REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To ___California State University, Northridge___

Date of Visit
October 6-8, 2021

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Established in 1958 as the 14th in the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) has grown from a small college enrolling 2,525 students to the second largest institution within the CSU, regularly serving approximately 40,000 students. Originally known as the San Fernando Valley State College, CSUN changed to its current name in 1972, and has grown to be a vibrant, major academic community serving the diverse population in San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles and beyond.

The largest four-year public university system in the United States, CSU educates approximately 486,000 students, and employs more than 56,000 faculty and staff. The system has conferred degrees to more than 3.9 million alumni, accounting for one of every 20 Americans with a college degree. As such, the CSU system has a tremendous impact on the state of California and the entire nation. Consistent with the CSU's mission to "promote student success through opportunity and a high-quality education that prepared students to become leaders in the changing workforce" ([CSU Scope & Mission](#)), CSUN's mission states that it "exists to enable students to realize their educational goals. The University's first priority is to promote the welfare and intellectual progress of students" ([CSUN Catalog](#)).

To reach the mission, CSUN provides a wide range of programs and activities to help students develop academic competencies and professional skills through its nine colleges: Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication; David Nazarian College of Business and Economics; Michael D. Eisner College of Education; College of Engineering and Computer Science; College of Health and Human Development; College of Humanities; College of Science and Mathematics; College of Social and Behavioral Sciences; and the Tseng College of Graduate, International and Midcareer Education. According to the 2021-22 Catalog, CSUN offers bachelor's degrees in 65 disciplines, master's degrees in

74 fields, and 3 doctoral programs in audiology, educational leadership, and physical therapy, as well as 17 teaching credential programs.

CSUN's student population reflects the diverse populations that CSU serves. According to the CSUN Office of Institutional Research, 56% of the CSUN student population in fall 2020 is female, 71% are first-generation in their families to earn a college degree, and the top student ethnicity groups are Hispanic (54%), White (22%), Asian (9%), and African American (5%). Additionally, half of the student population is eligible for Pell Grant, and approximately 80% of them receive some form of financial assistance. CSUN's commitment to diversity is reflected in its designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), and the recognition of its AIMS2 Program by Excelencia in Education as a 2019 Example of Excelencia.

Initially accredited by WSCUC in 1960, CSUN most recently received 10-year reaffirmation in 2012. An Interim Report was submitted in 2016 (see more details later in this report), which received positive review from the Commission. The institution has made more progress since then, and the in-depth review of this progress was conducted in the 2021 reaffirmation process.

In addition to the main campus at Northridge, CSUN offers programs at 8 additional locations throughout the region. These locations primarily serve as instructional sites, without independent administrative structure. All of these programs are managed by the Tseng College of Graduate, International and Midcareer Education in collaboration with the appropriate academic departments, and are largely aimed at supporting students or working professionals who live or work near the various locations. Members of the team visited the Tseng College, and met with faculty, students and the administration team who teach at, study at, or support these sites.

CSUN also offers 17 distance education programs, the majority of which are master's programs. Members of the team reviewed an array of documents related to these programs, including Substantive Change screening forms for new distance education programs (e.g. Master of Arts in Music Industry

Administration), and the program review self-study and strategic plan for the Master of Public

Administration - Public Sector Management and Leadership program. The Associate Dean of the Tseng

College and faculty representatives of the distance education programs were interviewed. The team

members also reviewed 3-4 courses in-depth through the institution's Learning Management System

(LMS) for each of the two sample programs – Master of Social Work and Master in Public Health.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The COVID-19 pandemic led the team to make the decision to hold the review remotely. The

team reviewed all the documents and supplemental materials submitted by CSUN, including the

Institutional Report, required compliance forms, and the appendices. The team members thoroughly

discussed these materials in advance of the virtual visit, requested additional materials to explore areas

of inquiry, and completed worksheets that summarized preliminary evaluation of the institution's report.

In parallel, the team worked with the CSUN ALO to finalize the virtual visit schedule.

Several interactions between the team and CSUN personnel took place prior to the October 6-8

visit. The Chair and Assistant Chair met with the CSUN President on September 9 to address any

questions about the review process, and to learn any recent updates or topics of exploration during the

visit. The Chair met with the CSU Chancellor also on September 9 to discuss any updates or concerns

from the system perspective. In advance of the start of the formal visit, the team members also

reviewed respectively the institution's distance education programs and off-campus locations through

document/material reviews and interviews with the relevant students, faculty, staff and administrators.

The results of both reviews are included as Appendix B and Appendix C of this report – the team found

evidence of compliance, and no concerns were raised.

The team convened on its own and then together with the CSUN ALO the day before the

three-day virtual visit to narrow down the foci of the various meetings during the visit. The visit began

with meetings with the President, the Provost, and the CSUN Accreditation Steering Committee. These meetings helped the team gain a high-level view of the institutional context, accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities, and to understand how the reflection process took place that culminated in the Institutional Report.

During the remainder of the visit, the team met – as a whole group or in sub-groups – with a wide range of constituents that are involved in the diverse issues discussed in the report, ranging from assessment and program review to student success initiatives. Open forums with faculty, staff and students were held as well. The team also reviewed emails received via the confidential email account, which provided the team with additional information and context.

The Team Chair met with the President in the morning of October 8, 2021 to inform her of the final commendations and recommendations (included in Section III of this report). An exit meeting followed immediately after, where the same information was shared to the CSUN community by the Team Chair.

The entire virtual visit process ran smoothly, and every meeting was informative and productive. The team is thankful to the CSUN ALO and the entire CSUN team for all their hard work in making the visit a success, including setting up the complex schedule and all the meeting logistics, responding to the team's requests, and providing data and documents to help the team gain a comprehensive understanding of the institution. The team also appreciates the candor and openness of all the participants, including the leadership at the university and the system level.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

Because the institution chose the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of accreditation, its Institutional Report did not follow the format of addressing all nine Components. Instead, the report

was framed by four of the nine Components including Component 8, which centered around the institution's theme of "Student Success". The theme, which included three sub-themes – Student Achievement, Student Engagement, and Student Support, was developed by the 30-member CSUN Reaccreditation Steering Committee representing a variety of disciplines, stakeholder groups, and perspectives. During the theme development process, the steering committee guided the consultation and engagement with the broad campus community through discussions and dialogues. Once the sub-themes were determined, the steering committee broke into three sub-committees, each leading the review and writing for one of the sub-themes.

The Institutional Report was clear, articulate, and well-organized around the institution's theme "Student Success – Achievement, Engagement and Support". The report provided a comprehensive and evidence-based overview of how the institution has supported student success for its diverse student population, offering an honest portrait of the achievements and challenges. The discussions are thorough, and the reflections are thoughtful. It is apparent that the report was resulted from wide range campus involvement, and was built upon collaborative work of diverse constituents at CSUN.

In the judgement of the team, the report provided adequate evidence of how the institution satisfied the WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFRs), as well as the federal compliance requirements. It provided the team with a good foundation for the visit, situating the team in appropriate context while exploring important issues with the CSUN partners.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to Previous Commission Actions

In its March 8, 2012 letter reaffirming accreditation, the Commission emphasized five areas for

further attention:

1. Continuing development of assessment of student learning outcomes.
2. Refining program review.
3. Continuing improvements in advising.
4. Raising undergraduate completion rates.
5. Addressing ongoing state funding challenges.

An Interim Report addressing these issues was requested for fall 2016 and was duly submitted.

In January 2017, the Interim Report Committee(IRC) review panel found that the institution had

accomplished a great deal of quality work on assessment since 2012, and had established some

departments' assessment efforts as models for others to follow in order to strive for consistency across

programs and to integrate assessment results into decision-making. The IRC panel was also impressed

with the institution's efforts to prioritize student advising across the university and its plans to launch a

wide range of initiatives to improve student retention and graduation rates across multiple populations.

The committee encouraged the institution to maintain momentum to integrate findings from assessment

of student learning into program review, and to collect and analyze data showing the impact of each of

the retention and graduation rate improvement initiatives.

The thematic organization of the institution's report for the current review provides ample

evidence on the further development in these areas.

Assessment and Program Review: The Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI)

submitted for this review shows that all programs have published formal learning outcomes, which are

assessed by faculty through a variety of modes of student work. Results of these assessments are used

to guide program curricular improvements. Subsequent to the 2016 Interim Report, the guidelines for

self-studies for program reviews were revised to better assess the progress made over the review period

in key areas, among them the use of learning outcome assessment data in program decision-making. In late 2020, the institution brought the administration of program review and academic assessment into the organization of the Office of Institutional Research. Assessment and program review activities have also begun to extend to co-curricular activities housed in the Student Affairs division.

Advising: The institution's Interim Report provided evidence of steps taken to improve the overall advising culture. Viewing continuous improvement in advising as a major way to increase retention and graduation rates, the institution opened in summer 2019 the Matador Advising Hub to provide centralized advising support for entering first year (first time freshmen) students. A major focus of the current review is to evaluate the institution's effectiveness in advising support for all students, as they move from first year advising into college and departmental support for degree completion and post-graduation success.

Undergraduate completion rates: In 2016, the California State University (CSU) system launched Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025), an "ambitious plan to increase graduation rates, eliminate equity gaps in degree completion and meet California's workforce needs" ([CSU GI 2025 website](#)) . GI2025 provides a context for the institution's on-going efforts to support student success across its diverse student populations. The institution's many programmatic and organizational initiatives to support GI 2025 are central to the thematic focus of the current review, and are evaluated in detail in this report.

Funding: Since the last reaffirmation in 2012, the institution has become more diligent in anticipating and planning for interruptions in the level of state support, expanding its reserves and adopting more strategic budget planning. It has also been successful in developing sources of additional support. This review provides an opportunity to examine the results of these changes in the challenging context of the COVID pandemic.

In sum, the team finds that the institution has been responsive to previous commission recommendations, and remains focused on those issues while firmly grounded in their engagement with student success.

Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

The institution's reaccreditation steering committee conducted a self-review under the Standards, and completed the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI, CSUN Institutional Report Appendix 1) and the Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements Form (CSUN Institutional Report Appendix 2). The team reviewed the institutional report, appendices, and supporting documentation to assess the institution's compliance with the WSCUC Standards. The team's evaluation is detailed in the following sections.

Standard 1. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes (CFR 1.1-1.2)

As briefly described in Section I, CSUN's purpose and identity as an educational institution servicing the diverse student population in its local and nearby communities are well established. The essential values and guiding principles of the institution are clearly communicated within and outside of the institution, and are widely acknowledged by the higher education community and general public alike (CFR 1.1, 1.2).

The institution publishes statements of its mission, values, and vision on its website and catalog (CFR 1.1). All academic programs publish and assess their student learning outcomes. Through its Office of Institutional Research, the institution makes publicly available via interactive dashboards a wide range of student achievement metrics, including disaggregated data on retention and graduation rates (CFR 1.2). Annual assessment reports of student learning outcomes and program review self-study reports are accessible through the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review website and the institution's ScholarWorks Open Access Repository (SOAR; CFR 1.2).

The institution provided evidence of endorsement by the California State University (CSU) Academic Senate of continuing commitment to the principles of academic freedom and freedom of inquiry for faculty, within the context of the CSU governance structure (CFR 1.3). The institution has a clear view of the centrality of issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to its mission and success, as reflected in its ranking as the fifth largest institution in the nation in awarding bachelor's degrees to students from underrepresented groups. With DEI central to its mission, the institution publishes diversity data, a campus action plan, and a 2020 strategic plan for diversity and inclusive excellence that includes Seven Standards of Excellence (CFR 1.4). The institution's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is evident throughout the current review.

The institution operates as an educational institution within the governance framework of the California State University under the authority of its Board of Trustees and within a legal framework established by the legislature of the State of California. As such, its policies and procedures governing the full range of expectations of and rights to due process for students, faculty and staff are publicly available at these levels (e.g. CSU system, state) (CFRs 1.5, 1.6, 1.7).

The materials provided by the institution for this review and all of the team's interactions during the review have been honest and open, which is consistent with the expectations of CFR 1.8.

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1.

Standard 2. Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Centered around student success, the institution provides a diverse array of curricular and co-curricular programs and services to fulfill its mission as an educational institution, to facilitate teaching, learning and research, and to support student learning and success (CFR 2.1, 2.11).

Teaching and Learning (CFR 2.1-2.7)

In conducting its self-review of Standard 2, the institution highlighted a number of strengths, including having educational programs that are appropriate in content, standards and rigor, and employing sufficient qualified faculty for the type and level of programs offered (CFR 2.1). The institution offers a wide range of programs at the undergraduate and graduate level, and clearly defines the entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for degree completion (CFR 2.2). At the undergraduate level, the institution has a General Education program that is integrated throughout the curriculum at the lower and upper division level, complemented by in-depth studies in each major (CFR 2.2a). The institution also has a significant number of graduate programs (74 master's and 3 doctoral programs) and 17 teaching credentials that promote the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice (2.2b).

Student learning outcomes for the academic programs have been developed by faculty who take collective responsibility for establishing assessment, but it is not clear how consistently that assessment is carried out by all departments and whether follow-up activities (closing the loop) are systematically carried out (CFR 2.3, 2.4). The institutional learning outcomes are clear and aligned with services such as advising, library, and information technology resources. Students have abundant opportunities for involvement in a wealth of academic programs, and are provided with a wide array of high-impact practices including peer mentoring, service learning, internships, and other applied practices to support their success (CFR 2.4, 2.5, 2.6). Program review guidelines require integration of results from regular assessment and attention to markers of student success. (CFR 2.7)

Scholarship and Creative Activity (CFR 2.8-2.9)

The institution provided clear evidence of support for faculty scholarship and creative activity. The President and the senior leadership team emphasized the importance of including research as one of the institutional priorities, which was echoed by faculty experiences. The faculty and institution have been successful in securing significant external grant support, which allows faculty to pursue scholarship

and provides students at both the undergraduate and graduate level to participate in research and faculty mentorship (CFR 2.8, 2.9).

Student Learning and Success (CFR 2.10-2.14)

The institution clearly demonstrates its commitment to improving graduation rates and eliminating equity gaps. The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and disaggregates student data, and uses these data to inform activities to improve student success (CFR 2.10). In the co-curricular arena, the institution offers a wide array of student support structures and service programs that foster student success, belonging and connection, including a robust Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Veterans Center, Dreamer Center, Student Athlete Center, and disability services (CFR 2.11, 2.13).

Advising is a critical part of the support system for increasing student success. The institution has made significant investment in revamping advising, and has established a mixed advising model with entering first year (first time freshman) being advised centrally in the new Advising Hub, coupled with a decentralized approach of advising students through the college satellite centers as they progress through their college career (CFR 2.12). The team noted that the institution provided only limited evidence of ongoing efforts to support transfer students (CFR 2.14). CSUN is encouraged to identify ways to integrate transfer advising into the university advising ecosystem, and to strengthen advising to increase transfer student success.

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 2.

Standard 3. Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The institution invests in and sustains its educational mission through sufficient staffing, appropriate decision-making processes, and on-going investments in human, physical, and information resources (CFR 3.5). Organizationally, the institution is overseen by a governing board and engages in regular evaluation of its CEO as defined by the policies that apply to all 23 campuses within the CSU

system (CFR 3.9). On-going priorities of the institution include exploring diversified revenue generation and navigating the short- and long-term financial impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic (CFR 3.4).

Faculty & Staff (CFR 3.1-3.3)

The institution has a sufficient, qualified, and diverse workforce of over 4,000 faculty and staff, who are supported by its human resources (HR) functions, diversity and equity initiatives, and faculty and staff development efforts (CFR 3.3). During the visit, the team heard some concerns expressed about how the "tenure density" of the faculty has been measured, and how the distribution of faculty positions ensures that programs are supported by a substantial number of qualified faculty with continuing commitment from the institution (CFR 3.1). Evidence of succession planning for key roles that support programs and operations (CFR 3.1), expectations related to job performance for faculty and staff, and guidelines related to faculty probation, tenure and promotion (CFR 3.2) are defined within handbooks and manuals (CFR 3.3). As mentioned earlier, a signature principle that guides all faculty and staff resources is CSUN's Seven Standards for Excellence, which consist of the institution's 2020 Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence (CFR 1.4).

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources (CFR 3.4-3.5)

Both physical and information resources at the institution appear to be sufficient. As an example, the academic technology webpage outlines all the resources available to help faculty enhance teaching and learning, ranging from software and hardware to Learning Management System and Lecture Capture tools (CFR 3.5). The institution engages in proactive and realistic budget planning, incorporating input from the University Planning and Budget Group that provides recommendations related to critical issues such as enrollment, resource prioritization, and faculty hiring plans (CFR 3.4). During the COVID pandemic, the institution sustained its educational mission by exercising expenditure reductions, mobilizing one-time operating reserves, and utilizing one-time federal grant funds. The institution is also working to reduce campus infrastructure expenses and to diversify its revenue

generation through initiatives with its non-profit auxiliary corporation, the University Relations and Advancement Office, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The institution's increased donor engagement helped meet its $200M goal for the first comprehensive campaign. Additionally, the institution notably was the recipient of a $40M gift in June 2021, a gift focused on institutions that have high proportions of students from historically underserved communities and excel at supporting their success.

Organizational Structure and Decision-Making Processes (CFR 3.6-3.10)

The institution has relatively new executive leadership that is characterized by integrity and accountability (CFR 3.6, 3.8). The President, appointed in 2021, and the Provost, appointed in 2019, work collaboratively to ensure proper decision-making channels are maintained through a system of shared governance with the Faculty Senate (CFR 3.10). The institution continuously adapts its organizational structures, and makes operational decisions to meet the evolving needs of students, faculty, and staff. Examples of such decisions include the effort to promote cross-campus collaboration on student success by establishing the new Office of Student Success and hiring the associated new Associate Vice President (AVP), the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer to lead equity and inclusion initiatives, and the merging of the Office of Institutional Research and the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review to facilitate streamlined data-informed decision-making processes and continuous improvement (CFR 3.7).

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

The institution's commitment to quality assurance and improvement is made clear to the team throughout the review. "Democratization of data", evidence-based decision-making, and the alignment resource allocation with demonstrable effectiveness are highlighted as some of the major themes for the institution's newly embarked road-mapping exercise (CFR 4.3, 4.6).

Quality Assurance Processes (CFR 4.1-4.2)

The institution has demonstrated that a variety of quality assurance processes are in place to support institutional learning and improvement (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), including those that are specific to its chosen theme of student success. These processes have shown preliminary evidence of effectiveness for some of the student success initiatives, examples including the early academic alert process, centralized advising for entering first year (first time freshmen) students, and the "CSUN with A HEART" program.

Since its last reaffirmation, the institution has improved the program review process by developing institution level guidelines, though the implementation of the assessment and program review process appear to be uneven across disciplines (CFR 4.1). The university has invested administrative resources and expertise to facilitate meaningful examination of learning outcome and student success data, developed a more robust institutional research office, improved access to institutional data, and demonstrated a commitment to supporting data-driven decision-making at the institutional leadership level (CFR 4.2, 4.4, 4.5). It is also evident that the institution closely monitors and disaggregates student success data related to retention and graduation, supporting its strategic planning priorities (CFR 4.3, 4.6).

Institutional Learning and Improvement (CFR 4.3-4.7)

The institution has presented evidence for wide participation in program and institutional learning outcome assessment (CFR 4.4, 4.5). As reflected in the self-study process, the institution has also engaged the campus community to reflect on the past and to plan for the future, examples of which include the university's first capital campaign and the Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence developed in 2020 (CFR 4.6, 4.7).

While the team commends the institution for creating administrative structures to support meaningful quality assurance and institutional learning (CFR 4.1), the team challenges the institution to encourage deeper and more consistent engagement with student learning outcome assessment and the

data it produces, especially among the faculty across different disciplines (CFR 4.3, 4.4). The team observed uneven quality and levels of sophistication among the program assessment reports reviewed, which suggests different stages of implementation of the assessment process across programs, and inconsistent engagement among the stakeholders involved. This observation is echoed by the institution's acknowledgement of the challenges in deploying consistent and scalable assessment processes, citing experiences from the written communication assessment effort.

As mentioned earlier, the Institutional Report Steering Committee composition and the report development process made it clear that a diverse range of stakeholders across the university were involved in developing and reviewing the self-study. The institution's commitment to self-reflection and institutional learning is evidenced in the resulted report, particularly in the discussion regarding "its transition to a post-pandemic institution" (CFR 4.7).

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.

Component 8: Institution Specific Themes

8.1 Institution Specific Theme 1: Academic Assessment and Program Review

As noted above, following the 2012 reaffirmation of accreditation, the Commission recommended the institution to continue development of program review, in particular to ensure that all program reviews include findings from student learning assessment as one important element of the review. In 2017, the Interim Report Committee noted the progress made, and encouraged the institution to maintain the momentum to continue integrating findings from student learning assessment into program review, and to further strengthen and implement program review processes for both academic programs and co-curricular units. The institution's self-review for Compliance with WSCUC Standards identified (p. 22) "academic assessment and program review reports" as an area needing additional improvements "to better achieve the University's objectives, including more fully analyzing

and aggregating data from the dozens of annual assessment reports files on behalf of departments and programs". The current review provides an opportunity to examine these issues.

Both annual academic assessments and periodic program reviews have been overseen by the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review (OAAPR) within the Division of Academic Affairs. The office maintains a publicly accessible archive (SOAR, beginning in 2012) of reports from individual departments on their assessment activities. Beginning with 2015-16, all programs have annual reports posted on the office website (CFR 2.10, 4.2).

The institution's program review process begins with a launch meeting to initiate the program's self-study. The self-study provides the basis for a review involving external reviewers. The outcome of the process is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the program and the university administration. The MOU is intended to guide the actions of the program during the 7-year cycle leading up to the next review. The team's understanding is that programs that hold accreditation from a specialized discipline accreditor are able to use documentation from that process to satisfy the institutional program review requirements (CFR 4.3, 4.4).

According to the institution's 2016 Interim Report, the format of the program review MOUs was revised to include a section on assessment. Program review policies and self-study guidelines that place greater focus on direct assessment for all programs at all levels were approved by the Faculty Senate in academic year 2015-16. The current guidelines for program review were revised in 2017-18 to require self-studies to include assessment plans for each program, summaries of assessment results, and improvement actions taken to address issues discovered through assessment since the last program review. The template for external reviewers' reports also requests evaluation of the program's assessment activities and "closing the loop" actions taken based upon the assessment results (CFR 2.7, 4.3).

The team reviewed the reports provided by the institution through its self-study process, sampled reports from the archives of program reviews and annual assessment reports, and requested additional examples of more recent program review self-studies completed under the revised guidelines. The review suggests that the quality and level of sophistication of assessment activities vary considerably across programs. But it is also clear that over time, self-studies for program review have increasingly incorporated the results of annual assessment activities, as well as the ways in which faculty have used assessment results in considering changes to program requirements, curriculum, and strategies for outcomes assessment (CFR 2.4, 2.7, 4.1).

The team finds that the institution has been intentional in designing its program review process to incorporate ongoing assessment activities and to encourage regular use of assessment results by the faculty to examine program effectiveness. The team heard positive examples of how assessment fueled program improvement from faculty representatives, and is informed that similar processes have been extended to co-curricular programs in student affairs (CFR 2.4, 2.11).

In the initial phase of the institution's focus on improving retention and graduation rates and eliminating equity gaps, assessment efforts in gateway courses with low rates of successful completion reinforced the value and importance of using finely disaggregated data on student outcomes in curriculum assessment. To strengthen the integration of student success data and academic program assessment, the Office of Academic Assessment and Program review was brought under the umbrella of the Office of Institutional Research in 2020 (CFR 2.10, 4.5).

The team discussed current operations and future goals with the Senior Director of Institutional Research, the interim Director of Assessment and Program Review, and the Coordinator of Program Review. The team understands that the intention is to infuse data and accountability into the assessment and program review processes, and thus strengthen their connections to support the institutional goal of improving student success. The Institutional Report notes (p. 37) that currently no

formal oversight or accountability mechanisms exist to ensure that issues identified through program review process including "assessment and or other issues that might impede student success" are addressed, except for the identification of these issues in the culminating MOU. The institution sees this as the developing edge of planning for effectiveness in this area. The team concurs and believes that effective progress in this regard will require strong and visible support and additional investment from leadership at multiple levels (university, college, department) (CFR 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

8.2 Institution Specific Theme 2: Student Success: 2016 - 2019

The selection of "student success" as the comprehensive and overarching theme for CSUN's TPR aligns with the institution's mission, vision and strategic planning priorities. Between 2016 and 2019, the institution was making slow progress in raising its retention and graduation rates. With the launch of the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) in 2016, the institution dedicated significant effort to examining student success data and developing a series of new initiatives that could accelerate institutional improvement in retention and graduation, as well as the elimination of equity gaps. Since 2016, investments have been made to build out student success strategies, enhance student success staffing capacities, and deepen faculty engagement in student success. These early student success strategies include enhancing advising (including hiring additional advisors), developing the Matador Academic Challenge credit momentum program, improving student engagement, strengthening peer mentoring, and establishing faculty-directed initiatives in the form of "Data Champions" and learning communities focused on classes with high rates of failing "DFU" grades (CFR 2.10, 2.12, 2.14).

Graduation rates: Between 2016 and 2019, the institution's first-time freshmen (FTF) 6-year graduation rate increased from 50.1% to 55.4%. With respect to equity gaps, the institution made very limited and uneven progress on increasing graduation rates for Pell recipients and underrepresented (UR) students. During this period, the institution's Pell equity gap hovered around 10 percentage points (9.7%, 12.6%, 7.4% and 10.9%), while the UR equity gap decreased only slightly and remained in double

digit range (14.3%, 14.1%, 12.8% and 12.6%). The team noted that transfer student two-year graduation rates improved significantly during this period (31.2% in 2016 to 41.4% in 2019), while the transfer four-year graduation rate remained relatively steady (73.5% in 2016 to 76% in 2019). As the Institutional Report notes, graduation rates are notably lower for African American males and Latina/o transfer students (p. 28). While CSUN demonstrated progress toward achieving the institution's GI2025 targets, more attention and efforts are clearly needed to continue improving graduation rates and eliminating equity gaps (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 4.2).

Through a closer examination of the data, CSUN identified first-year retention of first time freshmen as the "biggest obstacle" (p. 29) to reaching graduation rate goals and eliminating equity gaps. The institution thus zeroed in on the advising experience of first time freshman as key to turning things around (CFR 2.10, 2.12). The Office of Student Success Innovations was also launched in 2016 (later becoming Office of Student Success) to examine student success initiatives, scale efforts that demonstrate promise, and prioritize under-represented students who experience the largest and most persistent equity gaps.

Advising: The 2012 Commission Action Letter and the institution's 2016 Interim Report both acknowledged that an uneven and decentralized advising structure was not adequate in serving the needs of the large and diverse student body, especially the historically underrepresented students. A centralized freshman advising hub was launched in summer 2019. Academic advising in the major continues in college or department advising satellite sites. The institution has a vibrant Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) that is fully integrated into the college satellite advising centers. The advising hub represents a step in the right direction, but the continuation of a mixed model of advising that varies by college does not fully address the previous Commission's recommendation, as it only focuses on advising a fraction of the institution's student population – students who arrive as first-time freshmen (FTF). While this area for improvement was acknowledged by the institution, it is unclear

whether this is the first step in a comprehensive plan to expand centralized advising services to a broader undergraduate population, or whether it intends to maintain the present practice of prioritizing centralized advising for entering first year students. The team was unable to find evidence that speaks to whether the current arrangement (centralized advising for FTF and decentralized advising for all others) adequately supports student success across the institution's entire diverse undergraduate population, including transfer students. The team noted that transfer students receive only limited targeted services to support their unique needs as they transition into and through the university. The team learned that while advising ratio in the Hub is 1:250-300, the ratios in the satellite sites vary significantly with some colleges over 1:1,000. Both staff advisors and administrators expressed concern that these high ratios could result in inequitable and inconsistent advising experiences and student success outcomes for students (CFR 2.12).

The institution added college-specific Graduation and Retention Specialists (GRS) in 2017, whose role is to focus on getting more FTF to graduate in four years and transfers in two years by completing 15 units per semester or 30 units per year. During the team visit, both administrators and staff advisors shared that the role of the GRS remains ill-defined and inconsistent across the colleges. The team recommends the institution to explore how these roles can be clarified, integrated with advising, and expanded to serve the entire undergraduate population, rather than focusing heavily on students who enter as first-time freshmen (CFR 2.12, 2.14).

The Institutional Report discussed promising results from the institution's new AI Chatbot (CSUNny) and early academic alerts, coupled with academic policy affordances designed to protect struggling students from risking failure in foundational courses. The team encourages the institution to further develop, implement, assess, and improve these initiatives, as well as to connect these initiatives (particularly early alerts) with advising and academic policy updates, in order to provide a comprehensive student success support ecosystem to serve the entire student population.

High Impact Practices (HIPs): The institution provides a wide range of cross-divisional HIPs, many of which are intended to support first-generation, underrepresented, low-income students. Support through these HIPS come from both peers and faculty, as evidenced by the peer mentoring program, faculty mentorships, and undergraduate research opportunities. Among these HIPs, an important student success initiative was the peer mentoring program led by the Division of Student Affairs. Launched in 2017, peer mentoring aimed to provide support to "potentially vulnerable" incoming FTF, and has been shown to be promising to improve their first-year retention. Encouraged by the program's early success, the institution scaled up this effort to offer a campus-wide peer mentoring for all new students (first-time freshmen and transfer students) with the help of Mentor Collective. What is needed – as made clear to the team by faculty, staff and administrators in multiple meetings – is a smooth "hand-offs" mechanism between first year advising and the array of targeted mentoring programs. The institution also provides many co-curricular HIPs opportunities including a variety of student clubs and organizations, cultural events, living and learning communities, and service-learning opportunities through the Office of Community Engagement that are intended to foster a sense of belonging and connection to the broader community.

CSUN has a history of success in securing significant grants (and often renewals) that address equity gaps, enhance student support, and provide faculty mentorship. These grants included the $6.2 million renewal in 2016 of the Department of Education AIMS Program in College of Engineering and Computer Science, the NIH-funded BUILD POWER program (funded in 2014 and $19 million renewal in 2019) to diversify the biomedical research workforce, the HSI Pathways to the Professoriate program launched in 2018 to prepare students to succeed in a Ph.D. program in the humanities or a related field, and the CAMINOS Project funded by the Department of Education with the focus on recruiting and retaining underrepresented students in graduate health programs (CFR 2.8, 2.9).

During the early stage of student success initiatives (2016 to 2019), the institution demonstrated a deep commitment in student success, provided significant investment, and has achieved noticeable progress. However, there is little intentional integration between these student success initiatives, and limited effort to assess and track effectiveness of these initiatives. As the institution acknowledged, there is a lack of sufficient evidence on the impact of the individual initiatives on student learning and success, e.g. which initiatives are effective and for what student population, how different student groups (by demographic variables, by participation level, by matriculation type, etc.) participate or benefit differently in these initiatives, or whether students who participate in multiple initiatives experience more positive outcomes. The institution is recommended to further examine and identify the differential impact of individual initiatives or support programs, and thus make evidence-based decision regarding where the institution should allocate additional resources.

8.3 Institution Specific Theme 3: Student Success: 2019 and Beyond

More recent efforts and progress continue to underscore the institution's prioritization of student success, focusing on improving graduation rates and eliminating equity gaps in conjunction with the CSU's GI 2025 initiative. Since 2019, these efforts have led to demonstrated impact of select curricular and co-curricular student success initiatives. The institution cited evidence by noting progress such as a four-percentage point reduction (2019 to 2020) in the equity gap in terms of six-year FT graduation rate between underrepresented and non-underrepresented students, a promising step toward meeting its GI 2025 targets. The institution has also continued to measure the effect of student participation in some of the student success initiatives, an effort largely concentrated in those initiatives mentioned in the previous section. For example, the institution reported higher GPAs of students who received enhanced interventions from the early alert program piloted by political science, economics, anthropology, chemistry and math in spring 2019, as well as reduced academic probation and higher retention for participants in Matador Academic Challenge in fall 2019. Similarly, the implementation of

the AI chatbot (CSUNny) has led to positive outcomes such as higher retention rates of students who interacted with the tool (CFRs 4.3, 4.4., 4.6, 4.7).

While the institution celebrates the significant progress it has made, it acknowledges and continues to grapple with the ongoing challenges in further addressing disparities in the six-year graduation rate, especially the equity gap between underrepresented and non-underrepresented students. In particular, several students, faculty, and staff expressed to the team during the visit their concerns with the widening gaps for African American students. It is clear that more targeted attention and funding are needed to improve the student success outcomes of these underserved students.

The institution continues to offer a wide range of curricular and co-curricular programs, high impact practices, and student support services to support students' basic needs, identify financial support, improve retention and graduation rates, and eliminate equity gaps. While intentional efforts have been put in place to assess the impact of these programs, the majority of co-curricular assessment tends to rely on indirect evidence (e.g. self-reported survey data), has yet to fully integrate "closing the loop" activities, and includes limited connections to retention and graduation metrics or academic outcomes.

At the institution level, the team observed a clear vision to establish a data- and evidence-based culture to improve student success. The Institutional Report suggested that the institution is working to expand its usage of disaggregated data (based on ethnicity and other demographic variables) of student learning and success outcomes to lead to action (e.g., identifying the profile of students who receive DFUs and analyzing their corresponding retention and graduation rates). However, as discussed earlier, the team noted the uneven nature of engagement in assessment practices for student success initiatives. The team recommends the institution to implement more consistent mechanisms to track the effectiveness of these initiatives, continue to grow the data-driven processes at the aforementioned

emergent areas (e.g. early alert, Matador Challenge, AI Chabot), and establish and meet accountability milestones at the individual unit and the institution level alike (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 4.1, 4.3).

Achievement has also been made in regard to the institution's planning for a secure financial future, which is critical to student success. The institution has proactively and creatively explored how to expand, diversify, and sustain revenue beyond state support and student tuition. As mentioned earlier, approaches such as exploring models of shared services, institutionalizing energy conservation efforts, investing in donor development and engagement, and pursuing external grants that are focused on eliminating equity gaps have resulted in new diversified sources of funding that enable the institution to sustainably expand its operations to support student success (CFR 3.4, 4.7).

Although the institution has made strides in both retention and graduation rates, the team identified challenges that the institution must address in order to fully realize its vision of student success. The team noted a lack of clarity related to the concept of student success when meeting with faculty and staff from different divisions and units (academic affairs, student affairs, academic advising, etc.). The absence of a clear definition resulted in campus stakeholders identifying a wide (and sometimes divergent) range of action steps that likely were rooted in disparate understandings of student success. The institution appears to be further hindered in expanding its student success agenda due to the lack of formal, robust coalitions and clear communication strategies surrounding the notion of student success that span interdepartmental and interdivisional areas. Despite these observations, the team noted clear resolve from faculty, staff, administrators, and senior leadership who are willing, able, and eager to tackle these challenges. Moving forward, the institution has a substantial opportunity to further amplify its impact and expand its reach to enhance student success.

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

In the current review, the institution has, in the judgment of the team and subject to Commission review, provided sufficient evidence that it is in compliance with the WSCUC Standards and

CFRs, and satisfies all federal compliance requirements. The institution has implemented a wide array of student success initiatives, including centralized advising for entering first year (first time freshmen) students, and invested substantial human, organizational and financial resources to improve credit momentum, retention and graduation rates, and student experiences. The Institutional Report's concluding section demonstrates a sense of humility and candor, and ultimately an eagerness to wrestle with persistent challenges in both the short- and long-term. The team found that the institution has produced a thoughtful and reflective summary of the areas it seeks to further improve. These areas include:

- Determining which student success initiatives and high-impact practices to invest in, resourcing and assessing those efforts appropriately, and then implementing improvement strategies accordingly (i.e. "closing the loop" on assessment)
- Supporting basic needs for its most vulnerable student populations
- Considering how CSUN defines student success beyond first-to-second-year retention and traditional six-year graduation rates
- Addressing persistent equity gaps in student outcomes
- Reinforcing student engagement and support strategies
- Increasing racial and ethnic diversity among its faculty and staff
- Hardening the institution's financial infrastructure against an uncertain future

The team notes that there will be challenges in putting human and financial resources simultaneously into all of these priorities. In reflecting on its recent efforts to foster student success, the institution "mobilized the campus to generate a profusion of projects, programs and initiatives, offices and leadership positions" (p. 52) intended to get multiple endeavors under way. As this review comes to a conclusion, it is appropriate to raise the question raised by the institution itself (p. 53): "What is being done to assess or track the effectiveness of the many programs and initiatives ... described throughout this institutional report?"

Many of the issues that were identified in the 2012 WSCUC Commission action letter remain challenges today: improving the assessment of student learning outcomes across the institution, improving the quality of program reviews, creating more effective advising programs across all student populations (not only for entering first year students/first-time freshmen), continuing to improve

retention and graduation rates especially among the underrepresented student groups, and building a more stable financial future for the institution. For example, as highlighted before, the institution has specifically identified challenges regarding retention and graduation rates for African American male students, though the specific strategies on how to improve outcomes for these students remain undefined. The team exhorts the institution to develop targeted interventions for this population of concern (and similar student groups), track the performance of those interventions closely, and improve them where required. The team finds that the institution is well-positioned to continue with improvements in each of the areas it highlighted in its conclusory remarks. The team challenges CSUN to harness the power of its own clear and compelling conclusions, and to act upon those conclusions with conviction.

SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The institution successfully fulfilled the goals of this thematically focused review for reaffirmation. The selected theme(s) provided the team an extensive view of the institution's core commitments to student learning and success and to quality and improvement. The Institutional Report, supporting documents, and interviews during the visit consistently reflected a deep and long-standing commitment to student success, which has been reinforced and energized since the last visit by system-wide initiatives. The institution has adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic without losing focus on the goals of this review.

- The team commends the institution for its authentic and widespread commitment to student success, as reflected in the institution's effort to invest resources and update relevant organizational structures.

During the visit, the team had opportunities to review the results of changes made since the last visit to improve advising for first-year students and assessing gateway courses with low success rates through a multi-dimensional lens on student success. These changes have already shown positive results in improving retention and graduation rates, and sharpened the focus on the need to reduce equity gaps in student success.

- The team commends the institution for its substantive progress in revamping advising practices, particularly as they related to freshmen (e.g. the Matador Advising Hub, the EOP structure integrated across college-based advising).

- The team commends the institution for its commitment, investment, and progress in improving capacity for generating and providing student success data.

During the visit the team also learned of several positive developments in the institution's efforts to diversify the sources of its support.

- The team commends the institution for significant progress in supporting institutional sustainability through diversifying funding sources including philanthropic engagement, capital campaigns, and private-public partnerships.

During the visit, the team heard more than once the concern that their recent accomplishments in improving student success may have been "the low-hanging fruit." The team believes that further progress will continue with leadership for sustained focus and broad engagement and accountability across the colleges and divisions of the university.

The team believes that the institution has made progress in developing the capacity to achieve its goals and demonstrated its effectiveness in improving student success in several areas. To sustain their efforts and achieve their goals, the team offers the following recommendations:

● Clarify and operationalize the institution's definition of "student success". Identify common language and shared definitions, develop concrete objectives, and specify strategies to achieve the objectives with demonstrable milestones to track progress. (CFR 2.4, 2.7, 2.10, 2.11, 4.3, 4.4)

● Develop collaborations, coalitions, and communication strategies across divisions, departments, and stakeholders to move beyond the shared goals of "student success" to implement and assess student success strategies. (CFR 4.1, 4.5, 4.6)

● Build a culture of evidence for data-informed decision-making, regularly engaging in assessment of the effectiveness of student success initiatives that support goals for accountability (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

● Extend the thoughtful planning and implementation process used for freshmen advising to provide equitable advising structures for other students (e.g. upper division, transfer, graduate students, part-time students…) (CFR 2.12, 2.13)

The team believes that these recommendations are implicit in and congenial to results of the institution's process of self-reflection in preparation for this review, as evidenced in the following questions from its original proposal for this thematic review (p. 5):

How is the university defining student success beyond the numbers? What are we doing now and to what do we aspire moving forward? How do we examine the quality of education beyond metrics? … How does the campus foster communication and collaboration?

Appendix A. Federal Compliance Forms

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? **X YES** ❐ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? https://catalog.csun.edu/policies/credit-hour/
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? **X YES** ❐ NO https://catalog.csun.edu/policies/credit-hour/
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? **X YES** ❐ NO
	Comments:
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? **X YES** ❐ NO
	Comments: Set appropriate parameters to search for in-person on-campus courses and expand detail on each section for full scheduling information. https://mynorthridge.csun.edu/psp/PANRPRD/EMPLOYEE/SA/c/NR_SSS_COMMON_MENU.NR_SSS_SOC_BASIC_C.GBL
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? 7
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Both
	What degree level(s)? ❐ AA/AS **X BA/BS** **X MA** ❐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? **Graduate level: Biology, History, Management** **Undergraduate level: Business Law, History, University Freshman Seminar**
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? **X YES** ❐ NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? **4**
	What kinds of courses? **Directed Research, Internship, and Lab/Practicum**
	What degree level(s)? ❐ AA/AS **X BA/BS** **X MA** ❐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? **Journalism, Political Science, Marriage/Family Therapy, Mass Communications**
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ❐ YES ❐ NO **X Unclear**
	Comments:

	We did not discover university-wide standards that correspond to credit value in these non-standard courses. Much appears to be left to the individual instructor/supervisor's discretion, which is generally an acceptable practice in higher education.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? **7**
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? **BA/BS and MA-level Degree Programs**
	What degree level(s)? ❑ AA/AS **X BA/BS** **X MA** ❑ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? **BA/BS – Anthropology, Civil Engineering, Journalism, Theatre** **MA – Geography, Psychological Science, Spanish**
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? **X YES** ❑ NO
	Comments: **All programs are discoverable in the University catalog and/or website.**

Review Completed By: Elizabeth Morgan
Date: October 6, 2021

2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ✔ YES ❏ NO
	Comments: CSUN follows the general recruiting and admissions policies defined by the CSU system below: CSU Conflict of Interest Policy: https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/systemwide-human-resources/conflict-of-interest CSUN-specific student admission policy: https://catalog.csun.edu/policy_categories/undergraduate-admission-requirements/ CSU Admissions Requirements: https://www2.calstate.edu/apply/freshman/getting_into_the_csu/Pages/admission-requirements.aspx CSU 2020-2021 Admissions Handbook: https://www.calstate.edu/attend/student-services/Documents/Admissions-Handbook-2020-21.pdf
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ✔ YES ❏ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ✔ YES ❏ NO
	Comments: CSUN Degree Roadmaps can be accessed at: https://catalog.csun.edu/degree-road-maps/ Institutional time to degree reports can be accessed via Office of Institutional Research: https://www.csun.edu/counts/graduation-rates.php Cost of Attendance (Net Cost Calculator for CSUN) can be accessed at: https://www.csun.edu/financialaid/net-price-calculator CSUN's Financial Aid and Scholarships Department also provides cost of attendance at: https://www.csun.edu/financialaid/cost-attendance
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ✔ YES ❏ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ✔ YES ❏ NO
	Comments: CSUN academic programs individually manage websites that describe career opportunities and employment of their graduates. A sampling of these pages includes: https://www.csun.edu/humanities/religious-studies/career-suggestions

| | https://www.csun.edu/social-behavioral-sciences/africana-studies/what-could-you-do-africana-studies-degree
https://www.csun.edu/humanities/linguistics/career-options-0
https://www.csun.edu/social-behavioral-sciences/history/why-history
https://www.csun.edu/humanities/gender-womens-studies/events/significance-and-value-gws-degree
https://tsengcollege.csun.edu/programs/HUMA/faq |

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Kevin Gin
Date: 9/18/21

3 – STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? ❒X YES ❒ NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where?
	Comments: The policy is easily accessible and found here: https://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/academic-grievance-and-grade-appeal-procedures
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? ❒X YES ❒ NO If so, please describe briefly: Academic Grievance and Grade Appeal complaints are submitted to the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ❒X YES ❒ NO
	Comments: The institution sets forth procedures for each type of complaint – Academic Grievance and Grade Appeal.
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ❒ X YES ❒ NO If so, where? Prior to COVID, complaints were maintained in hard files and housed in the VPSA office located in University Hall 310. The complaints are now stored electronically in a secure CSUN cloud storage location. These records are kept for seven years.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ❒X YES ❒ NO If so, please describe briefly: The office retains a yearly spreadsheet recording all submitted complaints, including those that move through the process and those that have been refiled. These spreadsheets are also maintained for seven years.
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)
See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: S. Terri Gomez
Date: 10/01/2021

4 – TRANSFER CREDIT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? **X YES** ❏ NO
	If so, is the policy publicly available? ❏ **X YES** ❏ NO If so, where? https://catalog.csun.edu/policies/transfer-policies-of-csu-campuses/
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? **X YES** ❏ NO
	Comments:

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

(1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

(2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Elizabeth Morgan
Date: 10/6/2021

Appendix B. OFF-CAMPUS LOCATIONS REVIEW

Institution: California State University, Northridge
Type of Visit: Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR)
Name of reviewer/s: Su Swarat, S. Terri Gomez
Date/s of review: September 21, 2021

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed[1]. One form should be used for each site visited. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

1. **Site Name and Address**

   California State University, Northridge (CSUN)
   18111 Nordhoff St, Northridge, CA 91330

2. **Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a branch campus standalone location, or satellite location by WSCUC)**

   CSUN reports 8 off-campus locations. The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program is offered at all locations, and one location (LAUSD Administrative Headquarters) also offers the Bachelor of Public Sector Management program. At the time of the review, the bachelor's program is not being offered.

   All of CSUN's off-site locations are not satellite sites with independent administrative structure or student support services. They are instructional locations within the facilities of partnering community agencies, e.g. school districts, police stations. The MPA program has been in place for over 40 years, so several of the sites are indicative of the long-term partnerships CSUN has with these community partners. Given these circumstances, the off-site locations review took place at the main campus, but the discussions and meetings are focused on the programs at the off-site locations, especially the MPA program. The off-campus MPA program typically enrolls 200-300 students (195 headcount in Spring 2021), and are taught by 10-20 faculty (15 faculty members currently). It also has an online version since 1985.

3. **Nature of the Review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)**

   The reviewers reviewed the documents provided by CSUN regarding enrollment and student success metrics (retention/graduation rates) for the MPA program. They also interviewed three groups of individuals that are involved in the MPA program at the off-site locations:

   Meeting 1: With Tseng College Administration (10:30am – 11:20am)
   - S. Jimmy Gandhi -- Associate Dean, Tseng College, CSUN
   - Jonathan Clayden -- Director, Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services

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[1] See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

- Elliot Maude -- Program Manager, Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services

<u>Meeting 2: With Faculty (11:30am – 12:15pm)</u>
- Henrik Minnassians -- Academic Lead, Master in Public Administration (MPA) program & Tenured Full Professor at CSUN.
- Elizabeth Trebow -- Adjunct Professor, MPA Program & Former Director of Assessment at Woodbury University
- Steven Golightly -- Adjunct Professor, MPA program & retired former Los Angeles County child supportive services and now consultant with DCFS

<u>Meeting 3: With students (12:15pm – 1:00pm)</u>
- Angelica Luz Leslie -- MPA student
- Melissa Pease -- MPA student

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (Identify the issues)
For a recently approved site. Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	n/a	n/a
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1)	The program offerings at the off-campus locations support CSUN's mission on student success. These programs, while operated through the Tseng College (extended education), are integrated into the university, and support the university's commitment to social mobility and local community impact. The off-campus locations are developed based on demand. Due to the self-support nature of these programs, a minimum enrollment threshold (25) needs to be met before the programs are offered. The Tseng College intentionally utilizes campus resources as much as possible.	n/a
Connection to the Institution. How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.2, 2.10)	The MPA program has a strong presence at the off-campus locations, since it has been in place for over 40 years. It has been an integral part of CSUN, and the students in the MPA program have access to the same level of services (e.g. advising, career services, library, graduation) as students at the main campus. The administration team reported that there is a concerted effort to not differentiate colleges at CSUN – all programs are CSUN programs.	n/a

	The faculty and students echoed the same perception. The two students we interviewed only had experience with the online MPA program. They stated that they were provided plenty of opportunities to connect with the campus.	
Quality of the Learning Site. How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5)	The off-campus locations are within the facilities of partnering community agencies, so they are convenient for the students who work there. The Tseng College maintains MOUs with each of these locations, and conducts periodic site visits, as well as regular communications with the partners.	n/a
Student Support Services. What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? What do data show about the effectiveness of these services? (CFRs 2.11-2.13, 3.6, 3.7)	Most student support services are offered through the Tseng College, which is students "first point of contact" to the university. The administrative team provides support from application stage to graduation.	n/a
	Each self-support program has a dedicated faculty lead in the appropriate academic colleges. The MPA program director, who participated in the interview, confirmed that he offers advising, manages academic issues (e.g. no shows, low GPA) but refers students to the Tseng College or the appropriate university units for other support (e.g. disability services, library). The faculty concurred that the services are easy to access for the students, and they themselves also provide support to the students (e.g. career advice). The Director described the MPA program as "focused on the students, not based on faculty's scheduling", a statement demonstrating the care for the students in the program.	
	Students similarly reported that they receive adequate support and clear communication. They commended CSUN for the responsive administrative team, the accessible faculty, and the flexibility to adapt to the students' work schedule (e.g. meeting on weekends).	
	The Tseng College tracks admission yield, enrollment, and student performance, including using an early retention alert system (e.g. class attendance, course work completion, LMS engagement) to identify students who may need additional support.	

Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty is involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.4, 3.1-3.4, 4.6)	The faculty in the MPA program are a combination of full-time and part-time adjunct faculty. The Director is a tenured professor at CSUN, and many of the faculty are working professionals with relevant expertise. The MPA program has an advisory board consisting of tenured or tenure track faculty who oversee the curriculum design, and a big pool of instructors to meet course needs. The Director convenes a faculty committee to determine the qualification of the instructors, with the intention of bringing together theory and practice.

The Director meets regularly with the faculty (4-5 times per semester), and engages them in curriculum development and program assessment efforts.

Faculty support includes Zoom, Canvas and other technology training from CSUN, and administrative support from the MPA program. For faculty who teach online courses, the Tseng College provides distance education support to ensure the online course is appropriately set up and meets all compliance requirements (e.g. ADA). The quality of support is reported to be good by the faculty, and the adjunct faculty report they "never felt like the forgotten child".

The Director also observes classes every semester, following the same visitation procedures as a state-side, main-campus program. The observation is followed by conversations with the faculty to help develop strategies to address the issues observed. He also reviews the course evaluation, shares it with the faculty, and meets with the faculty individually if there are any issues. | n/a |
| *Curriculum and Delivery.* Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1-2.3, 4.6) | The curriculum is designed by the faculty, with the same approval process as the state-support programs. The program director is responsible for ensuring the quality is the same for programs at the off-campus locations.

The faculty, including the adjunct faculty, are involved in the curriculum development process, including assignment design, course sequencing, etc. The program appears to have a reasonable assessment plan – the Director showed an integrated ILO-PLO assessment plan, as well as a curriculum map.

The Tseng College provides support to the faculty, particularly when the course is online. They work | n/a |

	with individual faculty to make sure the course materials are appropriately developed and adapted for the online environment.	
	The students provided positive feedback about the curriculum quality, and reported that the courses are engaging, appropriately challenging, and applicable in practice.	
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10)	The retention and graduation data are regularly tracked by the Tseng College. Data disaggregated by cohort, modality, ethnicity and underrepresented status were provided. It appears the retention and graduation rates for the MPA programs are fairly strong (higher than the university general data), and the equity gap between underrepresented and non-underrepresented students is minimal.	n/a
Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)	The MPA program participates in the university assessment process, assessing CLO, PLO and ILO. An annual assessment report is submitted, and a program review is conducted every six years. The Tseng College also organizes a faculty convening every two years, presenting data to identify areas of improvement. The college is also re-developing their student survey as another means to seek feedback from the students about their experience.	n/a
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.4-4.8)	The quality assurance process for the programs at off-campus locations appears to be the same as that for on-campus programs. The same SLO assessment and program review processes apply. The strong reputation of the MPA program in the community, the faculty engagement in the curriculum review process, and the positive report from the students all indicate that the MPA program is of high quality.	n/a

Appendix C. Distance Education Review

Institution: California State University, Northridge
Type of Visit: Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR)
Name of reviewer/s: Elizabeth Morgan and Kevin Gin
Date/s of review: October 4, 2021

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

   - **Program:** Social Work (Masters)
     - See list of courses reviewed under "Section 3 LMS Courses Reviewed"
   - **Program:** Public Health (Masters)
     - See list of courses reviewed under "Section 3 LMS Courses Reviewed"

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

   - **Number of programs offered by distance education**:
     - 17

   - **Degree levels:**
   - Bachelors (1), Masters (12), Non-degree (4)

   - **FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs:**
     - 1,223 students enrolled (See table titled "GPE Enrollment Headcount Summary Report" below).

GPE Enrollment Headcount Summary Report   Data Last Refreshed: 9/17/2021

Academic Year Multiple values	Program All	Delivery Method Fully Online	Entering/Continuing All	Cohort ID All

Headcount (The unduplicated headcount provides the number of unique students with no double-counting. Students withdrawn are excluded.)

Program	2015/16				2016/17				2017/18				2018/19				2019/20				2020/21			
	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total	FA2..	SP2..	SU2..	Total
ATE																					19	18		19
ATHS		22	20	22	19	18	18	19	18	33	30	51	29	53	49	53	48	41	39	71	37	39	38	58
CDS	181	227	173	242	174	228	173	237	176	226	169	233	177	232	174	242	174	236	176	243	180	233	178	238
DCDL																					27	28	27	28
ELP	1			1																				
EM													27	25	25	27	57	57	57	57	56	55	55	56
HUMA					16	15		16	39	37	19	39	39	38	17	39	38	40	19	43	45	44	25	47
LS																1				1				
MIA																					67	30		67
MID																					26	24	23	26
MPA	38	36	36	38	49	123	121	131	173	194	189	211	219	213	203	226	247	208	194	253	209	227	216	245
MPH		31	27	31	66	76	66	76	91	63	60	92	97	53	55	98	85	61	61	85	96	59	59	97
MSW							80	80	81	80	1	82	96	96	1	97	94	138	43	138	129	129	44	129
PSLP	75	72	39	76	76	74	44	76	78	76	29	80	69	64	32	70	75	63	33	75	73	66	30	74
PSM						14	13	14	54	47	28	55	61	59	53	62	88	78	60	89	89	83	54	89
RTCM	13	12	12	13		18	18	18	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	13		24	20	24	22	22	21	24
SLPA											36	36							44			44	29	29
Total	308	400	307	423	384	647	468	667	758	768	537	888	828	846	622	928	949	946	702	1,115	1,018	1,095	818	1,223

- **History of offering distance education:**
  - o The Tseng College has been offering distance education programs for 2 decades, with significant growth in the last 5 years. The earliest program is the Master in Public Administration (MPA), which has been offered since the 1980s.

- **% Growth in distance education offerings and enrollment:**
  - o Distance Education offerings have grown by approximately 350% since 2014 (See chart titled "CSUN Self-Support OL Students" below).
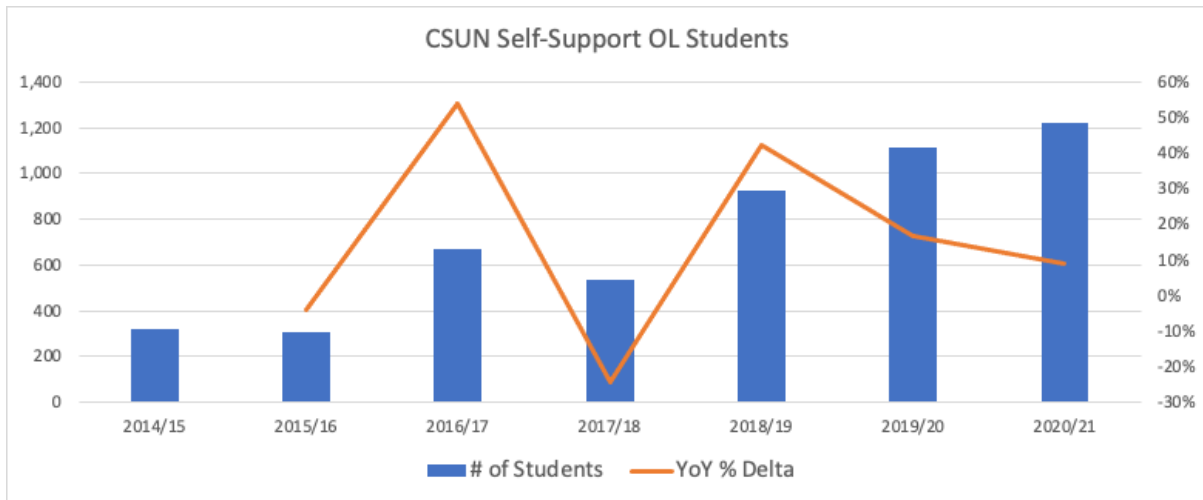
- **Platform, formats, and/or delivery method:**
  - o All distance education programs are a combination of synchronous and asynchronous lectures, discussions, and presentations embedded in the Canvas Learning Management System and Zoom virtual communication platform.

3. Nature of the review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

Substantive Change Action Letters:
- 2021: Music Industry Administration (Masters)
  - ▪ No action was required per the Substantive Change Screening form.

Program review:
- Public Sector Management Program Review Self Study and Six-year Strategic Plan
  - ▪ The self-study included enrollment data, student demographic profile, and assessment/planning of the program Student Learning Outcomes. A strategic plan was also included that summarized action steps that will be used to leverage program strengths, and address program challenges that emerged from the review.

Other documents:
- Outcomes overview: https://tsengcollege.csun.edu/sites/default/files/aboutus/Outcomes-Overview-2018-2019-v2.pdf

- Tseng College Overview:
  https://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/Section_3_-_Tseng_College_Units.pdf
- Tseng College Policies: https://tsengcollege.csun.edu/aboutus/internal-policies#exl

Courses through the Learning Management System:
- Social Work
  - SWRK 520 - Spring 2021
  - SWRK 630 - Fall 2020
  - SWRK 510 - Fall 2020
  - SWRK 635 - Fall 2020
  - SWRK 503 - Spring 2021
- Public Health
  - HSCI 587 - Fall 2020
  - HSCI 539 - Fall 2021
  - HSCI 533 - Spring 2021
  - HSCI 694 - Summer 2021

Distance Education Leadership interviews (Monday, Oct. 4, 2021):
- Associate Dean, Tseng College
- Director, Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services
- Program Manager, Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services
- Program Manager, Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services

Faculty interviews (Monday, Oct. 4, 2021):
- Five faculty members from Social Work
- Three faculty members from Health Sciences

Lines of Inquiry (refer to relevant CFRs to assure comprehensive consideration)	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	The Tseng College where Distance Education (DE) programs are house is integrated within the larger CSUN identity, and the Tseng College aligns its curricular, assessment, planning, and budgeting processes with all institutional expectations. Most DE programs are classified as graduate programs, and students tend to be classified as self-support. The Tseng College representatives reported that they feel well integrated, and do not see themselves as "the other" part of state-side campus initiatives. DE offerings are overseen by the Tseng College administrative team who works cooperatively with faculty and the corresponding state-side academic programs.	N/A
Connection to the Institution. How are distance education	DE students are offered student support services from the moment of admission, which includes two program managers in Graduate and Professional Education Programs	N/A

students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	and Services who focus on retention of students and enhancing connections with students, faculty, and staff in the Tseng College. The Tseng College is also piloting an early-alert system that would enable faculty to identify students who could benefit from high-touch outreach as means to increase retention.	
Quality of the DE Infrastructure. Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	Faculty regularly maintain contact with students both within the DE environment and beyond the online classroom in instances where students need to satisfy internship and field work requirements. The Tseng College uses the Canvas Learning Management System and Zoom as technology platforms, which are the same platforms used by the rest of the institution. Faculty and Tseng leadership report that the technology is adequate to maintain substantive engagement with students and to provide effective learning.	N/A
Student Support Services: What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	Students have access to student support services that state-side students have access to on ground, although faculty reported it is unclear how many students realize these services are available to them. Administrators identified student support services as those that help students enter the academic pipeline (e.g., enrollment based and retention services), and faculty identified student support services as those that are related to student personal or academic experiences (e.g., counseling, library, technology). The institution has the capacity to provide all the necessary services to students. Next steps for continuous improvement include assessing the impact of student support services, better publicizing access to these support services, and addressing student needs that have emerged due to COVID-19 (e.g., mental health, wellness).	N/A
Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of	Courses are taught by both faculty who teach in the on-ground, state-side programs and adjunct faculty. The Tseng Colleges maintains compliance with the 125% rule for faculty workload limit. All faculty are provided with resources (e.g., instructional designers, administrative assistance) to ensure they can effectively develop and teach courses in the online modality. Faculty in the Tseng College stated that they are asked annually to provide feedback regarding their DE teaching	N/A

the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	experience, and the institution has shown that they will follow through with addressing their feedback. Faculty in DE also take part in the same assessment processes that faculty teaching on-ground state-side students are required to participate in.	
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	Curricula are developed with collaboration from faculty and appropriate administrators (e.g., college dean). Exploration of the viability of the program is confirmed via market research study and feasibility study. All DE degree and certificate programs go through the same approval process that on-ground (state-support) academic programs go through. Instructional designers are assigned for the development of DE programs, and work with faculty to develop and align learning outcomes. Instructional designers help faculty identify and build in substantive student engagement for the online course modality.	N/A
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	Initial data show that students in the DE programs tend to have higher retention and graduation rates than those in the corresponding on-ground programs, and the Tseng leadership has identified further disaggregation of data as an important approach to inform future practices. Anecdotally, students and faculty report increased maturity and a "close cohort feeling" that is attributed to the higher retention rates. Integration of both quantitative and qualitative data is a next step for the Tseng College's continuous improvement effort. Further analysis of these retention and graduation data offers an opportunity to expand DE programs to support student success and share practices with other CSUN academic programs.	N/A
Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with	DE programs in the Tseng College follow the same assessment processes as those on-ground CSUN programs participate in. The Tseng College regularly surveys their students and faculty, and integrate their feedback into the design and improvement of the courses or programs. Faculty and the Tseng College leadership also regularly meet to evaluate how student internship and field work opportunities are readily available. Faculty expressed interest in further understanding the academic rigor of DE programs	N/A

learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?	vs. comparable on-ground programs, which offers an opportunity for further inquiry and improvement.	
Contracts with Vendors. Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on *Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations?*	N/A. All courses are taught by CSUN faculty and run by the Tseng College.	N/A
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	All Tseng College DE degree and certificate programs take part in regular assessment processes, and follow the same system of review that all on-ground CSUN programs must complete. All programs complete an academic program review on a regular cycle that includes assessments of PLOs.	N/A