WASC Report
University of California Riverside

CAVEAT

The 1998 reaccreditation document provided by the University of California Riverside to the WASC site visit team is rather different from the self-studies that are typically presented to WASC. This was done with prior agreement between the WASC staff and UCR. It was the fourth in a series of experimental reaccreditation processes. While the document carries the term “self-study,” it is not a comprehensive examination of performance on the WASC standards that a reaccreditation review normally is. It was described during the visit as a “snap shot of a process” and a “vision.” As such, it does not provide a self-study or assessment of the institution’s practices and performance as a report prepared in the usual manner for a WASC visit would. However, the agreement to use an experimental format stipulated that the document submitted would implicitly speak to the nine standards that WASC normally uses to assess an institution for accreditation. The site visit team accepted this condition in its examination of the University of California Riverside. The visit established the UC Riverside document to be the vision of the institution’s senior administrative governing body (the Coffee Group) for the next seven years of the university’s operation.

THE META-ENVIRONMENT

The team drew certain generalizations about the University of California Riverside from examining the vision document, supplementary materials made available to the team and the interactions of the team with campus personnel and students during
the visit itself.

- UCR is a fundamentally sound institution that is fulfilling its mission effectively.
- UCR enjoys a remarkable degree of institutional loyalty displayed at all levels.
- Through the vision document prepared for the WASC visit, the university has stated a broadly ambitious vision about its roles in the system, region, and community.
- UCR's commendable attention to student needs is evidenced by its student-to-faculty ratio, its strong advisement program and undergraduate participation in research.
- There is concrete evidence that UCR has a strong base of community support.
- The institution shows a remarkable interest in and responsibility for its immediate community, e.g. University village, the University/Eastside project, and the joint policing programs, to name a few examples.
- UCR is benefitted by a service-oriented administrative support operation.
- UCR's demonstrated commitment to diversity is seen especially in its student enrollment, though less so in faculty and even less in senior administration appointments.
- UCR exhibits a bold sense of institutional confidence rooted in a record of academic excellence as evidenced by its research productivity, the national recognition of faculty, teaching as a core value and its pride in membership in the University of California system of higher education.
- UCR's excellence is recognized in the region and the state by the number of high school graduates who make the institution their first choice to attend.

**RESOURCE PLANNING AND BUDGETING**

The performance of UC Riverside in resource planning and budgeting demonstrates clear evidence of responsiveness to a suggestion that was made by the 1988 visiting team. That team recommended that the institution should devote human and
financial resources to long-range planning, because of the expectation of the very large projected enrollment and the rate of that growth.

In 1998, the visiting team finds that resource planning and budgeting at UC Riverside are quite vigorous; even more than one would be inclined to conclude from merely reading the vision document. Each college has a five-year plan that is updated every year in a process of consultation between the dean and the executive vice-chancellor. The updated plan is also reviewed by the Budget and Planning Committee of the Academic Senate.

The input indicated a higher level of satisfaction with consultation within colleges (Natural Sciences and Agriculture being an emphatic example) than at the campus wide level. Dialogue between deans and chairs and between chairs and departmental faculty is viewed as democratic, responsive, and effective. However, the team received input that information lags frustrate the involvement of faculty and non-academic staff in the planning and budgeting processes beyond the college level. Much more consultation and information-sharing should be done widely and systematically in order to carry the vision to fruition. Any campus that plans to grow from an enrollment of 8,791 to 15,000 students would find its faculty, staff, and students unsettled if there were not sufficient, timely communication about plans and rationale.

At UC Riverside, the faculty, staff and students take pride in the excellence of the institution and seem to want assurance that the present high quality of programs will be sustained throughout the period of growth. Not surprisingly, apprehension was expressed that the enrollment increase would not be funded, thus causing a deterioration of the quality of education and the quality of student life. Concurrently, unfunded growth is feared to impact faculty workload and research productivity negatively. Timely and effective consultation on budgeting and planning will be vital to preserving the
quality of UC Riverside if fiscal circumstances require deviation from the planned enrollment target.

Assuming that UCR's growth will be funded, the vision document proposes a new opportunity for flexibility and innovation through the device of an unallocated faculty position pool. Careful and effective use of these funds could provide for physical facility improvement, program initiation or adjusting to enrollment trends. However, apprehension was expressed that diversion of these funds from the classroom or allocation of them to new instructional ventures will have a negative impact on current instructional programs. Ample consultation utilizing the "culture of evidence" approach that WASC recommends would be a suitable means to avoid the feared negative consequences.

CURRICULUM AND THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

The very title of UCR's reaccreditation submission, "Undergraduate Education in the Context of the Research University," pointed the committee's attention to various questions concerning curriculum and the quality of instruction. What are the definitions of quality that drive enrollment, especially as enrollment increases? Do qualitative measures for faculty include evaluation of instruction? If general education is to be a significant component of high-quality undergraduate education, what are the hallmarks of that education? Will there be adequate academic supports services—especially advising and instructional technological support—as enrollments increase and as curriculum and pedagogues change? These and related questions were the basis for conversations the reaccreditation team held with administrators, staff, faculty, and students—all of whom are well aware of the need to assure ongoing quality and to strive for improvement in academic programs.

Administrative services staffs are well along with much of the planning for the
essential support needs of expanded instructional programs, and they are aware of how important it is to move rapidly with such projects as the completion of the wiring of student residences, class scheduling and registration, expansion and renovation of classroom facilities and also of student housing. The committee did not see coordinated timelines of enrollment and academic program expansion with administrative services expansion, and from several quarters of campus there were expressed concerns about potential lags if enrollment increased faster than support services—this was a particular worry of staff personnel.

Because there have already been various reconfigurations of both graduate and undergraduate instructional programs (such as the consolidation of national languages and comparative literature, the restructuring of geography, and the trial GRU programs in science), UCR is well aware of the opportunities and challenges of combined program development and expanding enrollment. For some departments, especially in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, there is concern that the targeted growth in other areas—especially engineering and professional schools, will strain capacities already taxed by recent increases of entering students. At stake is the faculty commitment to active engagement with undergraduates in advising, to small classes, and to faculty teaching across the whole of departmental undergraduate programs. Because faculty presence in general education and lower division courses has been noted as a quality factor in UCR undergraduate education, the faculty is concerned about the prospect of increased numbers of non-ladder instructors whose teaching presumably would be in those areas. Regardless of the specific impacts on teaching loads and assignments, the enrollment increase and concurrent reallocation of faculty positions is likely to have significant impact on departments most engaged in undergraduate service instruction. Much of this concern has been exacerbated by the experience of over-enrollment in both
1996 and 1997. As faculty working on an academic senate committee that has been
discussing general education realize, the present general education program, which is
largely college-specific, is one with more requirements than on any of the other UC
campuses, but it is one that is more of an a la carte menu than clearly defined sets of
options for clear general education objectives. To some, this is preferable, especially when
implemented by strong faculty advisement.

From both faculty and student interviews, it is clear that UCR has a department
culture that is highly collegial and yet not intellectually isolationist—as one faculty
remarked "chemists and physicists" do talk to one another outside of committees, and
another expressed her satisfaction with the interdepartmental dialogues fostered by the
Center for Ideas and Society. Student evaluation of faculty, more sporadic in the past, is
now routine and has become a part of faculty personnel files.

Although there has been extensive training and evaluation provided for teaching
assistants, there has been less attention to faculty instructional development (perhaps
because of the generally high level of instructional quality as measured by student
satisfaction). An obvious need, whatever the rate and extent of enrollment growth, is for
departmental-level instructional technology training and support.

Administrators and faculty with whom the committee talked are well aware of
the self-study premise that "The intellectual process must drive the change process"
(p. 46). From what the committee has been able to determine, apart from various
departmental conversations largely in connection with departmental curricula, the
principal responsibility for assuring this intellectual emphasis resides with the Academic
Senate, and it is articulated in the recent document “Administrative Decision Making
and the Role of the Academic Senate.” It is essential that the Senate maintain
leadership and close communication with the entire campus community as it attends to
academic program development. If on the one hand, the majority of faculty delegate this responsibility to their Senators, and if on the other hand Senators find their work fragmented or more immersed in such ongoing functions as routine course approvals, it can be difficult for faculty to exercise their principal intellectual role in curricular and program review and development.

RESEARCH FOCUSES AND REACH

UCR is a well established research university. Its vision statement points out that it is first among all American Research I Public Institutions in per capita publications, R and D funds and number of Fellows elected to the American Association of Science. UCR's goal is to grow in stature, quality, and productivity of research as the undergraduate enrollment grows to 15,000.

In order to determine if this goal is realistic, the team examined the vision document, published reports on research productivity, annual summaries of contract and grant activity, and numerous working documents furnished by the university. In addition, the team interviewed administrative and planning groups listed in pages ix to xi in the vision statement, a subset of those administrators dealing specifically with research, a sample of student leaders, support staff, and faculty.

The team found that UCR is indeed a high quality research institution as it claims in its document. There is justifiable pride and enthusiasm among faculty, staff, and students. When asked what area of research is best known at UCR, the most common answer is "Agriculture." This is not surprising considering the historical fact that the research roots of the institution go back to the Agricultural Experiment Station on which UCR was founded. Even today almost three fourths of the funding for research at UCR is in the College of Natural and Agricultural Science and the majority of the AAAS Fellows are on its faculty. Given the apparent strength of agriculture, the
team is somewhat puzzled at the downplaying of the strength provided by the appropriated funding and mandated mission of the Agricultural Experiment Station and UCR's contribution to the economy of California. Areas of specific research strength on the campus include pest management, plant science (including the dry land and desert environments), environmental science, and analytic chemistry.

One of the major strengths of UCR's educational activity is the involvement of undergraduate students in active research. The team found strong support for undergraduate research at all levels. It was impressed that these activities are not just class exercises to teach about research, but are well designed projects done by students that often led to publication in scientific journals.

A major weakness in the research environment is the shortage of cutting edge research facilities, and the lack of funds to bring older research labs up to date. The paucity of needed facilities is the most common reason given for the loss of first class faculty and the low number of research stars recruited from other universities. Research facilities are perceived to have deteriorated throughout the University of California system, leading to an adverse impact on the educational and research efforts throughout the state.

Planners think it unlikely that the necessary research facilities at UCR can be provided by state funding, given the backlog of need throughout the System. UCR planners are looking at a combination of state and federal funding, self financing, and private funding to meet their needs. This scenario leads UCR to the necessity of increasing research funding through grants and contracts. The team believes that the quality of faculty, the proven performance record, and the support structure of the University is such that the goals for increasing grants and contracts can be met. However, unless special efforts are made to monitor and control growth in soft money
areas, the desirable qualities of UCR, the faculty and students may be compromised.

The small size and collegiality of the faculty leads to interdisciplinary efforts arising naturally, often cutting across departmental lines. UCR is experimenting with horizontal research organizations such as centers, institutes, and Graduate Research Umbrellas. These types of organizational attempts to lower departmental boundaries have had mixed success at other universities. They have not been in effect long enough at UCR for us to determine whether they will help or hinder UCR’s goal of keeping a first class undergraduate experience as more students come on campus.

The team believes, as alluded to above, that for UCR to meet its research goals, it will be necessary to increase significantly the percentage of its funds coming from grants and contracts. Experience at other institutions show that as the success in soft money generation increases, there is a tendency to follow the source of funds rather than the university’s traditional strengths. Mechanisms are not described in the vision statement that indicate how UCR will maintain its high quality undergraduate education as it develops its considerable potential in contract research.

ENROLLMENT GROWTH AND STUDENT PROFILE

The vision document sets forth a desire to continue UCR’s improvement of its undergraduate student profile from the perspective of quality as measured by higher SAT scores, grades and diversity of each incoming class. The team found in reading the institutional vision statement, discussion with staff, faculty and students, and a review of institutional reports and plans that UCR is indeed committed to these aims. It also seems positioned to reach the goals it has established. However, it is clear that the university must continue to work with the Office of the President to reach its goal of enrolling a student body of 15,000 and obtaining complimentary funding for a student body of this size. Given the fact that this is a dynamic process of negotiation between the campus
and the Office of the President, the team was pleased to see that institutional officers have a number of planning processes in place to help it make appropriate adjustments in plans as decisions are made about the size of student body that will be funded at UCR.

The team notes that the chancellor initiated a UCR diversity initiative in 1995 that provides a template for future activity in admissions and other important areas of the university. This initiative provides a framework on which important administrative, faculty, student and community cooperation can be stimulated to ensure that the university attracts and enrolls the kind of student body that can successfully take advantage of academic opportunities at the institution. The university is to be applauded for its achievements in enrolling a diverse student body prior to the passage of Proposition 209 and its adjusting to that change. The current university enhancement of its outreach programs to regional elementary, junior high schools and high schools is a positive manifestation of its commitment to maintaining a diverse student body.

The vision document asserts that financial aid can also be used to help support the enrollment of a diverse student body. The team found through discussions with staff, faculty and students that this strategy is not only being successfully employed, but continually reviewed and appropriately adjusted given resources as well as institutional, system-wide, federal and state regulations governing financial aid.

THE QUALITY OF CAMPUS LIFE

Students

Through discussions with students, staff, and faculty and the review of institutional reports, the team found a high level of satisfaction among students with their educational experience and extracurricular activities at UCR. Students report feeling included in important decisions that affect them (e.g., the Division 1 athletics debate, the allocation of space, the use of student fees). Students also report positive feelings
about access to senior administrators and faculty when needed. The team notes that
staff, faculty, and students do worry about how an increased student body will affect the
“intimate” nature of the UCR community and relations among key constituencies. In
particular, there is concern that the institution does not give high enough priority to
supporting key student “common goods” (programs not administered by academic
programs) so that appropriate space, staff and expendable materials and supplies are
provided for programs in this category: Among these are the student commons, the non-
residential computer clusters, the learning center, the career planning and placement
center, the student health center, and the recreation programs. The team believes that
these, and similar university “common goods” that help create a positive quality of life for
students should have a higher priority as the Vision document ideas are more broadly
discussed and developed by administrators, students, and faculty in the decentralized
resource allocation process. This will become increasingly important as UCR compares
its efforts in these areas with other larger sized University of California campuses and
institutional peers of similar size and breadth of educational and programmatic offerings.
However, despite these considerations, many faculty, staff, and students see positive
possibilities to developing a critical mass of students to enhance educational, cultural, arts,
and sports programs that are difficult to initiate and sustain at the student body’s current
size.

Security is an area of particular concern for student leaders. They voiced support
and appreciation for some of the improvements the administration has undertaken to
improve lighting along walkways, and to trim bushes, for example. But, there is still a
perception that the university could do more. The team found through its discussions
with administrators and staff that security in the UCR community is an evident
concern. The joint policing compact with the city of Riverside and the construction of a
new police station in a prominent sector of campus is clear evidence of a response to this concern. However, the students' perception that more needs to be done indicates that the university will continually need to educate the community about what has been accomplished to improve security over the past few years, what is currently being done and what is planned in the future. This may become even more acute with a larger student body and the concomitant expansion of human activity that will result.

Staff

The team found through reading the vision document, institutional reports and discussions with faculty, staff, students and administrators that decentralization of resource decisions to the schools and departments is one of the most important issues confronting the university. The team notes that many colleges and universities have used decentralization to increase accountability, and enhance decision-making by reducing bureaucratic steps and empowering faculty and staff to take greater responsibility for decisions that affect their research, teaching and work. The team notes that from discussions with staff and reading of the vision statement that more attention needs to be paid to the needs of staff as departments are merged and responsibility is further decentralized to these units. A tension exists over how much work can be decentralized without adequate training of staff and a realization that some staff struggle to accomplish the missions of their units without full recognition or adequate support.

The team found, however, that staff are very committed to UCR's mission, and favor the march toward continuous improvement. This reservoir of goodwill behooves the university to involve front-line staff more closely in the implementation of decentralization efforts, the development of appropriate support and training, and the further refinement of the vision document ideas and other decentralization initiatives.
FULFILLMENT OF SERVICE MISSION

The Vision document describes the service mission of the University of California Riverside as "engagement with the university's publics" (p. 106). The university has gone about this mission in a number of innovative and commendable ways, as evidenced by the creation of a partnership with the private sector to undertake the revitalization of a shopping plaza adjacent to the campus and by its launching a large-scale collaborative effort in the university's surrounding neighborhood designed to improve educational and employment opportunities for neighborhood youth. In these efforts, the university successfully demonstrates both its capacity and commitment to place its institutional resources and expertise in the service of its immediate community.

The university also brings its resources to the service of the larger community through its extension programs. A large audience of non-matriculated, often older, adults take advantage of university offerings. UCR's Co-operative Extension and its English as a Second language program which reaches over 4,600 international students, the eighth largest such enrollment in the nation, are notable examples of this larger-scale service mission.

In addition, the service mission is met by the vast network of services provided by individual members of the UCR administration, faculty, staff and students to community agencies and organizations. Beyond service to their disciplines or professional fields and service to the university itself, members of the UCR community have accepted the obligations of civic responsibility, as evidenced by membership on civic boards, service to youth groups, and participation in other social and community improvement organizations. UCR students, during the academic year 1996-97, volunteered almost 40,000 hours of community service work to the University/Eastside Community Collaborative.
The UCR has a half-century tradition of university-community engagement, reflected preeminently in the work of its Citizens University Committee. It is widely acknowledged also that the emphasis and priority which the university chancellor has given to the service mission has increased the levels of faculty and staff participation in this area.

Like every institution of higher education, however, UCR faces the acknowledged challenge of developing both creative and substantive ways in which to nurture and reward the efforts of its personnel in public service. The plans of the Graduate School of management to create a Center for Social Responsibility is a noteworthy step in this direction; hopefully it can be matched by equally innovative efforts to provide tangible rewards for excellence in this area. Universities traditionally laud service as one of the three essential components in the mission of higher education; by tradition also, universities give far greater emphasis and weight to teaching and research—the other two components—than to service. Without suggesting that all three components are of equal value, the team notes that elevating the importance of the service mission is in the strategic interest of UCR, as it would be in the interest of all universities which are increasingly expected by the public which supports them not only to produce and advance knowledge but also to apply knowledge and the university's resources to the problems of their immediate and the larger society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The team believes that UCR's vision to increase enrollment while at the same time keeping the desirable qualities of a small institution is a reasonable and achievable goal. However, the rate and amount of growth will demand creative management, committed cooperation and constant monitoring. The following recommendations are intended to provide guidance to those efforts.
1. UCR should seize the opportunity to use the vision document and its subsequent amendments as a tool for building and strengthening a sense of campus community.

2. Early warning indicators should be developed to detect adverse effects of growth, giving time to correct unwanted consequences in the early stages.

3. Flexibility created by growth should be used to correct present inequities in workload and maintain appropriate workloads in the future.

4. Continued vigilance in monitoring the quality of undergraduate education must be maintained, with special effort on having senior faculty teaching classes and undergraduates doing research. There should be particular attention to the general education curriculum. The presence of ladder faculty in general education instruction should be maintained.

5. A plan for continued instructional development, including instructional content, pedagogy and instructional technology training should be developed in continuous consultation with the faculty.

6. Higher priority in planning and resource allocation should be given to student service facilities and programs that are not the responsibility of academic programs.

7. UCR should continue to strengthen and improve campus safety, including special educational efforts to let students know what equipment and programs are available and how to use them.

8. Greater involvement of departmental and mid-level staff in the institutional planning process should be initiated.

9. As UCR continues to develop a more decentralized administrative
organization, it must ensure that all schools and programs continue
to be appropriately involved in central recruitment and enrollment programs.

10. Policies should be developed and mechanisms implemented to assure
that the quality of education will not diminish with the increased emphasis
on developing contract research centers. As revenue enhancing contract research
centers develop, they should do so in accord with the university's educational
mission.

11. As UCR continues to grow, more formal mechanisms should be developed to
assess institutional performance in its drive to maintain quality and excellence, e.g.
in such matters as: student services appropriately housed, general education
programming, faculty advisement, graduate studies, resource management and
campus service operations.