

Access to Excellence: Planning Retreat California State University, Chico

February 9, 2007¹

The retreat provided a valuable opportunity to discuss issues of consequence to both the system and the campus, to identify our strengths and areas for improvement, and to offer specific suggestions for the update of the CSU Strategic Plan. Not all of the issues identified as worthy of attention by the campus or the system fit neatly into the domains that guided our conversations and some issues seemed to cross-cut all of the domains.

Before listing answers posed under each of the five domains, California State University, Chico would like to offer the following recommendations to the steering committee:

- Affirm campus autonomy as articulated in Cornerstones #10, and develop funding formulae that distinguish between the missions of the campuses and their success in helping students graduate.
- Determine whether or not year-around enrollment is appropriate for a campus, based on the mission of the institution and the demographic characteristics of the student body.
- Fund new facilities on the basis of mission and campus identity and not a simple calculation of FTES growth.
- Address the problem of deferred maintenance. (We recognize that such recommendations require the support of the Legislature.)
- Develop formulae for the allocation of space and new buildings that recognize changed pedagogies and the fact that all campuses have research responsibilities that were unrecognized in earlier formulations.
- Help develop public policy that recognizes the need to:
 1. Make clear the public and personal benefits of a higher education and the development of a stronger consensus to this effect between the CSU and the Legislature.
 2. Provide additional funding for student access (grants, loans, work-study funds).
 3. Require four years of mathematics and four years of science in high school to assure success in college.
 4. Begin an educational campaign that sets students on the pathway to college in the primary grades.
- Fund technology, either through a student-fee for technology or a legislative initiative that recognizes the critical role technology plays in improving learning, providing access, and increasing efficiencies.
- Adopt the principles of sustainable economic development system wide and encourage campuses to develop a curriculum that creates environmentally literate students.

¹ There were a total of 124 participants, including faculty, staff, students, administration, advisory board members, and community partners. For each domain (1-5), there were three roundtable-discussions. Each table had a facilitator, who focused on the questions posed for the domain in question. The retreat lasted approximately 6 hours.

It was noted by all that there are many issues that need to be addressed in concert with the system-wide planning effort. Some are:

1. Faculty and staff compensation.
2. Workload for faculty. (Many of the practices associated with student success, e.g., mentoring, advising, providing instruction for under-prepared students, all require time, something in short supply.)
3. Housing costs in California and the difficulty of recruiting new faculty and staff.
4. The need for scientific equipment and technology to teach our students.
5. The need to increase the number of faculty and staff.
6. Resources need to be dedicated to faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity and clearly recognized as part of faculty workload.

Domain 1 - "Assuring Success."

Three groups engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about how to provide both access and assure success. We will report on those suggestions that are relevant to the entire system and/or require public policy changes.

- **Public policy:**
 1. Assure that only demonstrably well-trained teachers are hired in the public school system.
 2. Provide more funds for work-study, which is shown to increase student success.
 3. Offer fee waivers for students and family members whose incomes are below the poverty line.
 4. Increase financial aid, but not as a portion of student fees.
 5. Eliminate financial differences between school districts.
 6. Increase both Cal-Grant Part A and B funding.
- **System policy:**
 1. Strengthen partnerships with community colleges.
 2. Develop a lower-division transfer module and offer portions of it on-line.
 3. Create campus-based and system web sites on "How to Prepare for College."
 4. Mandate the a-g curriculum for all students beginning in the 7th grade with an opt-out provision available only from the parent or guardian.
 5. Modify risk management policies to allow more flexibility for field trips, service learning, and civic engagement.

Domain 2 - “Connecting to P-12 and Community Colleges.”

Not all responses fit neatly into the domain questions:

- **Strengths of system:**
 1. Excels in teacher preparation.
 2. Diverse as a system. (Some noted it could be more diverse.)
 3. Ease of access and affordability.
 4. Strong partnerships with P-12, community colleges, business community.
 5. Faculty committed to student success.

- **Changes needed for system:**
 1. Continue to improve articulation.
 2. Use technology to facilitate collaboration and fund the technology.
 3. Help to improve image of teachers (P-12) as professionals.
 4. More effective programs for recruiting and retaining at-risk students.

- **Strengths of California State University, Chico:**
 1. Teacher preparation.
 2. Good reputation in placing students in professional jobs.
 3. Strong efforts in civic engagement, service learning, and sustainability.
 4. Good partnerships (all subject matter projects are represented on campus) with teachers in region.
 5. Strong partnerships with community colleges in region.

- **Role of technology:**
 1. Provide incentives for the development of on-line classes.
 2. Expand distance-education opportunities.
 3. Expand faculty and staff development for the use of new technologies.
 4. Break the link between seat-time and learning.
 5. Provide adequate funding for technology, including scientific equipment.

Domain 3 - “Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders.”

- **Strengths of system:**
 1. Ease of access.
 2. Compact with Governor.
 3. Size allows for the development of unique programs, e.g., study abroad.
 4. One-stop application process to multiple campuses.
 5. Articulation with community college.
 6. Outreach to diverse communities and constituencies.
 7. Able to leverage influence, scope, and buying power.

- **Weaknesses of system:**
 1. Lack of enrollment planning beyond setting enrollment targets.
 2. Lack of system-wide identity or “brand.”
 3. Failure to seize opportunity to develop a national/international reputation.
 4. Messages are often diverse and seemingly uncoordinated or lacking in focus

- **Strength of California State University, Chico:**
 1. Outreach to diverse organizations and the North State.
 2. Some faculty bring research to help local businesses solve problems.
 3. Focus on sustainability.
 4. Positive economic impact on community.
 5. Has helped to improve local diversity.
 6. Good connections to alumni.
 7. Good partnerships with local and regional school districts.
 8. Provides significant service to community and North State.

- **Role of Technology:**
 1. Need to develop simple, clear messages and communicate frequently with students.
 2. Use existing databases.
 3. Use electronic kiosks to welcome people to campus.

Domain 4 - “Ensuring Success in Student Learning.”

As occurred with other groups, the conversation ranged beyond the five domains and in this case focused to on what the campus itself needed to do. This was one of the main benefits of the retreat, i.e., the opportunity to focus on what we were doing well, to determine what we could do better, and how to achieve distinction.

- **Advice for the system about data and planning:**
 1. System requests for information should provide a context and understanding of how the data will be used.
 2. There should be a limited set of questions asked about the same topic.
 3. Feedback should be provided to the campus or group providing the data or information.
 4. Attention needed for data requests and initiatives that largely appear to be reinventing a wheel.
 5. Avoid initiatives du jour and focus on efforts both more intentional and aligned with strategic plan priorities.

- **System-wide issues:**
 1. Student preparation.
 2. Transfer from community colleges to universities.
 3. High schools are not able to provide college-preparatory courses.
 4. Parents need to be more engaged in helping their students complete a college degree.

5. Faculty hiring needs to keep pace with increased enrollments and increased expectations for student performance.
 6. Reaching out to economically diverse populations and helping them to succeed requires additional resources.
- **System identity and strengths:**
 1. Affordability.
 2. Potential for a core GE learning experience on which to build. (There was a difference of opinion as to whether or not this is an actuality.)
 3. Growing importance of graduate education and potential for applied doctorates.
 4. Economies of scale in seeking public support, purchasing, risk management, internships and undergraduate research (these potentials are not fully realized).
 5. Interaction among faculty in disciplines across the system (unrealized potential)
 - **Strengths California State University, Chico:**
 1. Civic engagement and service learning.
 2. Associated Students independence contributes to leadership growth.
 3. Training leaders.
 4. Sustainability focus.
 5. Connection to the community and serving the region.
 6. Internship programs.
 7. Faculty focus on student success.
 8. Residential nature.
 9. General Education is a potential strength on campus but requires greater focus.

Domain 5 -“Faculty and Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success.”

The three groups focused considerably on what was being done at the campus level and what might be done locally. However, the following observations relate to the questions posed for this domain.

- **System strengths:**
 1. Brings together deans, chairs, provosts, and disciplinary communities to address issues of relevance.
 2. Supports system-wide technological solutions.
 3. The talents of the faculty, staff, and students that make up the system are an asset (that is sometimes recognized and sometimes not).
 4. Affordability and access.
- **Changes that should occur system wide:**
 1. Improve infrastructure (and on campus) for faculty and staff development.
 2. The system should fund student success and not FTES production.
 3. The system should embrace the concept of sustainability.
 4. Faculty, staff, administration all need to be “on the same page” in addressing policy makers and the public.
 5. Engage in a strong and visible lobbying effort to improve public and legislative support for higher education.

6. Develop enrollment planning as a system-wide priority.
 7. Assure that assessment is not limited to measuring outputs (e.g., FTES and scores on standardized tests).
 8. Invest in leadership development at all levels.
 9. Recognize more clearly faculty and staff service to local and regional communities.
- **Strengths of California State University, Chico:**
 1. The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).
 2. Opportunities for interdisciplinary research and teaching (but there should be more).
 3. Real communities of teachers and scholars.
 4. Regional and community focus.
 5. Focus on stewardship and sustainability.
 6. Technology (but there should be more of an investment in training).
 7. Committed to the model of the teacher scholar.
 8. A friendly campus.
 9. Co-curricular activities.
 10. Physical location and campus beauty.