

**Response to Recommendations from the
Report of the WSCUC Visiting Team
October 7-9, 2009**

**SECTION III: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

In an effort to further support the educational effectiveness efforts of USF, the visit team makes the following recommendations as associated with the three themes offered by USF: (a) Supporting Academic Excellence as an Essential Component of our Educational Learning Community; (b) Building a Diverse Learning Community; and, (c) Creating a Socially Responsible Global Learning Community.

THEME #1

- *As departments complete the first cycle of their assessment plans, they should be encouraged to stay focused on how best to use their data for general program improvements so that they effectively close the loop on the assessment process. The target is not only to have a systematic plan in place, but also to use the evidence to design and revise curricula, assignments, and pedagogical practice (CFRs 2.2, 2.4, 2.7). With just one-third of the University's academic outcomes assessed in most cases, it has not been possible to cultivate the "bigger picture" of assessment.*

USF Action:

At the time of the 2009 review, USF was in the first of a three-year assessment plan for all programs across the institution. By October 2014, when the interim report was submitted, USF had discovered that the plan articulated was not sustainable. After an extensive review process, it developed a new plan that was decentralized, with assessment coordination placed in each of the schools, and supported at the institutional level by the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support (OAAS) and the University Assessment Committee (UAC). As discussed at length on pages 53 through 61 of our Institutional Report, that plan has been in place for several years and programs are working to improve the process of the yearly assessment of program learning outcomes. Results are used to improve student learning in the programs. See Exh. 6.03, CAS Examples of "Closing the Loop," for examples of changes made as a result of assessment.

- *The assessment of outcomes has already led to a refinement of expectations. Programs should be encouraged to explore multiple methods, qualitative and quantitative, to develop confidence in their outcomes so that they are better able to articulate their expectations for student learning and whether these have been achieved at varying levels of student development in the completion of their curricular and co-curricular programs (CFRs. 2.1, 2.5).*

USF Action:

The University of San Francisco uses multiple strategies to comprehensively assess learning and guide curricula and program changes in meaningful ways with the goal of continuous improvement in student learning. As discussed in our Institutional Report on pages 53 through 61, the direct assessment of student learning has been increasing across the campus in the period since the last review. For example, 100% of major and minors in CAS used direct measures of student learning in their yearly assessment report submitted

in fall 2017. All but one used direct measures and submitted a report in fall 2016. Yearly assessment has improved in the other schools as well, and those programs have also increased the direct assessment of student learning. Assessment continues at the course level, to assess varying levels of student development. Program review continues to be a strength.

- ***The revision and refinement of outcomes and methods for measuring them will better equip programs to help students achieve at or above levels set by each program. Their findings can then be used by all (or nearly all) of the faculty and other campus educators to build the strongest and most supportive learning environment possible through better informed administrative and budgetary decisions in the ongoing processes of program review (CRF 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4).***

USF Action:

After the 2009 visit, all programs across campus reviewed and revised learning outcomes to align with the curriculum and be more measurable. Measures have also been refined and templates are available in the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Management and School of Education to provide guidance on assessment reports. The School of Nursing and Health Profession's Program Evaluation Committee (PEC) provides a PEC Scorecard to communicate expectations around assessment and provide feedback on assessment efforts. See Exh. 6.08 for these assessment templates. All assessment reports, both from program review and yearly assessment, are made public on the [OAAS website](#) so that findings can be used by all faculty and staff.

- ***Development of the core curriculum should continue in the context of sustaining the current momentum for assessment. This development would result in a reasonable and appropriate set of outcomes across all core areas, and the methods used to assess whether the outcomes have been achieved. Improvements might include consistency and clarity of assignments, exploration of developmental sequencing in skill and knowledge acquisition, and comparative analyses of student outcome achievement to increase confidence in obtained results.***

USF Action:

As discussed on pages 31 through 33 of our Institutional Report, a multi-year assessment of the Core Curriculum began in fall 2015. A consultant assisted the group with development of a plan and assessment measures. A working group comprised of four faculty members, each representing broad disciplinary groups that span the Core Curriculum was convened. It is charged with investigating procedures and developing a timeline for assessing the Core. See Exh. 3.08, Core Assessment Timeline. The initial work consisted of consolidating the original 48 learning outcomes across the Core areas into a set of learning goals corresponding to each area. See Exh. 3.09, Core Higher Order Learning Goals. The goals were used to create a rubric for each area. In consultation with Core area faculty, the working group reviewed syllabi from the first areas to be assessed to determine what type of student work products would be available and appropriate for assessment. Student work was randomly sampled. After a calibration session, faculty from those areas rated student work products in May and June 2017. The results are under analysis by the working group and a report will be issued in spring 2018.

- *Integration of assessment for the General Education Core learning outcomes throughout the majors should be employed where appropriate. For example, writing and oral communication skills learned in the Core should be advanced in the business program and can be assessed in a way that identifies the synthesis of learning across the entire academic program.*

USF Action:

See the above and the Institutional Report for a description of the assessment of the Core Curriculum, which is underway. Additionally, the assessment of all five of the Core Graduation Competencies was completed in spring 2018 – summer 2018. A multi method approach was used, and samples of student work from students at or near graduation was assessed from across programs from the three schools that serve undergraduates, as discussed in the Institutional Report, pages 38 – 42

- *The development of curricular and co-curricular learning outcomes is on a parallel path rather than an integrated one. It is also apparent from our interviews that both curricular and co-curricular units desire a more integrated approach in support of student learning. A structure or means to achieve this integration is not apparent and is necessary if USF’s goal of a seamless integration of the co-curriculum and the curriculum is to be achieved (CFR 2.3.). We recommend that an integrated approach such as that used to redesign and deliver New Student Orientation be used as a starting point for cross-divisional dialogue and integrated planning.*

USF Action:

This integration is happening as the co-curricular programs go through program review. For example, the Gleeson Library and several divisions of Student Life, including CASA, have recently completed program review. In each case, the co-curricular program has developed program learning outcomes and is developing an assessment plan to better understand the co-curricular program’s impact on student learning.

- *The university has relied mainly on self-report data, particularly from the NSSE, to demonstrate educational effectiveness. Direct assessment of student attitudes and behaviors is necessary to make the claim that actual learning has occurred. The visiting team recommends that the university advance its assessment of learning outcomes related to diversity by utilizing direct measures of impact (CFR 2.10, 2.11.)*

USF Action:

The University of San Francisco uses multiple strategies to comprehensively assess learning and guide curricula and program changes in meaningful ways with the goal of continuous improvement in student learning. As discussed in our Institutional Report on pages 53 through 61, the direct assessment of student learning has been increasing across the campus in the period since the last review. For example, 100% of major and minors in CAS used direct measures of student learning in their yearly assessment report submit in fall 2017. All but one program used direct measures and submitted a report in fall 2016. Yearly assessment has improved in the other schools, as well, and those programs have also increased the direct assessment of student learning. Assessment continues at the course level, to assess varying levels of student development. Program review continues to be a strength. Assessment of the Cultural Diversity graduation requirement is underway.

- *Discussion with faculty and academic administrators revealed that students are not consistently informed about course level learning outcomes (CFR 2.3, 2.4). There is little evidence that students are directly informed of the relationship between course and program outcomes. The assessment rubrics for program outcomes appear not to be shared with students. We recommend that the faculty bring greater attention to learning outcomes at the course level and specifically introduce the relationship of the course level outcomes to the program level outcomes (CFR 2.4, 2.11).*

USF Action:

Course learning outcomes are now on all syllabi. Faculty increasingly discuss the relationship between course and program outcomes and share rubrics with students as they are prepared.

- *Evidence of educational effectiveness is frequently presented as student self-report rather than direct evidence of learning. An over reliance on the NSSE to demonstrate effectiveness and the relative absence of more appropriate measures should be corrected (CRF 2.4.)*

USF Action:

This correction has been made. As discussed above and in our Institutional Report on pages 53 through 61, the direct assessment of student learning has been increasing across the campus in the period since the last review. For example, 100% of major and minors in CAS used direct measures of student learning in their yearly assessment report submit in fall 2017. All but one used direct measures and submitted a report in fall 2016. Most of the programs with the School of Management are accredited by the AACSB and use direct measure of all POLs on a three-year cycle. The programs with the School of Educations that are accredited by the CTC submit biennial reports on direct measures of student learning. All programs with the School of Nursing and Health Profession assess at least one PLO using a direct measure and receive feedback on that direct measure from the Program Evaluation Committee.

- *More complex systems of assessment such as capstone projects and student portfolios should be fully supported to provide richer estimates of student development as they progress through and complete their programs. These can be coupled with the multiple indirect assessments (e.g., NSSE, EBI, homegrown survey results) currently used to provide a fuller picture of the support provided and the outcomes achieved.*

USF Action:

As discussed above and in our Institutional Report on pages 53 through 61, the direct assessment of student learning has been increasing across the campus in the period since the last review. For example, 100% of major and minors in CAS used direct measures of student learning in their yearly assessment report submit in fall 2017. All but one program so in fall 2016. Additionally, while student portfolios were not used at all in 2009, over 1000 student portfolios have been developed over the past three years using Digication. Educational Technology Services will be organizing a task force to help with the review of ePortfolio platforms in spring 2018. Capstone courses are becoming the norm, and over 75% of the program in CAS offers a senior capstone or seminar. All undergraduate programs in the School of Management and the School of Nursing and Health Professions culminate in a capstone course.

THEME #2

- *Faculty workload is monitored and guided through the use of the Academic Career Prospectus (CFR 3.4.) The University describes the ACP process as one that allows faculty and their deans to discuss their contributions to teaching, research, and service not just in terms of quantity but of quality and it sets plans for the following academic year. Through the team’s findings, this effort appears to be an attempt to empower faculty, particularly women and faculty of color, to establish boundaries in the amount of time they allocate to formal and informal student advisement and support. This approach may actually place an additional burden on the faculty, i.e., being perceived as turning their backs on students. We strongly recommend that USF reframe this issue as developing greater capacity among the entire faculty to support students of color and women (CFR 3.4).*

USF Action:

Since the last WSCUC visit in October 2009, the “burden” of “formal and informal student advisement and support” has fallen on fewer individual female faculty members and faculty members of color, as the total number of full-time faculty, full-time female faculty, and full-time faculty of color has increased. As noted on page 8 of our Institutional Report, the number of full-time faculty increased from 394 in the fall of 2010 to 503 in the fall of 2017 (a 27.7% increase), while student enrollment increased from 9,585 in the fall of 2010 to 11,080 in the fall of 2017 (a 15.6% increase). During this time period, the number of full-time female faculty increased by 41.1%. Six years after the last WSCUC visit, for the first time in USF’s history, the number of female full-time faculty exceeded the number of full-time male faculty. During the period from the fall of 2010 to the fall of 2017, the number and percentage of full time faculty of color also increased: the number of African American full-time faculty increased 10.5%; Hispanic full-time faculty increased 74.2%; and Asian full-time faculty increased 61.9%. The number of White Non-Hispanic full-time faculty increased by 1.8% during this time frame. Since the last WSCUC visit in October 2009, the overall capacity of the full-time faculty to advise and support students has significantly increased.

- *Diversity is a distinguishing characteristic of USF when compared to other Jesuit universities, yet no data and analysis is offered on the impact of economic diversity. The visiting team recommends that USF explore the relationship that economic diversity has to the issues of persistence to graduation and attrition. We also suggest that the University explore how economic diversity helps or hinders student participation in service learning, immersion, social justice, and community action programs.*

USF Action:

As noted on pages 47 through 49 of our Institutional Report, USF has achieved considerable success in retaining and graduating an ethnically diverse student body relative to national and comparable peer institutions. Indeed, USF’s success rate in graduating Latino students was designated in 2017 by the highly respected Education Trust as second in the entire nation among four-year schools with respect to closing the graduation gap between Latino and White students. As we also show in figure 2 on page 49 of our Institutional Report, USF outperforms the vast majority of other four-year institutions in 6-year graduation rates among Pell Grant recipients and underrepresented minorities. The 2018 edition of *U.S. News & World Report* further suggests USF’s effectiveness in graduating an economically diverse population, as measured by graduation rate performance: the difference between a school’s *actual* six-year graduation

rate and its *predicted* graduation rate, based on students' characteristics, including entering test scores, high school class standing, and the proportion of students receiving *need-based financial aid, such as Pell Grants*. If a school's actual graduation rate is higher than the predicted rate, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, a school has enhanced student performance or "added value." In the 2018 edition of *U.S. News & World Report*, USF was listed as having a predicted six-year graduation rate of 62%, but an actual six-year graduation rate of 72%. USF was thus 10 percentage points over its expected performance by this measure. Only one school in the top 50 schools in the national rankings exceeded USF's graduation rate performance. In the fall of 2010, the base year used for the 6-year graduation analysis, 28.4% of USF's undergraduates received Pell Grants. Finally, the most recent IPEDS Graduation Report (2017-2018) shows that freshmen who entered USF in 2011, and received Pell Grants, had a six-year graduation rate of 77.4%, whereas all freshmen in the 2011 cohort had a graduation rate of 77.2%. At USF, students' economic disadvantage does not thwart timely graduation.

Regarding the economic diversity of our students and participation in service-learning programs, since all undergraduates are required to take a service-learning class to graduate, the number of Pell Grant eligible students taking service learning classes mirrors the total number of Pell Grant eligible students at USF over any four- to six-year period. Thus, 100% of Pell Grant eligible undergraduates have participated in at least one service-learning course before graduation. The same is true of work study undergraduate students. A recent survey conducted by the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good found that 44% of participants in the McCarthy Center's public service and community engagement programs since 2002 were Pell Grant eligible, 46% were federal work study students, and 35% were first generation students.

THEME #3

- ***The University should consider how to provide on-going opportunities for faculty and staff who are engaged in international programs to come together on a regular basis for purposes of discussion, planning, evaluation, and assessment.***

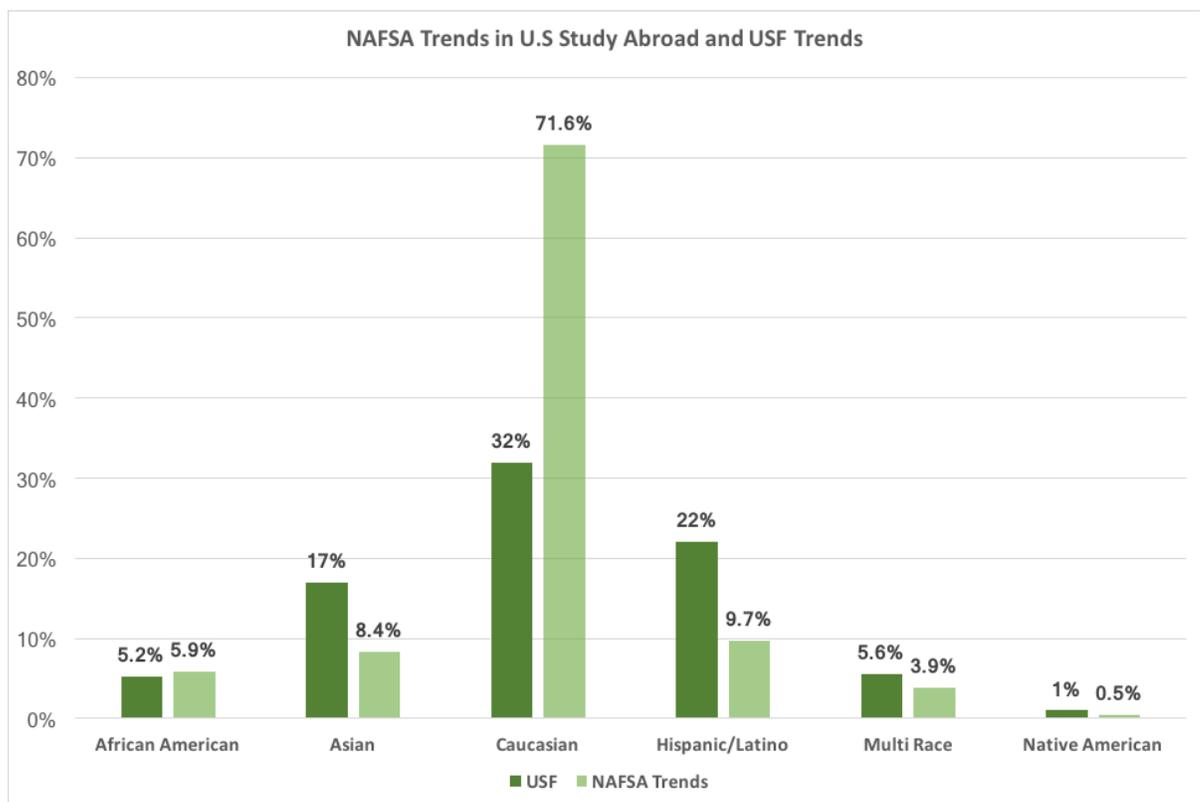
USF Action:

In 2011, the College of Arts and Science convened a task force on Internationalization. They recommended that a university-wide committee be formed that could work multiple organizations on campus to further global education and internationalization. In 2015, faculty with expertise in international affairs and relations formed the Faculty Advisory Board for Internationalization (FABI), with representation from all five schools. The FABI meets regularly along and with the senior vice provost for academic affairs and the staff for the Center for Global Education and University Ministry to discuss issues relevant to faculty, staff, and students. In addition, in 2017, the senior vice provost created the Workgroup on the International Student Experience (WISE) with faculty and staff to help coordinate support and program for the USF international student population. The provost has created a new position, vice provost for global and experiential education, who will continue to community build in the internationalization area.

- *The University should continue and, as possible, expand its efforts to ensure that students participating in its excellent study abroad and immersion experiences reflect the ethnic/racial, socio-economic, gender, and other diversity represented in the student body.*

USF Action:

USF has continued its commitment to diversity in its study abroad and immersion programs. The President’s Cabinet and Provost’s Council supported continuing to allow student institutional aid to travel with the student during study abroad semesters, when other universities were capping the movement of these resources. The Development Office has increased donor funds for immersion experiences, including a \$1M donation from the McGrath family for University Ministry. These efforts have allowed us maintain diversity in the population of students traveling abroad (see graph below).



“Percent of U.S. Study Abroad Students by Race/Ethnicity.” *NAFSA*, Institute of International Education's Open Doors Report, 2017, [www.nafsa.org/ Publicpolicy.aspx?id=667](http://www.nafsa.org/Publicpolicy.aspx?id=667)

- *USF should expand its effort to benchmark accomplishments in this area against national, institutional, and regional norms.*

USF Action:

The Center for Global Education has focused primarily on maintaining student diversity and expanding the network of opportunities for USF students. Work on benchmarking and assessing competencies is in progress. In 2015, USF participated in the NSSE Global Perspectives module. First-year students were higher than the comparison group average

in 6 out of 21 of the items and seniors were higher than the comparison group average in 10 out of 21 of the items. USF students were significantly more likely to have more diverse social circles and think more critically about culture and cultural diversity compared to students from the comparator schools, on average. These differences cannot be mapped to directly study abroad experiences and a follow up assessment is planned with study abroad and immersion students. In addition, the American Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) International Educators consortium has a subcommittee on assessment. USF is a member and is working with other schools in the AJCU on how best to measure skills, such as cultural competence.

- *USF should focus effort on assessing how the global experience and immersions have affected students' learning, especially with regard to the integration of learning from different disciplines.*

USF Action:

See response immediately above.

- *Selection of external reviewers for co-curricular programs should be based on the reviewers' knowledge of student learning outcomes assessment and the mission of USF.*

USF Action:

Reviewers for student life and other co-curricular programs are chosen based on their knowledge of the Jesuit mission and assessment, as well as the specialization of the unit under review.

STUDENT RETENTION

- *There appears to be administrative support for most of the recommendations from the Committee on Retention; however, decisions regarding actual implementation of the recommendations are left to the colleges and co-curricular units. This has resulted in a lack of coordination and perhaps some inconsistency in application. Additionally, evidence of assessment planning to determine the effectiveness of the interventions/changes is not obvious. We recommend that assessment plans be developed for each of the recommendations which have been implemented.*

USF Action:

In 2013, a university-wide committee was formed including 25 members from the many service units linked to retention and persistence efforts. Their charge was: "Using institutional data, study the processes and procedures to help students persist and graduate within four years for those who enter USF as freshmen, and within the typical program time frame, as well as for those who enter USF as transfers or graduate students. Make recommendations for changes and/or enhancements to processes and procedures, from admission through graduation, to eliminate redundancy, improve efficiency, streamline the student experience and facilitate student success." See Exhibit 5.07, Retention and Persistence Committee Summary, which summarizes the work this committee did to better coordinate efforts across the colleges and co-curricular units. Work is on-going with the Retention and Persistence Steering Committee and assessment plans for the recommendations are in progress.

- *The first-year seminars are an excellent support system for student persistence but not all USF students are able to participate. According to USF's Office of Institutional Research a study recently conducted compared three years of retention data based on participation/non-participation in first-year seminars with the results showing a clear advantage to students who participated. Any efforts to expand this program should be supported and encouraged as it shows tangible results for retention.*

USF Action:

USF 101 – “Expedition USF” is a data-driven initiative that grew out of the university-wide Persistence and Retention Committee, first convened in January 2014. The course was developed by the First Year Experience (FYE) Subcommittee after the collection and analysis of three years’ worth of data from the USF Achieve/Mapworks survey and other sources, to better understand the enrollment retention and student success challenges faced by USF. While USF has had a thriving First Year Seminar program, housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, at the time of the last review, those classes (4 units, count toward the Core, capped at 16 students) have limited availability: typically, less than half of the students in each entering class enroll in a First Year Seminar course. The FYE Subcommittee explored whether USF101—a one-unit course, capped at 20, taught by both faculty and eligible staff—could offer a valuable supplement to the First Year Seminars, *and* could be more easily scaled up to be offered to (and perhaps eventually required of) all entering first year students.

The USF101 Program is a partnership between Student Life and the academic units at USF that serve undergraduates. Both faculty and staff collaborated in designing the course, and both faculty and eligible staff teach the course. The program is co-directed by a faculty member and the assistant vice provost for student engagement; administrative support is provided by the division of Student Life. The vice provost of student life is also very involved in the program, serving as liaison to the rest of the university’s leadership team.

The USF101 program has completed its third pilot year and an analysis of the impact of the program was performed in fall 2017. To date, the program has served 790 students: 183 completed the course in fall 2015, 344 in fall 2016, and 263 in fall 2017. We are tracking retention and student achievement data for students who take the course, comparing it to those who did not take the course. For the fall 2015 cohort, student retention to the fifth semester (fall of their junior year) has been stronger for students who took USF101: 82.5%, as compared to 77.3% of students who did not take the course. For the 2016 cohort, there is so far only a small difference in retention rates, and USF101 students were retained at a slightly *lower* level: 83.4% in contrast to 85.7% of students who did not take the course. We plan to offer 30 sections of USF101 in fall 2018 and hope to increase student enrollment to 500 or more students.

Page 52 of our Institutional Report details future initiatives to support student success, including the expansion of USF 101. See also Exh. 5.08, USF 101 Justification & Overview. The USF 101: The Assessment Report will be available spring 2018.