ESSAY STANDARD 4
Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Since its inception, CETYS University has distinguished itself for being an institution with solid strategic planning processes. These processes are clearly defined and include the contributions of different audiences/stakeholders. Under a framework of continuous improvement, the institution has been working on data-gathering for the support of decision-making processes at all levels. As a result, within the last few years, we have been undertaking institutional research with different focuses.

A work system that includes the academic and administrative processes necessary for the adequate operation of the University is in place. This system is subject to periodic review by academics, administrators, students, advisors, and other audiences/stakeholders, who evaluate its effectiveness, and establish improvement strategies and plans.

STRATEGIC THINKING AND PLANNING

CFR 4.1
The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies in institutional reflection and planning processes which assess its strategic position, articulate priorities and define the future direction of the institution.

Each stage in the history of CETYS University has been characterized by a strategic plan that charts the desired path to follow. The creation, identification, implementation and evaluation of all of these planning efforts have been initiated by the President and his Staff, with the involvement of the Board. They have been assisted in the process by external advisors since the first self-study was undertaken in 1969. Planning has always been a participative process, open to all internal and external publics, who wish to provide input regarding the institution's future direction. Up to the present, five important planning strategies have shaped the course to be followed by CETYS:

- *CETYS 2010 Plan* (2000-2010)
- *CETYS 2000 Plan* (1995-2000)
- *CETYS 2000 Plan* (1986-1994)
- Second *Institutional Development Plan* (1977-1985)
- First *Institutional Development Plan* (1970-1976)

The CETYS Institutional Planning System –SPIC (Sistema de Planeación Institucional CETYS)- determines planning frequency by indicating a timeline, responsible authorities, the plan's structure (regulatory, strategic, operative) and the methodology to be followed for its formulation and follow-up. Since 2006, we have been updating *Plan 2010* and through the use of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approach, the desired institutional outcomes and goals have been clarified and better communicated to all of the organization's constituents.

A visit to Sistema CETYS' institutional Website demonstrates that the *2010 Plan* remains current and accessible to all members of the community. Additionally, presentations made before various internal and external audiences further attest to our efforts to disseminate this strategic project.

Strategic directions, strategic objectives that breakdown into annual goals, performance indicators for each strategic objective, initiatives, resources and responsible parties are all components of *Plan 2010* under de BSC approach. Once the *Annual Campus Plan 2010* is finalized, it is presented for approval to IENAC's Planning Committee and its Executive Commission.

Inside CETYS, each functional area is responsible for designing a work plan that must be clearly aligned with *Plan 2010*. Such a work plan is translated into Productivity Matrices for all the heads of such areas. In this way the strategic objectives are cascaded throughout the organization, so strategic ideas are implemented on a daily basis.

During meetings with their General Director and the President's Staff, the three campuses along with the Graduate College present progress reports at the end of each semester. Additionally, work plans and productivity matrices for each head of the main areas, assessing their performance in their respective areas, are also presented.

CFR 4.2
Planning processes at the institution define and, to the extent possible, align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological needs with the strategic priorities of the institution.

CETYS' Institutional Planning System (SPIC) establishes the standards for the design, implementation and evaluation of *Plan 2010*. Currently, *Plan 2010* in its version 2006-2010 includes a strategic map that allows us to visualize the interrelationship existing between each of the institutional objectives, as well as their relation to strategically defined guidelines. When revising the plan, we considered the human, procedural, financial and academic perspectives, thus ensuring that all of the institution's dimensions were addressed, while at the same time, through such strategic issues, we define indicators and their objectives.

At the beginning and conclusion of each semester, administrators and heads from the different institutional areas meet to respond to existing needs and determine how to turn them into opportunity projects, and to also define evaluation strategies for outcomes.

CFR 4.3
Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, including evidence of educational effectiveness and student learning.

In support of planning processes, the different functional areas of the institution receive information from professors, admissions, registrar, analyses of classroom capacity, student presentations, analyses of financial statements, and other relevant analytical data. Furthermore, the institution conducts institutional and academic research activities in support of institutional planning and evaluation, while also including data collected from other entities such as the National Institute for Statistics, Demographics and Geography (INEGI) [1], the Mexican Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions (FIMPES) and the National Association of Universities and Institutes of Higher Education (ANUIES). Listed in section CFR 4.5 below are examples of the types of data gathered and analyzed and the departments responsible for such.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

CFR 4.4
The institution employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes at each level of institutional functioning.

Intent on guaranteeing the quality of the institution's educational programs and services, CETYS University employs a set of processes, among which are the following:

Creation of new educational programs: includes a defined strategy for determining graduation requirements, curricula, and the process for both internal review and official program approval by governmental agencies.

Student selection: this process includes an admissions examination for each level, undergraduate or graduate, that evaluates mathematical, verbal and English language skills; the process employs a set of defined and very specific criteria for unconditional and conditional admission and for denial of admission.

Faculty Selection: through this process, we seek that all professors wishing to join our faculty corps, meet the established qualifications and standards expected of all CETYS professors.

Student Orientation: complete student immersion is sought regarding the educational model, library and Blackboard use, and knowledge of the different supporting departments available throughout the course of the student's university life.

Teaching-Learning Process: this includes various elements such as:
        * Presentation of learning objectives during the first session of each class;
        * Blackboard use;
        * Learning activities; and
        * Mid-term and final evaluations for each   course.

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[1] All abbreviations cited in this document pertain to the corresponding name in Spanish. For a complete listing and definition of all abbreviations in English and Spanish, refer to the Glossary.

Academic Guidance and Support: such services are provided through specialized educational units such as the Center for Learning and Scholarship (CEA) in Tijuana and Ensenada, and the Student Academic and Personal Development Center (DAPA) in Mexicali. Both of these units analyze student learning outcomes and individual academic performance indicators, and help the student improve his/her achievement levels.

Awarding of Academic Degree: process achieved when the student successfully completes all courses in his/her program of study, in addition to all elements established in the curricular plan, such as:

- o English language certification
- o Social Service
- o Professional Internship
- o General Skills and Knowledge Examination

CFR 4.5
Institutional research addresses strategic data needs, is disseminated in a timely manner, and is incorporated in institutional review and decision-making processes.

As documented by the CETYS University *Institutional Master Research Plan*, institutional research has been conducted during the past years, in different ways and by various academic units, especially at the President's level, and on the three campuses by the Departments of Institutional Effectiveness, Curriculum Development, Education, and Marketing (presently known as the Department of Institutional Development and Promotion).

The Department of Institutional Effectiveness, responsible for coordinating institutional planning and evaluation processes, as well as efficiency and effectiveness assessment procedures, has performed the following data collection and analyses: Semester Basic Statistics; Supply and Demand Studies on private higher education in the State of Baja California; Diagnostic Study of educational supply and demand at the higher education level in the State of Baja California for 1996-2000; Alumni follow-up analysis; and Evaluation study of the professional performance of Alumni.

Given their shared responsibilities, the Deans of the Colleges, in collaboration with the Academic and Curricular Development Heads, conduct the design, implementation, and assessment of all academic programs. They are responsible for the implementation of CETYS' Educational Model. To this effect, all of these units have undertaken important institutional research projects, focussed on academics, such as: Methodology Standards for the review and re-structuring of academic programs; and syllabi follow-up, especially those related to the 2004 academic reform. Research results have generated Official Program Guidelines for each academic program.

The Department of Institutional Development and Promotion, is responsible for the design of institutional branding programs, the detection of market needs, research on new markets, and for measuring satisfaction levels for the services we provide. This

department created a Research and Evaluation Coordination unit, in order to continuously and systematically ensure data generation. The reports are intended for analysis and discussion, and their results are used for implementing continuous improvement strategies.

Starting in 2006, institutional research activities were required to follow the research guidelines framework described in the *Institutional Master Research Plan* which envisions institutional research programs and sub-programs along with the internal units responsible for these studies. In October 2006, the *Institutional Research Program for 2006-2010* was designed and its implementation was launched.

CFR 4.6
Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation and assessment used throughout the institution.

Seeking to improve our culture of evidence of teaching improvement and learning processes and outcomes, the institution, based on appropriate policies and practices, designs and administers a series of feedback gathering instruments and programs that allow it to gather information for the purpose of increasing educational effectiveness.

Institutional leadership under the President and with IENAC's support seeks academic improvement at all academic levels based on a humanistic education with a focus on Learning Centered Education. As a process of continuous improvement and recognition of our academic quality, it is an institutional policy, under the President of Sistema CETYS Universidad, to seek accreditation from FIMPES (Mexican Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions), WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), CACEI (Council for Accreditation in Engineering Instruction), CACECA (Council for Accreditation in the Instruction of Accounting and Administration), CNEIP (National Council for Instruction and Research in Psychology) and CENEVAL (National Assessment Center for Higher Education).

The leadership at the three campuses, exercised by the respective directors, also provides funds for faculty to attend workshops and conferences regarding accreditation issues, which are organized and sponsored by national and international accrediting bodies, including WASC.

The institution employs a *Faculty Institutional Development Plan* that addresses the individual

professor's preparation, educational level, and pedagogical aspects, among others. In the Graduate School, the resources needed to support the curricular re-design of 2003 and of subsequent programs have been available, and professors are provided the required support.

Undergraduate programs were redesigned with a focus on Learning Centered Education, thus standardizing classroom instruction, bibliographies, teaching methods, objectives

and learning outcomes, and learning activities inside and outside the classroom so that all professors on all three campuses share a common foundation. Additionally, feedback processes employed by these programs allow the academy to look for continued improvement through the updating of courses and programs.

CETYS University offers a tutoring program for students who are not achieving the desired learning outcomes. With the support of specialized personnel, each individual case is evaluated and provided with the required development plan for learning improvement. The Center for Learning and Scholarship (CEA) is responsible for this function in Tijuana (http://www.tij.cetys.mx/campus/depas/cea/despliega_cea.html) and Ensenada, while in Mexicali it is under the responsibility of the Center for Student Academic and Personal Development (DAPA) http://www.mxl.cetys.mx/dapa.php. For both undergraduate and graduate studies, the model is based on learning and core values indicated by the student's specific program.

Systems and information mechanisms that support the learning-teaching process include:

SERP (Faculty Evaluation and Retribution System), is used to evaluate and remunerate undergraduate faculty and provides learning outcomes feedback inside and outside the classroom; also, its results are used confidentially to advise the professor to devote attention to certain areas needing improvement. For the graduate school, we employ a faculty evaluation tool that provides feedback to both the administration and the professor concerning his/her performance, and we are developing a tool that will allow us to evaluate the curricular objectives of graduate programs. It is important to note that CETYS has been systematically evaluating faculty since 1969.

Basic Statistics: This report encompasses much institutional qualitative and quantitative data.

The General Undergraduate Exit Exam (EGEL) administered by CENEVAL certifies that learning outcomes and graduation requirements consistent with the program of study have been met.

To evaluate our student environment we employ a Satisfaction Survey: a study of student satisfaction levels which incorporates feedback from services received by the student from and throughout the institution.

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) contains projects for updating software, hardware, technology and improvement of paper supply, copy center, first-aid, cafeteria and other services.

CFR 4.7
The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning.

To ensure that best practices are incorporated into curricular design and the faculty's pedagogical practice, along with programs designed with a focus on student learning, we periodically incorporate improvements to achieve expected learning outcomes in academic programs. As a result of this, the institution designs and applies a series of research tools in order to gather valuable feedback that can enable it to incorporate new strategies to increase educational effectiveness.

Our re-structured course programs allow faculty from all campuses who teach the same course to start from a common base. Faculty teaching these programs employ a faculty log where they compile outcomes and recommendations for future changes to be made as assessed by their classroom experience. The Department of Curricular Development compiles all this information and produces a summary of comments on what takes place in the classroom as concerns academic programs, meets with Curricular Development Managers (CDM) and Subject Matter Experts (SME) to effect changes in the curricula, program design and teaching practices.

At the graduate level, programs were designed and prepared by a group of specialized professors, and they serve as a guide for faculty in developing specific course syllabi. A feedback mechanism for curricula involving the professor, the student and the company where the student is employed is presently under design.

The Balanced Scorecard sets the improvement program for faculty training for teaching in re-structured programs and to ensure the professor's participation in the educational model. Other feedback processes include:

Group Interviews: These are used to generate and compile students' opinions about the professor, teaching method, learning outcomes and learning strategies.

Student Survey: This survey is administered to high-achieving students and asks them about the most used techniques and resources, outside classroom activities, use of Blackboard software and the professor's working style and method in order to validate the time spent by students outside the classroom for all specified activities in the courses and program. By working with high-achieving students, we obtain valuable qualitative feedback and information.

Student Questionnaire for Faculty Evaluation: This survey assesses students' experiences with course program groups. These results are also used to support the professor's ongoing development and improvement.

CEA. At CETYS' Tijuana and Ensenada campuses, the Center for Leaning and Scholarship (CEA) is the unit dedicated to maximizing the learning process, by offering educational services to the CETYS community such as faculty support in designing courses and materials, training workshops for faculty, as well as through didactic course assessment http://www.tij.cetys.mx/campus/depas/cea/despliega_cea.html. For students, CEA provides educational, vocational and psychological counselling services http://www.tij.cetys.mx/campus/depas/cea/servicios_estudiantes.html.

In Mexicali, these responsibilities are located in different units: the Center for Student Academic and Personal Development (DAPA) provides student services, while faculty services are found in the offices of the Academic, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Curriculum Development Directors.

CFR 4.8
Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, and others, are involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs.

CETYS University administers opinion and assessment surveys to various audiences who are interested in the institution's performance. These constituents include current students, alumni, employers, parents, faculty, donors, IENAC Board, external accrediting agencies and the general public. Examples of such surveys are described as follows.

In the interest of following student satisfaction, each semester, CETYS University administers *satisfaction surveys* to students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs, through which they are asked to evaluate the services received. The results are compared with those of the **entry survey** to see if student expectations from prior to their entrance to CETYS University are being achieved. The semester evaluation of undergraduate and graduate faculty is also performed to obtain students' opinion.

To follow up on our *alumni* and those who are about to graduate from such programs, *focus groups* are conducted periodically. In these meetings we ask participants their opinions on services received in the course of their student life at CETYS; such services include classroom facilities and the use of equipment and other institutional resources. These focus groups are in addition to the CETYS Alumni Association of Professionals' (APEC) input provided through the group of CETYS Board members. Alumni and Employer Studies are also conducted.

Employer follow-up occurs through the Study of Alumni Professional Performance in the Marketplace. The review and revision of programs takes into account employer opinions for each course's updating, thus responding to the needs they have expressed. Additionally, there are also Studies on Workforce demand for new programs, as well as Institutional Image/branding Studies, where audiences, internal and external to the institution, participate.

Parents are invited to participate in the Parents Forum for parents of students conditionally admitted following the admissions exam.

An annual meeting of companies and individuals who have made donations and contributions to CETYS University is organized by the Department of Institutional Advancement. At this meeting they are presented with a report on how donated funds were used, and they are recognized for their support to the student community and the general public. It is important to make clear that CETYS University's donors and contributors do not interfere in academic programs or other

institutional operations. They are only informed of how donations are used, i.e., of the assets acquired as a result of their contributions.

The _Board_ is a consultative body, involved through the various committees in providing feedback and support to the institution.

External Accrediting Agencies such as FIMPES (Mexican Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions), CACECA (Council for Accreditation in the Instruction of Accounting and Administration), CACEI (Council for Accreditation in Engineering Instruction), and CNEIP (National Council for Instruction and Research in Psychology), provide recommendations and feedback regarding their specific accreditation policies and processes in order to subsequently follow-up on them. These agencies evaluate CETYS University as an institution and by academic programs, and according to the respective case, from the students' point of view, the faculty, by direct observation and through evidence presented regarding all institutional processes.

The _general public's_ opinion is sought through studies pertaining to institutional image and through market studies.

Finally, the use of various sources of information, from different audiences exploring the operational activities of CETYS University, are used to enrich the institution by implementing improvement processes benefiting academic quality and the services offered to students, and to reinforce and ratify the institution's image as a university of excellence.

Conclusion

Our Institutional Planning System allows our _2010 Strategic Plan_ to define action guidelines for the achievement of our institutional goals.

An indicator of our efforts towards improvement is the implementation of the Balanced Score Card system, a tool integrating a group of projects, follow-up and evaluation through which the University seeks to materialize the strategic objectives of its _2010 Plan_ and its vision for quality and development. CETYS University has a solid institutional research program to support decision-making.

There is greater and more systematic faculty participation in decision-making related to the design, adoption and operation of new academic programs, as well as the review and revision of already existing programs. In this respect, the new academic structure, based on colleges, has yielded favourable results.

It is appropriate to state that CETYS University, in its commitment to improvement, has adopted accreditation processes that are both national (Mexico) as well as international (WASC). This is a clear sign of the commitment we have to the institution's mission,

and expect that accreditation processes will lead us to an in-depth questioning and strengthening of our quality, our teaching and the effectiveness of our outcomes.

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Recommendations:

1. We have realized that we must review and update existing mechanisms so that data and institutional plans are made available and accessible at all organizational levels and to all individuals who require them (CFR 4.1).
2. Although we have established and implemented academic and administrative processes, nonetheless, we have identified the need to undertake systematic analysis in order to identify those processes which require review and/or updating (CFR 4.4)
3. A future project of great importance to the institution is the creation of a learning assessment center (CFR 4.6).
4. We also recommend the implementation of an institutional information system that allows data consultation, thus facilitating research (CFR 4.5)
5. It is important to promote the exchange of experiences among units of the three campuses charged with student advising for learning improvement (CEA and DAPA) (CFR 4.7).
6. Although numerous and varied individuals, groups, and constituents are involved in consultation for the improvement of academic programs, we have detected the need to undertake consultation and seek advice in a more systematic and uniform manner (CFR 4.8).