

California State University Maritime Academy

Progress Report

Submitted to WSCUC Commission

March 1, 2021



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I. Introduction

In their Action Letter of July 2019 (Appendix A), the WSCUC Commission requested the submission of a Progress Report to address four recommendations that had been articulated in the March 2019 “Report of the WSCUC Team for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.” CSU Maritime Academy would first like to express its appreciation to the team for their frank and honest assessment of our institution during their visit. Cal Maritime values the opportunity to both reflect upon the Commission’s findings and to present the work on these issues that has taken place over the past nineteen months.

Immediately after receiving the Action letter, the WASC Steering Committee met to develop strategies to address the recommendations. There were initial presentations to the Campus Leadership Council, the Provost Council, the Academic Senate, and other campus bodies. Moreover, the WASC findings were discussed at length and provided a significant foundation for the strategic planning retreat of campus leadership in February of 2020. Existing campus committees and subcommittees were tasked with addressing these concerns, and, in the case of the first item addressed, an additional task force was created to ensure progress on this front.

The following sections describe what actions have been taken toward reaching goals to be attained before the next comprehensive visit.

It should be noted up front that since the WASC visit in March of 2019, the university has been involved in a series of unfortunate incidents that usurped a great many resources. In October of 2019, the campus sustained heavy damage from a wildfire that destroyed structures and threatened several more, including laboratory buildings and the training ship. Campus was closed and classes were canceled as crews cut down smoldering trees while classrooms, dormitories, and dining facilities underwent smoke damage restoration. In February of 2020 we were confronted (as was nearly every university in the world) with an external crisis that threatened the health and safety of our faculty, staff, and students – not to mention the educational mission of the institution.

The situation was (and still is, at this writing) very dynamic. In a very short window decisions needed to be made as to how and when to suspend courses, how to convert most classes to an alternative modality, and how to bring our faculty up to speed in unfamiliar technologies and pedagogies under intense deadlines. As a maritime university with specific US Coast Guard-mandated practicums, many courses simply could not be converted to an online format – they were just suspended. Through this all, the university was guided by three principles: the prioritization of the health and safety of the campus community; the preservation of our educational mission; and the constant assessment and reassessment of external factors in order to make decisions based on fluctuating conditions. Cal Maritime operated under these principles but information from county, state, and national health agencies (as well as information from various governing bodies) seemed to pivot daily, if not hourly. The abandoned spring schedule for licensed students was completely dismantled and rebuilt according to Coast Guard learning objectives and sea-time contact hour requirements rather than established meeting hours and places. This was done in weeks, not months or semesters.

What could have been one of the darkest chapters of Cal Maritime's 90-year history was transformed into one of its greatest triumphs: in the midst of a global pandemic, with generalized heightened fears and anxiety, we were able to graduate our seniors and get them into the workforce and advance our underclassmen and keep them on track -- and all with just a very small handful of cases, none of which to date has led to a major campus outbreak.

To work in the environment of the pandemic has been a struggle, and many of the strategic goals and objectives of the institution were postponed or stalled as human and financial resources were diverted into emergency processes necessary to keep students, faculty and staff safe and healthy. Cal Maritime was successful, but perhaps at the expense of advancing other initiatives that lost priority.

However – and crucially – in other ways, the pandemic has brought out the best in Cal Maritime, and (especially as should be seen in the section below), actually enabled the campus to improve certain processes which will be carried forward in the post-pandemic environment.

II. A Culture of Trust

The first Action requested in the progress report was to strengthen a “culture of trust in the administration” along three separate lines, each of which is addressed below.

i. Review and Revise communication strategies to improve internal communication horizontally and vertically

As noted in the introduction, upon the return to campus in the fall of 2019, The WASC Coordinator made a series of presentations to different constituencies including the Campus Leadership Council (CLC), the Provost Council (PC), Student Leadership (The Triad) and Faculty Leadership (The Academic Senate) regarding the findings of the Visiting Team and the subsequent Action Letter. The President's Leadership Offsite was held the following February, under the theme “A Courageous Commitment to Lead Cal Maritime.” Thirty-one individuals across all divisions on campus – including the entire Academic Senate Executive Committee – were invited to spend two days working on the following objectives:

- Cultivate a passion for clarity and shared understanding
- Build trust within each relationship among the Campus Leaders:
 - Cultivate open and honest communication
 - Remove divisional boundaries
 - Build a “we-first” orientation
- Build a shared purpose for Campus leadership
- Build a shared action plan for “working on” Cal Maritime that integrates with all of our other responsibilities

Certainly these objectives were born out of a recognized need for better communication practices at Cal Maritime. At the conclusion of the retreat, it was recognized that the issue included both a technological dimension (how to best disseminate information) and an interpersonal/organizational one (how to effectively communicate with colleagues and teams). Regarding the former, a Communication Task Force was put together which looked at how email practices have devolved over time (See Appendix B). The overuse of the “All Faculty,” “All Staff,” and/or “All Student” lists led to “email fatigue” and, ironically, more messaging from more individuals and groups led to a decreased understanding of campus operations. Actions taken and actions proposed from the task force include:

- Create Auto-provisioned granular distribution lists for School of Engineering (For School, Department, and Program) interfaced with PeopleSoft.
- Created an archive account to preserve messages sent to the campus-wide lists.
- Transition to using department-named email addresses as opposed to individually named addresses for specific information.
- Work to identify the on-campus population to target on-campus messages
- Explore use of Portal / Intranet and Digital Displays for announcements on- and off-campus.
- Test use of Microsoft Teams for affinity group collaboration.
- Email Etiquette and Protocol Manual for Campus to eliminate unnecessary CCs and “Reply All” functions.

Regarding the interpersonal dimension of communication, it was recognized that changes were necessary to help leadership recognize *why* trust may have eroded in some relationships and how campus administration and faculty could combat this perception. This recognition immediately led to many of the action-oriented objectives articulated below.

ii. Strengthen Shared Governance

In the months just prior to the WASC visit but after the campus WASC report had been written, perceptions of shared governance were at a low point. Rather than dismiss the concerns of faculty and staff alike, Provost Opp commissioned a third-party facilitator familiar with Cal Maritime to interview multiple parties on campus, submit findings, and offer recommendations for improving relations. It was into this environment of heightened sensitivity that the Visiting Team came to campus. Since then, in response to the “Reichard Report” a number of dramatic improvements have taken place:

- The Senate has re-written its by-laws, such that administrators are invited to attend General Senate meetings, subcommittees are responsible for making periodic presentations to the General Senate, and minutes are more carefully preserved and publically available.
- The Provost is invited to weekly Senate Executive Committee meetings and has scheduled an additional bi-weekly meeting with the Senate Chair.
- The President meets monthly with Academic Senate Chair, Vice-Chair and Provost.

- There are new modes of presentation *and* dissemination of information from various governing bodies including the update and revision of public-facing Senate webpages.
- The entire Senate Executive Committee has been invited to all subsequent Campus Leadership retreats (See Appendix D).

Additionally as noted in the introduction, while the COVID pandemic was extremely disruptive, much was learned from the crisis. Communication protocol and shared governance practices became much stronger: COVID necessitated a great many committees constituted with all the relevant campus stakeholders, all of which were dependent on each other in order to make quick and serious decisions in a very fluid and dynamic environment. Out of this exigency Cal Maritime adopted several new governance schemes (Appendix C). The campus success with handling the crisis was in no small part to our ability to communicate effectively and push recommendations through appropriate channels. It is our hope and desire that such practices will remain after the crisis has passed.

iii. Ensure faculty and student inclusion in decision making

As part of the refinement of the role and function of the Campus Leadership Council, a certain number of objectives were clarified. In a series titled “Decision Making and Shared Governance, (See Appendix E) the Campus Leadership Council will serve as the primary integrated planning body at Cal Maritime. The CLC is responsible for the effective coordination and communication of campus-wide strategic activities and decisions. Through collaboration, the CLC ensures that the planning process and decisions sustain the Academy’s mission and core values, and directly align to the campus strategic goals. The intent of these changes is to establish a clear and simple decision-making process that:

- Saves time and makes better use of resources.
- Enables faculty and staff to contribute more effectively (which leads to a greater sense of ownership and accountability).
- Creates opportunities for professional development (which leads to improved satisfaction and engagement).
- Establishes clear lines of communication, delegation, and responsibility.
- Leads to fewer mistakes, better decisions, and greater trust.

In addition to the changes listed above, other changes have been made to create a more inclusive environment:

- The Edward Leadership Development Program now has greater input from cadets, faculty, staff and administration so that the ELDP is more integrated into campus curricular and co-curricular activities (see Section III below).
- The President provides monthly updates on campus issues and activities to the entire campus.
- The Academic Senate has granted ad hoc committee status to the Gender Equity group (see Section V below) for this body to have a larger voice in faculty governance.

- The Senate has implemented a new Administrative Review Policy, and the second cycle of evaluations was completed in January of 2021.
- Faculty membership has been increased on the Budget Advisory Committee (from two at-large members to three faculty members; one representative from each school).

III. Leadership Principles

The second Action requested in the progress report was to “Work to identify principles of leadership that are instantiated in curricular and co-curricular offerings aligned with the institution’s mission and culture.”

The Edwards Leadership Development Program (ELDP), now in its second year of operation, is progressing well considering there has been a significantly diminished number of students on campus since the pandemic began. The ELDP has partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership to help improve learning outcomes for the ILO “Leadership and Teamwork” which asks students to “Work toward common goals and motivate and empower others to achieve them; foster collegiality, goodwill and community within a diverse group.” One assessment on this outcome has already been administered: The CCL “Leadership Indicator for Students” reveals how our students are performing against national benchmarks in the area of Social-Emotional Leadership (see Appendix F).

What is particularly encouraging now is that there is synergy between the co-curricular ELDP and the Institution-Wide Assessment Council (IWAC), which assesses leadership offerings on the curricular level. This year, several upper division courses across *all* our degree-granting programs incorporated the Leadership Indicators for Student success for seniors. The program included a fall assessment in October and a spring assessment in March. Following each assessment, the Center for Creative Leadership offered a virtual debrief of the results. This assessment featured self, peer, and faculty/staff feedback within three categories – leading self, leading others, and changing your environment.

A preliminary examination of the results -- from conversations between invested faculty and the ELDP -- conclude that improvements are most necessary in the categories of integrity, accountability, and self-awareness. The ELDP is now in conversation with CCL about short and long-term strategies to address these areas. IWAC will need to determine what specific tracking tools are needed to assess these traits within the cadets over the next several years and will work with CCL to develop an instrument to assess these traits. Trends will then be examined over a 4-year cycle (or ideally more frequently) to assess the strategies that have been implemented and determine what adjustments may need to be made. Cal Maritime looks forward to sharing the results of these findings with WASC in the next Reaccreditation Report.

There are other activities and plans that (in the words of the commission letter) “identify principles of leadership that are instantiated in [...] offerings aligned with the institution’s mission and culture.”

- The program in International Business and Logistics (IBL) is developing an alternative to Watchstanding (which is a current requirement of all cadets but is only mandated by the Coast Guard for our licensed students). This would provide more meaningful programmatic opportunities to enhance those students' leadership skills.
- As noted in the "Communication" section above, student groups are now much more assimilated in strategic decision-making processes: as part of their involvement, endorsement letters are required to be issued from these groups, and this can be tied to leadership development enhancements. The opportunity for our cadets to participate in shared governance – but with the added responsibility of *accountability for that participation* – contributes to the overall emphasis on student stewardship of campus operations.

IV. Assessment and Program Review

The next Action requested in the progress report was to "Continue to build on the progress that has been made in assessment and program review by focusing on faculty development and deliberate planning of assessment methods."

Cal Maritime takes pride in the continued development and refinement of its assessment practices. This is demonstrated, in part, in successes in the reaffirmation of accreditation of individual programs that occurred since the WASC visit. In 2019-20, the Department of Engineering Technology and the Department of Mechanical Engineering were successfully reaccredited by their respective ABET Commissions. (Appendices G and H). Last July, our Business Administration program was reaccredited by IACBE with no notes, and no observations (Appendix I).

Additionally, our Institution-Wide Council – comprised solely of faculty members – receive summer stipends to work on the assessment of our institution learning outcomes. Their annual report and executive summary can be found on the [Annual Learning Results and Program Review](#) page. In the spirit of continuous improvement, IWAC also makes recommendations for process improvements. The IWAC 2020 Executive Summary is attached as Appendix J.

In regards to the issue of faculty development and assessment planning, much of our faculty development resources over the past twelve months were devoted to the monumental pivot to alternative modalities of instruction and developing faculty expertise in synchronous and asynchronous online courses. However, there were also a number of faculty development activities devoted specifically to assessment and program review:

- IWAC Assessment Workshop presented on 9/6/19.
- Faculty funded for completing ABET Basics of Program Assessment workshops 19/20.
- Faculty funded for completing eight week ABET ePAW4: A Fundamentals of Program Assessment Workshop in spring, 2021.
- Faculty participation in the IUPUI Assessment Institute 10/20.

- Faculty Workshops in Assessing Institution Learning Outcomes this year in Information Fluency and Ethical Reasoning.

V. Current Status of Unity and Diversity

The final action requested in the progress report was to “Assess the current status of unity and diversity on campus using an objective method, for example, a confidential campus climate survey, as the basis for creating a clear set of goals and measures of achievement for the programs and services provided.”

Campus Climate Surveys

Cal Maritime administered a number of surveys in the 2019-2020 academic year and the decision to participate in these programs preceded the WASC visit. Cal Maritime administered the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#); the [Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement](#); the [Higher Education Research Institution Faculty Survey](#); and the [Higher Education Research Institution Staff Climate Survey](#). Summaries of the latter two are contained in Appendices K and L). While these surveys were not exclusive in their scope in terms of addressing “unity and diversity,” there were sections of the surveys that could be used for that purpose.

Of particular note are areas indicating degrees of satisfaction with campus diversity from a staff perspective (Figure 1), institutional priorities regarding commitment to diversity (Figure 2), and perspectives on campus climate for diversity (Figure 3).

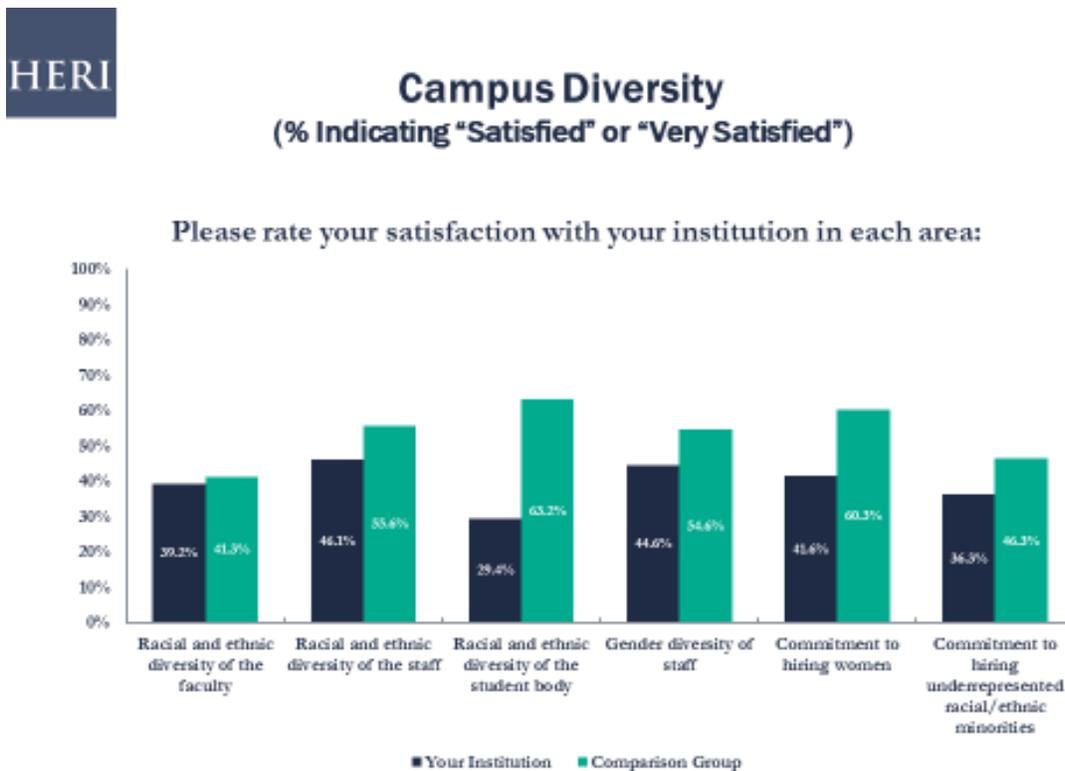


Figure 1: Comparison Group on Question of Campus Diversity



Figure 2. Institutional Priority to Diversity

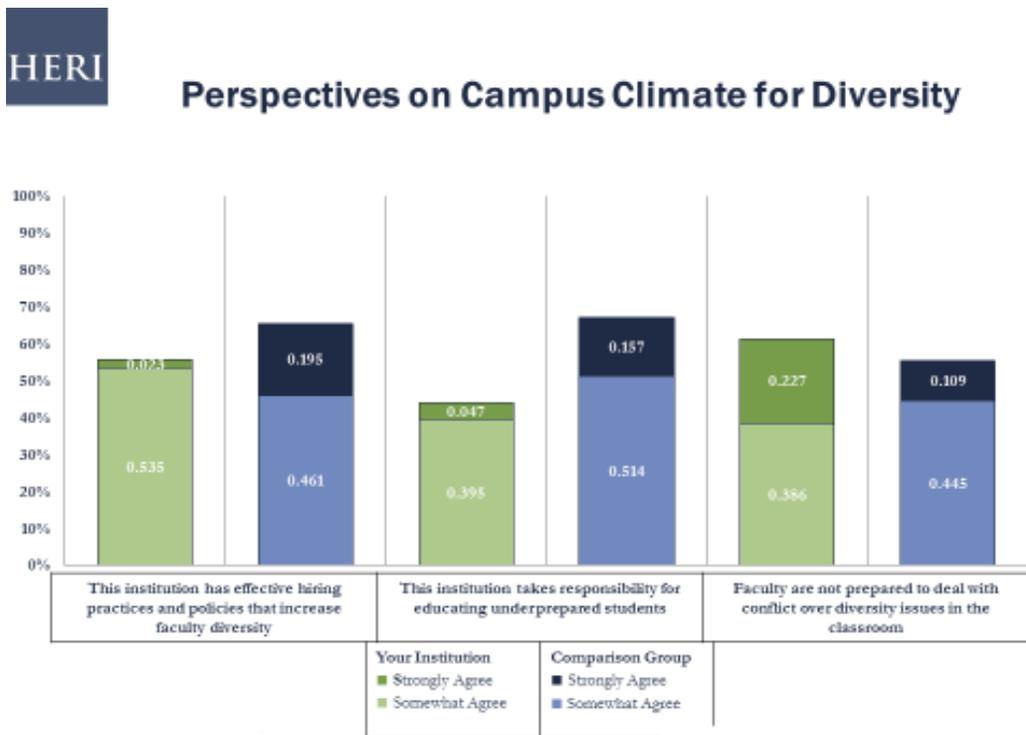


Figure 3: Perspectives on Camus Climate for Diversity

These surveys give Cal Maritime valuable information in order to address its challenges. While the administration of these instruments demonstrate a commitment to assessment, a plan has yet to be adopted which would serve to improve campus climate based on these initial responses. Furthermore, additional campus climate surveys – specifically devoted to issues of diversity – will be implemented in the future. Due to concerns over survey fatigue, it was felt that a pause between surveys was in order. Compounding the issue was, again, the COVID pandemic: it was felt that administering a “campus climate” survey in a period when fewer faculty, staff, and students are on campus calls into question the very validity of what information we could gather from such an unusual and unprecedented “climate.” Concerns over the distortion of COVID on any data-gathering activity in 2020-2021 has postponed additional surveys to a post-pandemic environment.

Unity Council and Gender Equity Group

The Unity Council is the university’s primary body for diversity issues. This council includes the campus Title IV Coordinator, the Chief Diversity Officer and the HCM Manager, and has three distinct focus areas: education, integration and advocacy, and culture. The charter is currently being reassessed with the council to play a larger role in the future in the onboarding and development of employees, cadet orientation and the first year experience, and enrollment management and cadet retention programs. Cal Maritime looks forward to documenting further progress in refining and empowering this council. (Appendix M).

The Gender Equity Group was initially created in 2019 as an informal faculty group. It grew to include interested participants from across campus and in the spring of 2019 it received ad hoc status from the Faculty Senate, with a slate of student, faculty, senate, HR, and administrative members. Its charge – “to study gender equity issues in our campus culture and make recommendations to the Faculty Senate on policies and best practices that can be adopted” – led to involvement with various projects, including a Senate Resolution on Gender Equality, engaging and leading campus conversations regarding murals on the Training Ship, and creating a Working Group on Equity of the Cadet Experience, among others (Appendix N). It is the hope and expectation of the university that the Gender Equity Group will continue to advocate on behalf of faculty, staff, and students in order to improve campus conditions.

VI. Conclusion

It is hoped that the sections above demonstrate Cal Maritime’s commitment to the recommendations put forth by the WSCUC Commission letter. Despite external environmental setbacks, we feel we have made significant progress in the four areas identified, and we look forward to presenting our findings/progress/improvements in the Interim Report of Spring 2023.

VII. Appendices

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