

# Report on Program Evaluation Process

2010 February 2

The program evaluation process begun in fall 2009 is meant to address our immense budget challenges while remaining true to the University's mission and values. The goal is to maintain the excellence of our academic offerings by focusing our diminishing resources on a reduced number of vital programs. The cost savings will not be large initially, but become more substantial in subsequent years as students currently in the programs are accommodated, freeing up resources for investment in other programs.

Programs have provided information on qualitative indicators including uniqueness, centrality to mission, future growth, graduate placement, assessment, faculty scholarly productivity, and external funding and recognition. This was supplemented by quantitative information from University records on the number of students, degrees awarded, FTES, enrollments in advanced courses, etc, and the trends in these numbers over the past several years. On the basis of this information programs were identified as candidates for change or closure.

Since December I have begun and am continuing meetings with the departments involved. These meetings do not focus only on program closure, although of course that's always in the background, but on dealing with the need to reduce costs while maintaining program quality and choice. The departments have developed many useful and creative ideas to achieve these related objectives, so this is proving to be a valuable dialog. However, it does take time. This may not be a bad thing, as it gives the affected departments more time to consider their options and respond. Indeed, the Senate requested at the end of fall quarter that the evaluation process be slowed down to allow more time for these discussions. To date, proposals from departments have included closing programs, sharing programs with CSULA, adjusting course offerings, and setting specific benchmarks, targets, and goals.

Curricular and organizational changes will of course involve the Academic Senate according to established procedures. Because we're following this consultative process, there will not be a single referral, as envisaged last fall, but rather a series of referrals, many submitted by the departments themselves. There is understandable concern about this process, concern exacerbated by its slow pace. I have been asked to provide a list of the departments affected. In fairness to these departments, I would rather wait until after I've made contact with each individually; that should happen soon.

It is necessary to have these conversations now, despite the uncertainties about next year's budget, because the time scale for academic program changes is long, while other divisions can realize savings through personnel actions, on a shorter time scale. It is impossible at this time to put a specific dollar figure on the savings that will result from the evaluation process. What is clear is that it won't be enough. Both small and large departments will need to examine their activities and programs, considering ways their costs might be further reduced. In the next several months I plan to meet with more departments, beyond those on my initial list, to discuss this. Departments which are proactive now about making changes to save costs and increase efficiency put themselves in a stronger position to weather our probable future fiscal storms.

I know these are difficult times for everyone, especially since we've been doing more with less for so long already. I continue to believe that with the measures taking place we will eventually be able to replace some of the critical faculty vacancies emerging in departments across the university and continue to serve Californians with quality educational programs despite decreasing state support.