



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 7, 2014

Mr. Michael Claire, President
College of San Mateo
1700 West Hillsdale Blvd
San Mateo, CA 94402

Dear President Claire:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 8-10, 2014, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited College of San Mateo October 21, 2013 through October 24, 2013, and considered the presentation by College representatives.

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** with the requirement that the College complete a **Follow-Up Report** that must be submitted by **October 15, 2014**.¹ The Report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is granted when an institution is found to substantially meet or exceed the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Report should demonstrate, and the visiting team will verify, that the institution has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

Need to Resolve Deficiencies:

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in any Standard will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students. The Commission found College of San Mateo deficient in meeting the following Accreditation Standards: II.A.1.a, c; II.A.2.a,b,c,e,f,h,i; II.A.6; II.A.3.a; and Eligibility Requirement 10. Please note that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when an institution is not in compliance with Standards, the Commission “must immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the agency’s standards within a time period that must not exceed...two years.” College of San Mateo should fully resolve the noted deficiency by October 2015.

Mr. Michael Claire, President
College of San Mateo
February 7, 2014

College Recommendation 3

To order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College complete and assess SLOs for all courses, programs, certificates and degrees, linking them to Institutional Learning Outcomes. Further, the team recommends implementing multiple modes of assessment for certificates and degrees. The College should utilize multiple modes of assessment for the Learning Centers in order to integrate academic support services with the instructional programs. (II.A.1.a,c; II.A.2.a,b,c,e,f,h,i; II.A.6; II.A.3.a; ER 10)

Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness:

Recommendations have been made for the College of San Mateo and the San Mateo Community College District to improve institutional effectiveness. Recommendations for improvement may be made to highlight areas for continuing or expanding excellent practices. Recommendations for improvement may also be made when an institution is currently in compliance with Standards, but additional levels of effort should be demonstrated in the future. In the Commission's experience, these recommendations may provide indicators of possible future noncompliance if left unattended by the institution. College should plan to fully address all improvement recommendations in the Midterm Report.

College Recommendation 1

In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college complete its stated planning agenda to align its administrative services program review model to its mission, based on the guidelines/criteria established by the IPBC in spring 2013 program review cycle. (I.A.1 and II.A.2.)

College Recommendation 2

To increase the effectiveness in meeting the Standard, the team recommends that the College immediately complete the process of assessing and evaluating its activities of the 2008-2013 planning cycle for the purpose of improving student learning and student achievement. (I.B, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, and I.B.7)

College Recommendation 4

In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that

1. the College update the assessment plan for Distance Education, by using data to develop interventions to close the achievement gap between face-to-face traditional courses and distance courses in required core courses and provide academic support services to students enrolled in distance education. (II.A.1.b; II.C.1.a)
2. the College align the administrative program review with the new program review guidelines for instruction, student services, and learning support centers. (II.A.1; II.A.2)
3. the College develop a comprehensive plan for assessing the information needs of CTE programs, including evaluating student perceptions, job trends, emerging industry needs, and the feasibility of new programs. (II.A.2.a)

Mr. Michael Claire, President
College of San Mateo
February 7, 2014

College Recommendation 5

In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends the college evaluate technology planning. The evaluation process should include assessing the manner in which technology planning is documented, and assuring that technology needs in program and service areas are met effectively. (III.C.1, III.C.1.c, III.C.2)

College Recommendation 6

In order to enhance its effectiveness, the College should complete its planning agenda items related to its new Planning and Decision-Making Manual. The contents of this document should be expanded to:

1. clarify the relationships between the institutional planning, program planning, and the budget allocation processes; (IV.A.1, IV.A.2., IV.A.2.a),
2. clarify the resource allocation processes (including the criteria that is used in these processes); (IV.A.1, IV.A.2., IV.A.2.a),
3. clarify the linkages between the College and District planning and decision-making processes (where appropriate); (IV.A.1, IV.A.2., IV.A.2.a), and
4. describe the process and timeline by which the College evaluates its processes under the proposed Institutional Effectiveness Audit process currently under development and the review of committees' charges. (IV.A.5)

District Recommendation 1

In order to increase effectiveness, the District and Colleges should broadly communicate the modification of the evaluation process for faculty and others directly responsible for student progress, which includes student learning outcomes, and ensure that the process is fully implemented. (III.A.1.c)

District Recommendation 2

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the Board of Trustees should develop goals for increasing its professional development and orientation of new Trustees. (IV.B.1.f)

District Recommendation 3

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the District should establish a regular cycle for the evaluation of its services and provide documentation regarding the outcomes of the evaluations. (IV.B.3.b, IV.B.3.g)

The Commission voted to convey the following comments to College of San Mateo and the San Mateo Community College District.

The team report noted three specific challenges that the evaluation teams experienced during the site visit. First, the District Chancellor was unavailable to the team for the majority of the visit. Comprehensive evaluation visits are scheduled

Mr. Michael Claire, President
College of San Mateo
February 7, 2014

well in advance, and the Commission expects top administrators to be available to the team during the visit.

Second, per a reported directive from the Chancellor, additional staff members were required to attend scheduled team interviews with district staff members even though these additional individuals were not invited to participate in the interviews by the members of the evaluation team. Although the evaluation team overcame this challenge and was able to complete its duties, this is problematic. It made the work of the team more difficult and created an awkward situation. Evaluation teams are charged with examining evidence from the college, and one of the methods of gathering or confirming evidence is through the interview process. By including observers not requested by the team, interviewees may be reluctant to share information because of a lack of assurance of confidentiality.

Third, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report should, in addition to demonstrating adherence to the Accreditation Standards, demonstrate ongoing efforts by the college to continually improve its performance and effectiveness. An important way the Commission expects colleges to carry out this task is by including actionable improvement plans in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that contain future actions to be implemented by the college. The Commission noted that Institutional Self Evaluation Report for College of San Mateo did not include actionable improvement plans.

The Commission is concerned about the implications of the three challenges experienced by the evaluation team. These actions, not having a key leader available, not respecting the interview requests and confidentiality of the evaluation interview process, and failing to develop actionable improvement plans are behaviors not conducive to maintaining positive relations between the College/District and the Commission. Eligibility Requirement 21 concerns the integrity of relations between Colleges and the Commission. It states that the “institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies...”

The Commission carries out its accreditation function in a professional and balanced manner while ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of the process. Accreditation is a complex and demanding process, and the future cooperation of College of San Mateo and the District will assist the Commission in assuring the quality of institutional activities.

The External Evaluation Report that was sent to the institution provides details of the team’s findings with regard to each Eligibility Requirement and Accreditation Standard and should be read carefully and used to understand the team’s findings.

The recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit, but may not describe all that is necessary to come into compliance. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to comply with Eligibility

Mr. Michael Claire, President
College of San Mateo
February 7, 2014

Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, College of San Mateo is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

I have previously sent you a copy of the External Evaluation Team Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that the College give the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to College staff and to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the Chancellor, campus leadership, and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this Commission action letter be made available to students and the public by placing a copy on the College website. *Please note that in response to public interest in disclosure, the Commission now requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no farther than one click from the institution's home page.* If you would like an electronic copy of the External Evaluation Report, please contact Commission staff.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness, and educational quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/mg

¹Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission*. It contains the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. It is available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).