Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

21-24 October 2007

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities that Represents the Views of the Evaluation Committee
Evaluation Committee Report
Utah State University
21-24 October 2007
## Table of Contents

Evaluation Committee ........................................................................................................... v-vi

**Introduction** .......................................................................................................................... 1-6
  - History .................................................................................................................................. 1
  - Accreditation Summary ....................................................................................................... 1-4
  - Eligibility Requirements ..................................................................................................... 4
  - Self-Study Report ............................................................................................................... 4-5
  - Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 5-6

**Standard One – Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning, and Effectiveness** .......... 7-15
  - Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 7
  - Role, Mission, and Goals ..................................................................................................... 7-11
  - Planning and Effectiveness ................................................................................................. 11-15

**Standard Two – Educational Program and Its Effectiveness** ................................. 16-47
  - Undergraduate and Professional Programs ....................................................................... 16-35
    - College of Agriculture ..................................................................................................... 16-18
    - College of Business ......................................................................................................... 18-21
    - College of Education and Human Services .................................................................. 22-24
    - College of Engineering .................................................................................................... 25-27
    - College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences ....................................................... 27-31
      - Humanities ..................................................................................................................... 27-31
    - College of Natural Resources ......................................................................................... 31-33
    - College of Science ........................................................................................................... 33-35
  - General Education Program: Policy 2.1 ........................................................................... 36-37
  - Educational Assessment: Policy 2.2 .................................................................................. 37-38
  - Distance and Continuing Education: Standard 2.G and Policies A-6 and 2.6 ............. 38-40
  - Experiential Learning and Study Abroad: Policies 2.3 .................................................... 40-41
    - 2.4, and A-6 ...................................................................................................................... 40-41
  - Non-Credit Programs and Courses: Standard 2.H ........................................................... 41
  - Graduate and Interdisciplinary Programs: Standard 2.D .................................................. 41-47

**Standard Three – Students** ............................................................................................ 48-58
  - Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 48-49
  - General Responsibilities ..................................................................................................... 49-52
  - Academic Credit and Records, Transfer of Credits .......................................................... 52-53
Student Services................................................................. 53-56
Intercollegiate Athletics......................................................... 56-57
Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and ......................
Representation of Accredited Status: Policy 3.1 ....................... 57-58

Standard Four – Faculty.......................................................... 59-63
  Faculty Selection, Evaluation, Roles, Welfare ..............................
    and Development ............................................................ 59-60
  Distance Learning Faculty .................................................... 60-61
  Faculty Evaluation ................................................................ 61-62
  Scholarship, Research, and Creativity ...................................... 62-63

Standard Five – Library and Information Resources ...................... 64-66
  Purpose and Scope ................................................................ 64
    Information Resources and Services ...................................... 64
  Facilities .............................................................................. 64-65
  Personnel and Management .................................................... 65
  Planning and Evaluation .......................................................... 65-66
  Summary and Concerns ........................................................... 66

Standard Six – Governance ....................................................... 67-70
  Introduction ........................................................................... 67
    Governance System and Governing Board ................................. 67-68
    Leadership and Management .................................................. 68-70

Standard Seven – Finance ......................................................... 71-74
  Financial Planning ................................................................. 71
  Adequacy of Financial Resources .............................................. 71-72
  Financial Management ............................................................ 72-73
  Fundraising and Development .................................................. 73-74
  Summary ................................................................................ 74

Standard Eight – Physical Resources .......................................... 75-76
  Instructional and Support Facilities ............................................ 75
  Equipment and Materials .......................................................... 75-76
  Physical Resource Planning ....................................................... 76
  Summary ................................................................................ 76

Standard Nine – Institutional Integrity ........................................... 77
Conclusion ................................................................. 78-80
Commendations .......................................................... 78
Recommendations ......................................................... 79-80
Evaluation Committee
Utah State University
Logan, Utah
21-24 October 2007

Dr. George M. Dennison, Chair
President
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana

Dr. A. Larry Branen
Associate Vice President
University of Idaho – Northern Idaho
Coeur d’Alene, Idaho

Dr. Kregg Aytes
Chairman, CIS Department
Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho

Dr. Larry B. Harris
Dean, School of Education
University of Alaska Southeast
Juneau, Alaska

Dr. Douglas J. Goering
Professor and Interim Dean
University of Alaska, Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

Dr. Tom Grayson Colonnese
Chair, American Indian Studies Program
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

Dr. Dawn S. Neuman
Vice Provost for Academic Resources
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Las Vegas, Nevada
Dr. Alan Egger  
Professor of Mathematics  
Idaho State University  
Pocatello, Idaho

Dr. Linda J. Morris  
Professor of Business  
College of Business and Economics  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho

Dr. Muriel K. Oaks  
Dean, Center for Distance and Professional Education  
Washington State University  
Pullman, Washington

Dr. Patricia B. Reuss  
Director, Career Services and Cooperative Education  
Montana State University-Billings  
Billings, Montana

Ms. Karyle Butcher  
University Librarian  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon

Mr. Mark E. McCambridge  
Vice President, Finance and Administration  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon

Dr. Albert E. Johnson  
Vice President  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
Redmond, Washington
INTRODUCTION

On 21-24 October 2007, an Evaluation Committee representing the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) visited Utah State University (USU) in Logan, Utah, to assess the University for reaffirmation of accreditation. The Committee consisted of thirteen members, with the Vice President of the Commission providing staff assistance as an ex officio member. The Committee extends deep appreciation for the courtesy and hospitality shown by the University community during the visit. The University people with the responsibility made certain that the Committee had all the support and access to information necessary to the completion of its work.

History

Utah State University (USU), a public institution of higher education chartered in 1888 by the State of Utah as the Utah Agricultural College, became a University in 1957. USU awarded its initial graduate degrees in 1916, its first doctoral degree in 1950, and has served more than 700,000 students during its years of service to the state. USU offers an array of programs extending from the “agricultural and mechanical arts,” in the terminology of the 19th century, through the liberal arts and sciences to modern science and technology. In addition, in accordance with its mandate, USU hosts the Utah Cooperative Extension Service, Agricultural Experiment Station, and Utah Water Research Laboratory, and has three branch campuses located around the state. The main campus in Logan consists of 400 acres with more than 200 buildings, 63 dedicated to instructional programs, with an Innovation Campus to the north of the main campus as a center for research and technology transfer. The Utah Board of Regents, in its master plan for the Utah Higher Education System, assigns “a unique role” to USU “as the state’s land-grant and space-grant university,” with authorization for doctoral and master’s “programs in agriculture, business, education, engineering, natural resources, sciences, and the traditional core of liberal learning – humanities, arts, and social sciences.” Reflective of its status as a “Doctoral Research University – High Research Activity,” USU faculty researchers typically attract in excess of $140 million in external funds annually to support research and graduate education.

Accreditation Summary

Initially accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges in 1924 as the Utah Agricultural College, USU successfully sustained its accreditation over the years and received its most recent
reaccreditation following a full-scale evaluation in 1997. Over the years, the University has continued to develop distinctive programs, delivering some to remote locations around the world. The last full-scale evaluation in 1997 resulted in reaffirmation of accreditation for ten years, with a required focused interim report and visit in 1999 concerning assessment and the standard interim report and visit scheduled to occur in 2002. The 1997 Evaluation Committee offered five commendations and made four recommendations for improvement. The 1999 evaluator – Dr. Marcia Belcheir, Coordinator of Institutional Assessment of Boise State University – reported that USU “personnel have paid careful attention to the assessment recommendation issued in 1997.” As a result, “almost all academic departments [including general education] are engaged in assessment at some level.” The standard interim evaluator – President George M. Dennison of The University of Montana – concluded in 2002 that USU had satisfactorily responded to the three 1997 recommendations that Dr. Belcheir did not review, and had made continued progress with regard to the assessment recommendation. However, the evaluator recommended once again “that the University continue the development and refinement of its assessment plan and program.” Based on the evaluators’ reports, the Commission mandated a progress report in 2004 in response to the evaluator’s 2002 recommendation on assessment, accepted the progress report in 2004, and reaffirmed accreditation until the next full-scale visit in 2007.

**Recommendation 1:**

While the committee found assessment activities are evolving in a generally position [sic.] direction, institutional efforts are uneven and coordination is lacking. Methodologies, which assess outcomes rather than inputs, and quality rather than quantity, need to be improved in some cases and implemented in others. The committee recommends, as others have done in the past, that the university meet the requirements of Policy 25, Educational Assessment.

**1999 EVALUATOR RESPONSE:** The University has “made significant strides in the level of its assessment efforts since the 1997 reaccreditation visit. Sufficient evidence exists that data are being used in decision-making and planning to indicate that assessment is being woven into the fabric of academic life at the University.” Nonetheless, the evaluator found that “Much remains to be done,” noting “Resources for this area are small” and emphasizing the need for “better quality outcomes assessment, including design and publication of learning outcomes for every program.”
2002 EVALUATOR RESPONSE: The University must “continue the development and refinement of its assessment plan and program to include specific learning outcomes measures for its programs and integrate the results into the institutional planning and decision making processes (Standard Two and Policy 2.2 on Educational Assessment).”

Recommendation 2:

Over the past decade, Utah State University has found means of providing financial resources, primarily from grants and contracts and student fees, to support its programs in the face of inadequate state funding, particularly funding for operations. Both the 1988 and 1993 evaluation committee reports addressed concerns about the extent to which such non-state appropriated funds must be generated to maintain the quality, scope, and range of the university’s programs and services. This heavy reliance on outside funding appears to have become an institutionalized mode of operation in lieu of an appropriate level of state support. This committee recommends that the university’s planning and budgeting process set forth realistic requirements to achieve the mission and goals of the institution, as a step toward achieving increased state support, particularly of its general operations budgets. The long established reliance upon grant overhead funds and rising student fees reflect on the one hand, an admirable level of achievement and commitment in the absence of state funding, but this reliance is placing USU in an increasingly precarious position.

EVALUATOR RESPONSE: The “university’s revenue picture is stable and this stability is likely to be maintained,” largely as a result of the “creative effort to identify new revenue streams” realized through “new strategic partnerships . . . during difficult economic times.”

Recommendation 3:

The committee recommends that, as was recommended ten years ago, Utah State University reexamine and reassess its substantial number of graduate programs that have low enrollments and low graduation rates, in order to assure that these programs are of sufficient size to offer an effective curriculum and a rewarding educational experience.
EVALUATOR RESPONSE: The University has satisfactorily responded by conducting a review of its graduate programs and discontinued or merged those of inadequate size or enrollment.

Recommendation 4:

The committee recommends Utah State University address the dissonance between the university mission statement in its goal to encourage cultural diversity (p. 11, Mission Statement, Self-Study), namely, the objective of Student Affairs to “recruit and retain minority students” (p. 165, Self-Study), and the actual performance in achieving greater diversity in the student body.

EVALUATOR RESPONSE: While USU’s location contributes to the challenge of recruiting a diverse student population, the University has established realistic goals, identified the challenges involved, and outlined plans for the recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority and international students.

Eligibility Requirements

The University continues to satisfy the twenty Eligibility Requirements as revised and approved by the Commission on Colleges and Universities of the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities in December 2000 and reaffirmed by the NWCCU in 2002.

Self-Study Report

The Committee found the Self-Study Report readable, informative, too closely tied to the Standards and Sub-Standards, with an overly tight and thus constraining adherence to the outline in the Accreditation Handbook, and not sufficiently analytical or precise to provide assistance to the campus for improvement. The inclusion of summaries and statements of challenges and recommendations within each section of the report afforded some opportunity for analysis focused on institutional self-criticism. Nonetheless, the analysis of some areas and issues, such as outcomes assessment, did not provide the detail necessary to an understanding of the University’s overall progress. Thus, the discussion of assessment and the web entries focused on a statement of learning outcomes – actually inputs -- without sufficient attention to the means of measuring the achievement of those outcomes. As well, the discussions of planning at times
failed to guide the readers through the complexities of interrelated processes and procedures. On the other hand, the exhibits provided most of the information deemed essential to inform the Committee for the campus visit. However, some areas of campus activity received virtually no attention in the Self-Study, such as Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Utah Water Research Laboratory. In addition, the College discussions focused exclusively on the Departments and programs, with no summary statement defining the College as an academic entity. On the other hand, University representatives responded to all requests for additional information and readily made themselves available for individual and group discussions.

The University sought to assure broad campus involvement in the self-study process under the oversight of a Steering Committee, appointed by the President, that worked through sub-committees including faculty, staff, and students. The Steering Committee maintained open communications and invited participation and commentary from people across the entire campus community, although with relatively sparse interaction. Putting the draft reports on the web proved less than successful in terms of campus community responsiveness.

**Methodology**

The Evaluation Committee reviewed the Self-Study Report prior to its initial meeting in Logan on 21 October 2007 and evaluated the Study’s usefulness during the meeting. In addition, the members analyzed the sufficiency of the listings of other documentary materials assembled by the campus and the functionality of the web site. On the basis of this review and discussions, the Committee members identified additional documentation needed and established an interview schedule for individuals and groups on and off campus. Each Committee member identified any additional information needed during the meetings and interviews. In daily meetings in late afternoon, each Committee member shared information and insights with other members to facilitate the process. The campus representatives complied in all respects with every request for information and assistance, and attended to accommodations and equipment needs as communicated by the Committee.

Following extensive review and analysis, each member of the Committee drafted assigned sections of the Evaluation Report and submitted the drafts to the Chair at the close of the visit. The Committee agreed unanimously on the Commendations and Recommendations and reached consensus on the Confidential Recommendation to submit to NWCCU concerning accreditation for the
University. The Committee members also counseled the Chair concerning the outline of the oral report to the campus during the Exit Conference. Finally, the Chair met with and informed the President of the Commendations and Recommendations in advance of the Exit Conference.

After the campus visit, the Chair integrated the various sections into a first full draft of the Evaluation Report, retaining the substance of the sections prepared by individual members of the Committee while seeking to give the Report a single voice for effective communication. The Chair then sought comments from the Committee members, made the necessary revisions, and forwarded the penultimate draft to the President of Utah State University for correction of factual errors. Upon receipt of the corrections, the Chair finalized the Report, circulated it to the members of the Committee for review and any further comment, and submitted it to the Commission in accordance with established procedures.
STANDARD ONE – INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND GOALS, PLANNING, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

Utah State University revised its mission, vision, core values, and five-year goals and objectives during 2005-2007 in a process that involved all stakeholders, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Regents. The new statements reflect the need for a broader and more ranging vision and a clear plan to guide the course of institutional development. Planning during the late 90s and the early part of the 21st century had focused on short-term and reactive responses to resource and enrollment volatility. Moreover, USU had not previously adopted a statement of vision or core values. The new President in 2005 seized the opportunity presented by increased stability to obtain campus-wide agreement on a revised mission statement, a vision and set of core values, and a strategic plan with benchmarks for progress and assigned implementation responsibility. The initial report on progress will become available in Fall Semester 2007, with an anticipated impact on resource allocations in Spring 2008.

Role, Mission, and Goals

The Regents’ master plan for the Utah public higher education system identifies USU as the land-grant and space-grant campus in Utah; as a “Doctoral Research University – high research activity;” and as host to the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Utah Water Research Lab, and the Cooperative Extension Service, with a presence in each of the state’s 29 counties. The statements of the approved institutional mission, vision, and core values reflect this unique role and appear in the current edition of the Utah State University General Catalog: 2007-2009 and other appropriate publications. The several campus constituencies reviewed and endorsed these statements prior to approval by the Trustees and Regents. The mission and vision statements commit the University to the fulfillment of the role assigned by the Regents, and make clear the institutional dedication to the premise that “academics come first,” and to “exceptional learning opportunities and world-class research.” As the designated land-grant university for the State of Utah, “USU is responsible for programs in agriculture, education, engineering, natural resources, and sciences, while supporting the traditional core of liberal learning – humanities, arts, and social sciences.” Organized in seven Colleges on the Logan campus, USU also delivers courses and programs at 3 regional campuses, 4 Educational Centers, and 13 in-state delivery sites widely dispersed around the state. Finally, USU also participates in dual enrollment programs for Utah high
school students, and monitors the subsequent performance of dual enrollment students.

The approved strategic plan identifies seven general goals, and lists specific objectives and activities designed to assure the achievement of the goals, with assessment methods, measures, and benchmarks to evaluate progress. The general goals include undergraduate education, graduate education, discovery (research), engagement (outreach, partnerships, and community involvements), economic and social development, access (diversity), and University life (supportive environment and infrastructure for learning and work). For the most part, the benchmarks or indicators provide quantitative evidence to demonstrate institutional progress toward achieving the specific goal. The Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation maintains a “Facts and Figures” website that periodically updates the data in the form of “dashboard indicators” – i.e., numbers of students, student cohort profiles, student-faculty ratios, retention and graduation rates, faculty profiles, funded research expenditures, publications, and the results of periodic surveys of students and faculty using national norms (CIRP, NSSE, FSSE, HERI), and locally produced surveys of student and alumni perceptions, satisfaction, and employment. However, without denigrating the value of the information, very few if any of these data involve assessment of actual learning outcomes, but they do contribute to a broad assessment and understanding of institutional performance in the designated areas.

According to the Self-Study, “the goals and objectives will be used for resource allocation,” but they have not yet influenced allocations because of their recent approval, although the collection and analysis of relevant data has begun. As the Self-Study indicates, “individual . . . proposals will be evaluated based on their relationship to the university goals and objectives.” Assessment of that outcome will become possible during budget allocations for FY 2009. The University receives funding from the state annually in nine separate line items and must budget and expend the funds accordingly. The line items include the following: Education and General, Uintah Basin Regional Campus, Southeastern Utah Campus, Brigham City Regional Campus, Toole Regional Campus, Agricultural Experiment Station, Utah Water Research Laboratory, Cooperative Extension, and Educationally Disadvantaged. Moreover, “Most legislative appropriations have intent associated with them (e.g., salary and benefits) and the university prepares its budgets so that this intent is reflected.” According to the Self-Study, the state “uses an incremental budget approach” which “allows the university to match the budget with strategic priorities. Other than the prohibition placed on moving funds between line items in the budget, the university has autonomy to effectively plan
and budget.” The comment lacks the desired clarity to explain how budgeting actually works, although, during at least some of the years of challenging fiscal conditions, the legislature has waived the prohibition against line item transfers.

During the early years of the century, the University experienced budget reductions totaling some $30 million, some of which reflected enrollment declines and some revenue shortfalls causing constrained state appropriations. In making the reductions, the University protected the faculty and strove to assure the scope and quality of its educational offerings. Nonetheless, operating budgets suffered serious erosion. Flexibility with tuition and fees and the success of funded research assisted the University in dealing with the resultant challenges.

The Regents exercise the authority to set the standard tuition at a designated rate of increase for all institutions, but the legislature controls the use of the tuition revenue, since the annual budget request to the legislature includes an amount generated by the tuition increase set by the Regents. Typically, the legislature “earmarks” this additional tuition revenue for compensation increases. If tuition revenue exceeds the amount appropriated in the budget by the legislature, the University can use it at discretion, subject to the approval of the Regents and Trustees. If tuition fails to meet the appropriated level, the University must draw on other funds or reduce expenditures.

In recent years, however, the Regents have authorized a tuition surcharge for graduate students and a second tier of tuition specific to each institution and not included within the budget request. The so-called “Tier II” tuition, also approved by the Regents after ratification of the President’s proposal by the Trustees, goes toward institutional priorities and student initiatives. During years when the legislature did not provide for compensation increases, the University resorted to Tier II tuition to cover those costs. Using Tier II tuition revenue, the University also appointed several (number not specified) additional faculty members during the years from 2001 to 2006; and will appoint 40 new faculty members during 2007-2009 to “serve students at locations other than the Logan campus.” This funding for faculty on the remote campuses reflects emerging enrollment patterns, with something like 40 percent of enrollment increases occurring on the remote campuses, but offers no relief for enrollment pressures on the Logan campus. Finally, because of the escalating salaries for faculty in the College of Business, that College secured approval for and implemented in Fall 2007 a surcharge on its course offerings to generate the funds to pay competitive salaries.
Relying on a “diverse source of revenues which provide the ability to respond to changing economic conditions,” the University draws upon “non-operating revenues, state appropriations, and private gifts to meet its cost of operations and provide funds for the acquisition of capital equipment.” In fact, however, the state Education and General appropriation covers roughly 33 percent of the University’s total budget. Budget planning proceeds essentially on an annual basis, with requests received and reviewed by the President during the Spring months and then aggregated at the system level for presentation to the Legislature during the session. The legislative decisions become available in March and the President makes the allocations to the various entities based on legislative intent, Regental directives, Trustees’ counsel, and institutional priorities.

As indicated in the Self-Study, USU faces challenges similar to those confronting other universities, specifically, lagging salary levels for new and existing faculty, the need for additional faculty, and eroding operating expense budgets to support academic programming. While the responsible University staff has worked hard to maintain and equip existing space, rising enrollments and the success of the faculty in attracting external funds to support research have combined to put space at a premium across the campus. These challenges underscore the value to the University of a strategic planning and budgeting structure and process. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

The student profile has not changed much over the years, although enrollments have fluctuated in response to changing tuition policies. Even as the University has sought to diversify the student population, and has responded to the increasing numbers of potential Hispanic students in the region, the student population remains relatively homogenous, except for international students. The state changed its rather lenient policy allowing nonresidents to gain residency for tuition purposes after one year in the state, enrolled or not, but subsequently reverted to the old approach when nonresident enrollments dipped. In addition, the University changed its admission standards and has only recently made up ground lost for a period in terms of enrollments. Because of these perturbations, enrollments declined during the early years of this century, but preliminary analysis suggests either a leveling or an up swing in Fall 2007. From Fall 2003 to Fall 2006, total enrollment fell by 2,016 head count students, while FTE students fell from 13,566 to 12,506. However, between 2003 and 2005, resident enrollments declined by 435 students from a high of 11,094, while nonresidents fell by 1,222 from a high of 4,217. In any event, Utah residents continue to account for roughly 3/4th of total enrollment.
The approved strategic plan rests on the role, mission, and goals and commits the University to appropriate program development and services to meet identified needs within the state and region. However, programs have developed typically without additional support funding, with a consequent burden on existing programs and resources. As state support has languished in recent years, student fees and Tier II tuition have provided a larger portion of the operational budget. In addition, the graduate tuition surcharge has allowed the University to dedicate funds toward defraying the higher costs of graduate education. Enrollment planning has become an increasingly critical component of institutional survival, and has received enhanced if perhaps as yet insufficient attention in recent years. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

Planning and Effectiveness

According to the Self-Study, “For the past few years the university has been without a formal strategic budgeting structure and process. The university needs to develop a process that will include the appropriate stakeholders. This structure will assist the university in making disciplined, strategic decisions for resource allocation, and will help find campus-wide solutions to financial challenges.” The discussion of strategic and financial planning lacks details concerning process and procedures, and clearly reveals the lack of a strategic approach linking priorities to allocations. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

Prior to revising the institutional mission, vision, core values, and strategic plan in 2007, the University experimented with a number of different approaches to budgeting and planning, most recently the “compact” and “strategic investment” approaches of the prior administration. With a change in administration, the new President seized the opportunity to launch a modified and more responsive planning and budgeting process. The new process has not yet taken final shape, with the first iteration scheduled for FY 2009. The Faculty Senate has a committee for some involvement in the planning and budgeting process, although the level of involvement remains unspecified. The administration currently holds budget request meetings every Spring in preparation for the annual budget request to the Legislature, but again the stakeholder involvement remains unclear. The University needs to bring to resolution the discussion of a strategic approach to planning, budgeting, and resource allocation and implement a “formal strategic [planning and] budgeting structure and process” as soon as possible. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)
The Educational Policies Committee, described as a Faculty Senate Committee with the Provost as the Chair, conducts its work through four sub-committees and considers new University-wide initiatives and programming efforts requiring institutional commitments. These institutional initiatives become integral components of the annual budget plan, although the details and mechanics of the process remain unclear, as does the direct nexus linking the annual budget plan to the strategic plan or actual budget allocations. The President directs the budget planning process within the guidelines set by the Regents and Trustees. The process begins with the budget hearings conducted by the central administration prior to incorporation of specific requests into the annual budget plan for review and approval by the Trustees and the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Regents. The President then presents the budget request to a wide array of groups and individuals before submitting it to the legislative committee. Following receipt of an appropriation of line-itemed funds from the Legislature and the Governor, the President allocates the funds in accordance with legislative intent and Regental directives. However, the appropriation in some recent years has not included funds to cover salary increases. When that occurs, the University must identify the funds from existing budgets or Tier II tuition or forego the increases, as has happened on occasion in recent years. As mentioned above, the lack of a clear and transparent relationship between the strategic plan and resource allocations requires attention. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

Curricular changes including course and program revisions and new courses and academic programs require the approval of the responsible faculty, College Dean, Educational Policies Committee, Faculty Senate, Provost, President, Trustees, and Regents. The proponents of new programs have the responsibility to identify the resources necessary to implement the programs, typically through use of any inflationary increases and reallocation of existing resources in recent years. The Educational Policies Committee, with the Provost as Chair, reviews and submits course and program proposals to the Faculty Senate for approval prior to consideration by the President, Trustees, and Regents, as needed. Precisely how the approved proposals find their way into budget allocations remains unclear. All new academic programs undergo three-year progress reviews, with reports forwarded to the Legislature. Periodic and mandatory program reviews identify programs for discontinuance and highlight needs for additional resources to maintain quality, and the University has discontinued or merged small enrollment programs, especially at the graduate level, in recent years. Nonetheless, many across campus claim to have no knowledge of the effects of program reviews, except as reports put on file.
Finally, the University Physical Resources Planning Committee, again with the Provost as the Chair and members drawn from the various academic and other areas of the University, advises the President with regard to a five-year plan for facilities developed and submitted in accordance with the state’s Capital Facilities Qualification and Prioritization Process. All major physical changes on campus must have the approval of the Committee and the President. Final approval includes the identification of funding sources, which typically include combinations of state appropriations, grant funds, donations, and bond revenue. The University also conducts annual facilities audits and requests operation, maintenance, and deferred maintenance funding on the basis of the audits. However, the state has not yet revised its approach to operation and maintenance funding for older and new facilities to take account of actual costs.

The University has recently strengthened its approach to outcomes assessment in the academic sector; but the Committee found little mention of outcomes assessment in other sectors. While the University has initiated and sustained efforts to bring about consistency and assure full participation by all academic Departments and programs, assessing learning outcomes has remained an identified issue for the University in every review since 1997. The current approach began after the regular interim report in 2002. As the Self-Study asserts, “USU has made significant progress in assessment since the Commission’s 2002 report. An outcomes-based assessment plan is in place and being implemented (emphasis supplied).” However, analysis of results reveals that progress remains uneven. The assessment of learning outcomes for parts of General Education appears more robust, such as writing and mathematical competency assessment, with some testimony to the contrary concerning the writing competency of students. Even so, the assessment of General Education relies more on student satisfaction surveys than on actual measurements or demonstrations of student achievement of intended outcomes. The Self-Study found “the weak link in educational program assessment . . . is general education,” noting some “very useful analysis of . . . writing, mathematics, and computer literacy,” and little if anything known about “the effectiveness of University Studies breadth courses . . . and depth course requirements.” The Self-Study concludes based on student surveys – not outcomes assessments -- that “USU’s general education program needs to be revisited,” but offers no indication of when revisitation will occur. For most Departments, the current approach has resulted in statements of learning outcomes and mapping the intended outcomes through the required courses, with insufficient attention to achievement of those learning outcomes. Intended outcomes and mapping of courses to identify where the outcomes receive
instructional attention, while essential to an outcomes assessment process, represent input variables and do not actually measure learning outcomes. Nonetheless, the University has made notable progress on outcomes assessment since 2002.

The results of the assessments have the stated purpose of informing the annual planning and budgeting processes, while also helping to identify areas needing improvement. As mentioned, the definition of outcomes assessment data continues to lack the required specificity and clarity essential to those tasks. As a result, a variety of collected information receives that designation, including survey results, job placements, reviews of courses and programs, faculty analyses of curricular design, reports of focus interviews, and statements of intended learning outcomes. While such information has value for the University, it does not constitute actual outcomes assessment data. On the other hand, the use of professional examination results, capstone courses, portfolio reviews, and content-based tests using embedded assessment techniques do provide data concerning achievement of learning outcomes. Taking into account the clearly visible improvements and effective alterations over the interim, progress in assessment within the academic sector has occurred but remains uneven, and the University has yet to institutionalize a culture of assessment. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

The annual planning process purports to involve all stakeholder groups, with more or less success depending upon the group. The planning process also purportedly provides the mechanisms to assure that the strategic plan with its goals and objectives and the results of outcomes assessment and program reviews inform resource allocations and thereby affect budgets. However, the Committee found it difficult to identify the points of direct linkage between budget development and planning and outcomes assessment, program review, and resource allocation. Thus, it remains unclear how outcomes assessment and program reviews affect annual budgets. (See Recommendation Number 3 in Conclusion below.)

Nonetheless, the University has strengthened its data management systems and enhanced the resources of its Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation to assure access to critical data for analysis and planning. The recent development of a comprehensive institutional assessment plan and identification of learning outcomes for all academic programs means that the University has not yet completed a full cycle of outcomes assessment. Review of the assessment plans, learning outcomes, and assessment instruments for the various programs and Departments indicates that many have yet to identify the means to assess the
achievement of the intended outcomes. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.) Even so, the planning process has enabled the University to address student services, library resources and access, and other needs over the years since the last accreditation visit. As mentioned, assessment efforts have not yet fully matured, even as the University has sought to assure quality control. In some Colleges and Departments, assessment has become quite meaningful and robust, typically in the fields affected by specialized accreditation (Business, Education, Engineering, and others). However, as the discussions above and below reveal, the connection between outcomes assessment, program review, program planning, quality control, and resource allocation remains less than clear. (See Recommendations Numbers 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

A recent reorganization separated the Library from Information Technology, with the effect reported in the Self-Study of “reduced” communication and coordination across units.” However, the two entities have cooperated on a number of projects to the benefit of the entire campus, and currently have an institutional depository in development. It appears, however, that the University has yet to develop the spate of policies that will assure security, identity management, and a universal directory, bringing some rationality to the numerous email systems on the campus. (See Recommendation Number 6 in Conclusion below.) The University has recently implemented the BANNER suite of integrated systems and appears poised for the significant benefits the suite can provide when fully utilized.

The Regents evaluate the performance of the President informally every year and formally in the second year of tenure and every four years thereafter. The President mandates and oversees the annual evaluation of all administrators. The processes take into account goals and objectives and the progress toward achieving them. In addition, through a variety of processes, the University seeks to assess and evaluate its effectiveness in the fulfillment of its role and mission, filing mandated reports to the Regents. The Regents and the Trustees set and publicize annual goals and evaluate their own performance, with additional conversations occurring in conjunction with changes in leadership.
STANDARD TWO – EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

UNDERGRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Utah State University delivers its educational programs through seven Colleges, including the courses and programs presented on the regional campuses. The array of offerings runs the gamut, from non-credit experiences through the most advanced graduate level. To that end, USU has recognition from the NWCCU for these degree levels, and has also secured recognition of its regional campuses and remote delivery sites.

The College of Agriculture

Introduction

The College of Agriculture (COA) has an excellent blend of programs in research, teaching, and Extension, and has five academic departments, with one of the Departments – Economics -- co-administered with the College of Business. The COA ranks among the top two Colleges in total research expenditures, with a faculty very active in scholarly activity. COA also plays a major role in the outreach mission of USU, with 16 facilities operated at off-site locations and faculty and offices in 28 County Extension Offices across the state. The COA has several unique facilities affording major benefits to the University, including the Utah Botanical Garden in Kaysville, Utah. The Dean of COA also serves as the Vice President of Extension for the University, with responsibility for setting the program directions of the University in Cooperative Extension. Although the combination of Cooperative Extension with COA seems a positive move for the University, actually a return to an earlier organizational structure, some faculty expressed concern that the Dean has too many responsibilities with the addition of the duties as Vice President of Extension.

The College has an excellent state reputation for its research, teaching, and Extension programs, having earned recognition for a commitment to rural communities. The College offers a diversity of degree programs, with 3 certificate/associate, 11 bachelor’s, 13 masters, and 8 doctoral degrees through the five Departments; and three degrees at the A.A.S., B.S., and M.S. levels in collaboration with the regional centers. Total enrollment has remained steady for the last several years at roughly 940 undergraduate and 115 graduate students in FY 2006. Over the years, the College has built and sustained excellent educational
programs. Based on the testimony provided during interviews, students feel satisfied with the education Utah State offers and enjoy the community and personal approach of the College of Agriculture.

The College has some 200 faculty members, including those on campus with instructional, research, and Extension assignments and those off-campus in Cooperative Extension. The College retains a deep commitment to faculty development and evaluation and has done excellent work in establishing role statements for all positions. The annual review process seems well established and accepted by faculty with good involvement at the Department and College levels in all evaluations.

**Program Planning and Assessment**

The College of Agriculture attends closely to all the elements of Standard Two, but needs to improve assessment strategies and programs. The College merits commendation for the commitment to program review and the establishment and maintenance of a regular schedule for these reviews. Three programs have earned and sustain accreditation by national accrediting agencies (NCATE, CADE, and IFT) and two Departments recently underwent reviews by the USDA CSREES. All Departments have established the framework for outcomes assessment and have well-developed web pages laying out mission statements, assessment plans, program learning objectives, mapping of curriculum and learning objectives, required outcomes data, and data-based decisions. The Departments appear to use assessment outcomes to modify the various programs, and have made curricular changes as a result of assessment. The College has discontinued four B.S. degrees and one M.S. degree while adding one M.S. and one B.S. degree in the last three years. Several Departments have under consideration major curricular changes in response to program reviews. The current work by the College to do “curriculum re-visioning” with external stakeholders will further these efforts. The College and Departments must work together, however, to develop better assessment tools that actually assess outcomes. Both faculty and students need to have greater awareness of the outcomes assessment process and help to improve it. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

**Facilities**

The College of Agriculture facilities appear serviceable, although several buildings need replacement or updating. The University has new facilities under construction for the Experiment Station Farm in Logan to replace existing
facilities, and the new Animal Complex will become a major asset in teaching and Extension. The College commendably sought state and federal funds in partnership with the USDA to finance the construction of a new Agricultural Sciences Building that will house two Departments and the College administration in state-of-the-art facilities.

**Summary**

The College attends closely to student needs and has placed high priority on providing a demanding and engaging learning experience. With well-designed advising programs implemented in all Departments, the College places a strong emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning and has developed excellent cross-College collaboration and interdisciplinary programs in research. The Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension provide some funding to specialists located in all the Colleges of the University, thus increasing the opportunity for collaboration among the Colleges and Departments as well as other agencies. Some faculty, staff, and students expressed concerns regarding the proposed split of the Department of Economics between the College of Business and the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources. If implemented, the division will require full and open discussion to assure success.

**The College of Business**

**Introduction**

The College of Business consists of the School of Accountancy and the Departments of Business Administration, Management Information Systems, Management and Human Resources, and Economics. College faculties teach the undergraduate programs primarily on the Logan campus, while offering the MBA Program both on the Logan campus for full-time students and at numerous off-campus sites for part-time students, and the Master of Accounting and Master of Science in Human Resources degrees only on the Logan campus. The College also offers two doctoral programs, one in Information Systems jointly supported by the Department of Management Information Systems and the College of Education and the other a Ph.D. in Economics by the Department of Economics. The proposed division of the Department of Economics will require careful consideration of doctoral programming.

The College of Business maintains specialized accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and College curricula follow
the traditional model for business education, including General Education, a core of business courses, and major courses. Programs have well defined curricular goals and include the areas normally expected for an accredited business school, including a strong emphasis on ethics and international experience.

The College has assembled and maintains a well qualified faculty. AACSB requires classification of all faculty members as either “academically” or “professionally” qualified. Typically, academically qualified faculty members have earned terminal degrees and maintain currency and relevance by conducting research. Professionally qualified faculty members typically have earned Master’s degrees and maintain currency and relevance by practicing professionally in their fields. Approximately 75 percent of the College faculty fall into the academically qualified category, and 99 percent of the faculty members qualify for either academic or professional classification.

The College requires annual evaluation of all faculty members. This process includes classroom observation and syllabus review by a peer and student course evaluations. With evidence derived from these sources, Department Heads prepare the evaluations and review them with faculty members. In recent years, new faculty members have received one course release during the first semester on campus so that they may attend teaching workshops to sharpen their teaching skills. Untenured faculty members have assigned mentors, consisting of senior faculty colleagues not members of their promotion and tenure committees, to assist them to succeed. Faculty members, both new and current, generally feel they receive adequate counsel and guidance about their performance.

The faculty in general indicate that post-tenure reviews occur but with little if any discernable effectiveness. The peer-review process, while an integral part of the tradition of higher education, results in the reviews generally lacking much criticism. Neither faculty members nor administrators cited any instance when the post-tenure review process resulted in observable modifications of behavior. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

Recent appointments have produced salary compression and inversion issues. In some cases, this appears to have contributed to the abrupt departures of some experienced faculty members. (See Recommendation Number 4 in Conclusion below.) However, the Dean has acquired funds to balance salaries in some cases as well, and course or program fees – approved for Fall Semester 2007 – will provide additional funds. In spite of salary compression concerns, faculty morale remains high. New faculty members seem particularly invigorated by the strategic direction
and leadership of the Dean. Faculty members often cite the outstanding collegiality of the faculty as one of the strengths of the College.

Several faculty members identified the future of the Department of Economics as a serious concern for the College. Currently, the Department has joint administration by the Colleges of Business and Agriculture. Recently, the Provost has agreed to split the Department, with faculty members assigned exclusively to one of the two Colleges or the other. To date, the implementation of the decision remains unclear, and the uncertainty (as well as disagreement about the decision) has resulted in reduced morale among the Economics faculty.

Consistent with its mission, the College productively engages the business community, and sponsors the *Shingo Prize in Operational Excellence*, an international award given to a select few organizations world-wide each year based on their use of “lean operations” techniques. The College also conducts the *Partners in Business* series of seminars, delivering a variety of informative and useful programs in management and business education to industry. Individual faculty members also participate in consulting activities.

**Program Planning and Assessment**

The College, under the leadership of a relatively new Dean, has developed a comprehensive strategic plan consistent with the mission and student demographics of the University. The faculty provided advice and guidance for the development of the plan during an off-site retreat. Although some faculty members feel they had little active participation in identifying the specifics of the strategic plan, most express agreement with the positive direction charted for the College.

The College has an assessment program focused on measuring the effectiveness of the programs, primarily through student, alumni, and business surveys and counsel from various advisory boards for several years. More recently, the requirements of AACSB for direct assessment of student learning have resulted in more emphasis on actual outcomes. The College has identified a set of learning goals and objectives and the faculties have mapped the goals and objectives to particular courses in the curriculum for assessment. Each Department has identified changes made because of the assessment results and advice from the various constituencies, including:

- A new course on Ethics, Communication, and Professionalism in the School of Accountancy;
• Additional funding to expand laboratory coverage for the introductory Accounting course; and
• Alteration of the most relevant Human Resource course taught by the Department of Business Administration because of student performance on the Human Resources Certification Institute standardized examination, resulting in scores increasing from 70 percent in 2005 to 83 percent in 2006.

The College also uses standardized ETS tests to measure student knowledge of core business concepts, and takes particular pride that the students’ performance on this test ranks the College in the top 10 percent of its peers.

An Assessment Committee monitors the assessment process, and each Department has developed an assessment plan. The stronger emphasis on direct assessment of student learning will result in more concrete data-based decisions in the future to complement the continuous process improvement based on survey data and advisory board counsel that the College already uses. While assessment activities can certainly improve in the loop tying specific results back to changes implemented because of direct assessment efforts, the College has made and continues to make making good progress in this area. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

Facilities

The College of Business appears to have adequate physical facilities to conduct its teaching and research, including sufficient classroom technology and adequate computing facilities. Students have access to computing labs available in the building, and they frequently receive free software for educational purposes from Microsoft.

Summary

Consistent with its mission, the College adheres to its strategic plan and productively engages the business community. With a dedicated and talented faculty committed to engagement and collaboration, the College represents the University well in the region, state, nation, and world.
The College of Education and Human Services

Introduction

The College of Education and Human Services consists of the following Departments:

- Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education;
- Elementary Education;
- Family, Consumer, and Human Development;
- Health, Physical Education, and Recreation;
- Instructional Technology;
- Psychology;
- Secondary Education; and
- Special Education and Rehabilitation.

The College of Education and Human Services provides the professional preparation for teachers, counselors, other school personnel, and selected professionals in human services and corporate settings. The College currently has accreditation by NCATE and the Utah Department of Education for Teacher Education, ASHA for Communications Disorders, APA for Psychology, NASP for School Psychologists, and CANRPA for Recreation. The teacher education programs will terminate their association with NCATE and affiliate with TEAC for national accreditation, in accordance with a decision made jointly by the Schools and Colleges of Education in Utah in cooperation with the Utah Department of Education.

Program Planning and Assessment

The College offers programs at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels. In addition to the degrees offered, the various programs also provide a large variety of emphasis areas to meet the needs and desires of students for specialized study. The College offers a mix of both undergraduate preparation programs and graduate programs as fitting its mission in the state. The College recently initiated a certification program for the preparation of Educational Leaders, a program initially housed in the Office of the Dean but moved to the Department of Elementary Education.
The 121 tenured and tenure-track faculty in the College have adequate and appropriate preparation for their assignments. The College requires annual evaluation of the faculty members. In addition, all tenured faculty members undergo post-tenure review on a five year cycle. For adjunct faculty, the College relies on peer evaluations, supervisor observations, review of syllabi, student ratings, and other means. Faculty at the regional centers must also participate in the Logan campus evaluation processes.

Faculty members working with the Department Heads develop role statements and work plans each year. These documents provide the basis for the annual faculty evaluation. Each junior faculty member also receives mentoring from senior colleagues in preparation for the tenure review process. The mentoring committee, assigned when the faculty member arrives on campus, remains with the faculty member until the time of tenure. The mentoring committee also serves as the Department tenure committee, a practice not identified as a concern by the faculty interviewed for this report.

The College faculty members perform as active scholars engaged in developing articles for publication, papers for presentation, and proposals for external funding. The typical faculty member in the College has a teaching load of 2 courses per semester. In addition, however, the College expects each faculty members to engage in research activities, including the securing of external funds for up to 50 percent of their time.

Students report teaching of very high quality in the College. The students understand and comment that the faculty genuinely cares about them. Students also reported a strong connection with faculty through both undergraduate and graduate research, and the faculty members have made research opportunities available across the College. The College provides funds to send students to conferences for paper presentations. Several undergraduate students reported very positive experiences as a result.

The largest concern raised by the faculty related to salary compression and inversion as new faculty appointees command higher salaries because of the market. (See Recommendation Number 4 in Conclusion below.) Some Department faculty, HPER and Communicative Disorders, reported issues relative to office space and research space as well.

All programs in the College of Education and Human Services have established operational assessment plans. A review of the College and Department assessment
web sites demonstrates that all programs have collected outcomes data and have used these data for decision making about the programs, as confirmed by the faculty who report reviewing the assessment data each fall. Some programs, most notably Elementary Education, have not included aggregated data useful to the program faculty in assessing the quality of the program completers. However, the Department collects these data on an annual basis and uses the results to guide program improvement.

Most programs in the College have earned and maintain accreditation by nationally recognized accreditation bodies as indicated in the introduction. The teacher education program will change from NCATE to TEAC as the accrediting agency, a very difficult decision in view of the association with NCATE since 1954, but one made necessary by a statewide imperative.

Facilities

The College of Education enjoys well maintained and functional physical spaces. As programs have expanded and new faculty members have come to the campus, space has become a premium for both faculty offices and research facilities. The Department of HPER reports all faculty offices full even as they search for new faculty members during this year. The Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education also reports that recent growth has severely impacted the space for both offices and research. However, the University recently announced plans for a new facility appropriate to the rising stature of the College.

Summary

All in all, from students to faculty to Department Heads to the Dean and Associate Deans, the College of Education and Human Services demonstrates a strong adherence to the assigned role and mission. The new programs developed and implemented respond to the needs of the state and the region. The new facilities will make an immense difference in the responsiveness and effectiveness of the College and its faculty. Already recognized as one of the leaders in the country, the College anticipates an even brighter future, especially as it continues to extend its resources and programs across the state.
The College of Engineering

Introduction

In accordance with its role as a land- and space-grant institution, and in conjunction with the master plan for the State System of Higher Education, Utah State University maintains a strong focus on engineering programs. The College of Engineering consists of five academic Departments, including Biological and Irrigation Engineering (BIE), Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE), Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), Engineering and Technology Education (ETE), and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE). Each Department offers ABET-accredited BS degree programs, with the exception of ETE that offers BS degree programs accredited by NCATE and AABI (aviation accreditation). The College also offers MS and PhD programs in each of the five Departments.

Over the past five years, following the appointment of a new Dean, the College has established a new administrative team that includes three Associate Deans and newly appointed Department Heads. The College enjoys significant support, in part due to the Governor’s Initiative in Engineering and increased development activities, and has added several new faculty positions in recent years. As a result of the new leadership in the College, significant re-direction of academic programs has occurred in the Departments of ETE and BIE in recent years. The Department of ETE has terminated a number of technical degree programs in the vocational-technical areas and developed a new focus on engineering and technical education at the K-12 level. This effort has the support of a $10 million NSF-funded Center for Learning and Teaching. The Department of BIE has increased its focus on the use of biological materials for practical purposes and successfully pursued research funding in this area. In addition, research has an enhanced focus in all of the College’s Departments.

The College employs 76 tenure-track faculty members, nearly half of whom accepted initial appointment during the past five years. In addition, several of the Departments also utilize adjunct faculty and/or lecturers. In general, the faculty members have the appropriate terminal degrees and qualifications for the positions they occupy. They warmly support students and attend to their instructional responsibilities to assure student learning.

The Department Heads evaluate the faculty members annually and pre-tenure faculty work closely with Department promotion and tenure mentoring committees
established when the faculty members arrive on campus. Post-tenure reviews occur on a regular schedule and, in some cases, have resulted in plans for improvement. Although no written criteria exist for promotion and tenure, pre-tenure faculty meet annually with the Department Heads and Dean and generally have a good understanding of the requirements for successful advancement in the College. Nonetheless, some faculty members expressed concern regarding the dual role (mentoring and promotion/tenure evaluation) played by the Department committee. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

Program Planning and Assessment

The faculty and Department Heads generally and strongly support the new directions and expanded research emphasis in the College. They perceive these changes as allowing the College to fulfill its mission in education and research. However, some concern remains regarding the level of involvement and role of the faculty in the planning activities. An enhanced University planning process that incorporates guidance and counsel at all levels will alleviate this concern. (See Recommendation Number 3 in Conclusion below.)

The College has well-developed statements of program objectives and outcomes for each of its undergraduate degree programs. In most cases, the Departments have developed linkage maps between specific courses and individual outcomes or objectives. The ABET-accredited degree programs all have well developed assessment plans that rely on both qualitative and quantitative outcome measures. The BIE, CEE, and MAE programs require that all undergraduate degree recipients take and pass the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) Examination. In some cases, FE examination scores play a significant role in the assessment process. Other tools include in-class and faculty course assessments; evaluations of student portfolios and design projects by faculty and external reviewers; student, employer and alumni surveys; and a variety of other instruments. The outcomes assessment process has helped to identify areas of weakness and led in many cases to substantial changes in the undergraduate programs.

Assessment plans for the College’s graduate programs, not accredited by ABET, appear less well developed. In some cases, overlap with undergraduate assessment activities provide some outcomes data, but in general the graduate program assessment in the College needs further development and refinement. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)
Facilities

Utilizing public and private funds, the College has added modern, attractive office and laboratory space over the past few years. A new building for the College of Engineering opened in the fall of 2003, with the groundbreaking for another new research building for the College in March 2007. Additional renovation of an older facility will begin once the new research building comes on line. The students have access to modern computer laboratories maintained by Engineering staff and also enjoy access to specialized software. Instructional laboratory equipment funding comes to the Departments by way of state initiative funding, although in modest amount causing some concern about the limited number of work stations available and/or the age of equipment in some instructional laboratories. This problem has become particularly acute in some Departments that have experienced significant enrollment growth. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

Summary

Overall, the College of Engineering has fared well and performed at a very high level in recent years. New leadership combined with new facilities and enhanced support have energized the faculty for significant increases in research involvements. The new state initiative to foster economic development through research and technology transfer has provided additional incentives for the College and its faculty.

The College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

Introduction

The College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HAAS) of Utah State University consists of twelve primary Departments: Art; English; History; Interior Design; Intensive English Language Institute; Journalism and Communication; Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning; Languages, Philosophy, and Speech Communication; Music; Political Science; Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology; and Theatre Arts. In addition, two smaller programs, Aerospace Studies and Military Science, round out the College. In the Fall Semester 2006, the College delivered instruction that produced 73,301 student credit hours out of a total of 240,052 student credit hours for the Logan campus and Continuing Education. Thus, the College accounted for nearly one-third of the total student credit hours for Utah State University, a 5.8 increase over the previous Fall
Semester. In addition to actively pursuing its instructional role, the College faculty members have also remained active in research. In carrying out its instruction and research, the College has consistently contributed to the fulfillment of the University’s mission and goals.

The College has roughly 200 tenured and tenure-track faculty members – less than one-third of the University’s total number -- and also employs a significant number of lecturers, adjunct faculty, and teaching assistants annually. Thus, the College faculty appears to carry a fair share of the teaching load. A significant portion of the teaching load in the College supports the University’s General Education Program – University Studies in USU terminology. The overwhelming majority of the College faculty members, as for the University, have the appropriate earned terminal degrees for the positions they occupy. Students report teaching of very high quality, and indicate that the faculty members have a strong and apparent commitment to student learning and student success. However, increasingly heavy loads have imposed constraints on what they can accomplish.

The College supports a large portion of the University Studies Program and a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs – 20 master’s and 2 doctoral programs -- in the several fields represented by its Departments and programs. Even with only 2 doctoral programs, the faculty remains heavily involved in research and creative activities, and has taken effective steps to promote undergraduate research and creative activities. Once again, however, the rising student numbers and demands for University Studies courses combine to impose severe limits on the faculty time available for research and creative work. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

Faculty members at large express concerns about inadequate salary levels in general, and about salary compression and inversion in specific. However, they also report the lack of definitive salary study information to identify equity and other issues. Concern also exists about alleged differential treatment by College or discipline. (See Recommendation Number 4 in Conclusion below.) The faculty also believes that the practice of conjoining the mentoring and tenure evaluation functions leads to less than acceptable faculty involvement in either function. Finally, few faculty members find the post-tenure review process effective or meaningful. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)
Program Planning and Assessment

Under normal circumstances, the College has sufficient human, physical, and financial resources to support its educational programs. However, in recent years the College has faced significant challenges. During the years of declining student enrollment and reduced state appropriations early in the century, the University experienced severe budget shortfalls, and to cope found it necessary to leave faculty positions vacant for the duration and to reduce operating budgets for the Departments and programs. These prior actions continue to affect the College, especially as enrollments and state appropriations have rebounded and the College has experienced increased student demand, but neither new allocations nor reallocations have occurred as yet to restore the earlier balance. (See Recommendation Numbers 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.) In response, the Departments and programs that comprise the College have developed a number of coping strategies. Some of these strategies seem reductive to the overall instructional mission of the University, i.e., reducing General Education offerings. (See Recommendation Number 5 in Conclusion below.) Other more common strategies have proven expansive in nature, and include such actions as developing undergraduate teaching assistants, adding research fellows and rhetoric associates, imposing class or course fees, and increasing the pursuit of faculty fellowships in order to expand the funding base. In addition, the College has actively pursued donor support and gift equipment. In general, the resultant stresses, if left unattended, can over time affect quality and productivity. Although physical resources appear generally adequate, the old and quite decrepit facilities for theatrical performances do not meet code, nor do they meet ADA requirements. Other examples abound, either of lack of appropriate instructional space or of office and meeting space for faculty.

Administrators, faculty, and students reported that access to required classes has become a serious issue, particularly but not exclusively for University Studies coursework, which has begun to affect time to degree. (See Recommendation Number 5 in Conclusion below.) Various faculty members stated that the budget issues described above persist, with no allocation of new or reallocation of existing resources as yet in accordance with changing student demand. The University has a variety of options to address the problem, such as reallocation of existing resources, allocation of new resources, reliance on Tier II tuition revenue, additional class or course fees, revision of curricular requirements, and perhaps others. The Dean has attempted some reallocation at the College level, but the increased demand has occurred nearly across the board, thus limiting the possibilities of internal allocation. New leadership within the College will
undoubtedly bring new thought to the challenge, but it appears that the College requires University assistance through an inclusive, deliberative, and comprehensive strategic and budget planning process. (See Recommendation Number 3 in Conclusion below.)

In view of these circumstances, the College has not planned or developed very many new curricular initiatives. Faculty groups have discussed the University’s General Education Program, and have made some efforts to assess learning outcomes. However, not much has resulted, except for an emerging consensus that the University Studies needs review for possible revision. As a separate but related issue, students express dissatisfaction about inflexibility with regard to substitutions for General Education requirements, have little understanding of the rationale for the requirements, and openly advocate a reduction of General Education requirements. As usually occurs, students prefer more elective and more major courses. The General Education Committee has announced the intent to conduct a review in the coming year.

College faculty members have expended a great deal of effort in support of curriculum review, sequencing, assessment of intended learning outcomes, and in career guidance. However, although every Department has defined its mission and identified learning outcomes, with some also mapping outcomes to specific courses, not every Department has developed metrics, measurements, and processes to assess the actual achievement of those outcomes. The College, as the University at large, has made substantial progress toward laying the foundation for a culture of assessment, but still has room for improvement. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below).

Facilities

Physical facilities appear generally adequate, with very notable exceptions. The old and quite decrepit facilities for theatrical performances do not meet code, nor do they meet ADA requirements. The Department of English has cramped and difficult space. Other examples abound, either of lack of appropriate instructional space or of office and meeting space for faculty. The ongoing renovation and expansion of University facilities has great promise for the College.

Summary

The College deserves commendation for expanding services to students in an environment of diminished resources and increasing student demand. The College
faculty exhibits a commitment to students and student learning, and has demonstrated creativity in identifying new ways to respond to challenges.

**The College of Natural Resources**

**Introduction**

The College of Natural Resources includes the Departments of Environment and Society, Watershed Sciences, and Wildland Resources, and offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs supported by roughly 60 faculty and 55 staff. The new Dean assumed his role in January 2006. While the College has a dedicated faculty stretched thin across a wide range of course and program offerings, the faculty displays a great deal of enthusiasm about instruction, research, scholarship, and service. Support for the Dean appears universal and strong. The faculty views strong leadership as necessary to the fulfillment of the College mission.

Expectations run very high among the faculty, all well qualified for their roles, prolific researchers, and scholars dedicated to teaching. Faculty relationships within the College appear quite collegial, with positive faculty-student relationships as well. Students express broad and strong satisfaction with the level and quality of instruction, finding the faculty highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Many students commented about the accessibility of faculty to students. The Departments provide advising in the major fields, but the College also employs a professional staff person who has earned high regard by students as a source of information and support. On the other hand, graduate students expressed frustration with the difficulty of getting needed information from the Graduate School.

**Program Planning and Assessment**

The faculty has the wide range of College programs under active scrutiny, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Most programs remain very competitive and well received by students, although a recent reorganization has not yet stabilized. Students noted the lack of convenient sequencing of required courses due to hiring constraints and lack of coordination among programs. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.) The faculty clearly supports the view of “student as investigator” and has a strong commitment to the research experience. However, fulfilling the research mission of the College will require
the recruitment of the best faculty, adequate funding, and high-end research facilities. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

All faculty members have degrees from nationally recognized universities, and adjuncts appear qualified for the classes they teach because of their occupational experiences. Faculty members receive annual feedback from Department Heads on scholarship, teaching, and service based on role statements. Under University and College policy, Heads evaluate all faculty members (including instructors and adjuncts) each year, although the relationship of the annual evaluation to promotion and tenure does not seem explicit. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.) Concern also has surfaced about the evaluation of faculty located on regional campuses but assigned to Departments. Nonetheless, the incorporation of off-campus faculty into Departments corresponds with the institutional vision regarding regional campuses and has garnered wide support in the College.

While the Faculty Handbook and other published and readily available documents contain the processes and procedures for promotion and tenure, faculty report variation in implementation. Considerable uneasiness exists about the dual roles of the committee that provides guidance towards the tenure decision and then performs the evaluative function. Faculty also indicate little confidence in the five-year summative evaluations required for all tenured faculty under University policy; with some noting that meaningful five-year evaluations rarely if ever occur. Others indicate a lack of uniformity in or understanding of the process. Taken together, these reports suggest the absence of a common understanding regarding college processes pertaining to pre-tenure and post-tenure review. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

The College of Natural Resources monitors and seeks to assess student outcomes in a variety of ways across the three Departments. The Department of Environment and Society includes capstone courses and service learning projects among its assessment efforts, focusing strongly on integrative student training. Little discussion of assessment activities appeared in the Self-Study for the Department of Watershed Sciences, although the Department reports data concerning student success after graduation. The Fisheries program ranks third nationally based on faculty productivity, but the Department has not developed its program to assess student learning outcomes. The Department of Wildland Resources not only has its own assessment practices, but also ties assessment to specialized accreditation by the Society for Range Management and American Foresters Association. While the faculty continues to refine assessment
methodologies, assessment processes in the College concentrate more on instructional evolution than long-range planning. (See Recommendation 2 in Conclusion below.) In addition, while the Self-Study Report includes sections on each Department, little appears relating to strategic planning. (See Recommendation Number 3 in Conclusion below.)

**Facilities**

The College facilities appear adequate, with the ever present need for renovation and upgrading. In addition, the active engagement of the new Dean and the faculty with the challenges of regional program delivery and research will undoubtedly lead to the need for more space and resources. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

**Summary**

The College of Natural Resources has a well earned reputation for programs of high quality that contribute directly to the fulfillment of the University’s mission in the state. The Dean and faculty appear eager to continue that active engagement.

**The College of Science**

**Introduction**

College of Science offerings touch essentially every student at Utah State University and critically contribute to the effectiveness of USU educational programs. The roughly 130 faculty members appear well qualified and generally of sufficient size to support the academic programs. Programs, degrees, and courses also appear recognizable and appropriate. The Departments exhibit "ownership" of their offerings and concentrate on improving them.

Offerings in the College include remedial and developmental, General Education, service, and major courses, and occur at all educational levels. These offerings vary substantially among the Departments. Departmental self-studies, and conversations with College members, make it clear that the faculty members take these obligations seriously. The Self-Study cites several teaching awards faculty members of the Departments have received, and students almost universally praise the programs and faculty.
Most of the Departments in the College suffered during USU's recent budget problems. Those successful in attracting external funding fared better than others. In particular, Computer Science benefited from the Governor's Initiative to improve Engineering and Computer Sciences and developed rather dramatically. All Departments expressed a desire for more faculty positions and/or other resources, but the Department of Mathematics seems caught in a particularly difficult situation. The Mathematics faculty members report that hiring freezes impacted them severely, resulting in a substantial number of unfilled positions and having to cover courses at the doctoral level in an *ad hoc* fashion.

College faculty members report that they have seen little by way of reallocated or new resources to assist them. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

Consistent with USU's mission, the College exhibits a strong commitment to research, as manifested in the quality and accomplishments of the faculty and the scope and quality of the educational offerings. While a strong commitment to research for graduate programs hardly seems noteworthy but rather expected, the Departments have a remarkably strong emphasis on research in undergraduate programs as well. In fact, most College of Science students interviewed had participated in research. As a land-grant institution, USU also has Extension as part of its mission. College of Science Departments participate in Extension to varying degrees, based on identified needs in the state. In the recent period, the Departments have actively integrated Extension into their programmatic activities. Some Departments also participate in USU's dual enrollment program, and have gained appropriate control over these offerings.

**Program Planning and Assessment**

In preparation for the 2007 NWCCU visit, each Department in the College has completed a self-study as the foundation for the College's contribution to the University Self-Study. The self-studies forthrightly express the challenges, opportunities, and aspirations the College and its faculty confront. However, the College did not offer a summary relating to the whole, an unfortunate omission.

Open meetings with students and faculty of the College confirmed that the faculty exercises principal responsibility for the curriculum and that students know of the published learning objectives and affirm that the faculty pursue those objectives in courses. In the College of Science student meeting, students expressed satisfaction with resources committed to support their education and agreed that (at least retrospectively) their programs had remained coherent. Mathematics students also
echoed the concerned highlighted in the Department self-study about the availability of offerings for majors and graduate students. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

All Departments in the College of Science have assessment plans in place. While these plans have generated valuable data, so far they appear to have generated only a modest number of programmatic changes. Even when changes/improvements have occurred, few assessment plans have existed long enough to observe any improvements. It appears as well that most of the assessment effort relies on survey and other information rather than actual outcomes data. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

A few years ago the availability of resources became and remains an issue. Recent budget shortfalls resulted in freezes, cuts, and position holds. Within the College, the impression that prevailed held that budgetary decisions during the shortfalls depended more on availability of vacant positions than strategic considerations. Departments report Education and General budgets as inadequate and the central administration has undertaken a five-year initiative to address this challenge. Through the Self-Study, program review reports, and conversations with Department Heads, it became clear that some Departments eagerly anticipate increased numbers of and support for graduate students. Departments also expressed concerns over the size of support staffs, citing the implementation of Banner and the resulting "push down" of responsibilities several times. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

**Facilities**

The College has generally adequate facilities, with a need for some renovation and upgrading. Equipment budgets remain constrained, and operating expense budgets have not recovered from the earlier reductions caused by revenue shortfalls. The College awaits its turn in the building boom occurring across the campus.

**Summary**

The faculty of the College of Science has developed and sustained through some challenging times programs that relate directly to the fulfillment of the mission of the University. With adequate support, they appear ready and willing to continue this effort.


**GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM: POLICY 2.1**

All undergraduate programs at the University include a coherent General Education Program, referred to as University Studies, that requires instruction in the major areas of knowledge. General Education includes courses to provide both breadth and depth. The faculty, administration, Trustees, and Regents collaboratively established the objectives of the General Education Program shared among other state universities. A faculty-based committee governs the General Education offerings, and the committee reviews proposed courses for inclusion in the General Education Program based on the degree to which the courses serve the stated purpose of the Program. The committee also reviews existing courses periodically for continued inclusion in the General Education Program.

The University has assessed the effectiveness of its written communication and mathematics courses as primary components of the General Education Program. The results indicated that the required writing courses positively affect students’ writing ability, although some concern remains about writing competency of the students. Assessment of mathematics skills showed more uneven results, and the responsible faculty members have consequently restructured the appropriate courses. Assessment of other components of General Education, such as social and physical sciences, humanities, etc., has yet to occur to demonstrate the achievement of the objectives of the General Education Program. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

Students in general do not understand the purpose of the General Education courses, finding them irrelevant and unrelated to their educational aims. They also have concerns about their ability to enroll in needed courses because of insufficient sections of General Education courses. Departments have no incentives to offer General Education courses. Also, the University appears to lack classroom space furnished with the appropriate technology to offer the typically large sections of General Education courses. To address the latter problem, the University will make available some of the Tier Two tuition money to fund additional course sections. Reportedly, entering freshman students can avail themselves of seats in four General Education courses by paying a $100 fee, a seeming anomaly for a public university. Nonetheless, mechanisms such as these provide some ways to manage enrollments better. Whether these initiatives will suffice remains for future determination. In any event, these problems and the student lack of awareness of the purposes and utility of General Education create a negative attitude about General Education that needs attention. The faculty committee responsible for General Education has announced a review for the coming year with the intention
of identifying needed revisions of General Education. Pending that review, the University needs to find ways to convey to students the purpose and value of General Education and assure sufficient offerings of General Education courses to meet demand. (See Recommendations Number 2 and 5 in Conclusion below.)

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT: POLICY 2.2

While the NWCCU visit report in 2002 cited progress on educational assessment, it included observations and recommendations to assure continued progress in pursuance of Policy 2.2. In response to these recommendations, USU centralized assessment activities in the Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation. That Office organizes assessment information on a single website using a uniform Departmental Assessment Model. Each Department has published learning objectives and mapped the learning objectives to specific courses in the curricula. Over the interim, the University has continued to make good progress toward establishing a culture of assessment.

The section on Policy 2.2 in Utah State University's 2007 Self-Study closely patterns the examples in the 2003 NWCCU Accreditation Handbook and employs the measures exemplified there. Thus, the Self-Study contains a great deal of valuable descriptive information, but rather less analysis. Moreover, the bases on which the University or the Departments made the choices of assessment measures "informed by the institutional mission" remain unclear. The information included does document the effectiveness of educational programs, but does not always show how the data has helped to improve programs or demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. A good deal of the information results from surveys of impressions rather than assessment of actual outcomes.

In addition to campus-wide assessment efforts, Colleges and Departments vary considerably in their assessment activities. Some have the developed capability to document the linkage between assessment and improvements in their educational programs, but others have not. In some cases, the Departments have not had sufficient time to "close the loop," and in others heretofore informal processes have not yet become formalized. Moreover, some Departments have not yet conceptualized the linkage between assessment and improvement. As commonly happens, programs with specialized accreditation tend to have more fully developed assessment plans, protocols, and metrics or instruments than those who do not have such accreditation. Undergraduate assessment at USU has become generally more fully developed than graduate assessment. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)
USU has made substantial progress on addressing previous issues with Policy 2.2. However, the University must continue to improve its educational assessment activities. In particular, the linkage between outcome measures and educational program improvement needs attention. (See Recommendations Number 2 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

**DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION: STANDARD 2.G AND POLICIES A-6 AND 2.6**

USU reorganized its distance/continuing education and Extension in 2006, integrating Extension into the College of Agriculture, Conference Services into Business and Finance, and creating Regional Campuses and Distance Education (RCDE), which reports to the Provost through the Vice Provost for RCDE. This latter structure pulls together all of the entities that support distance education for academic credit or programs for CEUs with a goal of providing broad access to a range of nontraditional students. The new approach also provides a reporting structure that ties these programs to the academic side of the institution and provides evidence showing these programs as integral organizational components of the University.

The organizational structure of the RCDE and its policies and procedures provide evidence of programs designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated by the sponsoring academic Departments, under established procedures, and fully compatible with the University’s mission and goals. The close relationship between the RCDE and its academic partners insures the involvement of appropriate faculty in program design, approval, and evaluation. Interviews with Deans and campus faculty verify that the academic community approves of this new structure and the closer ties of RCDE programs with the Office of the Provost.

The RCDE promulgates policies for student fees, granting of academic credit, admissions, and transfer of credit consistent with campus-based policies, except where alternatives reflect more flexible admissions policies for nontraditional students and different fees to cover special costs. Since RCDE offers courses on a self-sustaining basis, the courses do not become available to campus-based students under their regular tuition. The Provost has acknowledged that this policy and the resulting barrier to wider access to the online courses needs reconsideration, given the value of flexible course delivery to students on the Logan campus.
Students in distance courses offered on-site or via teleconferencing at Regional Campuses, Education Centers, and other delivery sites have resources and support services appropriate to the programs. The Regional Campuses have a range of services available on site, depending on the size of the campus and the number of students enrolled. Students who access courses offered online or through Independent Study receive support services and resources online and/or locally if they reside near an RCDE delivery site.

Online courses by design provide a variety of options for faculty-student interaction. Independent Study courses, by their nature, have less interaction with faculty, but most do provide connections through WebCT Vista. RCDE has in process an effort to replace the courses in print for with online versions, and also has initiated hybrid courses that combine online, video teleconferencing, and potentially face-to-face delivery.

The breadth and quality of teleconferencing facilities and equipment serving USU locations around the state deserve special notice. Together they provide the technical backbone upon which the success of the institution’s distance learning programs depends. The ability to receive and send courses, serve class sizes as small as one student in a single location, provide a breadth of courses and programs, deliver support services, and provide teleconferencing services to connect faculty and administrators at multiple locations all figure as crucial elements in making such a geographically distributed system function effectively. Furthermore, the system has a scalable design and can grow and expand as needed to serve the programs and enrollments anticipated to follow the recent state investment in faculty, staff, and infrastructure.

Additional state funding in FY 2006-07 provided a 13 percent increase to RCDE that has allowed USU to increase enrollment, hire additional faculty, produce more online courses, purchase facilities, and improve its technical delivery to students. This evidence of legislative support and commitment provides a positive statement of the value of providing broad statewide access to the institution’s programs.

Concurrent or dual enrollment programs, coordinated by RCDE staff, refer to a collaborative effort between public and higher education systems in Utah enabling high school students to earn both high school and college credits. USU has become a major player in the delivery of these programs, utilizing full-time USU faculty at the regional campuses, adjunct faculty, and high school faculty. The appropriate campus academic Department approves all faculty and assures supervision of all instruction. Moreover, USU delivers courses in this program through the Utah
Educational Network, online, and face-to-face. Agreements for concurrent programs comply with Policy A-6, Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited. The USU administration has identified a study group made up of members from RCDE and the Provost’s Office to review the concurrent enrollment programs and make recommendations for changes as needed to assure its ongoing quality and success in meeting stated goals.

The institution’s Self-Study noted five challenges facing RCDE, including organizational structure, partnerships with Departments, new faculty integration, recruiting and retaining students, and responding to new technologies. The Self-Study also noted problems confronting specific components of RCDE. Interviews with RCDE staff, USU faculty, and administrators indicate broad awareness of each of these challenges and problems, and revealed a focus of institutional attention. Because of their recent occurrence or establishment, the challenges, changes, and operational units remain in a transitional phase. Each of these challenges and problems will require ongoing attention.

Despite the challenges encountered in implementing the new organizational structure and the expanded expectations for regional campuses and distance education growth, the RCDE staff has much of value to share with peers nationwide. Visibility for the good work to enhance the University’s statewide presence, develop community and corporate partnerships for faculty and program development, and use technology in creative ways to deliver programs and share resources deserves extension beyond Utah’s boundaries. The University should encourage RCDE faculty and staff to become active members of relevant professional associations to facilitate heightened visibility and, at the same time, expand their own horizons by learning from exemplary programs elsewhere.

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND STUDY ABROAD: POLICIES 2.3, 2.4, AND A-6**

Twenty-five bilateral exchange agreements with foreign institutions and involvement with the International Student Exchange Program facilitate study-abroad programs at USU. These programs include student exchanges and faculty-led summer programs, with the latter having grown rapidly from six programs three years ago to twelve in 2007 and serving approximately 200 students. USU offers travel/study courses under policies consistent with Policy 2.4, Study Abroad Programs, and Policy A-6, Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited. These courses meet the same academic standards, award
similar credit, and remain subject to the same institutional control as other courses and programs offered by participating institutions.

RCDE does not give credit for prior experiential learning, with the exception of elective credit available to currently enrolled students who have served in the armed forces of the United States. The number of credits granted varies from 4 to 12, depending on the length of military service, but the University may accept other military credit for transfer if it satisfies University requirements.

**NON-CREDIT PROGRAMS AND COURSES: STANDARD 2.H**

Conference Services works with academic colleagues to plan and deliver a variety of non-credit activities, including conferences, workshops, and youth activities, each under the direction of an academic Department or a Conference Services management and marketing team. In all instances, the responsible administrators follow appropriate institutional policies, regulations, and procedures. Conference Services maintains records of the content, length, level, and quantity of services provided for such programs, and grants CEUs according to national guidelines for such credits. Academic Departments also plan and deliver conferences, although apparently with no institutional oversight for these conferences in terms of following appropriate policies, regulations, or procedures.

The Self-Study did not address non-credit programs offered through USU Extension. A subsequent interview with the Vice President for Extension revealed that Extension faculty members, including Program Leaders and Department Heads, have direct involvement in such programs. Extension has made it a priority to develop consistency in the content and delivery of statewide programs. The College of Agriculture provides audit data for non-credit Extension programs through the “My Focus” online database used by Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Stations.

**GRADUATE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS: STANDARD 2.D**

**Introduction**

The Board of Regents’ master plan for USU has designated a distinct organizational entity to oversee graduate programs, the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). Further, the master plan charges USU to offer graduate education of national significance and prominence at the master’s and doctoral levels. USU has achieved the rating of “research-extensive” universities under the Carnegie
classification. The University has 43 Departments in 7 Colleges, and 42 of the 43 Departments offer graduate degrees. All graduate degree program objectives and requirements appear satisfactory and conform to disciplinary standards. In all, the University currently offers 95 master’s, 6 educational specialist, and 38 doctoral degree programs. Table 1 shows the number of graduate programs offered by each College and the 2006-07 graduates per College, with indicated percentage rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Master’s Programs (Main)</th>
<th>Doctoral Programs (Main)</th>
<th>2006-07 Total Graduates</th>
<th>Percent for each College of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40 students</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>136 students</td>
<td>17 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5 Ph.D. 6 Ed specialists</td>
<td>309 students</td>
<td>38 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>122 students</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAAS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>82 students</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54 students</td>
<td>7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>61 students</td>
<td>8 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>38 Ph.D. 6 Ed. Specialist</td>
<td>804 Graduates</td>
<td>100 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Note: The interdisciplinary graduate programs include: M.S. and Ph.D. in Ecology offered within each of the following Colleges: Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Science; and M.S. and Ph.D. in Toxicology offered within each of the following Colleges: Agriculture, Sciences, and Engineering.]

Of the 804 graduates in 2006-07, Table 1 indicates the distribution of the graduates across the academic programs. All faculty holding earned terminal degrees constitute the graduate faculty on the Logan campus. Ninety-eight percent of the faculty hold terminal degrees in their fields from 58 different universities, and thus have status to serve on USU graduate committees.

The 1997 NWCCU Accreditation Review Committee recommended that USU discontinue its low-enrollment, low-producing graduate degree programs. As a result of this recommendation, USU discontinued 14 graduate programs to its current level, according to a memorandum to the former Provost Gogue, dated April 19, 1999. Further, the University has a well defined process for adding and deleting programs, with sufficient faculty input throughout the process. The
Graduate Council, the primary faculty committee dealing with graduate programs, reviews campus-wide program additions and deletions, and works closely with the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to insure quality graduate programs and students.

**Graduate Related Resources**

USU recognizes that state appropriations will not suffice to provide adequate support for the graduate programs. Therefore, through its capital campaign and through increased efforts in federal grant activity, the University seeks to find the resources to fill the gap between available and needed resources. Thus, contract and grant activity increased more than 50 percent, from $97 million in FY 1997 to $147 million in FY 2006. During the silent phase of a recently announced 7½-year, $200 million capital campaign, the University has received pledges and commitments totaling more than $130 million. (See Commendation Number 6 in Conclusion below.)

The USU Self-Study states that SGS will seek “to increase the number of doctoral students.” Doing so will require the identification of financial resources to accommodate the doctoral students and the research programs and more competitive graduate stipends and benefits to attract such students. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.) SGS will partner with the Vice Provost of Research (VPR) to meet this goal. The VPR contributed more than $250K in FY 2006 (compared to $130K in FY 2003) to support graduate student fellowships, recruitment, and travel. USU provides research recognition opportunities for graduate students through the campus-wide Research Week now in its tenth year.

The current budget for support of all graduate students stands at roughly $11.54 million and supports about 880 graduate students. This total represents nearly half of the 1,665 students on the Logan campus. The average graduate student costs about $11,000 annually for a full-time graduate student taking 9 credit hours per semester. The SGS works with the USU Research Office to support fellowships for graduate students, with preference for fellowships awarded to doctoral students. The SGS funds 9 Presidential Fellowships at the $12-15K level, and the USU Research Office funds about 9 or 10 VPR fellowships at $15K each. These Fellowships, in addition to any tuition waivers, run for one year in an effort to recruit graduate students. Other graduate students may also receive non-resident tuition waivers and funding from their respective Departments for teaching assistantships, graduate assistants, and research assistants. The University
distributes resources to the respective Colleges and Departments based on graduate FTEs.

The SGS has health insurance proposals for graduate students under review as a means of becoming more competitive in recruiting graduate students. Health insurance has become an important benefit for graduate students because of the rapid rise in health costs. Based on the analysis to date, USU will in all likelihood follow the approach implemented at the University of Utah. Such a program will cost the University about $1,000 per “funded” graduate student in addition to about $200 out-of-pocket costs for the graduate student. It appears that the $1,000 per student expense will accrue to the Department awarding the graduate assistantship or to the faculty mentor’s research grant.

The University has cut Department operating budgets several times because of the declines earlier in state funding and enrollments. USU proposes to increase the operating budgets by 80 percent over the next 5 years, beginning on July 1, 2007. Some concern exists across campus that this proposed increase will not suffice to fund the health care plan for graduate students and still restore operating budgets to the levels prior to the cuts. Faculty researchers also have concerns about the impact of the health insurance costs on grants. Members of the Graduate Faculty have urged the Provost to supplement Department budgets to help with the expense of health care for graduate students, but no agreement has occurred as yet.

**Off-Campus Graduate Programs**

Following some organizational change in 2006, the University established the Office of Regional Campuses and Distance Education (RCDE) reporting through a Vice Provost to the Provost. RCDE provides graduate courses and degree programs throughout Utah and the world. RCDE students pay tuition and fees distinct from those that apply on the Logan campus, but have good access to student services. RCDE retains the fee revenue and uses it to fund services to the students. Table 2 on the following page shows the significant growth in the number of students seeking master’s and doctoral degrees through RCDE. Professional graduate programs account for most of the growth in the master’s degrees, while Education attracted most of the off-campus Ph.D. students. According to the Vice Provost of SGS, these programs do not require laboratory facilities, thus alleviating the need for more laboratories and other resources. In FY 2007, RCDE enjoyed a line item budget of $17,283,500, a 13 percent increase over FY2006 to support student growth. All graduate programs, graduate faculty,
and admissions standards must comply with the requirements and standards of the appropriate Departments on the Logan campus.

While the University has received increased funding to support RCDE activities, many administrative details related to faculty and students require continued attention for revision. For example, RCDE faculty must meet the promotion and tenure guidelines of the Logan campus. Currently, the role of RCDE faculty lacks clear definition for promotion and tenure purposes. Other issues relate to the consistency of requirements for the graduate programs on the main campus and the RCDE campuses, the course availability to main campus students, and the graduate requirement for a campus experience. The current policy requires that doctoral students have residence on the Logan campus for at least three semesters (two consecutive, with certain exceptions). Many master’s programs also require some form of campus experience. Additionally, all doctoral degree programs must have a core staff of faculty on the Logan campus, with some participation by faculty from RCDE campuses. The details of these policy and administrative issues remain as yet uncertain, since the new organizational structure occurred in FY 2006.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003 Graduate Students</th>
<th>2006 Graduate Students</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Campus-Master’s</td>
<td>1,959</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>- 49 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCDE-Master’s</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>334 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Campus-Doctoral</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCDE-Doctoral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduate Records and Academic Credit

The University has standardized graduate admission requirements at minimal levels, relying GRE, GMAT, and Miller Analogies scores. Student scores on GRE verbal, quantitative, and analytical have decreased slightly since FY 2003. For FY 2007, some 34 percent of the graduate students had taken undergraduate coursework from USU. The Undergraduate Research Program encouraged these students to continue their graduate studies at USU.
The yield of accepted to matriculating graduate students at USU fell from 54.2 percent in FY 2003 to 34.2 percent for FY 2006. Some of the decline undoubtedly resulted from the lack of competitive graduate assistant stipends and fellowships available at USU during the period of difficult financial strains. The University has recently launched efforts to offer more competitive graduate benefit packages to its applicants so the conversion rate will in all likelihood increase in the next year or so.

The University has also implemented an electronic portfolio system to improve and simplify the application process. This electronic portfolio system has enabled Departments to access readily and promptly all admissions documents for graduate students in real time, and has improved the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the application and review process. Graduate coordinators review the application materials and forward the results to appropriate research faculty in their Colleges and Departments. As full-time faculty members, the coordinators receive a course or two release to recruit students, review application materials, and process graduate student applications.

Summary

USU has clearly identified the challenges concerning graduate studies and has initiated efforts to address them by (1) enhancing stipends and benefits for attracting and retaining highly qualified graduate students; (2) improving the process and procedures for admission, monitoring, and graduating students; and (3) recognizing the need for continuous improvement of graduate laboratory and other space. USU recognizes that state appropriations will never suffice to fund graduate education and research, so the SGS has partnered with the Research Office to use funds from its federal grant activity to help meet this critical need. In FY 2004, USU ranked 10th in the nation among federal research institutions. In addition, the University has launched a very successful capital campaign. As additional leverage, the state has authorized an economic development program that will provide $400 million to USU for targeted research and graduate programming over a 10-year period through the USTAR initiative. Licensing and royalties have doubled since 2003 ($247K to $495K), and promotion and tenure criteria rewards the patent activities of research faculty. The University’s successful Undergraduate Research Program has also made a difference in terms of attracting larger numbers of successful graduate students. Fully 26 percent of USU’s graduating seniors have had research experience, while more than 30 percent of graduates pursue advanced degrees. Finally, the Research Office contributes funds
to recognize outstanding researchers in every College annually to encourage research activities and involvement of graduate students.
STANDARD THREE – STUDENTS

Introduction

Consistent with the educational philosophy of the University that “academics come first,” the Division of Student Services (DSS) provides essential support services to more than 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students, with 42 percent served, to varying degree, at three regional campuses, seven full-service centers, multiple education sites in all of Utah’s 29 counties, and by distance delivery. The DSS includes the Vice President for Student Services (VPSS) who oversees 22 Departments and offices. The VPSS serves as one of eight Vice Presidents (including the Provost) who report to the USU President as a member of the Executive Committee. Since the last accreditation visit in 1997, DSS leadership has changed repeatedly and programs have moved in and out of the Division. Stability dates from the recent appointment of a long-serving administrator as the VPSS, and Directors appear energized and optimistic about this change in leadership.

The 2007 reorganization of DSS into three Service Teams created a Cabinet (weekly meetings with the Interim AVP Student Life, Interim AVP Student Assistance, Director of Student Involvement, and others) and a Directors’ Council (comprised of Directors in each Service Team) which meets monthly. This new configuration remains in transition since national searches will occur to fill interim positions. Reporting structures need fine-tuning as the Director of Student Involvement (a Cabinet member) also reports to the Interim AVP Student Life, while the Enrollment Management Team has no Assistant or Associate Vice President, and no VPDSS supervises this team directly.

Designed to enhance communication and collaboration among Student Services programs, this new structure includes a new Student Advisory Council which involves representation from student organizations. Other student service programs involve auxiliary operations (Bookstore, Food Service, Housing) now reporting to Business and Finance after the reorganization. The Vice Provost for Regional Campuses and Distance Education supervises satellite campuses, but DSS cooperates to assure the availability of Student Services to remote sites.

Individuals with appropriate levels of academic preparation staff DSS programs. Several Directors have recently assumed new duties. Fifty-nine of 107 professional staff members possess advanced degrees, while 47 possess baccalaureate degrees. Job descriptions exist for DSS positions at the Director
level and up, and they guide annual the performance reviews that typically result in specific training and development goals for employees. Policies, procedures, and mission statements within DSS, for the most part, appear in carefully articulated statements and appear to meet the needs of the USU student population while supporting the goals of DSS.

The Taggart Student Center (TSC) houses most DSS programs, providing the place for many services in convenient locations on three floors, with a few located nearby in the University Inn. Recent renovations and office relocations have created adequate facilities, and DSS has a plan to remodel the Registration Office to include Distance Education. Student Health Services recently moved from TSC to a former surgery center which allows space for additional services.

DSS funding comes from the state Education and General appropriation (46 percent), student fees (24 percent), generated revenue (25 percent), DSS endowed scholarships (1 percent), and grants (4 percent). The Strategic Plan includes a system to propose, review, and implement new DSS initiatives, but no clear schedule or process exists to allocate resources on the basis of identified needs. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.) Adequacy of available funding has become an issue. Since 2002, DSS has experienced four permanent and five one-time budget cuts. DSS programs nonetheless continue to provide service with limited resources. Additionally, FY 2008 salaries for both professional and classified staff average 70 percent of market equity, based on salary ranges used by the University’s Department of Human Resources (HR). Low salaries also impact the ability to recruit and attract qualified professionals. Allocations for operating expenses have remained static for the last 20 years, so meeting student needs with limited resources presents a clear challenge. The University settled a lawsuit filed by students with disabilities in April 2007, and, as a result, provides more interpreter services for hearing-impaired students and has modified the University grievance procedure.

**General Responsibilities**

USU identifies the demographic characteristics of its student population, but little evidence exists to demonstrate that DSS systematically identifies students’ learning needs or that such assessment influences program development and delivery. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.) However, Student Support Services, Multicultural Student Services, and Disability Resource Center provide services for their specific populations. While the University tracks student
graduation rates, it does not establish graduation goals for the student population in its entirety or by sectors and groups.

Some tailored support services address transition issues confronting new students on any campus. First-year students must participate in a Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) session before registering for classes. In FY 2006, the University created the Retention and First-Year Experience Office to improve student success and retention through new “Early Alert” and “leave of absence” programs. The Academic Resource Center provides supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study skills and support classes.

USU provides opportunities for students to participate in institutional governance through the Associated Students of Utah State University which has 16 elected and 5 appointed student leaders. The President of ASUSU also serves as a voting member of the University Board of Trustees. ASUSU has three main bodies: Executive Council, Academic Senate, and Student Activities Board (STAB). The Executive Council mirrors the University administration and works collaboratively with University administrators on policy matters, while the Academic Senate focuses on academic matters. The policy and legislative recommendations developed by the Council and the Senate go through the Staters’ Council in quarterly meetings to the University President for consideration. Students matriculating at the regional campuses also participate, to varying degrees, in ASUSU.

While it has no governance responsibility, the new Student Advisory Council, established in FY 2006, has identified ways to improve the processes and procedures students experience. “Inclusiveness” has become the FY 2007 focus of this group and students see progress in current efforts to enhance and appreciate campus diversity. Faculty help to develop policies for student programs and services through committees in the Bookstore, Campus Recreation, Career Services, Student Conduct, Student Media Board, Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board, Transfer Student Advisory Board, and Taggart Student Center Policy Board.

The policies outlining student rights and responsibilities appear in widely available print and electronic formats. The Student Code, approved by the USU Board of Trustees on April 12, 2002, available on the web, spells out conduct, discipline, and grievance guidelines in appropriate and non-discriminatory language. The Campus Judicial Office handles violations of the Student Code. Precisely how the University insures the fair, impartial, and consistent implementation of conduct
policies remains unclear, since no formal review policies or procedures for regular administrative review exist.

USU has its own Police Department, providing 24-hour coverage, and a Fire Marshal Division to serve the campus community. The Risk Control Committee identifies, evaluates, and recommends solutions for risk exposures, including support for student groups and the responsible advisors.

The most recent Clery Act data (2005) contains required crime data; the USU Police Department page links to the Utah Sex Offender Registry. While available on the web or by request, these data and data sources do not appear widely distributed. The General Catalog contains brief references to security and safety information, but more comprehensive content and wider distribution appear appropriate for future publications.

USU publishes a General Catalog every two years which serves as a student handbook. The Catalog complies with NWCCU content guidelines regarding admission and academic policies and procedures. All entering freshmen receive copies when they attend the mandatory Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) program.

DSS has developed for implementation Division-wide standardized assessment guidelines modeled on the examples provided by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. Many programs post completed (as recently as September 2007) self-assessment guides with goals and objectives on their respective websites. While these assessments at times suggest program deficiencies, they do not necessarily address student outcomes. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.) The new assessment trainer or consultant position in DSS indicates progress in this area, and training for all DSS Directors will enhance this initiative. The development and promulgation of a written plan for the DSS review cycle explaining how assessment results will strengthen DSS will also help. The current lack of clarity and rigor adversely affects assessment, programmatic evaluation, planning, and budgeting. (See Recommendations Number 1-3 in Conclusion below.)

DSS does have a Strategic Plan for annual review and implementation of new initiatives as well as a timeline for staff training. Presumably, this plan will integrate assessment efforts to measure student outcomes and to evaluate the appropriateness, adequacy, and utilization of DSS programs and to make changes, as data indicate. Some programs rely on student satisfaction data to assess
program effectiveness, adequacy, and utilization of resources, and this information influences DSS planning to some extent. A more deliberate and proactive Division-wide system of developmental assessment and data mining will enhance planning and budgeting. (See Recommendations Number 1-3 in Conclusion below.)

Academic Credit and Records and Transfer of Credit

The General Catalog identifies the standard for academic course credit, as defined by the “Northwest Association of Schools & Colleges.” The Evaluation Committee notes here for the record that this language does not comply with NWCCU guidelines and policy. In future editions, the General Catalog must refer to the “Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.” The Catalog defines full-time undergraduate status and explains that academic Department criteria serve as the basis to evaluate graduate student performance as well as theses and dissertations. Course syllabi outline the criteria for the evaluation of student learning and achievement for the courses and programs of all seven Colleges. Syllabi include course objectives, requirements, assignments, and criteria for evaluating student performance.

The University employs a rather typical course numbering system, clearly identifying non-credit, remedial (usually entailing a fee), and other special courses not intended for transfer. In addition, the University does not award non-degree credit other than CE Units, and accepts courses taken at accredited institutions as transfer credit that will apply to satisfy USU graduation requirements. The General Catalog spells out transfer application procedures, and indicates that the appropriate academic Departments make the course equivalency decisions.

USU maintains paper transcripts of all academic records through 1980, with electronic records thereafter, and has microfilm/microfiche/electronic copies of all records stored in three locations. FERPA guidelines control access to all student records, and University personnel have access, as appropriate to their job duties. The Registrar backs up the information incrementally on a weekly basis and on a three-tier rotation schedule. Database and other vital files have local back-up file as well as external storage. The University has in progress a long-term document imaging plan that will allow Admissions and Registration to use one system that meets the needs of both offices by June 2008. In addition, the University has in planning a perpetual storage facility for recent CDs and DVDs of archived records. Currently, the University does not have a Disaster Recovery Plan for student
records, but has one in the planning stages. (See Recommendation Number 7 in Conclusion below.)

**Student Services**

USU uses an Admissions Index to admit undergraduate students who have the best chance to complete a University program of study. The Index predicts the academic performance of first-time students, generally requiring an index score of at least 90 (based on ACT/SAT and high school GPA). In addition, the University relies on the usual placement testing and assessment to enroll entering freshmen appropriately in classes. The Committee noted, however, the omission of mention of special provisions for “ability to benefit” students. In accordance with Commission policy, this provision needs open dissemination in literature representing the University. The University does post its policies for transfer, GED, and home-schooled students. Annual review of admission requirements by the Enrollment Management Team, faculty, and the Provost and VPSS insure consistency with the USU mission.

DSS addresses the diversity needs and characteristics of the students through programs such as Multicultural Student Services, GEAR UP (serving six area junior high and high schools), International Students and Scholars, Student Support Services, and Disability Support Services. ASUSU Executive Council includes the VP for Diversity and Organizations, a student executive. Together these programs host cultural events, provide orientation programs for their constituents, support academic and social needs, and integrate the diverse students into the campus community.

The February 2007 “Survey of Surveys” compiled by the Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation identified a generally conservative student population, 87 percent of whom affiliate with the LDS religion. The Student Advisory Council and other DSS programs have made good progress in addressing issues of campus culture and the “religious divide.”

The *General Catalog* publishes clearly defined academic policies as required by NWCCU standards; readmission, appeals, and graduation requirements also appear prominently in that publication. The “Code of Policies and Procedures” provides USU policies for students’ non-academic termination. “Student Right-to-Know” information appears in the *General Catalog*, with supporting Retention/Graduation data on the web.
The institution’s financial aid programs correspond to the USU mission and goals, and the University awards financial aid through grants, loans, work-study, and scholarships. The total financial aid awarded has decreased slightly from 2002 to 2006, while recent Tier II tuition increases have seemingly resulted in increased student borrowing. A University priority to increase both legislative appropriations and scholarships aims to address this funding gap.

Authority for awarding federal financial aid rests with the Director of Financial Aid. Institutional controls including annual audits provide reasonable assurance of compliance with federal regulations. Both the General Catalog and the web site contain comprehensive financial aid information; admissions materials include clear and accurate financial aid information as well. University publications outline repayment options and obligations, debt load considerations, and consolidation options, also available electronically and through personal contact. Students complete mandatory online loan counseling and produce evidence of exit counseling at termination of attendance. USU has exceptionally low Family Federal Educational Loan/Stafford default rates (2003-05), so the efforts appear quite effective.

Orientation options appear appropriate for new and traditional undergraduate students. MSS and OIIS offer orientation sessions for their constituents, with the Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) program optional for transfer students and mandatory for new students. SOAR includes a complementary family/parent program. University Connections (one week course) and Peer Mentoring also orient students to campus. The Departments handle the orientation of graduate students.

Most academic advising occurs in the Colleges and Departments involving faculty members and professional advisors, with 9 professional advisors in University Advising serving undeclared and General Studies students. The advising guidelines available in print and online with convenient electronic “Major Requirement” sheets provide timely and relevant information about advisor and student responsibilities. Advising loads run to approximately 400:1, with advising load targets of 300:1. These benchmarks appear very high for the type and responsiveness of intrusive advising needed.

Career Services programs offer an appropriate range of career development and placement services to students as well as alumni. Services include career exploration and counseling, Co-Op and internship opportunities, career employment and recruitment, and career testing. Vigorous Cooperative Education
and campus recruitment programs help to facilitate employment of graduates, while 30 percent enter professional or graduate programs, as documented in “2006 Employment/ Education Survey.” This 46-page report seems quite useful but needs one chart to summarize placement data. The Career Services web site lists job titles and salary averages by major, but offers no summary report.

The Student Health and Wellness Center provides comprehensive services for students and their spouses and dependents, including basic medical care with outpatient, primary care, pharmacy, laboratory, and health education services. Funded by student fees, the Center has a CLIA level II-certified laboratory and voluntarily complies with HIPAA guidelines. The University Counseling Center has accreditation by the International Association of Counseling Services, staffed by licensed psychologists and certified psychology resident students, as well as board-certified physicians and other highly qualified professionals.

Student housing programs meet appropriate standards of health and safety. Single, graduate, and family housing options for more than 3,200 students offer a variety of theme and interest groups, including the new Living Learning Center, which opened in Fall 2006. Residence Life includes comprehensive academic support services in the learning environments, served by well trained peer mentors and live-in staff, adhering to ACUHO-I standards for programming.

Dining Services, owned by the University, provides 6,000 meals a day to resident and nonresident students, faculty, and staff in a variety of venues all over campus, and includes a catering service. Professional managers have extensive food service experience and insure that each food service employee has, at minimum, a food-handler permit. Dining Services has recently implemented a new system to gather customer feedback from student residents and will respond to suggestions for improvement as appropriate. Catering customers also evaluate the services by way of a survey form accompanying bills for services.

Many co-curricular activities and programs exist to support the University’s mission. The great diversity of offerings includes student governance, residence hall governance, Student Involvement and Leadership Center, fraternities and sororities, service opportunities, leadership training and development, campus clubs and intramurals, Women’s Center, Outdoor Recreation Center, and more. Adaptations allow student participation by traditionally under-represented students, and University policies and procedures establish the relationship between student activities and the institution and address program governance.
The University Bookstore, owned and operated by USU, appears very adequate for campus needs. Recent remodeling and expanded services at Regional Campuses complement its mission of providing goods and services at the lowest possible prices consistent with sound business policy. The Bookstore Advisory Committee gives students, faculty, and staff the venue to participate in setting Bookstore policies and procedures.

USU has a Student Media Board which sets policies for student media supported by University funding and has developed a “Student Media Policy Manual” for the student newspaper. *The Utah Statesman* appears in print and online three times a week. The “Manual” includes the job descriptions for editors and advisors. The Student Media Board provides for a defined relationship between student media and the University at large.

**Intercollegiate Athletics**

The USU Aggies compete at the NCAA Division I level in 16 sports, including seven men’s and nine women’s sports, in a program consistent with the mission and goals of the University. A member of the Western Athletics Conference (WAC) since 2005, USU leads the WAC in Academic All-Conference selections and graduation rates and maintains certification by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (most recent review in September 2007).

Board of Regents’ policy requires the Athletics Director (AD) to report to the University President and the Board of Trustees has a Sub-Committee on Athletics. The University’s Athletics Council, consistent with NCAA regulations, provides advice to the President, while the Student Athlete Advisory Committee advises the AD. Additional oversight comes from the Athletic Compliance Committee which follows NCAA requirements. Recent recommendations of these Committees and the Big West Conference compliance review (2005) moved the reporting line for the Compliance Coordinator to both the AD and the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative, thus insuring oversight from outside of Athletics.

Each coach and staff member must sign and comply with the NCAA Institutional Certification of Compliance; additionally, all coaches must pass the annual NCAA recruiting test. The AD provides in written form the goals and objectives of Intercollegiate Athletics as well as institutional expectations of staff members to candidates for Athletics staff positions. The AD and the policy recommending committees have clearly outlined duties and expectations stated explicitly in the July 2007 “Athletics Policies and Procedures Manual.” Athletics administrators
and coaches review the policies and procedures at least annually for relevance, consistency, and conformity to NCAA, Conference, and University policies and regulations.

Admission requirements, academic standards, financial aid awards, and the like comply with institutional standards under the purview of the appropriate University administrators. However, the October 2007 NCAA Athletics Certification Peer-Review Team Report found that USU must take certain actions to adhere more closely to University policy for academic compliance: 1) Eliminate any difference between the percentages of regular students and students athletes in football admitted after special admission review; 2) eliminate any negative differential between the three-class average graduation rate of football student-athletes and students generally; 3) and promulgate in clear and written form the policies concerning classes missed by student athletes due to scheduled practices and competitions. The University must submit a plan to address these issues in December 2007 for final NCAA approval.

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics complies with all financial management policies and regulations of the University. Annual audits and mandatory monthly reports ensure fiscal accountability. In addition, USU complies with standards of fair and equitable treatment of both male and female athletes, as indicated by annual reports in accordance with the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act. The University awards financial aid at the maximum levels allowed by NCAA regulations. A three-year review of athletic financial aid by the Office of Civil Rights in 2001 verified compliance with Title IX federal guidelines.

**Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status: Policy 3.1**

University publications, advertising, and marketing materials conform generally to NWCCU policies, representing the educational programs factually, fairly and concisely in the publications, and seem readily available. However, the Committee noted inconsistencies needing correction in the General Catalog listing of faculty degrees earned and the conferring institutions. The Committee noted as well that official publications do not fully describe career opportunities and requirements for professional licensure, an omission needing correction in future publications. The admissions officers at USU appear well qualified, possess appropriate credentials, operate under clearly defined position descriptions, and do not use agents or independent contractors for recruitment. Finally, however, the Committee noted, as mentioned earlier, the incorrect reference to the NWCCU in the 2007-2009
General Catalog. The Catalog also failed to specify the scope of the specialized accreditation of selected professional programs. These omissions need attention in future publications.
STANDARD FOUR – FACULTY

Faculty Selection, Evaluation, Roles, Welfare, and Development

USU has a highly qualified faculty of some 700 full- and part-time faculty on the Logan campus, 98 percent of whom have earned terminal degrees. The Evaluation Committee commends the USU faculty and staff for exemplary commitment to the University and especially for meeting the needs of the students (See Commendation Number 1 in Conclusion below). The faculty and staff have maintained this high level of commitment and professionalism in a context of financial challenges, marked by the lack of increases in salaries and operating budgets. The Committee members reported evidence of collegiality and a spirit of cooperation within and across Departments, Schools, Colleges, and disciplines. Respect for colleagues’ high level of quality as teachers and researchers/scholars seems widespread. Turnover in faculty remains relatively low and surveys of faculty show high satisfaction with positions and assignments.

All evidence presented in documentation and comment indicates that faculty participates in deliberations about policies directly and through the Faculty Senate. The administration consults regularly with numerous committees at the Department, College, and University levels. Although comments and surveys allude to some disagreement about the extent to which faculty advice and opinion affects administrative decisions, the University regularly involves faculty in major decisions concerning promotion, tenure, and curriculum. The Faculty Senate participates actively in curricular decisions and provides a method of communication between administration and faculty. The faculty plays a central role in the tenure and promotion process through the Promotion and Tenure Committees, although some confusion or disagreement exists concerning the dual roles of the pre-tenure Committee members as mentors and judges. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.) The faculty also participates in a wide range of planning activities, even though many faculty members express concern about the apparent lack of clear linkages among various planning efforts and the budgeting processes. (See Recommendation Number 3 in Conclusion below.)

The faculty appears satisfied with the fairness and openness of the procedures used to recruit and appoint new faculty colleagues. Workloads also seem well understood, and the recent development of role statements has enhanced understanding. The role statements and associated annual work plans have received wide acceptance across campus and give faculty a way to gauge their
expenditure of time as well as a guide for evaluation of performance. This system appears to recognize and validate legitimate differences in individual faculty members’ responsibilities and allows evaluation and decisions for salary increases, promotion, and tenure with greater sensitivity to those differences. Surveys indicate some concern about the lack of faculty development opportunities, but the faculty supports the sabbatical program and the newly sponsored Teaching Academy to assist new faculty to make the transition into the University.

Faculty expressed concern about salary compression and the lack of recent salary increases, and the Self-Study verifies that average salaries fall substantially below peer averages at all ranks. Although salary levels appear adequate to attract new faculty in some areas, problems have occurred for other disciplines. Many faculty also have concerns about retention of appropriately qualified faculty, and the University has sought state funding for retention and looked to other sources to increase compensation, such as tuition surcharges and conversion of fiscal year faculty to academic year appointments without a decrease in salary. The faculty seems generally satisfied with the level of University support for benefits, and the Self-Study verifies that, with benefits, total compensation comes closer to that of peers. Some Departments have difficulty recruiting a diverse faculty, a challenge recognized by the University in some attempts to develop new procedures. The University needs to review its salary increase policy and procedures for clarity, effectiveness, transparency, and fairness. (See Recommendation Number 4 in Conclusion below.)

Even given the general satisfaction with faculty loads, many Departments expressed a need for additional faculty, while some still have a substantial, perhaps critical, number of unfilled positions. Most Departments cite the need for faculty to fill critical areas or add breadth, increase faculty numbers to national/regional averages, and take account of recent enrollment surges. The University has apparently turned the corner with regard to revenues and enrollments and the faculty anticipates some action to balance allocations in accordance with rising demands. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)

Distance Learning Faculty

The recent restructuring of distance education, continuing education, and Extension has resulted in the assigning of regional campus and Extension faculty to academic Departments. As addressed elsewhere in this report, the Colleges, Departments, Regional Campuses and Distance Education (RCDE), administrators,
faculty, and staff on the Logan campus have received this reorganization positively. The change, while being perceived as an institutional benefit, has introduced complications into a number of faculty related issues—mentoring, evaluation, tenure, promotion, and faculty expectations.

Utah House Bill 185 provided significant funding to USU in 2007 to expand degree programs, extend partnerships with the College of Eastern Utah (CEU) and Snow College, and further develop regional campuses in the Uintah Basin, Tooele, and Brigham City. The new funding will support an additional 37 USU faculty in 17 academic Departments, with all new positions located on regional campuses. In sum, the new funding does not do much to relieve the rising pressures on the Logan campus.

Search committees for the new faculty hires will include members from both the Logan campus and the regional campuses, following procedures outlined in the faculty code. Faculty expectations will generally place more weight on teaching, but even so, the result of these new appointments will undoubtedly require a reexamination of the faculty code to assure its relevance to faculty located on the regional campuses with roles ranging from somewhat to significantly different from their campus-based counterparts. It will become increasingly important to delineate clearly the expectations for faculty in the position descriptions at appointment and in the tenure and promotion guidelines for evaluation. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.) In addition, a smooth transition will require strong mentoring to assist these new faculty members to succeed.

Interviews with both faculty and administrators at USU revealed recognition that the current practice of assigning a single committee to mentor a new faculty member and then evaluate that faculty member for tenure and promotion does not work as planned. Committee members become invested in the faculty member’s success during the mentoring phase, then find it understandably difficult to recommend against approval when the time comes. Given the significant increase in new faculty in the near future, addressing this issue quickly has become a high priority. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

**Faculty Evaluation**

Utah State University has established policies requiring 1) annual evaluation of faculty, 2) summative post-tenure five-year evaluations of tenured faculty, and 3) practices regarding tenure and promotion. While all Departments report that evaluative processes generally work, a perception of inconsistency and lack of
transparency in implementation exists. For example, some faculty members in the liberal arts report they do not understand the relationship of annual evaluations to promotion and tenure decisions, whereas other faculty members seem to have a good understanding of the evaluative process. Confusion exists about the five-year summative performance reviews of tenured faculty as well. Many faculty members indicate that the five-year reviews have a cursory and inadequate character, reflecting less than appropriate attention and care in their implementation. Other comments indicated that the faculty does not have time to perform rigorous annual reviews. Cursory reviews lead to inaccurate assessment and mediocrity. A clear communication of expectations, criteria, and procedures for evaluation will improve the faculty evaluation process. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

The faculty also reports inconsistency in the interpretation of campus policy regarding annual evaluations and tenure and promotion practices, especially regarding the role(s) of the “promotion advisory committees.” University rules direct the assignment of an advisory committee to each tenure-eligible faculty member. This committee has the charge to assist the designated faculty member to achieve a positive recommendation for tenure through counsel and guidance. However, when the faculty member submits a tenure application, this same advisory committee takes on the role of evaluator. The conflicting responsibilities frequently, if not universally, result in recommendations favoring the award of tenure with too little regard to actual performance. Faculty members have strong feelings regarding the dual roles of the committees – first as advisory and later as evaluative – because of the potential for conflict as the relationships become adversarial. Positive comments reference the committee as a source of mentorship and direct guidance. Negative comments reference the fact that faculty serving as mentors have difficulty in becoming objective when the candidates apply for tenure. Clearly this procedures merits review for clarification or possible revision, given the disparity of opinions and the extent of confusion regarding the authority and role of the promotion advisory committees. (See Recommendation Number 8 in Conclusion below.)

Scholarship, Research, and Creativity

The contract and grant volume in support of research and scholarly or creative activity among USU faculty has increased from an already impressively high level by more than 50 percent over the last 10 years. Total research expenditures exceeded $147 million in FY 2007, with several University centers, programs, and Departments earning very high national ratings and the University ranking among
the top ten of land-grant, non-medical universities. Mechanisms and funding assistance from several sources (central as well as College- or Department-based) provide ample support for research/scholarship seed money, grant and contract development, and the basic needs of the several research institutes and centers at USU. Although the campus community strongly supports the potential of the USTAR program to bring new research funding and facilities to the University, some faculty members have serious concerns about the possible skewing impact of USTAR on the University’s research programs. Many feel strongly that excessive involvement in the market without attention to role and mission will generate problems. The University Research Council plays an important role in the development of research policies and procedures and provides advice and counsel to the VPR. Policies and procedures govern the conduct of research and scholarly activities with consideration of and respect for appropriate ethical, legal, and financial accountability requirements. Further, from all indications, the University respects and protects the academic freedom of the faculty and students in the choice and conduct of research, scholarship, and teaching activities. Faculty did report that the recent implementation of Banner caused some new challenges with research budget reporting. Finally, the Committee noted the absence of a comprehensive institutional conflict of interest statement. (See Recommendation Number 9 in Conclusion below.)
STANDARD FIVE – LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

Purpose and Scope

As its primary purpose, the Merrill-Cazier Library supports the teaching, learning, and research mission of USU, on and off the campus, meeting the needs of the faculty and students of Utah State University. The Library fulfills its mandate through the quality and responsiveness of its faculty and staff, its collections and technology infrastructure, and the facility it occupies. The overall holdings, equipment, and personnel of the Merrill-Cazier Library currently meet the research, teaching, and learning needs of the students and faculty, although the Library (as the University) suffered from budget reductions in recent years and has only recently realized a gradual increase in funding.

Information Resources and Services

The University supplements Library funding from the University Education and General appropriation with Tier II tuition dollars, Regents’ support, and student fees. In addition, the Provost, at the behest of faculty researchers, has guaranteed $1.7 million in additional funds to the Library over the next five years to the offset the cost of annual inflation increases for current journals and the Elsevier Freedom Collection of e-journals. Finally, the Library also needs to find additional funding for monographs and journal backsets.

The University supports the Campus Information Technology through Technology Resource funding as well as through cost recovery procedures. Information Technology (IT) has recently undergone a major reorganization with the goal of providing improved and more timely services, imposing a renewed emphasis on customer support and satisfaction.

Facilities

The Merrill-Cazier Library recently underwent a significant renovation and expansion resulting in an aesthetically pleasing and extraordinarily functional facility. The wonderfully innovative retrieval system - the Borrower’s Automated Retrieval Network (BARN) – guarantees that Merrill-Cazier will have ample room for growth in collections and new services. The Library has become a state-of-the-art facility with the creation of many student-centered learning spaces. The classrooms incorporate high level technology making them an asset both to the Library as well as the entire campus. The Library’s Information Commons
provides students the venue to search the web, scan documents, and integrate these resources into research papers. Technical staff and Library faculty actively and directly assist students.

Personnel and Management

The Library has experienced difficulty in recruiting new faculty primarily because of low entry level salaries, and as a result, has developed a plan to try to increase salaries to state and peer averages. In addition to professional development opportunities and access to designated funding for conferences, Library faculty and staff receive support for specific workshops to increase their competency to provide improved services. Faculty, staff, and students participate in the planning and development of the Library and its services through Library meetings and committee work. Library faculty participates on several University-wide committees and planning groups as well.

Library administration deserves commendation for the professionalism, commitment, and enthusiasm of the Library faculty and staff. (See Commendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.) There seems a universal belief that the lack of dollars, while a setback, offers no reason for not taking on new projects. Frequently, the faculty and staff accomplish new projects by reallocating resources and, in some cases, through the judicious use of gift monies. While much that occurs in the Library seems exemplary, the Special Collections/Archives and Library instruction program merit special mention for outstanding performance.

Staff in Information Services and Information Technology keeps current in their fields through conference attendance and regional and state-wide meetings with peers. They share information across campus through monthly meetings. The newly reorganized IT Department has a commitment to create and sustain user-friendly services and a robust infrastructure to support the entire campus.

Planning and Evaluation

The Merrill-Cazier Library has a variety of ways to assess its services. In 2007, the Library conducted its first LibQAL+ survey to gather baseline information on the quality of its services to students and faculty, with an announced intent to continue this survey as the basis for a series of service-related, data-based benchmarks. Library and Technology satisfaction rates appear in the University’s February 2007 survey compilation -- Survey of Surveys: What Do We Know About Current and Former USU Students. The Library Instruction program conducts, in conjunction
with the Department of English, a series of programmatic assessments. Finally, the Library has a formal feedback mechanism through its Library Advisory Council which includes both faculty and student representatives. Nonetheless, the Library has few data elements pertaining to actual student learning outcomes. (See Recommendation Number 2 in Conclusion below.)

**Summary and Concerns**

While striving to fulfill its mandate despite scare resources, the Merrill-Cazier Library has creatively sought to identify new resources and reallocate available resources. However, it currently has no fund raiser. Given the naming opportunities in the new facility as well as the high interest in the Library by the public, the University will undoubtedly benefit by identifying a person or shared person to work with the Library during the ongoing capital campaign. (See Commendation Number 6 in Conclusion below.) Some tension exists within the Library about the division between Library faculty and staff professionals, an historic separation that seems to result in a two-tier organization with ramifications for salaries and, in some cases, morale. In addition, the residual tension between the Library and IT works against attaining common goals. During the transition phase to the new organizational structure, the two entities need to develop a regular process for identifying and addressing mutual problems.
STANDARD SIX – GOVERNANCE

Introduction

Utah State University functions as one of ten public institutions of higher education in Utah governed by the Utah Board of Regents, with a Commissioner of Higher Education as the chief executive officer of the Regents and spokesperson for the System. The governance system provides for appropriate institutional autonomy within the context of policy direction by the Board of Trustees and Board of Regents. Each institution also has its own Board of Trustees, with specific authority delegated by the Regents, and with management flexibility accorded to the campus administration working directly with the local Board of Trustees. The Board of Regents posts its by-laws, rules, policies, and minutes on its website. In addition, the Board disseminates broadly its strategic and related plans and performance measures. These measures affect planning and budgeting on the several campuses.

Governance System and Governing Board

Utah State University has a governance structure typical of multi-campus systems. The Board of Regents constitutes a policy-making, eighteen-member governing board – sixteen (one a student) appointed by the Governor with the approval of the Senate and two non-voting members appointed by the Chair of the State Board of Education to assure communication with the public school system – with a chief executive officer (Commissioner of Higher Education, appointed by the Regents) and staff. In addition, each Utah institution of public higher education has its own ten-member Board of Trustees, with eight appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate, and includes the campus presidents of the student government and alumni association. For campus governance, the Regents appoint the President who reports to the Regents through the Commissioner, but works closely with the Trustees who exercise powers delegated by the Regents. As the chief executive officer for the Board, the Commissioner manages the coordination, policy monitoring, system budgeting, and communication processes for the Board, including serving as Chair of the Presidents’ Council that meets regularly to facilitate communication and coordination.

The Board of Regents has responsibility for the quality and integrity of Utah’s public colleges and universities; approves the mission, vision, and values statements; appoints the presidents; delegates powers to the Boards of Trustees; reviews and approves all budget requests and operating budgets; establishes all
operational policies for the System; approves all legislative initiatives; and delegates management authority to the presidents. The Board of Regents conducts its affairs as a committee of the whole, on a self-determined meeting schedule, but relies on sub-committees as needed.

The by-laws and procedures of the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees reveal a clear differentiation between policy-making and management, and provide for open and full communication between the Board members and the stakeholders. The Regents’ website affords easy access to all policies and procedures, as well as other useful and important information. To provide for greater communication and attention to local concerns, the Regents have delegated increasing authority to the Boards of Trustees, including approval of actions concerning institutional operating policies; physical facilities and property; research and training grants; audits, program reviews, and accreditation reports; some academic program revisions; and financial reports.

**Leadership and Management**

The President of Utah State University, an experienced professional with a long tenure at the University appointed some three years ago with widespread support across the campus, serves at the pleasure of the Board and has “overall authority and responsibility for carrying out the Regents’ policies and procedures with the advice and approval of the Trustees.” In pursuance of that authority and responsibility, the President has appointment and salary authority for personnel, with periodic reports to the Trustees and Regents, and for all budgeting and programming for the University. The administrative team consists of eight Vice Presidents and various Directors, Deans, and Department Heads, selected competitively to assure the best possible leadership. Relying on a traditional academic management approach, the President delegates authority and limited fiscal discretion to the executive officers who also delegate to the Deans and program directors the responsibility and authority to manage their sectors, Colleges, and program areas. This approach to management seeks to take full advantage of the expertise of administrators closest to the action while also maintaining accountability. When functioning according to theory and design, the decentralized approach works quite well, as the evidence indicates at USU. The Committee noted, however, the absence of an institutional policy on debt management, an important internal control. (See Recommendation Number 9 in Conclusion below.)
The President maintains an open door policy for all members of the University and surrounding community, and holds regular meetings with the Vice Presidents, Deans, and representatives of the professional employees, classified staff, Faculty Senate, and Associated Students of Utah State University. Students serve as voting members with faculty, staff, and administrators on most University committees. In addition, as the Self-Study reports and the students verified, “Virtually no decision concerning the student body is made without first educating its constituents and obtaining their input.” That students have supported Tier II tuition increase proposals provides good evidence for those assertions. The students have organized their government system to mirror University governance, with an Executive Council for administrative and policy matters and an Academic Senate for academic issues and matters relating to the University Honor Code. However, in practice the two entities work collaboratively on issues. Members of the Academic Senate also serve on the USU Faculty Senate. The ASUSU also includes a judicial branch that reviews legislative and other proposals for consistency with the charter of student government. Both the Executive Council and the Academic Senate meet weekly, coordinated by Student Affairs. At least once quarterly, but frequently more often as needed, the ASUSU convenes a meeting of the Staters’ Council which consists of the University President, Provost, and Vice Presidents and the members of ASUSU, with the ASUSU President serving as Chair of the meeting. During these meetings, ASUSU presents either research findings or proposed legislation relating to student welfare and student life. Actions approved by the Council or the Senate require the approval of the President of the University, usually after referral to the appropriate agency or committee for review.

The Faculty Senate provides advice to the President and consists of 55 faculty members elected from the several Colleges, but also includes the President and Provost, 8 Vice Presidents or Deans appointed by the President (6 of whom must have faculty status), 4 Chairs of Senate Committees, and 3 students. As the “Senate Handbook” indicates, “The Senate shall have the power to act for and represent the faculty in all matters of educational policy, including requirements for admissions, degrees, diplomas, schools and certificates, and curricular matters involving relations between colleges, divisions and departments.” To assure the faculty the opportunity to discuss issues without administrators present, the Faculty Forum consisting only of the faculty members of the Senate and three Senate Committee Chairs meets every November – or on special call – in lieu of the monthly Senate meeting with all faculty members invited to participate. The Senate functions through an array of standing committees with specific charges and responsibilities. An increasingly atypical structure involves the Educational
Policies Committee, with the Provost as the Chair, which functions through sub-committees to review and approve all academic program and policy proposals which then go before the Faculty Senate for recommendation to the President. Finally, the President from time to time appoints representative task forces or *ad hoc* committees to study specific issues and develop recommendations or action plans for consideration through the usual governance processes.

In general, the organizational structure appears to meet the identified needs of the stakeholder groups, with the possible exception of staff and administrative-professional personnel. Unlike the faculty, senior administrators (Vice Presidents, Deans, Departments Heads, and Directors), and students, staff and administrative-professional staff do not appear to have a senate or council as a forum. Nonetheless, the structure facilitates consultation, communication, and exchange of views, albeit not as perfectly as some might wish. As the Self-Study indicates:

> The Faculty Senate faces some challenges with regard to continuity in their governance. Each president serves one year as president-elect and the following year as president of the senate. Thus, continuity in leadership exists only from the experiences of the president-elect as a member of the executive board prior to the year as president.

The Senate has under consideration the extension of the role and term of a president to a following year as “past-president.”
STANDARD SEVEN – FINANCE

Financial Planning

Utah State University (USU) clearly has the appropriate autonomy in fiscal planning and budgeting to accomplish the mission that the Board of Regents has set forth. The state appropriates funds to the institution in nine prescribed and distinct line items. In consultation with the Boards of Regents and Trustees, and working with a variety of campus representatives, the campus administration directs funds to the University’s defined priorities. The University has positively positioned itself with the Legislature, given its land-grant mission, Cooperative Extension, regional campus, and research initiatives for economic development with the University of Utah.

The implementation of the two-tiered tuition approach and the recent surcharge on graduate students and the College of Business programs provides important flexibility for the University. The success of the recent efforts to keep faculty salaries at competitive levels provides the key to maintaining the quality of education for the graduates. The successful efforts of the University to remain abreast of capital construction and differed maintenance needs will pay huge dividends in the quality and responsiveness of education, research, and service.

The University has a very comprehensive approach to budgeting and both the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents review and approve annual requests and operating budgets. In addition, the University has the authority, with the approval of the Trustees and the Regents, to issue debt for both academic and auxiliary construction and renovation. The Board of Regents has policies in place for the control, restriction, and management of allowable debt levels. The University also has in development a University debt management policy. (See Recommendation Number 9 in Conclusion below.) In that regard, the University carefully monitors revenue streams dedicated to debt service, on a monthly basis, to insure budget stability. Fluctuations in student enrollment over the past few years have caused some stress on the financials of the housing and Athletic budgets, but the University has implemented solutions to rectify the resulting imbalances.

Adequacy of Financial Resources

The institution provided evidence that it seeks and utilizes a number of different sources of funds to support its programs and services. During the past decade, USU
has dealt with some very difficult financial challenges in the effort to fulfill its mission in the State of Utah. At no time during this period has the University recorded and accumulated a deficit. It bears noting that the University has seen a significant improvement in enrollment over the last couple of years, following years of reduced state support and declining enrollments. Even so, the State has never stopped funding enrollment growth. In the short term, the University probably has capacity to support new student enrollment on a tuition basis only, but this approach will prove unsustainable over the long term.

The University currently projects annual enrollment growth and seeks to estimate the impact on the availability and distribution of financial aid. In recent years, the University has worked aggressively to improve the effectiveness of its distribution of its internal financial aid and to budget and monitor its yearly levels and effectiveness in recruiting and retaining students. However, the University does not have the assistance and guidance of current multiple-year enrollment and budget plans. (See Recommendation Number 1 in Conclusion below.)

Key areas of fund management include working with the University’s development function to increase private funding, maximizing existing financial aid programs, and advising students on the availability of alternative sources administered or awarded by the University or external providers. The University understands the financial relationship between its Educational and General operations and its auxiliary enterprises and their respective contributions to the overall well being and vitality of the University.

Financial Management

The University centralizes its finance and facilities service functions under the Vice President for Business and Finance. The Vice President has responsibility for the following units: Budgets and Planning, Facilities, Auxiliary Services, Financial Services/Controller, Human Resources, Real Property and Real Estate Management, and Public Safety. The accounting system follows generally accepted accounting principles. The State Auditor audits the financial records of the University annually, and the 3-member Internal Audit Services reports its findings directly to the President and the Board of Trustees. In addition, the State Auditor audits the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships and Sponsored Research for compliance with federal regulations (OMB A-133). Financial reports have received unqualified opinions for FY 2006 and FY 2007 (not yet formally released). The President, the Vice President for Business and Finance, and appropriate staff, including the management personnel responsible for the audited
subjects, review all audit recommendations and identify corrective action for implementation as soon as possible, often time before receiving the management letters after the completion of the audits. The financial organization and management, as well as the system of reporting, insure the integrity of institutional finances, create appropriate control mechanisms, and provide a basis for sound financial decision making.

**Fundraising and Development**

Fund-raising and development activities for USU fall within the scope of responsibility of the Vice President for University Advancement. One of the Assistant Vice President for Financial Services focuses on accounting for the funds held by the University and the Foundation, and facilitates support for University advancement activities. University personnel take the responsibility to insure compliance with regulations contained in the Utah State Uniform Management of Institutional Funds Act, Section 13-29. The Vice President for Business and Finance monitors appropriate financial, professional, and ethical accountabilities and reports to the Boards of Trustees and Regents on a regular basis. The Investment committee consists of eight individuals, including both University personnel and Foundation Board members. This Committee has done an exemplary job of directing a well performing portfolio for both the University and Foundation funds. Last year, the performance exceeded a 15.7 percent overall return. As the Board of Trustees takes review responsibility for audit activity, it appears appropriate for the Board to take a focused role in the work of the Investment Committee to insure prudent management of the University’s and Foundation’s investments.

The Committee has managed and invested all funds in accordance with a recently revised and formalized Investment Policy approved by the University, Foundation, and the Trustees and Regents. This policy establishes a clear understanding of the investment goals and objectives for University and Foundation funds. It sets forth guidelines and restrictions for the investment managers, including risk and return parameters and the long-term target asset allocation for the investment portfolio. The Investment Committee insures compliance with the Investment Policy, provides guidance to the investment managers, and reviews investment performance on a regular basis. This occurs monthly at the University level, with reports to the Board of Trustees on that same timeline. The University and the Foundation maintain full and complete records for endowment and life income funds, accounting for each trust separately in compliance with policies governing gift acceptance, investment spending, and fee assessment.
In March 2007, the University President announced the public phase of the University’s first ever comprehensive capital campaign in March 2007 to raise $200 million from private sources to support the University and its programs. Since the beginning of the silent phase of the campaign at the opening of FY 2004, the University has received more than $132 million in pledges and commitments. It seems clear that the University will exceed its target by the close of the campaign in 2011. (See Commendation Number 6 in Conclusion below.)

**Summary**

In summary, Utah State University has sound policies and practices in place for financial planning, financial management, and fund-raising and development. However, the University will benefit from a seizing the opportunity to develop a more strategic processes for planning, allocating, and budgeting to meet the newly established strategic goals, objectives, and priorities. (See Recommendations Number 1 and 3 in Conclusion below.)
STANDARD EIGHT – PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Instructional and Support Facilities

Utah State University strives to provide physical resources of high quality that support instruction, research, and outreach, and enhance the capacity of the University to fulfill its mission and goals. The Logan campus features a spacious core area with historic buildings grouped around quadrangles that give way to long, tree-lined streets. Some 189 principal buildings reside within the 421-acre campus, along with numerous other smaller structures designed to support instruction, research, outreach, and student life.

During the last few years, the University has enjoyed the construction or expansion of a number of major buildings, including a new Library, Performing Arts Center, and Engineering facilities, totaling more than $190 million. Auxiliary operations have also constructed new housing units and the Department of Intercollegiate Athletic has expanded facilities. The University also constructed a new heat and cooling plant recently, adding co-generation and shifting from coal-fired to natural gas-fired boilers. This innovations significantly reduced emissions by the University, one of the primary reasons for implementing it. In addition, the University has in process roughly $164 million more funded capital construction over the next few years. The Legislature authorizes the construction of additional facilities, and also provides full funding for operating and maintenance costs initially. However, the state does not fund all of the increased costs in perpetuity. The University has identified operation and maintenance costs of new and older facilities as a major legislative initiative for the coming session.

The University has acted to insure that all academic programs on campus remain ADA accessible, and has initiated efforts to make all buildings fully accessible. These new or modified facilities have come with a future challenge. The state provides approximately $8 million a year for capital improvement but the University still has about $200 million in a deferred maintenance backlog. Because of the excellence of its work, the Facilities Department received APPA’s Excellence in Facilities Organization Award just recently, a national recognition awarded very infrequently.

Equipment and Materials

The Self-Study commented that remaining abreast of academic equipment needs presents a serious and formidable challenge. The University has a well wired
campus, but computers and other technological equipment require continual updating. For the most part classroom technology appears very current. The Vice Presidents for Information Technology and Business and Finance work closely together to insure that outcome. Interviews with faculty and staff supported the Self-Study assertion about the extent, sufficiency, and quality of equipment and materials to facilitate the achievement of educational and research objectives. The University sets aside an annual amount from the budget to help improve this area.

The responsible administrators conduct a comprehensive inventory of equipment annually. Specific information and procedures relating to equipment acquisition, inventory, disposal, and record keeping appear prominently in the University’s policies and procedures. The Preventive Maintenance Program routinely services and inspects facilities-related equipment as well as the building systems in over 6.0 million square feet of facilities, on and off campus. This approach maximizes the life of equipment, extends value, increases efficiency, and prevents breakdowns. USU has established policies and procedures for the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous material, including a primary document outlining a chemical safety program.

**Physical Resources Planning**

Two major ongoing committees work collaboratively on campus and space planning. The University Physical Resources Planning Committee, composed of faculty, staff, and administrators, cooperates with the Facilities Planning Group and an external consultant to determine overall planning directions and develop recommendations for the President. The University Physical Resources Planning Committee also evaluates and makes recommendations for the use of campus space and reviews and evaluates capital construction requests. Planning includes attention to facility accessibility, security, and possible funding sources. The University reviews for revision and updating every five years the institutional Master Plan, which rests solidly on and facilitates the achievement of the institutional mission, vision, core values, goals, and objectives.

**Summary**

In summary, USU has in place policies and procedures for planning, constructing, and maintaining its facilities for instruction, research, outreach, and service; and for acquiring, servicing, deploying, and replacing needed equipment in pursuance of the institutional mission.
STANDARD NINE – INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

Introduction

Utah State University presents itself accurately and fairly to the external community in its various publications and statements, assures academic freedom to students, faculty, and staff, and has widely publicized procedures to respond to grievances filed by members of the campus or the larger surrounding community. In fact, however, most complaints receive immediate attention through informal mediation rather than the formal grievance processes. In that regard, the Provost maintains a mediation service that seeks to resolve problems before they escalate into divisive disputes. The University also has clear and consistent policies with regard to equal opportunity to the educational benefits and employment it provides, with appropriate procedures for the resolution of grievances. However, USU does not have a formal code of conduct for staff, nor does it have an institutional conflict of interest statement (one in draft awaits action). (See Recommendation Number 9 in Conclusion below.) Finally, the Board of Regents has adopted and promulgated policies concerning conflicts of interest that apply to Board members, administrators, faculty, and staff.

Public Comment

Notices in the local press generated five comments from the public concerning the University, three essentially positive and two focused on special issues. The University administration reviewed the special issue comments and responded to each, providing the contexts for the comments and its responses. The Committee accepted the institutional responses.
CONCLUSION

Introduction

The Evaluation Committee wishes to extend once again its sincere appreciation for the kindness and hospitality shown by the University community during the visit to the campus. It merits mention that the hospitality and assistance, combined with the technical support, made the visit a productive and memorable experience.

Commendations

COMMENDATION NUMBER 1: The Committee commends the faculty and staff for their commitment to meet the needs of students and their dedicated service to the University.

COMMENDATION NUMBER 2: The Committee commends the University for success in maintaining and expanding the facilities and enhancing the campus landscape during periods of constrained resources.

COMMENDATION NUMBER 3: The Committee commends the administration and the University Library for the responsive efforts to assure that faculty and students, both on campus and at a distance, have access to needed information, whether in traditional or electronic formats.

COMMENDATION NUMBER 4: The Committee commends the University for the extraordinary efforts to extend its resources to meet needs around the state, and for its success in reaching collaborative agreements with state and local governments, other institutions, and private donors to secure and finance the facilities needed.

COMMENDATION NUMBER 5: The Committee commends the University for its success in engaging undergraduates in research.

COMMENDATION NUMBER 6: The Committee commends the University for the remarkable success of the silent phase of the capital campaign to generate $200 million from the private sector to support University programs and facilities.
Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 1: The Committee recommends that the University develop and promulgate a three- to five-year enrollment and financial plan, based on 1) the institutional strategic vision and plan; 2) analysis of state demography, student demand, and student cohort groups; and 3) projected state appropriations, fee revenue, and other identified revenue sources, to assure adequate support for current and planned programs. (Standards 1.A.4, 1.B.2-.5, 2.E.1, 2.E.3, 4.A.4, 3.B.1, 7.A.2, and 7.B.5.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 2: The Committee recommends that the University 1) continue to improve its institutional outcomes assessment plan for all sectors; and 2) identify and implement specific outcomes measures appropriate – but not necessarily the same -- in each instance to assess the achievement of intended outcomes. (Standards 2 and 3 and Policy 2.2.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 3: The Committee recommends that the University review its strategic planning and budgeting process and procedures for possible revision to assure appropriate linkages among strategic planning, institutional assessment, outcomes assessment, program review, budget planning, and resource allocation and reallocation. (Standards 1.B, 2.B, 3.B.6, 6.C.7, 7.A-C, and Policy 2.2.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 4: The Committee recommends that the University review its salary increase policy and procedures for clarity, effectiveness, transparency, and fairness. (Standard 4.A.4 and Policy 4.1)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 5: The Committee recommends that the University assure the scheduling of sufficient sections of General Education courses to enable students to make timely progress toward graduation. (Standards 2.A.1, 2.A.9, 2.C.3, 4.A.8, and 7.B.1.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 7: The Committee recommends that the University develop and implement a Disaster Recovery Plan for student records. (Standard 3.C.5.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 8: The Committee recommends that the University review for possible revision and for consistent implementation the pre-tenure faculty mentoring and evaluation policies and procedures and the post-tenure faculty evaluation policies and procedures, including institutional involvement in implementing plans for improvement. (Standard 4.A.5 and Policy 4.1.a-d.)

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER 9: The Committee recommends that the University consider for adoption a formal code of conduct for the staff, an institutional conflict of interest policy, and an institutional debt management policy. (Standards 7.A.4, 9.A.1, and 9.A.4.)

NOTE: #9 was ultimately deleted by the Commission at its January 2008 meeting.