

# Program Design Summary Report

**Delivered For:**



Channel Islands  

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

## January 2024

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## Executive Summary

The report offers a summary of the faculty-led program design initiative. Launched in May 2023, this initiative is centered on the Culture and Needs Assessment (CNA) process, which is crucial for the enhancement of academic programs through detailed analysis and inclusive participation.

### Key Outcomes

1. **Participation and Engagement:** With 90% of academic programs engaged, the inclusive design process drew on a wide range of expertise, with a majority actively finalizing or implementing plans based on the culture and needs assessments.
2. **Capacity Building:** The faculty-driven design process built the capacity for programs to internally assess their effectiveness using their own shared language, fostering goal-oriented inquiry within the programs' own context.
3. **Culture Development:** By encouraging inclusive goal setting and planning, the program design strategy has cultivated an institutional culture of assessment, where contributions transcend individual or program-specific goals.

### Key Findings from Culture and Needs Assessments

1. Programs have **reported success** in evolving their curricula through a reflective process driven by faculty involvement, using assessments of current students and alumni to enhance teaching and course design.
2. Programs report **challenges** in allocating adequate personnel for assessment tasks, arising from the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, staffing constraints, and the task of balancing assessment with faculty workloads reported as already demanding.
3. The central themes for **needed support** include fostering an assessment culture that not only emphasizes the value of reflective practices but also focuses on increasing awareness and use of existing resources, while continuously strengthening these supports to enhance the community's engagement in assessment efforts.

### Next Steps

1. Initiate a **culture and needs assessment within campus leadership** (starting with cabinet) leveraging the momentum of this semester's accreditation visit to engage leadership in the process and demonstrate and model active involvement.
2. Embrace the culture and needs assessment process for **scaling**, fostering an approach that enhances engagement in non-academic divisions and Student Affairs leading to more **integrated** assessment practices campus wide.
3. Strengthen **community and connectedness** in assessment. Establish a faculty director of assessment role to shape and unify the university's assessment culture, ensuring the position has potential to transcend divisional boundaries to foster institutional coherence and community in assessment practices.

## Context and Background

During Spring and Summer of AY 2022-23, a [review](#) was conducted for CSUCI aimed to evaluate and enhance the institution's culture of assessment in the context of its forthcoming reaffirmation of accreditation. The primary purpose was to establish a solid foundation for continuous improvement that integrates knowledge creation and application, extending beyond the reaccreditation process.

To accomplish this the external facilitators employed a multifaceted approach that included analysis of survey data, community rubric assessments on a culture of evidence, and stakeholder interviews. This comprehensive methodology ensured a thorough understanding of the current state of assessment practices and the integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles at CSUCI.

The findings indicate that CSUCI is in the early stages of articulating and demonstrating a mature and continuous improvement culture. There is a budding competence in using evidence for planning and an emerging ability to learn as an organization. However, there is a clear need for enhanced assessment leadership, and the establishment of a campus assessment learning community that can guide the university towards a more developed culture of assessment.

To enhance institutional capabilities, the Vice Provost's office collaborated with the external facilitators to create a **faculty-led** program design process for academic programs. This effort is part of a broader, deliberate strategy for cultural development within the institution, representing a sustained intervention rather than a one-time event.

## Process Model

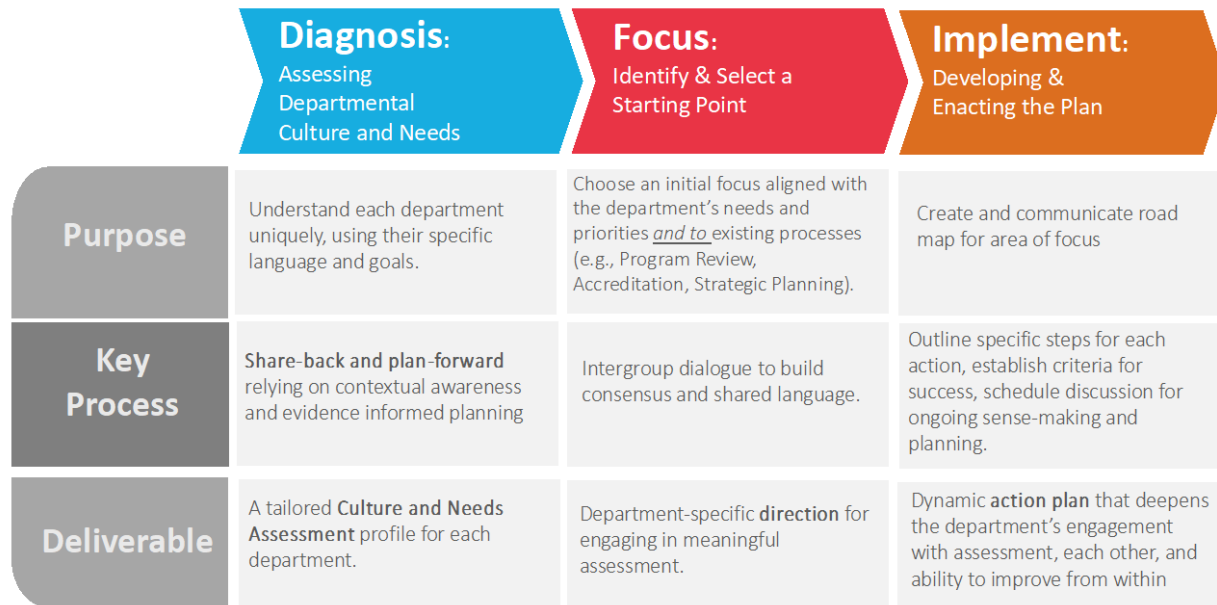
The program design process was initiated with the goal of engaging every academic program in completing a Culture and Needs Assessment (CNA) within the semester. This involved an inclusive approach where faculty members actively participated in adapting and informing the CNA through surveys, dialogues, and faculty sessions, ensuring the assessment was tailored to each program's unique context and language.

To achieve this, the Vice Provost established a team of three **faculty leads** (with course buyouts) as outlined in [Appendix 1](#). These leads were supported by the external facilitators through a structured process using **culturally grounded, human-centered, and evidence-informed** methodologies that included regular check-ins, training sessions, and ongoing coaching. The support model was experiential and collaborative, focusing on practical, on-the-ground support. It provided the leads with the necessary tools and guidance, including expert advice and assistance during meetings, to effectively engage with and support the various academic programs. This support was provided so that the process could build capacity and be truly **faculty-led**.

The initiative's momentum was reinforced through a call for applications for funding, which was designed to support retreats, provide spaces for conversation, and conceptualize and advance the work further. The Provost's office allocated funds specifically for retreats that would facilitate the ongoing Culture and Needs Assessment process. This financial support extended to non-tenure track faculty and lecturers, enabling them to fully engage in the process. Additionally, the funding was used to organize focus groups and provide incentives for student participation. The aim was not merely to fund one-off events or outsource tasks, but rather to encourage sustainable involvement and investment in the continuous improvement of the university's academic programs. Of the 12 programs that applied for funding, 11 received it.

The faculty-led program design process involved three phases: Diagnosis, Focus, and Implementation. The diagnosis phase aims to understand each department's unique culture and needs using their specific language and goals, culminating in a tailored Culture and Needs Assessment profile. The focus phase involves selecting an initial point of focus aligned with departmental priorities and existing processes. The implementation phase involves creating a roadmap, fostering intergroup dialogue to build consensus, outlining specific action steps, and establishing success criteria. This dynamic action plan was intended to deepen each department's engagement with assessment and their capability to foster internal improvements.

## Program Design Process



## Engagement and Results

The table below provides an overview of the levels of engagement among programs throughout the process. It summarizes the extent to which all programs participated, defining engagement as attending initial and follow-up meetings, and completing the first version of the Culture and Needs Assessment. This engagement was tracked and rated through various interactions, such as survey responses, faculty lead discussions, meetings with external facilitators, and activities like applying for and holding retreats. This information was then analyzed according to this rubric to make engagement ratings. The table reveals that levels of engagement have surpassed expectations, indicating a significant commitment from programs to the assessment process, even acknowledging that achieving such involvement within a single semester was an ambitious goal.

## Engagement Levels in Program Design Process

	0%	27%	58%	15%
	Unengaged	Just Getting Started	Engaged	Advancing
Chair Involvement	Little to no response; or active interference	Chair is aware and starting to get involved; Some hesitancy or superficial involvement	Chair is responsive and inviting leads to meetings; indications of genuine commitment	Chair is championing and promoting process with faculty and addressing their concerns
Level of Active Participation	Absence of participation and requests for involvement in survey/process	Low but non-resistant participation of chair/faculty	Good response (majority of faculty) on surveys or discussions	Subsequent sessions scheduled based on surveys, offline dialogue
Initiative & Planning	No initiative or planning evident	Initial stages of identifying needs and resources	Areas of focus for assessment work are identified and include input from faculty	Existing resources are readily identified and informing planning
Action & Implementation	No action items articulated	Initial thoughts on focus areas but no concrete plans	Plans for next steps are formulated.	Action plans have been collectively created and implementation has started

All program chairs completed an initial assessment to tailor with faculty input. Over 90% of the programs further customized this assessment to their specific contexts, and approximately 65% are now finalizing or enacting their resultant plans.

## Engagement of Academic Programs in Program Design



## Summary Results of Culture and Needs Assessments

The figure below provides a synthesized overview of the information gathered across academic programs. For detailed insights and results gained through this process, please see the summaries offered in [Appendix 2](#). Summarized next are areas of needed support based on information gathered across all the culture and needs assessment in light of institutional context and supports.

## Culture and Needs Assessment: High Level Themes Across Programs



### Needed Support

- Effective data analysis and application.
- Aligning assessments with accreditation standards and core competencies.
- Assessing community impact to guide assessment strategies.
- Allocating time in the academic calendar for reflective assessment planning annually.
- Enhancing stronger, formal connection with Institutional Research for proactive collaborative support.
- Navigating faculty workload balance and integrating assessment as a valued, integral aspect of program development

The need for more resources, both human and financial, was noted by programs as their main need for effective assessment. Some cited the absence of dedicated analysts to manage the collection and analysis of outcome data. Acknowledging how staffing and workload issues influence assessment is operationally necessary, but we must also examine the growing assessment culture. This includes moving past the idea of assigning assessment tasks to specific roles and instead integrating assessment practices into the fabric of university work. It is also important to consider the currently available resources and identify why they may be underutilized. For example:



- The potential of Institutional Research as a resource for data analysis and decision support is not fully realized across programs. A more proactive partnership between academic departments and IR can facilitate a deeper engagement with data for program improvement.
- The alignment between program goals, learning outcomes, and program-specific accreditation processes could be more consistently applied, leveraging practice and content of accreditation process to extend into broader ongoing assessment efforts.
- Effective use of existing technology, for example the Canvas learning management system offers integrated tools for outcome assessment that can facilitate the tracking of student performance against specific learning outcomes, enabling faculty to efficiently gather data and apply insights for targeted curriculum enhancements and program development.
- Leveraging and scaling faculty-led initiatives that foster innovative teaching and learning (e.g., Teaching and Learning Innovations—TLI, and Faculty Inquiry Projects--FIP) through evidence-based inquiry, enabling educators to collaboratively refine pedagogy and assessment in line with learning outcomes.

Clarification on where to seek assistance and how to effectively leverage current institutional support for data analysis could bridge the gap between the available resources and the unmet needs of these programs. Moreover, the value of data processing is fully realized only when it is integrated into the 'Act' phase of the assessment cycle. In this phase, data is collaboratively reviewed by a broad range of stakeholders to derive meaningful insights that drive program enhancement. **The value of data is only fully realized when it becomes part of the 'Act' phase of the assessment cycle, where diverse stakeholders come together to examine the data and extract insights for program improvement.** It is at this juncture that tapping into existing support and expertise is vital, moving beyond the mindset of limited staffing resources to a strategy of active engagement and utilization of available resources.

Balancing faculty workloads with assessment responsibilities requires clarifying that assessment is an integral part of faculty duties, acknowledging the pressures of accreditation and review cycles. Leveraging technology and Institutional Research (IR) support, along with targeted help during critical periods (program-specific accreditation cycles and program review years), can make assessment more manageable and meaningful. This approach isn't about outsourcing tasks or additional compensation; it's about offering strategic support to embed assessment into teaching and program development naturally.

Cultivating a culture that values reflective assessment practices aims to shift away from a compliance mindset towards enhancing learning. It is about acknowledging that assessment is integrated within faculty roles *and providing nuanced support*, which underscores the importance of not just conducting assessment, but doing so in a manner that emphasizes reflective practice over compliance.

## How Did This Lift Capability?

The aim of the Culture and Needs Assessment was not primarily as an information gathering exercise; it was to meet programs where they are at and collectively discover connection points where useful and meaningful assessment practice could occur, aligning to (not driven solely by) internal and external requirements. As such, the process of discovery and dialogue serves as a developmental opportunity; opportunity to identify priority areas, better understand how to create shared understanding, and collectively progress in an iterative process of sharing back and planning forward.

Process Phase	Guiding Questions
<b>PHASE 1 System Snapshot:</b> summary report of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is the health of our assessment culture, processes, and systems? How do we prepare to inquire and understand our culture of assessment in preparation for thematic pathway review?</i></li> </ul>
<b>PHASE 2 Action Plan:</b> proposed process for creating desired change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>How can we create a shared understanding around key priority areas of improvement and foster commitment to self-reflection?</i></li> </ul>
<b>PHASE 3 Facilitated Implementation:</b> support and consultation for enacting plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What are the main touchstones to track and celebrate achievement as we develop in our assessment and learning culture?</i></li> </ul>

The process, pivotal at this juncture, was not focused on professional development for programs on “how to do assessment” but on **nurturing leadership in assessment practices**. The Vice Provost’s leadership and the faculty leads’ deep engagement has been central to the progress seen thus far. Their full involvement speaks to the success of the initiative. Yet, to maintain this momentum and trust, especially against a backdrop of intermittent past efforts, it’s crucial to provide consistent support. This means deliberately fostering leaders who can champion the culture of continuous improvement and assessment through ongoing development using the culture grounded, human centered approach, creating the structures, processes, and policies that undergird the authentic work, and collective reflection on the growing culture.

## Feedback From Faculty Leads

The external facilitators worked closely with faculty leads, advising, collaborating, and coaching throughout the Fall and into the Spring semester to support the work in engaging the programs in the Culture and Needs Assessment (see summaries in [Appendix 1](#)). At the conclusion of leads working with their programs, they were interviewed to gain their insights into the effectiveness of the process. Overall, they expressed appreciation and enthusiasm for the process as their personal and professional orientations aligned with this approach. They also noted that while shifts in the culture are evident, they are initial steps that need to continue and be built upon. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of sustained support and resources; a lapse in the pace of these efforts could reinforce the skepticism among some that the initiative is temporary, aimed only at fulfilling accreditation requirements.

They noted that the process was effective when there was a space and structure for reflective and constructive dialogue. Success seemed tied to active chairs who created environments conducive to such discussions, propelling their programs forward. Conversely, less dynamic chairs were seen as a bottleneck, suggesting a need for systems that support progress without reliance on any single individual's energy. This insight highlights the importance of institutional frameworks that enable continuous engagement and improvement, independent of individual facilitators.

- **Approach:** There was rewarding and authentic collaboration and engagement across academic programs. It was very gratifying for leads to see across programs into the various and impressive work being done across campus. Their perspectives on assessment become more expansive and inclusive.

*"I enjoyed this work. I'll say that it was really hard work, but I found so much beauty in what our colleagues are willing to do even when it's hard, even when there's not time, and even when there's no resources. And that really gives me hope for our university."*

*"I love this work...It was so cool to find out what's going on in programs and help them to meet their goals and get our campus in a place where we're focused on the right things since we've had so much going on."*

### Engagement & Community Building:

- Effective programs require structured environments that promote reflective discussions and constructive conversations. The progress of these programs is often tied to the leadership of an energetic chairperson, but there is a need for systems that ensure their success without relying on a single driving force.
- There is a need to broaden the base of actively involved faculty by acknowledging and addressing the root causes of disengagement. It's important to maintain transparency and authenticity as the initiative progresses. Faculty reactions vary, some with full buy-in, and

some awaiting tangible results before fully committing, while others remain minimally involved, observing from a distance. This work has been helpful to meet faculty and programs where they are at and needs to continue to do so. The focus cannot only be about encouraging programs to participate in assessment; it's equally about how assessment leaders and administrators actively engage with and support these programs.

- One notable example involved a chair who initially displayed hesitancy towards the process. Despite an initial lack of response and seeming disinterest, it became evident that their reservations stemmed from a suspicion of the process's genuineness. Once they recognized that the shift was away from mere compliance and towards a culture of authentic engagement, their attitude transformed. Their program discovered a newfound freedom in reevaluating and adjusting their assessment tools to better serve their needs, rather than feeling restricted by external accreditation requirements.

### **Developing the Language of Assessment:**

- Working across programs has highlighted some underlying reasons for hesitancy due to differing understandings and definitions of what is meant by “assessment”. This work has involved deliberate efforts to craft a shared language that resonates with all faculty, encouraging wider engagement and an inclusive approach to assessment. Many programs want to know how to build in equity to their assessments. Many programs have already been doing this without anyone ever asking or telling them, and this needs to be more widely shared.

*“There’s more expertise among us than I knew! I wish we had the means to learn from each other a little more.”*

## **Next Steps**

The Program Design Summary Report for Cal State Channel Islands provides a strategic pathway for enhancing academic programs. Prioritized next steps and recommendations emphasize a comprehensive, inclusive approach, drawing from the Culture and Needs Assessment (CNA) process. The following are prioritized next steps and recommendations.

### **Continued Leadership Support and Sponsorship of Capacity Building**

- Engagement of the Cabinet in CNA Process: Involve the Cabinet to achieve stronger coherence across priority areas, shared vision for a culture of continuous improvement, and tighter coupling between divisional and institutional assessment needs.
- Engagement of Divisional Leadership in CNA Process: Support divisional leadership in DSA, BFA, and UA in framing and leading assessment culture within their divisions that is aligned and contributes to an institutional culture of continuous improvement.

- **Continue Strategic Resource Allocation:** Allocate resources strategically to empower roles such as a faculty director of assessment, tasked with driving the development of an assessment culture rather than just managing coordination efforts. This requires planning and reinforcing new approaches, rewarding genuine engagement in assessment (e.g., the Provost's funding for the CAN process this fall), offering tactical support, and fostering a shared vision for leadership in assessment. Continue investing in professional and leadership development (e.g., Vice Provost sent large team to WASC Assessment Resource Conference in 2023), to nurture leaders who can champion a culture of assessment throughout the institution.

#### **Scaling and Integration Across Campus: Import Successes from Academic Programs**

- Continue to implement CNA process across university units to identify and uncover points of intersection with assessment for various departments. The process of this approach is crucial, having more significance than the actual results and outputs it creates. Implement stakeholder-driven culture and needs assessment with scaffolded support where needed for units exhibiting alignment (readiness and curiosity) with assessment culture.

#### **Enhance Connectedness, Cohesion, and Community Building Around Assessment Culture**

- Develop targeted workshops for academic *and* non-academic management teams to align their practices with the institution's assessment goals.
- Create an inter-divisional assessment committee to share strategies and integrate practices across the campus.
- Implement forums, town halls, and campus-wide assessment day to highlight and celebrate the integration of assessment in various departments.
- Introduce a mentorship program pairing academic and non-academic staff to foster cross-divisional understanding of assessment.
- Launch a digital platform to facilitate communication and resource sharing between academic and non-academic divisions on assessment-related topics.

**Integration with Campus-Wide Initiatives:** Building on these insights, deeper involvement and collaboration across divisions are crucial. The success in Academic Affairs can be a catalyst for assessment development campus-wide, addressing operational challenges such as enrollment management and budget constraints. Adopting an outcome-informed approach is essential for strategic decision-making and sustaining program improvement.

Implementing these steps at Cal State Channel Islands will not only enhance academic programs but also align with broader institutional goals. This integrated, collaborative approach is key to fostering academic excellence and operational effectiveness in the face of evolving educational challenges.