

EVALUATION REPORT

MiraCosta College
One Barnard Drive
Oceanside, California 92056-3899

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
MiraCosta College on March 16 - 18, 2004

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Mira Costa College
Comprehensive Evaluation Visit Team Roster
Tuesday, March 16 - Thursday, March 18, 2004

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Accreditation Visitation Team
Summary Report
March 16 - 18, 2004

The MiraCosta Accreditation Visitation Team was afforded a warm, receptive welcome when it arrived on the Oceanside campus on Tuesday March 16, 2004. Prior to the campus arrival the college cooperatively provided a comprehensive selection of material related to the Accreditation Standards. Once on campus the team was able to utilize a team room that was centrally located and adequately equipped to meet our technical and investigative needs.

The visitation team fanned out across the college making site visitations and on-campus contacts at the three educational sites that comprise the college. Throughout the visit the team made contact with approximately 200 individuals that included students, staff, faculty and administration. The team was particularly impressed with the collaborative governance model that is utilized to provide direction and guidance for the institution. As a consequence of the governance structure the team found a college that operated effectively, was well financed and responsive in its efforts to bring education to the communities it serves. MiraCosta College has an extraordinary effective management information system that provides easy access to relevant college information, provides client centered student registration and encourages the utilization of technology throughout the operation. The college has established a clear plan to maintain and improve the facilities on the campuses. The result of this effort is the availability of quality facilities that strongly support the instructional operation.

The team believes that MiraCosta College is a well run institution that is responsive to the communities it serves. It values its employees and the commitment to a collegial governance style of operation. The college represents a strong example of a quality California Community College.

INTRODUCTION

Description of the History of MiraCosta College

MiraCosta College was established in 1934 at the height of the Great Depression in response to the community needs for additional training and education. Members of the Oceanside-Carlsbad Union School District were determined to provide opportunity for the students graduating from high school. Classes opened in the Fall of 1934 with 115 students utilizing classrooms on the high school site. The end of the Depression brought renewed student enrollment that grew until the beginning of World War II. Because of the war, the enrollment dropped to an all time low of 55 students.

Following the end of World War II, the student enrollment again began to grow and the college was faced with the dilemma of trying to accommodate renewed student enrollment not only from within the district boundaries but also for surrounding communities. A request was made to expand the area served by the college to include Vista, Fallbrook and Escondido. After extensive consideration the decision was made to not expand the district boundaries. The college was outgrowing the existing facilities and for the first time additional classrooms were built exclusively for the college in what was called the "College Center."

The 1960's brought the electorate the opportunity to vote on the establishment of a Community College District that was separate from the High School District. In 1961 the fledgling community college agreed to purchase 121.5 acres on a site that overlooked the Pacific Ocean. That site is where the Oceanside campus of MiraCosta College is currently located. Construction of new facilities began in 1962 and by 1964 the new campus opened with 650 students.

One of the core cultural elements of MiraCosta College is a commitment to a collaborative form of institutional governance. This is evidenced by the fact that when the college opened in 1964 it had already established an Academic Senate and had initiated a collegial form of institutional governance. This effort preceded the implementation of a collegial governance model that was legislatively mandated with the implementation of A.B. 1725. The collaborative governance effort established the foundation for the operational model that has successfully provided direction for the college through current times.

The institution experienced its next significant change in 1975 when, with the strong urging of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, the college moved to incorporate San Dieguito Union High School into the district boundaries. The result was the immediate need to provide educational opportunities for students at what was now the south end of the district. In the Fall of 1976 an educational center was opened in Solana Beach with a course offering of 50 classes. The student enrollment soon outgrew the location and a search was initiated that resulted in the selection and purchase of the San Elijo Campus. Construction of permanent facilities on that site began in 1986 and the new campus opened in 1988 with an enrollment of 2500 students, 1000 more than was anticipated.

The 1990's brought new challenges and a tremendous number of changes. Student enrollment began to level off and even decline. At the same time, the college entered into an aggressive building and remodeling program designed to accommodate enrollment growth. Because of the fluctuations in the student enrollment the District found itself in a position of needing to attract students to sustain the enrollment. A marketing plan and a restructuring of the class schedule combined with the offering of alternative ways of providing class enrollment opportunities were initiated. The result was a marked increase in enrollment that was sufficient to sustain the long term plan of the college. For the first time the college enrolled significant numbers of students who reflected the cultural diversity contained within the region. The district made a bold move that was designed to implement a technological infrastructure that would bring the college up to a state of the art information technology system and management information system. Armed with the wealth of new information the college focused on the utilization of data as part of the decision process. The result was a stabilization of the economic issues that arose in the mid-decade and a return to a planning mode that carried the college into the new millennium.

MiraCosta College has established a number of successful community, private and public partnerships. The result has been better service to students through collaboration with neighboring institutions. Significant grants offered special support for under-represented students allowing greater numbers of transfer students from ethnic minority groups. The college was recognized as the established location for the Small Business Development Center of North San Diego County. The college was able to refurbish a former shopping center and create an off campus site for non-credit education called the Community Learning Center.

Recent budgetary problems in the State have impacted the income of the college beyond the basic aid revenue. As categorical funds are wrapped into the state apportionment base for most community colleges, basic aid districts are faced with the need to find new internal resources to sustain the funding needed to maintain the categorical programs. While the fiscal picture of the college is strong, the recent financial problems with the State highlight the need for a continuance of a fiscally conservative approach to the management of MiraCosta College. The President has announced his retirement and the institution is in the process of selecting a new CEO to lead the college into the next era.

Team Visit, Size, Team Preparation

The accreditation visitation team for MiraCosta College was an exceptional group of professionals. It was a select team of experienced individuals who had been on previous accreditation visits. Due to the illness of the team chair's assistant, a last minute substitution was made. That substitution proved to be an enhancement to an already strong visitation team. The team was organized into groups that were each assigned responsibility for an accreditation standard. Prior to the visit, the 12 member visitation team had thoroughly reviewed the Reaffirmation self-study prepared by MiraCosta College. The team had taken the initiative to utilize an exceptionally accessible information system at MiraCosta College to examine, investigate and validate information that was contained in the Self-Study. The team did

preparatory writing in assessing the Self-study Report that was used to formulate our initial positions on the standards as we started the visitation activities.

Because of the experience of the team, it organized their activities to ensure all entities of the college were contacted. The team made over 200 individual contacts with faculty, staff, students, administration, board and community members at the three campus locations of the college. The team was measured in its assessment and maintained a global perspective of the operation in relationship to the accreditation standards. The focus of the visit was a positive one that centered on what the institution was doing best and what could be improved in relationship to the accreditation standards. It was recognized that the college had agreed to be a pilot location for the new accreditation standards. The team took the opportunity to learn as well as assess and investigate compliance with the standards. The group communicated openly, sharing insights between standards and was very respectful of each team members' competency and visitation efforts. We functioned as a committed team that was fair, balanced and enjoyed our opportunity to work together. There were periods of humor mixed with professional concern for the College. The entire visitation experience can only be described as exceptional.

GENERAL STATE OF THE COLLEGE

The visitation team found MiraCosta College to be a comprehensive well organized institution. The college had made a strong effort to reach out into the community and provide the opportunity for Community College education to the constituents of its district it offered its students the opportunity to select from a broad spectrum of courses and programs. The institution recognized the need to change and update programs based upon changing trends within the communities it serves. The facilities were well maintained with a focus on providing support for the educational process. A comprehensive facilities plan served as a strong pathway as the college responded to changing and expanding needs. The college had made a serious effort to adjust its focus toward student learning outcomes and had established a foundation for continued progress toward meeting the intent of the accreditation standards.

The college has been a leader in a collaborative style of institutional governance. The committee structure has effectively served the institution in its decision process. It is an example within the community colleges of the strength that a collegial governance decision process can have on all entities of a college. The result of the visitation to MiraCosta College was the perception of a solid institution that was student centered. There were many positives about the college and those are recognized in the following commendations. In addition, there are areas where the visitation team believed the college could improve and those are identified in the following recommendations.

COMMENDATIONS:

Commendation #1

The collaborative governance model utilized by the college exemplifies the commitment to the faculty, staff and students to involve as many constituents in the regular operation of the college. The model has proven to be inclusive and has allowed all campus sites to participate. The visit has revealed an operation that is more effective than was outlined in the accreditation self-study.

Commendation #2

The team is impressed with the advanced development of the use of institutional technology in support of student learning and the college operation. The college is commended for providing effective electronic access for and to all segments of the institutional operation.

Commendation #3

The college is commended for the renovation and construction of facilities that have occurred over the past six years. The team believes that the Facilities Master Plan will serve as an effective guideline for the addition to and improvement of physical resources for the next six years.

Commendation #4

The team commends the Service Learning Program offered by the college. The opportunity for students to become involved in a program that impacts their education in the community is impressive. The participation in this program has tripled over the past three years with 700 students enrolling each semester. In addition, this involvement contributes to the students personal growth and development, as well as teaching civic responsibility and the value of service to the community. The program has resulted in a strong retention strategy for students and has been incorporated into departmental student learning outcomes.

Commendation #5

The team commends the college for its commitment to and support of the Community Learning Center. This campus exemplifies the effort of the college to take education to the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation #1

The team recommends that the college develop a plan to implement the measurement of student learning outcomes at the course, program and institutional levels. The plan should include tasks, time lines and responsible individuals so that significant progress can be reported in the mid-term report (Standard IIA.1.a, IIA.1.c., IIA.2.a, IIA.2.b, IIA.2.e,2.f, IIA.2.h, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6.a, IIC.1.b).

Recommendation #2

The team recommends that the college develop a specific "education plan" for first time college students and take concerted action to improve student awareness and access to counseling and advising services at all college sites. (Standard II.B.3.c).

Recommendation #3

The team recommends that the composition of the credit faculty of MiraCosta College reflect the diversity of the district's student population and the diversity of the community it serves. Diversity should be a primary consideration in the hiring of new or replacement credit faculty. Significant progress toward this diversity must be reported in the mid-term report. (Standard III.A.4.b.)

RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1998 MiraCosta College Accreditation Visitation Team made four recommendations as a result of the site visitation. The college appropriately responded and took action to address all of the recommendations. In the Reaffirmation Self-Study document that was prepared for the 2004 site visitation, a detailed discussion concerning the college's effort to comply with the recommendations is included. In summary, it is the assessment of the MiraCosta College visitation team of 2004 that the college fully addressed three of the four recommendations from 1998. The first recommendation from 1998 identified the importance of "... implementing a strategy that increases a climate of inclusiveness. This strategy should develop an ongoing commitment to diversity" A review of the diversity as reflected in the fulltime permanent faculty who teach in the credit education area of the college shows that there is a significant disconnect between the diversity profile as reflected in the student body as well as the community and the full time faculty. The issue concerning the need to hire a more diverse full time faculty has been raised in the two previous accreditation visits with no discernable progress being made. The team believes that the issue is of significance. Therefore, the team is including a recommendation concerning the hiring of faculty.

1998 Recommendations:

Recommendation # 1

It is recommended that MiraCosta Community College develop and implement a strategy that increases a climate of inclusiveness. This strategy should develop an on going commitment to diversity and cohesiveness of the trifurcated district.

It is the assessment of the visitation team that the college has made great strides in its effort to incorporate the campus constituents from the three sites into a cohesive college community. There is evidence of a great sense of inclusiveness in college committees and processes at all three campuses. Information was clearly and widely available and opportunities to provide input numerous. This recommendation was partially addressed in that communications were enhanced between and among the college sites, major resources were allocated for facilities at both external locations, staff members were rotated among the sites and the inclusion of faculty and staff on various college-wide committees has moved the district toward a more collegial and unified organization. Diversity of the student body was addressed by the active recruitment of students from the more ethnically diverse Community Learning Center to both the Oceanside and

San Elijo campuses. However, there is no evidence available indicating how many students have been recruited or how successful it has been in making that transition. The ethnic composition of the student body and classified staff statistically reflect the ethnic composition of the communities served by the college. Unfortunately, the similar profile does not apply to the regular fulltime permanent credit teaching faculty. The commitment to faculty diversity, other than becoming the basis of a new goal, was not addressed in the response and appears to be an unresolved issue.

Recommendation # 2

It is recommended that the district respond to the 1992 recommendation by developing a college-wide, comprehensive and coordinated retention plan with leadership from both instruction and student services. The team recommends that the district implement this recommendation in a timely fashion. Although it appears that the district staff has developed a number of retention strategies, these strategies have not been incorporated into a comprehensive college-wide retention plan, with goals, objectives, and an evaluation process. This does not meet the requirements of the previous team's recommendation.

The visitation team assessed the progress that the college has made concerning this recommendation. The ability of the college to attract, enroll and retain students has been an issue throughout the history of the institution. It is the team's assessment that significant progress has been made toward implementing the intent of the recommendation. The college has established a Director of Retention Services position. The director chairs a retention advisory committee which is a sub-committee of the academic senate, provides leadership for academic support services and carries out aspects of the campus wide Retention Plan. The Retention Services Director is charged with the responsibility for student retention and the clear implementation of a formalized student retention program. The team is satisfied that the college has complied with the recommendation.

Recommendation # 3

It is recommended that given the district's enrollment is currently under cap and has been declining, it is essential that the district strengthen its community and student outreach efforts. The team recognized that district staff has implemented a number of student recruitment strategies, primarily through the efforts of student services and the public information office.

The college has established several formal efforts to sustain a focus on student enrollment. Those efforts include the creation of a college marketing committee, collaborative efforts with adjoining educational institutions and direct student outreach strategies. The result has been resurgence in student enrollment. The college has engaged in a variety of recruitment efforts to achieve cap. In 2001-2002 enrollment was 5.5% above cap. and in 2002-2003 it was only .7% below cap. As mentioned in the comment concerning recommendation #2, the college has a history of fluctuating enrollment and the team believes that it recognize the importance of a sustained student outreach effort. The college has satisfactorily addressed this recommendation.

Recommendation # 4

It is recommended that the college address the facilities limitations at the Oceanside campus, the coordination of library services across the Oceanside and the San Elijo campuses, and reevaluate the balance between print resources and technology in the library.

The assessment of the visitation team is that the college has strongly responded to this recommendation. Upon receipt of this recommendation, the college embarked upon a major renovation and new construction program encompassing all three sites. The renovation of the Learning Resource Center at the San Elijo campus was the first element of this effort followed by the construction of the new Library and Information Hub on the Oceanside campus. The Library and Information Hub opened on the Oceanside campus in 2003. In addition to the facility improvements, the college budget has been increased on an annual basis for expanding the acquisition of print materials for the libraries. The college has established a facilities master plan that has served it extremely well. The college built and renovated facilities that provide outstanding space for instruction and student learning. The team believes the college is in full compliance with this recommendation.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

MiraCosta College listed within its Affirmation Self-Study a section titled "Certification." It identified the 21 eligibility requirements for community and junior colleges that are prescribed by the Accreditation Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges within this section. The visitation team found the college to be in full compliance with each of the 21 eligibility requirements. The evidence validating compliance is found in the college catalog, published college policies and practices, MiraCosta College website, annual audit reports and reports to the California Community College Chancellor's Office.

STANDARDS

General Comments

In 2002 the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges implemented a revised set of accreditation standards that focused on the learning outcomes of students. With the advent of a change in the accrediting standards there is the need to assess, review and consider the impact and effect of the new standards on the educational institutions. MiraCosta College agreed to serve as one of five pilot institutions that would implement the new standards through an Accreditation Reaffirmation Self-Study and undergo an accreditation visitation utilizing the new standards. The visitation team found MiraCosta College to be making progress in addressing the implementation process of the new accreditation standards. The team recognized that since this was a first time experience both for the college and the team, full compliance and full organizational

incorporation of the standards was not a reasonable expectation. Part of the experience was intended to be a learning opportunity without losing an accurate assessment of the viability of the institution. The visitation team found a well run, comprehensive institution with a positive organizational culture that was focused on providing the opportunity for students to receive their education. This environment was strongly supported by a collaborative governance structure that provided the opportunity for input into the decision process from throughout the college. In addition, the facilities and the availability of relevant cogent information through the college information system fully enhanced the educational opportunity for students. The team believes that the college is responsive to the communities it serves through programs, services and facilities that provide local access in accordance with its mission.

The accreditation visitation team was an experienced, strong, balanced group that was prepared prior to their arrival at the college. It had studied and questioned the self-study. It investigated the institution through the management information system and available publications. Upon their arrival the team proceeded to reach out throughout the entire college to investigate and validate the reaffirmation document. Because of the experience of the team members there was an intimate understanding of the visitation process, the new standards and the operational intricacies of the college. The team questioned and pursued concerns all the while sharing observations and findings with the entire team. The result was a unified approach to the investigation and assessment of MiraCosta College. The following findings are categorized by 2002 Accreditation Standards.

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

OBSERVATIONS:

MiraCosta College has a comprehensive mission statement that guides the institution's educational purposes. The official mission statement of the college appears in the catalogue and other college publications. The mission statement defines the educational mission of the college in broad terms and includes language that generalizes the college's commitment to student learning. The mission statement has been approved by the Board of Trustees. A newer version, as yet not officially board approved, is much shorter and to the point, but lacks any mention of student learning goals. It is being utilized in recruiting and planning documents, pamphlets, and new publications. Reportedly, the new abbreviated mission statement will be submitted to the board as an approved simplified version, but not as a replacement to the more comprehensive statement. There is evidence that considerable research has been done to determine the needs of the local community and the college's student population in order to integrate this information into the college's mission. The mission statement is regularly reviewed by all of the stakeholders, including the board and is published in appropriate documents and college publications. Although members of the college community express satisfaction with the broadness of the statement, the college might consider more specificity regarding its student population and a more explicit statement of commitment to achieving learning.

To complement the mission statement, the Board of Trustees has developed a series of vision statements. These vision statements, developed over the last few years, guide the college in accord with the college mission. There is considerable evidence that they are widely disseminated and distributed to all planning committees. Board agendas and notes validate that the Trustees' vision statements are constantly being reviewed and revised. In addition, board members regularly request and receive indicator reports which detail progress toward fulfilling the vision statements. However, these indicator reports are not widely available to the college community and could be useful in reinforcing a focus on mission.

It is clear that the institution uses the mission statement at all levels of planning. Planning documents on many levels require, and subsequently contain, explicit connections to the mission. In addition, members of the college community often referenced the college mission in their discussions of planning with accreditation team members.

Evidence indicates that the college has a mature but still evolving and developing planning process. Conversations and documents confirm that numerous committees, with broad based participation from members of the college community, meet regularly. These committees formulate plans to present to the budgetary and planning committees for approval and recommendation. There is some overlap in purviews of committees, which sometimes confuses lines of responsibility, but there is evidence of efforts to address this problem. In addition, it appears that adjustments to committee time lines are ongoing to make the process work more effectively. Evidence confirms that there is regular review of the progress of the "action plans." The institution also systematically reviews the entire planning process, most recently through goals and guidelines developed by the Process Improvement Team. In general, though, in terms of the development of the plans themselves, there are indications that insufficient research is used. Care must also be taken to ensure that plans integrate the short term into the long term and the micro into the macro.

The plethora of committees and their inter-relations is somewhat bewildering to the members of the accreditation team, and evidently also to new faculty and staff. Still, members of the college community from all three campuses express great satisfaction with the structure and their opportunities for involvement. This campus-wide participation has helped institutionalize planning, making it an integral part of the college culture. It has also contributed to the high level of satisfaction most members of the MiraCosta College Community express about the inclusiveness of the institution in general. It is important to note, though, that the numerous committees and high degree of involvement may have slowed progress toward implementing plans, programs, and services.

CONCLUSIONS:

While there is ample evidence of the efficacy and review of planning procedures at MiraCosta, there is little evidence of systematic analysis of the effectiveness of the specific action plans. There also appears to be significant resistance to recognizing the value and centrality of articulating measurable student outcomes. There is no apparatus in place to measure the degree

to which these plans achieve institutional goals and objectives. Moreover, the institution has been slow in developing measurable student learning outcomes. The college is in the initial stages of developing and using these outcomes but it has not developed processes or approaches that enable it to adequately assess and utilize learning outcomes in planning. While some departments have made progress in their understanding and utilization of learning outcomes, particularly the divisions that have recently undergone six-year reviews, many have yet to take the first steps. Their inability to commit to a definition of "institutional abilities" seems to have hindered their progress in defining and implementing student learning outcomes. To enhance institutional effectiveness, the college needs to establish their "institutional abilities" to facilitate the implementation of measurable student learning outcomes. (I.B)

RECOMMENDATION:

No specific recommendation for Standard I.

Standard II. A: Instructional Programs

OBSERVATIONS:

The team found that the college provided evidence to largely substantiate having met the Standard 2 requirements by offering high-quality instructional programs leading to degrees, certificates and employment or transfer. Data provided in program reviews indicates a number of degrees and certificates awarded in the disciplines currently under review. Transfer data was available via the research office. Instructional programs are systematically assessed via a six year cycle of program reviews which were available to the team and revealed initial attempts to address Student Learning Outcomes, e.g. to use SCANS abilities, case study analysis, compilation of portfolios, and pre-post testing.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges does not expect the college, to have identified all of its student learning outcomes and have measured them, it does expect that the college has begun to plan how to accomplish this. In the self-study section entitled "Planning Agendas", the college lays forth its plan. The plan includes, but is not limited to:

- A review of the planning cycle to ensure that the academic master plan drives planning and budgeting
- Institutional Abilities and Measurable Student Learning Outcomes committee, Academic Master Plan committee, and Academic Policies & Procedures committee recommend how Student Learning Outcomes data will be collected and incorporated into the college's planning process, and will redefine assessment criteria to measure quality related to institutional abilities and program and course learning outcomes. (the Academic Master Plan indicates a completion date of October 2004 and responsible parties being the Academic Senate Council and the Institutional Abilities Steering Committee)
- Solicit student feedback, evaluate on-line and follow faculty experimentation
- Revise course outlines to include learning outcomes in accordance with institutional abilities

- Assess learning outcomes specific to vocational programs
- Begin mapping program and degree outcomes
- Revise institutional abilities as needed, monitor development of student learning outcomes, evaluate the effectiveness of student learning outcome assessment
- Incorporate student learning outcomes into catalogue

CONCLUSIONS:

The college has created an ambitious planning agenda with few specifics, leading to a concern that, without more definition, the college will have difficulty making progress in measuring student learning outcomes. The college reported it has proposed four institutional abilities (February 2002), which will lead to the development of measurable student learning outcomes. In November 2002 faculty agreed to adopt the concept of institutional abilities, 54% in favor and 46% opposed. However, the institutional abilities proposed in February 2002 were not adopted and the self-study states. "all parties acknowledge this is a work in progress". Additionally, less than half (47%) of the faculty feel they are adequately prepared to document specific student learning outcomes and abilities within their respective disciplines. Individual administrators and faculty reported feeling "stalled". The team believes that a plan with more specificity, e.g. tasks, time lines and responsible individuals needs to be developed.

With regard to delivery of instruction, faculty and staff at the San Elijo campus expressed concern that transfer students cannot complete all their requirements at that campus. Science labs are not offered nor are upper level math courses and physics. In addition, students reported that the lack of a comprehensive curriculum caused them to have to travel to the Oceanside campus in order to complete their degree requirements. Survey data from the Retention Services telephone survey of why students drop their courses supports this contention and analysis of the college's spring schedule for the San Elijo confirms that limited numbers of transfer classes are available to students.

The college might consider the assignment of a permanent fulltime administrative leader for the San Elijo campus. The student enrollment at this campus is sufficient to require consistent administrative leadership. A number of staff expressed the importance of having a permanent administrative leader for this site. When the campus was initially developed the college assigned one individual to serve as the administrative representative. It is the belief of the faculty and staff at San Elijo that the campus will be more effectively represented with an administrator who is permanently assigned to that site.

RECOMMENDATION:

The team recommends that the college develop a plan to implement the measurement of student learning outcomes at the course, program and institutional levels. The plan should include tasks, time lines and responsible individuals so that significant progress can be reported in the mid-term report (Standard IIA.1.a, IIA.1.c., II A.2.a, 11.A.2.b, IIA.2.e, IIA.2.h, ITA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6.a, IIC 1.b).

Standard II.B: Student Learning Programs and Services: Student Support Services

OBSERVATIONS:

Comprehensive student support services are provided at the Oceanside campus and all students have access to these services. Most support services are also available at the San Elijo campus and the non-credit Community Learning Center. All Student Services departments participate in Program Review every six years and also evaluate effectiveness of services by way of interim reports every three years consistent with the evaluation process for instructional programs.

There is evidence of systematic identification of student learning support needs. This is evidenced both by the 1999 Noel-Levitz study and the current web-based enrollment system that prompts students to report their individual needs at every enrollment cycle. On the other hand, there is little evidence of progress made related to identification of Student Learning Outcomes and measurement in the student support services area.

Student records are maintained both electronically and in film format with duplicate backup copies routinely made in case of fire or disaster. Student workers are required to sign a "Confidentiality Agreement" prior to being given access to student records. This is not the case for contract employees of the college. It is strongly suggested that the college require all employees who have access to student records be routinely updated on privacy laws and policies, and also that they sign this "Confidentiality Agreement".

The College Placement tests are COMPASS (Reading and Writing) and MDTP (Mathematics). Both assessment instruments are known to minimize bias. The appropriate validity and disproportionate impact studies have been completed and reported in the Matriculation Self Study, Spring Semester 1996.

The Catalog is comprehensive in its coverage and clearly communicates policies and procedures of the college. The college commitment to student diversity is also affirmed in the Catalog. There are many learning opportunities such as Puente, Black Student Union, and the Institute for International Perspectives (as well as many other clubs and organizations) that support the college's ethnically diverse student population. An analysis of student ethnicity reveals a reasonable reflection of the general population in the service area. Only Hispanic and Caucasian students are slightly under represented when compared to the surrounding community.

Especially impressive is the Service Learning Program at MiraCosta College. Participation in this program has tripled over the last three years with 700 students now participating in community service activities each semester. A number of clubs, the student newspaper, student government, and on-campus work as peer advisors/tutors all provide MiraCosta students with additional opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. This involvement contributes to the student's personal growth and development, as well as teaching civic responsibility and the value of service to the community.

CONCLUSIONS:

It is concluded that MiraCosta College meets or exceeds standards of good practice as delineated in II.B.1, II.B.2, and II.B.3, with the exception of Standard II.B.3.c. Data analysis from surveys of students and faculty revealed significant dissatisfaction with advising and counseling services. Twenty-five percent of faculty and staff were dissatisfied with these services. Ninety-one (15 %) of the student respondents were dissatisfied with counseling and advisement. In another survey taken in the Fall Semester of 2001, forty-two percent of the responding students said that counseling was not readily available at a time that was convenient. In the Counseling Department's Program Review it was suggested a large percentage of students do not avail themselves of counseling.

From survey evidence and direct interviews with students and faculty, the Accreditation Team concludes that a deficiency exists in the area of counseling and advisement services. A lack of student awareness or a lack of student will to see a counselor is a primary issue since many students do not seek counseling assistance in the first place. A second issue centers on student access to counselors either because of limited appointment times or a perceived dissatisfaction with a previous counseling experience. In light of these findings and the college's stated concern over student retention and student success, the Accreditation Team offers the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION:

The team recommends that the college develop a specific "education plan" for first time college students and take concerted action to improve student awareness and access to counseling and advising services at all college sites. (Standard II.B.3.c).

Standard II. C: Library and Learning Support Services

OBSERVATIONS:

Both the Oceanside and San Elijo campuses have embraced technology for learning support. The Library and Information Hubs at Oceanside and San Elijo provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to utilize technology along with print materials in a variety of ways to meet needs of different learning styles. Both hubs are active places with a lot of energy and interaction as well as quiet individual and group study places. They include space for group orientations by librarians as well as learning centers such as Math, Tutoring, Open Lab and Writing. While the San Elijo hub is smaller than Oceanside, it is quite effective in offering the same learning opportunities and services in an attractive, functional Library and Information Hub.

The librarians and staff are poised to move forward with information competency and assessment of student learning, an area in which they have been working for some time. The orientation classroom and other new building resources provide strong support as they promote this idea. Most of the discussion in this report deals with future plans which include an additional librarian and a replacement for a retirement. The librarians and staff also plan to evaluate their library courses and revitalize them. (IIC 1 b)

The other learning centers in the hubs are moving ahead. The Retention Director has energized the tutoring program and the Writing Center Director to be hired in the near future (planning agenda p. 121) should bring more vitality to that center's service for the whole campus. The Math Learning Center, an example of a discipline specific program, is heavily used to support classroom instruction and self-paced learning. (IIC 1a and IIA 1b)

The library has improved its collection development program recommendation #4. p. 49 with faculty utilizing program review, curriculum development, librarian sign off and flex activities for faculty input into the curriculum. (IIC2)

CONCLUSION:

The Library and Information Hubs are working well The Oceanside hub has made a dramatic and significant improvement to the campus both in terms of its physical attractiveness and its use of technology to enhance student learning. Despite the challenges at Oceanside with the library services split between two floors and the staffing level less than needed for this larger facility, student needs are being addressed. The librarians and technical staff are satisfied and pleased with the beauty and usage of this building and are looking forward to improved staffing levels.

There are plans for evaluating the library and learning resource center support courses, collecting and assessing data, conducting student self assessment and faculty assessment of skill level. In addition, plans to enhance student learning opportunities are waiting for a new instruction librarian to lead them forward. Technological support for managing surveys and other measures electronically appear to be available at MiraCosta.

The MiraCosta Standard IIC team chose to define learning support systems only in terms of labs located in the hubs. A broader discussion to include ALL learning centers and computer labs wherever located would have addressed this standard more fully and should be considered as the college moves forward with future accreditation studies.

Standard III: Resources

OBSERVATIONS:

Human Resources

The team met and visited with a variety of faculty, staff, administrators and students at each of its three sites. The team was able to find evidence regarding the employment, evaluation and professional development of faculty, staff and administrators. The committees that are involved in the hiring process do utilize established criteria and do receive information related to the needs and priorities of the college. Appropriate staff is involved in personnel recommendations as evidenced by the work of the hiring committees for both faculty and classified staff. Written policies and procedures exist and are readily available on the college website and in hard copy form. This includes the respective handbooks for faculty, adjunct faculty and classified staff. Professional development opportunities are plentiful and include such things as flex activities;

travel to professional workshops; partial reimbursement for professional membership fees; as well as, a Career Incentive Program for classified staff.

The team was unable to find evidence related to diversity of faculty and integrated planning. The college staff seems to be aware of the lack of diversity among credit faculty but little progress has been made to improve its diversity to better reflect the diversity of its student population. The team found several references to the Faculty Diversity Subcommittee, but the subcommittee is no longer in operation.

Other programs and services designed to promote diversity are not working. Problems still persist in the evaluative procedures for classified staff but the college appears to be on a path to rectify these issues. Several planning committees exist and several address staffing issues. For example, the Facilities Master Plan Committee will identify staffing needs for new buildings. How they integrate with each other or integrate into a final institutional human resource plan is not clear. There was no evidence to indicate how this coordination is accomplished.

Physical Resources

All three sites of the MiraCosta Community College District are clean, safe and attractive, which creates a positive learning environment and supports institutional effectiveness throughout the district. Over the past six years, the district has built new facilities and renovated existing space on the Oceanside campus. New facilities include the Child Development Center opened in 2002 and the Library and Information Hub that opened in the fall of 2003. Numerous renovation projects have occurred with the most significant being the renovation of the vacated library into a functional and attractive Administration building. Students and staff alike express pride in the campus. The appearance and cleanliness of the campuses both internally and externally are outstanding. However, the staff is being stretched to its maximum capacity and is concerned that it may not be able to maintain the same level of service.

The Community Learning Center (CLC) in Oceanside is located in a renovated strip mall. This innovative reuse of an existing facility provides a home for the college's non-credit programs. This very attractive and well-received facility provides classrooms, offices, and student support services to the most diverse population of the district. The first phase of this facility opened in the fall of 2000 and is already filled to capacity. The same quality of construction and attention to form and function that is apparent on the main campus is also reflected in the CLC.

The San Elijo campus has seen two major renovations occur over the last four years. The Learning Resource Center and the student lounge were remodeled to reflect changing program and student needs. This center, although not growing, provides access to students in the southern portion of the district.

Through interviews and review of documentation, the team found evidence that extensive coordination among the various planning components, the academic master plan, the facility

master plan, the technology master plan and the budget has occurred and is continuing to occur to ensure that the physical environment compliments and supports student learning and institutional effectiveness.

Technology Resources

Significant planning accompanied by major commitments of resources has enabled the college to assume a leadership role through the integration of technology to support student learning and institutional outcomes. With over 1300 computers, MiraCosta is one of a few colleges nationwide to implement a four-year replacement cycle for computer hardware and included this component in their Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) plan. Since 1998, the college has also implemented most of the major components of the PeopleSoft data management system including human resources, student information, and finance and accounting. Staff training is exemplary to the point that MiraCosta technology staff is viewed as regional leaders for the delivery of training.

Financial Resources

The budget is linked to and supports the mission, goals, and planning agendas of the college. The planning and budgeting calendar establishes the time line for the various committee recommendations and priorities are required. Extensive collegial consultation insures broad participation in the budget development process. Financial guidelines established by the Board of Trustees include a requirement for a balanced budget each year, a minimum of an 8% reserve, and a restriction that salaries and benefits not exceed 80% of expenditures. This direction from the Board insures that the district adopt a sound conservative budget. The district received an unqualified financial audit with no findings or recommendations. This is another indication of strong fiscal management.

CONCLUSIONS:

Human Resources

It is suggested that the timeliness and the filing of personnel appraisals for classified staff be resolved before the next self-study. This is a concern since it was mentioned in the previous team report six years ago. It is also suggested that because the college has a strong committee structure involving wide participation, that it review its release time policy for classified so that it is an equitable procedure for anyone who participates.

As mentioned above, diversity continues to be an issue for the college, specifically for credit faculty. Eighty-three percent of the fulltime credit faculty and eighty-five percent of the parttime credit faculty are Caucasian while forty percent of the student population is ethnically diverse. Since the previous report in 1998 mentioned the need for planning, and the 1992 report mentioned the need for diverse recruitment, it is time to take the next step and begin experiencing progress towards increasing diversity for credit faculty.

Human Resources should be commended for initiating and developing many new policies and procedures. Support of the policies and procedures identified in the Self-Study should continue

under the guidance of the Human Resources office.

Physical Resources

The college meets or exceeds every part of the physical resources standard. The implementation of the facility master plan over the past six years is commendable. The facility planning for the next six years is aggressive and will lead to an institution that will respond to the needs of students and faculty for the foreseeable future.

Technology Resources.

The college meets or exceeds every part of the technology standard and should be commended for the development and implementation of a four-year equipment replacement cycle tied to the Total Cost of Ownership plan. The quantity and quality of the technology training is also commendable.

Financial Resources

The college is in a sound fiscal position. Being a basic aid district reduces the impact of State budget cuts and enables the college to invest more resources in its staff and in its programs and facilities. The Board of Trustees commitment to maintaining an eight percent reserve and for not permitting salaries and benefits to exceed 80% of expenditures is an indication of sound financial management.

RECOMMENDATION:

The team recommends that the composition of the credit faculty of MiraCosta Community College reflect the diversity of the district's student population and of the diversity of the community it serves. Diversity should be a primary consideration in the hiring of new or replacement credit faculty. Significant progress toward diversity must be reported in the mid-term report. (Standard III.A.4.b.)

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

OBSERVATIONS

A. Decision Making Roles and Processes:

MiraCosta College is a model of collegiality. All members of the college community have the option to participate in the governing and planning of the College. The Academic Senate includes all members of the faculty and administration. The president of the college is an ex-officio member and attends the open meetings. The classified employees also have a senate. Most district committees have equal representation of classified, faculty and administration. Through the Associated Student Government, student representatives are included in many committees, where appropriate, and the college has a student trustee who is a non-voting member of the Board.

The committee structure which provides the basis of the decision-making processes of MiraCosta Community College is extremely large and complex. Part of the complexity is explained by the

fact that there are no bargaining units for the fulltime faculty and the classified staff. The associated faculty is the only group at the college who are unionized. There are 28 standing committees and numerous ad hoc committees. Faculty members admit that a new faculty member may take 2-3 years to understand the committee structure and decision making processes. New faculty members are not required to serve on committees during their first year of employment and some departments only require them to observe committee meetings during their second year to determine the committees on which they would like to serve. All members of the college community must serve on at least 2 committees, although some administrators serve on more than 10 committees. The committee structure is reflected in policy but there is no organizational chart that shows the decision-making relationships of committees. A committee can be created upon request from the Academic Senate, but there does not appear to be any formal means of phasing out committees that have outlived their usefulness. According to some staff, some of the committees do not meet. While the committee structure is reviewed every two years, there is not evidence that these reviews have ever resulted in the elimination of any committees. The college needs a method of evaluating the effectiveness of each committee and the committee structure as a whole.

The most powerful decision making committee in the district is the Planning/Budgeting Council that is chaired by the president of the college. This committee includes representatives from the Academic Senate, the Classified Senate, and the Associated Student Government. According to staff, regardless of the "status" of any other committee in the district, all decisions of all committees must be "blessed" by the Planning/Budget Council. Some faculty members are not clear about how budget decisions are made and how a departmental budget is enhanced when extra money is needed for a special project. Decision making processes and procedures are not clearly documented in written form.

CONCLUSIONS:

A majority of the staff at MiraCosta Community College appears to be satisfied with their role in planning and decision-making. Many expressed that although the planning and decision processes are not perfect, they continue to improve. The one significant exception appears to be the adjunct faculty who believe they have a lesser role in decision-making and who are distinctly dissatisfied with their opportunities at the college. The survey conducted by the college and published on the college web site contains many statements from adjunct faculty who feel they are not well paid and that they have no opportunity to become fulltime faculty members. These complaints appear to be unfounded. It is not clear, however, how adjunct faculty salary levels have been determined prior to the union being organized.

Tracing the planning process from the inception of a plan to its completion is difficult. There is confusion, as well as, unclear lines of communication between the different committees that a plan must navigate to ultimately get to the Planning and Budget Council. Ties between the Academic Master Plan, the Facilities Master Plan and The Technology Master Plan are confusing. Even faculty intimately involved with planning find it difficult to know where requests need to be sent to get prioritized for consideration at the Planning and Budget Council.

Missing from the planning and decision-making processes of the college is any evidence that the evaluation of these processes is performed for improvement.

OBSERVATIONS:

B. Board and Administrative Organization:

The Board of Trustees of MiraCosta College mirrors the collegiality that permeates the college. The board continues to develop its policy governance model of operation, which focuses attention on policy issues as well as evaluating progress toward achieving the Vision Statements. The board members perform a self-evaluation each year that includes reviewing and updating the board's goals as well as developing new ones. Community Links forums have been sponsored by the board to strengthen its relationship with the community. The board evaluates district policies and procedures twice a year. As part of the annual review process, the board looks at the Academic Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan and the Technology Master Plan. Also, regular reports are made to the board on the instructional and co-curricular programs of the college. Development stages of the budget for the district are also reviewed on a yearly basis.

The members of the governing board evaluate the superintendent/president of the district each year with an informal semi-annual review. There is consensus among the three vice-presidents that the president oversees the administrative structure and delegates authority and responsibilities appropriately. The president controls budget and spending by chairing the Planning and Budget Council, which oversees allocations of resources. Although this council is a recommending body to the president, decisions reached by consensus are usually adopted. However, the president can override any decision.

CONCLUSIONS:

There is strong evidence that the president/superintendent's leadership has ensured the success of this model collegial institution. At all levels of the district, faculty, staff and administration describe the president as a caring, fair and objective leader. The president is a strong, fiscally responsible administrator. The college has grown and flourished under his leadership.

MiraCosta College can serve as a model for the collegial governance structure. The college has incorporated into its culture the belief and practice that a collaborative approach to institutional governance can effectively serve all of the constituents of the college. All college entities, faculty, staff, students, administration and Board of Trustees are afforded the opportunity to participate in the decision of the college in a very open structured manner.

The governance structure is very complex and will require a period of time to fully understand the workings and interrelationships of the various college committees. There is duplication of function between some committees which results in minor confusion as an issue moves through the consultative process. The confusion occurs because identical issues can move through parallel committees with different end results.

The Board of Trustees are very active, informed members of the communities served by

MiraCosta College. The board is concerned about sustaining its roles of establishing policy and working as a team. The board is a dynamic group who are connected to their constituents and the college.