

CAMPUS DIALOGUES FOR ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE

CSU BAKERSFIELD

Thursday, 15 March 2007

Summary

The CSUB Campus Dialogues for Access to Excellence was coordinated by Dr. Edwin H. Sasaki, FERP Professor of Psychology and Special Assistant to the Provost for Academic Planning. Dr. Sasaki designated co-facilitators for each Domain and asked them to prepare a one-page “selected highlights” of activities/programs at CSUB that demonstrate how the campus is addressing the issues identified for the respective Domain, meeting campus and system goals, and addressing community and regional needs. In addition, the co-facilitators were to invite 4-6 faculty, staff, or community members knowledgeable with the “selected highlights” to serve as “Domain Members.” The Domain Co-Facilitators, Domain Members, and the “Selected Highlights” for each Domain are illustrated in the attached document that was distributed to all attendees for the CSUB Campus Dialogues.

During the CSUB Campus Dialogues, considerable time was spent talking about the “Selected Highlights.” Additional activities involving faculty, staff, and students for each of the Domains were mentioned from other participants, e.g., the Volunteers In Tax Assistance (VITA) by accounting faculty and students, outreach activities by Mathematics faculty, Math Field Day, Science Bowl and Fairs, We the People: U. S. Constitution, Student Research Scholars (SRS) Program, Travel Support for Student Researchers (TSSR), McNair, and mentoring of undergraduate students. However, the following summary will focus primarily on the three issues that CSUB and the CSU must address to meet this goal of “Access to Excellence:

1. Current and future challenges facing CSUB and the CSU,
2. Future priorities that CSUB and the CSU should be developing, and
3. What CSUB and the CSU should/could be doing differently.”

Domain 1 – Assuring Access

Most of the programs specified in the “Selected Highlights” for this Domain are funded through extramural grants, and many of these are reaching the end of their funding cycle. Access must remain a priority for the CSU, so a significant challenge is to plan for continuing the successful activities implemented under these programs. If further extramural funding is not forthcoming, then how is the CSU going to continue supporting “access,” which includes pre-college academic preparation programs (at elementary, junior high/middle school, and high school levels), tutoring and mentoring first-year students, developmental/remediation courses in English and mathematics, etc.

Student fees have just been increased again. The State University Fee has more than doubled in the last 5 years, and these increased fees clearly affects “access,” especially for students from the Central Valley. In addition, increased fees has a disproportionate affect upon students served by the newer and smaller campuses such as CSUB, because the communities served by these campuses do not have college-going traditions, i.e., high proportion of first-generation college students many of whom are lower on the socio-economic scale.

Having quality faculty to provide quality instruction is also a key factor in “access.” Professional programs, such as business, public administration, nursing, social work, criminal justice, education, psychology, etc., have been experiencing difficulty hiring and retaining quality faculty. Without quality faculty, CSUB and the CSU will have insufficient “instructional capacity” to meet the educational needs of these students.

Adaptive technology for students with disabilities is a continuing process. CSUB has been able to meet the adaptive technology demands/mandates, and students requiring these adaptive technologies have had academic success at CSUB. However, CSUB needs a Center for Alternative Media (CAM) where printed materials can be converted to diverse electronic versions. Unfortunately, there is no funding available for CSUB to implement a CAM.

Domain 2 – Connecting to P-12 Schools and to Community Colleges

Partnerships among P-12 schools, community colleges, and the CSU are essential. Many of these partnerships are funded extramurally through grants from public agencies, non-profit foundations, and local businesses/industries. As with the “Selected Highlights” for Domain 1, many of the “Selected Highlights” for Domain 2 are nearing the end of their funding cycle. If further extramural funding is not forthcoming, then how is the CSU going to continue supporting these “partnerships/collaborations”?

Rather than “Access to Excellence” being the CSU focus, maybe it should be “Achieving Academic Literacy.” Academic literacy is ultimately the fundamental basis for “access” to higher education, success in student learning, and entry into a professional career.

Domain 3 – Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders

CSUB alumni are currently “underutilized.” Since 70% of the CSUB alumni remain in the Bakersfield community, or at least in Kern County and surrounding regions, we need to become much more aggressive and creative in engaging our alumni to assist CSUB and the CSU in achieving its goal of “Access to Excellence.”

CSUB and the CSU need to give more serious thought to the 4 “I’s” used by businesses for economic development:

- Image – what image do we as a campus and system want to project and how successful are we in projecting the image that we want?
- Innovation – how does the campus or the system create anything new? How effective are we in rewarding those individuals/groups for innovating?
- Infrastructure – how effective are we in maintaining, and growing or developing, our workforce and our physical plant to meet future requirements?
- Inventory – how effective are we in providing and maintaining needed offices and classrooms, office furnishings and equipment, instructional equipment, etc.?

Local needs for Bakersfield and Kern County are in accounting, energy fields (petroleum, wind, solar, geophysical, and alternative sources), healthcare (especially nursing), education (especially elementary and secondary school teaching in reading/writing, mathematics, sciences), social services. CSUB and the CSU should work with stakeholders in these “high-need” areas, as well as the local Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation, to determine how the campus and the system can assist in addressing these needs; this collaboration must be ongoing.

Central Valley needs, such as air quality, water quality, affordable housing, skilled “white collar” labor force, academic literacy, and visual and performing arts, represent another focus for collaborative efforts involving CSUB, the CSU, and multiple stakeholders.

Both CSUB and the CSU are “hiding goods under a basket,” i.e., we are not as effective as we can be in communicating to our constituencies all the “good things” that our faculty and staff are doing for our respective communities. The Chancellor’s Office should hold an annual system-wide summit to

bring the multiple stakeholders together to illustrate the benefits of their engagement with CSU campuses. Another suggestion was for a system-wide summit was to bring key stakeholders from high schools and community colleges to meet with CSU faculty on how to facilitate communication among these different stakeholders, including “visiting lectureships.” The CO and every campus should have a “pride page” on their website providing a comprehensive listing of faculty, staff, and student accomplishments that are scholarly and beneficial to our respective communities. This “pride page” must be maintained for currency as well as providing an easily accessible historical record.

A major issue in meeting the diverse commitments to multiple stakeholders is limited resources—time, money, and people, especially at the smaller campuses such as CSUB. We recognize the need to meet these diverse commitments, which will continue to expand in the future. One possible solution is for the CSU to consider innovative strategies for sharing resources across campuses so that small campuses, in particular, will be able to more fully meet the needs of its multiple stakeholders.

The CSU needs to provide more systematic feedback to campuses on a variety of issues and to facilitate communication among campuses so that the “spirit of partnership” of each campus with the Chancellor’s Office and of campuses with each other becomes clearly visible. The major current issue on which we all need clarification is our “fiscal solvency.”

Domain 4 – Ensuring Success in Student Learning

Success, may be even “excellence,” in student learning is what the CSU should represent. Student learning occurs both in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. Many of these activities outside the classroom fall within the prevue of Student Affairs. At CSUB, Student Affairs has critical infrastructure needs—staffing, office space, basic resources for outfitting offices, and offices/activity areas for student clubs.

Risk management policies of the CSU often restrict, and even prevent, the scheduling of co-curricular activities that would benefit student learning. The “cost of doing business,” i.e., paying for food, custodial service, utilities, room rentals, etc., in supporting social activities for our students has been increasing on regular basis and is near the “breaking point.” CSUB and the CSU must review its policies regarding risk management and the various costs charged to student organizations and make reasonable adjustments to support these student-learning opportunities.

Mentoring of students by faculty and professional student affairs staff are frequently key factors in the academic success of our students. Mentoring requires lots of time, frequently one-on-one, with the student. For faculty, mentoring is frequently in the context of working with a student on a research or creative activity project. For staff, mentoring is frequently a social relationship/network. Faculty and staff who are particularly committed to mentoring students and are very effective in the mentoring process need to receive more visible recognition and rewards and formal acknowledgement through the RTP, PTR, and performance evaluation processes.

Both CSUB and the CSU need to better articulate with its multiple stakeholders how we are educating our students:

- to have a global perspective on economic, political, and social issues;
- to acquire cross-cultural competencies and sensitivities; and
- to develop personal skill sets to interact effectively with our diverse population.

CSUB and the CSU are sending contradictory messages to the faculty and students. We are being told constantly to increase class size and, at the same time, to increase the quality of student learning. In addition, we are expected to implement systematic quantitative assessment of student learning. At CSUB, our laboratory spaces were designed for a maximum of 24 students, so increasing lab enrollments beyond 24 has a major negative impact on the quality of student learning. In addition, scientific instrumentation plays a major role in student learning in the sciences. Historically, the CSUB faculty prided themselves that our students received quality experience with modern instrumentation. Now, there is no budget to purchase new instrumentation, and no specific budget to maintain our “old” instrumentation. We are now at the point of resorting to “duct tape and a prayer” in using our instrumentation, and this sorry state of affairs has a negative impact on student learning.

Math had a very successful developmental program based upon regular faculty-student contact. Because of our budget situation, we have been forced to “destroy” this successful program because it “cost too much” in terms of faculty time. Not only is this going to have a negative impact on student learning but it will also negatively affect “access” since students not being successful in development mathematics will be unable to move forward.

The Library is often considered the “laboratory” for many disciplines in the Humanities. While the CSU Electronic Core Collection is an excellent resource, all CSU libraries also need robust print collections because these print collections will represent a big part of the learning experience for most of our students.

At CSUB, many students depend upon the campus computer labs to meet their technology needs—word processing, spreadsheets, searching on the WEB, sending and receiving e-mail, completing WEB-CT course components, etc. While the CSU supported the TII project in providing the campus with a robust “backbone” for our technology network, we have many workstations that are 8-10 years old with software of the same vintage. There are no funds for systematic refreshing of workstations, and the result is that our students do not have access to “state-of-the-art” hardware or software. The CO needs to provide campuses with more flexibility in establishing “technology fees” for refreshing hardware and software for the benefit of student learning. Such “technology fees” are common place among universities throughout the U.S. If CSUB and the CSU are to ensure continuing success in student learning, then we must establish a stable baseline funding for technology at the campus level.

As new buildings come “on-line” and old buildings are renovated in the CSU, there is greater need for smart classrooms, computer workstations, and laboratories with sophisticated instrumentation, yet the CSU provides no budget recognition in its capital expenditures for these additional costs. Acquiring technology is only the start; maintaining and upgrading technology to maintain currency is a continuing challenge. The CSU must re-evaluate its funding model for these capital expenditures and start thinking of them as “long-term investments” requiring stable baseline funding for the life of the facility.

Other technology-based issues, such as accessible technology for disabled students, information security, PeopleSoft/Oracle “common management systems” for finance, human resources, and student administration, require high staff work load to implement and maintain, which causes major tensions and disruptions for a small campus such as CSUB. There has been no additional funding explicitly allocated for these new technology-based initiatives, so we are essentially building these systems “on the backs of our staff.” The CSU must seriously address this issue if we are to continue providing quality learning experiences for our students and avoid burning out our dedicated staff.

The CO should support more system-wide “best practices” forums for faculty to share outcomes based assessment of student learning. These “best practices” need to be communicated throughout the state and even nationally. CSU faculty have done some very innovative and successful outcomes-based assessments of student learning in diverse disciplines, yet most CSU faculty are unaware of these successes. As mentioned in Domain 3, the CSU is “hiding goods under a basket,” i.e., it is not as effective as it could be in communicating to our constituencies all the “good things” that we are doing for student learning.

Research and teaching go “hand-in-hand” for most CSU faculty, since many research projects involve undergraduate students because many programs do not have graduate students. Having undergraduate students involved in research with faculty is a unique characteristic of the CSU, and we need to do a much better job communicating this fact to the public. In addition, CSUB and the CSU need to do a better job formally recognizing and rewarding faculty who have engaged students in successful research projects through the RPT and PTR processes. Finally, the CO could provide assistance to the campuses in identifying funding sources for research since the type and areas of research have many commonalities across the 23 campuses. It seems much more efficient to have a central office doing this for the system rather than each campus having its own office duplicating efforts multiple times.

The legislature, followed by the CSU and CSUB, are implementing budget allocation models based solely upon student enrollments, so there is a “zero-sum” competition for the finite budget among the 23 CSU campuses, among schools/colleges at each campus, among departments/programs within a school/college, and even among faculty regarding teaching assignments at the department/program level. Rather than this “zero-sum” competitive scenario, the CSU and each campus needs to consider a more creative and innovative “needs-based” model for allocating the budget. The “needs” will have to be based upon empirical evidence for promoting student learning, but this evidence would be more realistic and meaningful than simply enrollments.

Domain 5 – Faculty/Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success

Research, scholarship, and creative activity tied to “fair” evaluation and reward systems are key factors in faculty excellence. For staff excellence, systematic, on-going opportunities for professional development tied to “fair” evaluation and reward systems are the key factors. While our systems at CSUB are generally OK, there is considerable room for improvement.

Salaries for faculty and staff are below “market level.” The CSU must make every effort with the legislature to ensure reasonable compensation for all the faculty and staff. It is not reasonable that administrators receive regular pay increases, while the faculty and staff salaries “stagnate.” It is indefensible to be paying retired Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, and Presidents for “special projects” when the faculty and staff “go without.”

At CSUB, and within the CSU, hiring faculty, especially in the professional fields such as business and nursing, has become a significant challenge. However, keeping faculty once hired is becoming an even greater challenge. The problem is “low salaries,” which makes the CSU not competitive. In some disciplines, faculty at community colleges and high schools receive higher salaries than CSU faculty. The CSU must develop a new funding structure that is proactive, secure, and future-based, rather than reactive, variable, and based upon last year’s enrollments.

CSUB and the CSU must increase its fiscal resources for instruction and student support. Under the current budget scenario, the faculty state that they can not do their basic jobs instructing students to

achieve academic success, let alone academic excellence. It appears as if there has been a dramatic change in the ethos of the CSU from “modeling the best characteristics of the UC” to “screaming that we are a community college too.” Student learning is being negatively impacted by the current limited resources allocated for instruction.

At small campuses such as CSUB, many faculty, staff, and administrators “wear multiple hats.” This is due to the fact that the number of initiatives and mandates to which any CSU campus must address is essentially the same regardless of size. As a result, the only way for small campuses to meet expectations is for its personnel to be given multiple responsibilities. We are “abusing” people (faculty, staff, and administrators) and then using this “abuse” as an acceptable model for doing business. CSUB and the CSU must carefully rethink the number of initiatives and mandates it specifies each year. We need to be much more selective and do a few things extremely well, i.e., we need to emphasize quality rather than quantity.

Staff are normally the key contact points for our students at “entry” and at “exit.” Most of our staff do excellent jobs in assisting students to be successful in their academic experience. However, there are embarrassingly few recognition/award programs for these staff. In addition, the few recognition and compensation incentives for staff are awarded in a “haphazard” fashion. Salaries for staff are frequently insensitive to educational level, unlike that for most of the faculty. The CSU also needs to revise its release time policy for staff to take courses so that they are encouraged to increase their educational level. In-range progressions are approved primarily for staff closest to the upper echelon of management. Hiring of off-campus candidates for staff positions at a higher salary has huge negative impact on staff morale. While staff involvement in “shared governance” has been improving at CSUB, we have a long way to go before all the staff believes that there is “shared governance.” Finally, many supervisors are not trained and their practices are not monitored for fairness, effectiveness, and best human resources standards.

CSUB and the CSU must allow greater flexibility in determining workloads for faculty and staff. We need to “build” our faculty and staff, not “burn-out” the faculty and staff.

Mentoring and “Student Academic Excellence” should be the “coin of the realm” for CSUB and the CSU. Faculty and staff mentoring of students is the key to their academic success and excellence. There needs to be clear transparent incentives, rewards, and recognition of faculty and staff who are successful in mentoring students to achieve academic excellence.

To achieve excellence, CSUB and the CSU must pay attention to the morale of its faculty and staff. Currently, faculty and staff morale is at an all-time low. CSUB and the CSU must invest financially in its labor infrastructure and in effective management of that labor infrastructure. Only through this commitment of investment will they earn the “devotion” of the staff and the faculty to achieve excellence.

Domain 6: Now and In the Future: Campus/System Identity

While most CSU campuses started as “commuter campuses,” the goal is that as each campus matures it will become a “vibrant campus” with multiple opportunities for student involvement. CSUB is taking steps to make this transformation, e.g., move to Division I in athletics, the new Student Recreation Center, and plans for new student residential facilities. The challenge will be to develop a full complement of student activities, to attract students from “out-of-area,” to add new facilities supporting student activities, and renovating old facilities. While some of these challenges can be met with additional student fees, CSUB, with the assistance of the CSU, must develop creative means of funding.

CSUB, as well as every CSU campus, is the center for visual and performing arts for its community. At CSUB, the facilities supporting the visual and performing arts are woefully inadequate. The plans for a new Art building indicate that it will be essentially the same size as the current facility. What is needed is a much larger facility that will accommodate the anticipated increase in enrollments at the university.

The CSU must become much more active politically with the legislature. In fact, every campus, including CSUB, must become much more active politically with its own legislators. Every administrator, faculty, and staff member should become a “lobbyist” and contact their legislator or his/her aide informing him/her on a regular basis of the contributions—economically, socially, culturally, educationally—made by the campus that benefits the community, region, and/or state.

CSUB has initiated a “visual identity program” to improve the image and branding of the university. To implement this program, we have had to overload our limited staff and have been limited by insufficient budgetary support.

CSUB and the CSU needs to focus on what is the best for its students, what is best for the faculty and staff, and what is the best for the community that the campus serves. These three items should be the priority of the CSU. In order to achieve excellence in these three areas, the CSU needs to concentrate on: (1) maintaining highest level of access and quality of instruction; (2) having adequate facilities; (3) hiring and keeping the best faculty possible; (4) achieving the best reputation for academic excellence as possible; and (5) being the best in Athletics (for CSUB that means Division I), which is both a reputation and community issue.

The CSU must become “leaders” in the State for (1) training teachers to guarantee high quality instruction and access to the CSU; (2) significantly attacking the nursing shortage; and (3) training leaders for private business and the public sector.

CSUB and the CSU must work more effectively with the media. They need to think of the media as a “partner” in presenting to the public the contributions made by the campus and the system to its respective community, region, and state as a whole. In addition, the media can be helpful in presenting challenges faced by the campus and the system and clearly explaining not only the “why” but also the “how” the public can assist in addressing the challenges.

CSUB and the CSU should seriously think of endowed chairs for promoting academic excellence. This will likely entail financial costs, but the academic returns for the faculty and students will be enormous.

The CSU must attack the budget issues, and it must not balance its budget on the “backs of the students, faculty, and staff.” Clearly, a new business model must be considered if the CSU is to achieve “access to excellence.”

The CSU must review its funding policies/practices. The newer and smaller campuses, such as CSUB, suffer disproportionately during the lean budget times because of their inherent size of available staffing. Rather than the historical practice of funding enrollment growth based upon empirically-based projections, the CSU has now implemented funding for enrollment growth based upon the previous year’s enrollments. This change in funding enrollment growth has disproportionate negative consequences for the smaller campuses because they have fewer instructional spaces, fewer faculty, fewer staff, etc., which makes it nearly impossible to accommodate any significant enrollment growth. With all the competition for resources in the CSU, it is time to rethink the funding for the smaller “growing” campuses differently than the larger “mature” campuses. “Access to Excellence” does not mean “one size fits all,” rather “Access to Excellence” involves diversity, creativity, and innovation, not only in instruction and scholarship but also in budgeting.