**FINAL REPORT**

**PROGRAM REVIEW**

**OF**

**THE WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY**

**TESTING CENTER**

**Linda D. Ensch, Director, Office of Testing Services**

**Academic Testing Center**

**California State University, Fresno, CA**

**Stephen Francis, Assistant Professor of History**

**Weber State University, Salt Lake City, UT**

**Thomas Justin Bell,** **Designer I/CE Online Fees**

**Continuing Education**

**Weber State University, Salt Lake City, UT**

**Introduction**

In February 2010, the Testing Centers at Weber State University, Salt Lake City underwent a 5-year program review. As the external evaluator of the three member Review Team, I have been asked to review and prepare feedback for the Executive Director of Academic Support and Programs and the Vice President of Student Affairs on the policies and procedures used at Weber State University Testing Centers. This report will provide a review and recommendations based on the guidelines adopted by the National College Testing Association (NCTA). (*Appendix A-1)*

Prior to the onsite review, the Review Team was provided with a copy of the departmental self- study document along with other materials to assist in the understanding of how the Testing Centers operate at Weber State University and with specific insight and questions to focus upon during the review. An agenda that included both time and opportunity for the Review Team to talk with directors, faculty, staff, proctors, students and the Vice President of Student Affairs was provided. Another part of the review involved evaluating the policies and procedures of the Testing Centers as well as being afforded the chance to watch the testing procedures at the various testing sites.

Therefore, this report evaluates the Testing Centers at Weber State University in conjunction with the Standards and Guidelines of the NCTA while providing feedback on observations, interviews and general issues of concern and final recommendations for what the Review Team views as ways to improve the overall operations of the Test Center. This evaluation will compile and condense policies and guidelines that are being met as well as commenting on areas that have need for improvement.

At the onset, however, it is important to stress that the issues that emerged are in no way a reflection of either the commitment to, or the quality of work of, the current leadership team or staff of the Test Centers. All members of this team are committed to providing excellent service to students as well as the university as a whole

**NCTA Standards and Guidelines for Test Centers**

1. **Policy**

The Testing Centers effectively adhere to the following general policies as outlined in the Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education by:

1. Having a clear mission statement and articulated goals
2. Maintaining adequate facilities and location suitable to the requirements of the testing programs
3. Operating in a diligent manner to promote honesty, integrity and fairness in all testing procedures
4. Operating under the guidelines of equal opportunity, affirmative action and the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 as well as local, state and federal regulations
5. Protecting of confidentiality and right to privacy issues of both staff and examinees
6. Adherence to the program requirements of testing companies in the administration of specific tests
7. Adherence to requirements and policies of their institutions in the administration of classroom exams and other assessments
8. Treating examinees in a fair, courteous, professional and nondiscriminatory manner
9. Following guidelines of staff training on operations and managing emergency situations
10. Developing and implementing guidelines for test center operations and staff training
11. Evaluating the testing program in an on-going, systematic, and comprehensive manner

**Observations and Issues**

1. Operate with adequate financial resources to support the mission of the testing program.

* While the Testing Centers have the full financial support of the university, they are currently not operating with the adequate financial resources to support the test program in the future, due in part to the incremental hikes in the minimum wage. Although some sites have outside proctoring contracts with test companies, it is the opinion of the Review Team that the Centers are not utilizing their facilities to the highest potential. Taking into consideration the peak testing times when the Centers are at or beyond capacity, there are blocks of time that all of the 122 available computers and over 200 paper and pencil stations are not in use. Since no additional staffing would be required, reserving a set amount of computers in each Center for outside proctoring use, at a specified fee, would generate funds that could be used to supplement the current budget as well as help the Testing Centers to become more self-sufficient in the future. A list of testing companies that are in need of proctoring services is available on the NCTA website of which the University is an active member.

Another way to generate funds was suggested during the initial review process. The thought was to charge students a “late-fee” if they choose to take their scheduled exam on the last day available. During the interview with a group of random students, the question was put to them on whether they would be willing to pay a small fee to help support the Test Centers and if the aforementioned procedure would be acceptable to them. The overall consensus was that it was not. They felt that they were being “penalized.” When asked if they would be open to a fee being added to their tuition to support the Centers, they were all in agreement that this suggestion was one that they would be more likely to consider. It is the suggestion of the Review Team that the Testing Centers develop and conduct a student survey to be administered during the fall and spring semester regarding student financial support of the Testing Centers. This information can be used to support a formal proposal for a tuition increase.

1. Address examinees concerns with empathy while maintaining the integrity of the test.

* When faculty members set up test sessions with the Centers, they fill out a Testing Center Information Sheet (*Appendix A-2)* that provides set guidelines for the exam regarding dates, time limits and any testing aids that may be permitted. In order for the room proctors to know which testing aids are approved in the exam room, colored slips of paper with the corresponding aid(s) listed on the sheet are given at check-in to the student, for example, cue sheets, open book or calculators.

The faculty can give permission for students to be allowed to take a restroom break on exams that are over two hours in length. The Review Team noted that a student went in the examination room without going through the check-in process. When asked, the staff member said that the student was returning from a restroom break. We were informed that the current procedure allowed the student to turn in the exam to the staff outside of the testing room and then pick it up when returning. Although this will work in most situations, when the Center is at capacity and staff is extremely busy, there is no guarantee that the same staff member will be returning the exam to the student. It was also noted that there was not a corresponding slip for this testing aid.

Consistent testing procedures are essential for the integrity of every test administration. It is the recommendation of the Review Team that, like all other testing aids, the restroom break should have a slip assigned to the student at check in. It is also suggested that when students need to use the restroom, they give their exam and ID card to the room proctor before exiting the room. They would keep the test aid slip with them and show it to the check-in staff before entering again. Not only is the integrity of the exam protected by ensuring that the test does not leave the room until finished but also allows re-verification that the student who left the room is indeed the same student returning to take the exam.

1. **Contractual Agreements**
2. Testing companies will send contracts to test centers to establish agreement s for test

delivery services. Contracts may be signed by test center managers or another designee of the institution.

* Weber State University currently administers tests for American College Testing (ACT), Educational Testing Services (ETS), CollegeBoard, Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), Pearson, Psychcorp, Prometric, Stanard and Assocs, Kryterion, Clearview Job Corps, Weber Basin Job Corps Edits, CPP, Inc. and General Education Developmental Testing Service (GEDTS) It was the overall opinion of the Review Team that the Testing Centers’ procedures are in accordance with protocol and are adhering to the highest ethical testing standards. Due to the sensitive nature of testing content, all Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (*Appendix B-1*) regulations are being strictly upheld. It was noted that security policies and procedures were in force in regards to paper and pencil testing with exams kept in locked cabinets, testing rooms or storage facilities.
* The Review Team did not have an opportunity to view a Saturday testing administration due to the timing of the site review. We would like to note, however, that external test companies cover potential liability issues that might arise provided the Saturday test supervisor and workers are adhering to the established procedures and regulations set forth. The Saturday test supervisor and workers are more at a risk for potential liability issues because the Testing Center Coordinator may not be physically on-site to handle any potential problems or conflicts. This is why it is important for all contracted workers to be cognizant and adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by the external test company. Even though the Testing Center Coordinator utilizes a core group of workers for Saturday test administrations, periodic and comprehensive training should take place on a regular basis to ensure that the potential for liability issues are reduced and the appropriate steps to take in the event that an issue arises would be addressed.
* In terms of the computer testing service, *Chi*Tester appears to not only be functioning effectively but has grown over time in order to serve the University’s needs. The procedures were explained to the Review Team’s satisfaction, and we were afforded the opportunity to view the service from check-in to check-out. Computer-based testing is growing in popularity as well as technologically and Weber’s Testing Center is at the forefront with *Chi*Tester as a system of test management. With the introduction of *Chi*Paper faculty now has the opportunity to input tests, receive reports through university portals as well as manage and archive their exams. Although we were not afforded a chance to meet with the two committees, Online Testing Steering Committee (OTSC) and the Faculty Testing Advisory Committee (FTAC) that meet with the Testing Centers, we hope they will continue in their collaboration regarding technology, policies and faculty relations.

1. **Staffing**

* It was noted that the Testing Centers have a diverse staff that is reflective of the ethnicity and gender of the population that they are serving. All staff was found to have an understanding of the concepts of institutional testing and was very cognizant of the importance of test security and the implications of testing irregularities. In addition, it was noted that staff were comfortable with each other, and issues of in-compatibility, procedural misunderstanding and tardiness were not evident. All staff that were interviewed and witnessed was cordial, pleasant and dedicated to the mission of providing a secure and friendly testing environment. All took their jobs seriously despite our presence; this would suggest that the Review Team’s presence did not impede the normal operations of providing an environment that would be deemed fair and equitable for all test candidates.

1. Office staff, secretaries, and student personnel of the testing center assist with various aspects of test administration and understand the requirement for security of test materials and information.

* According to Weber State University Testing Center Policies and Procedures Manual, 2010; Policy No. 7, Procedure K *(Appendix B-2),* any student who are hired as a proctor must make arrangements with their instructors to take an exam if it is being administered in any of the Testing Centers. Currently, it is the responsibility of the student to take any exam that is being administered in the Centers before they are scheduled to work. Although the student proctor has signed a confidentiality agreement upon hire, it is the recommendation of the Review Team that this policy be expanded upon in order to insure that all parties involved are well informed of the procedures and that they are being enforced.

As a part of the hiring procedures, student proctor would be provided with a form that they would take to each one of their instructors, informing them that they are working in a Test Center and will be taking exams early, before their first scheduled work day. This form should be signed by each instructor and returned to the Testing Coordinator to be put in the employee file. It would be the responsibility of the proctors to update their supervisor of any changes in their schedule and the verification form should be updated every semester in which the proctor is an employee of a Testing Center. This procedure will help protect the integrity of the Testing Center as well as the proctor.

1. Testing Operations Manager (Testing Coordinator) is the primary contact and is responsible for the appropriate administration of all testing programs.

* One area that the Review Team identified as a topic of concern was the organizational chartand how itdemonstrates the reporting structure of the Weber State University Testing Centers. *(Appendix B-3)* The Testing Coordinator is directly under the Director of Academic Support Centers and Programs (ASCP), while the Ogden Test Centers report to the Testing Coordinator. The chart shows the Davis Test Center reporting to the Director of the Davis Learning Center. This current reporting chain creates a climate of “separateness” between the Ogden and Davis campuses. In review of the organizational chart, it is unclear as to who is ultimately responsible for decision making in regard to the Testing Centers, as a whole.

It is the understanding of the Review Team that the Testing Coordinator is responsible for coordinating policy and procedure, budget issues and overseeing the technology needs of all Testing Centers. The Testing Coordinator is also responsible for communicating to every member of the staff, at all testing locations, decisions that have an impact on procedure and services. However, “site specific” decisions for the Davis and West Testing Center are communicated individually to on-site testing supervisors. Currently, policy and procedure decisions are conveyed on an “as-needed” basis from Ogden to Davis and only a monthly meeting is now in place for regular communication.

It is important that test centers adhere to established policies and that all staff follows a set of professional standards and guidelines. Since test centers are meant to be controlled environments, all policies should be consistent so as to preserve the integrity of the centers and the universities. A continuity of testing procedures should be in place so that no matter which site is utilized, the student taking an exam would have the same experience. This can be very difficult to achieve if the chain of command is not clear and can cause confusion and dissention among the staff.

It is the recommendation of the Review Team that the University reassess the organizational structure of the Testing Centers, integrating the Davis and West sites with Ogden and all testing staff reporting directly to the Testing Coordinator. In turn, the Testing Coordinator would report directly to the Executive Director of Academic Support Centers and Programs. The Testing Coordinator would assume authority on decisions involving the department, including, but not limited to, policies, budget approvals and staff issues. This realignment in leadership would improve communication within the department as well as incorporate a structural cohesiveness between the Testing Centers.

**Institutional Representation and Coordination**

* The Testing Centers should be commended in their efforts to collaborate with students, faculty, staff and the outside community. They have developed effective working relationships with faculty and institutional departments by hosting two committees: the Online Testing Steering Committee and the Faculty Testing Advisory Committee. They also have regular meetings with student focus groups, Technology Services, Admissions/Recruiting, Continuing Education and the Student Success Center. Promoting appropriate interaction between the Testing Centers and other institutional departments helps to ensure effective facilitation of test administration.

1. **Physical Environment**

* The Testing Centers maintain a distraction-free environment and consider location, space and layout when setting up a center. The standardization of those conditions is essential to the integrity of test administration. The Review Team was impressed with the utilization of limited space and the high standards that have been set by the Testing Coordinator.

**Summary**

Weber State University Testing Centers were found to be, overall, in accordance with the guidelines for test centers as articulated by the NCTA. The department was performing duties with the highest levels of professionalism while providing superior student/client-centered services. All sites were found to be student centered; and this was reflected in the attitude and demeanor of the staff who were helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable. The Centers were responsive to access and availability needs, as shown in student surveys and in their efforts to extend operating hours to meet demands. The *Chi*Tester and Paper*Chi* were up-to-date and meet or exceed technological advances. This was a testament to the professionalism and dedication that the staff places on faculty and student needs.

It has been the pleasure of the Review Team to observe the staff and operational aspects of the Weber University Testing Centers. The issues identified here and the recommendations related to them are intended to help further enhance the strong foundations laid by this team.

We can truly say, without hesitation or reservation, that the Testing Centers are performing well above any mandated expectations and are the envy of many private and public institutions of higher education, both because of its success and because of its potential.

***Appendices***

A-1 National College Testing Association Standards and Guidelines (NCTA)

A-2 Test Center Information Sheet

B-1 Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

B-2 Testing Center Policy and Procedures Manual, Policy No.7, Procedure K

B-3 Weber State University Testing Center Organizational Chart