

ACCREDITATION FOLLOW-UP VISIT REPORT

**Palo Verde College
One College Drive
Blythe, CA 92225**

**A Confidential 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
Palo Verde College on April 13, 2015**

Team Chair

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Team Members

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NOTE: This page shall be added to the team report noted below, immediately behind the cover page, and shall become part of the final evaluation report associated with the review.

DATE: June 29, 2015

INSTITUTION: Palo Verde College
One College Drive
Blythe, CA 92225

TEAM REPORT: Follow-Up Evaluation Team Report

This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited Palo Verde College April 13, 2015.

SUBJECT: **COMMISSION REVISION TO THE TEAM REPORT**

The Follow-Up Evaluation Team Report (Team Report) for Palo Verde College provides details of the team's findings with regard to noted Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The Team Report should be read carefully and used to understand the team's findings. Upon a review of the Team Report sent to the College and the Follow-Up Report submitted by the College, the following corrections are noted for the Team Report:¹

Page 5: In the team's conclusions, the final sentence has been deleted.

Page 11: Based upon evidence provided to the Commission by Palo Verde College, the Commission finds that Recommendation 6 has been addressed, the deficiencies resolved, and Standards and Policies are met. (*Standards II.A.7.b-c; II.B.2.c; ACCJC Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education*)

¹The Team Chair has concurred with this change.

ACCREDITATION FOLLOW-UP VISIT REPORT PALO VERDE COLLEGE

Introduction

Palo Verde College underwent a comprehensive accreditation review in the spring of 2014. In July 2014, the Commission took action to impose Probation on the College and instructed the College to “fully resolve the noted deficiencies by March 2015.”

As required by the Commission, Palo Verde College submitted a Follow-Up Report in March 2015, addressing the eight recommendations contained in the Commission’s action letter. Subsequent to the Follow-Up Report submitted by the College, a team visit was completed on April 13, 2015 by the evaluation team of Kathryn Smith (team chair for the 2014 visiting team), Susan Bangasser (a member of the 2014 visiting team) and Virginia Moran.

Prior to its visit, the evaluation team studied the 2014 Team Report, the Commission’s action letter from July 2014, the College’s March 2015 Follow-Up Report and the evidence which the College supplied as background to the report. During its visit, the team met with approximately 75 members of the College community, including administrators, faculty and staff, and reviewed additional evidence provided by the College.

Significant and substantial changes have occurred since the comprehensive visit one year ago. The Superintendent/President was able to forge strong relationships in the community and successfully ran a campaign for the passage of a Proposition 39 local bond measure. A new Vice President for Instruction and Student Services began work in July 2014 and serves as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). The strong leadership of these two administrators, along with the rest of their administrative team, provided a renewed sense of direction to the College and the enthusiasm to motivate the college community to complete the tasks necessary to come into compliance with Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements and Commission Policies.

While some of the previous recommendations will require a complete cycle of continuous improvement in order to be fully satisfied, the policies and procedures have been put into place to continue moving forward in the right direction. All constituent groups (Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students) have worked collegially and collaboratively over the last year to get things on track. Follow through on the plans they have developed will undoubtedly result in full satisfaction of the recommendations.

Palo Verde College was very accommodating to the visiting team and did an exceptional job preparing for the visit. The physical facilities were excellent and all requests made by the team were met quickly and completely. Team members were made to feel at home by everyone they met.

Evaluation of Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation #1: *In order to meet the Standards and as noted in Team Recommendations #1 and #2 and Commission Recommendation #4 (2008), the team recommends the College create a complete blueprint for planning that includes regular review of the mission statement and current institutional plans that collectively describe how the College will achieve its goals. The mission statement should inform overarching plans, such as the education master plan or strategic plan. Overarching plans should drive other long-term institutional plans such as the technology plan and enrollment management plan. These long-term plans should include institution set standards for student achievement and be used to inform annual planning as part of the program review process. Assessment of student learning outcomes and related dialogue should be integral to the planning process, such as by embedding SLO dialogue into program review. (Standards I.A.3-4; I.B.1-6; II.A.2.f; II.B.1; III.C.2; III.D.1; ER.10; ER.19)*

Findings and Evidence

The College developed an Integrated Planning Manual (manual) in the spring of 2015 to define and document its institutional planning system. This “blueprint” for planning includes descriptions of (1) how institutional plans are integrated, (2) when goal progress and processes are assessed, and (3) how plans are linked to resource allocation.

Key institutional plans and processes that are included in the manual are listed and briefly described below:

- Review of the College mission last occurred in the spring of 2013 as evidenced by minutes of the College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee from February 5, 2013. A timeline and procedures for mission review every three years are detailed in the manual.
- A Comprehensive Master Plan (also known as the Educational Facilities and Master Plan) is currently in development with the assistance of a consulting firm. The previous plan reaches the end of its ten-year cycle this year.
- The Integrated Strategic Plan, approved by College Council on May 20, 2013, documents College initiatives relative to Board goals. Within each initiative, goals are established with corresponding objectives that specify actions needed to accomplish each goal.
- Program Review is an annual process that the College has completed in previous years and was engaged in for the current year at the time of the follow-up visit. Computer Information Systems was the only current year program review document posted online at the time of the visit, but the team verified with the Institutional Researcher that other programs are in process. According to the Vice President of Instructional and Student Services, program reviews are being submitted late this

cycle possibly due to some confusion about whether to use the new or old format. Results and actions resulting from student learning outcomes (SLO) assessments are part of the new format to be required next year, although the Computer Information Systems comprehensive program review for this year does include program student learning outcomes results and action plans for each certificate offered.

- The resource allocation process follows established guiding principles detailed in the manual, with priority given to requests that support achievement of institutional goals and objectives. Also detailed in the manual are a timeline and process for allocation requests for full-time faculty positions and non-personnel items. Program review resource allocation requests have been discussed in procedural terms in the Budget and Planning Committee (BPC), as evidenced by minutes from the February 19, 2014 meeting. The manual documents an additional task for the BPC starting in October 2016 of evaluating the effectiveness of the prior three years' resource allocations in terms of advancing the College mission and achieving objectives.

Institution-set standards for student achievement have been identified. Although not part of existing plans, according to the Vice President and the Institutional Researcher, these standards will be vetted through the College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Future revisions to program review report templates will incorporate these institution-set standards. Furthermore, as the updated Comprehensive Master Plan is developed, the institution-set standards will be part of the dialogue.

Conclusion

The team found that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. The College has made substantial progress in developing planning processes to satisfy this recommendation, but the Standards have not yet been fully met. The College developed an Integrated Planning Manual which was adopted in March 2015. The mission statement is reviewed every three years, with the last review conducted in the spring of 2013. The Integrated Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 specifies the objectives necessary to achieve College goals, and the program review process was revised to include program SLO assessment results and planned actions for improvement. In order to fully satisfy this recommendation and meet the Standards, the College must complete one or more full cycles of evaluation, assessment, program review, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation.

Recommendation #2: *In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College develop and implement a sustainable assessment plan that ensures the College completes a full cycle of student learning outcome (SLO) assessment that includes discussion of results and action planning at all levels [course SLOs, program SLOs, general education (GE) SLOs, and institutional SLOs] to move to the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement Level of the ACCJC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness. To complete a full assessment cycle, the College must accelerate its efforts to assess all student learning outcomes for every course, and must demonstrate the following:*

- *All SLOs included in official course outlines of record are the same SLOs being assessed by faculty and that assessment of all SLOs is completed on a regular basis.*
- *Faculty are engaged in ongoing dialogue about methods of assessment, results of assessment and plans for quality improvement based on assessment.*
- *The College maintains records of assessment tools and methods used, assessment samples, assessment results, assessment dialogue and action planning based on assessments, and makes these records easily available.*
- *Course, program, GE, and institutional SLO assessment data and analysis are integral parts of the program review process and drive efforts to improve course, program and institutional effectiveness.*

(Standards I.B; I.B.2-3; II.A.1.a,c; II.A.2.a,b,e; ER.8; ER.10; ER.19)

Findings and Evidence

The follow-up team verified that College-wide activities have occurred that support and strengthen student learning outcome (SLO) progress. On the September 9, 2014 Institute Day, the College hosted an in-service training that included plans for developing, assessing and mapping SLOs. The course SLOs were determined to be a mandatory part of the course outline of record (COR). By January 2015, 371 of the 576 active courses (64.4%) had CORs updated with SLOs. Data was collected for each section of every course taught fall semester for the course level SLOs (CLOs). There are 142 courses without approved SLOs on the course outlines of records and the College is working with the providers of its instructional service agreements (ISAs) to complete and assess the SLOs in Fire Safety Technology. The faculty are also working to complete the SLO process for both credit and non-credit basic skills instruction.

During the January 2015 flex days, mapping of CLOs, program level outcomes (PLOs), and institutional level outcomes (ILOs) was initiated. Program/Division CLO Data Collection Worksheets were completed as a result of dialog among discipline faculty and norming of data. In addition to the course and division data collection forms, other helpful resources have been created, such as SLO checklists with timelines. CLO Data Collection Worksheets and the Program/Division CLO Data Collection Worksheets are stored on a network drive for easy access. SLOs have been assessed for all modes of instruction (face-to-face, distance education and correspondence).

The College maintains records of assessment tools for SLOs, methods of assessment and analysis of SLOs. The assessment tools for each course are kept in binders. Digital files for the course SLOs (CLO Data Collection Worksheets) for each section are stored in a shared folder on the network. The results of the dialog sessions from the flex days in January, where the Program/Division CLO Data Collection Worksheets which reflected dialog and evaluation were created, are also found in the shared folder.

Student Support Services previously collected data from students using Survey Monkey, but the assessment process revealed flaws that made it difficult to capture improvement. Therefore, Student Support Services has taken the new forms used in instruction and are

modifying them to meet their needs. They will begin using the newly developed forms during the next assessment cycle.

Although the current program review template requires some reporting on SLOs, the new program review template is more robust regarding SLOs, including evaluation of aggregated SLO data.

During the January flex days, faculty also mapped course SLOs to program SLOs (PLOs) and to institutional SLOs (ILOs). The College does not have a General Education (GE) Program or GE SLOs. However, the College did develop program level outcomes to meet the Associate of Arts (AA)/ California State University (CSU) General Breadth (Option B) requirements and for the AA/ Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) for the University of California. The first PLO for each AA program is the same; thus, all AA degrees require similar general education outcomes.

The College has completed SLO alignment with course outlines of record and one cycle of data collection on every section and division/program assessment of data collected during the fall 2014 semester. While they have institutionalized these processes, only one cycle has currently been completed.

Conclusion

The team found that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. The College has developed the infrastructure to reach the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement Level of the ACCJC rubric for evaluating institutional effectiveness. The College is making rapid progress and if it continues on this trajectory, will soon completely resolve this deficiency. The College must continue the cycle of assessment, dialogue and evaluation of CLOs, PLOs and ILOs in order to meet the Standards and improve institutional effectiveness.

Recommendation #3: *In order to meet the Standards and as noted in Team Recommendations #1 and #2 and Commission Recommendation #4 (2008), the team recommends that the College regularly evaluate and assess all of its processes. Information about the processes used in planning and institutional improvement should be widely disseminated to the campus and community. Sufficient research support and delegation of responsibility is needed to inform the research and planning process and ensure regular implementation of all elements of the process, and to inform decision making at all levels of the College. (Standards I.B.1-6; II.A.1.a,c; II.A.2.a,e,f; II.B.4)*

Findings and Evidence

The team confirmed through review of minutes of the College's Budget and Planning Committee (BPC) that regular evaluation of processes has occurred. The BPC assesses the allocation process annually, with the last assessment conducted during the fall of 2014 as evidenced by minutes of the BPC from October 2, 2014. Staff input was solicited and the

information was used to implement several improvement actions: budget development training on the Galaxy system, assistance to division chairs in reviewing budgets, review and revision of forms used in the budget request process, and the development of a Budget Handbook.

According to the Chief Business Officer (CBO), all staff are provided ample opportunity to receive the information resulting from process reviews via BPC minutes. Annually, BPC members participate in budget workshops conducted at public governing board meetings, which anyone can attend, as well as a workshop specifically conducted for members of the campus community.

The team found through interviews with the Vice President, Institutional Researcher and research support staff that the College has allocated the following additional resources to support its research function:

- Extended the contract of the faculty researcher an additional 2 months
- Allocated clerical support for approximately 10 hours per week
- Launched its search for a Student Success Manager, a position with oversight and coordination duties related to student success research.

Each of these research-related roles is overseen by the Vice President of Instructional and Student Services who ensures that the delegation of responsibilities is commensurate with the position. In addition, as part of his program review, the Vice President evaluates research needs on an annual basis to ensure any changing needs are identified, planned for, and addressed.

Conclusion

This recommendation has been satisfied. The College has a clear, documented system to evaluate and assess its processes. It uses the information to inform decisions at all levels and disseminates information about its planned improvements to campus constituents.

Recommendation #4: *In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College implement a data-informed process to systematically evaluate the methods of teaching of all courses and programs including all instructional modalities [distance education (DE), correspondence education (CE) and face-to-face] to ensure the student learning experience and outcomes are comparable regardless of the method of instruction or delivery. (Standards II.A.1.b-c; II.A.2.a,c,d,e,f)*

Findings and Evidence

During the fall 2014 semester, all classes with documented course learning outcomes (CLOs) assessed those CLOs, and the assessments were documented on Data Collection Worksheets. As discussed under Recommendation #5 below, many of the Fire Science Technology (FST) classes offered through an instructional services agreement, do not yet have documented CLOs. The network repository for the Data Collection Worksheets includes those offered via distance education and correspondence education.

During the January 2015 flex days, faculty in the various programs and divisions used the course Data Collection Worksheets to map COLs to program learning outcomes (PLOs), create program level Data Collection Worksheets, and engage in dialogue about assessment results, differences in results from alternative modes of delivery, and ways to improve student learning. These discussions were based on data from the Data Collection Worksheets of face-to-face, distance education and correspondence education classes, but did not include data from the FST classes taught through the instructional services agreement.

Additionally, student evaluations are completed in every class every semester. The forms for students to evaluate distance education and correspondence education classes were revised to be more tailored to the learning experience provided by different instructional modalities. The team also confirmed that evaluations of faculty teaching in these modalities addressed student learning outcomes and the student experience.

Conclusion

The team found that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. Data-informed processes are in place to evaluate the majority of courses regardless of mode of delivery. To fully satisfy this recommendation, the College needs to complete the development of CLOs for all courses, gather data for all courses, and document the dialogue regarding the differences in assessment results from the differing modes of delivery.

Recommendation #5: *In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College implement a data-informed process to systematically evaluate the instruction methods for all instructional service agreement (ISA) courses and programs to ensure the student learning experience and outcomes meet college standards. (Standards II.A.1.b-c; II.A.2.a,c,d,e,f)*

Findings and Evidence

The College's Fire Science Technology (FST) classes are offered throughout the state through an instructional service agreement (ISA) with the Industrial Emergency Council (IEC) based in Menlo Park, California. IEC is a non-profit organization providing training opportunities for emergency responders. Per the Palo Verde College (PVC) Superintendent/President and Vice President, IEC is a committed partner with a strong desire to make the changes necessary to help the College satisfy this recommendation.

To assure that FST classes meet all college standards, IEC has begun implementing the following PVC processes: faculty evaluations, student evaluations, CLOs on the course outlines of record (CORs), CLO data collection, and mapping of CLOs to PLOs.

IEC has begun using the official PVC faculty evaluation forms to evaluate FST faculty. A schedule of faculty evaluations has been established, and the PVC Vice President can now track FST faculty evaluations online. Student evaluations will now be done for every FST class taught by IEC.

Several of the FST course outlines of record did not document the CLOs for the course. Those are currently in the process of being developed and included on the CORs. The CLO Data Collection Worksheet is scheduled to be used in all FST classes next semester. Once completed, the Vice President will be able to access the worksheets online and evaluate the process.

The partnership between the College and IEC includes at a minimum, one annual visit by College administration to IEC headquarters in Menlo Park. In addition to reviewing the programs and processes, the Vice President plans to use this annual visit as an opportunity to work with FST faculty and staff to evaluate the CLO Data Collection Worksheets and prepare the same program level assessment worksheet used by all other PVC programs.

Conclusion

The team found that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. A process has been designed and implemented to evaluate the ISA programs and courses. This process includes faculty evaluations, student evaluations, student learning outcomes included on course outlines of record, and CLO and program level Data Collection Worksheets. The College needs to ensure that this process is routinely followed and systematically evaluated in order to fully comply with the Standards.

Recommendation #6: *In order to meet the Standards and comply with the Commission's Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education, the team recommends that the College establish a policy and process to authenticate the identity of students enrolled in distance education and correspondence education. The process should ensure that a student who registers and receives credit for a course is the same student who participates regularly in and completes work for the course. (Standards II.A.7.b-c; II.B.2.c; ACCJC Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education)*

Findings and Evidence

Students enrolling in distance education and correspondence education classes are assigned secure student usernames and passwords, and instructed not to share their unique identification with others. To access distance education course materials, students must enter their unique identification data on the College's course management system (the Bridge). Correspondence education requires the use of proctors for quizzes and exams.

To supplement these precautions, the Academic Senate recently approved a revision to the Student Academic Honor Code which better defines code violations and highlights the repercussions should a student violate the Honor Code. Once approved by College Council, this revised Student Academic Honor Code will be published in the college catalog and student handbook.

Conclusion

The team found that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. College processes have been put into place to authenticate the identity of students enrolled in distance education and correspondence education classes. To fully satisfy this recommendation, the Student Honor Code needs to be approved and published in college publications.

Recommendation #7: *In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College develop, implement and evaluate an effective part-time faculty evaluation process. (Standard III.A.1.b)*

Findings and Evidence

The College changed its evaluation practice to include adjunct/part-time faculty. The District and Palo Verde College Faculty Association (CTA) negotiations established new evaluation practices. Part-time faculty are now scheduled to be evaluated during their first semester of employment and every three years thereafter. In spring 2015, the first group of part-time faculty evaluations was initiated and will be completed by the sixteenth week of the semester. Part-time evaluation forms were created and are in use.

Conclusion

The team concludes that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. The process has been negotiated, forms developed, and the evaluation cycle has commenced. The College is making rapid progress and the first cycle of this process will be completed by the end of the current semester. The College must continue on this trajectory in order to improve and ensure institutional effectiveness.

Recommendation #8: *In order to meet the Standards and as noted in Commission Recommendation #2 (2008), the team recommends that the College fully implement the negotiated amendment to the faculty collective bargaining agreement requiring that a Professional Self-Disclosure Statement regarding faculty involvement in SLOs be included as part of the faculty evaluation process and that the College provide evidence that this self-disclosure is effective in producing student learning outcomes. (Standard III.A.1.c)*

Findings and Evidence

The District and the Faculty Association (CTA) agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that states that part of the Administrative Evaluation in the faculty evaluation process will include “records of division-level work on Student Learning Outcomes, Program Review, and Course Outline of Records.” This statement is also included on the Professional Development Self-Disclosure Statement, one of the components of faculty evaluation. The team reviewed samples of faculty evaluations for full-time faculty from December 2014, and

the documents included the SLO evaluation as a component. The faculty have worked with administration to make significant progress on developing and assessing SLOs which supports the effectiveness of the self-disclosure and administrative evaluation form.

During negotiations for part-time faculty, there was agreement that part-time faculty would be responsible for collecting SLO data, and encouraged, but not required, to participate in the development and improvement of learning outcomes. The evaluation form for adjunct faculty includes a component regarding adherence to established state, college and division academic standards and practices.

Conclusion

The team concludes that Palo Verde College is in the process of correcting this deficiency. The College has implemented the negotiated amendment to the faculty collective bargaining agreement by including faculty involvement in the SLO process as part of the full-time faculty evaluation. In order to fully satisfy this requirement and meet the Standards, part-time faculty evaluations must also include a component regarding effectiveness in producing learning outcomes. Additionally, documentation should be maintained that verifies that through the faculty evaluation process, faculty are effective in producing learning outcomes.