“Access to Excellence” in the California State University

Cal State East Bay Conversation
Valley Business and Technology Center on the Hayward Campus
March 1, 2007

Summary and Findings

Cal State East Bay held its campus conversation regarding “Access to Excellence” in the California State University in the context of its current strategic planning process, forthcoming accreditation visit by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and celebration of the university’s first fifty years.

Representatives from the California State University included Trustee Lou Monville, Gary Reichard, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, and Bill Wilson, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Teacher Education, Evaluation and Assurance. A diverse range of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from Cal State East Bay participated, along with a few guests from the community.

President Mo Qayoumi, ASI President Chantel Johnson and CSU Executive Vice Chancellor Gary Reichard welcomed the participants. Academic Senate Chair Henry Reichman (who is on the CSU Access to Excellence steering committee) provided background and an overview of the session to follow. The discussion was organized around three major themes encompassing the: (1) student access, (2) student success and academic excellence, and (3) stewardship and accountability. Cal State East Bay used a plenary format to bring the campus community together in one session because the campus had completed a number of separate small “town hall” meetings during the Fall.

Campus recorders took notes during the discussion and supplemented them with written comments received later. The appended notes provide more detail regarding the campus conversation. Most of the participants raised concerns in their remarks, and some also highlighted campus or system strengths. Further, while most participants spoke in the context of Cal State East Bay (the source of their experience), many implied the kinds of changes that the CSU as a whole needs to consider as we plan for the future.

This summary focuses on broader implications for the CSU. In addition, the campus administration will be adding the ideas from the Access to Excellence discussion to the record of campus issues being addressed through Cal State East Bay’s strategic planning and WASC processes. We have organized the summary and findings using the six domains established by the CSU Access to Excellence steering committee.
Domain 1. Assuring Access

Cal State East Bay participants expressed concern that outreach programs, which are a prime source for contacting potential students from historically under-served populations, have not been funded consistently. They urged more recruitment locally as well as attention to students with disabilities, students who need to complete a bachelor’s degree and to emerging populations.

East Bay students and staff advocated for more support services (such as financial aid and advising) to increase access. Further, most students expressed deep concern about fee increases as adding to the total cost of attending school. They suggested that more support, including more jobs on campus, would allow them to participate more fully in campus life.

Domain 2. Connecting to P-12 Schools and to Community Colleges

Faculty, staff and guests lauded the CSU Early Assessment Program and efforts to articulate community college courses with East Bay courses. They called for more attention to a systemic approach to make smoother connections between P-12 education, community colleges and the CSU.

Domain 3. Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders

Participants would like to see more active engagement with the community and suggested that service learning programs are very helpful to coordinate these efforts. They also urged investment in alumni relations as a means to this end.

Domain 4. Ensuring Success in Student Learning

Students and staff argued that opportunities for learning go well beyond the classroom. They asked for a holistic approach to campus life, including child care, healthy food choices, and integrated services, which would enable students to worry less about these needs and focus more effectively on their studies. Students specifically sought more use of on-line instruction, in part because of the flexibility this delivery mode offers. At the same time, some faculty urged caution and careful review rather than wholesale conversion of courses.

Domain 5. Faculty/Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success

Faculty and students talked about many aspects of a quality education, including the value of general education programs (including East Bay’s acclaimed first year experience involving learning communities for entering freshmen), the importance of second language fluency, and the collaboration between students and faculty on scholarly projects. They recognized the importance of the library to provide not just information resources but an appropriate “sense of place” for learning.
Faculty and students emphasized that the quality and diversity of the faculty and staff are central to student success because it takes dedicated people to offer the instruction and provide the services that students need to learn effectively. They specifically called for the system and the State to address faculty workload, compensation and the composition of the faculty (the latter through implementation of ACR 73 which calls for a higher proportion of full-time tenure-track and tenured faculty relative to lecturers).

Domain 6. Now and in the Future: Campus/System Identity

East Bay participants felt that the CSU administration and Board of Trustees should be more accountable. They called for CSU leadership to be more effective advocates with the legislature regarding the value of higher education and the less visible risks to the State of not investing in the CSU. Some also suggested that the campus and the system could demonstrate environmental stewardship through linking educational programs and institutional practices and programs.

Summary

While participants commented on a wide range of topics, four received repeated attention: student fees, outreach and other activities to increase access, student services on campus such as advising, and faculty workload and compensation. These and the other issues raised in the Access to Excellence discussion are consonant with the ideas that Cal State East Bay faculty, staff and students expressed at the campus town hall meetings during the Fall. In particular, Access to Excellence comments will contribute significantly to implementation of the following four of the seven Cal State East Bay mandates that emerged from the town hall meetings in the fall:

- Strong growth and full enrollment with personalized learning and expanded access
- Inclusive campus climate that values faculty, staff and students, and fosters multicultural learning experiences
- Tradition of teaching, learning and academic quality emphasized and reinforced
- Efficient, well-run university with culture of accountability

Attachments

- Final Program
- Recorded Notes

Links to CSUEB websites:
http://www.csueastbay.edu/access_to_excellence/
http://www.csueastbay.edu/framework/

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