

Access to Excellence Campus Conversation
Sonoma State University
February 22, 2007

The *Access to Excellence* campus conversation was held at Sonoma State University on February 22, 2007 from 10:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The event was widely attended by approximately 50 members of the campus community: faculty, administrators, students, community members, and staff. The day began with an overview by President Armiñana and Senate Chair McDonald-Newman. It concluded with summary remarks by Provost Ochoa. The first half of the day was spent discussing the CSU planning domains. The second half was spent discussing the relationship between Sonoma State University's strategic plan and the CSU planning effort. Attendees sat at tables with easels to record their discussions. Our report reflects a diversity of ideas rather than a consensus of how to proceed with the implementation of the domains.

A few overarching comments were expressed. The number order of the domains needs to be considered as it implies importance. A suggested order was:

1. Ensuring Success in Student Learning
2. Faculty/Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success
3. Assuring Access
4. Now and in the Future: Campus/System Identify
5. Connecting to P-12 Schools and Community Colleges
6. Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders.

In other words, the domains were viewed from the campus perspective rather than a system perspective with a focus on learning and teaching. The proportion of lecturers to tenure-track faculty was cited as a concern suggesting that we strive for 25% to 75% to insure quality of teaching.

A second theme was the need for transparency in the decision making process. The retreat itself was seen as a way to involve all constituencies in this important endeavor. The transparency and communication needs to continue during the entire process of refining the system-wide Access to Excellence effort.

It was suggested that each domain have a budget plan. Clearly some efforts are currently being done so do not require additional resources. Other initiatives would require additional monies to implement. Also each domain should be assessed to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts.

Finally, it was noted that the campus' strategic plan might have different priorities than the system plan. This seems quite reasonable given the specific needs of a campus compared to the needs of the system. It is important that each campus maintains its unique characteristics and autonomy.

The following are the comments made by the participants at the SSU Access to Excellence Conversation under each domain. Participants were invited to join a table for

an in-depth discussion of an individual domain. Each table had approximately 10 participants. A facilitator was identified at each table, as well as a note taker. Below are the substantive comments made for each domain.

Domain 1. Assuring Access

- K-12 – important to address the issue of preparation
- CSU Mission has been to serve the top 1/3. Is that still the case?
- CSU needs to find a way to provide access and attract quality
- The role of the CSU in this is to provide strong teacher education -- teacher preparation should be focus – not work in K-12
- A large percentage of high school student are not qualified to enter the CSU
- Improvements are underway in math and science
- Look for ways of improving the low community college transfer rates
- No mention of access to full education once at a CSU (e.g., universal design for learning, accessible technology initiative not mentioned)
- Credit for life experiences as an access issue
- Reach out to/visit high schools to inform students better – deans, faculty, staff
- Better information for students as to the transition from high school to college (hand-holding to self-initiating)
- Faculty lectures to high school classes on area of interest – make it fun (recruiting, community service)
- System level reform is CSU-level job
- The focus on K-12 intervention and teacher preparation is insufficient. The CSU trains and educates nurses, social service workers, counselors, business – these all contribute to the health and well-being of children and are part of our ability to successfully educate our children.
- Access should be greatly expanded to cover all aspects of CSU student access – adaptive technology; advising; WEBCT support; distance education support

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

- There are not high enough expectations for P-12 and CC performance
- CSU needs better public relations efforts.
- Solid outreach to community colleges about campus centers of excellence
- Amplify excellence and market excellent programs
- GE is “dumbed” down at CSUs – GE reform needs to occur throughout the system
- Faculty driven, bottom-up approach is best
- Missing from the document is how the CSU might support faculty to achieve the goals
- Bring local K-12 to campus – more programs needed

Domain 3. Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders

- Outcomes are vague and seem unconnected to the process of how to achieve this
- Communicate clearly and specifically with “stakeholders” (public, legislators, area residents, students, etc.). This should be a continuous process that comes from the campus itself.
- Standards, evaluation, and assessment measures need to be set from the beginning.
- #1. Who does the identifying of the stakeholder groups?
- #2a. For what purposes are indicators established?
- #2b. How will faculty and staff be encouraged to be involved with external stakeholders?
- #2b. Spread involvement among more variety of people. Bringing in outside experts and specialists to help assess development.
- #2c. Specifically address alumni, i.e., beyond fundraising. They bring other resources to the campuses.
- Suggestion is that a separate domain should address all potential contributions.
- Nurture alumni participation beginning with new freshmen and continuing through their relationships with their departments.

Domain 4. Ensuring Success in Student Learning

- Identify best practices and implement these across the system.
- Where is mention of resources for library and technology?
- Provide resources to achieve #2. Providing rigorous learning experiences outside the classroom implies civic engagement, service learning, research, all of which take additional resources.
- This whole domain needs technological equity.
- Faculty development support is needed for training in non-traditional pedagogy
- Set standards and develop mechanisms to enforce them/expect more from students
- Needs specifics about library and technology/emphasize wireless and mobility, need ongoing refresh support.
- IT support of online course activity – for example, WEBCT
- Support pedagogy of online instruction
- Cap enrollment on large undergrad courses. We are sacrificing lower division excellence in order to preserve small upper division courses.
- How do you assess when you don’t have formal training and outcome are so critical? Resources and time are needed to develop this ability.

Domain 5. Faculty/Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success

- All domains go hand in hand; difficult to discuss each separate from the others.
- The CSU is hiring highly capable faculty; the new faculty are very different than 30 years ago as they are much more research oriented.
- We cannot achieve excellence without excellent faculty
- A major roadblock under 3b is sufficiently competitive salaries to attract high-quality, diverse faculty.
- #4. What is the meaning of “high performance” by faculty, staff, and administrators? Are we talking about quantity, quality?
- What do the students need or want as customer service? Expectations?
- Offering opportunities for professional growth is one way of retaining and supporting faculty.
- Create opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators to learn from each other.
- More emphasis on leadership training. Good leadership makes good morale and inspires good, quality work.
- #1. Important to state faculty quality item – encourages and supports need for continued excellence.
- We need to provide more recognition for outstanding faculty and staff.

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

- Delete items including “think” or “envision,” etc.
- Needs more dynamism. Something about leveraging the core strength of the CSU as a system using the digital developments. * See Horizon Report.
- Add incentive for faculty for development of technological innovations for teaching and learning. Should have more of a future-looking tone.
- #4 is a CSU-level issue.
- Lack of forward thinking. Needs to be a stronger statement.
- Opportunities and demands of digital age.

We hope that these comments are useful. If you have any additional questions please feel free to contact Provost Ochoa at Eduardo.ochoa@sonoma.edu or 707-664-3190.