

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND
ACCREDITATION SELF-STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
FEBRUARY 11, 2000

Santa Clara University completed an experimental self-study for reaffirmation of accreditation by WASC in September 1999. This self-study, which assessed the University's progress in implementing its 1998 *Strategic Plan* rather than responding directly to the nine WASC standards for accreditation, was the basis for a review by a WASC visiting team in November 1999. The visiting team issued its report in January 2000, and the WASC Commission will take action at a meeting on February 23, 2000.

The full visiting team report is included in the agenda materials for the February 11 Board of Trustees meeting. The conclusions of the visiting team are best summarized on pages 48-55 ("Critical Issues/The Future") and 57-60 ("Appendix A: Nine Standards") of its report. The *Strategic Plan* and the University's self-study are available on Santa Clara's web site at www.scu.edu/SCU/StrategicPlan.

The visiting team praised both the self-study and the broader strategic planning process of which it was a part, noting that "Santa Clara should take great satisfaction in undertaking a Self-Study process that supports the implementation of its strategic plan and that contributes to the development of an exciting new model for accreditation." In its conclusions, the visiting team highlighted five critical issues that require further attention: diversity, decision-making processes, assessment, graduate and professional education, and library and learning resources.

The following sections summarize the perspectives of the *Strategic Plan*, the self-study, and the visiting team report on each of four major themes that connect these documents: learning outcomes, community of scholars, integrated education, and resources for excellence.

Learning Outcomes

Strategic Plan

Although it is not a separate initiative, a concern for learning outcomes pervades the *Strategic Plan*. It is a theme in the *Strategic Vision* ("Santa Clara University will excel in educating men and women for competence, conscience, and compassion"), the *University Mission* ("Santa Clara University is a Catholic and Jesuit institution that makes student learning its central focus"), and all three strategic initiatives. In addition to the two core educational initiatives (Community of

Scholars and Integrated Education), the third initiative on Resources for Excellence includes the following goal: “Use the assessment of learning outcomes and performance indicators as means to improve educational quality and administrative effectiveness.”

Self-Study

On the subject of learning outcomes, the self-study makes four recommendations for further attention:

1. Continue to explore ways to clarify, promote, and measure the goal of “competence, conscience, and compassion” as a distinctive outcome of an education in the Jesuit tradition.
2. Provide the expertise needed to support assessment of learning outcomes with more use of objective, longitudinal, and comparative data.
3. Strengthen the connection between the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of student learning.
4. 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.

Visiting Team Report

The visiting team report states: “Santa Clara University is to be commended for designing an exemplary program that bridges strategic planning and assessment of learning outcomes....To take assessment to the next level, however, the university is encouraged to address missing elements and to improve the assessment process.” Indirectly lending support for the recommendations in the self-study, the team report recommends 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.”

Community of Scholars

Strategic Plan

This first initiative of the *Strategic Plan* includes eleven goals to “foster a vital community of scholars whose members collaborate as partners in learning and scholarship.”

Self-Study

To advance the Community of Scholars initiative, the self-study makes two recommendations for further attention:

1. Promote increased use of practices and structures that bring members of the University community together across disciplinary and organizational boundaries.
2. Determine the optimum size and composition of both the faculty and the student body within the context of a central focus on student learning and support of the teaching scholar model.

Visiting Team Report

Singling out diversity as an issue of special importance, the team report “commends the university for the positive campus climate,” noting that Santa Clara “has made enormous progress in campus diversity since the last accreditation visit.” But the report also expresses concerns about diversity:

- “It is imperative that serious efforts are made to provide leadership from underrepresented groups at the very top.”
- “Deans and faculty must go beyond traditional approaches in carrying out search and recruitment processes.”
- “The campus faces a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining under-represented minority students.”
- “The visiting team is concerned that the ethnic studies component of the Core [Curriculum] is only required of students in the College of Arts and Sciences.”
- “We sense a need for even more effective means of administrative communication and interaction with the diverse constituencies at Santa Clara University.”

On other topics related to the Community of Scholars, the visiting team report states that Santa Clara “has made significant strides since the 1987 visit in the development of programs and structures that create an intellectual community, and foster intellectual collaboration and engagement with both the university and the surrounding communities.”

The report expresses concern about how well graduate students are connected to the campus community, suggests that the role and future of the Division of Counseling Psychology and

Education should be reviewed, and raises a number of issues related to faculty development, suggesting that “Centralized faculty development resources could offer availability and confidentiality as well as an economy of scale.”

Integrated Education

Strategic Plan

This second initiative of the *Strategic Plan* includes eight goals to “foster the education of the whole person in a learning environment that enables students to make connections among different forms of knowledge, understanding, and experience.”

Self-Study

To advance the Integrated Education initiative, the self-study makes five recommendations for further attention:

1. Continue to develop learning communities, particularly residential learning communities, as a principal means for promoting the coherence of student learning.
2. Root experiential learning, with particular emphasis on community-based service learning, more strongly within the curriculum.
3. Make student advising and learning assistance a vehicle for promoting integrated learning.
4. Assure that the emerging centers of distinction create stronger connections linking faculty scholarship, student learning, and off-campus programs.
5. Realize more fully the learning opportunities represented by the diversity of the University community.

Visiting Team Report

The team report observes that Santa Clara “is developing strong programs that reflect commitment to integrated education,” focused particularly on residential learning communities, the Eastside Project, the Student Reflectors Program, and the Drahmman Center. It again raises concerns about integrated learning at the graduate level. It also notes that the recent integration of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs has left some staff feeling unappreciated and unsure of their place in the university.

Resources for Excellence

Strategic Plan

This third initiative of the *Strategic Plan* includes twenty-two goals in the areas of human resources, physical environment, technology and information resources, financial resources, alignment, and marketing to “develop the resources necessary for educational excellence and focus them more sharply on advancing the University’s vision, mission, and values.”

Self-Study

The self-study makes four recommendations for further attention in the area of Resources for Excellence:

1. Integrate the planning and management of all University resources within a process that recognizes the interrelationships and interdependence of human resources, technology and information resources, the physical environment, and financial resources.
2. Assure that those who exercise leadership responsibilities at every level of the University develop and use the knowledge, skills, and sensitivities needed to effect organizational change.
3. Implement a comprehensive compensation strategy that is affordable within the University’s resources, addresses the problem of housing costs, and is sufficiently competitive to recruit and retain excellent faculty and staff.
4. Engage more faculty and staff in innovative uses of technology, especially the Internet and Web-based resources.

Visiting Team Report

The report devotes most attention to information resources and financial resources. It cites significant progress in the first area, but comments that the Orradre Library building remains inadequate, that additional resources must be provided to support technology use, and that the leadership structure for Information Services should be reviewed to consider the creation of a Chief Information Officer position.

In the area of financial resources, the report concludes that Santa Clara is “generating, managing and conserving its financial resources to advance its mission and strategic initiatives.” While noting that Santa Clara presents a strong financial profile, the report points out some risks in the University’s current debt financing and undergraduate tuition strategies. It also underscores that “it is important for the Board of Trustees to provide the leadership for the [new capital] campaign and to broaden the support for it, especially the support and level of giving from alumni.”

On another topic, the report states that “additional housing for faculty, staff and students is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.”