



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

One Barnard Drive • Oceanside, CA 92056

760.757.6610 • www.miracosta.edu

DATE: June 10, 2011

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)

FROM: Francisco C. Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Superintendent/President

RE: June 10, 2011 Comments to the Commission

Good morning, members of the Commission, I am Francisco Rodriguez, Superintendent/President of the MiraCosta Community College District. I extend warm greetings from north San Diego County to each of you on behalf of our Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and students. I am very pleased to be here to provide a few comments and observations related to our recent spring Follow-Up Visit, and appreciate the opportunity to address the Commission.

Our college, governing board and I embrace and support the accreditation process. We deeply believe in and value peer review. I am here to update the Commission on our continued and significant progress as an organization. I am also here to underscore the governing board and college's continued commitment to appropriate governance and to instructional quality, and to assure you – with my full confidence – that with the guidance of the accreditation process and standards that our college is moving forward.

As the Commission is fully aware, our college was thrust four years ago into a public debacle that began over leadership issues and palm trees. The net result, after two plus tumultuous and difficult years, was the departure of the then-CEO, a divided board, an enduring lawsuit and an accreditation sanction. Equally dramatic was the loss of reputation and an erosion of public trust and confidence. The college's long-standing ethos of collegiality was challenged and relationships were strained. At MiraCosta, we had an organizational and collective "teachable moment."

Ultimately, this trying period did exactly what it was intended to do - catch and direct our *full attention* to come together as an academic community and address some outstanding and pressing issues. We were determined to change and thus responded to this "call to action" with a clear focus, especially as it related to our accreditation status.

MiraCosta College embraces accreditation as a process, not as a moment in time every six years, and has grown as a result of it with foresight, courage and fidelity to the accreditation standards.

Today, I can say with full confidence that we are a stronger learning and service organization.

The recent Follow-Up Visit Report attests to the fact that positive change has taken place at the college and that the college possesses the capacity to address the recommendation from last spring's comprehensive visit. It underscores the willingness of faculty, administration, staff and the Board of Trustees to embrace institutional planning and work towards developing and implementing college strategic goals, objectives and an overall plan that will guide the work of the college and the allocation of resources. The report goes on to say, "the culture of the college is being changed: departments are now looking at data, analyzing the data and trying to plan forward based on evidence."

It is true that a full cycle of evaluation of governance and program review is not yet complete. It is not yet completed because we have been responsive to the recommendations by the Commission from previous special visits and consultation to construct a new governance model and program review process. We have made progress in a methodical fashion, through open and candid dialogue, seemingly endless meetings, and, of course, through institutional self-reflection. There exists significant campus awareness across all constituencies concerning accreditation and solid buy-in.

The report also makes a suggestion for the college to consider incorporating a "clear prioritization mechanism for resource allocation" and develop a "diagram that identifies how annual comprehensive planning and resource allocation connect to long-term planning processes and to the Educational (Comprehensive) Master Plan." Both are excellent suggestions to heed that will support the college's efforts to more effectively integrate institutional planning.

Change and improvement, however, are not just about campus climate, they are about systems – integrated planning and resource allocation cycles, feedback loops and systematic evaluations. Our story is now one that better incorporates planning involving institutional goals and objectives, an alignment of resources and a continuous assessment for improvement.

And the work continues. Since the spring visit, we have formally reviewed the new governance model and have identified adjustments and improvements that, in some cases, have already been made or will be made this summer and fall. We have working drafts of our Collegial Governance Handbook and the Program Review Handbook for 2011-12. By the end of summer, the college expects to have functional, working drafts of an Integrated Planning Manual and an SLO and Assessment Manual.

Moreover, for the past 12 months the college has been engaged with institutional planning efforts through the development of a new 10-year Comprehensive Master Plan that is on pace to be completed this fall. With this master plan, we have defined our broad institutional goals with bold and varied objectives. The college will now prioritize, assign measurable outcomes and timelines, and define a process to integrate and systematically review them.

The college has also improved the program-review-to-budget development process, incorporating improvements each time. By fall, we will have a version based on the master planning and data review elements. We have also incorporated participation in SLOs and Outcomes Assessment into our full-time faculty evaluation process and the manual incorporating these changes has been approved for fall implementation.

Lastly, our governing board and campus leadership continue their outstanding work of providing careful stewardship of the college's resources during a time period of rapidly declining revenues. Through various personnel, non-personnel and operational strategies, we have reduced our operating expenditures by 8 million this year and by close to 5 percent last year, while maintaining a high level of service to students and without a single layoff of permanent staff. We have also made a conscientious choice to add classes to our fall/spring schedules to meet the soaring demand in our service area.

To conclude, the college continues in an environment of progressive transition. And as a result of the accreditation process and the ensuing self-reflection and collaboration, positive growth and change has occurred at MiraCosta College.

The changes that we have made and will continue to make are consistent with excellent educational practice - practice that is sustained and will be routinely reviewed and modified over time to conform to the accreditation standards. The ultimate result is better learning outcomes and success for students. Our hope continues that we can build on this good work described previously and sustain the momentum towards a climate and expectation of excellence that has emerged at the college.

We appreciate the recognition and affirmation that is embedded throughout the Follow-Up Visit Report and accept the observations as an opportunity to grow. By the time the team visits next spring to review the other recommendations from the comprehensive visit, we will be much farther along, anchored by the completion of our Comprehensive Master Plan, the aforementioned handbooks and manuals, and through clearer models and processes for systematic evaluation.

MiraCosta College appreciates the continued guidance of the Commission.

Colleagues, have a wonderful rest of the day and thank you for your kind attention and this opportunity to address you. Thank you for your leadership and service to our community colleges.