Follow-Up Report and Visit

Cerritos College
11110 Alondra Boulevard
Norwalk, CA 90650-6298

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

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Cerritos College

on

April 29, 2009

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Team Chair

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Team Member
DATE: May 14, 2009

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FROM: William T. Scroggins, Team Chair

SUBJECT: Report of Follow-Up Report and Visit, Cerritos College, April 29, 2009

Introduction:

A comprehensive visit was conducted to Cerritos College on March 3-6, 2008. At its meeting on June 4-6, 2008, the Commission acted to require of Cerritos College a Follow-Up Report and visit. The visiting team, Dr. William T. Scroggins and Ms. Rhea Riegel, conducted the site visit to Cerritos College on April 29, 2009. The purpose of the team visit was to find evidence for the accuracy and relevance of the assertions in the Follow-Up Report, assess institutional developments at the college related to alignment with Commission Standards, and report findings and recommendations to the Commission.

The team found that the college had prepared well for the visit. The college web site and intranet contained extensive documentation related to the implementation of institutional practices to bring the college into compliance with Commission Standards. Over the course of the day, the team met with the Acting President of the college, three members of the Board of Trustees, the Interim Director of Research and Planning, the Chair of the Planning and Budget Committee, several middle management representatives, classified staff representatives, and faculty representatives. These groups included the President of the CSEA (California School Employees Association) and the President of the Academic Senate.

The Follow-Up Report and visit were expected to demonstrate sufficient progress on the following recommendations to establish compliance with the cited Commission Standards:

Recommendation 2: Leadership: Communication and Participation
In order to improve, the team recommends that the college, under the leadership of the president, establish effective methods of communication leading to the participation of all constituencies of the campus community in an on-going collegial dialogue regarding continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes. (IB.1)(IVA.2.a)(IVB.2.e)

Recommendation 3: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Evaluation
Because the college has not met Recommendation 2 from the 2002 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated here with additions relevant to the college’s current deficiency with the standards cited.

To meet the standards, the team recommends that the college make full use of the Office of Research and Planning to complete the development of a comprehensive planning and evaluation
process that is guided by the college mission statement and integrates strategic, master, and operational planning; unit planning based on appropriate program review; and the allocation of institutional resources. Both the planning process and a delineation of responsibilities for the implementation of the process should be communicated clearly to the entire campus community. (IA.3, IB.4)(IVB.2.b)

The team further recommends that

- the college complete the initial cycle of planning and resource allocation and evaluate the process so that each review cycle is complete and the resulting data and research can be fed back to provide continuous improvement (IB.6),
- the college provide adequate staffing and resources to the Office of Research and Planning so that data, research, and analysis can be provided sufficient for the college to implement integrated planning, resource allocation, and evaluation; to identify student learning needs; and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes (IB.3)(IIA.1.a)(IIA2)(IVA.2.b)(IVB.2.b),
- data used to produce reports that contribute to the college’s on-going self-assessment include both quantitative and qualitative information (IB.3),
- the college state its objectives in measurable terms in all its planning documents including the strategic plan and the unit plans (IB.2), and
- the college integrate planning for human resources, facilities, technology, and finances into the college plan and use the results of this evaluation to improve human resource processes, facilities utilization, the effective use of technology, and the distribution of financial resources. (IIIA.6)(IIIB.2.b)(IIIC.2)(IIID.1.a)

Recommendation 6: Program Review
Because the college has not met Recommendation 4 from the 2002 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated here.

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college extend the new program review process, recently revised for instruction, to other non-instructional areas of the campus with appropriate accommodation to address the unique nature of each service area. Further, it should be clear to the campus community how the process of program review is connected to the planning and budgeting process, and, ultimately, to program improvement. (IB.3)(IIA.1.a)(IIB.1)(IIB.3)

Recommendation 8: Leadership: Empowerment, Innovation, Collaboration, and Decision-Making
In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college, through the leadership of the president, establish a climate of empowerment, innovation and collaboration resulting in a decision-making process that provides for a substantial voice for faculty and middle managers and meaningful input for students and staff in areas that reflect their responsibility. The team further recommends that processes for decision-making be regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. (IVA.1)(IVA.2.a) (IVA.5)(IVB.2.a)(IVB.2.b)
Significant Changes since the Comprehensive Visit

The visiting team found that significant changes had occurred in the senior management of Cerritos College since the comprehensive visit in March 2008. In the summer of 2008 the previous President left for another position, and soon thereafter the Vice President of Academic Affairs was named Acting President. At the time of this follow-up visit, the college also had an interim Vice President of Business Services and an interim Vice President of Academic Affairs. A consultant was hired on October 1, 2008. The Director of Research and Planning, who was to guide the college’s response to the visiting team’s recommendation on planning, and a Dean, who had volunteered to spearhead efforts to lead program review for non-instructional programs, both contracted serious illnesses and were absent from the college for extended periods of time. The Director of Research and Planning recovered from his illness, returned to work and worked with the consultant in responding to the planning recommendation. He subsequently left the college for a new position on January 9, 2009. The college hired an experienced retiree as an interim Director on March 2, 2009. A search was conducted for a new support staff position in Research and Planning, but it did not yield a successful candidate; another search is underway.

College Responses to the Team Recommendations:

Recommendation 2: Leadership: Communication and Participation
In order to improve, the team recommends that the college, under the leadership of the president, establish effective methods of communication leading to the participation of all constituencies of the campus community in an on-going collegial dialogue regarding continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.
(1B.1)(IVA.2.a)(IVB.2.e)

The team found that the Acting President had established several communication strategies. A semi-regular report to the college community was published that included relevant initiatives underway including progress on the recommendations of the accreditation visiting team. The Acting President had reinstituted regular meetings of all the management staff and regularly ventured out on campus to visit managers and faculty in their offices. The Acting President attended meetings of constituent groups, notably the Academic Senate. Faculty and managers interviewed commented on the increased availability of the Acting President.

The team found that issues that had arisen over the last year had been widely discussed and input was widely solicited and incorporated into institutional decisions and practices. These discussions included matters being addressed regarding accreditation recommendations, and in fact, the issue of the nature of institutional dialog itself. Those interviewed confirmed the results of a survey taken by the college that managers and staff found the present climate to be somewhat improved while the majority of faculty sensed no significant change.
**Conclusion:** The Acting President has established effective methods of communication, significant collegial dialog is taking place, and these discussions are significantly focused on the improvement of student learning and institutional practices.

**Recommendation 3: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Evaluation**
Because the college has not met Recommendation 2 from the 2002 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated here with additions relevant to the college’s current deficiency with the standards cited.

To meet the standards, the team recommends that the college make full use of the Office of Research and Planning to complete the development of a comprehensive planning and evaluation process that is guided by the college mission statement and integrates strategic, master, and operational planning; unit planning based on appropriate program review; and the allocation of institutional resources. Both the planning process and a delineation of responsibilities for the implementation of the process should be communicated clearly to the entire campus community. (IA.3, IB.4)(IVB.2.b)

The team further recommends that

- the college complete the initial cycle of planning and resource allocation and evaluate the process so that each review cycle is complete and the resulting data and research can be fed back to provide continuous improvement (IB.6),
- the college provide adequate staffing and resources to the Office of Research and Planning so that data, research, and analysis can be provided sufficient for the college to implement integrated planning, resource allocation, and evaluation; to identify student learning needs; and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes (IB.3)(IIA.1.a)(IIA2)(IVA.2.b)(IVB.2.b),
- data used to produce reports that contribute to the college’s on-going self-assessment include both quantitative and qualitative information (IB.3),
- the college state its objectives in measurable terms in all its planning documents including the strategic plan and the unit plans (IB.2), and
- the college integrate planning for human resources, facilities, technology, and finances into the college plan and use the results of this evaluation to improve human resource processes, facilities utilization, the effective use of technology, and the distribution of financial resources. (IIIA.6)(IIIIB.2.b)(IIIC.2)(IIID.1.a)

The team found that the college had completed the cycle of planning, budgeting, and resource allocation that had begun just prior to the comprehensive visit in March 2009. Through documentation reviewed from several unit plans, minutes of committee meetings, and budget allocation sheets, it was clear that the process was carried out as designed and was comprehensive throughout the institution. The college Planning and Budget Committee had reviewed the process and made adjustments which are being implemented in the present planning-budgeting-allocation cycle.

The college has allocated funds to create an additional staff position in the Office of Research and Planning. The college has conducted a search for this position without yet finding qualified applicants and is doing a second search which it hopes will yield a successful candidate. In the meantime, the college has contracted with a consultant who is a respected retired researcher and has hired an interim Director of Research and Planning. Research and planning functions over
the last year have been significantly accomplished by the consultant, the former Director of Research and Planning until January 9, 2009, and the Interim Director of Research and Planning since March 2, 2009) There has been some lack of consistency and follow through as a result. For example, the research done of the effectiveness of the strategic planning process which was produced in the summer of 2008 has not been acted upon.

The team conducting the comprehensive visit had noted a distinct deficiency of qualitative research. Over the last year, several examples of surveys and focus groups were documented that contributed significantly to the college’s understanding of the program review process and its changes in the health fee. While the revised unit plans did, for the most part, state objectives in measurable terms, the strategic plan had not been revised and still had several examples of vague goal statements. This point was made in the evaluation of the strategic plan conducted by the former Director of Research and Planning, but again, the report had not been acted upon. The visiting team directed the Acting President to the specific goal statements in the strategic plan that needed attention. The college recognizes that some of the goals statements in its Strategic Plan could be more clearly and precisely phrased.

While the program review and unit plan documents that the visiting team inspected were comprehensive, well written, and included measurable outcomes, neither the unit plans nor the college plans on technology and facilities had been integrated into the strategic plan.

Conclusions: The college has effectively completed an entire cycle of planning, budgeting, resource allocation, evaluation, and improvement. The college has begun a second such cycle, now improved from previous experience. Middle managers in particular seemed pleased and involved with the results. The college has allocated resources to strengthen the Office of Research and Planning and has made repeated, concerted efforts to attract qualified candidates. Consultants and interims have been utilized while these searches have continued. The research and planning efforts have been adequate under this arrangement, but some projects have been unattended and future productivity is uncertain. Significantly, the college has not revised its strategic plan nor has it incorporated unit plans or focused plans into the overall college strategic plan. The team recommends that the strategic plan be so revised.

Recommendation 6: Program Review
Because the college has not met Recommendation 4 from the 2002 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated here.
In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college extend the new program review process, recently revised for instruction, to other non-instructional areas of the campus with appropriate accommodation to address the unique nature of each service area. Further, it should be clear to the campus community how the process of program review is connected to the planning and budgeting process, and, ultimately, to program improvement. (IB.3)(IIA.1.a)(IIB.1)(IIB.3)

The visiting team found that the college had created a systematic program review process for non-instructional areas, that all such units had fully implemented this program review, that unit plans had been created as part of this process, and that requests for resources grew out of these plans and were being incorporated into the coming year’s budget based on a systematic and well
understood prioritization processes. The visiting team heard testimony from several managers, staff and faculty from a variety of these non-instructional units. These individuals were conversant with the process and results, and while not all of them personally participated in the review process itself, were aware of colleagues in their unit who had done so. The visiting team requested extensive documentation and written testimony to this effect, and that documentation was delivered to the team before the close of the day. It should be noted that the program review process, the data derived to inform these reviews, and training on the overall process was largely provided by the aforementioned consultant.

**Conclusions:** The college conducts program review and unit planning in all areas of the college. It was clear to all those we interviewed that they understood the process. In fact, the Acting President had created a document explaining the connection of planning and budgeting and had held several discussions on campus about the process.

**Recommendation 8: Leadership: Empowerment, Innovation, Collaboration, and Decision-Making**

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college, through the leadership of the president, establish a climate of empowerment, innovation and collaboration resulting in a decision-making process that provides for a substantial voice for faculty and middle managers and meaningful input for students and staff in areas that reflect their responsibility. The team further recommends that processes for decision-making be regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. (IVA.1)(IVA.2.a) (IVA.5)(IVB.2.a)(IVB.2.b)

In direct interviews of twenty individuals, in an open forum attended by another forty persons, and in minutes of committees and departments, it was demonstrated that the climate at Cerritos College had improved. The visiting team asked all participants directly if they felt the climate was one that encouraged empowerment, innovation and collaboration. The responses were consistently in the affirmative, although some individuals qualified their answers. In all such cases the visiting team asked for specifics and, when available, documentation. Those specifics and documents were readily forthcoming.

The qualified statements were from the faculty and some staff leaders interviewed who generally felt that the Acting President was trying valiantly to improve the system but that two issues still remained for them. First, and generally mentioned first, was the fact that the majority of senior managers were in acting or interim positions and that there was no assurance that the recent attempts at improving the campus climate would continue. Second, there was dissatisfaction that the input of faculty and staff into the decision-making process was at the initial stage of planning with prioritization done exclusively by management, although the final decisions were for the most part shared with the Planning and Budget Committee.

Faculty seemed to trust their deans to represent their interests when the deans met with the vice presidents to prioritize resource requests within the areas of instruction, student services, and business. There was not confidence that their interests were reflected in the discussions of the vice presidents with the president that led to final decisions. In some cases, particularly cuts in budget or staff, i.e., not filling positions, this prioritization process was not used, and decisions
were made administratively. These statements by faculty were confirmed through minutes of committee meetings and discussions with senior managers.

The college is using the Planning Plus software system for developing plans and prioritizing resource requests. The software was developed by Pasadena City College and significantly revised by Cerritos College. The Office of Research and Planning conducted a survey, “Planning and Resource Allocation Process Formative Evaluation.” This survey was completed by 39 of those most involved in the planning and budgeting process: chairs, deans, vice presidents, and members of the Planning and Budget Committee, but rank-and-file faculty and staff were not surveyed. The results of the survey indicate that the college is on the right track with its Assessment, Planning, and Improvement process. Respondents saw the strengths of the process to be primarily its transparency, creation of linkages, and integration of requests from many units on campus. Weaknesses were poor information and training, not enough time, deficiencies in the software, and lack of leadership in implementing the system.

**Conclusions:** The climate of empowerment, innovation, and collaboration at Cerritos College has improved somewhat although the many interim positions at the senior management level make the future uncertain. The decision-making process has become more transparent with the implementation of the Planning Plus software, although definite improvements in the process are needed. The college is aware of these deficiencies and moving to improve them. Faculty in particular do not feel that they have a substantial voice in decision-making at the final stages.

The team recommends that the college continue to improve the Planning Plus software system and provide for dialog that results in a substantial voice for faculty, particularly at the final stage in decision-making.