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A Failing Strategic Plan?

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A FAILING STRATEGIC PLAN?

The CSUSB Strategic Plan, adopted in 2015, contains a number of commitments (shown in italics) designed to move the university forward over a five year period. This report assesses the progress made in advancing towards selected goals, all of which have measurable outcomes.

COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Goal 1 Student Success

4. • *Increase student success by maintaining high academic standards while reducing the overall DFWI (D, F, withdrawal, incomplete) rate through improved course learning conditions and enhanced co-curricular support. Aim to reduce the rate in lower division courses from 13% to 10%, and aim to reduce the upper division rate from 8% to 6%, particularly through providing additional supports for students in courses with the highest DFWI rates.*

The data on the CSUSB Institutional Research (IR) website indicate that the rate of D/F/W/I in lower division courses has risen from 13% in Fall 2014 to 14% in both Fall 2015 and 2016. The goal is to decrease the rate, but instead it has increased slightly.

The equivalent figure for upper division courses rose from 8% to 9% between Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 and fell back to 8% in Fall 2016. It has not been reduced.

5. • *Stay on track to meet or exceed the CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025 targets with four-year graduation rate in 2020 of 15% or higher, a six-year graduation rate of 52% or higher, and an underrepresented minority (URM)/non-URM achievement gap of 0%. For transfer students, by 2020 achieve a 36% two-year graduation rate and a 72% four-year graduation rate. Reduce by half the achievement gaps for males and Pell-eligible students. Decrease average time-to-completion for students who enroll as freshmen from 5.6 to 5.0 years by 2020. For transfer students, decrease average time-to-completion from 3.1 to 2.7 years by 2020.*

This objective has been eclipsed by the new targets set by the CSU system. The 6 year graduation rate target for CSUSB is now set at 62% (a 10 percentage point increase over the original figure) and the 4 year graduation rate target is 30%, rather than 15%. The revised rates for transfer students are a 2 year graduation rate of 45% and a four year graduation rate of 83% - increases of 9% and 11%, respectively, beyond the original target figures.

The targets set in the Strategic Plan are also very modest. The six year graduation rate in 2016 (Fall 2010 cohort) was 54.7%, a record for CSUSB, so that setting a target of 52% or higher actually would allow us to decrease our graduation rates and still meet the Strategic Plan's target. Likewise, the achievement gap between URM and non-URM students for the previous graduation rate cohort (200()) was 1.6% and that gap had been steadily narrowing. The 2 year graduation rate for transfers reached 36%, the 2020 target, in 2016, as a result of a remarkably sharp one year change from 2015. The 4 year graduation rate for transfer students met or exceeded 72% for four consecutive years between 2009 and 2012. It is only the incoming cohort in 2013 that failed to graduate at a rate of 72% or higher. That year the rate was 70%.

The time to degree targets are more difficult to evaluate, in part because the data on the IR web site have not been updated. Further, the baseline figures in the Strategic Plan appear to be from the 2007 cohort. The average time to degree appears to be declining, but the values are influenced by the proportion of students who are still enrolled and thus who remain potential graduates.

The leading indicators of student success on the campus are generally declining.

First year retention rates averaged 88.1% in the three years from 2010 to 2012. They were amongst the three highest in the CSU system. Over the past three years, they have cumulatively fallen by 3.5 percentage points, and are now at the levels they were in 2009. Particularly worrying is the decline of 9 percentage points in the retention of African American students in the past year. This returned us to levels of retention last seen in 2007.

Second year retention has fallen by 2 percentage points since its peak with the 2010 cohort

Average credits completed in the first quarter by students entering from high school in 2016 were 33, slightly lower than in the three previous years reported.

On a more positive note, the number of students who progressed from first year to second year status after one year at CSUSB has improved. It was 27% for the 2012 and 2013 cohorts of first year students, rose to 30% in 2014, but dropped back to 29% in 2015. The graduation rate plan submitted by CSUSB calls for this number to increase to 85% by 2020.

COMMITMENT TO ADDITIONAL REASSIGNED TIME

Goal 1 Student success

Strategy 1

- *Intentionally offer additional administrative support, stipends, re-assigned time, etc., to encourage and reward faculty as they continually improve their classroom teaching through integrating evidence-based and/or equity-based pedagogical strategies that enhance student learning and success.*

Goal 2 Faculty and Staff Success

Strategy 3

- *Increase funding, incentives, and reassigned time to enhance the support system for research, creative activities and scholarship by 10% progressively over five years.*

Strategy 4

Increase funding and faculty reassigned time to provide more student opportunities for supervised research and creative activities.

There are three specific commitments in the Strategic Plan to increase the amount of reassigned time available for: 1) improving classroom teaching; 2) supporting research, scholarly and creative activities; and 3) providing enhanced research and creative interaction opportunities for students to work with faculty.

There are line allocations in the Strategic Planning budget for the second and third of these activities. Student research and mentoring is shown as receiving \$50K in one-time funds in 2015-16 and \$62.5K thereafter. Faculty research, reassigned time and recognition is supported by an additional \$80K investment of base funding over the five years of the plan, with \$40K allocated in 2015-16 and \$20K in 2017-18 and again in 2019-20. It is impossible to tell from the report whether this, indeed, represents a 10% increase in assigned time.

There is no specific line allocation for the improvement of teaching, though this may be subsumed under the allocation to TRC of \$130K in one-time funding over the five years.

The President, in several communications, has indicated that he will maintain the current level of released time after conversion to a semester calendar in 2020, seemingly forgetting these commitments to increase reassigned time contained in the Strategic Plan.

COMMITMENT TO INCREASE TENURE DENSITY AND TO REDUCE STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO

Strategy 7 Tenure-Track Density and Student to Faculty Ratio

Increase Tenure Track Density (TTD) based on projected student demand and FTES growth, and decrease Student to Faculty Ratio (SFR).

1. *Increase TTD to at least 63.6% by the end of the five-year period*

The target for tenure density in the Strategic Plan is 63.6% (tenured and tenure-track faculty FTE/ total faculty FTE). We started the Strategic Plan at 59.4%. We are now at 57.2% - a decline of 2.2% points. With the current complement of lecturers, we would need to add an additional 121.9 tenured and tenure-track faculty over the next three years to reach the density target in the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan calls for the addition of 24 T/TT faculty positions.

2. *Reduce the SFR to 23.8 by the end of the five years.*

The target for student-faculty ratio in the Strategic Plan is 23.8. The ratio in Fall 2016 was 28.4 (according to the IR website). It is surprising to note that this number cannot be found in the progress report on the Strategic Plan. No data are provided and it is labelled 'future'. We are thus into the second year of the Strategic Plan and are 19.3% above our goal. To put this into perspective, we will need to hire another 134 FTE faculty over the three remaining years of the plan, at the current level of enrollment, to reach our goal of a ratio of 23.8 students per faculty member. Any additional growth in enrollment will increase that number.

COMMITMENT TO INCREASE REVENUE

Goal 3 Resource Sustainability and Expansion

Objective 3

Strategy 1: *Continue current campus effort of increasing non-resident enrollment by 5% annually through 2020.*

Non-resident enrollment was 892 FTE at the outset of the Strategic Plan. It fell to 853 FTE in 2016-17 and is projected to fall by a further 63 FTE from 2016-17 to 2107-18 to 790 FTE. This decline reflects factors that could not have been reasonably anticipated when the Strategic Plan was written, ranging from the tragic shootings in San Bernardino, to the decision by a number of governments to restrict funding for their nationals, to a broader concern over the effects of changes in US immigration policy.

This decrease has very significant budget ramifications for the University.

Objective 5

Increase the number of proposal submissions of contracts, grants, and philanthropic sectors by at least 5% annually with a targeted increase of 25% by 2020. Increase new award funding to at least \$25M/year by 2020.

The most recent data on the Research and Sponsored Programs web site is for 2014-15 and therefore it is not possible to chart progress on this goal.