

**MIRACOSTA COLLEGE PROGRESS REPORT
TO THE
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
APRIL 1, 2008**

Introduction

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges sent a letter dated January 31, 2008, to MiraCosta College stating that the Commission had acted at its meeting on January 9-11, 2008, to issue a warning and to ask that the College correct three deficiencies noted in the letter.

MiraCosta College Board of Trustees members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students did not expect to receive a warning letter. The College community began immediately to address the concerns expressed by the special evaluation team, which visited MiraCosta College in September 2007, as affirmed and expanded by the action of the Commission. In fact, the Board of Trustees had already acted to establish and had begun to implement a program to correct two of the three deficiencies noted in the Commission letter.

MiraCosta College has made significant progress in addressing the formal recommendations of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and that progress is documented in this report and its appendices.

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Volume I): The team recommends that the following items of evidence be in place at the time of the next accreditation visit:

- **Evidence that the process of establishing student learning outcomes at all course and program levels has been completed.**
- **Evidence that assessment of student learning course and program outcomes is being conducted.**
- **Evidence that students are achieving stated learning outcomes.**
- **Evidence that the assessment and evaluation results are used for the improvement of student learning.**

(Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f)

In 2004, MiraCosta College established an Outcomes and Assessment Committee (OAC). This Committee was the formalization of an Academic Senate Subcommittee that had initially been formed in 2003. (*Volume I, Tab 1: Senate Minutes; and Tab 2: OAC Committee Formed*). The initial five-member Committee conducted extensive research to learn how other institutions implemented their student learning outcomes (SLOs) including attendance at conferences, college visits, telephone interviews, and one-on-one meetings (*Volume I, Tab 2: Research Interviews*).

In 2005, the Committee was expanded to ten members to incorporate broader discipline coverage. (*Volume I, Tab 3: Committee Expansion*). In fall 2005, six administrators and 80 faculty members of the Academic Senate met to discuss the Committee's proposed plan and timeline for implementation of student learning outcomes assessment across all academic departments. The plan and timeline were unanimously approved and then posted on MiraCosta's web site (*Volume I, Tab 4: Academic Senate Minutes*).

In February 2006, ACCJC President Barbara Beno was invited to MiraCosta. She met with student learning outcomes leaders during her visit and reviewed and endorsed the MiraCosta plan and timeline (*Volume I, Tab 5: Barbara Beno Visit*).

In March 2006, faculty members drafted mission statements and program outcomes for both General Education (GE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) (*Volume I, Tab 5: Career and Technical Education/Mission Statements/SLO's; and Tab 5: General Education Mission Statement/Outcomes*).

In fall 2006, General Education and Transfer faculty met and engaged in extensive dialogue to draft area mission statements and discipline mission statements. Over 90 faculty members participated. Noncredit faculty drafted a mission statement and program outcomes for seven levels of ESL instruction (*Volume I, Tab 6: GE Mission Statements/Matrices; and Tab 6: Noncredit ESL Mission Statement/Outcomes*).

In fall 2006, the Student Services Council began a series of regular meetings to identify core student learning outcomes for the division, and four were identified, along with goals corresponding to each core outcome. Each student services department identified program-specific student learning outcomes, which were assessed on a pilot basis in spring 2007 (*Volume I, Tab 10*).

In spring 2007, 96 credit faculty members were trained and drafted at least one course-level learning outcome and assessment per discipline for a pilot in the fall (*Volume I, Tab 7*).

In fall 2007, one or more outcomes and assessments were piloted in 47 credit courses in 36 disciplines. Noncredit faculty members piloted assessment of learning outcomes in ESL courses (*Volume I, Tab 8*).

By the beginning of spring semester 2008, at least one student learning outcome and assessment had been written for 164 credit courses (representing 24 percent of the credit courses offered at the college).

Following the receipt of the January 31, 2008, action letter from the Accrediting Commission, the chair of the Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Academic Senate President, and the Office of Instruction have met several times to plan an appropriate and timely response. A plan was developed to substantially accelerate the college's implementation for student learning outcomes and assessment. To demonstrate the college's commitment and to provide significant momentum for this process, the goal initially established for the first phase was to produce a minimum of three learning outcomes and adopt appropriate assessment tools for one-third of the college's courses by the beginning of March 2008. The plan projects that a minimum of three learning outcomes will be developed and assessment tools adopted for **all** current courses by December 2008.

In the month of February 2008, the Outcomes and Assessment Committee conducted additional student learning outcome training sessions for faculty representatives from the College's academic disciplines. On February 29, 2008, over 100 MiraCosta faculty members participated in an all-day session, writing student learning outcomes and adopting assessments (*Volume I, Tab 9: Authentic Assessments: Leap Day SLO Workshop*).

Also in February, the college reviewed and purchased assessment management software (TracDat) to facilitate the collection, management, and evaluation of student learning outcomes and assessments. The software has now been installed at the college, and training will take place this semester.

By the beginning of March 2008, a minimum of three outcomes and assessments had been developed for 332 credit courses (49 percent of all credit courses at the college), significantly exceeding our initial target assessment of outcomes in pilot courses has already begun, and a regular cycle of ongoing assessment will be incorporated into the expanded program review process (*Volume I, Tab 11: Status Report*).

In an effort to achieve continuity across all academic courses, noncredit began by targeting those course offerings from which students might choose to move directly into transfer-level courses. In the initial effort, noncredit faculty developed mission statements and wrote student learning outcomes for Noncredit ESL and Adult High School, achieving 82 percent coverage. The Academic Senate will coordinate a college-wide dialogue to establish Institutional Learning Outcomes by the end of December 2008. The Senate is working with the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee and College administrators to integrate student learning outcomes into an expanded College-wide program review process. The new process is projected to be in place by fall 2008.

The faculty, administrators, and classified staff of MiraCosta College are focused on and committed to meeting and/or exceeding the expectations of the Accrediting Commission. We

are confident that we will meet the recommendation, and the required evidence will be in place at the time of the next full accreditation visit.

Documentation to support the progress indicated in this response is provided in the enclosed binder: "Responses to the Recommendations of the Commission: Volume I."

RECOMMENDATION 2: The team recommends that the governing board and college constituent groups engage in a dialogue focused upon identifying and achieving mutual interests central to ensuring a participative governance climate consistent with the college mission, vision, and values.

(Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3)

Demonstrating awareness of the need to improve relationships with college community stakeholders, the Board of Trustees conducted a comprehensive self-evaluation in summer 2007, and in September 2007 met to determine a schedule for the examination of current policies and practices related to governance issues. A task force consisting of two Board members, the College President, and the Human Resources Director was established to prepare a board-development program. The process was launched with a Board retreat on January 22, 2008, at which Butte College Trustee William McGinnis, American River College President David Viar, and legal expert Mary Dowell worked with Board members to help them understand their legal responsibilities.

The January retreat was followed by a series of meetings in February to establish lines of communication with leaders of major college constituencies. The Board President, the College President, the Academic Senate President, the Classified Employee Senate President, the Associate Faculty Union President, and the Student Government President have all been involved in these meetings. The meetings have been cordial, and there is a plan now to extend the discussions to include more representatives of stakeholder groups before the end of spring semester 2008.

On March 1, 2008, David Viar returned to MiraCosta College to meet with the Board of Trustees in an afternoon study session. That study session focused on the appropriate role of the Board in effective governance. President Viar advised the Board of Trustees to focus on developing the college's long-range vision and on setting goals for the College President. The local newspaper, the *North County Times*, described the discussion as follows: "Members (of the board) cooperated in civil conversations—a change from recent workshops that dealt directly with the roots of the board's divide."

An additional Board study session will be held based on direction given by the Board on March 1, 2008. David Viar will facilitate the additional study session. Board of Trustees responsibilities for institutional governance and relationship with the College President will be the principal areas of discussion at this session. The meeting date and preparation of meeting materials are being developed at this time.

There is an aura of confidence at the College based on genuine dialogue between the Board President, senior management, and campus constituent groups. This improved atmosphere is also noticed at regular and study sessions of the Board of Trustees.

Documentation to support the progress indicated in this response is provided in appendices attached to the report.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The team recommends that the governing board establish a comprehensive governing board development plan that builds a shared understanding of board roles and responsibilities, that leads to common agreement about the rules, regulations, and protocols, under which the board operates, and that creates a framework that allows the board to operate in a unified manner.
(Standards IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g)

The January 22, 2008, Board of Trustees retreat began the process of establishing a comprehensive Board development plan and provided tangible evidence that the Board of Trustees is committed this effort. The Board has made significant progress in preparing a plan and carrying it forward. Interactions between Board members at meetings have been decidedly more congenial since fall 2007. Board of Trustees members have effectively worked together to review their roles and responsibilities and have reached a consensus in many areas of policy governance and College President relations.

On February 5, 2008, a Board study session was conducted that focused on the College strategic planning and budget development processes and the Board's appropriate role in these processes. Again, there was consensus among the Board members on the issues of role, acceptance of College President and staff expertise, and the procedure for setting broad Board policy goals necessary for college planning.

The Board of Trustees voted on February 19, 2008, to approve a contract with the Dispute Resolution Center. The Center will provide well-known and experienced facilitators, who will meet with individual Board members and College constituency leaders, and then conduct a special meeting of the Board on April 15, 2008.

The Board of Trustees took the warning from the Accrediting Commission very seriously. The Board has been working diligently both before and after receiving the warning letter to address the Commission recommendations, resolve their differences in a manner that promotes a participative governance climate, establish dialogue with campus constituents, and focus attention on their appropriate role in collegial governance.

Documentation to support the progress indicated in this response is provided in appendices attached to the report.