

# Educational Distinctiveness

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This document reflects wide ranging discussions with colleagues from across our campus community across early 2022 as interpreted and articulated by our principal authors:

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Watch our brief overview video: <https://youtu.be/xonokhZzilw>

## Executive Summary:

TBD

## Preamble:

## Framing for our Report

Our January 2022 charge was to craft a vision of and for our campus to take us through 2032, the start of our fourth decade of operation. While our primary audiences are Academic Affairs and the Office of the Provost, we have tried to keep our conceptualizations and language as universal as possible so as to be relevant and useful to the entirety of our wider campus community as well as to our community partners beyond our institution. With that in mind and in keeping with the visionary role of our charge we have tried to primarily speak in generalities which are universally (or nearly so) applicable across our various campus units and activities. At times we seek to give clarity to these broader themes with specifics or examples. These particular supporting examples are not necessarily universally applicable across all campus units, not necessarily meant to be holistic, nor to disrespect any of the other challenges faced or great work done by our colleagues to date.

We undertook this visioning exercise via teleconferencing software, nearly two years into the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic that has so disrupted the work of our campus, country, and society.

This still-unfolding pandemic is but the most recent external event to influence our university over the twenty years since our founding. Our charge was to take a fresh look at our overall educational enterprise in light of the myriad of recent and likely-upcoming factors to both refresh our goals and make sure our orientation remains relevant to the coming decade and beyond.

Lastly we acknowledge that we are but the most recent in a long line of visioning efforts CSUCI has undertaken in recent years. We were inspired by those previous efforts but began this effort with a clean slate and have not necessarily referenced the specifics from those prior documents, most of which were unavailable to us during our initial outreach to campus stakeholders and subsequent writing.

## CSUCI's Distinctive Academic Experience

Our tradition of perpetually seeing new possibilities and opportunity for all is borne of our perch on the edge of our continent. It stretches back thousands of years. We proudly draw a direct line from our Chumash ancestors on the shores of Santa Rosa Island and the peak of Sat'wiwa to the halls of the former Camarillo State Hospital to our current campus committed to opening new horizons for our students.

The distinctive academic experience at CSUCI has grown out of the unique geographic, historical, and cultural surroundings and perspectives which characterize our home. "Home" for us is the wider Ventura and Santa Barbara County region, inclusive of the mainland, nearshore ocean, and offshore Channel Islands for which we are named. As Ventura County's only four-year public University, CSU Channel Islands offers distinctive and rigorous curricular and co-curricular programs which integrate that unique geography with our rich human heritage. Our student-centered and equity minded campus aspires to be an intellectual and cultural hub for our region and an institution recognized for outstanding scholarship, instruction, and social mobility well beyond. Since our founding, we have attracted and fostered students, faculty, and staff who are engaged members of our local community, committed to our area's advancement and innovation, and widely committed to a better, more resilient planet.

## 1. Core Values

California State University Channel Islands is distinct in the ways our core values manifest implicitly and explicitly across our range of academic experiences. These foundational values are a mix of principals found across institutions of higher learning and others endemic to our particular place and time.

CSUCI's values are grounded in the following overarching principles which apply across our organization:

- **Excellence** in higher education
  - Vocal advocate for academic rigor and high standards for all;

- Systemic support for robust and engaged scholarship and creative activities across the entire range of investigators (faculty, researchers, students, staff, and administrators);
- Create and maintain structures which are nimble and able to adapt to our needs as we grow and evolve.
- **Innovation** and creativity are hallmarks of our new knowledge and skill development
  - Comfortable blazing new trails and embracing potential risks associated with departures from tradition, understanding not all pathways bear fruit;
  - Strong commitment to innovative scholarship both within our campus and as a strong partner with long-established knowledge creation groups and legacy institutions of higher learning;
  - We believe teaching today exactly as we were taught yesterday, will rob our students of their maximum potential;
  - We are a locus for sustainability, economic, and cultural innovation within our region, anchoring our research and education in ethics and civic responsibility.
  - We develop, foster, and implement high impact practices across our range of instructional modalities and settings;
  - We view our university structures and landscapes as laboratories for inquiry and see our various enterprises as cauldrons wherein we can both vet traditional ideals alongside novel methods and techniques.
- **Aspire to be a change agent** for our students and regional community with particular focus on contributing to a more equitable and just society
  - We are a social mobility and betterment vehicle for our students;
  - While we encourage all academic endeavors, we have a traditional focus on applied research which frequently manifests as experiential learning and learn-by-doing praxis;
  - We educate students from all backgrounds and circumstances with a strong orientation on equity;
  - We prepare students to be informed and active citizens who contribute and sustain our American democracy.
- **Trusted, reliable** member of our region and community
  - We are perceived as a steady, apolitical organization trusted within our local communities to interpret both longstanding situations and emerging issues;
  - Engaged in active explorations to better understand and better our world, encouraging diverse perspectives and civil debates;
  - Strong tangible contributions to wider region, including policy tools, competent workforce members, and being active partners in times of crisis.
  - Serve as a key memory node/archive for our region;
  - In the highest tradition of universities as epicenters for the free exchange of ideas and the exploration of knowledge, we will model (and expect nothing less than) respectful and honest debate while simultaneously standing against dishonesty and sophistry.
- Committed to our **region's history** and its **optimistic future**
  - We inherit and are shaped by our history, not imprisoned by it;

- While our future can seem uncertain and at times dubious, actively sculpting a future we wish to see is the best antidote to despair;
- Fostering deep connections across spaces and times, but grounded in our own geography and culture.
- We are at home in **liminal spaces** characterized by transition, edges, and intersections
  - Comfortable in and supportive of work in gray zones wherein we work with ideas, situations, and memberships that are geographically, culturally, and intellectually diverse and dynamic;
  - In uncertain spaces, strong commitments to interdisciplinarity and diverse ways of knowing and learning best enable holistic understanding and problem solving.
- **Embrace risk & uncertainty as we grow**
  - We realize solutions to complex challenges typically emerge through trial and error and require a willingness, humility, and ability to act, learn, and adapt;
  - Accept and embrace the discomfort of not knowing how each endeavor will play out;
  - The solutions to some problems are straightforward and easily understood. But at other times effectively resolving many institution-level challenges requires resisting the allure of oversimplification, quick conclusions, and narrow perspectives;
  - We often face increasingly complex challenges whose contexts shift frequently making aiming for perfection futile.
- Fostering self-evaluation and **continual preparation** for emerging challenges perpetual disruptions;
  - We seek to do better tomorrow than we are doing today. To do so we actively use data to diagnose the causes of lower-than-desired performance and then systematically explore or pilot potential solutions;
  - We support assessment and accountability without fear of reprisal. Assessments are not places to hide issues, but rather forefront them. A culture of ongoing improvement encourages open dialogue between all levels of our organization;
  - We do not fear or run from our shortcomings, recognizing everyone and every structure can and should be stronger.

## 2. Place-Based Features and Opportunities

CSU Channel Islands is surrounded by numerous distinctive local resources which grant us valuable place-based opportunities. Our rare mix of geographic and demographic factors allow for both academic and co-curricular experiences few other institutions can offer. Working with our local community, we should prioritize budgeting and planning initiatives that leverage our adjacency to unique sites such as the Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary, our namesake.

In this section, we define both our distinctive place-based features and suggest opportunities which capitalize on these resources. These opportunities are varied, but share the goals of strengthening ties of CSUCI to our local community, growing our reputation as a regional leader, collaborating with local institutions, and enriching the university experience through scholarship, engagement, and cultural growth. The features and opportunities detailed below are not exhaustive, but instead serve as an initial orientation for institutional and academic planning groups to build upon. We have identified five broad place-based categories:

1. Local Populations
2. Wild Places and Natural Spaces
3. Central Coast Identity and Los Angeles Proximity
4. Governmental Institutions
5. Industry and Innovation

Note: There are numerous additional local features and opportunities available with potential for collaboration which are not detailed in this section because they are not distinctive to Ventura County. These resources are vitally important but are not unique place-based features and are analogous to other systems found nationwide (e.g., hospital systems, county governmental sites, law offices, etc).

### **1. Local Populations**

#### *Features*

The diverse histories, experiences and needs of populations local to the surrounding area of CSUCI will continue to be an invaluable place based resource. Certainly our student body reflects the diverse make-up of the local region with CSUCI continuing to be a systemwide leader in serving its Hispanic student population as well as other minoritized groups. Being a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a minority serving

institution (MSI) means much more than reaching demographic benchmarks at CSUCI. Instead it reflects the ways our campus is in tune with the needs of these student populations reaching CSUCI from local high schools and community colleges. While demographics will certainly shift between now and 2032, local students from working families, military veterans, and 1st generation college-goers will foreseeably remain significant segments of our student body.

While the critical mass of our student body will continue to hail from the counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles, the potential for creating lasting and impactful relationships with diverse local sectors is certainly unique. This includes Mindful engagement with California Native communities such as the Ventureño Chumash in observing respectful cultural protocols in research and education, as well as care for sites that are historically significant such as Round Mountain / Sat<sup>h</sup>wiwa. Additionally, migrant Indigenous communities from the Mexican state of Oaxaca concentrated in Ventura and northern Santa Barbara County are another example of the multiplicity of the local population.

### *Opportunities*

Place-based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Anthropology, Education, English, ethnic studies (Africana Studies, Asian & Asian Pacific Islander Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Native American Studies), Health Sciences, Information Technology, Mathematics, Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, and others.

Specific opportunities include:

- A. Partnerships with varied organizations serving local cultural efforts e.g. Round Mountain / sat<sup>h</sup>wiwa Stewardship and Collaboration or other initiatives involving Chumash History and Tradition
- B. Research, internship, and service learning opportunities with NGO's such as Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) and others that work with transborder populations
- C. Work to support international diasporic communities with the Mexican Consulate in Oxnard.
- D. Research with and about the rich histories of diverse sectors of the communities situated locally (African-American, Asian American, historic ranching industries of Ventura and Santa Barbara areas as well as on the Channel Islands and many others.)

- E. The make-up of our local population also calls for unique health and medical needs. The establishment of teaching hospitals in the underserved and more rural areas of the region may also be an opportunity.

## **2. Wild Places and Natural Spaces**

### *Features*

CSUCI occupies a beautiful, special, fragile, and important ecological space. Our namesake is both a National Park, home to endemic and rare species such as the Island Fox and Bald Eagle, and a National Marine Sanctuary, home to our Dolphin mascots and thousands of other species. We operate a research station on Santa Rosa Island, providing a home base for exploring these vibrant environs. On the ferry transit to the Santa Rosa Island Research Station, one crosses the Santa Barbara Channel. This nearshore deep channel is a driver of nutrient upwelling and contributes to the rich biodiversity and abundance of our waters.

Our university is directly situated on the Oxnard Plain, one of the most fertile alluvial plains in the country. This valley is split by the Santa Clara River, a large coastal river without a Dam. Owing to the richness of our soil and water, agriculture thrives nearby, supporting our local economy, providing food security, and offers avenues of collaboration detailed in other sections. CSUCI is also in close proximity to the Los Padres National Forest (home to the California Condor), Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Point Mugu State Park, and numerous State Beaches. These nearby wild spaces, encompassing historical and cultural sites as well as Native American centers, provide opportunities for research, education, and collaboration with national, state, and local partners.

Ultimately, our local environment is vulnerable. We live in a Chaparral biome with a Mediterranean climate - one of only five small areas in the world in this rare environment, and the only one in the United States. Our campus is also situated on an urban/rural divide, creating risks and opportunities for study. Because we live in a transitional space, we are especially sensitive to climatic changes. In fact, Ventura County has warmed 2.6 °C since pre-industrial times, the fastest change in the continental US. These changes will lead to increasing risks of wildfires, drought, rising sea levels, and other climate-driven disruptions. Although the occurrence of these disruptions are predictable, the timing and scale of these stochastic events is not, and we must institutionalize our preparations for future risks at CSUCI.

### *Opportunities*

The University has several ongoing and developing collaborations with organizations found locally that steward, manage, conserve, and study our wild places and natural spaces. At the department and faculty level, scholarship and collaborations exist in many departments/programs. However, these partnerships become more impactful when formalized across campus and supported at the institutional level. In this category, our Santa Rosa Island Research Station is on National Parks land and is operated through an MOU with the National Parks Service. Currently, talks are underway to develop partnerships with the Santa Barbara Zoo, Santa Barbara Botanical Gardens, and the Santa Barbara Natural History Museum. These organizations have expressed an interest in working with us as partners who value and prioritize local/regional communities, species, and places. In particular, they see our University's mission as better aligning with their missions, especially DEI initiatives. Our core values align well with their operational mission, a model that may be replicated with new partners.

Place-based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Anthropology, Business, Biology, Chemistry, Communication, Computer Science, Economics, Education, English, ESRM, Mathematics, Political Science, Sociology, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. Partnering with local, state, federal and private organizations found locally that grapple with issues created by climate change and living at the urban-wild frontier including: the National Park Service, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Forest Service, Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Weather Service, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Ventura Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, CalFire, Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, County of Ventura, and others.
- B. Building and maintaining animal husbandry, marine and freshwater aquaria (potentially at the CI Boating Center) and experimental gardens on campus to provide collaborative research spaces with agricultural, zoo, garden, and aquarium partners in the region.
- C. Codifying an environmental disaster response policy and leading a coalition of organizations dedicated to emergency response to regional ecological disasters including oil spills, wildfires, etc. This response may include field teams, lab space for cleaning and rehabilitation, and post-hoc, longer term ecological and economic impact assessments.
- D. Connecting with P-14 institutions to create regional educational pipelines of environmental stewardship, preparing students for leading roles in research, conservation, management, and policy.



- E. Establishing a Center for Coastal Studies. A research center which affords our wider campus a tangible home for broadly interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to understanding and proffering potential solutions to diverse challenges would be noteworthy and unique in our state. Our campus is uniquely positioned to engage issues of overfishing, ocean acidification, microplastic pollution, housing insecurity, eroding coastal dependent industries, vulnerability to natural disasters, and livable communities.
- F. Working with organizations working towards environmental justice to ensure safety from toxic pesticides, clean-up of areas like EPA Superfund toxic waste site Halaco, and protection from further environmental exploitation (CAUSE, CFROG, Sierra Club).

### 3. **Gold Coast Identity and Los Angeles Proximity**

#### *Features*

Colloquially known as the “805,” California’s coastal region of Ventura and Santa Barbara county boasts a unique local identity not to be subsumed by our neighbors to the north and south. Much of western Ventura County, are bedroom communities marked by less traffic, less pollution and stronger community ties. Shaped by the unique social, racial, economic and linguistic diversity of the region, locals are accustomed to the “rurban” experience that characterizes much of Ventura and Santa Barbara County.

At the same time, of all the central coast educational institutions, CSUCI is the closest to greater Los Angeles. We are a coastal campus on the Pacific Rim, and we exist within the event horizon of the second largest city (and the largest county) in the US. The proximity of our campus to Los Angeles County, the most populated county in the United States, allows for access for our students and faculty to distinguishable opportunities in teaching, scholarship and collaboration. These proximities come with costs (air and light pollution, traffic, urbanization) and benefits. The latter include access to cutting edge expertise in digital humanities, entrepreneurship, supply chain, pacific studies, biotechnology, and arts and culture.

#### *Opportunities*

Place based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Anthropology, Art, Biology, Business, Communications, Computer Science, Economics, English, ethnic studies programs (Africana Studies, Asian & Asian Pacific Islander

Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Native American Studies), History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Mechatronics, Performing Arts, Sociology, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. Research and teaching opportunities to highlight the unique social, racial, economic, lingual diversity of our local region (Ventura, Santa Barbara and northern Los Angeles counties)
- B. As a center of culture and knowledge with a beautiful campus, CSUCI can serve as significant hub in the landscape of venues featuring engaging programming for the campus community and lay audiences alike
- C. Partnership possibilities and student externship opportunities at world-leading institutions in medical and biotechnological research, such as UCLA, USC, Cedars Sinai and dozens of biotech firms.
- D. Enormous potential for collaborations with P-14, college, and graduate teaching and research programs at hundreds of Los Angeles educational institutions.

#### **4. Government-Related Institutions**

##### *Features*

Ventura County is home to several governmental institutions that provide internship and career opportunities as well as links for research and teaching. While locally situated, these institutions have a wide reaching national and international impact economically, politically, and militarily. While the University cannot lobby for candidates or issues before legislative bodies, it can be an active community member and promote civic activities.

Serving as the only deep-water port between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Port of Hueneme is currently an official U.S. Department of Commerce Foreign Trade Zone and one of the first Ports in California to be recognized as an environmentally sustainable port of the future. Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) with sites located in Port Hueneme, Point Mugu and San Nicolas Island features three federal/national research labs and various capabilities related to environmental conservation, national security and a unique test range. NBVC is also one the single largest employers in the region and focal point for veterans which are a significant part of our student population.

Located in Simi Valley, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library houses the presidential records of the 40th president while our library contains the papers of Congressional

representative and state senator Robert J. Lagomarsino. Additionally, civically engaged NGO's focused on policy are popular choices for CSUCI student interns.

### *Opportunities*

Place based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Business, Communication, Computer Science, Economics, History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Political Science, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. opportunities to host debates and informational sessions and the creation and dissemination of issue papers by experts
- B. public scholarship educating the local community and beyond on the rights and responsibilities of citizens in our democracy.
- C. Internship and service learning opportunities with government institutions and policy focused NGO's
- D. Research opportunities and military veteran engagement with NBVC
- E. Locally situated archival research and preservation (Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum and others)

## **5. Industry and Innovation**

### *Features*

#### 5.1. Agriculture

Ventura is home to some of the most fertile soil in America, and with its mild climate, crops are grown year-round. The estimated gross value of Ventura County's agriculture for calendar year 2020 was nearly \$2 Billion, with strawberries accounting for more than \$500 Million alone. There are nearly 100,000 acres of active farms in the county, including fields that surround CSUCI. While the business and production aspects of these industries are rich sources of learning experiences, so are the human aspects. These include the history and politics of migrant labor, and social justice issues associated with the agricultural workforce including access to health care. Many of our students, faculty, and staff have family ties to the local farming community, and there are many opportunities for collaboration here, including an envisioned Sustainable Agriculture Center on campus.

#### 5.2. Biotechnology and Pharmacology

Eastern Ventura and Western Los Angeles County make up the so-called “101 High-tech Corridor”. This stretch of highway connecting Ventura and Los Angeles is home to branches of some of the largest biotechnology and pharmacology corporations in the world, involved in research, development, and manufacturing. Major local companies include Amgen, Invitrogen, Integrity Bio, Thermo Fisher, Takeda Pharmaceuticals, and many others. Based on a 2013 Bio-pharma assessment, Amgen alone has an enormous financial impact on Ventura County through manufacturing and R&D activity. It generated \$2.7 billion in county GDP, provided more than 12,500 jobs and almost \$18 million in local tax revenues. CSUCI has previously partnered with Amgen, and many of our former students find employment locally there and at many other cutting-edge companies.

### 5.3. Energy

Oil and gas production began in the 1860s, following the discovery of the Ojai oil field. Subsequently, Ventura County became one of the major producing areas in the State of California. There are currently about 3,800 active wells, with 43 companies that operate oil and gas facilities in the 34 active oil and gas fields located in Ventura County. Additionally, there are several offshore oil platforms between Ventura and the Channel Islands, primarily in federal waters. No new offshore drilling platforms have been built since the 1980s.

Despite its “crude” start, Ventura County is now on the leading edge of converting to a completely carbon-free energy production climate, more than a decade ahead of the California target of 2050. The Clean Power Alliance is available throughout Ventura County, supporting and funding the expansion of wind and solar production. CSUCI’s newly built solar array generates approximately 68% (3.63 MW) of our annual campus demand. Additionally one of the largest energy storage sites in the United States was completed in 2021, the Ventura Energy Storage project. This is a 100MW green energy storage system, formerly known as the Saticoy Battery Storage Project. Initiated by Strata Clean Energy, it is now run by Arevon with power stored in dozens of battery megapacks.

### *Opportunities*

#### 5.1. Agriculture

Place based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Biology, Business, Chicana/o Studies, Communication, Economics, Education, ESRM, History, Mechatronics, Political Science, Sociology, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. The establishment of a Sustainable Agriculture Center on campus would provide a homebase for research and partnership in the region - with affiliations in multiple departments. In collaboration with industry, education, labor, and conservation partners, CSUCI will become a regional leader in the field. Sectors of interest include sustainable agriculture, aquaculture ventures and research, pest and invasives, public policy, and social justice.
- B. Within the Sustainable Agriculture Center, an Interdisciplinary BS would offer four foundational concentrations: Ag Business, Ag Plant Science, Ag Social Systems, and Ag Water Management. Expanded concentration offerings in Aquaculture/Mariculture, and Viticulture/Brewing could be included in the future. Agricultural and aquaculture education pipelines can be explored in conjunction with area high schools and community colleges (e.g., Fillmore, Santa Paula, Camarillo, Channel Islands, Ventura College).

### 5.2. Biotechnology and Pharmacology

Place based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Biology, Business, Chemistry, Education, Information Technology, Mechatronics, Psychology, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. The region is home to numerous pharmacology and technology start-ups as well as mid-size established industries spanning public, private, and non-profit organizations that may be potential partners. Biotechnology and pharmacology training, placement programs, and summer internship partnerships could be explored.

### 5.3. Energy

Place based opportunities in this area offer learning experiences for majors/programs in Business, Chemistry, Communication, Computer Science, Economics, ESRM, Geology, Mechatronics, Political Science, Sociology, and others.

Specific opportunities could include:

- A. Collaboration with local energy companies on green grid technologies - investments and innovations in solar, wind, battery, geothermal, wave, and new forms of energy generation, storage, and carbon capture. CSUCI can become a green center for the region, both leading by example and linking research with industry to grow clean energy initiatives.

### 3. Characteristics that Reflect Our Values

The academic experience at CI will be distinct, unique and meaningful based on the assets of our region and perspectives of our faculty.

#### Characteristics of the CI Academic Experience

Taking the best of a traditional college educational experience, the 21st century knowledge of how people learn, and a modern view of equity and antiracism, the characteristics of a CI education include the following:

- always student-centered and framed by our mission pillars and the Mission Centers that are their primary custodians,
- experiential learning opportunities for students inside and outside the physical classroom;
- established pathways to careers and post-secondary training through internships and scholars in residence from regional businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits;
- institutional commitment to high quality, faculty-mentored student research (RSCA) experiences that are embedded in the curriculum and co-curriculum and available to all students;
- Place-based learning experiences (i.e. using our location and its resources to make learning come alive); and,
- Pedagogies that are informed by established and tested research on how people learn and retain knowledge and skills.

These characteristics will inform how the University invests resources in existing academic programs, develops new degree offerings, frames annual academic and non-academic planning, engages in the Community, prioritizes budgeting, and prioritizes its pursuit of grants, contracts, and donations.

#### How CI will ensure meaningful Operating Values

The above characteristics of a CI education contribute to the distinct value of the CI degree and the lasting reputation and success of the graduates and university. Keeping true to our educational mission, we will ensure graduates have the skills and ability to meet the civic and business needs of our region and community while also providing betterment and improvement to the broader world in which they will enter. Students from CI will be equipped to advance their lives, the community and the world.

In order to meet these student centered values, the University will ensure that:

- students will naturally participate in at least two educational high-impact practices before graduating: learning communities, faculty-mentored research, study abroad, internships, peer mentoring. Students for whom HIPs are shown to be highly beneficial will participate in more so we can close equity gaps;
- students will receive high-quality, personalized academic advising from the moment they matriculate to CI until they engage in their post-graduate career or learning pathway after graduation;
- instructors will be encouraged and supported to use courses and major programs as pathways to student growth, with courses engaging students in debate about and reflection in capacious social issues, often creating uncomfortable situations for students and supporting them through the process of growth it fosters.
- every aspect of the student (and employee) experience will be fair and equitable
- the University will prepare its students to be citizens of the American democracy, give them tools to be responsible activists for causes for which they are passionate;
- the University will be in continual engagement with local external stakeholders (e.g., through Disciplinary or School Advisory Boards made up of local leaders in regional businesses, government agencies, and non-profits) on the workforce needs of the community and what the University can do to align its programs to meet those needs
- the University will support and encourage faculty-industry exchange opportunities, especially with regional organizations; and,
- the University will be a sharing and engaging epicenter for thought leadership, special regional interests and general interests of the community in which it resides and serves. The University will be regional champion for the idea that learning is a life-long endeavor and that everyone can find new ideas that engage and excite them to learn more.

## 4. University as Citizen

CSU Channel Islands strives to build meaningful, lifelong communities on campus while serving the communities that surround the campus. CSUCI prepares students to engage in the diversity of the world in which they live and fosters ways for students, staff, and faculty to make that world better. It seeks to build local and regional partnerships, while maintaining a commitment to the national and international. CSUCI encourages a commitment to lifelong learning and progress.

At the same time, these broad sensibilities are fundamentally linked to 'place' and the role of the 'University as Citizen' to the region. To that end, the university endeavors to build out:

- A nexus of scholarship and opportunity for our region ("inreach" where the external community is welcomed to the university)
- Active work in the broader community ("outreach" that does not rely on a "come to us" mentality)
- Integrated collaboration with local resources/institutions to better prepare students coming in and going out
- Ongoing, sustainable engagement with the community to foster positive change

## 1. A Nexus of Scholarship and Opportunity ("Inreach")

Modeling a scholar/teacher approach, the university commits itself to dedicated and meaningful financial support of faculty and students in research and creative activities. This commitment extends both to individual faculty scholarship as well as to faculty-led student research. In return, faculty and departments dedicate themselves to the continuing pursuit of knowledge, the dissemination of that knowledge, and the engagement of students with that process. No student will graduate without having the opportunity to participate in a seminar, internship, or research experience that provides not just research opportunities but skills and experiences that prepare them for the job market and/or graduate school as well as a global world.

The university will be a community focal point, bringing together scholars and thought leaders, from artists to scientists to public voices, to engage issues of the past, present, and future. The campus president annually hosts some of these events, bringing together community members with faculty, staff, and students (e.g. Campus Reading Celebration; talks by distinguished speakers such as Sandra Day O'Connor; and so forth).

Believing that our geographic and social/societal place provides unique opportunities as well as inherent responsibilities, the campus builds out relevant areas of scholarly distinction. One example of emphasis is the interconnected and interdisciplinary Coastal Zone Studies, integrating disciplines (e.g. Environmental Science, Biology, Anthropology, Business, etc.) and place (Channel Islands NP, Santa Rosa Island Research Station), while addressing pressing issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (e.g. climate change, environmental degradation, water resources, etc). CSUCI collaborates with local institutions (e.g. Museum of Ventura County, Ronald Reagan Library) and national institutions (e.g. National Park Service), with an engagement to build collaborative systems addressing local needs amid global change. Mirroring partnerships such as USC/Huntington Library, CSU Channel Islands promotes collaborations that advance the institutions involved regionally and nationally.



## 2. Active Work in the Broader Community ("Outreach")

Through campus institutions such as the Center for Community Engagement, the Center for Entrepreneurship, etc, and community relationships such as the Business and Technology Partnership, the university consciously and actively seeks opportunities to explore, work with, and enrich the community in which it is situated. Opportunities to leverage our strengths in fields such as business, education, healthcare, and climate-related activities (to name just a few examples) could blend well with on-going community-wide initiatives that will create possibilities for faculty research and practical student engagement.

Outreach should not solely be the responsibility of specific centers within CI or individual faculty/staff members that have a particular interest to engage, but should be a core feature of all departments on campus. Dedicated conversations within academic departments that address ways that students could holistically pursue curricular pathways that engage the community and create opportunities for students and graduates can be a defining initiative of the campus administration.

Such pathways may engage business and industry, education and nonprofits, community needs and civic building. Further, the campus should seek to foster active dialogue among underserved communities along with business, political, and civic leaders in order to enhance the region's progress towards social and environmental justice while strengthening its overall standard of living.

## 3. Potential Manifestations of University as Citizen

Specific examples of sustainably building 'University as Citizen' into the region could include:

- **Sustainable Agriculture** – While the region is a center for agriculture, it faces less predictable weather conditions, problems securing labor, and long term water decline. The creation of a Sustainable Agriculture Center on campus, commensurate with a newly designed BS in Sustainable Agriculture with foundational concentrations in Ag Business, Plant Science, Ag and Society, and Water Studies, will provide a home for multiple schools and departments to build partnerships with the region. By creating such a center, CSUCI could partner with local agribusinesses like Limoneira and Reiter to lead research on addressing these challenges; it could partner with local high schools to create formal agricultural pathways; it could encourage college-bound students into related fields while also creating research and educational opportunities for current students; it could establish farm-to-table business connections with local restaurants and schools while also creating partnerships with farmworker advocacy groups like [MICOP](#) and [House Farm Workers](#) to enhance the conditions for the laborers that feed us.
- **Coastal Studies** – In a world facing rapid climate change, impact to coastal regions will be particularly acute. Proximity to the coast is already the best

geographic predictor of just about every demographic aspect of our society. From generating the highest economic output and fostering the greatest housing density to harboring the greatest infrastructure vulnerability and environmental injustice, improving the management of our coastal zone central to our success as a state. By founding a Coastal Studies Research Institute, CSUCI can lead the way in integrating disciplines (e.g. Anthropology, Biology, Business, Communication, Environmental Science, and others) and place (Channel Islands National Park, Santa Rosa Island Research Station, Channel Islands Boating Center, etc.). This integrative approach best addresses pressing regional marine and littoral issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (e.g. climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing, microplastics, coastal development, water resources, etc). The coastal zone is a fantastic lens through which to refract and concentrate the numerous interests and values our faculty and students bring to our community.

- **Biotech and Tech** – Already home to leading Biotech and Tech companies, Ventura County offers opportunities for private/public partnerships. CI started on a premise that we would substantively engage with such sectors in order to enhance the strength of the region as a STEM leader, something that other areas do well at but is behind in Ventura County. While it may be that collaborations have a financial element to them, the university has a role to play in furthering knowledge and the betterment of lives.
- **Impactful Service Learning and Community Engagement** - Preparing leaders to tackle the social issues of our day requires mindful involvement and awareness of the work engaged by stakeholders, advocates and community based organizations. Intentionally building pathways at CSUCI for students interested in careers related to advocacy, policy and social justice is a logical outgrowth of the work already engaged in by CSUCI through centers like CCE.

Other sectors ripe for true collaboration with the region might include the region's links to the Arts and Media industries, or initiatives in Public Health. The purpose of this section is not to exclude possibilities but to incite imagination. What is necessary is to creatively engage with our broader community and commit to building a region that provides for all.

## 4. Integrated Collaboration with Local Institutions to Better Prepare Students

### 4.1. Inward Bound

CSUCI works to create active, organic collaboration with the local P-14 sector, such as:

- participating in the VC Community Foundation's [Early Childhood Education](#) initiative by contributing to planning and creating opportunities for research;

- partnering with area high schools, particularly in underserved communities, to create robust educational pathways into higher education;
- offering a “whole family” approach to college knowledge and financial literacy outreach activities;
- funding dedicated, annual meetings between departments at local community colleges and those at Channel Islands to promote seamless transfer pathways and students prepared for the transition.

## 4.2. Outward Bound

CSUCI believes that understanding the success of its graduates is necessary to continually improve student experiences and activities. This fuller understanding of how students are meeting the world after CSUCI is essential to ongoing efforts to understand what can and should be done with students before they leave Channel Islands.

To that end, campus administration works with the Office of Institutional Research to actively survey and track graduates at the 1-year, 5-year, and 10-year post-graduation marks in order to better understand and inform the career paths of CSUCI graduates.

While this is part and parcel of the work of Alumni Relations and the Office of Advancement, this information is of vital importance for Academic Affairs as well. For instance, this information shared out to each academic program helps faculty as they undertake the 5-year Program Reviews, during which academic programs can address the career paths of their majors and how department curriculum can best prepare students for productive and rewarding careers. This endeavor necessarily relies on institutional support that provides the necessary data as well as time and space for authentic assessment.

## 5. Ongoing, Sustainable Engagement With Community to Foster Positive Change

Situated in a broader community of people and lives, CSUCI commits to fostering positive change on campus and in the community. The campus embraces and pursues a diverse and inclusive society built on principles of equity and justice. Active relationships are formed with regional partners to initiate and ensure collaborative endeavors in a variety of areas such: quality healthcare systems, robust food security, integrated educational pathways, tech and business incubation, and strengthened arts and cultural institutions.

Local civic organizations such as [MICOP](#) (indigenous rights), [C-FROG](#) (climate change), and [CAUSE](#) (civic rights) do meaningful work in underserved communities that

can use collaborative help. While one time efforts can hinder rather than enhance, long-term institutional commitment can create sustainable and long-lasting community engagement.

## 6. Known Challenges

Channel Islands has many opportunities to be educationally distinctive, providing an exceptional education for students, full support for staff and faculty, and meaningful collaborations and contributions to the community. While articulating our values and opportunities, however, we must also acknowledge our challenges, both current and potential, which stand to constrain our ability to become distinctive if not attended to.

### 1. **Leadership Instability**

After our first decade of relatively stable and deepening administrative leadership that forged strong community relationships, CSUCI entered a decade defined by pervasive administrative turnover and indecisiveness. While this can be seen in a variety of ways, two illustrations serve: faculty hired in 2016 have served under at least three Deans, five Provosts, and three Presidents. As we draft this report (in January of 2022), every Cabinet leader but two is “interim.” This has broadly produced turmoil or equivocation across divisions as either directives and goals change every few months or a unit is paralyzed by indecisiveness as decisions are endlessly forestalled awaiting a “real” leader. But one casualty here has been meaningful and lasting relationships with the community. This has solidified perceptions inside the campus that the Chancellor’s Office sees CSUCI as a training ground or stepping stone for larger campuses given the destination of many of our departing administrators are our sister campuses. Ensuring consistent, effective leadership will be critical to (re)building a strong and distinctive reputation, regional leadership and engagement, and a “destination” campus for students, staff, and faculty alike.

### 2. **Faculty and Student Preparedness**

There are basic truisms that shape the faculty/student interactions that are the essential core of the university experience: we live in a constantly evolving world, one that has faculty at risk of being left less well-prepared for addressing the changing experiences and expectations of students; we live in a wealthy nation that at the same time has

underfunded education and under-resourced and marginalized communities, thereby creating inordinate challenges for many students to start and then complete their degree. The reality is that today students are entering institutions of higher education that were built for a different student population with different and the needs of our students continue to change. Inequitable academic preparation by K-12 schools compounded by social and economic marginalization has also contributed to opportunity gaps impacting students when they arrive to college (Da Silva et al., 2007). With little campus discussion, CSUCI has leaned into the inequitable preparation of high school graduates by eliminating selectivity or any other barriers to entry and effectively adopted an open door policy for anyone seeking a college education. Students entering our institution are less adequately prepared for educational achievement than many acknowledge. This deeply disadvantaged academic preparation frequently compounded by ongoing social and economic marginalization conspire to make learning and growth challenging, particularly compared to students of the past (including the first waves of enrollees at CSUCI) or those at many of our sister institutions. These challenges manifest as high Drop-Fail-Withdrawl rates, problematic performance, restricted career opportunities, and a long list of other interrelated, difficult realities. Compounding these challenges is the fact the vast majority of our faculty were not trained to effectively educate our extant student population and require extensive overhaul of their pedagogies. The ways in which our campus addresses these challenges will greatly determine the success of students and faculty.

### **3. The Equity Gap - understanding and responding to our students' and community's challenges.**

Our current COVID-19 pandemic has only highlighted what we already knew: our students and many members in our community suffer disproportionately in the best of times and even more so during societal crisis. For instance, the digital divide was stark when moving to virtual teaching. Improving access for students who do not have access to computers or reliable internet must be achieved so they are able to receive a quality and comparable education. But it does not stop there. Honoring our responsibility as a Hispanic Serving Institution and our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means we are ethically bound to transform institutional practices to address equity gaps among our students and in our relationships with the broader community. We are called to act in tangible ways, including working with the region to prepare students for success at CSUCI, committing to serving our students with high impact practices and well-supported research experiences, and creating clearer pathways to meaningful and well compensated employment after graduation.

4. **Reputation** - Understanding, responding to and advancing CI's current reputation in the region.

We must listen to our community partners that engage with our students, staff, and faculty, and understand how we can better prepare students both during and after their time with CI. Courageous conversations with our regional partners and employers can identify gaps in learning so as to better serve both our students and the region. We need to improve the our reputation for both students and faculty.

5. **Workload** - Providing sufficient faculty and staff time for teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and community engagement.

For faculty, with a 4-4 teaching load and our present service commitments, it is difficult at best to carve out time for meaningful scholarly activity and community engagement. For staff, twenty years of filling the breach while hearing "we're only one deep" continues to exact a physical and mental toll. We need to think creatively and purposefully to create the time and space for faculty and staff to do their critical work.

6. **Funding and Infrastructure** - Providing appropriate resources needed to become distinctive.

Even as workload is a paramount issue, resources and institutional infrastructure are critical as well. Determining needs of existing centers at CI as well as determining what new research and administrative centers are needed goes arm in arm with leveraging opportunities to generate new funding. Realistic assessments are needed about the cost of endeavors and commitments are needed as much as active seeking of funding opportunities and partnerships. As important, the University and Academic Affairs needs to establish clear points of contact and stewardship for potential initiatives with private and government sectors.

7. **Assessment and Accountability** - Meeting our goals for the future

We may agree with all the aspirations embodied in this text, but without true assessment and accountability those aspirations will remain on paper. Concrete steps must be taken to ensure we grow in a way that makes us distinctive from other institutions. Two illustrative examples. One, we must measure progress towards our goals on equity with definitive metrics, with institutional commitments to fulfill our goals codified so as to weather changes in personnel. Two, institutional research on graduates is necessary for understanding how we are serving and preparing students for future paths and lives.

Ongoing review of these goals and true collaboration must be part of a culture of CSUCI that will make us truly, educationally robust.

## **8. Increasing Disruptions - Responding to climate and social change in a less predictable world.**

It is all too easy to think of our past as a reliable guide and of our world as inviolate. Recent experience and continually-mounting data contradict this view and show Ventura County to be an epicenter for both California's and our Nation's accelerating climate crisis and our increasingly stressed socioeconomic fabric. These challenges have already wrought confusion and harm to our university. Our campus has not had a year of uninterrupted instruction since 2017. CSUCI's students, staff, faculty, and even our buildings themselves now face threat from increasingly intense and frequent wildfires and floods, let alone gun violence, and pandemics. The sea will literally be lapping at the edge of our our main campus' propertyline within the next four decades (and possibly much sooner). Other climate-related disruptions will likely include future disease outbreaks, heat waves, stronger storms, rising sea levels, severe droughts, degraded ecosystems, and heightened food vulnerability. These predictable current and future disruptions must be met with resilience and flexibility, with plans in place to alter modalities of teaching, support ongoing scholarship, and aid residents of campus and University Glen in the face of disaster. Just as important, formulation of strategic plans for addressing longer-term change will need to be started now

As much as we believe in a common vision of preparing our students for the broader world, we in turn must engage with actual and future challenges of that world. In doing so, we can be an example to the world beyond campus boundaries or pathways to better the world around us.