

EVALUATION REPORT

Southwestern College

**900 Otay Lakes Road
Chula Vista, CA 91910-7299**

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

**This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited Southwestern College
on October 5-8, 2009**

**Gari Browning, Ph.D., Team Chair
President/Superintendent, Ohlone Community College District**

II. Southwestern College Accreditation Team Roster, October 5-8, 2009

Dr. Gari Browning (Chair)
President/Superintendent
Ohlone College

Mr. Mike Bowman (Team Assistant)
Dean, Research and Planning
Ohlone College

Mr. James Austin
Vice President Business Services
Mira Costa College

Dr. Lawrence Bradford
Vice President of Student Services
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Mr. John Keim
Chief Academic Officer
Heald College

Dr. Kathleen Flynn
Professor of Credit ESL and Planning Director
Glendale Community College

Mr. Dylan Mattina
Director of Information Technology, Distance Education and Learning Support Services
Cerro Coso Community College

Dr. Jan Muto
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Ms. Patricia Saulsbury
LRC Coordinator, Nevada County Campus
Sierra College

Mr. Gregory Stoup*
Director of Planning, Research, and Student Success
Cañada College

**Mr. Stoup participated with the team in training, and in analysis of the Self Study Report and available documentation. He did not participate in the site visit due to illness.*

III. SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: **Southwestern College**

DATES OF VISIT: **October 5-8, 2009**

TEAM CHAIR: **Gari Browning, Ph.D.**
 President/Superintendent
 Ohlone College

Southwestern College received reaffirmation of accreditation in June 2003. Since that time the college has expanded its facilities to include new and renovated centers, passed a significant bond, and experienced extreme turnover in leadership. Following the last comprehensive visit, the college was required to submit a Progress Report focusing on seven recommendations encompassing concerns about delegation of authority to the Superintendent/President, review of board policies, supporting an environment of trust and respect for employees, developing a culture of evidence especially regarding Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), developing a comprehensive technology plan, communicating budget decisions, and implementing on-going board training. The Progress Report was accepted in June 2004.

An accreditation team conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Southwestern College in October 2009 in response to the institution's petition for reaffirmation of accreditation. The accreditation visiting team was comprised of eight members including the team assistant, who filled in for a member who was unable to participate in the visit. In preparation for the arrival of the team, the following activities occurred:

- College staff began preparation of the self study in August 2007.
- The team chair participated in ACCJC Team Chair Training in August 2009.
- Team members, including the team assistant, attended an ACCJC Team Training and discussed preparations for the visit with the team chair in September 2009.
- The team chair and team assistant visited Southwestern College in September 2009.
- Team members read and analyzed the self study and supporting evidence which the college made available online, prepared a list of individuals and groups with whom they wanted to meet, and prepared first drafts of the team report according to their assigned Standards.

The visit began with several members of the team visiting each off-campus site. The primary team room was located on the main campus; most interviews and all forums occurred there as well. In the course of the visit, team members conducted over 90 interviews with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and trustees, attended various college meetings, conducted two open forums, visited classes, and reviewed all pertinent documents supporting the self study.

The visiting team found the Self Study Report to be generally well organized but noted that some of the information was out of date, perhaps due to the early start the college made on the report. The team also noted that the evidence offered in support of one standard often was the information needed to support a different standard. A more careful editing of Self Study Report

would have resulted in a document that better represented the college. The team found that the college had not completely satisfied eight of the ten previous recommendations.

The visiting team was impressed with the college facilities on the main campus and at each of the centers. A sense of vibrancy and student engagement pervades the college, and faculty and staff are clearly dedicated to students and to providing a supportive environment for learning to occur. Turnover in administration has caused middle managers and faculty to take responsibility for the continuity of the day-to-day activities of the college. Staff loyalty and the evident engagement of students in the life of the college have sustained the college through its difficulties. However, tension between the Superintendent/President and members of the college community has distracted the institution from ongoing improvement efforts for several years.

The visiting team has identified ten recommendations for improvement through analysis of the self study; review of supporting documents; extensive interviews with students, staff, faculty, administrators, and trustees; discussions in committee meetings; and observation in open campus forums. Six recommendations are carried over from previous team reports; the others pertain to new issues.

IV. INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

Southwestern College has been offering classes since 1961, beginning at Chula Vista High School. In 1964 construction on the present campus was completed. Southwestern College presently provides educational services at four sites, including its main campus and three centers. The Educational Center at San Ysidro was established in 1988. The college expanded again in 1998 by establishing the center in National City in partnership with San Diego State University. In 2004, since the last accreditation visit, the Higher Education Center at National City was incorporated into the Educational Village with the construction of a new facility. A new center at Otay Mesa opened in 2007 and serves as a regional training and development center. In 2009, a new facility replaced the previous San Ysidro site.

SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE TODAY

Southwestern Community College District extends from south of San Diego to the U.S.-Mexico border. It is the primary institution of higher education for a population of approximately 400,000 residents of South San Diego County serving the communities of Bonita, Chula Vista, Coronado, Imperial Beach, National City, Nestor, Otay Mesa, Palm City, San Ysidro, and Sunnyside. Ethnic distribution is over 53 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and 5 percent African American. The 2000 Census reports that the poverty rate in the district is 15 percent higher than the rest of the county. Only 72 percent of the residents over the age of 25 have completed high school compared to the county average of 85 percent, and only 17 percent have earned a bachelor's degree.

The college student population enrolled in credit courses is over 20,000 per semester. Students enroll in basic skills, nonvocational courses, and vocational programs. Total enrollment has increased somewhat over the last six years. Ten percent of the enrollment is in online classes; 206 online sections were offered in spring 2009. The number of students earning degrees and

certificates has increased slightly over the past year, and the number of transferring students has also increased. Student retention has held steady since 2005.

SOUTHWESTERN ACCREDITATION

Since the last comprehensive visit in 2003, there has been inconsistent attention to the accreditation recommendations. Of the ten recommendations given in 2003, only two have been completely resolved. The college has also not carried on with a systematic planning process that connects college goals to assessment and resource allocation. Program review, while occurring, is reliant on minimal student achievement data rather than student learning outcomes, and is not the basis for planning.

Since 2003, the college has expanded its facilities in the following manner:

- The Cesar E. Chavez Student Services Center opened.
- The Higher Education Center at National City opened as part of the Education Village project.
- The Higher Education Center at San Ysidro reopened in January 2009 in a renovated facility.
- The district's fourth center at Otay Mesa opened in August 2007.
- The Child Development Center expanded its service due to a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.
- The district was successful in a passing a bond measure for \$389 million to help with remodeling and upgrading the campus.

COMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

Overall, the visiting team was impressed with the vibrancy of the college community, especially the involvement of the student body in the life of the institution. Specifically, team members noted the following areas worthy of commendation:

- The Math Department Final, designed to ensure consistent levels of student competence across developmental math courses.
- Being named one of the "Hewlett Leaders in Student Success" as a result of its efforts to promote student success.
- The library for a vital and robust relationship with the student population. There is a great devotion to student support in evidence among the library staff.
- Consistent and documented use of the Adverse Impact Analysis to assure adequate diversity of applicant pools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

1. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends that the college systematically and regularly evaluate and update the mission statement; assure that it defines the college educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to student learning; and use it to guide institutional decisions and improvement goals. (Standards I.A.3, I.B.2, and II.A.1)

2. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends that the college establish and implement a collegial and comprehensive planning process that assures improvement in student learning. Such a process integrates the various college plans; is informed by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis; systematically assesses outcomes within both instruction and noninstructional services; and provides for an ongoing and systematic cycle of goal setting, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation. (Eligibility Requirement 19, Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.7, III.A.6, III.B.2a, and III.B.2.b)

3. The team recommends that the college improve program review across all areas; integrate it with student learning outcomes; and ensure that it is evidence based and is occurring at regular intervals sufficient to provide a foundation for college planning and allocation of human, physical, technological, and fiscal resources. At issue since 1996, the team recommends that the college implement its policy on program discontinuance. (Eligibility Requirement 19, Standards I.A.4, I.B.1, I.B.5, I.B.6, II.A, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, II.C, II.C.1.a, and III.B.2)

4. The team recommends that the college identify SLOs for all of its courses, academic programs, learning and support services, and identify administrative unit outcomes for noninstructional areas. It is further recommended that the college use data and analysis to assess student achievement of those outcomes and use assessment results to make improvements. (Standards II.A, IIA.2.e, and IIA.2.f)

5. The team recommends that, in order to comply with the Commission's policies on distance learning and substantive change, the college submit a substantive change report for those programs that currently offer more than 50 percent of a program through distance education. (Eligibility Requirement 21)

6. As previously identified in the 1996 and 2003 ACCJA WASC Accreditation Reports, the team recommends that the college implement a Technology Plan that is integrated with the Strategic Plan and college goals; relies on Program Review; and provides reliable budgetary process for renewing technology and for providing appropriate technology staffing, support, and training college wide. (Standards II.C.1.a, III.C.1.a, and III.C.1c)

7. The team recommends that the college plan and conduct professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel and implement a formal evaluation process of the activities. (Standards III.A.5, III.A.5.a, and III.A.5.b)

8. The team recommends that the college set as a priority fostering an environment of trust and respect for all employees and students that allows the college community to promote administrative stability and to work together for the good of the college. The team further recommends that the college establish and follow a written process and structure providing faculty, staff, administrators, and students a substantial voice in decision-making processes. (Standards IV.A, IV.B.2.b, and III.A.4.c)

9. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends the Governing Board adhere to its role as a policy-making body and not interfere with the authority and responsibility of the Superintendent/President for college operations. The team further recommends that the Governing Board act as a whole once it reaches a decision and as an advocate for the college. (Standards IV.B.1.a and IV.B.1.j)

10. The team recommends that the Governing Board establish and implement a formal procedure for handling potential conflict of interest and ethics policy violations and document adherence to the protocol. (Standard IV.B.1.h and IV.B.1.i)

RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2003 EVALUATION TEAM

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the College establishes and implements a process for regular review and revision of the Mission Statement and utilizes the statement as the key planning element. (Standards 1.3 and 1.4)

The college has responded well to the recommendation to regularly review the mission statement, discussing it in depth at the outset of the strategic planning process in 2004 and revisiting the mission statement in 2008. Although the mission statement has not been revised since 1993, the choice to retain it as written is the result of purposeful, reflective dialogue rather than neglect.

There have been noted efforts to incorporate the mission statement into planning, and the Governing Board has created policies in which the mission statement is intended to be understood and applied. Although the scope of the mission statement is broadened by these policies, the explanatory verbiage lacks the specificity to shape the development of discrete institutional strategies and goals. The mission statement does not specify the college's intended student population or its broad educational purpose, nor does it state directly the college's commitment to achieving student learning. All of these elements would aid the college in setting goals and making decisions.

The self study reveals a lack of connection within the entire planning process which, in turn, indicates that the mission statement has not been utilized effectively in college planning. Although there are numerous references in the self study supporting the integration of the mission statement within academic program review and strategic planning, there are also references to college planning being solely driven by enrollment trends and the budget. The budget should be driven by planning, not the reverse, as appears to be the case at the college. Overall, *the recommendation has not been adequately addressed.*

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The Team recommends that the College develop and implement strategies to ensure a supportive environment of trust and respect for all employees, in which the various constituent groups assume responsibility for its maintenance. (Standard 2.6)

In 1996 and 2003, the college was given similar recommendations regarding issues of trust and creating an environment of mutual respect. Faculty, staff, and students reported to the visiting team that they operate in a "culture of fear and intimidation" and "lack of trust." At both of the very well attended college forums, employees vocally indicated that this recommendation has not been adequately addressed. Employees stated that they were fearful for their jobs and that an atmosphere of distrust permeated the college. This negative climate was attributed to the Superintendent/President's action to terminate some staff members following a vote of no confidence by both the faculty and classified unions. In addition, students stated that they felt their input in the decision-making process was not valued, their proposals were ignored, and

decisions regarding class cuts and reduction in library hours were not made with their best interests in mind. The long-standing nature of the recommendation, dating back over ten years, suggests that the negative climate is not the doing of the Superintendent/President, but the current administration has not succeeded in addressing the recommendation. *The recommendation was not met.*

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The Team recommends that the College establish a culture of evidence, relying on data and analysis to ensure improvement of programs and services. In particular, the College should use student learning outcomes as the means to determine institutional effectiveness and, as previously identified in the 1996 AACJC WASC Accreditation Report, develop and implement a process for program discontinuance. (Standards 3.A.3, 3.A.4, 3.C.1, 4.D.1, 5.10, and 6.7)

The self study reports that there has been years of dialogue about student learning outcomes, but action to actually implement SLOs has only occurred in the past year and a half. Assessment of SLOs is a process in its infancy, so there has been no evaluation of the effectiveness of the student learning outcomes and certainly no integration into the process of determining institutional effectiveness.

The absence of a research office since 2005 has hindered the establishment of a robust culture of evidence, and there is little reference within the self study to any meaningful links between data, analysis, and planning.

As far back as 1996 the college was instructed to develop and implement a process for program discontinuance. Two issues arise regarding the college's response to meeting this recommendation. While the district approved Policy #4020 for program discontinuance in January 2006, the Governing Board then charged the Superintendent/President, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the Academic Senate to establish procedures for program discontinuance. However, the procedures, while in place, have not been formalized. Additionally, the procedures as outlined in the self study are dependent on a fully functioning program review that includes utilizing data, assessing needs, and evaluating effectiveness in light of the evidence. Given the absence of a research office, it has not been possible for the program discontinuance process to be fully implemented. The college has not established the recommended culture of evidence and used it to ensure improvement of programs and services. *The recommendation has not been adequately addressed.*

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Team recommends that the College establish, implement, and make known to the college community its planning processes, integrating financial, facilities, technology, and human resources plans to support its Educational Master Plan.

The Team further recommends that the College define the purpose and function of collegial consultation committees and councils, effectively involving faculty, staff,

administrators, and students from both the main campus and the Centers. (Standards 3.B.2, 3.B.3, 3.C.3, 4.B.1, 8.5, 10.A, 10.B.6, 10.B.9, and 10.B.10)

From 2003 through 2005, the college engaged in a collegial and systematic planning process that resulted in a strategic plan based on enrollment trends and budget. This process appears to have stalled in 2006, probably due to a rapid succession in college leadership. Very recently (since the pre-visit in September), the Superintendent/President has restarted the planning processes by keeping the goals of the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan in effect until an updated plan can be created. The Superintendent/President has recognized the confusion over the roles of the various college committees and has begun to distinguish the roles of the College Leadership Council (CLC) and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and their responsibilities in college planning. However, the team validated that recent planning processes are dominated by administrators with few opportunities for widespread input and that there is a lack of information about how financial planning occurs and is monitored by the college.

The college has made a recent push to improve planning, and it recognizes the need to integrate its multiple plans and to connect planning with resource allocation. The Educational and Facilities Master Plan, approved by the Governing Board in 2008, is one element of the strategic plan and is an attempt to integrate institutional planning across two areas.

The college is just beginning to refocus on this recommendation and the recommendation has not been adequately addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

As previously identified in the 1996 AACJC WASC Accreditation Report, the Team recommends that the College develop a comprehensive Technology Master Plan that ensures end-user training on the full functionality of Datatel's Colleague system; integrates the functions of Instructional and Distance Learning technology support; and provides a reliable budgetary process for the systematic upgrading and replacement of instructional and administrative technology. (Standards 4.A.4, 5.6, 5.9, 6.1, and 6.2)

Since the last accreditation visit, the college has made significant strides to ensure that technology resources are reviewed often and upgraded methodically. The Governing Board allocated \$1.5 million from its reserve fund to support the implementation of a comprehensive Technology Plan. The Technology Plan addresses the issues of access, support, reliability, and integration with Distance Education programs. The college presented evidence that staff training in Datatel Colleague and WebAdvisor has occurred and that staff have been sent to onsite Datatel trainings. With regard to instructional and distance learning support, the college has successfully developed and implemented more than one hundred online courses.

Despite this progress, the college has yet to fully implement its Technology Plan. To date no new computers have been deployed in the areas they are most critically needed. A four-year hardware leasing replacement system, which should relieve a collegewide crisis of outdated equipment, is in the process of being implemented. However, technology support remains short staffed and unable to keep up with demand for its services. In addition, it does not appear that the college has identified a reliable budgetary process for the systematic upgrading and replacement

of instructional and administrative technology. *The recommendation has not been adequately addressed.*

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The Team recommends that the College establish, clarify, and implement hiring, promotion, and equal employment practices and provide appropriate orientation, training and evaluation. (Standards 2.6, 7.A.1, 7.A.2, 7.B.1, 7.B.2, 7.B.3, 7.C.2, 7.D.1, and 7.D.2)

The college appears to have all the necessary policies and procedures in place, and evaluations are taking place on a regular basis. There is a concern that the ethnic representation of adjunct instructors is disproportionate to the student population. *The recommendation has been met.*

RECOMMENDATION 7:

As previously identified in the 1996 AACJC WASC Accreditation Report, the Team recommends that the College define and communicate budget-decision making processes to achieve College goals. (Standard 9.A.1)

The college states that it is committed to ongoing planning, yet it recognizes that planning processes occur apart from one another, and none of the processes is tied directly to budget planning.

There is disagreement about whether the college clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development. The self study states and a review of evidence and interviews confirm that the process is undocumented, dominated by administrators, and has few opportunities for widespread input. *The recommendation has not been adequately addressed.*

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The Team recommends that the Governing Board establish and monitor itself as a policy-making body, delegate operational authority to the Superintendent/President, clarify management roles, and support the authority of management in the administration of the College. (Standards 10.A.3 and 10.A.4)

Due to changes in the composition of the Governing Board and especially since the hiring of the current Superintendent/President in 2007, the Board has made significant strides in addressing this recommendation. The Board has an approved Policy #2432 which specifically delegates operational functions of the institution to the Superintendent/President, and meeting minutes document that the Board reviewed and approved revisions of district policies which are directly related to the definition of roles and responsibilities. The Superintendent/President reports that he is satisfied that the Board is relying on him to guide the operation of the college and implementation of board policies, and interviews with administrators and staff tell the same story. Despite these improvements, there appears to be more work to do to satisfy this recommendation.

The self study quotes the 2003 team report as follows, “The Board appears to have expanded its policy-making role to include some management decisions. It is important that this practice be stopped as it is a direct violation of the Standard. It is also important that the board members’ primary contact with the campus be the Superintendent/President to avoid the occurrence or appearance of micromanagement. There appears to be a breakdown in protocol related to the Superintendent/President’s function as a liaison between the Governing Board and the staff.” Despite the college’s acknowledgement of this statement in the self study, the Board does not appear to have fully embraced the distinction between its role and that of the Superintendent/President. Between 2004 and 2007, there was a succession of Superintendent/Presidents leading the Board to conclude that they needed to continue to exert some control over the operations of the college. The majority of the trustees appear to trust the new Superintendent/President, and they recently voted to grant him a multi-year contract. There are, however, several indications that the Board is still not strictly adhering to its policies regarding delegation of authority and that some policies undermine the authority of the Superintendent/President.

Since the self study attests that trustees interpret their role as “legally responsible for the effective operation of the District,” and that trustee actions have been in conflict with the 2003 team’s recommendation, the team concludes that *the recommendation has not been adequately addressed.*

RECOMMENDATION 9:

The Team recommends that the Governing Board systematically review and update its policies, especially those on academic honesty and academic freedom, and delegate the development and implementation of corresponding procedures to the administration. (Standards 2.9 and 10.A.3)

As documented in meeting agendas and minutes, the Governing Board completed a thorough review and approval of policies, including those related to academic honesty and academic freedom. The college employed a legally-vetted set of templates provided by a recognized public community college source but did not adhere to those templates consistently; some policies continue to obscure the functions of the board and the Superintendent/President.

Although a regular policy review cycle has not been established, the maintenance of policies and determining the need for revision is delegated to the Vice President of Human Resources.

The recommendation has been met.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

The Team recommends that the Governing Board establish and implement ongoing board training as previously indicated in the 1996 AACJC WASC Accreditation Report, and include a consistent self-evaluation process. (Standard 10.A.6)

As documented in meeting agendas and minutes, the Governing Board has conducted regular self-evaluations since 2004. Interviews suggest that the results have been discussed, but no written improvement goals have been identified. The policy on Board education provides for

new trustee orientation. Although the college has subscribed to an external source for policies including a policy on board education, no evidence of ongoing or external board training was found. The newest board member has not participated in formal external training. *The recommendation has been partially addressed.*

IV. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. AUTHORITY

Southwestern College is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and is approved under regulations for the California State Department of Education and the California Community Colleges. The Nursing Program is accredited by the California State Board of Registered Nursing and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission; the Surgical Technology Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs; and the Dental Hygiene Program is accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Accreditation.

2. MISSION

The Governing Board affirms and publishes the college educational mission. The mission statement appears in the college catalog and on the college website.

3. GOVERNING BOARD

A five-member elected Governing Board governs the Southwestern Community College District. The Governing Board ensures the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the college. Members serve staggered four-year terms. Trustees have no financial interest, employment, or family employed in the District.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Southwestern College has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the Governing Board, whose primary responsibility is to the college, and who possesses the authority to administer Governing Board policies.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

The number of administrative staff members at Southwestern College supports the services necessary to carry out the college's mission and purpose. Their preparation and experience are reviewed through open and competitive employment processes.

6. OPERATIONAL STATUS

Southwestern College is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

7. DEGREES

Southwestern College offers associate degrees in 129 areas, and a majority of the college's students are enrolled in these programs.

8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Southwestern College's degree programs fall within the mission of the college, are based on recognized fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at appropriate levels of quality and rigor.

9. ACADEMIC CREDIT

The college awards academic credit based on standards set out for the California Community College system. The college catalog documents college policies for transfer and course and degree credit.

10. STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Southwestern College catalog describes the purpose and expectations for each program offered. Additionally, course and program student learning outcomes are in development.

11. GENERAL EDUCATION

Degree programs require a minimum of 18 to 24 units of general education to provide a breadth of knowledge to students, to enhance learning, and to promote intellectual inquiry. Courses provide an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge and require demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills.

12. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Southwestern College has policies addressing academic freedom and academic integrity, which are designed to ensure faculty and students are free to examine and reflect on all knowledge presented.

13. FACULTY

The college employs 244 full-time faculty and 640 adjunct instructors who are qualified under state mandated minimum qualifications to conduct the college's programs. Full-time faculty responsibilities are stated in the union contract.

14. STUDENT SERVICES

The college provides for all of its students a wide array of student services designed to support student learning and achievement.

15. ADMISSIONS

The college maintains an open door admissions policy. This policy is consistent with external requirements for California public community colleges.

16. INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The institution makes available to students a large number of print titles, electronic books, audiovisual titles, and periodical subscriptions. Learning Assistance Services provides tutorial services for students and computer resources to supplement conventional classroom instruction, distance learning, and hybrid courses.

17. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The college maintains a budget reserve and conservatively manages its finances to assure financial stability.

18. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The college undergoes an annual audit by an experienced independent audit firm. There have been no major audit exceptions reported in the past ten years. The auditor submits the report and

makes a presentation to the Governing Board each year. The Governing Board reviews all findings and requests follow-up action as appropriate.

19. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The college has not evaluated the extent to which it is accomplishing its purpose, and planning structures are not ongoing. However, student learning outcomes for courses and programs are in development. *This eligibility requirement is not satisfied.*

20. PUBLIC INFORMATION

The college publishes in its catalog and schedule, and posts on its website, current information required by the Standards including General Information, Requirements, Major Policies Affecting Students, and Locations or publications where other policies may be found.

21. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

Southwestern College asserts that it adheres to all eligibility requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission. However, the visiting team determined that the college does not meet two eligibility requirements (#19 and #21). The college was not able to provide documentation that a substantive change proposal to allow more than 50 percent of a program using distance learning had been submitted and approved despite having such a program in place. Eight of the ten recommendations from the previous visiting team have not been satisfied fully. The institution meets other aspects of this eligibility requirement. *This eligibility requirement is not satisfied.*

VII. EVALUATION BY STANDARD OF THE COLLEGE

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

General Comments

Southwestern College's mission statement has been in place since 1993 and encompasses its commitment to meeting the educational goals of its students and to providing a good educational environment. The college has reviewed the statement twice since the 2003 comprehensive visit, once in 2004 and again in 2008. Although revisions were not made to the mission statement, the decision not to revise it was purposeful and deliberate, involving significant dialogue among various constituent groups. The college asserts that it uses the statement to guide college planning and decision making. SWCCD Policy #1200 has been created to augment the statement by specifying the scope of education offered by the college.

The college began a dialogue to improve student learning in 2003, but the process was on hold until recently. In 2008, the college began to develop SLOs in earnest but as yet assessment has not occurred.

From 2003 through 2005, with the help of an outside consultant, the college engaged in a collegial and systematic planning process that resulted in a strategic plan based on student needs.

The process yielded relevant planning information in the form of an environmental scan. Since 2006 the college has not engaged in a systematic planning cycle. The college states that major goal-setting processes—program review, student learning outcomes, and budget—occur independently of one another.

Until just recently, the college has relied on externally supplied data for its planning needs. This data is comprised of enrollment and demographic statistics and comparisons of student progress on several measures, all of which are publicly available.

The College Leadership Council (CLC), which is the institution's collegial planning body, was recently re-purposed and offers a framework for integrated planning and resource allocation. Planning processes and descriptions of how planning and budgeting are integrated are not documented, although the college reports a working budget task force that is charged with supporting alignment of the strategic plan with distribution of resources. The college has created an action plan to establish a comprehensive and fully integrated institutional budget and planning process that includes a mechanism to determine the degree to which goals are met and a means to communicate these outcomes. Program goals resulting from program evaluation are not linked to institutional planning and resource allocation at this time.

Findings and Evidence

A. Mission

Southwestern College has a board-approved mission statement that is published in the catalog and on college business cards. (I.A.2) The statement by itself, however, is vague and does not define the college's educational purposes or intended student population. The commitment to student learning is stated as a commitment to providing an appropriate learning environment. (I.A.1) The mission statement therefore lacks the specificity needed to make it a usable touchstone for determining the appropriateness of student programs and services. Some information about the college's educational purposes, such as meeting the needs of underprepared students and developing career skills, is provided in the district policy. (I.A)

Although there is evidence that the mission statement has been reviewed through a collegial process twice since the last comprehensive visit, no revisions have been made since 1993. There is also no documented process about how the statement is reviewed, the criteria used to evaluate it, or a cycle that ensures its regular review. (I.A.3)

Due to the vagueness of the mission statement and the lack of ongoing college planning, the college's assertion that the mission is central to institutional planning and decision making could not be corroborated. The college's interpretation of using the mission statement for planning is instead the identification of the need to make the mission statement more visible. This supposes that the college community is either unaware of the mission of the college, or, once aware, will automatically consider the mission in all subsequent planning. A more concrete process needs to be established for using the mission to provide parameters for institutional plans and decisions. (I.A.4)

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The college has engaged in a dialogue about student learning since the 2003 accreditation visit (I.B.1), but actual identification of SLOs does not appear to have begun until 2008. Therefore, the cycle of assessing learning, identifying areas of needed improvement and improvement plans, allocating resources and implementing the improvements, and then assessing the results has not had time to occur.

Despite the claim that the mission statement is the central foundation of SLOs for programs and administrative unit outcomes, it does not provide an adequate definition for guiding or framing college effectiveness. The criteria for establishing institutional priorities appear to have been limited instead to enrollment trends and budget. Nevertheless, the college, with the help of a consultant, developed a comprehensive strategic plan and described a viable planning process and useful data in 2006. Since that time, the college has not formally implemented that plan and has not really engaged in planning. Instead, decisions do not appear to be informed by data and processes are disconnected. Program review results should be central to improvement planning as well, but data to support this critical function seems to be anecdotal rather than purposefully gathered.

Overall, the college seems to be suffering from a lack of relevant data upon which to base its decisions. It has relied on data from college MIS submissions to the state Chancellor's Office and comparisons of student progress with other colleges on several measures, which does not focus on specific college goals and objectives, and does not significantly inform planning. The recent hiring of a Dean of Research, Evaluation, and Planning appears to be a good faith effort to address the college's research and planning needs; however, that effort could well be subverted by the additional responsibilities that are assigned to the position. (I.B.2, I.B.3)

The college Self Study Report states that major processes relevant to planning—program review, student learning outcomes, and budget—occur independently of one another and are not integrated. The college must also integrate the planning processes and resource allocation, systematically assessing and evaluating in an ongoing cycle using current, relevant, verifiable, and quantitative and qualitative data. (I.B.3)

The re-purposing of the College Leadership Council has the potential to provide the framework for an effective governance body charged with integrating planning and resource allocation. However, the body has not yet addressed this function. Neither program review nor the strategic plan informs institutional planning, nor do they inform resource allocation. (I.B.4)

The college communicates the data it does collect in various ways to various constituencies. There is little evidence in the self study, however, that the data has been analyzed and evaluated to assure an appropriate level of quality in the educational programs. One exception is the Math Department Final, designed to ensure consistent levels of student competence across

developmental math courses. The final is commendable and, with a planned implementation of imbedded constant questions, it could become exemplary. (I.B.5, II.A.2.g)

The college seems to meet the standard of assessing evaluation mechanisms in those departments that have additional external agencies monitoring the effectiveness of specific programs, for instance, health sciences and child development. College wide, such programs are the exception, and the rule appears to be that the evaluation mechanisms are not in place to be assessed for effectiveness. The self study acknowledges the need to evaluate student support services, library, and other learning support services in its planning agendas. The college does not systematically review the planning cycle, resource allocations, or its research efforts. (I.B.6, I.B.7)

Conclusions

The college understands that the mission statement should emphasize student learning and that the mission statement should be communicated to both those within the college community and those in the community at large. (I.A) However, there is no evidence offered to support the requirement that the mission statement is systematically evaluated using any evidence other than discussion; the mission statement is not central to planning—planning itself seems to have lapsed; and there is no assessment to verify that the mission is being effectively accomplished. (I.A.3, I.A.4)

A constant refrain within the self study points to administrative turnover as the cause for a lack of planning or assessment. While it is true that planning is primarily directed and motivated by the CEO, the fact is that planning and assessment have not occurred and the standards have not been met. (I.B.2, I.B.3) There have been inadequate systematic data collection, assessment, evaluation, and planning. (I.B.3) Only a very small minority of faculty and staff ventured the opinion that data is even analyzed and presented to the college community. The college contends that dialogue has been extensive, but there is little evidence that much has moved past the talking stage. (I.B.1) Student learning outcomes appear to be barely out of the starting gate, and processes for assessing the effectiveness of SLOs still seem to be on the drawing board. (I.B) Program review, by the college's own admission, operates isolated from institutional planning and budget development and is not connected to SLOs. (I.B) The practice of contracting with consulting firms to gather data and to produce plans on behalf of the college has resulted in both data and plans that the college constituents do not own and easily ignore. Some of the data is publicly available for anyone to access easily, mitigating the need to have a paid contractor to gather it, while other data that has been gathered by consulting firms is robust, valuable...and ignored. Additionally, there is little evidence of analysis of the data. Certainly there has been no on-going, systematic evaluation of relevant data, nor has the data about the college, its programs, and its students been aligned in any way with identified community needs. (I.B.3) *The college does not meet Standard I.*

Recommendations

1. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends that the college systematically and regularly evaluate and update the mission statement; assure that it defines the college educational purposes, its intended student

population, and its commitment to student learning; and use it to guide institutional decisions and improvement goals. (Standards I.A.3 and I.B.2, II.A.1)

2. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends that the college establish and implement a collegial and comprehensive planning process that assures improvement in student learning. Such a process integrates the various college plans; is informed by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis; systematically assesses outcomes within both instruction and noninstructional services; and provides for an ongoing and systematic cycle of goal setting, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation. (Eligibility Requirement 19, Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.7 III.A.6, III.B.2.a, and III.B.2.b)

3. The team recommends that the college improve program review across all areas, integrate it with student learning outcomes, ensure that it is evidence based and is occurring at regular intervals sufficient to provide a foundation for college planning and allocation of human, physical, technological, and fiscal resources. At issue since 1996, the team recommends that the college implement its policy on program discontinuance. (Standards I.A.4, I.B.1, I.B.5, I.B.6, II.A, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, II.C, II.C.1.a, and III.B.2)

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

General Comments

The college has implemented an extensive developmental program. It also offers transfer majors in 129 areas and 133 career certificates. The college offers a wide range of delivery systems and modes of instruction to its students. A large number of online courses and hybrid courses are offered using the established delivery system.

Academic programs have engaged in program review through the efforts of faculty piecing together whatever data was readily available, state-reported data in particular. Evaluation of the program review reports from the 2008-2009 academic year confirmed that in many instances faculty were able to assemble and analyze sufficient student achievement data to conduct analysis and make recommendations for program improvement.

The process of developing or revising specific content for traditional General Education courses is conducted by discipline-specific faculty members using an online system. The college offers several vocational and occupational programs that have standards defined by external regulatory agencies.

The college provides current information about its programs and policies through the catalog and on the college's website. As documented in meeting agendas and minutes, the Governing Board completed a thorough review and approval of policies, including those related to academic honesty and academic freedom.

The college offers many services intended to support learning at the main campus and the satellite campuses. It appears to provide an environment for students that embraces diversity, intellectual development, and personal and civic responsibility.

The college provides library and other Learning Assistance Services (LAS) to support its educational programs on ground and online.

Findings and Evidence

A. Instructional Programs

The college serves a diverse community, and many of its students are the first in their families to attend college. To address the needs of its students, the college has implemented an extensive developmental program including English, ESL, reading, and mathematics. A Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee (BSI-SC) has developed a five-year plan for this area. The college is to be commended for being named one of the “Hewlett Leaders in Student Success” as a result of its efforts to promote student success. (II.A.1.a) The college is also to be commended for the work of the mathematics faculty in implementing in 2000 standard departmental finals for all developmental math courses. Data analysis of the departmental final has been distributed regularly to faculty. Despite the progress in evaluating the mathematics program, additional work needs to be completed to assess the effectiveness of the other developmental, ESL, and tutoring programs as well as the effectiveness of the assessment/placement services and students’ success in achieving the proficiency requirements. (II.A.1.a, II.A.2.g)

There is a dearth of research and data on student achievement and student progress for use in identifying student learning needs and assessing student progress on SLOs. Academic programs have engaged in program review with minimal and anecdotal data which has focused on student achievement rather than student learning. This is problematic since program improvements should have a direct impact on student learning. Despite this obstacle, there are many instances where faculty were able to assemble and analyze sufficient student achievement data to conduct analysis and make recommendations for program improvement. The team found a wide variation in the quality and quantity of data used by the college in conducting instructional program review. (II.A.1.a)

The team was not able to verify that the college uses research and analysis to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes as required by the Standards. The college has identified and installed a software system to collect and manage assessment data; however, team interviews confirmed that the system is not yet operational nor in use. (II.A.1.a)

The college offers a wide range of delivery systems and modes of instruction to its students. Review of the catalog revealed that more than 50 percent of several programs including the entire Certificate Program in Insurance are offered online. The college was not able to provide documentation that a substantive change proposal to allow more than 50 percent of a program using distance learning had been submitted and approved. In addition, the team was unable to verify that adequate research has been conducted either to establish the student need for distance learning or to demonstrate its link to the college’s mission. (II.A.1.b, II.A.2.d)

Unfortunately, the college does not maintain separate data on student achievement for the different delivery modes. The team observed that the college does not collect and analyze this data separately. In order to meet the Standards, additional work needs to be completed to assess the effectiveness of the online and hybrid programs as compared to face-to-face delivery and to implement an ongoing process to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these different delivery modes. (II.A.1.b, II.A.2)

The college has identified four core competency areas for the institution upon which all SLOs are intended to be based. A document describing SLOs for the college's programs was provided; however, there is considerable confusion about the difference between SLOs and objectives for student achievement as well as the difference between institutional and program level SLOs. (II.A.1.c)

The college reports that it has developed SLOs at the course level for 61 percent of its courses; however, the team was not able to confirm the validity of this assertion. The college did not provide evidence that the results of assessment of SLOs are used to analyze or improve the educational programs. In order to meet the Standards, much work needs to be done to appropriately define and assess program SLOs and to conduct authentic assessment of course level and program level SLOs. Although the college has a process for evaluating faculty, the team was unable to verify that there are systematic processes in place to measure or demonstrate the overall quality, breadth, rigor, and sequencing of instruction. The college should consider methods to measure, assess, and evaluate the quality of instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning in each program using student achievement data and accomplishment of SLOs. (II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.c)

The college has developed a comprehensive approach to program review that is detailed in a Program Review Handbook available on the college's website. The process is well designed and appropriate for evaluating courses and programs and making improvements. The team was unable to verify that comprehensive and meaningful program reviews have been conducted by the college for all of its academic programs over the most recent accreditation cycle. The next step for the college is to use the results of assessment of student learning and incorporate assessment and evaluation of course and program level SLOs into an academic program review. Incorporation of this data and analysis will allow the college to close the loop on the assessment cycle and to make recommendations for planning and resource allocations based on analysis of student learning. (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e)

Review of the college's progress in linking program review and planning indicates that the level of implementation of program review can be at best characterized as being at the awareness/development level. The college's approach to planning implementation is inconsistent, and it is not well linked to program review or resource allocation in practice. Planning does not appear to be ongoing nor is institutional data or assessment of student learning being used for planning purposes. Program review instead relies on student achievement data. (II.A.2.f)

The evaluation of student learning and the award of course credit are determined by the instructor of record. The method of evaluating student progress toward, and achievement of, these course objectives, including the method by which the final grade is determined, is contained in the course syllabus presented to students at the beginning of the semester. Credits are awarded consistent with accepted norms in higher education. (II.A.2.i, II.A.2.h)

The college follows criteria consistent with the Standards to define the content and methodology of the institution's General Education coursework. Coursework is required in eight traditional areas. The college catalog contains all General Education information. The team validated that SLOs have been developed for General Education courses. (II.A.3)

The process of developing or revising specific content for traditional General Education courses is conducted by discipline-specific faculty members using the CurricUNET system. For a new course to be included in the General Education requirements, it must first be approved by the Curriculum Committee, which assesses each submission. The team was able to verify courses follow an appropriate approval process. Degree majors provide the appropriate emphasis on discipline courses. (II.A.3, II.A.4)

The college offers several vocational and occupational programs that have standards defined by external regulatory agencies. Students completing the Dental Hygiene, Paramedic, LVN, and RN programs are required to pass national and/or state competency examinations and apply for licensing within the appropriate jurisdiction. In 2008, 98 percent of the Certified Nursing Assistant Students passed the national exam, and 93 percent of the Associate Degree in Nursing students passed their national exam. The college reports and the team were able to verify that the results for these programs meet or exceed the external standards. (II.A.5)

The college provides current information about its programs and policies through the catalog and website. Transfer policies are communicated to students through the Transfer Center, which provides information and resources to students who are considering transfer to other institutions and provides assistance for students to apply online. (II.A.6)

The criteria and process for determining whether a program should be discontinued are dependent on a fully functioning program review that includes utilizing data, assessing needs, and evaluating effectiveness in light of the evidence. A program discontinuance process has not been fully implemented although the operational steps are in place. (II.A.6.b)

Information about the college is communicated to prospective and current students and the public through a variety of methods and media including catalogs, schedules, website, publications, and statements. The team verified that the college website features the current catalog and schedule. (II.A.6.c)

The college has policies on academic freedom and academic integrity, and the team was able to verify that these policies are published in the catalog. (II.A.7)

The college does not offer any curricula in foreign locations. (II.A.8)

Conclusions

There is little data available for program review. Consequently, the college has had difficulty locating appropriate data for use in conducting program review and for making decisions related to planning and resource allocation. Although a new Dean devoted to research, evaluation, and planning has recently joined the college and a data warehouse has been identified, much work remains to be done to make student achievement and SLO data available to the college community. Additionally, there is considerable confusion at the college about the difference between SLOs and objectives for student achievement. The college is advised to revisit the definition of program SLOs to reflect learning outcomes instead of student achievement objectives. Although some measures have been identified to conduct direct assessment of student learning, they have yet to be introduced. The team was unable to verify that the results of assessment of SLOs are used to analyze or improve the educational programs. In order to meet the Standards, much work needs to be done to define appropriately and assess program SLOs and to conduct authentic assessment of course level SLOs. (II.A.1.c)

Although processes and timelines have been established for program review, the process was interrupted for several years and meaningful program review has not been completed for all academic programs during the last accreditation cycle. (II.A.2.e)

The team was not able to verify that that the college uses research and analysis to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes as required by the Standards. The college has identified and installed a system to collect and manage assessment data, but the system is not yet operational. The college currently relies primarily on indirect measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs. (II.A.2.e) *The college partially meets Standard II.A.*

B. Student Support Services

The college offers programs intended to support the general student population. In addition, there is a range of programs designed to meet the needs of specific student populations. These programs appear to be supportive of student learning and consistent with the college mission. (II.B.1) However, there is little evidence that these programs have been developed based on student need, are using student learning outcomes, or are being systematically assessed. (II.B.3) There is evidence that there is a well-functioning Early Admission process, which includes parent participation. (II.B.3.a) Many of the programs offer specialized counseling designed to help students meet their personal goals. Counselors meet with students individually, online, and in a group or workshop setting. Although students are receiving advice, some students and staff stated that it is difficult for students to get an appointment with a counselor, the online services are not always available, and access to student services data on the college's website is limited. According to students, the termination of the Web Developer and Outreach Coordinator seems to have affected the online counseling and enrollment process. (II.B.3.c) A systematic assessment of the availability of these services would assist the college to determine if student needs are adequately met. (II.B.3.c, II.B.4)

The college catalog includes the college mission; descriptions of courses, programs, and degree offerings; and the length of the academic calendar. Further, the catalog displays other

information required by the Standard. The catalog is current. It has a clear table of contents and appears to be accurate and clear regarding general information and student policies. It is available on campus in the library and the bookstore, and on the college website. (II.B.2)

The college offers many services that support learning at the main campus, but it offers limited services at the three satellite campuses. However, students may access the Internet to apply for admission, access their transcripts and grades, pay registration fees, and complete other transactions that are available on campus. (II.B.3.a, II.B.3.b)

The college appears to provide an environment for students that embraces diversity, intellectual development, and personal and civic responsibility through its many clubs, programs, and activities. (II.B.3.d)

No assessment instrument or related validation was referred to in the self study, but there is indication that the college follows externally required validation processes. (II.B.3.e)

It appears that the college maintains student records permanently and securely, observes federal requirements for student privacy, and follows established policies for the release of student records. (II.B.3.F)

The college claims that all Student Services are evaluated through program review and the implementation of SLOs. Some programs, like Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) and Disability Support Services (DSS), must submit annual reports to external overseers, while others must submit annual reports to the federal government. According to staff in Student Services, these reports are often substituted for program reviews. The team was unable to find evidence of the regular evaluation of support programs or well defined SLOs. As verified by the Dean of Student Services, the SLOs for the Student Affairs Division were written in September 2009, just before the team visit. While there is evidence of student surveys that date back to 2003-2004, there is no clear evidence that SLOs have been assessed, nor is there evidence of how program review is being used within student affairs. (II.B.4)

Conclusions

The college offers an admirable array of support programs and services for students. Assessing student needs for these and future programs will provide more targeted help for students and will assist the college in using its resources to its best advantage. Likewise, identifying SLOs for its student services and assessing those outcomes through a comprehensive program review process will enable the college to increase its effectiveness. While there appears to be some evidence of program review and SLO development, the division must participate in the college's systematic and continuous cycle of institutional and program planning, evaluation, and assessment for all student services, support programs, and SLOs. (II.B.3) *The college partially meets Standard II.B.*

C. Library and Learning Resources

The team validated that the college partially supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other Learning Assistance Services (LAS) that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to supplement educational offerings. (II.C.1) With the addition of the libraries or resource centers in the Higher Education Centers and the move from the old library into the Learning Resource Center, the area that the library staff oversees has more than quadrupled. During the planning stages for the centers it was recommended that the number of staff should double to adequately serve the centers and the expanded library. However, the staffing level instead has been reduced, with further reductions possible in light of budget reductions. (II.C.1.a, III.A.2) The planned conversion to a new integrated library system has stalled. If the conversion is not completed, the library at the main campus and the centers may need to use a system that is no longer supported by the vendor. Close to half of the library computers are not functional and the same is true for those in the teaching lab. The leasing plan to replace desktop computer hardware on a four-year cycle is not evident in the library, which has resulted in a number of computers with out-of-order signs. In addition, the college lacks resources for disability support software. (II.C.1.a, III.C.1.a, III.C.1.c)

On the other hand, the library is to be commended for a vital and robust relationship with the student population. There is a great devotion to student support in evidence among the library staff. Librarians freely arrange their hours to provide library orientations in the library or classrooms and outside of their normally scheduled open hours and days; they also rotate out to the Centers to provide support. (II.C.1.b)

Learning Assistance Services are provided at all sites and include a wide array of tutoring services and labs. Learning Assistance Services oversees discipline-specific tutoring in certain labs. Software is needed in order to provide course-specific tutoring. Staffing is also an issue; students reported to the team waiting as long as a month to have a tutoring session, especially at the beginning of the semester. (II.C.1.c, II.C.1.d, III.A.2, III.C.1.a)

Program review for the library at the course level was last done in 2000 and is being finalized for fall 2009. The team cannot validate that there is a current timeline for program review for administrative units, and although a document dated March 2001 states that program review for Academic Information Services was to have been completed in 2003-2004, this was not done. At this point, neither the college nor the library measures and maintains sufficient data to plan and implement improvements. (II.C.2)

Conclusions

Library and Learning Assistance Services are busy providing excellent services and generating ideas on how to attract and serve more students despite a clear lack of resources. However, neither program is generating program reviews with student learning outcomes at the program level and then using that data to ensure the continuous improvement of programs and services. (II.C.2) *The college partially meets Standard II.C.*

Recommendations:

2. See Recommendations 2 and 3, previously noted, regarding planning.

4. The team recommends that the college identify SLOs for all of its courses, academic programs, learning and support services, and identify administrative unit outcomes for noninstructional areas. It is further recommended that the college use data and analysis to assess student achievement of those outcomes and use assessment results to make improvements. (Standards II.A, IIA.2.e, and IIA.2.f)

5. The team recommends that, in order to comply with the Commission's policies on distance learning and substantive change, the college submit a substantive change report to offer more than 50 percent of a program through distance education. (Eligibility Requirement 21)

6. As previously identified in the 1996 and 2003 ACCJA WASC Accreditation Reports, the team recommends that the college implement a Technology Plan that is integrated with the Strategic Plan and college goals, relies on Program Review, and provides reliable budgetary process for renewing technology and for providing appropriate technology staffing, support, and training college wide. (Standards II.C.1.a, III.C.1.a and III.C.1c)

Standard III: Resources

General Comments

The college employs well-qualified faculty and staff to support programs and services. The college is working to re-establish a viable professional development program for its employees.

The college assures that its facilities, equipment, land, and other assets support student learning programs and services. The college has passed two bond measures and enjoys safe and functional facilities that support student learning on all sites.

The college's financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Given the current fiscal crisis, maintaining the fiscal health of the college is especially challenging. The reduction of the reserve from seven percent to four percent is an unfortunate but necessary measure in order to allow the college to continue to serve its community. The college appears to be fiscally healthy, and processes, other than the integration of planning and budgeting, appear to be solid.

The college supplies technology to support the needs of learning, teaching, and operational systems. However, technology, professional support, and technical staffing levels appear to have been reduced significantly by recent budget cuts.

Program review for noninstructional departments has been on hold since the last self study. Overall, there is a lack of logical flow from assessment of institutional operations to planning for improvement to allocation of resources to affect improvement. There is not a clear, direct, and

documented connection between the college's mission and goals and the budgeting and resource allocation. There is also not a clear, direct, and documented connection between the results of program review and the resource allocation processes.

Findings and Evidence

A. Human Resources

The college has been challenged by excessive turnover of its top administrative positions and is being challenged by the constraints on hiring imposed by the current budget crisis. Given the reality of the budget crisis, the college is acting appropriately to maintain its instructional staffing and all of the top administrative positions have been filled. (III.A.1) The college, like all other colleges, will be challenged by the budget crisis to maintain adequate staffing levels. To address the budget situation, the self study states that the Superintendent/President and executive staff are currently reviewing the existing organizational structure. The intent is to create more efficient workflows and streamline operations while maintaining the focus on student success. (III.A.2)

The college has created and is maintaining appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel. The college demonstrates through its policies and practices an understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity. (III.A.4, III.A.4.a)

For permanent positions, the college regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity and should be commended for its consistent and documented use of the Adverse Impact Analysis to assure adequate diversity of applicant pools. However, the college has not responded to its longitudinal employment statistics that show the ethnic distribution for adjunct faculty does not reflect student demographics. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a plan or strategy to more closely align the demographics of the adjunct faculty with that of the student population. (III.A.4.b)

A significant finding, based upon numerous interviews, is that there is no evidence the faculty and staff feel the college subscribes to, advocates, or demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, and staff. (III.A.4.c)

There is no evidence in the self study that the college provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development. The college does not plan and conduct professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel, and to date the vacant Staff Development Coordinator position has not been filled. There is no evidence of an adequate budget to conduct professional development activities. In the past five years, there has not been a formal evaluation process completed for the staff development program. (III.A.5, III.A.5.a, III.A.5.b)

Human resources planning is not integrated with institutional planning. There is no evidence that the college systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation for improvement. Further, it is not clear that there is a staffing plan for all employees that flows from program review and is tied to the Strategic Plan. It appears that

faculty hiring flows from program review, but it is not clear that other hiring needs are identified by program reviews. Academic program review is used as a vital component in the prioritization of faculty hiring, but not as a component of a systematic planning process. (III.A.6)

Conclusions

The college is addressing some aspects of this standard but needs to provide opportunities for professional development to its faculty and staff. (III.A.5) Human resource program review is not occurring and planning is not integrated with college planning; resulting assessment and improvement are not occurring. (III.A.6) *The college partially meets Standard III.A.*

B. Physical Resources

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Facilities planning is integrated with institutional planning; however, there is no evidence of a connection between program review and physical resource planning. In terms of safety and security, the college does not have a comprehensive emergency response plan that conforms to federal and community college system requirements in order to address natural disasters or eminent danger. There is no evidence that externally required emergency preparedness and response training has taken place. (III.B.1, III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b, III.B.2)

Program review for noninstructional departments has been on hold since the last self study. A memo has been issued by the Superintendent/President directing that the vice presidents reinstate noninstructional program review and a schedule has been created in at least one division, but to date there is no evidence that noninstructional program review data has been used to improve programs or services. As a result, the college does not systematically assess the effective use of physical resources in relation to program review nor does it use the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement. (III.B.2, III.B.2.b)

The 2008 Master Plan is used as a blueprint for educational and facilities master planning. Construction occurs in an organized and systematic way in response to the college's educational needs. Passage of Proposition AA allowed the college to implement the facilities priorities outlined in the Bond. Proposition R will provide continued funding. The facilities master plan that was the basis for Proposition R was connected to institutional planning, but moving forward there is no evidence that modifications to the plan, modernizations, and renovations will be based upon systematic program review. (III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b)

Conclusions

Physical resource planning is incorporated into college planning; however, program review is not occurring. The facilities master plan was the foundation for the recent bond, but without clear program review processes in place the connection between assessment and planning cannot occur. The college also lacks a comprehensive emergency response plan and is urged to prepare one. (III.B.1.b, III.A.2.b) *The college partially meets Standard III.B.*

C. Technology Resources

The college currently is not assuring that technology support is meeting college needs. (III.C.1.a) Committees are in place, but there is question regarding their efficacy. Although the college maintains it “fully engages instructional faculty in the decision making process” for instructional technology, faculty themselves indicate that this is not occurring. The structure for technology services is not effective and the ability for Computer Support Services to replace computers is stymied by these processes, as evidenced by the inadequate Technology Plan 2005-2010. The computer replacement policy indicates a four-year schedule for upgrading technology across the campus. While the plan has been approved, funded, and is in place, the computers have yet to be deployed. (III.C.1)

The team feels that technology support, facilities, hardware, and software are not supporting the operation of the college. Staffing levels seem to be inadequate for the size of the institution. The college is not planning, acquiring, maintaining, upgrading, or replacing technology infrastructure or equipment to meet college needs, as evidenced by a collegewide crisis of outdated equipment. To date no new computers have been supplied to the areas they are most critically needed--open computer labs, libraries, training areas, and classrooms. There is also no evidence that this plan has been properly vetted through the appropriate committees. (III.C.1.c)

The college was unable to provide evidence that, in general, it is providing adequate technology training to students and personnel. Some training is conducted by the library staff, providing valuable orientations and training to students and personnel. Recommendations to hire staff have not been followed; nevertheless, the Online Learning Center continues to offer services that meet student needs and should be applauded for providing a physical environment that is well appointed, collegial, and conducive to learning, mentoring, and training. (III.C.1.b)

The team observed that technology planning is not aligned with college planning. Administrative program review is vital in this area and is conspicuously absent. While efforts have been initiated to integrate the college technology plan with other plans at the college, no evidence of evaluation, assessment, or analysis of how well they integrate or their efficacy was found. (III.C.2)

Conclusions

As indicated in the self study, technology does not appear to be meeting the needs of learning, teaching, collegewide communications, research, and operational systems. (III.C.1.a) Discussions with stakeholders indicate that recent cuts have compromised technology and support services. Conversely, technology training and orientations for students and staff appear to be well satisfied by the library staff. Technology planning is not aligned with institutional planning. (III.C.2) *The college does not meet Standard III.C.*

D. Financial Resources

There is no evidence that the college relies upon its mission and goals as the foundation for finance. Nor is there evidence that financial planning is integrated with and supports all

institutional planning. Although academic program review has been linked to the prioritization of faculty hires, there is no evidence that program review for all of the divisions and units in the college has been linked to the budgetary process. (III.D.1, III.D.1.a)

The self study notes that, while the Governing Board had set a goal of a seven percent budget reserve, in 2008 that “the District found itself in a position of being able to maintain only a 4% reserve.” Although bond measures, Proposition AA and Proposition R, were successful in 2000 and 2008, those monies do not support the operations of the college nor replenish the budget reserve shortfall.

Not all constituents agree that the college clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, preventing some constituents from having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of college plans and budgets. The self study states--and a review of documents and interviews confirms--that the process is undocumented, dominated by administrators, and provides few opportunities for widespread input. (III.D.1.d)

Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services. College responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated properly. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the college. However, it must be noted that due to the current culture within the college, a significant number of individuals and constituents do not trust the data. (III.D.2.a, III.D.2.b)

The college currently has sufficient cash flow to maintain stability; however, the dramatic decline in the budget reserve in 2008 impacts the college’s ability to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences in the future. (III.D.2.c)

Conclusions

The college is in acceptable fiscal condition considering the current budget situation statewide. The reduction of the budget reserve since 2008 is of concern and should be addressed as soon as possible. Required processes are in place, but it is not apparent that all constituents have input into those processes. Areas of concern are in planning, program review, and collegial participation. *The college partially meets Standard III.D.*

Recommendations

2. See Recommendations 2, 3, and 6, previously noted, regarding planning.

7. The team recommends that the college plan and conduct professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel and implement a formal evaluation process of the activities. (III.A.5, III.A.5.a, and III.A.5.b)

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

General Comments

The leadership of the college has changed several times in rapid succession. According to the self study, the position of Superintendent/President has been filled four times since the last Accreditation Team visit in 2003 (three interim and one permanent selections), and there have been four Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs in the same span of time. Other managerial positions have shown turnover as well. This rapid turnover and the resulting questions about whom to turn to for decisions have left the college with a sense of confusion as to which bodies or committees provide access for input into college decisions. The faculty and students report that institutional decisions are largely top down. They express a desire for more open communication, transparency, and collaboration to take place and that their perspectives have greater weight in college decisions.

The majority of Governing Board members support the Superintendent/President, but the newest member, who also has strong faculty union support, is decidedly skeptical. The Superintendent/President and most trustees report that the Board has a clear understanding of its role as a policy-making body and that there has been a marked decrease in the Board and individual trustees micromanaging college operations. Enumerated below is evidence that suggests continued involvement, however.

- A board member is an active participant on the College's Budget Task Force. The campus reports that the board member is a dominating participant in meetings and indicates that this participation stifles communication and sharing of ideas and impacts the Superintendent/President's ability to lead the meeting.
- Other board members state they may sit in on college committee meetings for their own information but do not hold seats on those committees. They then share what they learn with other trustees.
- Trustees interact regularly with college staff, seem to think it is important to do that, and report feedback to the Board and to the Superintendent/President. The Board seeks communication between its members and the college staff, an activity supported by SWCCD Policy #2743.
- The Superintendent/President is required to communicate regularly with each trustee to review district business and to generate reports requested by individual trustees. (SWCCD Policy #2430)
- In 2006, the Board insinuated itself into the hiring of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Although the Board has not invoked that privilege in the hiring of the last four vice presidents under the current president, SWCCD Policy #2432 still states that the Board may interview finalists for vice president positions. Trustees state that this policy was kept despite the recent review and updating specifically as a safeguard to allow the Board to intervene in vice presidential selection if necessary.
- One trustee clearly expects his wishes to be carried out by the Superintendent/President. Although his fellow trustees report attempting to clarify his role and monitor his questions and comments during Board meetings, they appear not to have succeeded. He is perceived by some as not understanding the difference between policy and operation.

Findings and Evidence

A. Decision-making Roles and Processes

After the 2003 site visit, the college established one body, the Process Planning Group, and re-purposed the College Leadership Council (CLC), to provide structures for a collegial environment that welcomed input from all college constituents. There is also an Executive Leadership Team (ELT), which was designed to serve a collegial role in governance but is now reported to function as a way for the college administration to provide input for Governing Board meeting agendas and policies. The self study reports confusion about whether the ELT or CLC is the primary collegial governance body for the college and the means for bringing forth collegewide initiatives for consultation and decision making. The college has held retreats on the topic of governance and has conducted surveys to determine why the college community is confused about the decision-making process and to assess the level of satisfaction with campus climate. The survey results indicate the items of greatest concern are a lack of information about the direction of the college, the level of respect shown by the Board toward members of the college community, the reasons for administrative decisions, and the college's manner of rewarding leadership. Of the 91 full-time faculty who responded to the survey, just 20 percent believed that they had adequate opportunities to participate in decision making. (IV.A)

Through conversations with all employee groups, it has been reported that the oppressive climate on campus has not improved in ensuing years. Several faculty members commented to the team that they feared reprisal for their words and actions. Examples of this allegation were supplied by faculty via conversations and at the well-attended forums held during the visit. Several faculty members cited an environment in which nontenured faculty, middle-level managers, and classified staff feared for their jobs if they spoke freely about an issue that they perceived to be a problem or if they complained about particular issues. Students report that their suggestions do not appear to be followed and that their best interests are not the basis for institutional decisions. The perception by some administrators is that eleven or twelve individuals are causing the strife between the college and the administration. (IV.A.1)

In response to the last visit, the college created policies for more widespread input. Faculty and administration were given a prescribed role in governance and a voice in their areas of responsibility and expertise. Policies provided for student and staff input. However, college constituents report that, subsequent to the hiring of the current Superintendent/President, the policies which specify how information is brought forward from one committee or task force to the next level in the process have not been followed. (IV.A.2, IV.A.3)

Conclusions

The 2003 team recommendations include "...that the college define the purpose and function of collegial consultation committees and councils, effectively involving faculty, staff, administrators, and students..." as well as ensuring a "...supportive environment of trust and respect for all employees..." While such consultation committees have either been instituted or re-purposed, it is apparent their purpose and function is unclear, and, in the midst of this

confusion, collegial processes are rendered ineffective. (IV.A.2) It could be construed that the college either is making a good faith effort to address the recommendation and foster collegiality, or that the college is merely paying lip service; it is evident that too many within the campus community presume the latter. The obvious adversarial climate that exists on campus is destructive and disruptive to student learning. *The college does not meet Standard IV.A.*

B. Board and Administrative Organization

The Governing Board has a two-member subcommittee to revise board-related policies. Other policy revisions go through the ELT. The Vice President of Human Resources monitors what policies need to be revised according to changes in state policy or legislation. There is no written policy for selection of the Superintendent/President. Instead, in the most recent search, the Board relied on the procedures set by a search consultant which did not include methods for garnering constituent input on desired characteristics of candidates. Provisions for evaluation are in the Superintendent/President's contract, and he has been evaluated regularly over the last two years. (IV.B.1)

There is disagreement among trustees on how the Board's role as a policy-making body reflecting the public interest is manifest. Some see themselves as budget watchdogs attending to small details of the operations of the college. Several interpret their role as a conduit for concerns from the college community, seeing a need to meet privately with college personnel. Recently the newest board member publicly expressed positions on two issues different from what the Board had already decided, and trustees reported that the same member has criticized the college and the Superintendent/President in a public forum. Although fellow trustees report having attempted to clarify his role and monitor his questions and comments during board meetings, they do not feel their actions had the intended impact. He is perceived by some as not understanding the difference between policy and operation or to be applying K-12 concepts to community college governance. (IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c)

In general, all board members see a part of their role as the public face of the college, representing it in community meetings, for example. (IV.B.1.a)

The college's mission statement is vague and is missing elements, which makes it an inadequate basis for policies. The overly broad nature of the mission statement accommodates a variety of interpretations, thus giving the Board wide berth. The self study claims that the Board makes decisions guided by the college mission statement and cites basic skills as an example. However, basic skills is not mentioned in the mission statement, nor is student learning, which is cited as another example of mission-based decisions regarding allocating resources to faculty positions. The board meeting minutes reflect significant attention to facilities decisions. There seems to be confusion among the board members over its role in setting college goals versus setting board and superintendent/president goals. (IV.B.1.b)

The Board has policies in place regarding its size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures. However, not all are published in an accessible manner. (IV.B.1.d)

Generally, the Board acts in a manner consistent with its policies. Although no specific timeline is referenced for the systematic review of policies, the procedures do call for regular review, essentially on an as-needed basis. (IV.B.1.e)

Although the college has subscribed to an external source for policies, including a policy on board education, no evidence of ongoing or external board training for all trustees was found. Despite encouragement from the Superintendent/President, the new trustee has not attended external training. (IV.B.1.f)

The Governing Board has conducted regular self-evaluations since 2004, the most recent occurring in July 2009. However, the evaluation process is not codified or consistently implemented. Following the most recent evaluation, the Board reports it discussed areas in need of improvement. No improvement plans or goals are documented, and there is disagreement among board members regarding the purpose of the self-evaluation. (IV.B.1.g)

An ethics code and policy are in place, but the self study indicates that the Board does not deal with violations effectively. There is at least the appearance of a conflict of interest with a board member and senior administrator of the college having a personal relationship and with trustees sitting on another board that is responsible for the oversight of a fellow trustee's employer. However, there is no evidence that a recusal process is followed when decisions arise that may be impacted by these conflicts. The issue of board ethics has been addressed by the media and was the subject of a Grand Jury review. The Superintendent/President reports that this issue is under control. (IV.B.1.h)

The Board has an approved policy specifically delegating operational functions of the college to the Superintendent/President. Nevertheless, some college policies are inconsistent with the effective application of this policy. There is evidence that the Board has been kept apprised of the development of the self study. (IV.B.1.i, IV.B.1.j)

Another example of Board interference occurred in 2006 when the Board insinuated itself into the hiring of the Vice President of Academic Affairs by not accepting the recommendation of the Superintendent/President and interviewing three finalists. As an apparent result of the Board selecting its own candidate, the Superintendent/President resigned. The current Superintendent/President reports that the Board elected to retain the right to interview finalists for vice president positions in its policy. According to multiple sources, under the current Superintendent/President the Board has not interviewed candidates in the hiring of the last four vice presidents. Trustees reported that they wanted the policy to remain in place until the newly hired Superintendent/President was established; the President/Superintendent has left the policy in place to build trust. (IV.B.1.j)

Trustees interact regularly with college staff and think this direct communication is important; they report feedback to the rest of the Board and Superintendent/President. The Board reports that it seeks communication between its members and the college staff. (IV.B.1.j)

Recently the Superintendent/President has begun to take steps to reinstate the college planning processes. He has hired a researcher to supply data for decisions. A continuation of the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan was recently provided to the College Leadership Council. (IV.B.2)

The Superintendent/President is responsible for the administrative structure of the college. He implemented the most recent reorganization in spring 2009. Within that plan, several academic departments were moved from one school to another and several staff positions were eliminated. Some members of the college community view the reorganization and the subsequent position eliminations as retribution on the part of the Superintendent/President against those who spoke out against him; the Superintendent/President attributes the reduction in positions to the budget situation. (IV.B.2.a)

Although a process for improving the college is laid out in the self study, it has not been followed for several years. The Superintendent/President has identified board and superintendent/president goals but, despite earlier promising attempts, the process for setting new goals and priorities for the college is in its infancy with efforts beginning fall 2009. (IV.B.2)

The Superintendent/President described his lack of attention to integrated planning as a result of having to deal with more pressing issues upon his arrival, including budgetary matters. He articulated plans to codify the planning process over the course of the current academic year. He described changing the ELT, which currently is the primary body for review of policy changes prior to being sent to the Board, to a subset of the CLC (the primary governance committee). (IV.B.2.a)

College decisions do not rely on data at this time, although the Superintendent/President seems to have a good grasp of the concept of evidence-based decisions. Planning processes are not data driven, there is no documented process, and there is no evidence that planning has occurred for several years. The integration of the educational plan with the budget in order to achieve SLO's is not present. (IV.B.2.b)

The Superintendent/President expresses awareness of statues and regulations pertaining to the college. (IV.B.2.c)

The Superintendent/President previously served as acting Vice President of Business and Financial Affairs and demonstrates a keen understanding of these issues. He has taken measures to manage the college's budget. As might be expected, strong fiscal management actions have caused distress among the faculty and staff who claim the process is not transparent or connected to planning. Lack of established leadership in the Business and Financial Affairs Office prior to the recent arrival of the new vice president resulted in a perceived gap in information sharing about budgetary decisions with the college community. The new leadership, however, is presenting a strong and forthcoming presence much desired by the college. (IV.B.2.d)

The external community's perspective on the college and thus the Superintendent/President may be revealed in the passing of a recent bond measure by a large margin. There are problems with communication internally evidenced by individual reports of feeling threatened, fearing retribution, and feeling intimidated. These issues have the potential to impact the public perception of the college's leadership. (IV.B.2.e)

Conclusions

Despite policies and processes designed for collegewide participation in decision making, these structures have not resulted in everyone working together for the good of the college. As a result of a collective inability to work together, the college has not carried through on many important issues identified in the last accreditation cycle. Faculty and students appear to want the last word on college decisions; administration appears to take a hard-line top-down approach to decisions. Although the college community is passionate about blaming the current Superintendent/President for the situation, it appears from the broader perspective to be a long-standing problem stemming from a breach in philosophy about college decisions between the Board and the college employees. This clash in understanding of college governance has created obstacles to student learning and the improvement of the institution. (IV.A.1)

The self study indicates that the Superintendent/President is making strides in repairing college morale, but in reality there is a strong undercurrent of discontent at the college. Faculty are more vociferous in their opposition to the Superintendent/President's style, but there is clearly some tension among the administration as well. The Superintendent/President is quick to note that he doesn't need this job and has stated he has received strong support from the Board on personnel actions. He expresses his role as coming in to clean up the college and get it on track for a long and stable future. (IV.A.1, IV.A.2.a)

The Board does not have a clear understanding of its role in determining the direction and philosophy for the college (policy) versus how that direction and philosophy are accomplished (operations). It is still at an early stage with regard to the delegation of authority for operations to the college Superintendent/President and his administration. Some existing policies undermine the effective delineation between the functions of the Superintendent/President and the Board. The trustees do not seem to realize the negative impact their involvement in day-to-day college affairs can have on college operations. Every trustee should participate in externally-provided trustee training on a regular basis. (IV.B. 1.f, IV.B.1.j) *The college does not meet Standard IV.B.*

Recommendations

8. The team recommends that the college set as a priority fostering an environment of trust and respect for all employees and students that allows the college community to promote administrative stability and to work together for the good of the college. The team further recommends that the college establish and follow a written process and structure providing faculty, staff, administrators, and students a substantial voice in decision-making processes. (Standards IV.A, IV.B.2.b, and III.A.4.c)

9. As previously identified in the 2003 ACCJC WASC Accreditation Report, the team recommends the Governing Board adhere to its role as a policy-making body and not interfere with the authority and responsibility of the Superintendent/President for college operations. The team further recommends that the Board act as a whole once it reaches a decision and as an advocate for the college. (Standards IV.B.1.a and IV.B.1.j)

10. The team recommends that the Governing Board establish and implement a formal procedure for handling potential conflict of interest and ethics policy violations and document adherence to the protocol. (Standard IV.B.1.h and IV.B.1.i)