

Chapter Two

Achieving Our Core Institutional Purpose by **Making Excellence Inclusive**

The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in its efforts to attain educational effectiveness.

WASC Standard Two

Diversity, like technology, is a powerful presence, and institutions will not be credible or viable if they do not make diversity fundamental.

- Daryl G. Smith,
“Reframing Diversity as an Institutional Capacity”

In a democratic society, it is incumbent upon a publicly-funded institution to assure equal access to the benefits of a quality education. Moreover, it has become clear that anyone who is unprepared to function skillfully and respectfully in today’s diverse environment is at a disadvantage; the lack of access to diversity as an educational process impoverishes the educational experience of all students. The California State University system is justly proud of its efforts to serve historically underrepresented populations, and Humboldt State University is working to increase diversity among its students, faculty, staff, and administration, for the benefit of all members of the university community.

However, in recent years it has become clear that providing access to educational institutions and programs is not enough. As the new California State University strategic plan phrases it, what is required is “Access to Excellence”: not just an equal opportunity to participate, but an equal opportunity to succeed. In other words, it is not enough to admit a student population whose diversity mirrors that of the state, though that is an essential first step; instead, the goal is to *graduate an alumni population* whose diversity mirrors that of the state. Achievement gaps – demographic variation in learning and graduation rates – indicate the need for significant change in the overall learning environment of the institution.

This chapter describes progress that HSU has made in working toward achieving educational effectiveness through the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative, through building capacity

around diversity issues for faculty and staff, and through improving the accessibility of materials and methods to enhance student success.

Making Excellence Inclusive

In response to the need to make student success more inclusive, the second of two main themes proposed by Humboldt State University for its self-study was “ensuring academic excellence for traditionally underrepresented students in the areas of student access, persistence and graduation.” A Theme II Action Team was appointed to lead the effort to accomplish these goals. In AY 2006-07 the team pursued the three inter-related research questions posed by the Institutional Proposal:

1. Which HSU program areas were graduating and retaining the largest numbers and percentages of under-represented students?
2. What “best practices,” circumstances, or conditions in those programs were factors impacting underrepresented students’ access, retention, achievement and graduation?
3. How could these “best practices,” circumstances or factors be used in other program areas?

Specifically, the Theme II Action Team was given responsibility for developing multiple plans that will include both process and outcome objectives that are measurable and ambitious, and that are based on analyses of institutional data at the academic program level, to help shape a learning-centered environment and to actively promote student success. The team embraced the intellectual framework described in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) “Making Excellence Inclusive” initiative, and shared this with departments and programs engaged in the Phase1 Pilot Study.

Phase I: Pilot Study

The Action Team first identified 18 HSU program areas, nonacademic as well as academic, based on institutional data that revealed them as having SOC enrollments well above or below the 21% university average, and selected sets of institutional aggregated and disaggregated data through which programs could explore the research questions. The team prepared information packets containing baseline data, the AAC&U report “Achieving Equitable Educational Outcomes for All Students: The Institutions Roles and Responsibilities,” and a recommended approach for completing the program area analyses: reading and discussing the report, their own data, brainstorming insights and questions about influential factors and writing an analysis and interpretation of their data and identifying recommended practices, action steps and strategies for improvement with measurable process and outcome objectives for each of the next five years.

In the pilot process, pairs of Action Team members engaged each of the programs in analyzing and interpreting their data, and identifying best practices, circumstances or other conditions that influenced success, retention, academic achievement and graduation rates of underrepresented students. Both the AAC&U report and action team members stressed the value of “moving beyond compositional diversity” towards an institution suffused with a commitment to “diversity as educational process” and building the institutional capacity

required to achieve this. The response rate in the Pilot Study was 78%; by the end of February 2007, 14 of 18 programs had responded.

Phase II: Cascading Roll-Out

During Phase II the Action Team members charted key findings from the pilot reports, undertook a review of the literature and developed a website to serve as an ongoing resource for the campus constituency. They posted a literature guide, along with their insights from program area reports, and developed a list of suggested Best Practices. They made clear their understanding that it was appropriate for different disciplines and student service areas to choose different methods to enhance student access, persistence, retention and success.

In line with WASC visitation Team suggestions, the Action Team's initial intention that the entire campus immediately engage in developing five-year plans was revised into a "cascading roll-out" that required program areas to develop and track at least two best practices over three years. At the beginning of AY 08-09, the WASC II Action Team re-identified itself as the "Making Excellence Inclusive" (MEI) team, taking HSU ownership of the initiative, and a .4 faculty associate was appointed to serve as a coordinator of the effort. The MEI team developed a series of selection criteria as a rationale for programs' placement in the roll-out schedule and circulated a flow chart of the proposed plan of campus engagement (see [Appendix ---](#)). The implementation began with those in the pilot study; five new departments and programs will be added each semester over the next four years to this self-study and review process until the entire campus is involved.

The criteria were: 1) Self-identified departments (volunteers), 2) A drop-out rate of ethnic minority students above HSU average of 22%, 3) A high migration rate of ethnic minority students from the department Major, 4) Non-academic units where impact on retention is greatest, and 5) a Low number of ethnic minority students in the Major. The criteria served as initial selection factors and subsequently the chart was populated in a way that makes it clear that the entire campus is involved in this transformation, adding programs with a view to their College and their physical location among other factors.

Two workshops were scheduled in September 2008 (one for the original 14 programs that participated in the pilot study and another for the five new units scheduled to begin participating that semester). MEI team members explained the need for a degree of consistency required when working with institutional level data. They shared a straightforward tool that they had developed, which could be used by a program to readily identify achievable goals and incorporate their earlier pilot study work. The workshops further provided an opportunity for pilot study participants to review/renew their progress and more importantly to discuss strategies and share experiences with others. During the workshops the team reviewed with the groups, various data sets available on the Analytic Studies website, shared the resource material available on the WASC II Moodle site, and stressed their commitment to supporting all campus constituency groups as they develop plans to institute processes and track outcomes that will provide us with the required institutional level data. Participants were clear that our campus goal of ensuring inclusive academic excellence for traditionally underrepresented students in the areas of student access, retention, achievement and graduation will be more readily achieved when we change our conversations and track our data.

In Spring 09 the MEI team opted to meet with programs individually and undertake the same process. The new Associate Director for Diversity and Inclusion joined the MEI team, an enormous benefit to both the work of the team and the ongoing perspective of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Making Excellence Inclusive – DRAFT - 5 year plan

| Administrative Unit | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 | YEAR 4 | YEAR 5 |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | 16 | + 10 = 26 | + 10 = 36 | + 10 = 46 | + 10 = 56 |
| CAHSS | Art | Journalism MC | English | Anthropology | Theatre F&D |
| | Communication | Politics | History | NAS | |
| | Geography | Women's Studies | Philosophy | Music | |
| | Religious Studies | | WLC | | |
| | Sociology | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| CNRS | Biology | Forestry | Math | Fisheries Biology | NR College |
| | Chemistry | Oceanography | Wildlife | Geology | Zoology ? |
| | Env Res Engineering | Psychology | Engineering | | |
| | Physics/Astronomy | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| COPS | Business | Child Development | Education | | Applied Tech |
| | Computing Science | Social Work | Kinesiology | | |
| | Economics | | | | |
| | Nursing | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| OTHER | Athletics | Undeclared | All Univ | Registrar's Off | Psych Serv |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------|---------------|--|---------------|-------------|
| | EOP | Financial Aid | | Housing | Health Cent |
| | ITEPP | | | Learning Cent | HOP |
| | | | | MCC | Career Cent |
| | | | | Police | Univ Cent |
| | | | | | SDRC |

Initial results: current second-year retention rates for initial participant programs

| YEAR 1 | Retention AY 2006-07 | Retention AY 2007-08 | Retention AY 2008-09 |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 16 | | | |
| Art | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Geography | | | |
| Religious Studies | | | |
| Sociology | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Biology | | | |
| Chemistry | | | |
| Env Res | | | |
| Engineering | | | |
| Physics/Astronomy | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Business | | | |
| Computing Science | | | |
| Economics | | | |
| Nursing | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Athletics | | | |
| EOP | | | |
| ITEPP | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

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| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

Phase III: Institutionalizing Inclusive Excellence

The process of working with individual departments and programs, both in the pilot study and again in 2008-2009, has led to a greater degree of focus on the issues and greater familiarity with the data. The sharing of Input/Output data in particular has been of significant critical interest – specifically, tracking the movement of students out of the majors and exploring the factors that explain this. As individual faculty/staff and departments/ programs engage in these conversations, new understandings and new questions have emerged. While there may be a slight delay before we see the impact of this work in the retention data, the reality on campus has begun to shift and the necessity of tracking program metrics is becoming embedded in institutional practice.

While some academic departments have already made conversations about under-represented student excellence and success an integral and regular feature of department meetings, it appears that these concerns are on the way to becoming a routine element of more discussions in more departments. There has been a broad interest in community building and outreach to under-represented students as a first “best practice” and this has entailed significant discussions about combining receptions with gathering meaningful student survey data in sensitive ways.

For example, the Politics department members generally believe themselves to do quite well with under-represented students, but they cannot explain why this is the case; they realized that they have the opportunity to undertake real political research on their own performance in this area. In another example of action emerging from analysis of the data on student success, the Nursing program instituted a one- unit course, “Success in Nursing,” for all new Nursing majors; the course, in turn, is deepening the department’s understanding of the challenges faced by students, most especially by minority students. Faculty in the Nursing department are constantly engaged in elements of accreditation but have been excited to further bring in curricular issues around multiculturalism through the lens of factors behind and contributing to student engagement and success.

Examples of potential ‘best practices’ being instituted on campus

Community Building and Outreach.

- Holding more social and informative events for students and faculty to get together and develop connections and then evaluating their impact on retention. Reflecting on some of the additional hurdles that first-generation college students have (reticence to approach faculty for example) and making efforts to address them.
- Staging some of these events in Hum Week to welcome students to the department and the campus.
- Highlighting the success stories of graduates from the major who are members of under-represented groups.

Inclusive Academic Excellence

- ‘Student Roll-call’ as a regular item in department meetings – faculty take the opportunity to discuss the success of their students.
- A new one-unit “Success in Nursing” class.
- Disaggregating GPA scores by ethnicity and investigating possible causes of disparities.
- Surveying graduating seniors to determine student views on what worked well for them and what could be improved in the curriculum, the major, the campus climate.
- Student Surveys – to check in early with students about factors that will assist their success and to detail their experience in a more comprehensive way.
- Highlighting curricular opportunities to reflect on the social conditions behind the low representation of some groups in the discipline.
- Seeking to hire more faculty of color in the major.
- Instituting a student mentor program in the major to promote student success.

Persistence and Retention

- Exit Interviews when students leave one major for another to determine the reasons and then making changes if called for.
- Exit interviews when students leave the campus to determine what factors are behind the decision.

Building Capacity around Diversity Issues for Faculty and Staff

The Capacity and Preparatory Review report previously noted the fact that our campus capacity in the diversity area has been limited to ‘pockets’ of faculty, staff and students who provide what leadership and support they can, but that we have lacked such capacity in our senior leadership. It further identified the lack of a campus-wide buy-in based on a solid understanding of our own data and performance with regard to underrepresented student success, or other diversity issues that impact campus climate. The report also acknowledged that *“integrating diversity and quality into the core of institutional functioning is a key element in re-visioning the University’s diversity efforts” (CPR:12).*

In addition to the WASC self-study process, other recent activity has contributed significantly to the beginnings of a campus-wide grasp of the context and the need for action and understanding; as a result, we have made significant progress.

Establishing Professional Development on Diversity

In 2006-07 the Diversity Plan Action Council re-oriented its work away from regular large-scale meetings and moved the focus to its task forces charged with pursuing the specific actions items in the Diversity Plan. The **Access, Retention and Recruitment** task force already constituted a majority of the WASC Theme II / Making Excellence Inclusive team. The **Training and Accountability** task force worked with the Provost to institute an annual **Professional Development Day on Diversity and Inclusion** to be held on a non-instructional work day beginning each Spring Semester. This is a day that is completely focused on diversity issues and building campus capacity to teach and serve underrepresented students. There was a clear understanding within this group that to be most effective in institutional efforts to serve underrepresented students there must be a transformation of campus climate and a strong focus on classrooms.

The first Professional Development Day on Diversity and Inclusion was held in January 2008. Attendance was promising, both at the keynote by diversity strategy expert Yuri Brown, on preparing for globalization and a diverse workforce, and at the workshops, repeated morning and afternoon. A total of 129 staff, faculty and administrators were in attendance.

In October -November 2008, partly in response to some of the questions that had been raised at that first Professional Development day, nationally known consultant and social justice activist Francis Kendall was invited to engage staff, faculty and administrators in reflections about white privilege in institutional design and in discussions about organizational change. According to feedback collected through assessments of the activities, Kendall's sessions caused some to experience eye-opening revelations about privilege and about becoming change agents. Others, who reported feeling frustration and discomfort, sought out follow up discussions which provided opportunities for further reflection and learning. For example, frustration on the part of many science faculty led to the development of two workshops facilitated in the College of Natural Resources and Sciences (CNRS) by the Associate Dean and the Director of Indian Natural Resources, Sciences and Engineering Program (INRSEP). The workshops helped faculty question how they viewed student success and led the group to seek practices that could support inclusive learning, specifically in the Science disciplines. Ongoing efforts in CNRS include bringing speakers to campus to further discuss diversity issues in the STEM disciplines and sending CNRS faculty members off-campus for training.

The second Professional Development Day, held in January 2009, was centered on relationships among advising, mentoring, outreach, and retention. The keynote address by Dr Daryl Smith was entitled "*The Imperative of Diversity: How Do We Know We Are Making Progress?*" A total of 142 staff, faculty and administrators were in attendance. There was already some familiarity with Dr Smith's work in the California-wide Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI), with its clear focus on institutional learning and the capacity-building required for diversity efforts to have a sustained impact. Diversity Office staff had previously made presentations about the metrics tracked in the Campus Diversity Initiative, suggesting that HSU could readily adapt the process to build on the momentum generated by the Making Excellence Inclusive efforts, and copies of Dr. Smith's report were provided to all deans and chairs. Dr. Smith's visit to campus, however, provided an invaluable opportunity for the campus to begin understanding the need to choose appropriate metrics and disaggregate the resulting data in order to make diversity efforts successful; in the time she was here, she was able to work with the Executive Committee, DPAC members, MEI Action Team members, the Cabinet for Institutional Change and the Provost and Vice-Provost. The new Associate Director of Diversity and the Provost were able to spend almost two days with her. In a very short time the commitment to tracking the institution's disaggregated data was embraced by the senior leadership and its importance was made clear to the rest of the campus community.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (see below) subsequently developed a set of institutional metrics closely modeled on the 'best practices' that emerged in the CDI study and incorporating NSSE data and local focus group results. Monitoring our progress will transform our institutional practice and build capacity at all levels, as we broadly embed a shared awareness of the core issues behind the metrics.

We should note that although we have a long way to go there is a sense that the profile of diversity issues has been raised and there is a new commitment from the campus leadership,

from the president to the program leader and individual faculty level, to find proven ways to support success for underrepresented students. The issue has become a greater part of the campus fabric and concern.

Establishing an Office of Diversity and Inclusion

In May 2006, the Diversity Plan Action Council published an annual report which noted that the identification of Diversity with Compliance as a Human Resources function meant that diversity issues were not being given sufficient priority. In Summer 2006 the President's Office made the decision to dismantle the Diversity and Compliance Office, relocating the compliance function within Human Resources and beginning the process of establishing a unit assigned specifically to foster campus diversity. To staff an initial and interim Diversity Office, the President appointed a half time faculty member and a .75 professional staff member. Their brief was to continue the Diversity Policy and Cultural Programming functions; to conduct research about "diversity office models" nationally before establishing a senior diversity position at HSU, and to develop and present staff and faculty trainings. There were significant budget constraints; with no office budget, the unit had to compete for grant funding available through a Diversity Programming fund.

In Spring 2009, a newly-configured Office of Diversity and Inclusion was relocated to Academic Affairs, in recognition of the centrality of diversity to every part of the educational process. The staffing levels remain at one .75 staff and .5 faculty, both of whom have a part-time presence in the office. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is currently charged with developing campus policies to institutionalize diversity as a core part of HSU's mission, and to overcome the historical and social inequities that continue to challenge students, faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion continues to work with the Diversity Plan Action Council, the Multicultural Center, Student Affairs, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Academic Personnel Services, and other campus entities to support cultural programs, educational experiences and professional development opportunities that work to deepen understanding across various groups, to advocate for social justice, and to improve the climate in classrooms and other institutional spaces.

The office also provides guidance to campus units seeking to make fundamental changes to how they approach their work, in order to overcome barriers to achieving the campus diversity goals. For example, both co-directors have been working with the AVP for Faculty Personnel Services and the Provost to revise faculty search committee processes and develop a plan to diversify our faculty.

Establishing University-wide "Diversity Metrics"

Beginning in Spring 2009, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion initiated a reporting process designed to track, monitor and report annually to the campus community on a comprehensive range of key diversity-related indicators. This initiative was seen as a critical means of monitoring progress towards the achievement of the educational outcomes that have been articulated through the WASC process. It also stemmed from the need, felt across the university, for evidence-driven decision-making. This "Diversity Metrics" process has two goals: 1) to integrate the reporting of diversity-related data across various campus constituencies, and 2) to institutionalize a mechanism for ongoing monitoring of patterns and trends in campus diversity,

as a means to help inform the work of faculty, staff and administrators across campus. It tracks a range of data included within four broad dimensions of diversity: institutional viability and vitality, education and scholarship, access and success, and climate and intergroup relations.¹

First presented in proposal form in Spring 2009, this initiative received wide support as all relevant campus constituencies were invited to endorse them as a set of appropriate and meaningful indicators. In cooperation with the many departments on campus involved in data collection and processing (such as Analytic Studies, Academic Personnel Services, and Human Resources, among others), the Office of Diversity and Inclusion undertook the process of data collection and analysis for this reporting process, and its first report, “Dissecting Diversity at HSU,” was distributed widely across the campus at the start of the Fall 2009 semester (see Appendix XX). It is intended that this first report will comprise the basis for structuring and informing campus initiatives for addressing critical issues such as student retention, inclusive excellence, campus climate, and others.

[A brief description of initial report’s findings is forthcoming]

Designing for Universal Learning

Humboldt State University currently is participating in the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI), A CSU-wide mandate to achieve technological accessibility for all students and particularly those with disabilities and alternative needs. While the University has taken a lead role in accommodating the needs of students with disabilities, reporting the highest number of students with disabilities in the CSU system, the new ATI represents a shift to a more proactive approach to accessibility. Preparing web sites and course materials that are designed to be accessible represents a shift away from a system of special accommodation upon request and proof of eligibility, and toward access that does not require special status nor involve delays for transformation into a different format.

A core instructional principle underlying full accessibility is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the practice of consistently providing multiple ways for students to attain and demonstrate learning outcomes. UDL fosters the goals of both ATI and Making Excellence Inclusive by building access and multiple approaches into learning materials and activities. Through three years of participation in the EnAct (Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology)

¹ Clayton-Pedersen, Alma R., Sharon Parker, Daryl G. Smith, José F. Moreno, and Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi, *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: a Guide to Institutional Change* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). HSU’s Diversity Metrics process is structured according to the framework of “best practices” outlined in the Campus Diversity Initiative’s *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: a Guide to Institutional Change*, which studied 28 college campuses in California over the course of six years to determine the most effective ways of institutionalizing diversity imperatives in a university setting. Based on these six years of research, the study identified four critical dimensions of diversity, and suggested mechanisms for monitoring and assessing progress across these dimensions.

grant program coordinated by Sonoma State, Humboldt State University has been able to expand campus understanding of how UDL can enhance learning for all students.

To date HSU has adopted several policies and training approaches (see Appendix XX) in order to implement the recommendations of the Executive Steering Committee to bring the campus into compliance with Executive Order 926, the governing document of the ATI. The challenge, as with other initiatives aimed at supporting students with diverse needs, is to institutionalize the practices that are called for by policy, especially in the absence of central coordination. Several subcommittees continue the work of guiding the campus in developing accessible materials, tools, and media. On this, HSU has made considerable progress, but much work remains to be done.

Making Learning Inclusive

The shift in higher education from a focus on providing instruction to a focus on producing student learning provides a larger context for rethinking students' learning experiences at the university. In this context, the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success are aligned in support of one another: scholarship on student success shapes the institution's teaching and learning activities, research and creative activity engage faculty in learning together with students, and metrics that monitor student learning and success become the yardstick by which HSU monitors the achievement of its institutional purpose.

By incorporating such approaches as Universal Design for Learning and best practices for student engagement into multiple areas across the campus, we are moving away from seeing diversity and accessibility as peripheral concerns and moving toward making them fundamental.