

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM  
**EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**  
To  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

October 7-9, 2009

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
**REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION**

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitments and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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## **SECTION I: SECTION OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

### **DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTION AND VISIT**

The University of San Francisco (USF) is a Catholic, Jesuit institution, founded in 1855 and has served the city and the nation from its current location near Golden Gate Park since 1927. The University is the oldest institution of higher education in San Francisco and one of the early collegiate institutions on the West Coast. Sponsored from its founding by the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), the University continues its historic affiliation with the Catholic Church and pursues a mission that commits the University to “Educating minds and hearts to change the world” in one of our nation’s most diverse, dynamic and distinctive cities. The University of San Francisco is a non-profit, Carnegie “Doctoral/Research; Community Engaged” institution with doctoral programs in Nursing, Education, and Law and a comprehensive undergraduate curriculum and selected graduate programs in the three schools as well as in the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Business and Professional Studies. Today, USF enrolls more than 9,000 students in the five schools and colleges at multiple locations including San Francisco, Cupertino, San Ramon, Santa Rosa, and Sacramento. In addition, USF students can participate in exchange programs with a number of other institutions located worldwide. Programs and schools at the University of San Francisco are also accredited by national bodies such as the American Bar Association (ABA), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, (AACSB), the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

The University of San Francisco enjoys a long history with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Activity in the last ten years includes reaffirmation of accreditation in

1998 with a fifth-year visit in 2002, numerous substantive change activities, and the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CP&R) for reaffirmation of accreditation in October 2007. In 2003, the Substantive Change Committee of WASC approved a systems review proposal to allow implementation of master's degrees at domestic and international off-site locations without seeking prior review. That agreement was in place until January 2008. In August 2008, the Commission ratified the approval for Systems Review and it is now valid until August 20, 2012. The 2007 CP&R report documented a number of activities approved through the substantive change process. Since that report was prepared, additional substantive change activity has taken place and includes the addition of an International School Leadership Credential/Certificate – East Asia, the Master of Science in Nursing in Palo Alto, and the addition of a program in Global Entrepreneurship and Management in San Francisco, Barcelona, and Taipei. Each of these was approved through the expedited action process.

This team visited the University of San Francisco on October 7-9, 2009, in response to the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) for reaffirmation of accreditation. Two members of the EER visit team also served as part of the CP&R review team and were quite pleased to see that the USF community had embraced the recommendations of the visit team and Commission, demonstrating that commitment through the advanced use of data-driven decision making and an enhanced culture of assessment and evaluation.

The self-study report prepared by the institution provided information regarding USF's commitment to educational effectiveness connected to the four standards and the effort for building "a premier Jesuit Catholic, urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world." The themes that USF has chosen to focus upon in conjunction with reaffirmation of accreditation include effectiveness in supporting

academic excellence as an essential component of the learning community, building a diverse learning community, and the effectiveness in creating a socially responsible global learning community. In addition to the review of those issues, the team used the Commission letter in response to the CP&R, dated February 28, 2008, to frame its inquiry.

### **THE INSTITUTION'S EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT**

The Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) report is a well prepared set of documents that allowed the team to have a high level of understanding of the assessment and planning work that has occurred at USF in recent years. The appendices and accompanying digital materials included key performance indicators in retention and graduation, indirect evidence through survey results, distribution of full-time and adjunct faculty across sections in the academic Core Curriculum, and direct evidence of learning through examples of student work product and service learning activities.

The report strongly aligned with the proposal submitted by the institution in a number of key areas. First and most palpable in the campus culture is the University's Mission Statement which guides every aspect of the University's life and work, and the EER supports the assertion of the Proposal that this is lived out in reality. Secondly, Theme #1 of the EER documents the University's significant progress in the assessment of student learning outcomes, which was the first theme of the Proposal as well. The EER illustrates the steps USF has taken in building a culture of evidence, with respect to data acquisition and presentation, the establishment of Student Learning Outcomes and the systematic implementation of external program review. Third, Theme #3 of the EER illustrates the degree to which the institution has managed to integrate the curricular and co-curricular aspects of the USF learning environment. Finally, the EER provides a clear explanation of how the University of San Francisco has earned its

reputation as one of the most diverse institutions among independent colleges and universities in the country.

It is clear the institution and its EER committees conducted an impressive amount and quality of work in the time between the CPR and EER visits. As the Commission indicated in its letter dated February 28, 2008, this review process depended for its success on the completion of a number of assessment processes, particularly in the areas of student learning and educational effectiveness, moving forward simultaneously. The EER materials submitted make evident the fact that the administration, faculty, and staff cooperated in developing assessment plans, conducting numerous surveys, developing program review guidelines and establishing an expectation that the data resulting from these activities would be appropriately analyzed and used for improvement.

The mixture of textual documentation of educational effectiveness with video presentations of a wide variety of artistic, service, and collaborative learning activities related to the themes of the EER was an effective and enriching presentation of evidence. Documentation supporting the EER was helpful in providing a nearly complete view of what has been accomplished in a number of areas represented in the thematic essays and adequately fulfilled the requirements of the Standards and CFR's. The institution acted with a spirit of transparency through its initial materials offering to the team and in its responsiveness to questions that arose throughout the review process.

The report is well organized and written, but there is an over emphasis (especially in the essays for Theme 1 and Theme 2) on the presentation of data and indirect survey evidence and insufficient illustration of how these data give meaning to the Institution's understanding of the value and use of assessment. There was a widely shared belief among Visit Team members that

the Institution has done a better job of mastering the implementation of critical components of educational effectiveness than the Report presented. Excellent work had been done, but was not well enough articulated to be evident from simply reading the Report. Personal interviews and other activities during the site visit convinced the Team members that the Report somewhat understates the quality of the planning, development, and implementation of assessment activities and the degree to which they have become an integral part of the culture of the University.

#### **RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED IN THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW**

The EER and the interviews conducted on site provided the Site Visit team ample evidence that the University has responded adequately, even superbly in some respects, to the most important issues raised in the CP&R report. Of the three issues that called for focused and intensive response by the WASC Commission's letter of February 28, 2008, all three have been directly addressed by the institution: one was fully planned and programmed, but its implementation delayed by the national recession, the second item is a longer-range issue that is receiving very focused attention from the University administration and staff, and the third, the team feels has been resolved as reflected through the preparation for the Educational Effectiveness visit.

#### **Part-time Faculty and Faculty from Underrepresented Groups**

The Commission's concern with the number of full-time faculty at the University of San Francisco and the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty has been the subject of significant budgetary and personnel planning by the University for the better part of the last decade. The size of the full-time faculty at USF has increased by seventy-four full-time budget lines since FY 2002, forty-three of which have been added since FY 2006. Even more impressive is the fact that

the original university budget for FY 2010 had twenty-three additional faculty lines scheduled for distribution to the various colleges and schools. These additional lines (it is important to note that these are lines in addition to existing positions i.e., as positions became vacant due to attrition or retirement, those lines were not frozen or eliminated) would have reduced the university's reliance on part-time faculty noticeably, especially in the coverage of courses in the Core Curriculum, where 55.3% of the course sections are still taught by part-time faculty. Unfortunately, with the exception of two faculty lines for Nursing in Palo Alto, the onset of the recession has caused the University's Leadership Team to decide (correctly in the visit team's opinion) to delay filling those positions and to increase the University's reserves and contingency funds against an unforeseen or unexpected decline in general university revenues. The Leadership Team has already gathered enough information about this year's probable financial outcomes and has sufficient confidence in its financial models for FY 2011 to authorize departments to proceed with advertising and recruiting for eight of those twenty-one lines at the time this report is being written.

It is clear that the University's administration has committed itself to continue its already impressive investment in acquiring additional full-time faculty and will pursue its faculty recruitment goals as soon as and as much as is prudent in the prevailing economic environment for institutions of higher education in its area (additional information regarding USF's response to the current economic climate will be addressed in Section 2, cf. pp. 34-35).

### **Student Advisement, Persistence and Retention**

The second major issue engaging the University since the CP&R is the matter of student persistence to graduation and advising. The University has made some notable progress in this



area since the CP&R visit in 2007 (particularly with respect to freshman retention), but it remains a stubborn and difficult problem for a number of reasons.

The University has an historic and mission-derived commitment to educate a diverse, largely immigrant and first-generation American student population, many of whom enjoy neither material prosperity nor the benefits and opportunities made available by good elementary and secondary educations at high quality schools. This fact, together with the continuing lack of sufficient full-time faculty to provide more robust advising, and some possible disjunctions among the various offices and programs dedicated to reducing attrition and enhancing retention of students have conspired to perpetuate a six-year undergraduate graduation rate that, although it rose in 2008 to a level that approximates the national average for private schools, is considered unsatisfactory by the University's own academic leaders.

The Team has no doubt that the multiple efforts the University is putting forth to address this issue (cf. EER, pp.52-53 and Attachments 39-41) will bear fruit over time and with the additional capacity made available by the continuing addition of full-time faculty when the recession abates. In the short term, however, the University is taking appropriate steps to continue to gather, disaggregate, evaluate, and reflect upon the very good data sets that it has on student retention and persistence to graduation. The University might also be well advised to pay special attention to the data it has available from the SSI (cf. EER, Appendix 6, "Student Satisfaction Inventory") with respect to freshman attitudes toward social opportunities on campus (especially on weekends), toward a feeling of being welcomed on campus by individuals who are concerned about them, and toward a sense of belonging at USF. Although the Retention Committee has studied these results and recommended actions to change these perceptions, the continued presence of these concerns in the SSI suggests additional work (much of which would

deal with “soft skill” coping mechanisms that do not cost much to provide) is necessary to respond to what appears to be changing expectations and needs among a significant portion of the freshman class.

### **Educational Effectiveness**

The third significant issue that was raised by the Commission as a result of the CP&R is the assessment of student learning outcomes. With respect to this issue, the visit team has been greatly impressed by the very significant progress that USF has made in creating a culture of evidence, articulating student learning outcomes for all its undergraduate, graduate and core curricular programs, designing and implementing assessment plans and processes, and reflecting on and using the results of the data secured to make improvements in the education programs of the University. There is solid evidence that learning assessment has become a regular and expected component of the educational process at USF, and assessment enjoys widespread acceptance and support from all sectors of the University. Not all areas are equally well developed in their design and use of assessment tools and procedures, but all are clearly committed to using assessment as a vehicle for course, program, departmental, college, and institutional improvement. The specific areas of improvement we have observed and the current status of the assessment of learning process at USF will be addressed more fully throughout the remainder of this report and especially in Section II (cf. pp. 11-15; 20-21; 28-30, and 32-34) as it relates to the thematic essays prepared by USF.

## **SECTION II: EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER THE STANDARDS**

The University of San Francisco has chosen to represent its work through the use of three themes for the EER: Effectiveness in (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. The essays supporting the three themes were supplemented by data in the included attachments and appendices provided to the visiting team, materials found online and in the Team Resource Room, and qualitative data collected during the visit in the form of interviews, observations, and discussions related to educational effectiveness. Based on the evidence provided, the Team makes the following observations regarding the themes identified by USF:

**THEME ONE: EFFECTIVENESS IN SUPPORTING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY**

Academic excellence is the first theme of the USF self-study, focusing on educational effectiveness. The discussion begins with identifying the mission, vision, and values of the institution as the center of USF as a learning institution. Conversations with trustees, faculty, administrators, and students confirmed that the mission and core values are at the heart of the Jesuit tradition of “discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge” in order “to contribute to fashioning a more humane and just world for all.” In many cases, academic programs, such as “Performing Arts and Social Justice” and “Architecture and Community Design,” have embedded overt commitments to the mission. In other cases, the link is not as apparent (such as in the teaching programs in the School of Education), but it is present, nonetheless in USF’s commitment to Mission District schools in San Francisco and to Catholic elementary and secondary education.

It was, at first read, a little puzzling that a substantial portion of the first essay emphasizes not the actual learning gains by students as supported by the university’s mission but the perceived quality of the educational experience for students, with student engagement, academic support services, faculty scholarship, teaching, and development, and peer institutional rankings

listed as the first key indicators. In the section of the EER entitled, “Impact on Students,” NSSE data, EBI responses, and results of Freshman Seminar course evaluations are used to document perceived quality of and satisfaction with the learning environment. NSSE and other survey data are presented as evidence that students surveyed perceive USF as effectively contributing to their knowledge and skills acquisition and that learning measures such as exams and presentational measures are sufficiently challenging in eliciting student’s best work. Additionally, when surveyed, faculty members perceive the assessment efforts of student learning adequately measure whether students are achieving learning outcomes. These are all strong support measures for creating effective learning environments, but they are not direct assessments of learning outcomes as USF duly notes. The lack of summaries of direct evidence suggests that alignment among institutional-level, program-level, and course-level goals and outcomes is not yet fully articulated (CFR 1.2).

### **Program Learning Outcomes Assessment**

Student learning outcome assessment within undergraduate and graduate academic programs is evident beyond the EER report from further exploration of the USF assessment website and documents provided during the onsite visit. It is clear from this additional evidence that USF has established a strong beginning of an assessment culture, especially in the last two years. Examination of academic program learning outcomes indicates the institution is between the “emerging” and “developed” rankings of the WASC Program Learning Outcomes Rubric and the Educational Effectiveness Framework Rubric. Most programs have worked on developing a “reasonable” list of outcomes, explaining that in some cases, they began with too many or too poorly defined a set of outcomes so that in the last year or two, they have worked on revising the list (CFR 2.4). Programs should be encouraged to revisit and revise as needed the alignment

between program-level and course-level outcomes so that outcome achievement is clarified and adequately examined (CFR 2.3).

Many of the programs have outcomes that identify knowledge, skills, and values, and many of the curricular maps show an understanding of learning as a developmental process with outcomes as introduced, moderately covered, or comprehensively covered. Indeed, the supporting guidelines encourage faculty by description and example about the need and rationale for such alignment tasks. However, program-level curricular mapping shows inconsistencies typical of newly implemented assessment plans, where sequencing is lacking or measurement of the same outcome across different courses is problematic in some way. Since only one-third of the actual assessments have been collected and analyzed (and, in most cases, with little or no repetition over time), there is little direct evidence that students are systematically progressing throughout a well-sequenced curricular program (CFR 4.4). Once most programs have been through one or two full cycles, the faculty should be able to develop a larger picture of program results, and begin to base curricular decisions upon full sets of results. 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, 4.4).

From the dates on most documents in the binders and online, it appears that significant progress has been made in developing three-year assessment plans in the majority of undergraduate and graduate programs (CFRs 2.4 and 2.7). Assessment plans are identified for the graduate programs; clear examples of these are provided for the School of Business and Professional Studies and the School of Education. Using WASC's Educational Effectiveness

Framework Rubric, most of the undergraduate and graduate plans are ranked between the “emerging” and the “developed” stages. Plans are mostly in place; assessment occurs periodically, using direct methods with some additional qualitative and descriptive data. However, results vary widely in their initial assessments. Most programs have only assessed one-third of their outcomes just once using primarily one method for each outcome. How results are interpreted widely varies with no systematic understanding of what constitutes “achievement of expectations.” A few programs use benchmarking through implementing appropriate standardized rubrics or tests, such as the professional certification examinations in several of the SBPS undergraduate programs and the use of ETS field tests in multiple subject areas (CFRs 2.4, 2.7, 4.4).

Communicating program outcomes or course outcomes with students on course syllabi is inconsistently practiced (e.g., see CDs of program course syllabi provided in the Team Room). Discussions with students from English, Performing Arts and Social Justice, and Architecture and Community Development revealed that many students knew about “course objectives” or “course outcomes,” and they said that their instructors had discussed them in the class. The faculty, from their perceptions, seemed genuinely concerned about what students were learning. Faculty were focused on the process as well as the product of the students’ learning experience. Students, for the most part, had not heard about program outcomes, nor did they know what rubrics were (CFR 2.5). Students and faculty were engaged jointly and separately in critical and creative scholarship, and curricular and instructional innovation appear to be valued and supported (e.g., service learning courses with community partnerships) (CFR 2.8).

## **Core Curriculum**

At the heart of liberal arts education is the breadth of discipline-based knowledge, skills, and values as these align with the mission, vision, and values of the institution. USF has developed a core curriculum map spanning six area concentrations and two course requirements in service learning and cultural diversity. There are various core courses that satisfy each of the area requirements. Currently, four course requirements have been assessed: philosophy, ethics, public speaking, and rhetoric and composition. Core-level assessments show greater awareness and understanding of the process of systematic and collective evaluation than can be found in program-level assessments. For example, faculty were engaged in revision of outcomes to produce a reasonable and appropriate set; they were careful in collecting randomized samples of student work across sections of core courses; they explored possible ways to establish greater consistency across assignments and assessments; they have considered comparative analyses of students able/unable to enroll in basic competencies their first year; they have noted pedagogical discrepancies between full-time and adjunct professors; and they are interested in exploring developmental advances in basic competencies after students completed basic first-level core courses (CFRs 2.5, 2.6, 4.3). The core curriculum subcommittees should be encouraged to continue their initial and monumental efforts in student learning outcomes assessment, keeping issues of validity and reliability foremost in their measurement processes.

## **THEME TWO: BUILDING A DIVERSE LEARNING COMMUNITY**

University of San Francisco has a long, rich history of commitment to diversity; first, through its long time practice of enrollment of immigrants and then later by the inclusion of African American students and women. More recently, that commitment has been demonstrated through efforts to develop a campus population that reflects the diversity of the Bay Area. USF's

commitment to a diverse learning community is expressed through the 2001 statement of *Mission, Vision and Values*. Specifically USF will “distinguish itself as a diverse, socially responsible learning community...” that believes in and is committed to “diversity of perspectives, experiences, and traditions as essential components of a quality education in our global context” (CFR 1.1, 1.2). USF’s goals for studying its effectiveness in building a diverse learning community were to analyze its structural diversity and how that diversity has had a positive impact on students and alumni. The EER addresses three aspects of diversity: gender, ethnicity/race and economic status. The EER presents an analysis of the current status of diversity followed by an analysis of the impact of that diversity. USF deserves to be congratulated on the preparation of this essay which demonstrates compliance with the WASC Standards and a wide array of review criteria. A fuller inclusion of voices of the students, faculty, and staff, however, would have brought to life the significance of the data presented and painted a richer description of the importance of diversity on the campus.

### **Current Status**

**Student Diversity:** USF reports that it is among the most ethnically diverse higher education institutions in the country and the second most ethnically diverse among Jesuit colleges and universities (CFR 1.5). The ethnic diversity of the student body appears to be an important factor in student enrollment decisions. During the last decade there has been little change in the percentage of students from each ethnicity with the exception of a decline of 7 percentage points in White students, an increase of 4 percentage points in Hispanic students, and an increase of 2 percentage points in Hawaiian/Pacific Islands students. USF has also experienced an increase in international students in the past five years. The percentage of female students has increased by 11 percentage points during the past 10 years. Female students now



comprise nearly 62% of the student body. A key indicator of the economic diversity of the student population is the percentage of students qualifying for the Pell Grant which reached a high of 26.6% in 2003, declined to 21% at the time of the writing of the EER and has since rebounded to 25.3% of the student body.

It is clear from the university's literature and our visit that USF seeks to enroll a diverse student body including students from underserved and lower socio-economic communities; it is unclear whether the current student body profile represents outcomes of intentional efforts on the part of USF, the effect of changing demographics, or other factors (CFR 1.4). Likewise, it is unclear whether a plan to maintain or further diversify the student body exists (CFR 1.4). USF has done a good job in collecting and reporting student demographic data. There is, however, considerably less evidence of analysis, interpretation, and use of that demographic data. An example would be the lack of evidence of response in the face of the decline in the percentage of White students enrolled and the percentage decrease in eligible Pell Grant awardees.

**Faculty Diversity:** The WASC CPR visiting team suggested that the university evaluate “the issue of the perception that there is heavy pressure on faculty and staff of color to supply a diverse presence in so many areas of university life and work” (CFR 3.2, 3.3). Subsequently the Commission recommended that USF give continuing attention to faculty from underrepresented groups. Faculty workload is monitored and guided through the use of the Academic Career Prospectus, a process in which the dean or associate dean and the faculty member review performance, accomplishment, and commitments and reach a decision on what is appropriate in the professional and personal development of the faculty member (CFR 3.4). This effort appears to be an attempt to empower faculty, particularly woman 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 cultural capacity among the entire faculty to support students of color, women, students with disabilities and other cohorts (CFR 3.4).

The ethnic/racial diversity of the faculty is not comparable with that of the student body although USF reports an increase in the percentage of full-time faculty from all ethnic/racial groups except Latinos and Whites since 2001. The ethnic/racial diversity of part-time faculty has increased by 8 percentage points since 2001. The percentages of full- and part-time female faculty have increased by 6 percentage points and 14.4 percentage points respectively since 2001. The university notes, however, that “the current financial crisis has forced us to postpone recruitment in 21 lines during AY 2008-2009.” University leaders have assured the visiting team that the postponed positions will be restored as quickly as possible (cf. pp. 7-8). The positions are not earmarked for faculty of color although USF adheres to federal affirmative action guidelines (CFR 3.2). We encourage USF to also reinstate, as funding permits, programs designed to support doctoral candidates from underrepresented populations to complete their dissertations and gain experience as faculty.

**Staff Diversity:** Ethnic/racial diversity of full-time staff is consistent with that of the Bay Area with the exception of Latinos who are reported by USF as “dramatically underrepresented” (CFR 3.2). This seems remarkable given the significant growth in the Hispanic/Latino/a population in the Bay Area. The EER does not indicate whether efforts to respond to this finding are planned (CFR 4.1). The percentage of women in executive/administrative positions has increased by 19.2% since 2001 but remains underrepresented in technical/paraprofessional and skilled craft positions.

**Trustee Diversity:** Efforts to diversify the ethnic/racial profile of the Board of Trustees have resulted in a modest 5 percentage point reduction in White Trustees. The percentage of female Trustees has remained essentially unchanged during the past four years. Although the Board does not reflect the demographic composition of the student body, it is genuinely committed to the enrollment and graduation of a diverse student body.

**Curricular/Co-Curricular Attention to Diversity:** Ethnic/racial diversity is supported through the curriculum in the form of a required course on cultural diversity and in several ethnicity-oriented majors and minors (CFRs 1.5, 2.2a). USF's mission of "social justice" supports diversity as a central role in its curriculum in a number of unique ways, for example, the "Architecture and Community Design" major. Support in the co-curriculum occurs primarily through the Multicultural Student Service Office which supports ethnic or culture clubs as well as training in cultural sensitivity for students, faculty, and staff (CFRs 2.11, 2.13). Additional co-curricular programming is provided through various centers such as the Center for Latino Studies in the Americas (CELASA), through academic departments and interdisciplinary programs. Gender diversity is also supported through the curriculum in the form of an interdisciplinary minor in Gender and Sexualities Studies and in the co-curriculum through a variety of programs sponsored by academic departments.

### **Effectiveness**

USF studied the impact of diversity in the composition of the student body, faculty, and staff in the areas of academic and scholarly achievement, interpersonal behavior, psycho-social climate, and the co-curriculum as well as on alumni. Evidence of impact was demonstrated through a variety of surveys including the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the Educational Benchmarking Inc.-Housing (EBI), the

Graduating Student Survey (GSS), an alumni survey, and interviews (CFR 2.11). The evidence presented strongly suggests that students and alumni attribute an increase in their understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the university. It is unclear to what extent the efforts to include diversity education in the curriculum and in the co-curriculum have contributed to this outcome. The university might benefit from assessing curricular and co-curricular outcomes more directly (CFR 2.11).

The visiting team wishes to acknowledge the extensive effort made to assess students' perceptions of their experience. Student self-report is a valuable indicator of impact; however, it is indirect evidence. The university has relied mainly on self-report data, particularly from the NSSE. 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 the impact of curricular and co-curricular programs (CFRs 2.10, 2.11). A particularly valuable aspect of the NSSE which the university has used very well is student report of the frequency in which they engage in educationally purposeful activities. The university has identified a decline in first-year student interaction with diverse others and cites a related decline in first-year student perception that the university emphasizes such interaction. The university also acknowledges a decrease in overall satisfaction among first-year students. We commend the university's acknowledgement of the need to understand further the causes of this issue and its efforts to develop strategies to reverse these situations (CFR 1.2).

The impact of the interaction among diverse others in co-curriculum is acknowledged as is the Division of University Life's effort to develop student and staff cultural competency (CFRs 2.13, 3.4). A Council on Equity and Inclusion has been created to engage students and

staff in learning experiences related to cultural competency (CFRs 2.13, 3.4). It is unclear whether this effort is in response to an identified problem or as an enhancement to existing programmatic efforts. Likewise it is unclear what outcomes are desired from the effort. Effectiveness of this approach is incomplete due to the newness of the effort.

USF has presented a large amount of data related to the positive impact of the racial/ethnic diversity of the university on student awareness, understanding, values, and worldview. Other than indicating that a socio-economic diversity is a distinguishing characteristic of USF when compared to other Jesuit universities no data and analysis is offered on the impact of this aspect of diversity.

### **THEME THREE: EFFECTIVENESS IN CREATING A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

The University of San Francisco has a deep and abiding commitment to social responsibility and global perspectives that is rooted in its Catholic and Jesuit mission, tradition, and values—both of which emphasize social justice and strengthening the bonds among individuals and peoples. The University’s vision is to be “internationally recognized as a premier Jesuit Catholic urban University with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world.” The visiting team found the third essay to be the strongest of the three submitted for the EER, as it provided descriptions of what the University is doing in this area, along with an array of quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrating the extent to which the University is achieving its mission and vision (CFRs 2.10, 2.6).

Members of the visiting team were impressed by the extent to which the University’s mission is understood and embraced throughout the community. We found extensive evidence of awareness of the university’s distinctive mission in numerous discussions with students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the Board of Trustees. Discussions with faculty,

administration, and trustees made it clear that issues of social responsibility and global perspectives have come to be an integral part of community life at USF. This is reflected in both the curriculum and the co-curriculum (CFR 4.6). There is clearly widespread “buy-in” for a diverse and inclusive culture that is based in the University’s mission, vision, and values.

Current students, faculty, staff, and alumni shared compelling stories about how experiences in University programs had shaped students’ career and educational decisions and had continued to impacted graduates’ lives long after they had completed their on-campus studies. Surveys of continuing students, graduating seniors, and alumni provided quantitative and qualitative evidence to support what was described by members of the campus community.

USF has also received considerable external recognition for its work in this area and has been identified by the Carnegie Foundation as one of the nation’s most community engaged postsecondary institutions. The University has been recognized by local non-profit community agencies in San Francisco and has been consistently described by *The Washington Monthly* as one of the universities with the most distinguished record “for being an engine of social mobility, supporting research and promoting an ethic of service” (CFRs 2.7, 4.8).

USF’s core requirements have been established to assist students to “understand and value cultural and ethnic differences in a multicultural society and global world,” and the University offers a wealth of courses (150+) with a significant global perspective. There is also a wide array of undergraduate majors, minors, graduate and professional programs with international emphases. The University offers instruction in more than a dozen languages and undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences are required to demonstrate second course proficiency in a language other than English (CFR 2.6). Nearly half of graduating seniors reported that they had learned a foreign language.

Curricular initiatives to create a socially responsible global learning community include immersion programs, such as the African Studies Department's *South Africa Today* course, which engages students to work with street children in Durban; a School of Nursing project that trains midwives in Guatemala; an Art and Architecture course that supports economically poor communities to identify building needs and then engages students to collaborate with community members to plan, design and construct projects—such as a library for AIDS orphans in Zambia, housing for immigrants in Leon, Mexico, and a community center for a rural Nicaraguan farming village. In discussing an immersion course that took a diverse group of students to Finland, a faculty member recalled how those students shared the common experience of being “strangers in a strange land,” which created a sense of bonding and community among them that might otherwise have not occurred.

In addition to the core curriculum, major, and minors, USF offers study abroad, field experiences, and other opportunities to support its students to develop an enhanced sense of social responsibility and global perspectives. For example, nearly 30% of graduating seniors reported having studied abroad and more than 350 students did so in AY 2007-2008. Students, faculty, and alumni spoke in admiring terms about the example set by the President, who has engaged his leadership team, trustees, and faculty members to participate in immersion experiences. In addition to providing insights into student and faculty experiences, there was a sense that these actions strengthened the credibility of these programs and enhanced a broader sense of community.

The faculty plays a critical role in supporting students to develop socially responsible global perspectives. For example, there was a wealth of experience and background represented at a meeting of faculty and staff who are currently engaged in international education programs.

However, it does not seem that these colleagues meet on a regular basis. The University would do well to consider how to provide on-going opportunities for faculty and staff who are engaged in international programs to come together on a formal or informal basis for purposes of planning, coordination, and assessment. In addition to public proclamations and budget allocations, a university communicates its values and priorities in its recognition and reward system. USF is to be commended for its commitment and valuing of this work, as is reflected in the fact that faculty involvement in these initiatives is considered as part of teaching effectiveness—rather than institutional service—in the promotion, rank, and tenure process.

USF should continue and expand its efforts to ensure that students participating in the University's excellent immersion experiences reflect the ethnic/racial, socio-economic, gender, and other diversity represented in the student body. Faculty and staff reported that concerted efforts were made to ensure that financial considerations did not limit student participation. Indeed, several faculty referred to efforts to "privilege" students who might otherwise not participate in such programs, including efforts to offer a variety of options (e.g., one-week, ten-day and two-week courses), as well as charging students tuition for only two (2) units of a four (4) unit course. However, in a meeting with a diverse group of 12-13 multicultural students, all but one student indicated that lack of financial resources would prevent them from participating in these programs.

The University has also taken a serious and thoughtful approach to service learning and has established effective criteria for the proposal, review and approval of courses that meet the service learning requirement. All service learning initiatives include personal and structured reflection along with classroom work. Undergraduates are required to complete at least one service learning course, which include internships, clinical experiences, and other off campus



opportunities. In Spring 2009, more than a quarter of all USF undergraduates were enrolled in 104 courses emphasizing community engagement.

USF also offers a wide range of other programs intended to advance the same goals. These include the USF Street Law Program, which educates young people about the law and provides legal assistance to people in low-income communities; working with the economically poor in communities across San Francisco; and tutoring inner city youth. The University provided NSSE data indicating that the percentage of seniors participating in community-based service learning has increased significantly in the last four years—from 32% to 48%.

The EER provided quantitative and qualitative evidence to support claims of effectiveness in this area by highlighting exemplary curricular and co-curricular programs and sharing survey data from students and alumni. Student surveys found students expressing their view that USF emphasizes community involvement through the curriculum, co-curriculum, student clubs, retreats, and workshops. Nearly 80% of graduating seniors reported that their sense of social justice had been strengthened as a result of their experiences (CFR 2.2). USF students were reported to have contributed 217,000 hours to community service (CFR 2.3). Similarly, a recent survey of alumni found respondents nearly unanimous in reporting that their commitment to social justice, awareness of international issues, and their adherence to professional ethics had been developed and strengthened as a result of their educational experiences at USF. The institution should continue and expand its effort to benchmark its accomplishments in this area against national, institutional, and regional norms (CFR 2.7). It should also continue and expand its efforts to assess how the global experience and immersions have affected students' learning, especially with regard to the integration of learning from different disciplines.

International education exchange has long been a hallmark of the University of San Francisco. In addition to encouraging and supporting U.S. students to study abroad, the University enrolls nearly 900 students (517 undergraduates; 360 graduates) from around the world. USF recognizes the important role these students play in creating a socially responsible global learning community. There is also an intensive English program that supports students from abroad to acquire the linguistic and cultural skills needed to succeed academically and personally. The presence of international students—who themselves are from diverse countries, cultures, and backgrounds—provides additional learning opportunities for the USF community. USF should be commended for its on-going and increasingly effective efforts to recruit, enroll and support students from abroad.

The Office of International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) plays a lead role in shaping the University's response to students from abroad. However, a 2006 self-study and external review of ISSS suggested that program staff is severely taxed by increased SEVIS reporting requirements, which detract from their ability to respond to students' educational, personal, and cultural needs (CFR 3.1). The institution responded positively to that concern and added a staff position to respond to the increased regulatory requirements. Surprisingly, that same report called on the ISSS to focus on service rather than student learning. An outcome of that review has been recognition that selection of external reviewers for co-curricular program should be based on the reviewers' knowledge of student learning outcomes assessment and the mission of USF. ISSS should ensure that its programs are consistent with the learning, mission, goals and assessment processes of the University. At the same time, the ISSS should seek to ensure that the staff of the ISSS is commensurate with student needs and the University's commitment and obligations to support students from abroad.

## **INSTITUTION'S SYSTEMS FOR ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING**

The University of San Francisco's EER report and a meeting with the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee confirm that substantial progress has been made in the assessment of the Core Curriculum (CFR 2.7) and the use of direct measures of student learning outcomes from the Core (CFRs 2.2a, 2.10). The core divisions of Rhetoric and Composition, Public Speaking, Philosophy, and Ethics are in varying stages of utilizing assessment results to refine assessment methods, improve the clarity of student performance expectations (CFR 2.12), and develop new pedagogical and evaluation strategies. The faculty who teach in these divisional areas should be acknowledged for the seriousness with which they have engaged assessment and the use of assessment results. The success of these efforts is evidenced in positive student perception of the influence of the Core Curriculum and the quality of instruction on their achievement of the learning goals of the Core as compared to non-Core courses (CFR 2.10).

Progress on the assessment of academic programs outside of the Core Curriculum (although impressive in its scope and organization) is less robust as the Academic Program Review web site demonstrates (CFR 2.7). Program outcome assessment has resulted in an awareness of the linkage between course outcomes and program outcomes (CFR 2.3). There is considerable variability in the use of direct evidence which is acknowledged as an area for improvement. It appears that WASC rubrics have not been incorporated into the program review process. Program faculty may find the use of the WASC rubrics to be informative as an additional benchmark.

Faculty are actively engaged in reflection on assessment findings and the implications for curricular improvement (CFR 2.7); however, recommendations for improvement tend to be course-based and short-term (e.g. send more students to the Writing Center and give students

more exam-practice type activities). In order to achieve a more holistic and integrated learning experience, we encourage USF to think of program goals as a whole and how a particular set of assessment results represent an evaluation of learning on a developmental spectrum across the program's curriculum (CFR 2.2a).

Indirect assessment of graduate outcomes (CFR 2.6) reflects a high degree of alumni satisfaction with curricular and co-curricular experience—with some exceptions noted by gender and race. Alumni report that their USF education provided them with the basic skills and abilities commonly thought of as associated with an excellent general education (CFR 2.2). They also reported that the skills and abilities obtained through their USF education prepared them for their first job after graduation and to make a difference in society (CFR 2.2). Alumni surveys demonstrate that many alumni have integrated the USF mission into their lives.

In spite of the shortcomings noted in the immediately preceding paragraphs, the visiting team commends USF on the progress it has made in developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to outcome assessment. Our interactions with the faculty, staff, and students have revealed more dramatically than is explicitly communicated in the EER a campus community that is committed to student learning improvement through the use of assessment and to institutional learning through the assessment process. Our comments, therefore, should be understood as suggestions for improvement and for further development. Assessment has afforded USF faculty the opportunity to engage each other in dialogue focused on curricular and instructional innovation as well as to develop personal knowledge of assessment practice (CFR 2.8). Ample evidence has been presented to demonstrate that USF recognizes and promotes linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning and service (CFR 2.9).

We are, however, concerned that 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 (CFR 2.4).

### **Support for Student Learning**

USF identified a decline in student retention as a significant concern and has made the understanding of and response to that situation an institutional priority. The Committee on Student Retention was created and charged with studying USF attrition factors and making recommendations for improvement. The Visiting Team commends the Committee on Student Retention for the comprehensive manner with which they have approached their responsibilities. They have grounded their study in the literature on retention, assessment of factors at USF, and the incorporation of best practices in their recommendations (CFR 2.10.) Our visit with the Committee revealed that the implementation of the Committee's recommendations is not as systematic as the process that created the recommendations. While there appears to be administrative support for most of the recommendations, decisions regarding actual implementation of the recommendations is 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 yet apparent.

Student concerns with the access to and quality of academic and career advisement was noted by the CPR visiting team in 2007. The need for continuing attention to advisement was indicated in the Commission's Action Letter following the CPR. During the past two years USF has made a concerted effort to improve advisement (CFRs 2.11, 2.12, 2.13). These efforts have

included hiring three new retention counselors; development of a faculty-student mentoring program for well prepared students; intrusive advising and mentoring workshops for students on probation or at risk of academic failure; an on-line tutorial explaining graduation requirements and registration procedures for entering students; development of intrusive advising with students withdrawing from classes after the Census Date, and career planning information which has been placed on-line. USF deserves recognition and commendation for the seriousness with which it has responded to this issue. The extent to which the various initiatives have been assessed or assessment plans established, however, is still unclear. The lack of clarity may be related to the decentralized nature of academic advising and thus the absence of a coordinating entity. Discussions with students suggest that efforts to improve advisement have not significantly improved student perceptions. Whether this reflects misdirected effort or lack of successful implementation should be determined. However, the absence of an organizing mission and framework for academic advisement may make that determination impossible.

## **STUDENT SUCCESS**

The university identified retention and graduation rates as “important indicators of success as well as of the academic and personal support” provided to students. A high degree of first-to-second year attrition variability exists within and among ethnic/racial groups entering the university between 2002 and 2007. White students had the highest attrition rate in five of the six years studied. Asian/Pacific Islander students had the lowest attrition rate four of the six years. The two-year attrition rate shows a pattern similar to the one-year attrition rate. In addition, the most recent six-year graduation rate (first-year students entering in 2002) reveals wide variability among ethnic/racial groups. African Americans had the lowest rate at 51.1% and Hispanic the highest at 73.3%, closely followed by Asian/Pacific Islander students at 71.0% and Foreign

students at 69.8%. White students' six-year graduate rate was 61.2. African American students and White students have experienced a decline in graduation rate since 1996. A review of one-year and two-year attrition rates and six-year graduation rates among men and women reveal that men tend to have higher attrition and lower six-year graduation rates.

The administration's expressed dissatisfaction with the retention and graduation rate data noted above indicates a belief that the University can do better. USF has responded positively by establishing the Committee on Student Retention which has utilized assessment data to recommend strategies to improve retention. The Committee on Student Retention should be acknowledged for the comprehensive approach they have employed in their study of attrition. Many and perhaps most of their recommendations have been implemented. Our visit with the Committee on Retention, however, revealed that their recommendations were grounded in theoretical constructs that were not validated for applicability at USF. In the event that outcomes from the implemented recommendations do not achieve the intended level, the visit team believes that the University may benefit from consideration of the factors that contribute to the attrition of specific ethnic/racial groups at USF (CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5), which the University does have in disaggregated format.

## **PROGRAM REVIEW**

USF appears to engage in periodic reflection and planning processes stemming from its mission, core values, and strategic directions. Several planning documents alluded to in the CP&R report would indicate fiscal alignment with strategic planning and general operations. Once student learning is more systematically evaluated and fully incorporated into program review, academic objectives will also be fully aligned with strategic planning. Involvement of alumni, students, board members, and faculty in evaluating educational experiences is evident in

the university's EER documentation and from discussions with representatives of each group (CFRs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.8).

USF recognizes the importance of the Program Review process for academic and non-academic programs. Extensive guidelines for program review phases can be found on the referenced website and in the on-site documentation. The guidelines include analysis of students, faculty, the curriculum, and student learning as part of every self study, together with a comprehensive needs analysis for sustainability and improvement. Additionally, there are a number of quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group studies estimating student engagement and satisfaction with their learning experiences. These included an alumni survey of USF's contribution to student learning.

Because student learning outcome assessment is still in a developmental stage across the campus, scant attention has thus far been paid to this level of analysis in the program review process. As a result, few plans include recommendations for curricular change based on direct assessment evidence. This is a current shortcoming of the existing program review data. Additionally, program review of co-curricular programs, such as the ISSS (Office of International Students and Scholars Services) program, showed little direct evidence of systematic attempts to enhance the quality of the student learning experiences leading to a "seamless" learning environment. The revision and refinement of outcomes and methods for measuring them will better equip programs to help students achieve at or above levels established by each program.

USF has included the co-curriculum in its approach to program and student learning outcomes assessment (CFRs 2.7, 2.11). All University Life and University Ministry units have established goals and outcomes, assessment rubrics, and curriculum maps. Assessments of 2008-



2009 outcomes have been completed. Program reviews for most units have also been completed. While the co-curricular units are utilizing the same learning outcome assessment model as the academic units, it is apparent that they are 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 across all programs 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.). An excellent example of an integrated approach at USF can be found in the restructured New Student Orientation. The university will be well served to de-construct the factors that led to that success and then to adopt them in other appropriate areas.

Finally, with respect to program review, USF provides impressive faculty development resources for both full-time and adjunct faculty, though it is unclear whether all faculty are fully aware of and motivated to take advantage of these opportunities (CFRs 4.6, 4.7). Faculty development funds can and should be used by all (or nearly all) of the faculty and other campus educators to employ the findings and recommendations emanating from program review to build the strongest and most supportive learning environment possible for student learning. (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7).

#### **INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

WASC policy recognizes the unusual and severe pressures being exerted upon institutions by the current economic recession but requires, none the less, that accredited institutions continue to comply with WASC standards for institutional integrity and academic effectiveness. In that regard, Teams conducting Educational Effectiveness Reviews in 2009-10 have been asked to make specific inquiry into the prevailing economic status of institutions

under site review and make an evaluation of the institution's capacity for sustaining its educational effectiveness.

The Team Chair and the WASC Liaison Officer conducted an enhanced review of the University of San Francisco's capacity for sustaining its effectiveness in conjunction with the site visit. The institution provided up-to-date documentation of its economic status and made available its Assistant Vice President for Business and Finance and its Vice Provost for Planning, Budget, and Review for a special interview with the site visit team. USF cooperated completely with our request for a special review of sustainability, and the team expresses its gratitude for the institution's special efforts in this regard.

Both members of the reviewing team were extremely impressed with the steps that the University of San Francisco has taken to deal with the emergence and the protracted length of the recession and even more impressed by the strategy that the administration is employing to integrate their cost-cutting and revenue enhancing activities with the University's planning process, financial management, and long-term objectives. The University of San Francisco should, in our considered opinion, have no difficulty sustaining its educational effectiveness and may very well be able to advance its financial well-being in the near future, unless the recession takes an additional, unexpected, and precipitous turn for the worse in the near future.

The evidence upon which we base our opinion consists of the University's 2009-2010 budget document, the current plan for restructuring and refinancing of long-term debt, the most recent institutional planning alignment model, the current financial ratio analysis, the current scenario financial plan for FY 2010-2015, and interviews with the President, the Provost, and the two financial specialists named above.

The strategy that underlies the institution's response to the recession is based upon the conservation of budget capacity through targeted budget cuts in the Fall Semester of FY 2009; the restoration of those cuts in the initial FY 2010 budget; selected "holds" in the FY 2010 budget (after restoration); the creation of increased capacity reserves in FY 2010 for regular contingency (+100%), bad debt reserve (+50%), and reserve against reduced interest revenue (100%) for a cumulative reserve of approximately \$9 million, and the expansion of a very few selected programs

### **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.

- 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).
- 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).
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.)
- 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).

- 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.)
- 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.

## **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).
- 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.

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

### **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.

- 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.