

Follow-Up Visit Evaluation Report

Cerritos College

11110 Alondra Boulevard, Norwalk, CA 90650

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 Community College District

on

April 13, 2015

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Follow-Up Visit Report

DATE: April 23, 2015

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FROM: Gilbert H. Stork, Ed.D., Team Chair

SUBJECT: Report of Follow-Up Visit Team to Cerritos College on April 13, 2015

Introduction

A comprehensive visit was conducted at Cerritos College on March 3–6, 2014. At its meeting of June 4-6, 2014 the Commission acted to require Cerritos College to submit a Follow-Up Report followed by a visit in one year. The visiting team, Dr. Gil Stork, Mr. Brent Hastey, and Ms. Michelle Johnson, conducted the follow-up site visit to Cerritos College on April 13, 2015. The purpose of the visit was to verify that the Follow-Up Report prepared by the College was accurate through examination of evidence, to determine if sustained, continuous, and positive improvements had been made at the institution, and that the institution had addressed the recommendations and resolved the deficiencies cited in the June 2014 Action Letter from the Commission and that the College now meets the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

Since the focus of Cerritos College's follow-up visit was on the three (3) College Recommendations, the Team spent its time on the College campus conducting interviews with selected members of the faculty, administration, students, and Trustees, as well as reviewing evidence provided by the College and/or requested by team members. In general, the Team found the Cerritos College representatives sufficiently prepared for the visit with well-organized access to evidence and appropriate interview schedules allowing the Team to conduct its assessment in a timely, organized manner. Over the course of the visitation, the Team met with the President/Superintendent of the Cerritos Community College District, six of the seven members of the Board of Trustees, the Student Trustee, the Vice President of Academic Affairs/Accreditation Liaison Officer, the Student Learning Outcome Coordinator, and the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Research & Planning.

The Follow-Up Report and required Follow-Up Visit were expected to document resolution of the following three (3) College recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2: Degree and Certificate Outcomes

In order to meet the standard, the Team recommends the college establish program student learning outcomes for all degrees and certificates, assess student achievement of the program student learning outcomes, and use the results of the assessment to make improvements to the programs. (II.A.2.f)

Recommendation 3: Leadership and Governance

In order to meet the standards, the Team recommends the members of the governing board demonstrate compliance with their policies on the appropriate roles of the Board and the Superintendent/President, the requirements of Standard IV, and adopted Board Policies 2410, 2340, 2510, 2200, 2430, Administrative Procedure 2410, and the Shared Governance Handbook. (IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3, IV.B.1.e)

Recommendation 4: Board Development

In order to meet the standards, the Board should, through its behavior and actions, demonstrate compliance with Board policies and accreditation Standards. (IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g)

College Responses to the Team Recommendations

General Observations and Comments:

The Team found Cerritos College had initiated specific actions to respond to the three recommendations provided in the Commission's July 3, 2014 Action Letter. Evidence of such activities reflected considerable effort over the past year focused on resolving the issues and bringing the College into compliance with accreditation Standards. The evidentiary CD and historical documents submitted on a flash drive provided documentation of such activities (received by the follow-up team by mail prior to the visit), and direct interviews affirmed the scope and chronology of College data-gathering, dialogue, and policy development work.

The Cerritos College community, including the Board of Trustees, advanced their efforts to respond to the Commission's recommendation with the intent to operate in an open and transparent manner. The Follow-up Report contained evidence of broad-based involvement by all college constituencies in addressing the deficiencies which was confirmed by the interviews conducted and further documents reviewed during the campus visitation.

It was evident from the information confirmed during the campus interviews that Cerritos College faculty, staff, administration, and Trustees had truly taken ownership for resolving the non-compliance issues and therefore achieving accreditation compliance with all of the Standards, Policies, and Eligibility Requirements. Throughout the entire process, Cerritos College has remained committed to its student-centered focus.

It was also observed that the Board of Trustees has accepted its important role in accreditation compliance and has worked diligently to address the recommendations directed at the Board.

The Board has taken ownership for correcting its deficiencies, provided additional training efforts related to accreditation, and improved the quality of communication with the President/Superintendent and other members of the executive administration. This was confirmed by the extensive interviews conducted during the site visit, as well as the documents reviewed, minutes of meetings read, and Board meeting videos viewed.

Recommendation 2: Degree and Certificate Outcomes

In order to meet the standard, the Team recommends the college establish program student learning outcomes for all degrees and certificates, assess student achievement of the program student learning outcomes, and use the results of the assessment to make improvements to the programs. (II.A.2.f)

Findings and Evidence: Members of the Follow-up Visiting Team reviewed documentary evidence and conducted interviews to affirm intentional College efforts focused on addressing Recommendation 2. The evidence included over a dozen examples of degree and certificate student learning outcomes. Cerritos College was open and transparent when asked for additional documents including full access to the Elumen system for further review. The examples provided by Cerritos College included all aspects of the assessment cycle, including assessment results and improvement plans. In addition, the Team conducted a random review of another dozen examples through the Elumen system affirming compliance among the programs.

Following the comprehensive team visit last year, the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) committee carefully reviewed the Recommendation 2 and reorganized their SLO structure. In doing so, the college now assesses at a fourth level in the structure, which specifically addressed learning outcomes for all degree and certificate programs. Once defined, a plan was developed to facilitate the writing, mapping, assessing, analyzing the data, and developing improvement plans. The SLO Coordinator worked with individuals and departments to help facilitate these actions with the ambitious intention of having a cycle completed by the end of fall 2014. Early examples were shared, and it was through this faculty-driven cooperation that the college was able to create SLOs for all degree and certificate programs by October 2014. These actions were verified through follow-up interviews with various members of the campus including faculty, institutional research, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the SLO committee, and SLO Coordinator.

For example, the Psychology transfer degree includes a learning outcome for students to have a level of capability with a discipline-specific software, SPSS. Students were falling short of the learning outcome goal, causing the department to reflect on the outcome and align that with the transfer degree expectations. It was determined that the students did not have enough access to the software. The department used the information to purchase more software licenses which are now being utilized by students in campus labs.

The Follow-Up Report indicated that, while the initial cycle of assessment was completed in this compressed time frame, moving forward the review of degree and certificate programs will be integrated into the annual program review process. The process now includes a written analysis of the data including a SWOT analysis that will guide goals and activities for improvement and alignment with strategic goals. Based on the strategic goal alignment, resources may be requested and allocated.

Conclusion: The Team acknowledges the diligent and systematic work done by the SLO Coordinator and faculty to address the recommendation. Cerritos College has completed a cycle of assessment in terms of degree and certificate programs and is using the results to make improvements to the programs. Protocols are in place to continue a yearly review and update of the cycle for all degrees and certificates.

The college has met Standard II.A.2.f.

Recommendation 3: Leadership and Governance

In order to meet the standards, the Team recommends the members of the governing board demonstrate compliance with their policies on the appropriate roles of the Board and the Superintendent/President, the requirements of Standard IV, and adopted Board Policies 2410, 2340, 2510, 2200, 2430, Administrative Procedure 2410, and the Shared Governance Handbook. (IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3, IV.B.1.e)

Findings and Evidence: During the follow-up visit, team members reviewed documentary evidence including the Cerritos College Follow-up Report, minutes of Trustee meetings, the Board/President Compact, reviewed and revised board policies, schedule for Board review of board policies and administrative procedures, and the action plan for each compliance issue cited in the visiting team report. In addition, the Team conducted interviews with six of the seven members of the Board of Trustees, the Student Trustee, and the President/Superintendent to affirm intentional College efforts focused on addressing Recommendation 3. Specifically, the Team evaluated the degree of activity taken on the three elements of the recommendation, including; 1) the substantive and clearly defined roles in decision-making processes (IV.A.2.a), 2) the working relationship among the board, administration, staff, and students (IV.A.3), and 3) the Board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and evaluates and revises policies as necessary (IV.B.1.e).

On September 3, 2014, the Board took action to adopt two additional Board Goals in an effort to intensify its response to the recommendations:

Board Goal 2 – Ensure that the District and the Board meet the ACCJC Accreditation Recommendations, and

Board Goal 6.b.a – Improve protocols and practices for effective Board and President/Superintendent communications and relations.

The Team also noted that the Board utilized Board Policy 2220 – Committees of the Board to establish two, three-member Board Advisory Committees (BACs) for Accreditation and for Policies. These BACs were utilized to work with the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) on the responses to the recommendations contained in the ACCJC Action Letter, as well as prepare policy reviews and revisions to be considered by the whole Board of Trustees. The Accreditation BAC developed an action plan to address each of the compliance issues stated in the Action Letter. From the issues identified in the Team Report, action steps were created and periodic status reports were made to document the institution’s efforts to satisfy the recommendation.

Cerritos College reported in its Follow-up report that the college had engaged in an effort to review and revise, if necessary, all policies and practices that affected the efficient and effective roles that all constituent groups play, including the Board of Trustees, in the decision-making process. The Board began a process of reviewing all of the Board policies in Chapter 2 – Board of Trustees of the Board Policy Manual. A schedule was developed so that at each regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Board of Trustees, policies from Chapter 2 would be reviewed. On January 21, 2015, the Board reviewed Board Policy 2510 and Administrative Procedure 2510 – Participation in Local Decision-Making. From the minutes of that meeting as well as the interviews conducted, it was confirmed that the opportunities for participation in decision-making processes by faculty, staff, and students were clearly delineated. In addition, a review of the current Shared Governance Handbook also indicated a well-defined college committee structure that defined purpose, membership, and reporting lines. (IV.A.2.a)

The Team noted a renewed effort in addressing communication concerns expressed in the recommendation among the members of the Board, president, executive administrators, and the bargaining teams. On February 4, 2015 the Board reviewed and discussed Board Policies 2200 – Board Duties and Responsibilities, 2410 – Policy and Administrative procedure, and 2430 Delegation of Authority to President/Superintendent. On February 11, 2015, the Board reviewed and discussed Board Policies 2715 – Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice, 2710 – Conflict of Interest, 2712 – Conflict of Interest Code, 2716 – Political Activity, 2717 – Personal Use of Public Resources, and Administrative Procedure 2714 – Distribution of Tickets or Passes. These were facilitated activities in order to enhance dialogue and discussion. With a new President/Superintendent beginning on July 1, 2015, the Board is scheduling quarterly reviews with the President/Superintendent regarding performance and goal attainment in order to improve communication with the President/Superintendent. The first review is scheduled for September 16, 2015. In addition, the Board adopted at its March 4, 2015 meeting a “Compact Between the Cerritos College Board of Trustees and the President/Superintendent.” The purpose of this document is to maintain a successful and positive working relationship between the CEO and the Board. The document addresses five areas of concern: Trust, Respect, and Partnership; Confidentiality; The Board’s Role; The President’s Role; and Requests for Information. From interviews conducted with members of the Board, as well as the President/Superintendent, it was confirmed that this document will be of great assistance as the Board hires a new President/Superintendent. The Board also took action to improve access to Board deliberations and to improve transparency to the college and community by live streaming its meetings of the Trustees. These videos are found on the college website for public access. (IV.A.3)

The Board also addressed the necessity of the Board governing its own members when a member appears to violate Board policy. The Accreditation BAC recommended conducting a Parliamentary Procedure workshop and discussing Board Policy 2715 – Code of Ethics. The Board responded to this recommendation by holding an Ethics in Public Service Workshop on February 11, 2015 which included a review and discussion of Board Policy 2715. To address the Team’s concern regarding how members of the Board of Trustees place items on the agenda, the Board reviewed Board Policy 2340 - Agendas on January 21, 2015 and made revisions. The Board also agreed to place a standing item on the agenda for Board members to request future agenda items. To respond to the Team’s concern regarding Board interference with the President’s authority to implement policy on a day-to-day basis by having counsel attend

operational meetings of the President’s Cabinet and the College Coordinating Committee, the Board, through its review and clarification of the respective roles of the Board of Trustees and President/Superintendent, terminated this practice with the College Coordinating Committee. However, it was confirmed by the Team through interviews with the President/Superintendent and members of the Board that it was appropriate for counsel to attend the President’s Cabinet since its exclusive purpose was to review and prepare agenda items for the Board of Trustees. The Team report also expressed concern that the Board of Trustees was not following Board Policy 2550 – Authority and Relationship of Board and District Negotiation Teams with Exclusive Bargaining Units. In reviewing Board meeting minutes and through interviews with members of the Board and the President/Superintendent, it was confirmed that on February 18, 2015, the Board held a comprehensive review of Board Policy 2550 to clarify the roles of the Board, the President/Superintendent and the District negotiation teams. The Board is aware of the role of the negotiating team and its relationship with the President/Superintendent. The Board also is committed to relying on the work of the negotiating team and the President/Superintendent to represent the interests of the Board of Trustees regarding salaries, benefits, and working conditions. (IV.B.1.e)

Conclusion: The Team acknowledges the degree to which the Board of Trustees has taken ownership of the recommendations in Standard IV stated in the ACCJC Action Letter. With five of the seven members of the Board having served less than three years, the Board demonstrated its need to learn more thoroughly what the Board’s role was, the role of the President/Superintendent, as well as the role of each member of the Board. The Board has taken its role seriously and should be commended for the quantity and quality of work that has been completed to date. There was no doubt in the minds of the Team that the Board of Trustees, as well as the entire Cerritos College community, remain firmly focused on student success. For this they should all be commended.

The college has met Standards IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3, IV.B.1.e.

Recommendation 4: Board Development

In order to meet the standards, the Board should, through its behavior and actions, demonstrate compliance with Board policies and accreditation Standards. (IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g)

Findings and Evidence: As previously cited in Recommendation 3, during the follow-up visit, team members reviewed documentary evidence including the Cerritos College Follow-up Report, minutes of Trustee meetings, reviewed and revised board policies, schedule for Board review of Board policies and administrative procedures, and the action plan for each compliance issue cited in the Visiting Team Report. In addition, the Team conducted interviews with six of the seven members of the Board of Trustees, the Student Trustee, and the President/Superintendent to affirm intentional College efforts focused on addressing Recommendation 4. Specifically, the Team evaluated the degree of activity taken on the three elements of the recommendation, including; 1) board development and orientation (IV.B.1.f), and 2) board self-evaluation process (IV.A.3).

The Team reviewed the Board Policies associated with Standard IV.B.1.f as well as conducted interviews with members of the Board and the President/Superintendent. The college has, in

place, Board Policy 2010 – Board Membership which identifies how many members are included on the Board, when those elections will take place, and a provision for staggered terms to enhance continuity of Board service. The Board is scheduled to review this policy again on September 2, 2015 as part of its regular policy review schedule. Board Policy 2740 – Board Education identifies the types of activities that the district supports for the ongoing development of the Board. The policy provides members of the Board with the opportunity to attend study sessions, have access to reading materials, to attend conferences and/or workshops. The policy also provides for the orientation for new Board members. The application of the orientation portion of this policy to the newly elected member of the Board was confirmed by interviews with the Board member and the President/Superintendent. During the review of Board policies made by the Policy BAC, it was suggested that Board Policy 2740 be revised to include the responsibility of each member who attends a conference or workshop, to provide summaries of the information obtained from these activities to share with their Board colleagues so that all members of the Board can benefit by the educational experience. This revision was made, and the Board adopted the new language on April 1, 2015. Now, with the filming of all Board meetings, study sessions, and other training sessions, it is expected that anyone who is unable to attend will review the training and any accompanying material. The Team also reviewed the 2015 Board Meeting/Board Development calendar which identifies the types of trainings, college program presentations, and reviews of specific Board policies for the calendar year. The Team confirmed that the activities, reports, and trainings have been conducted according to the calendar for the period January 1 through April 1, 2015. (IV.B.1.f)

The Team report from the visit in 2014 determined that the Board of Trustees had not followed Board Policy 2745 – Board Self-Evaluation and Goals in conducting its 2013 annual self-evaluation. On June 11, 2014 the Board took immediate action and appointed a Board Goals and Self-Evaluation BAC. The work of this committee was to review BP/AP 2745 and bring recommendations to the Board for consideration. In addition, the Accreditation BAC also participated in the review in order to ensure compliance to the Standards. In reviewing Board meeting minutes, it was confirmed that the Board revised BP/AP 2745 at the November 12, 2014 meeting and has conducted its self-evaluation for the current year. The results of that self-evaluation were made available to members of the visiting team. The Board self-evaluation and goal setting process will take place at the April 15, 2015 and May 6, 2015 meetings of the Trustees. The new process and timeline will allow the Board to set its goals prior to the development of the goals established for the President/Superintendent. (IV.A.3)

Conclusion: The Team acknowledges the degree to which the Board of Trustees has taken ownership of the recommendations in Standard IV stated in the ACCJC Action Letter. The Board of Trustees has demonstrated the importance of regular self-reflection for continuous quality improvement as a governing body. In addition, by the changes made in BP/AP 2745, the relationship between the goals established by the Board and those developed for the President/Superintendent will be greatly enhanced and will likely lead to greater uniformity in direction of effort. Again, the Board, President/Superintendent and college community are commended for their efforts to achieve compliance with the Standards.

The college has met Standards IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g.