

CETYS UNIVERSITY'S PATH TO WASC ACCREDITATION

For over fifteen years, CETYS University sought the opportunity to approach WASC to explore the possibility of being considered the first university in Mexico to receive WASC review and accreditation. Up to this point, we had been unsuccessful in obtaining a favorable response, even though a team from WASC visited our main campus in Mexicali three years ago.

However, it was with great pleasure that we began our quest for this accreditation, thanks to the efforts and persistence of our current President, Enrique Blancas de la Cruz, who has sought to develop our institution beyond our international borders, and thanks to the Accrediting Commission's authorization for WASC and CETYS University to begin the accreditation process as part of an experimental pilot program in Mexico.

Although we have acquired substantial experience in national accreditation, the WASC accreditation process has proved to us to be of greater analytical depth but we are fully committed to meeting the demands of the four standards under which we have been working in this first stage of institutional capacity that will lead us to Candidacy. We have come to understand and appreciate the reasons why WASC requires that any institution that achieves accreditation must be an institution which will remain indefinitely committed to continued improvement.

The involvement of more academic personnel in the process of preparing for the Candidacy stage has resulted in a very positive and enriching experience for the University, by receiving the contributions and experiences from each of the scholars who have become contributing parties in this accreditation process. These faculty members have been participating from different areas and academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The task of disseminating information about WASC accreditation –from initial awareness of WASC, to what accreditation means, to the different stages we must work through, the resources that must be utilized, improvement actions that must be taken, and in a general manner, all that we have been learning on the way, and which we will undoubtedly continue to

learn until the process culminates with obtaining accreditation— represents an accumulation of experiences and knowledge of an incalculable value for CETYS University.

Our path to candidacy has already been established by WASC and our deadlines have been met in accordance with the following timeline:

Eligibility Proposal: Fall semester 2004

Eligibility Granted by the Commission: March 2005

Work towards Candidacy: From the moment eligibility was granted.

Letter of Intent Submission: May 2006

CPR Submission: December 19, 2006

CPR Visit: February 28-March 2, 2007

EE Report Submission: July 18, 2007

EE Visit : October 10-12, 2007

The culmination of the Candidacy stage represents the end of a very valuable chapter in the history of our University, which has allowed us to better appreciate the WASC process, to understand what working in coordination and collaboration with this prestigious accrediting organization means, and to have studied and maximized the use of all resources provided by WASC, such as the *Handbook of Accreditation* and the *Evidence Guide*, among others, without which it would not have been possible to meet this project's expectations.

Our Organization for the Candidacy Stage

To achieve the desired success for the Candidacy stage, we have designed an informal organizational structure composed of the following working groups:

WASC Commission:

A consultative and support body headed by the President and comprised of the President's Staff, the three Campus Directors, Academic Directors from each campus, Deans of the Colleges, and the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

Planning Group:

Under the direction of ALO and comprised of the President's Staff and the Graduate Department, this body makes and executes decisions concerning the project and provides support to the four WASC operative groups.

Four WASC Working Groups:

Four groups, each of which has been assigned one of the WASC standards; each is headed by a group leader and is comprised of faculty members and administrators from the three campuses. The recruitment of all of the individuals involved in this accreditation process was a considerable undertaking. In doing so, we took into consideration various factors, first of which was knowledge of English; secondly, their history with the institution; thirdly, their commitment to the institution; and finally, that they were mostly faculty members.

We have been very pleased to see that all of the individuals involved have taken up, with enthusiasm and responsibility, their task of assisting the University in order to further our commitment to this accreditation, while at the same time they have realized that this process will transform CETYS Universidad into an institution of even greater quality and academic excellence.

Our working strategy since obtaining eligibility has been through the ALO: preparing orientation sessions for all members of the WASC operative groups; using the *Accreditation Handbook*, the Handbook on *How to Become Accredited*, and *The Evidence Guide*, along with other resources

provided by WASC; attending annual WASC meetings; and through the assessment of previously accredited universities such as Biola University and San Diego State University.

At the same time, we began a dissemination of information campaign for all internal and external audiences in the CETYS community with the publication of articles in the electronic and print newspapers of the three campuses, with informational meetings with full-time faculty on the three campuses, through informational bulletins for course faculty, the presentation of progress reports in sessions before the Educational Committee and Board of Trustees, among others.

The Institutional Capacity Report herein presented is supported by our electronic evidence portfolio and by a WASC-CETYS web page specifically created to facilitate document-browsing by the visiting team.

From the start, the Board of Trustees has demonstrated its interest and support for this project, and therefore, it is very important that the Trustees are aware of its progress. The President has kept them informed, while at the same time, he has been receiving their feedback.

CETYS University looks forward to the next phase of the accreditation process leading ultimately to the success and satisfaction of receiving accreditation by WASC.