The four essays presented here by the University of California, Santa Cruz, represent many months of work by the entire campus community. Guided by the WASC Steering Committee, a working committee met with faculty, students, administrators, and alumni to determine the topics to be covered in the essays and to review the many drafts of the essays as they evolved.

In September 2002, UC Santa Cruz chose to focus its accreditation on three main topics. These are: 1) the expansion of our graduate programs; 2) undergraduate student engagement; and 3) restructuring departmental review procedures with a focus on the undergraduate curricula. These topics are discussed in detail in the university’s proposal to WASC. Guided by that document, the working committee initially held a wide-ranging discussion of how to structure our reflective essays. Through informal discussions with others, the working committee drew on the expertise of many on campus who gave valuable input to the formulation of these essays. Essays were drafted, critiqued, redrafted, and reviews were sought from key members of the campus community. When the 2003/04 academic year began, the committee formally submitted the draft reflective essays to the Academic Senate, and changes were made in response to the Senate’s comments.

The finished essays clearly reflect the input of many members of the UCSC community, and provide the Preparatory Review visiting team an encapsulated presentation of our institution’s history; its educational philosophies, goals, and objectives; an analyses of how we meet these goals; a discussion of our planning process; and, lastly, a discussion of how we use data to assess how well our institutional objectives are being met.

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**Essay 1:** Traces the history of UC Santa Cruz from its founding up to approximately 1990. When it was founded, the campus determined to embed a liberal arts ethos in its commitment to undergraduate education. The Academic Senate voted to avoid letter grades and, instead, to combine a Pass-No Record system with written performance evaluations. Establishing a residential college system was a further innovative strategy.

**Essay 2:** Continues the campus history, focusing on UCSC’s success in providing excellent education at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This has been achieved by a partnership between faculty providing outstanding curriculum and teaching, and student affairs professionals ensuring personal development outside the classroom. The model that has evolved at UCSC has been so successful that other campuses are planning or launching residential college programs. We also mention that UCSC is examining its lower division experience to determine if we are doing the best for our students. With regard to graduate education, the campus plans to more than double the number of graduate and professional students over the next decade. Major efforts to improve the quality of life and professional development of graduate students are reflected planning the creation of a Graduate College.

**Essay 3:** We describe the current planning process and highlight aspirations for UC Santa Cruz over the next two decades, and present some results of the planning process to date.

**Essay 4:** This essay illustrates the strong tradition of shared governance at UCSC, and we outline the collection and use of institutional data. The campus is actively engaged in a strategy to improve the accessibility and accuracy of the data, and strengthen reporting capabilities. Intensive efforts are also leading to the creation of a new academic information system. Program review forms part of this essay, and review protocols are discussed.