

Follow Up Visit Report

Palo Verde College
One College Drive
Blythe, CA 92225

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

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Palo Verde College

on

November 12, 2008

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Date: November 24, 2008

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FROM: Team Chair

SUBJECT: Report of Follow Up Visit to Palo Verde College,
November 12, 2008

Introduction:

A comprehensive visit to Palo Verde College was conducted in March of 2008. At its meeting in June of 2008, the Commission acted to place Palo Verde College on Warning status, to require Follow Up Report from the College in October of 2008 and a Follow Up Visit. The visiting team, David Pelham, Marilyn McBride and Ryan Cartnal conducted the site visit on November 12, 2008. The purpose of the team visit was to verify the Follow Up Report prepared by the College and to determine if sustained, continuous and positive movement toward institutional good practice had occurred.

In general, the team found that the College had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with individuals as requested by the team chair and by assembling documents in the meeting room used by the team. Over the course of the day the team met with the President, all three Vice Presidents, the Human Resources Director, the Accreditation Liaison, the staff member in charge of Institutional Research and additional staff and faculty members as needed. The Follow Up Report and Visit were expected to document improvement on three recommendations from the original visiting team and four recommendations from the Commission. The report of the visiting team's findings and conclusions follow.

COLLEGE RESPONSES TO THE TEAM AND COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Team Recommendation 1

The Team recommends that the College engage in systematic educational program planning guided by strategic dialogue and data. This planning should include the following:

- 1. Planning course offerings so students can complete a program in a timely manner (II.A.2)**
- 2. Educational program planning based on data about community and student needs (II.A.2)**
- 3. Clearly disseminating information about procedures to approve and evaluate courses and programs (II.A.2.a, II A.2.)**

1. The Visiting Team found that the College has revised the process for developing a schedule of classes. The Office of Instruction did a thorough review of the scheduling process and recommended that it be centralized. The Instruction

Office will be evaluating course offerings to ensure courses are offered in a pattern that reflects students' needs. In the initial evaluation, conflicts and omissions were identified and changes were made that significantly increased students' ability to complete programs with a minimum of conflict. This process is just beginning. Faculty will develop and publish program offering plans to help guide students and counselors so that students can complete programs in a timely manner. The College will evaluate the success of the new scheduling procedures and program plans to determine the effectiveness of the changes.

2. The College has conducted three focus group sessions with local residents to determine needs with respect to programs of study desired, employment needs, and support service needs. The College plans to conduct at least two more focus groups within the next year. In addition they have purchased additional data regarding the market potential and demographics of the local community. Surveys have been completed by students who registered at the beginning of the Fall semester and data gathered will add to the knowledge base used for planning. The data have not yet been evaluated and synthesized into a plan that will help guide the College as it moves forward.
3. In order to improve the curriculum development process and evaluation of courses and programs, the Curriculum Committee in conjunction with the Office of Instruction are revising the Curriculum Handbook to be a resource for faculty that is consistent with Title 5 and good standards of practice. This will be the guide for faculty who want to develop new courses or programs, or who need to update existing curriculum. Once the Curriculum Handbook has been updated, it will be published on the College website. The College will devote one flex day in the Spring semester to train faculty on the curriculum processes. A tentative agenda has been developed for the training.

Conclusion: The College has made significant progress in addressing the requirements of this recommendation. However, additional work needs to be completed before the next review is conducted.

Team Recommendation 2

The team recommends that the College more systematically evaluate its processes using both quantitative and qualitative data. The following processes are especially in need of systematic assessment.

1. **Professional development programs (III.A.5.b)**
 2. **Effective use of human resources-allocation of human resources (III.A.6)**
 3. **Strategic planning and budgeting processes (I.B.6, III.D.2)**
 4. **Financial management practices (III.D.2.g)**
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1. The Visiting Team found that the College had made significant progress in the evaluation of its professional development programs. The College has adopted a procedure by which the HR Director gathers information on the effectiveness of various professional development activities and reports those results to the College Council/Strategic Planning Committee so changes in the program can be made the following year when appropriate. (Pala Verde)

Community College District Professional Development Processes-Report and Evaluation form)

2. Since the March visit the Visiting Team found that the College has adopted a new process for evaluating the use and allocations of human resources. As a part of this process, the HR Director will prepare a report that compares the current and preceding years in terms of full-time and part-time faculty, full-time and part-time staff, administrators, reclassifications and position terminations. The report also identifies justifications for human resource allocations in terms of the College's Strategic Plan elements. The report goes to the College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee for evaluation of resource allocation and recommendations for actions for the next year. (Palo Verde Community College District Human Resources Utilization Report, Palo Verde Community College District Employee Category Full-time Equivalency (FTE) Distribution report)
3. The College recently added a step in the program evaluation review process by including Budget Committee review of all requests in program reviews for budget impact. Further, the College is implementing a survey measuring campus perceptions of the effectiveness of the budget development process. (Palo Verde Community College District Budget Review Process-Evaluation form)
4. The College's implementation of the Datatel software system has required the institution to evaluate the effectiveness and compatibility of all of its financial management practices. In an effort to continue this self reflective process, the College has expanded the Budget Committee's responsibilities to include oversight of financial management practices. In addition, the schedule for program reviews on campus has been amended to include a comprehensive program review of the Administrative Services department during the 2010-11 school year.

Conclusion: The College now meets the Standards referenced. The college is to be commended on its quick response to the call for data-driven decision making. In particular, the college is to be commended for its collection of community focus group data, which will be used for assessing and evaluating its current and future program offerings. Additionally, the college has begun to incorporate student survey data (both qualitative and quantitative) into its decision-making processes. For example, the office of Instruction surveyed students as to the most convenient times for classes to be offered. Similarly, the Student Services office used the results from a student satisfaction survey to advocate for the need of an additional counselor.

Team Recommendation 3

As noted by the 2002 team, the College should ensure that the College Catalog provides clear and precise program and course description information about the degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected SLOs. (II.A.6, II.B.2, ER 20)

The Visiting Team found that Palo Verde College has completed a major revision of the College Catalog to significantly improve the information provided to students regarding degrees, certificates. The description of degree and certificate programs now clearly lists general education requirements, required program courses, alternate courses, and electives. The original team found significant inconsistencies in the listing of hours of study required for courses throughout the catalog. A comprehensive review was completed and all courses now have consistent information regarding the number hour hours of instruction for every course. The College Catalog directs students to the Palo Verde College website for information regarding student learning outcomes for courses in the course outline of record. The College has indicated that it does not believe that it is fiscally feasible to include SLOs for each in the College Catalog. The Team concurs with that assessment. ✓

Conclusion: The College now meets the Standards referenced.

Commission Recommendation 1

The College should analyze and discuss the impact of current enrollment patterns, specifically the over reliance on a single ISA, on the fiscal stability of the college and develop a contingency plan for fiscal stability should the ISA be reduced or lost.

The Visiting Team concluded that the College had engaged in a meaningful dialog on current enrollment patterns, specifically discussing the potential impact of the loss of its largest ISA. This dialog included consideration of the history of the ISA in question which stretches back almost 20 years. The College's relationship with the company with whom the ISA was signed has survived multiple budget down turns and the death of one of the company's partners. As a result, the College feels relatively secure in the stability of the ISA. Even with this feeling of security, however, the College continues to look for ways to further stabilize and diversify its enrollment. Since the 05-06 school year the College has significantly increased the number of adjuncts it has teaching Public Safety courses. This increase reduces the College's reliance on the ISA. Examples of enrollment diversification include its expanded partnerships with local prison facilities and the expansion of its distance learning capabilities. The expanded distance learning capabilities are a function, in part, of the College's adoption of the Datatel software package. Prior to the adoption of Datatel the College lacked the software and hardware resources necessary for a meaningful online distance learning presence. The College has also attained a Title III grant to support the development of additional online courses. (Palo Verde Title III Grant Application) The new online capabilities will allow the College to appeal directly to some students with whom it is currently connected through the ISA. In addition, the College's prison and expanded online programs will allow the College to diversify its enrollment so that it is depending less on a single ISA.

Conclusion: The College has adequately responded to the Commission's concerns in this area.

Commission Recommendation 2

The College should provide evidence that faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes (III.A.1.c).

Inclusion of student learning outcomes data in faculty evaluations is a controversial topic on many campuses. This College has engaged its faculty union in discussions of the appropriate place for this data in the evaluation process. The current union contract authorizes the inclusion of the following language in the preamble to the Faculty Evaluation procedure, "...the primary purposes of evaluation are: to enhance faculty performance; to promote excellence...; and to further institutional goals and student learning outcomes." (District-CTA Agreement, 2007-2010, Article V, Section I, Paragraph A) The College and the faculty union will continue this dialog when contract negotiations open again. The Visiting Team suggests that the College also pursue inclusion of SLOs in evaluations of appropriate managers and administrators. Currently, the evaluation form for managers and administrators does not include mention of SLOs. (Palo Verde Community College District Administrative/Management/Confidential Evaluation form)

Conclusion: The College does not yet meet the Standard referenced in this recommendation. However, much of the reason for not meeting this standard does not lie entirely within the College's sphere of control. Faculty evaluation forms must be negotiated and, while the College has communicated this need to the union it will have to go through the normal negotiating process.

Commission Recommendation 3

The College should ensure its compliance with standards relating to the evaluation of administrators. (III.A.1.b, III.A.5, IV.B.1.j).

The Visiting Team found that all administrators had been evaluated since the March visit. The HR Director provided the Team Chair with a schedule indicating when evaluations had taken place. Later individual interviews with administrators confirmed that the evaluations had been done. To ensure that future evaluations are conducted in a timely manner board policy has been amended to clarify the deadlines for the completion of evaluations.

Conclusion: The College now meets the Standards referenced.

Commission Recommendation 4

The College should demonstrate that its Program Review processes are fully integrated with the budget and planning processes and at the proficiency level as described in the Commission's Rubric for Evaluation Institutional Effectiveness Parts I and II. (I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, II.A.I.A.6, II.B.2.a -b, III.C.2., III.D.3)

The College in its response to the recommendation addressed each item in the rubric. The Team finds that Program Review processes are in place and are completed regularly. Results of the program reviews are integrated into the College planning processes, and the College has recently incorporated an additional step in the dialog process whereby the reviews are presented to the Budget Committee before being presented to the College Council/Strategic Planning Committee. This revision will enable the College to more fully link Program Review to the overall planning and budgeting processes. As this is a change, there has not yet been a cycle of this is a newly implemented process being implemented.

Conclusion: The College is making progress toward being fully proficient in the evaluation of institutional effectiveness with some standards fully met and some procedures yet to be tested.