conscience, and compassion?

*What we hope to gain that will move us forward:*

This review will increase our collective understanding of the goal of educating for competence, conscience, and compassion; hone our tools for assessing it; tell us how successful we are; and identify ways to do it better. It should ultimately position us to be recognized as a national model for educating men and women of competence, conscience, and compassion.

## **Theme 2: Strengthening the Santa Clara Teaching Scholar Model**

*Why this is important for self-study:*

For the past 20 years, Santa Clara has promulgated a “teaching scholar model” in which faculty are expected to balance and excel in their work as both teachers and scholars. One of the key strategic challenges set forth in the current Strategic Plan is: “How can Santa Clara support faculty in their efforts to exemplify the ideal of the teaching scholar?” Faculty have expressed a concern about the adequacy of resources to support this model, about competing demands on their time and efforts, and about tensions between the professional norms of their disciplines and the distinctive vision, mission, and values of Santa Clara University.

*Illustrative questions for self-study:*

- What is the Santa Clara “teaching scholar model” and how is it different from other models of faculty work?
- What concerns do faculty have about this model?
- How well does the teaching scholar model connect with the additional dimension of engagement created by the values of our unique community and our commitment to educating for competence, conscience, and compassion?
- How can we make the teaching scholar model more effective in serving the needs of both faculty and students within the context of Santa Clara’s distinctiveness as a Jesuit university?”

*What we hope to gain that will move us forward:*

This review will allow us to plan the appropriate size and composition of the faculty, clarify performance expectations, provide better support for faculty, and link the teaching scholar model more closely with our student learning goals. It should ultimately help us

enable faculty, individually and collectively, to balance the expectations of their academic disciplines with the inspiration of Santa Clara's vision, mission, and values.

### **Theme 3: Promoting a Community of Inclusive Excellence**

*Why this is important for self-study:*

The goal of a community of inclusive excellence is to provide the kind of environment in which we can most effectively educate for competence, conscience, and compassion and in which our teaching scholars, staff, and students can function at their highest potential. Our 1993 Statement of Purpose envisions a "community enriched by men and women of diverse backgrounds, respectful of difference and enlivened by open dialogue, caring and just toward others, and committed to broad participation in achieving the common good." This theme reappears in our 1993 Guiding Principles and again in our 2001 Strategic Plan, which names "community and diversity" as one of our six fundamental values and makes "Building a Community of Scholars" one of our three strategic initiatives. At the conclusion of our last accreditation review, WASC highlighted diversity as one of five issues requiring more attention by the University. Diversity is also one of our Future Directions themes. Recent national discussions of diversity have been framed in terms of "inclusive excellence," which the Association of American Colleges and Universities describes in terms of efforts to integrate "diversity and educational quality efforts and embed them into the core of academic mission and institutional functioning."

*Illustrative questions for self-study:*

- What do we mean by a "community of inclusive excellence" at Santa Clara University?
- How do we currently reflect diversity and inclusiveness in the composition of our faculty, administration, staff, and student body?
- How do we currently reflect diversity and inclusiveness in our policies, practices, and campus climate?
- How do we currently reflect diversity and inclusiveness in our curriculum and educational programs?
- What improvements will we make as a community of inclusive excellence, based on the evidence we have collected?

*What we hope to gain that will move us forward:*

This review will allow us to gain a clearer understanding of campus issues related to diversity and inclusiveness; remove barriers to both; and pursue opportunities to increase them. It should ultimately result in a community of increased diversity and greater inclusiveness, better able to carry out the University's vision, mission, and values.