Criterion Four Conclusion
The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environment, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Assurance Evidence
In this section, we have demonstrated how CSU takes responsibility for student success and the quality of each of the critical components of Criterion 4. CSU has maintained its commitment to assessment of academic programs since the last comprehensive review. Assessment activities have been greatly expanded for co-curricular programs and the entire student experience to inform and strategically guide the institutional commitment to student retention, persistence (progression), and graduation (completion). Evidence collection and analysis have become critical elements throughout the culture of the institution as we have developed a strong desire for (1) data-informed decisions, (2) careful and deliberate analysis of data to benchmark progress in achieving goals, (3) increased public transparency and accountability, and (4) evidence that tracks changes and informs adjustments in strategic initiatives. We have found that assessment processes need continuous review to ensure that they are meaningful and strategically informing the institution for continuous improvement. In sum, we believe CSU fulfills the expectations of Criterion 4.

Strengths

- CSU has an established process of program/department review that has undergone periodic modification to continually improve the process.
- Direct assessment of student learning within programs is becoming a systematic process that includes sharing of best practices across the institution.
- The institutional commitment to SSI, particularly through enhanced advising (how to graduate, more than just focusing on academic course of study) has become the “quality initiative” of the campus and is demonstrating successes.
- Enhanced student engagement and personal development is evidenced by gains in NSSE scores across all benchmarks.
- Multi-factorial data-informed goal setting and initiative development has kept the institution focused on realistic and achievable student success goals.
- TILT has contributed to enhancing a culture that values and continuously seeks to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Challenges

- Student success goals to significantly improve the six-year graduation rate by 2020 are very ambitious, thus requiring ongoing assessment and refinement of initiatives to achieve them.
- Academic program reviews and learning assessments need to become more strategically informative to the institution.
- Learning assessment processes need to nurture an institutional culture that values and provides effective contributions to institutional decision-making processes in addition to the current focus on transparency, compliance and unit planning.

Plans for enhancement
This self-study review has led to the recommendation that the institution proceed soon with a more detailed analysis of program review and learning assessment processes. Such a review has been initiated and will guide how the institution meets the aforementioned opportunities for improvement.

Our desired program review process should clearly establish and communicate the goal of program reviews and define the expected outcomes, such as:

- Affirm the quality of each academic degree program for assurance to HLC and other stakeholders;
• Identify possible program additions/discontinuances for institutional planning;
• Be visionary by proposing faculty hiring plans to support and enhance the research, scholarly, and teaching mission; and
• Evaluate operational efficiencies and capacities to identify resource needs (operating budget, facilities, technology, and institutional services) that inform the institutional strategic planning and budgeting processes.

Likewise, the learning assessment process needs critical review and adjustment to:

• Focus on establishing and assessing learning goals for each academic degree program that differentiates it from other programs and other degree levels, and assures educational quality;
• Expand the scope of learning assessments within programs to include all aspects of the student experience; and
• Be relevant and useful to inform continuous improvement at the unit level and strategically inform the institution.

Throughout the process of refining the program review and learning assessment processes, the institution needs to factor in the changing nature of accreditation reaffirmation through the newly adopted HLC Pathways process. These institutional processes should be designed, in part, so they efficiently gather the evidence required for accountability to HLC to fulfill the Assurance Process that will follow after this comprehensive review while maintaining a focus on continuous quality improvement.