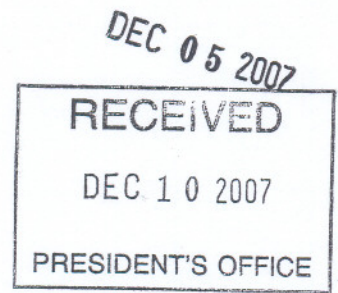# PROGRESS VISIT REPORT

COLLEGE OF THE REDWOODS

7351 Tompkins Road
Eureka, CA 95501-9300

**A Confidential Report Prepared for
The Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

**College of the Redwoods
On
November 5, 2007**

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College of the Redwoods
Progress Visit Team Report

November 5, 2007

Introduction:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges issued a Warning to College of the Redwoods in January 2006. The college was required to submit a Progress Report in March 2006. A follow up visit was conducted in April 2006. The April 2006 team's report noted the college had made progress on several of the recommendations. In March 2007, the college prepared another Progress Report and a team visited the college on April 23, 2007.

The evaluation team in April 2007 noted that the college made little progress toward implementation of the recommendations cited in the evaluation report of October 2005 and the Progress Report of March 2006. The Commission placed the college on Probation in June 2007 and required that the college submit a Progress Report in October 2007. The report was to be followed by a visit.

A team visit was conducted on November 5, 2007. The team received the Accreditation Progress Report dated October 15, in time to prepare for the visit. The report included responses to the 2005 recommendations and documentation in support of the assertions made in the report.

In conducting the visit, the team reviewed the report from the April 2007 team visit and the college's response to the 2007 team's visit as contained in the October 2007 Progress Report. The team conducted interviews with the superintendent/president, Accreditation Liaison Officer, leadership of the Academic Senate, members of the Coordinated Planning Team, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Technology Advisory Group (TAG), the Institutional Research Advisory Committee (IRAC), the Program Review Committee (PRC), the Facilities Planning Committee, and the Accreditation Steering Committee. Representatives from the Academic Senate, the classified staff and the student body were included in the meetings with each of the committees. The team also met with members of the Board of Trustees.

In summary, the team found that the college has resolved the financial concerns expressed by accreditation teams from October 2005 through March 2007. The college has taken action to contain expenditures to levels consistent with available revenue. The college generated a surplus for Fiscal Year (FY) 06/07, raised its contingency reserve to a prudent level, and has, as of fall 2007, experienced a slight increase in enrollment. In combination, these actions fully address the concerns express in Recommendation # 6 (2005) of the comprehensive evaluation team report and Progress Reports in March 2006 and March 2007.

The college has begun to address Recommendations # 1, # 5 and #7. The team's assessment is that the college has reached the development level of implementation for

program review and the awareness level for the planning related recommendations. It is apparent all college constituencies are working together to update curricula, institute an effective program review process, and to develop a comprehensive planning process. Much of the progress at the college is attributed to oversight and emphasis on actions to correct deficiencies by the Board of Trustees and the new interim superintendent/president. The college leadership continues to be in a state of uncertainty although the interim superintendent/president has been effective in bringing the college together to address the concerns express by the Commission. The team also wants to acknowledge that the faculty has asserted strong and effective leadership to achieve the progress noted on the recommendations.

Recommendation 1 (2005): The team recommends that the college develop and implement a means of systematic, collaborative, and evidence-driven Program Review for all instruction, student services, and institutional support areas. In order to assure maximum effectiveness, such reviews should be conducted on a regular cycle that links the findings to the annual planning process for all programs and services.

Findings and Evidence:
The team found the status of program review at the college to be as follows:

Program Review - Instruction
The foundation for program review within the instructional areas was laid during 2006-07 with the development of the program review model. The process has been initiated throughout the instructional programs commencing with the academic year 2007-08. To launch this initiative, all instructional areas have been assigned into one of two program review processes for this year: annual review or comprehensive review. The deadline for completion of these reviews has been fast-tracked to ensure timely completion. There are approximately five dozen program areas currently undergoing an annual review; all have initial due dates prior to the end of fall term. Ten program areas are involved in the comprehensive program review process, with due dates prior to the end of fall term as well.

The comprehensive program review process is designed to be conducted every five years. Annual reviews will be carried out during each of the four intervening years. Comprehensive program reviews ask the instructional areas to reflect upon, evaluate, and assess the following:
- Program's relationship to mission and strategic plan of the college
- Program description and pertinent information
- Curricula
- Program-level student learning outcomes
- History
- Measures of effectiveness
- Resources (i.e., library support, professional development, human resources, facilities, equipment)
- Summary and recommendations
- Vision and goals
- Quality improvement plan

Annual reviews provide the opportunity for programs to assess the following:
- Emerging trends and relevant data
- Resource needs (i.e., library support, professional development, student services support, human resources, facilities, equipment)
- Learning outcomes assessment update
- Curriculum update
- Goals and plans

Of note is that both the comprehensive and annual review processes incorporate the following:

- *Curriculum update plan*
  It has been noted during both the 2005 comprehensive accreditation visit and the 2007 progress visit that the college's official course outline of records have not been updated on a regular basis. The comprehensive and annual program review processes require that each program area address this issue.

- *Student learning outcomes(SLOs)*
  During the comprehensive program review process, departments are required to identify program-level SLOs and map each back to the course(s) that incorporate that particular program-level SLO. Further, programs are asked to submit a narrative describing the assessment of both program-level and course-level SLOs for the instructional area. On an annual basis, programs are asked to provide an update on the assessment of SLOs within the program area.

- *Quality Improvement Plan*
  This element of the comprehensive program review process is designed to operationalize the program review recommendations and set in motion a means of connecting the program review outcomes with institutional planning and budgeting. The Quality Improvement Plan is meant to be refined annually (as needed) and included in each program's annual program review documentation.

In the instructional areas, program review is faculty-driven, informed by data, collegial, and led by the Program Review Committee (PRC). The PRC held trainings during fall 2007 convocation and have supported the departments undergoing program review through ongoing assistance, guidance, and feedback. It is acknowledged by the college that this newly adopted model for program review in the instructional areas is a work in progress and will likely undergo revision and refinement as more reviews are conducted and analysis takes place regarding the efficacy of this process.

Program Review - Student Services and Administrative Services
As noted in the March 2007 progress visit, Student Services embarked upon a program review cycle of annual and comprehensive reviews during the 2006-07 academic year. Administrative Services has begun the comprehensive/annual cycle of program review this current academic year. Four program areas are undergoing the comprehensive program review process in 2007-08; the remaining Student Services and Administrative Services programs are implementing the annual review process. The calendar for both support areas indicates that the comprehensive program review process will occur every fourth year with intervening annual review updates.

The comprehensive process includes an analysis/discussion of each of the following program components:
- Department background, purpose, and goals
- Past quality improvements and transformations
- Outcomes assessment

- Cost effectiveness
- Recommendations and comments

Annual program review updates ask the departments/programs to address the following:
- Outcomes assessment plan report
- Department goals report
- Major accomplishments/achievements

Link to Institutional Planning

Linking the outcomes of program review to institutionalized planning and budgeting processes has yet to be fully developed. It is anticipated that the program review outcomes will be vetted through the college's Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) to provide a viable connection with the institution's overarching strategic plan and effectiveness assessment. The Quality Improvement Plans emanating from the instructional program reviews will likely play a role in this regard as these actions plans are revisited on an annual basis and can be incorporated into annual resource allocation proposals.

Conclusions

During this progress visit, the team found that the college has (1) begun the process of program review for instructional programs; (2) continued its program review efforts, begun in 2006-07, for Student Services; (3) launched program review for the administrative areas of the institution; and (4) begun discussion of the manner in which institutional planning and budgeting can effectively incorporate program review outcomes. The instructional program review process is faculty-developed, faculty-implemented, and faculty-driven – principally through the efforts of the PRC. It is obvious that this committee takes its charge and responsibility very seriously and is committed to a meaningful review and improvement process. The program review process for Student Services and Administrative Services is overseen administratively. Data to support the program review process and allow for evidence-based decision-making is being developed and disseminated by the Institutional Research department.

A necessary and important by-product of the instructional program review process has been the need to attend to outdated curricula. Records from the Curriculum Committee suggest that many departments are using the program review process as a catalyst to update seriously outdated course outlines of record, substantially revise the outlines, or inactivate courses. Further, both the curriculum review and program review processes are advancing the effort to implement SLOs at the course and program levels.

The college is commended for the progress made to date to meaningfully address this recommendation. In particular, the PRC and Curriculum Committee deserve much recognition for their efforts. While impressed with the magnitude of the effort made, the team has five remaining concerns regarding this recommendation:
1. There appears to have been yeoman's effort to implement program review in the instructional areas this year and to complete these reviews prior to the end of the fall term. When the team inquired about the motivating force behind this

concerted effort, two reasons were provided: (1) the positive and supportive leadership provided by the interim president; and (2) the need to address the seriousness of ACCJC's action in June 2007 to place the college on probation. These are significant motivators. Absent these conditions, the team posed the question about long-term commitment to program review. The team was assured that the institution is committed to the principles and tenets of program review and genuinely wants the process incorporated into the ongoing planning structure of the college. The college's future actions will serve to affirm this commitment.

2. The program review process has jump-started the much-needed effort to update curriculum across the disciplines. Acceptable standards of practices require that curriculum be updated, current, and reflective of transfer and workforce expectations (as applicable). Similar to the concern expressed in #1 above, the team has some unease about the college's long-term commitment to regularly update the curriculum in accordance with best practices and the expectations of transfer institutions, students, and business/industry/employers. Again, the only affirmation of this commitment will be the college's future actions in this regard.

3. It is hoped that the massive effort to conduct annual and comprehensive program reviews in a compressed period of time does not necessarily set the tone for such review in the future. Rather than rushing through the process for the sake of completing it, the team hopes that future annual and comprehensive program reviews are conducted in such a manner that deadlines are met while at the same time allowing for an appropriate timeframe to provide for adequate reflection of the findings, departmental dialog, and critical and thoughtful analysis.

4. The college must work to forge a viable connection between program review outcomes and institutionalized processes for planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. This will be a crucial link to validate the program review process and continuously implement program improvement measures.

5. Finally, the team wishes to encourage the college to genuinely embrace program review not so much for what it can "get" the program in terms of equipment, faculty, staff, or facilities – but rather because it provides programs the opportunity to step back and assess where the program has come from, where it is currently, and where it needs to go in the near future. Program review is not a means to an end – but rather should serve as an ongoing, dynamic process for program improvement, institutional improvement, and enhancing student success.

In summary the college has made improvements since the March 2007 progress visit. The team concluded that the college has moved beyond the awareness phase of program review and is moving into the development phase. Program review is taking hold across the college. The institutional research function is providing quantitative and qualitative data to assist with program assessment activities. The college has not yet aligned the results of program review to resource allocation decisions.

Recommendation 5 (2005): The team recommends that the district improve its planning processes to include: the development of a long-range educational plan; the development of a facilities master plan; and the development of an information technology plan. It is further recommended that the district develop a long-range financial planning process to provide early notice of structural imbalances between revenue and expenditures; to identify resources needed to adequately support changes in technology systems, facilities, and enhancement to student support systems; and to regulate the pace of changes consistent with available funds.

Findings and Evidence:

The college has developed a framework for strategic planning. Through the efforts of a newly established Coordinated Planning Team, four goals and a series of supporting objectives were created. The goals and objectives can serve as a foundation for the development of an integrated strategic plan. Work on planning has just begun and the college has a ways to go to develop an ongoing and systematic integrated planning process. In short the college has made some progress but has not yet implemented the components of this recommendation.

Under the general guidance of a consultant, a large cross section of representatives from the college community came together as a Coordinated Planning Team to create a short term set of goals and objectives. The team also formed a framework for the planning process. The goals established by the planning team were narrowly focused but served to rally the college around a series of immediate issues that needed to be addressed.

The goals were as follows:
- Enable attainment of educational goals
- Build a sustainable college organization to effectively support the learning environment
- Maintain fiscal stability
- Contribute to the economic and social well-being of the north coast community

The goals are identified as broad statements of what the college wants to accomplish over the next three to five years and are expected to form the foundation for the strategic plan. A series of supporting objectives were also created as intermediate milestones that would assist in accomplishment of the goals. A planning framework is in a draft form with an expectation that the changes will be made as it is implemented and becomes operational.

The Technology Advisory Group (TAG) is working on the development of a technology plan. Currently, the TAG is awaiting direction from the Coordinated Planning Team. TAG has not developed a technology plan. A Facilities Planning Committee has also been established. The committee met on October 4, 5 and 19, 2007. The committee has received information from key administrators who have been working on the development of facility improvements. Committee members are unsure of their roles and have not as yet been active in setting a direction for facilities planning efforts. As the college continues its development of the program review process, it is expected that there

will be more involvement by the committee. Documents have been compiled to form an information database that will be useful in making facility improvement decisions.

Integrated planning is not yet in place at the college. On the positive side, it should be noted that the college has begun the planning process and has moved past the gathering of data phase which is what the college had completed as of the team's March 2007 progress visit. The college has not yet embraced planning as part of its culture and will need to institutionalize the processes in order for it to reap the benefits provided through planning. In order to develop an effective long range financial plan, the core plan areas of technology, facilities, and the educational master plan need to be in place. Hence the college has not been able to address the long range financial plan that would funnel resources to achieve plan priorities.

Conclusions:

The college has begun work on development of a comprehensive strategic plan. The college has made some progress on the supporting plans for the areas of technology and facilities. Dialogue is occurring in the committees although the members are not clear as to their roles on the committee other than to represent various constituency groups. The college has made some progress on this recommendation, but the team concludes that the recommendation has not been implemented.

The college has an awareness of planning. It has begun preliminary investigative dialogue about planning and it has initiated a pilot planning process. The college has defined a general planning process but has not made sufficient progress for the team to conclude that it is at the development phase of implementation. The college has not yet developed a working model for linking program review to planning. Also, there is no framework in place to align the results of program review to resource allocation. However, the team recognizes the substantial improvement that the college has made since the March 2007 progress visit and encourages the college to continue to build on the work that it has begun.

Recommendation 6 (2005): The team recommends that the college develop a financial plan that will accomplish the following goals: Respond to declining revenue resulting from the loss of full-time equivalent students, establish a prudent and sufficient unrestricted general fund balance reserve, address changes in annual expenditures to assure that such expenditures are equal to or less than available resources.

Findings and Evidence:

After four years of deficit spending, the college experienced an unexpected but welcomed turn around in its financial situation. During Fiscal Year (FY) 06/07, a surplus of $1 million was generated. The contingency reserve has increased to 6.7%, up from 3.1% at the end of FY 05/06. The FY 07/08 Final Budget projects a deficit of $332,909 although the increase in enrollment revenue will offset the deficit and the college is expected to operate with a balanced budget or more likely generate a surplus for the year. The enrollment from the number of Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES) has increased by 4.5% as of the start of the fall 2007 semester. This increase of FTES early in the academic year does not assure a turnaround of the trend of decline experienced by the college but it has at least stalled the declining enrollment trend and will assist in stabilizing the financial condition of the college.

During FY 06/07 the college generated a surplus of $1,044,823 for the year by reducing expenditures to levels lower than original budget amounts. The contingency reserve in turn rose to $1.9 million which is 6.7% of budgeted unrestricted fund expenditures. Enrollment revenue continued its trend of decline in FY 06/07. The most important shift at the college is the fact that it operated at a surplus and raised its contingency reserve above the state's prudent reserve level of 5%.

The college is feeling the full effects of the loss of stabilization revenue from the state. The state has provided the college with stability revenue for the past three years. Permanent reductions in the college's base revenue have occurred as a result of the persistent declines in enrollment. The state allows colleges up to three years after the year of decline to earn back lost enrollment. For FY 07/08, the State of California is reporting that the College of the Redwoods has $ 4 million in revenue available to it if it can raise enrollment up to its 2003 levels.

The college is reporting encouraging news about its fall 2007 semester enrollment. Although the projections are preliminary, the college expects its enrollment to rise. Fall enrollment is 4.5% higher than the same period in 2006. While it does not appear that the college will experience the kind of an increase necessary to earn all available lost base funding ($ 4 million), it does appear that an increase in FTES of 5% is within reach during FY 07/08. Any additional growth revenue will stabilize the financial condition of the college as long as expenditures continue to remain within budgeted levels.

During the March 2007 progress visit the accrediting team commented that the college could be subject to a financial penalty from the State of California if it failed to meet its 50% law compliance requirement for FY 06/07. The 50% law rule requires at least 50%

of the cost of education be expended on salaries of classroom instructors. The containment of expenditures and use of funds in the proper proportions resulted in the college expending 51.0% of its funds for the cost of classroom instructors in FY 06/07 thereby meeting the 50% law requirement for the year. This removed the potential of a financial penalty. In FY 07/08 the college made further changes to ensure it would meet the 50% law requirements. Specifically, instructors on release time were reassigned classroom instruction duties. Also, administrative and other non-instructional costs were reduced.

Conclusions:
The college has a contingency reserve that exceeds the minimum prudent reserve levels established by the State of California. Expenditures are at or below the expected amount of revenues for the year. Additionally, enrollment has increased thereby reversing the trend of decline that existed since FY 02/03. As a result of these changes, the team concludes that the college has implemented all elements of this recommendation

Recommendation 7 (2005): The team recommends that the college improve its capacity for collaborative and data-driven decision-making. Such decision-making should incorporate broad-based participation, use of qualitative and quantitative data, and establish appropriate measures of effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence:

The team found considerable progress has been made in addressing this recommendation. The college's efforts center around three primary areas:

- *Developing the capacity for institutional research*
  The college is midway through a federally-funded Title 3 grant which is focused on developing the capacity for institutional research and assessment. To a very large degree, the efforts put forth by Title 3 have served as a timely catalyst to promote an institution-wide commitment to this research initiative. Title 3 has provided strong leadership and resources to allow an infrastructure to be developed to launch and support institutional research. A most important outcome of these efforts has been the creation of an Institutional Research department, staffed with highly skilled and professional individuals who hold a genuine commitment to the importance and value of sound research practices.

- *Embracing the notion that data is important, necessary, and effective in informing the decision-making process*
  Overarching efforts to embed data into institutional processes can be found by examining the college's provisional 2007-08 Strategic Plan (10/25/07 draft). One of the goals articulated in the Plan is as follows: *Build a culture of assessment.* This goal is supported by preliminary objectives that include increasing access to and use of data and increasing data-driven decision-making.

  At a grass roots level, the Institutional Research Advisory Committee (IRAC) provides support, advocacy, and neutrality to the newly evolving research function at the college. The IRAC maintains a fervent commitment to ensuring and protecting the integrity of institutional research at the college. Historically, there has been mistrust in the acquisition and use of data. This is rapidly dissipating as the campus (spearheaded by the IRAC) works to (1) promote the value of decision-making informed by data; (2) rebuild trust surrounding the use of data; (3) ensure that data is widely available to all; and (4) hire dedicated professionals who are knowledgeable in sound research practices.

  Further, the college has expended much effort to understand what it means to use data in an effective manner to (1) inform decision-making, (2) serve as a foundation for governance processes, and (3) form the basis for institutional systems and functions. To further this understanding, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) has just recently been constituted. Its role is as follows:

  > *To provide oversight, coordination, analysis and reporting on the effectiveness of the college. Serving as a neutral clearinghouse for program review and planning*

*information, this committee will use the mission and
goals of the college as the lens for evaluating program
reviews and college plans.*

Specifically, the IEC will use data and research to assess the effectiveness of programs and plans and will produce and disseminate data-informed assessment reports to college governance partners. As explained to the team, the IEC will be dealing with the actual data itself, ensuring that it is appropriately interpreted and effectively used to further the strategic plan and mission of the college.

In concert with the establishment of the IEC has been the utilization of the College Council as a way of creating a more definitive governance and decision-making structure at the college. Viewed together, the IEC is considered to be a coordinating body for information, reports, and assessment of effectiveness while the College Council is a long-range policy, planning, and budget development body informed by the work and efforts of the IEC.

- *Dissemination of institutional data*
  The college is working to cultivate a climate of decision making that is evidence-based and collaborative. Such an environment can only be forthcoming when data becomes accessible to all, transparent, and serves as a foundation for college decision-making processes and institutional governance. This is just the effort being made by the campus and spearheaded by the work of the IRAC, Title 3, and the newly formed IEC. Toward this goal, significant resources, time, and energy have been focused on developing the technology-based infrastructure and accompanying systems to allow for the wide dissemination of key institutional data. This has been accompanied by extensive training opportunities offered across the institution on the interpretation and effective use of data. Further, communications from the Institutional Research Department and Title 3 have been disseminated regularly as a means of keeping all college employees informed and engaged in the emerging research activities.

Conclusions

The team has found that the college has made substantial effort and progress in addressing this recommendation. Research is becoming more readily accepted as part of campus-based processes including program review, academic planning, course scheduling, strategic planning, enrollment management, assessment of student services programs, curricular impact on student success, and the like. The team commends the college for its efforts in this regard, particularly the leadership of the IRAC and Title 3. Additionally, the team cautions the college to (1) have a sound institutionalization plan for these research functions as the Title 3 grant winds down; and (2) be flexible and open to adaptation as the newly implemented college governance structures (e.g., IEC, College Council) are launched, piloted, tested, and refined. The college has made substantial progress on implementing this recommendation; however, additional work is needed to institutionalize the use of data driven decision making. The team concludes that the college has not yet fully implemented this recommendation.