1. Executive Summary

Cal Poly’s proposed main theme is “Promoting the Success of All Cal Poly Students While Achieving the Goals of the California State University’s Graduation Initiative 2025” (GI 2025). These are co-equal efforts, which reflect the initiative’s dual nature. It is focused on the success of all students as measured by overall graduation rates for first-time, first-year (FTFY) and new transfer (NTR) students, while it also demands that sustained attention be given to the academic performance of key groups of students, as indicated by the graduation-rate gaps that exist between them and their peers. It is understood that closing these gaps will go a long way toward helping the university achieve its overall graduation-rate goals.

This main theme and the institutional effort that it implies are both supported by the three proposed sub-themes:

- “Recruiting and Retaining a More Diverse Community of Students, Staff, and Faculty” will address the number of students who choose to leave Cal Poly before completing their degrees, which is a significant component of the graduation-rate gap. Furthermore, it is understood that our success in this area depends on the university’s ability to recruit and retain a diverse community of staff and faculty.
- “Developing a Campus Culture that is Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive” will address issues of campus and community climate that can encourage students to apply to Cal Poly, accept an admissions offer, and then persist to degree completion.
- “Teaching and Learning How to Live and Work in a Diverse World” will concern student experiences in the curriculum and co-curriculum, which will help them to thrive in their personal and professional lives, while helping them to successfully navigate the increasingly diverse world of the campus and beyond.

As described above, the main theme and three sub-themes will focus the entire campus on achieving the goals of GI 2025. These themes emerged in a survey that was administered to various campus groups while explaining the thematic pathway for reaffirmation (TPR). These themes are closely aligned with the results of the Collective Impact process, a participatory planning effort sponsored by the Office of University Diversity and Inclusion, and with sections of the Cal Poly Strategic Plan that address campus demographics, campus climate, and diversity learning.
2. Overview of the Institution

Cal Poly is a distinctive part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system. As such, it shares in the system’s broad mission, while having a unique identity that is defined in state law. This specifically authorizes Cal Poly (and its sister campus in Pomona) “to emphasize the applied fields of agriculture, engineering, business, home economics, and other occupational and professional fields.”

Architecture is also a field unique to Cal Poly and its sister campus.

Cal Poly’s own mission statement, which is also a statement of the university’s values, is as follows:

*Cal Poly fosters teaching, scholarship, and service in a Learn by Doing environment in which students, staff, and faculty are partners in discovery. As a polytechnic university, Cal Poly promotes the application of theory to practice. As a comprehensive institution, Cal Poly provides a balanced education in the arts, sciences, and technology, while encouraging cross-disciplinary and co-curricular experiences. As an academic community, Cal Poly values free inquiry, cultural and intellectual diversity, mutual respect, civic engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.*

The university’s vision statement is as follows:

*Cal Poly will be the nation’s premier comprehensive polytechnic university, an innovative institution that develops and inspires whole-system thinkers to serve California and help solve global challenges.*

Cal Poly’s identity as a comprehensive polytechnic reflects the language of the mission and accounts for the unique collection of majors that have developed in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences, College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Orfalea College of Business, College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts, and College of Science and Mathematics. The programs offered by these six colleges include 66 undergraduate degrees, 84 minors, 13 credential programs, and 37 master’s degrees.

**History.** Cal Poly was founded in 1901 as a co-educational vocational high school — the California Polytechnic School — but the first class of 15 women and men was not enrolled until 1903. Legislation limiting enrollment to men only was passed in 1929, and women students were not admitted again until 1956. In 1940, the State Board of Education authorized the granting of Bachelor of Science degrees and changed Cal Poly from a school to a college, the first degrees being granted to 24 men in June 1942. The senior project, a capstone requirement for all undergraduates, has been a distinctive component of a Cal Poly education since that time. Cal Poly officially became a university in 1972. It has been fully accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) since 1951.

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1 State of California, Education Code, section 90404.
3. Process for the Development of Themes

Because of the 2012 recommendations of the Commission, the imperatives of GI 2025, and the ongoing campus commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, it has long seemed evident that the focus of Cal Poly's thematic self-study would lie at the intersection of diversity and student success, each broadly defined. President Jeffrey D. Armstrong supported this approach at a presentation of the TPR process to him and his cabinet of vice presidents, but it was necessary to engage in a broader process of consultation. The TPR presentation was thus delivered by Mary Pedersen, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and Bruno Giberti, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Planning, to a variety of campus stakeholders (Criteria for Review [CFR] 4.5):

- President’s Leadership Council (a campus advisory group)
- Provost’s Council (deans and vice provosts)
- Student Affairs Leadership Team
- Associate Deans Council
- Collaborative Advising for Student Success (college advisors and associate deans)
- Academic Senate
- Associated Students, Inc., board of directors

At each presentation, an informal survey was administered, which asked respondents to indicate their top three choices from a list of possible themes. Out of 138 responses, including some repeats, the top five were “Recruiting and retaining a diverse population of students, staff, and faculty” (43.8%), “Inclusive campus climate” (36.5%), “Learning how to live and work in a diverse world” (22.6%), “Expanding interdisciplinary learning” (22.6%), and “Closing the achievement gaps among students” (21.9%). All of these themes aligned with the goals of the Cal Poly Strategic Plan; four aligned with the intentions of GI 2025. As a result, versions of these four themes are being proposed, with the president’s approval, as the themes of Cal Poly’s next self-study.

4. Description of Each Theme

Cal Poly’s proposed main theme is “Promoting the Success of All Cal Poly Students While Achieving the Goals of the CSU’s Graduation Initiative 2025” (CFRs 1.6, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 4.3 and 4.7). These are co-equal efforts, which reflect the essentially dual nature of GI 2025. Begun in 2015, this effort has been a systemwide initiative designed to raise graduation rates and close graduation-rate gaps on each of the CSU’s 23 campuses.

From its inception, GI 2025 has had both a broad and a narrow focus. It has promoted the success of all students as measured by certain broad metrics — four- and six-year graduation rates for FTFY students, as well as two- and four-year rates for NTR students. At the same time, GI 2025 has demanded that sustained attention be given to the academic performance of key
groups of students, as indicated by the graduation-rate gaps that exist between them and their peers. It is understood that closing these gaps, which exist between students based on first generation, Pell eligibility, and underrepresented minority (URM) status, but above all on the basis of gender, will go a long way toward helping the university achieve its overall graduation-rate goals. Thus, focused advising and support efforts that promote a sense of belonging must be made available to all students. The success of these efforts over the last three years is presented below.

**Cal Poly Graduation Rates 2016-2018**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FTFY 4-year</strong></td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FTFY 5-year</strong></td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FTFY 6-year</strong></td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NTR 2-year</strong></td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NTR 4-year</strong></td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>URM 6-Year Gap</strong></td>
<td>9.3 points</td>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>9 points</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pell 6-Year Gap</strong></td>
<td>9.1 points</td>
<td>10.7 points</td>
<td>7.6 points</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instead of “equity gap,” the term “graduation-rate gap” is used purposefully, because it precisely describes the measures in question: FTFY and NTR graduation rates. There is indeed an equity gap that underlies the differences, but it is only indirectly measured by graduation rates. Ultimately, an institution’s efforts to become more equity-minded are not well served by confusing the symptom with the cause.

This main theme and the institutional effort that it implies are both supported by the three proposed sub-themes:

- **“Recruiting and Retaining a More Diverse Community of Students, Staff and Faculty”** will address the number of students who leave Cal Poly before completing their degrees, which is a significant component of the graduation-rate gap. This theme is tied to WSCUC Accreditation Standards 1 and 3, as well as CFRs 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1 and 4.3. The essay will describe and evaluate a broad spectrum of efforts that are being made in response to Cal Poly’s stated GI 2025 goals:
Develop integrative models for both student advising and academic support
Remove or reduce barriers to graduation
Build a more supportive campus community
Develop specific measures to eliminate the achievement gaps
Cultivate data-driven decision-making

Although the major focus of this essay will be the recruitment and retention of students, it is understood that Cal Poly's success in this area depends on the university's ability to recruit and retain a diverse community of staff and faculty who can help create a welcoming and supportive environment for a diverse community of students. The essay will thus consider the success of recent and planned initiatives such as cluster hires, diversity statements in applications, and various efforts to promote inclusive teaching practices through the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology.

• “Developing a Campus Culture that is Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive” will address issues of campus and community climate that can encourage students to apply to Cal Poly, accept an admission offer, and then persist to degree completion. This theme is tied to WSCUC Standards 1 and 3, as well as CFRs 1.2, 1.4, 2.10 and 3.1. The essay will treat the following topics:
  o A short history of climate improvement efforts at Cal Poly, including the results of previous climate surveys
  o The Inclusive Excellence effort led by Dr. Damon Williams, including the development of a campus experience study informed by listening sessions; based on this study, a campus experience survey to be administered in spring 2019; an action plan and progress report based on the results of the survey; and leadership institutes to promote the development of the skills necessary to implement this plan
  o One key initiative that has been successful in attracting under-served students to the campus and promoting high rates of degree completion has been the [Cal Poly Scholars](https://www.calpoly.edu/scholars) program. A new fee on out-of-state students will support a dramatic expansion of this program by providing significant scholarships to students from families with low expected contributions; the success of this program will also be a major focus of the self-study.

• “Teaching and Learning How to Live and Work in a Diverse World” concerns learning experiences in the curriculum and co-curriculum, which will help students to thrive in their personal and professional lives, while helping them to successfully navigate the increasingly diverse world of the campus and beyond. This theme is tied to WSCUC Standards 1, 2, and 4, as well as CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.11, 3.10 and 4.4. The essay will treat the following topics:
- A background account of diversity-related learning at Cal Poly, including the
development of policies such as the Diversity Learning Objectives (DLOs), the US
Cultural Pluralism (USCP) requirement, and the Cal Poly Statement on Diversity
- The current efforts to infuse outcomes relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion
(DEI) throughout the GE curriculum; to update the DLOs; to revise, refocus, and
rebrand USCP; and to strengthen DEI-related programming in the co-curriculum,
such as new student orientations for FTFY and NTR
- The planned curricular campaign, carried out under the auspices of the self-
study, to encourage each major curriculum to address DEI issues and incorporate
inclusive teaching practices in a manner appropriate to the discipline

As described above, the main theme and three sub-themes will focus the entire campus on
achieving the goals of GI 2025. These themes emerged in a survey that was administered to
various campus groups while explaining the thematic pathway for reaffirmation. They are
closely aligned with the results of the Collective Impact process, a participatory planning
initiative sponsored by the Office of University Diversity and Inclusion in AY 2017-18.

These themes also align with the goals of the Cal Poly Strategic Plan (CFR 4.6), which has among
its seven strategic priorities, “Enhance the Success of All Cal Poly Students” and “Enrich the
Campus Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” The latter priority has three goals that
address campus demographics, campus climate, and diversity learning. The fourth goal, “Create
an Aligned and Cohesive Focus on Diversity and Inclusion Across the University,” will be
addressed by the self-study as a whole, by summoning the attention of the entire campus to a
focused attempt to achieve these critical components of the strategic plan.

5. and 6. Timelines and Resources

The deadline for achieving the goals of GI 2025 is a given, and the goals themselves have been
described above: we are expected to reach the projected FTFY and NTR graduation rates within
six years. Financial resources to achieve these goals have been provided by the legislature and
allocated by the system; a campus leadership group, which has been operating since the
initiative began three years ago, has allocated these resources on an annual basis and will serve
as the working group for the main theme.

Similarly, the three subthemes will build on existing or projected efforts, including the
committees and leadership that have been established to support these efforts. The three
subthemes will be the responsibility of individuals that have already been identified as leads for
the Cal Poly Strategic Plan, which describes the goals and metrics in the linked areas of
diversity, campus climate, and student learning. Leadership will also be drawn from the
individuals responsible for achieving the divisional strategic plans for Academic and Student
Affairs.
Progress against the main theme and the three subthemes will be measured on an annual basis, either through required GI 2025 reporting to the CSU, or through planned updates to the action plans that have been developed for each campus goal. Timelines for the three subthemes will vary, depending on the goal, but it is understood that these are long-range ambitions which may not be achieved until after the end of the current review period in Spring 2022.
INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CERTIFICATION FORM

To: WASC Senior College and University Commission

Re: 10-Year Reaffirmation

From: Chief Executive Officer
      California Polytechnic State University
      1 Grand Avenue
      San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

This report is submitted in support of our institution's accreditation review.

I affirm the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with WSCUC's Standards and policies.

Signed: ____________________________
       Chief Executive Officer

Name: Jeffrey D. Armstrong
Title: President
Date: February 12, 2019