

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

Educational Effectiveness Review

To University of Southern California
October 11-13, 2010

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I	Overview and Context	4
IA	Description of Institution and Visit	4
	<i>Institutional Background</i>	4
	<i>Accreditation History</i>	5
	<i>The EER Visit</i>	6
IB	The Institution’s Educational Effectiveness Review Report	7
	<i>Alignment with the Proposal</i>	7
	<i>Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report</i>	7
IC	Response to Previous Commission Issues	7
Section II	Evaluation of Institutional Educational Effectiveness under the Standards	8
IIA	Evaluation of the Institution’s Educational Effectiveness Inquiry	8
	<i>Essay 1 – Interdisciplinary Learning: Minors and General Education</i>	8
	<i>Essay 2 – Assessment of Student Learning</i>	10
	<i>Essay 3 – Global Awareness and Engagement</i>	12
	<i>Essay 4 – Academically-Centered Approaches to Student Success</i>	15
IIB	Institution’s Systems for Enhancing Educational Effectiveness and Student Learning	16
	<i>Assessing the Impact of Diversity Classes</i>	18
	<i>Current Students</i>	19
	<i>Faculty</i>	19
IIC.	Program Review	20
IID.	Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs	22
	<i>Substantive Change – Off-campus and Distance Education</i>	22
	<i>Institutional Research: New Developments in Data and Planning</i>	23
	<i>Strategic Planning</i>	24
SECTION III	Findings and Recommendations from the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review	26
	<i>Commendations</i>	26
	<i>Recommendations</i>	28

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Visit: October 11-13, 2010

SECTION I – Overview and Context

IA. Description of Institution and Visit

Institutional Background

Established in 1880 with 53 students and 10 teachers, the University of Southern California (USC) is the oldest private university in the West and has now become a world-class research university. The University's central mission which links together its many schools and programs is "the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit." According to published information about the University, the principal means by which this mission is accomplished is through "teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service."

For the 2009-10 academic year USC reported its total student enrollment (rounded to the nearest 500) as 35,000 students (17,000 undergraduates and 18,000 graduates), including 6,600 regularly enrolled international students. The number of full-time faculty is 3,200, with a staff of 10,800 people working at least half-time (50 percent time or more). The University employs an additional 7,100 student workers (not including teaching/research assistants), making the total University employment approximately 21,000.

USC's University Park campus is a 226 acre complex located in downtown Los Angeles. This campus houses the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School, and most of USC's 17 professional Schools. The 50 acre Health Sciences campus, northeast of downtown Los Angeles, is home to the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the School of

Pharmacy, three major teaching hospitals and programs in Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, and Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy. USC also reaches a larger audience through a number of off-campus and online programs, which are listed later in this document.

Accreditation History

USC became a WASC accredited institution in 1949. Since that time the University has maintained a strong history of accreditation and engagement with WASC. USC's last reaffirmation of WASC accreditation occurred in 1998. Additionally, USC has received approval for a number of distance and off-campus programs, including:

- (1) a distance education MS in Engineering Instruction in 1971;
- (2) an off-campus MPA in Sacramento, California in 1971;
- (3) an off-campus MBA in Irvine, California in 1990;
- (4) an online MS in Gerontology in 1998;
- (5) an online Masters in Long-Term Administration in 2002;
- (6) a MS in Education with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist Teacher Training Credential in 2002;
- (7) an off-campus Executive MBA (EMBA) in Shanghai, China 2003;
- (8) an online MS in Regulatory Science in 2004;
- (9) expansion of the off-campus EMBA to San Diego, California in 2006;
- (10) final approval for a distance education MA in Teaching in April 2009¹;
- (11) final approval for a distance education Master of Aging Services Management (MASM) in August 2009²;

¹ Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

² Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

- (12) final approval for an off-campus MSW with concentration in military social work and veteran services in August 2009³;
- (13) final approval for a distance education Master of Academic Medicine in August 2009⁴;
- (14) final approval for a distance education MS in Geographic Science and Technology in October 2009⁵; and
- (15) final approval for a distance education MSW program in August 2010⁶.

The current accreditation cycle was initiated in October 2005 with USC's submission of its Institutional Proposal to the WASC Commission on Accreditation. The two thematic areas included in the Proposal: 1) *Spanning Disciplinary and School Boundaries to Focus on Problems of Societal Significance*; and 2) *Increasing Responsiveness to Learners* provided the focus of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) submitted to WASC in December 2007. The CPR site visit occurred on October 29-31, 2008. The results of this visit are described later in this document.

The Educational Effectiveness Review (EER)

The EER visit to USC occurred October 11-13, 2010. One member of the team observed the Global Executive Master of Business Administration (GEMBA) program in Shanghai, China prior to the on-campus site visit (October 4, 2010).

The team was provided with excellent hospitality and work accommodations both on campus and at the Biltmore Hotel. Over the course of the visit the team met with administrators, faculty, professional staff, and students. All representatives of the University were open and candid, providing the information necessary for a thorough EER site visit.

³ Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

⁴ Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

⁵ Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

⁶ Substantive change action since the last accreditation visit.

The team would like to express its appreciation to President Nikias and his leadership team for the openness with which they responded to questions and the provision of additional materials as requested. A special thank you is also extended to Robin Romans, Associate Provost, for his extraordinary effort in bringing about an exceptionally well-organized site visit. In addition, the orientation to and assistance with the review process provided by Ralph Wolff and Barbara Gross Davis as the WASC liaisons, were helpful and greatly appreciated.

IB. The Institution's Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) Report

Alignment with the Proposal

The organization of the EER report follows the general content presented in the Institutional Proposal, while also incorporating the recommendations that resulted from the CPR review and visit.

Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The EER report proved to be useful in describing the developments that have occurred since the CPR visit. The document clearly conveys USC's commitment to institutionalizing learning outcomes, assessment and program review by extensively describing efforts in these areas and including sample documents and procedures (CFR 1.9).

IC. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

In a letter to then President Steven Sample, Ralph Wolff summarized the findings and deliberations of the Accrediting Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges regarding the report of the team conducting the CPR visit of USC on October 29-31, 2008. In his letter, President Wolff emphasized two recommendations: (1) that the USC administration increase its efforts to work with faculty members to expand their understanding of assessment, including identification of student learning outcomes and ways to measure whether outcomes have been attained; and (2) that the University incorporate

undergraduate education into its program review process with particular emphasis on faculty efforts to assess student learning.

As described more fully in the body of the report, the University has made great progress since 2008 in implementing both recommendations. All departments and programs except one have now developed learning outcomes, and faculty understanding and acceptance of the assessment process has increased dramatically since the team's first visit. In addition, the University has incorporated undergraduate education into the program review process and has formulated and distributed suggested steps for conducting such reviews. During the 2010-11 academic year five programs will be reviewed. International Relations, Earth Sciences, and the Language Center will be reviewed during fall 2010, whereas Philosophy and Psychology will be reviewed during spring 2011.

The University also responded thoughtfully and in detail to all of the other suggestions made by the team in its 2008 report, including: (1) easing impediments to interdisciplinary teaching; (2) evaluating the results of efforts to encourage students to enroll in minors; (3) developing criteria and learning outcomes for global programs; (4) examining the institutional experience of international students; (5) reviewing the adequacy of the general education program with particular reference to quantitative literacy and moral reasoning; (6) developing clearer criteria for approving diversity courses; and (7) integrating global awareness into all degree programs (CFR 2.3, 2.7, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8).

SECTION II – Evaluation of Institutional Educational Effectiveness under the Standards

IIA. Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

Essay 1 – Interdisciplinary Learning: Minors and General Education

Throughout this reaccreditation process, one of the themes emphasized by USC has been interdisciplinary learning, i.e., “*Spanning disciplinary and school boundaries to focus on problems of societal significance.*” In response to this theme the team repeatedly heard

(from students, faculty, and staff) that opportunity for choice is one of the magnets that draw applicants to USC and contribute to the recent improvement in student quality and graduation rates.

The University's development of the USC Core and its Renaissance Scholars programs is commendable. The USC Core curriculum (originally instituted in 1997) is organized around three areas, General Education (a six-course, 24-unit General Education program), Writing (a two-course, 8-unit writing curriculum), and Diversity (a one-course, 4-unit diversity requirement). The USC Core is now a requirement for all undergraduate students and inter-School agreements (e.g., the recent plan of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and the Marshall School of Business) reduce the number of required professional school courses so that majors can pursue complementary arts and sciences courses that broaden their academic experience. The team suggests that in the projected review of the Core, the University take a close look at whether the entire curriculum, as currently structured, does enough to provide a breadth of learning. The Core has been severely constricted in scope to make room for students to complete a minor in addition to a major and electives. The stated rationale for the minor is to provide interdisciplinary breadth, apparently by encouraging students to choose a minor in a subject significantly different from their major. In practice, however, more than half of the undergraduates do not elect to complete any minor, and of those that do, 40 percent chose a minor that is not significantly different from their major. Thus, it is possible, for example for a student to major in business, complete a minor in Marketing, Advertising, or Entrepreneurship, take additional electives in business-related courses, and, upon graduation, apply to business school. Such a program would be widely considered to have sacrificed breadth in favor of a narrowly vocational course of study. It may be that very few students actually choose to follow such a route. Still, it is important to find out by examining the transcripts of a representative sample of recent

graduates to discover not only what majors and minors they completed but what electives they chose. In addition to such an inquiry, the University may also want to consider how subjects such as Moral Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Civic Engagement are currently pursued by USC undergraduates. Are these subjects truly integrated into Diversity or Writing courses or embedded in the majors and/or extracurricular programs?

In Essay 1 of the EER report, USC also addressed challenges and opportunities for interdisciplinary work (p. 15). The team commends USC for its plans to study: (1) obstacles to interdisciplinary education such as approval processes for new programs and course proposals; (2) extending interdisciplinary studies to students (such as those in business and engineering) for whom such options are not as readily available; (3) relationships between breadth of studies and, for example, research engagement; and (4) the next frontiers of USC for enriching learning through such paths as residential programs, the co-curriculum, international experiences, community service, online communities, and innovation/invention (CFR 2.2a, 2.4, 2.6, 2.9).

Essay 2 – Assessment of Student Learning

Since the CPR visit, USC's central administration, the faculty, department chairs, deans, and Academic Senate aided by a strong accreditation committee have devoted considerable time to developing a campus-wide understanding of the assessment of student learning. During the past two years, the administration has successfully engaged the departments in defining the learning objectives for the undergraduate majors. Although most of its undergraduate programs are only at the initial or emerging stages of implementing assessment processes, the apparent commitment of all members of the University provides a strong foundation for future efforts in this area.

In keeping with USC's decentralized governance, assessment methods are not identical but are tailored to the particular needs of individual academic units. As such, the

progress to date on the assessment of student learning has taken many forms. All but one academic program has met to discuss and develop program level student learning outcomes.

An area of particular note is the USC College Critical Thinking Assessment Project, a collaborative effort carried out by the General Education and Writing programs. This study provided an opportunity for formative assessment, designed to measure changes in critical thinking and writing from the initial writing course in the freshman year to the advanced writing course for juniors and seniors. As part of the study faculty came together to develop an assessment rubric and implemented a training program to improve the consistency of scoring student essays and ensure that scorers were reading for the same sense of critical thinking that the faculty were teaching in their classes. The results of the study seemed to show impressive improvement in students' critical thinking writing between the freshman and junior years of the writing curriculum. The authors of the writing assessment wisely plan to conduct a longitudinal study to trace the progress of a sample of students from freshman year onward. Such an inquiry will yield data that will provide a more reliable measure of student progress and supply information from which to analyze why some students make greater progress than others and which methods of teaching or kinds of courses seem to have a more powerful effect than others on writing and critical thinking skills.

The assessment methodologies already developed through this study are now beginning to be used in other parts of campus on a selective basis. Also impressive has been an articulation by the arts faculties of what they want their students to achieve and how they pursue these goals in a quasi-conservatory context.

Overall, there appears now to be a positive feeling on the part of the USC faculty that the efforts to date and planned future steps will have important benefits for the quality and impact of undergraduate programs. The substantial cooperation that exists among the Schools and the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and between (and within) faculties of

the academic programs and the central administration augurs well for the future of assessment at USC. Consequently, the team recommends that USC proceed vigorously with the next steps in the assessment of student learning. While much has been accomplished over the past two years in getting assessment activities initiated, there is much that remains to be done, perhaps more than is currently realized. For example, the specification of student learning outcomes is still at an early stage in many of the academic units and efforts need to continue to define these outcomes and to do so from a perspective that transcends each department's own activities in isolation.

The hard work of developing methods to assess the extent to which learning outcomes are being accomplished needs to begin. A process of continuous quality improvement should be established so that when outcomes have not been met to the institution's satisfaction, procedures exist to determine why not and what can be done to improve the program's educational effectiveness. Efforts to achieve the desired improvements and evaluate the results must then be implemented so as to create a process of continuous quality improvement. These efforts, measuring the extent to which learning outcomes have been accomplished, determining the reasons for any failures, and feeding this information back into the curriculum to improve pedagogy have scarcely begun. It is also not clear what steps the University will take to provide assistance to parts of the campus which need help. To address these issues leadership will presumably be provided by the Provost's Office, aided by the new Office of Institutional Research, and cross-school and cross-unit opportunities will be created for sharing of techniques and ideas (CFR 2.7, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8).

Essay 3 – Global Awareness and Engagement

The team was impressed by the considerable efforts undertaken by USC to respond to the issues identified in the CPR report, namely the need for USC to develop:

- “A coherent strategy and ‘a unified vision of global learning’ or ‘a shared definition of globalization’ for the wide range of programs with an international dimension (CPR Report p. 12).
- A set of appropriate learning outcomes for global programs (CPR Report p. 12; CFR 1.2, 2.7, 3.1, 4.4).
- A deeper understanding of the total international student experience and improved interaction with domestic students (CPR Report p. 12, 13; CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7).”

The work completed in these areas, especially through the Committee on Academic Programs and Teaching, is reflected in its *Report on Global Connections and Engagement (May 2010)*, as well as in *Essay 3 – Global Awareness and Engagement* in the institution’s EER report. Both of these reports highlight the significant progress that has been made in establishing the centrality of global learning for the institution. The formulation of Global Learning Objectives is a welcome advance. The team acknowledges not only the work done to achieve this result but also the active promulgation of the objectives through USC’s academic units, the Global Scholars initiative and the General Education program. In addition, the team found international engagement to be developing through many of the University’s academic programs, in addition to those with an established global focus. It was clear in meeting with University leaders who have responsibility for a wide range of disciplines and professional programs, as well as those who have functional responsibilities for diversity, alumni networks, and international student affairs, that there is a strong and growing orientation towards global awareness and engagement. The team hopes that the momentum created toward this goal can continue to grow and spread further throughout the institution.

The team was also impressed by the initiative of the Marshall School of Business in exposing their freshman class of 500 students to an international experience in order to give them a sense of the demands and rewards of becoming a graduate with the knowledge, skills and awareness to work and live internationally. Faculty members testified to the impact on students who studied overseas and returned more focused, mature and aware. However, there are challenges in mobilizing the resources that will permit the continued expansion of international opportunities for students, including the availability of sufficient faculty with the expertise to implement quality international experiences. Such programs will also need clear learning objectives and methods of assessing outcomes. In this regard, the team suggests that USC consider a longitudinal study of business students to evaluate the impact of international experience and global engagement on their academic careers.

The team benefited from the survey data recently compiled on the interactions and satisfaction levels of international students in comparison to domestic students. It also found the discussion with current students to be enlightening. However, those with whom the team spoke reported that it continues to be a challenge, as in most research universities, to ensure that international students interact enough with domestic students to provide an academic experience in which their differences become a source of learning for the entire community. The team believes that USC's current initiative to develop more residential communities with academic leadership to be a critical part of addressing this challenge. In addition, the team concluded that in accordance with the priorities expressed by those we interviewed, USC now needs to build upon its existing studies to make a deeper assessment of how well it is serving international students, e.g., further examination of the venues and types of activities that will address the reported need for more intergroup interaction.

Essay 4 – Academically-Centered Approaches to Student Success

USC has developed creative approaches to fostering student success. The new Advisement Database provides an efficient and effective way for the University to reach out to students prospectively, facilitating early interventions for at-risk students and additional personal contact with international students. Several Schools have designed programs such as the Freshman Academy in the Engineering College and the Topping Scholars program in the Division of Student Affairs, to orient freshmen to the culture of their newly chosen discipline. Students in these programs learn about collaboration and teamwork, the value of peer mentors, and the importance of working with faculty. The team hopes that all of the Schools at USC will develop similar programs.

These innovations are demonstrably successful. USC has made remarkable improvements in its undergraduate graduation rate. Since 1998, the rate has increased from 70% to 89%, nearly reaching the institution's goal of 90%. Faculty and staff with whom the team spoke are enthusiastic about reaching for an even higher target, and their concern for every student is real and laudable. In keeping with this ambition, the University might now consider comparing retention and graduation rates against a more challenging benchmark group than the AAU as a whole. Additionally, USC should examine the retention and graduation rates of sub-populations, especially international students, since it has a relatively high proportion of international students, and rates for international students are known to be lower than for domestic students. Many universities within the Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE) share data about retention and graduation rates, and these rates are disaggregated by subpopulations, including non-resident aliens. Comparisons to a more similar benchmark group, as well as a better understanding of international student retention will help USC to develop a challenging yet reasonable target for further improvement.

IIB. Institution's Systems for Enhancing Educational Effectiveness and Student Learning

The University has developed an impressive array of services and support systems to enhance students' learning. Among these are the support services provided through the Division of Student Affairs (e.g., special admissions cohorts, freshman and transfer orientation, at-risk students, students with disabilities, first generation college students, Greek organizations, and residential life programs for students who live on or off campus). Several of these services appear to have been especially successful, including:

- the Summer Bridge Program which provides a small group of potentially at-risk incoming freshmen an academic head start and helps facilitate their transition to the University.
- the Neighborhood Academic Initiative which helps educationally disadvantaged 7th through 12th grade students in Los Angeles prepare for college;
- the Topping Scholars Program which provides academic, personal, and social support for first generation college students;
- the exemplary collaboration between the Division of Student Affairs staff, the Academic Information Officer, and outcomes research staff to conduct assessments of students' experiences and needs;
- the collaboration between student affairs programming staff and faculty in the Marshall School of Business and faculty in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences; and
- the IRB approved study that found that students with disabilities feel as able to use campus services as their counterparts without disabilities, due in part to programs and services available to the former.

Annual goals are established for these service areas. Therefore, data are gathered through the new USC-developed Trojan Experience Survey, other standardized and specially developed surveys, and still other methods such as focus groups and dialogue with students (e.g., “Listening to Students” which provides feedback through individual interviews with sampled students). The Academic Information Officer has also developed a Data Portfolio (enrollment, retention, graduation, academic performance, and survey results) that is distributed to Schools (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13).

The team encourages the continued collaboration among the Offices of Institutional Research, Enrollment Services, Student Affairs, and the assessment research staff to triangulate assessment data across these departments. Such collaboration will support the anticipated effort to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between students’ academic and co-curricular experiences and their overall progress. The team also suggests that the University make strategic decisions about how to add carefully chosen assessment variables to the existing data portfolio of each School and the College of Letters, Arts and Science. Although it is expected that these data will continue to be provided to academic units under the leadership of the newly formed Office of Institutional Research, concern was expressed by some with whom we spoke that the data collection expertise and resources developed by the Student Affairs Assessment Center (available at <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/assess/index.htm>) not be lost as the University centralizes its institutional research functions (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13).

Also supporting students’ achievement is the high quality of co-curricular programs offered at USC. The team was particularly impressed by the size and variety of community services opportunities available to students. However, while some of these service opportunities are linked to specific academic programs, it was reported that many of them do not have learning objectives. Although survey data is used to determine students’ utilization

and satisfaction, assessment of the educational effectiveness of service learning programs appears to be limited (CFR 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13)

Assessing the Impact of Diversity Classes

The Rossier School of Education has completed a useful set of studies conducted by faculty and graduate students. These studies explore the question of whether diversity courses increase students' respect for those different from themselves while also improving their cognitive skills. Several of these courses (ranging from introductory to advanced) were used to estimate student outcomes across all (110) approved diversity courses. While these studies have some student sampling and methodological limitations, their findings suggest that diversity courses can improve students' critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. In addition, the faculty and graduate students are to be commended for their plans to continue assessing the extent to which approved diversity courses:

- influence students' moral reasoning and ethical beliefs;
- have differential impacts on learning outcomes of international students;
- have an effect on underrepresented students' leadership identity development; and
- enhance the learning outcomes of students who participate in service learning experiences, including students who live in residential programs.

Since the support for these studies from the Teagle Foundation ends in December 2011, the team suggests that the administration provide resources and incentives sufficient to recruit and maintain faculty participation in studying these issues at the department and academic program levels. The team also suggests that the results of these assessments efforts be used to continue refining the institution's criteria for approval of diversity courses (CFR 1.5, 2.2a, 2.9, 3.2).

Current Students

The team met with an impressive group of undergraduate student leaders at all levels of their academic journey. These students expressed appreciation for their academic programs and for the services provided by the University to assure their success and satisfaction with their USC experience. They also reacted positively to the University's efforts to address issues that were formerly of concern during the CPR, including:

- campus safety and security (improvements include more security cameras, more private security staff, more blue light phones, enhanced communication and collaboration with the Los Angeles police department, and Trojan Alert with text messages);
- race relations among students on campus (improvements include student mixers, residential program experiences, slowly increasing racial diversity in fraternities and sororities, peaceful coexistence in residence life between different racial groups in spite of frequent self-segregation by race in roommate selection); diversity courses, which are seen as opportunities to increase awareness about poverty, social class, racial differences, and human characteristics shared by all races and ethnicities; and
- scarcity and lack of variety in 2 credit courses which limit flexibility in the selection of electives and their ability to maximize the number of units students can take under the 12-18 unit block tuition plan, given that the majority of their courses are 4 units each (CFR 2.13, 3.6).

Faculty Diversity

The team confirms that USC can be justifiably proud of its commitment to diversity. In terms of faculty diversity by gender and ethnicity, the team notes that the levels of under-

represented groups have remained largely static from 2006-2010 (WASC Table 4.1) with changes largely due to the increase in the NRA/Unknown category. However, the team acknowledges the difficulty of retaining highly qualified faculty from under-represented groups and also the increased efforts that USC is making in this area including initiatives in faculty searches, retention and preparation for the tenure process.

The team was impressed by the work undertaken under the Women in Science and Engineering program (WISE) funded by an endowment and targeting recruitment and retention. Related activities including the formation of mentoring networks and the improvement of conditions of service (e.g. pregnancy leave, teaching load buy-out, stopping the tenure clock, dual hire) are considerable achievements.

With the consolidation of equity and diversity initiatives, the team notes the increasing attention being paid to departments which have remained outside the focus of diversity programs until now, such as Pharmacy. The team also recognizes that efforts to improve the articulations from traditionally Black colleges to USC may well pay dividends in the future.

With respect to the teaching of diversity courses, the team noted the view of faculty working in this area that these teaching assignments have become something of a “ghetto” and that a broader range of faculty need to be drawn into the task. There was agreement on the need to provide incentives to participate through grants and other mechanisms. There was also a view that the development of a community of diversity teachers across all units was needed, albeit difficult to achieve within a decentralized structure (CFR 3.2).

IIC. Program Review

The team commends the University on its creation of a new process of program review for undergraduate programs to beginning in the fall of 2010. In this first year five programs will be studied. International Relations, Earth Sciences, and the Language Center

will be reviewed during fall 2010, whereas Philosophy and Psychology will be reviewed during spring 2011. These five are representative of programs within the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences both in field and range of majors. While initially in the College, the University plans to extend these reviews to all of the Schools over an 8 to 10 year cycle.

Core guidelines for the review process were outlined by the Office of the Provost in March 2010 in consultation with the Academic Senate Executive Board and the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures. In line with USC's decentralized governance, the university-wide guidelines leave room for interpretation by academic units in their preparation of self-studies.

Based on the University guidelines, the College has prepared a document entitled "Suggested Steps for Undergraduate Program Review," which while relatively detailed also leaves considerable latitude for appropriate design in each College program. The team assumes that similar guidance will be given to the other Schools when their programs are reviewed. The team met with representatives of four of the five programs to be studied in 2010-11 and with the College-level dean who is assisting with the reviews. In conversations with program chairs and faculty, the team was pleased to find serious engagement with the reviews. Several expressed appreciation for this attention to the undergraduate majors and looked forward to learning both from preparation of the self-study and from feedback from the reviewers.

As the new Office of Institutional Research is developed, the team suggests that USC determine how IR can best support the undergraduate reviews. While there is much to be said for encouraging each program to tailor the process to their particular disciplines and cultures, the team also believes that it would be useful both to academic units and to the institution as a whole to incorporate certain common data elements into the individual reviews.

Finally, in accordance with WASC standards (CFRs 2.7 and 4.4), the University's undergraduate program review process needs to be made more explicit in incorporating the assessment of learning outcomes for each academic program. Such assessment is already outlined in the University-wide guidelines under "Protocol for Assessment of Student Learning" and both central and departmental data items are listed under "Recommended Sources of Evidence." However, consistent attention to this requirement was not obvious in the College's "Suggested Steps" document. The team also recommends strongly that at the end of 2010-2011 the Provost's Office and the Office of the College Dean review the process itself to consider what has been learned and then make any necessary adjustments. As these efforts go forward, it is also recommended that the University provide central support for departments to carry out the implementation of program assessment, as well as developing a process for reviewing assessment efforts beyond the department level.

IID. Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs

Substantive Change: Off-campus and Distance Education

The review of off-campus and distance education began with one member of the team making a site visit to the Marshall School of Business Global Executive Master of Business Administration (GEMBA) program in Shanghai, China. Based on the findings of this review, the University and School are to be commended for the resources and efforts put forth to develop what is a truly impressive and successful global executive business program. Dialogue with GEMBA administration, staff and students consistently verified the amount of attention that is being given to ensure the educational effectiveness of this program. Notable were the educational case experiences and faculty support that have been integrated into the program to guarantee the development of global executive leadership knowledge and skills in the programs graduates.

Continuing its inquiry, the team met collectively with the leadership of all of the University's off-campus and distance education programs during the visit to the Los Angeles campus. The responsiveness of each of the off-campus and distance programs is commendable in addressing the unique population needs for masters level education. Extensive attention has been given to developing and assuring excellence in the curricula, instructional methods, faculty and student support in ways that will assure quality education. Each of these programs is responsive to the requirements of professional accreditation and/or state certification, and the methods established to assess student learning are well developed and systematic. One cautionary issue that will need further review as these programs continue to develop is the very large numbers of students that the distance education programs in Education and Social Work are projected to enroll once fully operational. Since it is anticipated in at least one case (i.e., the MSW program) that the student body enrolled through distance education will number approximately 2000, or twice the size of the corresponding on-campus student body, careful attention will need to be given to assuring that the educational experience is of comparable quality regardless of the mode of delivery. That said, the team notes that these programs are being developed under the guidance of nationally recognized leaders in each of the respective disciplines. This initiative gives USC an opportunity to position itself in the forefront of developing new methodologies and understanding for distance education in professional areas that have historically shied away from technology assisted learning (CFR 2.1).

Institutional Research: New Developments in Data and Planning

The University is to be commended for bringing together data analysts and institutional researchers throughout the institution to form a centralized office charged with development and implementation of a comprehensive institutional research agenda. The

effort by USC to review institutional research offices at other AAU institutions is a useful step.

It is useful for the different Schools that make up USC to benchmark against peer sets appropriate for their own purposes; however, the University as a whole should develop a suitable institutional peer set. Such a benchmark will be helpful in such matters as development of a new graduation rate target, evaluating the impact of a high proportion of international students on retention and graduation rates, and understanding alumni survey results. Increased involvement in the AAU Data Exchange should help USC develop comparative data (CFR 4.5).

Strategic Planning

Faculty with whom we met were adamant that strategic planning matters at their institution, and describe how previous plans have contributed to the institution's current priorities and successes. The 1994 plan listed as priorities undergraduate education, interdisciplinary research and education, programs building on the resources of Southern California and Los Angeles, and internationalization. The 2004 strategic plan built upon the 1994 plan and followed a conscious decision to differentiate USC from other universities, focusing on solving societal problems through interdisciplinary research and engaging with the Los Angeles, Southern California, and Pacific Rim environs as their research laboratory.

The 2010-2011 Strategic Planning Committee is a faculty committee chaired by the Provost, with the Executive Vice Provost as vice chair. Membership includes leaders of the Faculty Senate. Committee members with whom the team met were effusive about strategic planning, remarking that the last plan "totally affected the lives of almost everyone" at USC. Members of the faculty discussed previous plans as being successful because they kept to a very high level vision, were inclusive and faculty driven, and because resources were found

to implement the plan, with deans held accountable by the Provost for accomplishment of the goals. They remarked on the seriousness with which the administration has taken the plan and said that faculty believed it was worth devoting effort and thought to the process, because resources would be available to achieve the agreed-on goals. Faculty cited the following programs as exemplary of the previous plan's success: USC's technology-licensing office created a highly competitive grant program to support undergraduate research; a new globalization program supports student-proposed international projects with societal impact; and the Marshall School of Business's social entrepreneurs program develops social programs and businesses to serve the community.

The 2010-11 Committee has met once thus far. Faculty expect the new plan to build upon the previous strategies and believe there is a commitment by the President's Office to continue the University's momentum on these fronts. Globalization will again be a focus, with a view to expanding collaborations in the South American and Mexican regions of the Pacific Rim. The committee will consider how to continue to improve integration of the Health Sciences and the University Park campuses as "one university." Schools and departments will be expected to review and revise their individual strategic plans in light of changes to the institutional plan. USC should encourage its Schools and department heads to discuss their plans across units as well as within and to embed interdisciplinary approaches to addressing institutional goals in their plans.

Faculty remarked that USC has begun to reward collaboration in research, but that barriers to interdisciplinary teaching, especially revenue issues, remain. As a part of strategic planning, USC should review its budget structure to assure that it supports the institution's goals and create ways to evaluate the ease with which faculty can collaborate across disciplines.

USC is to be commended for its highly inclusive approach to strategic planning. It is clear that faculty are energized and enthusiastic about planning for the institution's future, that they feel ownership of and pride in the institution's goals, and that they believe that the administration has the ability and resolve to generate the resources, both human and financial, to achieve their ambitions (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6).

SECTION III – Findings and Recommendations from the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review

III.A. Commendations

Representatives of the University are commended for:

Assessment

- Their openness and willingness to move forward with the development of assessment and engaging the entire campus in dialogue;
- Developing a rich environment of co-curricular offerings that include learning objectives, assessment, and program evaluation;

Curriculum: Interdisciplinary

- The programs that they have created to encourage interdisciplinary learning;

Curriculum: Global Learning

- Developing student learning outcomes related to global awareness and engagement; and global programs that provide rich experiences for students that are effective in supporting students' academic planning;
- Continuing to develop a focus on global awareness and engagement, and is encouraged to continue to develop these in light of their new strategic planning initiative;

Curriculum: Online

- The development of innovative online and off campus programs;

Students: Admission and Graduation Rates

- Raising their graduation rate to almost 90%;
- The improvement in the academic quality incoming freshmen;

Students: International

- Developing opportunities that support the academic experiences of international students, and encourages the University to continue to create more residential environments that support the international exchange between domestic and foreign students;

Students: Support

- The types and nature of supports provided to students, including providing students with ready access to faculty and administration;
- Developing their advisement data base, and the use of this data to proactively reach out to students with early intervention supports;
- The programs that have been developed to orient freshmen students to the culture of their disciplines, e.g., the Topping Scholars, the Summer Bridge program, etc;
- The time and effort that has been given to improving the security of the campus and its community perimeters;

Diversity

- Developing requirements for diversity courses, including the creation of a typology of diversity courses that is being used to evaluate the effectiveness of these courses on learning outcomes;
- The recruitment and retention of ethnically and racially diverse faculty members; and the establishment of faculty development programs that support diversity, including Women in Science and Engineering (WISE);

Institutional Research and Strategic Planning

- Bringing together a data team from across the campus in order to develop a comprehensive institutional research agenda; and
- Involving faculty in a foundational way in strategic planning and following through with previous strategic plans.

IIIB. Recommendations

The WASC visiting team offers the following recommendations:

Assessment

- The University has laid a good foundation for identifying learning objectives and outcomes at the undergraduate level. It now needs to take the next steps to implement these outcomes by developing effective methods of assessment and using the results to improve learning.
- The University should provide the necessary central support to enable departments to carry out the implementation of program assessment and to develop a process for reviewing assessment above the department level.

Program Review

- The University's undergraduate program review process needs to be made more explicit about incorporating the assessment of program learning outcomes.

Curriculum (Minors and GE)

- The University should carefully study the impact of their minors to determine if these are providing the hoped for academic breadth for undergraduates.
- The University should consider the adequacy of the revised General Education program in light of the findings made regarding the academic programs of recent graduates, including their choices of majors, minors, and elective courses.

OFF-CAMPUS SITE SUMMARY

[This is a summary form for off-campus site reviewers. A completed copy of this form for each off-campus site visited should be appended to the team report. Evidence based on the information collected may be integrated into the body of the team report as appropriate.]

1. INSTITUTION:

University of Southern California (USC)

2. SITE NAME and LOCATION (include physical address):

Marshall School of Business Global Executive MBA program (GEMBA) located in Shanghai.

3. TEAM MEMBERS WHO REVIEWED THIS SITE:

Bev Buckles

4. CONTEXT (for example, number of programs offered at site, degree levels offered at site, FTE enrollment, faculty numbers and composition)

5. DATE VISITED and LENGTH OF VISIT:

October 1-5 (On-site visit was October 4, 2010.)

6. VISITED IN CONJUNCTION WITH (check all that apply):

- CPR
- EER
- Special Visit
- Substantive Change review
- Other (please explain)

7. DESCRIPTION OF ON SITE INTERACTIONS (with whom did reviewers speak, in what contexts?):

John D. Van Fleet, Assistant Dean and Executive Director, GEMBA

Emma Xi (Junfang), Co-director and Professor of International Economics and Management, Antai College

Lisa Li (Shu), Associate Director, GEMBA

Available program faculty and twelve students in small groups throughout the visit. Dialogue also occurred with additional students during an informal lunch gathering.

8. OTHER MATERIALS REVIEWED (prior to visit, on-site, or after the visit):

GEMBA and EMBA program descriptions (including goals and learning outcomes) and curricular maps (prior to visit)

WASC Substantive Change documents (prior to visit)

GEMBA course materials and schedules (on-site)

OFF-CAMPUS SITE – OBSERVATIONS, FINDINGS, COMMENTS

When completing the following table, please provide any other information that you believe is pertinent. Please also include any recommendations you might have for subsequent team members/reviewers concerning this site.

Suggested Lines of Inquiry: Please address each of the following. Representative CFRs are noted in each cell below.	Observations and Findings	Note here if follow-up is needed, and identify the follow-up issues.
<i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> Is the physical environment and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to the fostering of learning and dialogue between faculty and students? (CFRs 2.1, 2.5, 3.5)		
<i>Student Support Services.</i> What is the site's capacity for providing advisement, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? (CFRs 2.13, 3.6)		
<i>Connection of Students and Faculty to the Institution.</i> How visible and deep is the presence of the home campus (or broader institution) at the off-campus site? (CFR 2.10)		
<i>Relationship of institution's goals for CPR/EER Reviews to off-campus activities.</i> In what ways, if any, do the institution's efforts to build capacity and enhance educational effectiveness through the reaffirmation process on the home campus carry over to activities at this site? (CFRs 4.1, 4.8)		
<i>Context of this site in the broader institution.</i> How does the institution conceive of this site relative to its mission, other current and potential remote sites, and administrative structure? How is this operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.8)		
<i>Educational Effectiveness Preparedness.</i> How has the institution organized itself to address student learning and educational effectiveness at this site? What are the quality and nature of institutional data analysis systems, quality improvement systems and systems to evaluate student learning at this site? (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)		