



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

Chairperson
LURELEAN B. GAINES
East Los Angeles College

Vice Chairperson
FLOYD K. TAKEUCHI
Public Member

President
BARBARA A. BENO

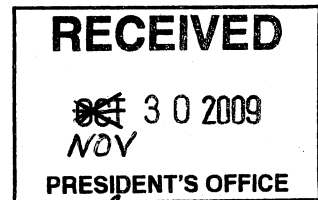
Vice President
SUSAN B. CLIFFORD

Vice President
STEVE MARADIAN

Vice President
GARMAN JACK POND

Associate Vice President
LILY OWYANG

MEMO TO: Dr. Jeff Marsee
Superintendent/President
College of the Redwoods
7351 Tompkins Hill Road
Eureka, CA 95501



FROM: Barbara A. Beno, President *Barbara A Beno*

DATE: November 23, 2009

SUBJECT: Enclosed Report of the Evaluation Team

Previously, the chairperson of the evaluation team sent you a draft report affording you the opportunity to correct errors of fact. We assume you have responded to the team chair. The Commission now has the final version of the report.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges follows a policy of providing a copy of the final evaluation visit report to the chief executive officer of the visited institution prior to consideration by the Commission. Please examine the enclosed report.

- If you believe that the report contains inaccuracies, you are invited to call them to the attention of the Commission. To do so, a letter stating recommended corrections should be directed to the ACCJC President and signed by the chief executive officer of the institution. The letter should arrive at the Commission office by **December 11, 2009** in order to be included in Commission materials.
- ACCJC policy provides that, if desired, the chief administrator may request an appearance before the Commission to discuss the evaluation report. The Commission requires that the institution notify the Commission office by **December 11, 2009** or earlier of its intent to attend the meeting. This enables the Commission to invite the team chair to attend. The next meeting of the Accrediting Commission will be held on **January 6-8, 2010** at the Westin Hotel, San Francisco Airport, Millbrae, California. The enclosure, "Appearing Before the Commission," addresses the protocol of such appearances.

Please note that the Commission will not consider the institution as being indifferent if its chief administrator does not choose to appear before the Commission. If the institution does request to be heard at the Commission meeting, the chairperson of the evaluation team will also be asked to be present to explain the reasons for statements in the team report. Both parties will be allowed brief testimony before the Commission deliberates in private.

The enclosed report should be considered confidential and not given general distribution until it has been acted upon by the Accrediting Commission and you have been notified by letter of the action taken.

BAB/tl

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Marjorie Carson, Accreditation Liaison Officer (w/o enclosure)



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

Chairperson
LURELEAN B. GAINES
East Los Angeles College

Vice Chairperson
FLOYD K. TAKEUCHI
Public Member

President
BARBARA A. BENO

Vice President
SUSAN B. CLIFFORD

Vice President
STEVE MARADIAN

Vice President
GARMAN JACK POND

Associate Vice President
LILY OWYANG

Appearing before the Commission

ACCJC policy provides that, if desired, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an institution may request an appearance before the Commission to discuss the evaluation report. The opportunity is provided when the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that affect the institution.

The Commission meets in January and June. An institution must send written notification to the ACCJC office at least 15 days before the scheduled meeting if the CEO wishes to attend. If the institution wishes to submit additional material to the Commission, it should exercise care, keeping in mind the Commission cannot read and absorb large amounts of material on short notice. Material should arrive at the ACCJC office with the written notification that the CEO has accepted the invitation to address the Commission.

The Chief Executive Officer is expected to be the presenter, and should consult with Commission staff if there are plans to invite other representatives to join the CEO. On the day of the Commission meeting, ACCJC staff will escort the CEO (and additional representatives) to and from the designated waiting area to the meeting at the appropriate time.

An institution's presentation should not exceed five (5) minutes. The Chair of the institution's evaluation team or designee will also be invited to attend. The Commissioners may ask questions of the CEO or representatives, and then will continue their deliberations in private. The CEO will be notified in writing of the subsequent action taken by the Commission.

The Commission considers this opportunity beneficial to the process of accreditation and values the occasion to learn new information from the institution.

Policies that are relative to this process are the *Policy on Access to Commission Meetings*, *Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions*, *Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions*, and *Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process*.

NOV 18 2009

Follow-Up Report

College of the Redwoods

7351 Tompkins Hill Road
Eureka, CA 95501

A Report Prepared for the Accrediting 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

October 20-21, 2009

Dr. Marie B. Smith, former Vice Chancellor of Education & Technology, Los Rios
Community College District, Team Chair

Mr. James Barr, Senior Research Analyst, American River College, Team Member

Introduction

In the last 4 years, College of the Redwoods has undergone a series of visits and received recommendations from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior colleges regarding its ability to meet accreditation Standards and sustain activity that will lead to institutional improvement. The most recent actions have included attention to a last remaining recommendation from the 2005 comprehensive evaluation. In December 2008, a visiting team provided a report showing significant progress in meeting that last 2005 recommendation (Recommendation 5) and also found a new issue regarding the use of data in the program review process. This last concern resulted in a new recommendation (Recommendation 1, 2008) calling for the use of data in program review to inform academic decisions. The Commission acted in January 2009 to remove the college from warning and reaffirm accreditation. The Commission also acted to require a Follow-Up Report be submitted by April 1, 2009 demonstrating the college's resolution of the latest (2008) recommendation on program review. The college was also to provide evidence that it had continued its momentum, sustained the achievements to date and completely resolved the remaining issues related to the integrated planning and Educational Master Plan (EMP), including the development of a long-range educational plan, a Facilities Master Plan and the implementation of budgeting and planning frameworks.

A visiting team composed of Dr. Marie Smith and Mr. James Barr was fielded in April 2009 to review the college's efforts to resolve the 2008 recommendation and to verify that the college had sustained its momentum in completing and implementing the planning recommendation (Recommendation 5) from 2005. The team's findings resulted in a report indicating that the 2008 recommendation on program review had not been adequately addressed in that the college had completely redesigned its process and put itself back at the developmental level of program review. In regard to the final 2005 planning recommendation, at the time of the visit, the final planning documents supporting the complete resolution of the recommendation had not yet been approved by the Board of Trustees. The college informed the Commission by letter in May 2009 that the Board of Trustees had approved all planning documents in May. In addition, as a result of the April 2009 visit, the team also discovered a new concern regarding the breakdown of communications in the college. A new recommendation was developed to rectify the situation (Recommendation 1, 2009). In a June 30, 2009 action letter, the Commission put the college on Warning status requiring a Follow-up Report demonstrating the resolution of both Recommendation 1 (2008) and Recommendation 1 (2009).

On October 20-21, 2009 the same two-person team visited College of the Redwoods to determine the resolution of these two remaining recommendations. The team carefully read the college's report, and examined the provided evidence prior to the visit. During the two day visit, the team interviewed three members of the Board of Trustees, the college president, the Academic Senate co-presidents, the college researcher, the college senior leadership team, the College Cabinet, Enrollment Management Committee, the Integrated Planning Council, and the Program Review Committee. The college was well-

prepared for the visit and eager to discuss the progress made on both recommendations. The documentation was thorough and the team found all college personnel candid and thoughtful in their interactions with the team and each other. The following report provides the team's findings regarding both remaining recommendations.

Recommendation 1 (2008)

The college should determine a template for student achievement data and related analyses that is to be included in all program reviews, and should use the institutional research staff and others knowledgeable about data analyses to guide the faculty and ultimately the college in discussions of what these data show about student success; these discussions should become part of the culture and practice of the institution. (Standards II.A.1a and c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e)

Introduction

The college has been conducting program review for three years beginning in 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and the current 2009-2010 period. This progress marks a strong departure from previous practices from the 1997-1998 year to 2006-2007 when program review was a sporadic and often informal practice. This issue was further complicated at the time by a lack of institutional research support, defined program review procedures and student learning outcomes. The college had been asked in a December 2008 recommendation to provide evidence of the addition of appropriate data elements to the 2008-2009 templates to strengthen the program review process. The college was also asked to demonstrate enhanced end user support for interpretation and use of the data elements. At the time of the April 2009 follow-up visit it was clear that the college had made significant progress in developing a new data driven review template. The principle concern by the team at that time was the finding that the format of the template had not been finalized and embraced by the Program Review Committee with many aspects of the template still under discussion. Because the initial template had been largely designed through efforts of consultants and the Institutional Research Office, the Academic Senate and other faculty groups made it clear that there were serious concerns about the lack of input and approval from the appropriate constituencies. Compounding this unrest was that the April 2009 follow up report stated that the college had concluded that the program review practices were actually at the developmental level as defined by the rubric for evaluating institutional effectiveness published by the Accrediting Commission. This candid internal conclusion was drawn from a rigorous examination of the older templates and program review practices made prior to the April 2009 follow-up visit which had in turn motivated much of the progress of the more recently developed framework of the data driven template under evaluation in the April 2009 follow-up. Because the team could not validate in April 2009 that the college had fully addressed this recommendation, it became a focus again in the current October 20-21 follow up visit.

Findings

Since the April 2009 follow-up team report, the college has made commendable progress with the program review process and especially with components of both the annual and comprehensive program review templates for both instruction and student services. The team found that major refinements to the templates had continued through the summer of 2009, largely guided by collaborative efforts of the Program Review Committee and the Institutional Research Office. Further input to the structure of the templates came from the planning committees and councils to insure that the program review process would interface properly with ongoing refinements being made to the integrated planning processes the college had developed. An overarching goal of the college groups involved in this process was to insure that the program review process would be a valid input driving the overall planning process. The team found solid evidence the current program review templates that were implemented in fall 2009 for both instruction and student service units are now rich with a wide variety of relevant data elements that programs are asked to evaluate and address. Though not a focused concern of this recommendation, it must be pointed out that the program review templates are very complete with individual sections addressing all critical dimensions of program evaluation including a robust examination of student achievement for student learning outcomes. The last section of the comprehensive template even asks programs to make an assessment of their program review process. It should be noted that though these program review templates were just finalized for use at the end of summer 2009, all college units that were scheduled for comprehensive or annual program reviews in fall 2009 had largely completed this process at the time of the visit. The new program review schedule calendar located on the college's web site clearly showed which programs were up for both annual or comprehensive program review, the time lines for progress of the process, and expected completion dates. Inspection of individual program reviews such as the one done for Biology provided strong evidence for the team that the data driven templates had given departments new opportunities to employ a data driven rationale for program recommendations at both an operational level and for budget requests. At the time of the visit, the college was receiving feedback from units who had participated in fall 2009 program review as to how the templates themselves could be further refined and improved.

The current program review process is significantly more user friendly for end users now that all program review templates for each unit are easily located on the college's web site for download to local user locations. Because the template are already populated with data appropriate for each programs, college units now can spend their time evaluating and considering the implications of the data, rather than the often frustrating process of locating it as in the past. All sections of the templates now use prompts to guide the end user responses in designated boxed areas that grow in response to the size the narrative developed. The prompts for the data elements will insure that common student enrollment, student performance and course scheduling data are responded to uniformly across programs. Now that the reporting format is more uniform across programs, it has the potential to inform the overall planning and budgetary processes with more relevant and focused recommendations that align with the college's integrated

planning model. The college is to be commended not only for including a wide range of appropriate data elements in the templates, but especially for the inclusion of the student enrollment and success rate in the discipline being reviewed that are either enrolled in or have a placement recommendations at all levels in the English and math sequence. The significance of this new data element is that it will begin to build awareness across all college units that basic skills students are not just the responsibility of English and math, but have an impact on all disciplines efforts with student achievement.

At the time of the visit, the team found that there was growing awareness of the need for additional support to properly interpret the new data elements. Even more interesting was the discovery that a number of individual programs had held discussions with other programs, and most notably the math department to insure that program interpretations and their responses to the prompts were accurate representations of the data for their units. Though the Institutional Research Office currently provides an open door support policy for program review units, the team was pleased to find that there was a growing interest in having additional access to the Institutional Research Office and also among colleagues in other programs, early evidence that the dialog about student success is becoming embedded in the culture and practice of the institution. The Institutional Research Office assured the visiting team that the open door policy of supporting the program review process would continue, and currently has plans to offer additional workshops that will address the data elements and other aspects of the program review process. Further evidence that data is now becoming part of the culture of the college was seen in the wide array of other data elements designed to support ongoing institutional level enrollment management practices that have been developed by the college. This wide range of data is available on the college's web site and provides all college units and decision makers with daily enrollment activity to support ongoing scheduling practices. Key data elements are automatically emailed to decision makers that contain daily cumulative trend shifts across selected enrollment elements. At the time of the follow-up visit, overall planning practices were found to be much more influenced by the use of institutional data than in the past, and that the college overall was becoming more aware of the value that evaluation of data can provide.

Conclusion

In the time period between the April 2009 follow-up visit and the current follow-up visit, the college has not only completed a well-designed data driven program review template, but fully implemented the annual and comprehensive program review templates for all instructional and student service units scheduled for fall 2009. Examination of the completed program reviews at the time of the follow-up visit indicated that the college has developed and implemented a robust and compressive data driven program review process that can inform the college's overall integrated planning process with a greater range of data driven conclusions and recommendations relating to student success than in the past. The increased demand for additional support for data interpretation coupled with increasing dialog among college constituencies has also demonstrated that this practice is becoming part of the culture and practice of the institution. This 2008 recommendation has been fully met.

Recommendation 1 (2009)

In order to meet the Standard and improve both communication and operations of the college, the team recommends that the college undergo a review of roles and responsibilities of each member group. In so doing, the college should develop means by which trust can be enhanced and respect increased among the constituent groups to create an environment that supports empowerment, innovation and leads to institutional excellence. (Standard IV.A.1, 2a, b, 3, 5)

Introduction

In April of this year, the visiting team found the college was exhibiting signs of stress, caused by many organizational changes, which translated into miscommunications, positional behavior, and breakdown of decision-making ability. Lack of trust and little mutual respect were evident throughout the institution. Some of the aforementioned stress resulted from a new president with an administrative team with many vacancies or very recently hired interims, trying to undertake new initiatives to better position the college. Examples of these new approaches were to significantly increase enrollment to capture all state funding available preceding a state fiscal crisis, to provide more community access to the district's programs by creating new sites, and to take necessary actions related to the development of institutional master plans required to meet ACCJC deadlines. These initiatives occurred quickly, did not always include faculty consultation in a manner that the faculty were accustomed to, and led to a breakdown of communication between administration and faculty. This lack of productive communication is the latest episode in the college's troubled history. The college has had four presidents in as many years, contributing to governance instability. During that time, the faculty assumed operational duties often assumed by administrators in other institutions. The role of faculty, and all other governance groups, are now under examination in the current environment. These governance discussions and potential for changing roles resulted in such discord that both the administration and faculty became defensive and positional in their approaches to solving these and other issues facing the college. After reviewing the situation, the team provided a new recommendation to lead the college to clarify its roles, responsibilities and organizational values in order to create an environment that leads to institutional excellence.

Findings

The team visit in October 2009 revealed a much improved college climate. Interviews with individuals and groups provided evidence that the college received the new Warning sanction as a call to seriously examine the college's governance system and their roles within it. With that commitment to engage in productive dialog the team also observed a concomitant resolve to exhibit professional behavior in individual and group interactions.

The college used its newly revised planning system to guide structural change to its governance system. The cabinet has produced an organizational chart which is providing the framework for discussion of roles and responsibilities. At the time of the visit, the draft of the new governance system was not yet public, but greatly anticipated. There was great interest in the "arrows", showing the pathways of information and decisions. One year ago the college Council changed its role to provide oversight of shared governance and now will be the body where new mission and scope of councils and such will be discussed. This is also the group that is charged with communicating planning recommendations to the president. The college is willing to support this new structure and the Council in particular wants to support clear planning and decision-making that will "rid the processes of mystery and foster collaboration." As one council member put it, "there is cautious optimism" that these new structures and new ways of collaboration will yield positive results. The team suggests that while there is Board policy regarding governance, an outcome of these discussions should be a written set of governance procedures supporting the newly revised structure.

There was also evidence that several of the stressors which had contributed to the negative atmosphere of the spring semester were now either lessened or absent. For example, during the spring 2009 visit, many administrative positions were yet to be filled, and those that were present had been there only a few days or weeks. Clearly, the administrative structure was fragile or non-existent and it was difficult for existing administrators to execute their appropriate role in college governance. Since that visit, during the end of the spring 2009 semester and the summer, administrative positions were filled and the senior leadership group (Vice president of Administrative Services, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Student Services, Deans of Academic Affairs, and Distance Education) is now in place and working as an effective team. The administrators are clear about their roles and committed to supporting the work of faculty. As an example, the team heard of a situation in which a new administrator had started activities that were problematic for faculty. In this new environment, the faculty and administrator identified the elements of their discord, found ways to solve the issues, and both parties agreed that the outcome was productive for the college. Faculty expressed appreciation of their administrators and, in fact, worry that they do not have enough clerical support to effectively do their work. This attitude of mutual support, lacking in the spring, was strongly present in this latest visit, leading the team to conclude that clear progress has been made in developing appropriate relationships that support institutional excellence.

Both the administration and the faculty Senate have taken steps to seek common ground. The most recent evidence of this was a joint invitation to the state Faculty Senate and Community College League to come to the college for a mediation session in October. The team heard from all parties that the session was productive and helpful in establishing new relationships.

The college president now has the support of a full team of dedicated, creative and willing administrators. They are eager to share the load and create positive relationships with the faculty and staff and to increase both collaboration and communication. The

president, in turn, is supporting his administrators in this effort, and has taken steps to include them in appropriate areas of governance. The challenge for the president and his administrative team is to continuously model open communication and collaborative behavior in decision-making so that instances of miscommunication and lack of opportunity for participation are minimized.

The faculty Senate has also shown a marked difference in attitude. The distrust displayed in spring is now replaced with a willingness to engage in a different, more positive, type of dialog. In a meeting with senate leaders, the comment was made that the Senate now “jumps to opportunities (for dialog and interaction) where before they just jumped to conclusions”. They have also pledged to model trustworthiness and build trust by acting positively. The team learned that although there was one instance of the faculty senate seeking external guidance prior to using internal remedies, the overall attitude and behavior has been markedly more positive. The Board of Trustees also confirmed this attitude is a significant change and hopefully will be sustained over time with the building of better relationships within the governance system that will negate the necessity to seek solutions outside the college. The Senate leadership has knowledge of interest-based decision-making and seems willing to explore that model as a way to support positive, non-positional decision-making. Whether it is this method, or any other, the college is urged to continue the exploration of more positive ways to sustain productive dialog in their new governance structure with the overall aim of improving institutional effectiveness and thereby supporting student success.

Conclusion

During the visit, all constituencies in the institution agreed that the 2009 recommendation calling for a change in climate and increased communication was accurate and timely. The visiting team found that the college took the recommendation seriously and had made significant strides to meet the Standards. The team documented a significantly better climate and a sincere willingness to work together to achieve common goals, thus concluding that important progress has been made to date. However, at the time of the visit, the work was clearly in progress; the new organizational structure and its attendant roles and responsibilities had not yet been discussed in the College Council. While the college had hosted a mediation session offered by the State Senate and Community College League of California, the recommendations of that session had not yet been received by the college. In order to fully resolve this recommendation, the college must continue to clarify roles and responsibilities within its newly refined governance system, define them in procedures and, agree to common standards of behavior in executing those responsibilities. These new ways of decision-making must be used and sustained to support student learning and institutional excellence in order for the college to fully address the Standards referenced in the recommendation. This 2009 recommendation has been substantially but not fully met.