

December 2010

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Dear Colleagues,

Last month, I wrote to you about the next steps in addressing the accreditation recommendations for Mesa College. My thanks to the many individuals who responded and expressed support of the work we need to do together. The response has been thoughtful and indicative of a deep concern for the continued success of our college. Within one short month, we have already made much progress! This Update describes the progress on the two major recommendations.

Recommendation on Planning and Resource Allocation

Introduction

Of the five recommendations cited at the Team's Exit Interview, this one was deemed the most serious because it was also a recommendation from the 2004 accreditation. Specifically, we are directed to integrate and link planning and resource allocation consistently and to incorporate the use of student achievement data. The college needs to implement a planning cycle of program review, planning, evaluation and assessment, demonstrate that the allocation of resources considers the overall college priorities, and then communicate this effectively to the college. When we receive the Report from the Commission in late January, we will have more specific details. In the meantime, we are working from the information provided at the Exit Interview and the Standards, which in Standard 1.B.3 require that institutions "assess progress towards achieving stated goals and make decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, Integrated Planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation." A June 2009 letter from the Commission states that institutions are to be at the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement Level in Planning.

The Mesa College Strategic Planning Committee has been meeting weekly since the start of the fall semester, including a day-long retreat. The committee is not starting the planning process from scratch but building on the good work accomplished already.

To address concerns about "what is strategic planning" and assure that all committee members are using the same assumptions the committee adopted as a guide the text: "A Guide to Planning for Change" by Norris and Poulton, published by Society for College and University Planning (the SCUP book). Through discussions led by Dr. Jill Baker in her role as "consultant" on the SP Committee, the committee found this book to be instrumental in achieving a level of common understanding as we move forward.

Several faculty have proposed that we investigate the planning/resource allocation processes at other community colleges, especially those that have received commendations, and the committee has followed up on this. Members of the SP committee have looked at Santa Barbara City College, Pasadena City College, Sacramento City College, Grossmont College, Cosumnes River College, San Diego City College, and Valencia Community College in Florida among

others. The information has provided context, even though there are variations between the colleges' structures (single college district versus multi-college district, for example) and the ways in which colleges design their planning processes.

In addition, the SP Committee is guided by a one-page article published in ACCJC News, Fall 2009, entitled "Integrated Planning to Implement College Quality Improvement" listed under Newsletter at <http://www.accjc.org>. One key quote is: "When integrating plans and planning processes, a college must have a point in its decision-making process whereby it considers all of its plans, determines how to align them and which ones it will commit to, ... and allocates resources and responsibilities to achieve the needed changes..." The Commission intends to hold a spring 2011 meeting on practices in program review and integrated institutional planning which should be helpful as we chart our way to our own integrated planning process.

Strategic Plan Components

Strategic Planning refers to the process used for all aspects of the planning process. It is not the title for the product or plan. The strategic planning process incorporates all college-wide planning activities. It is developed by Strategic Planning Committee and approved by President's Cabinet. The Strategic Planning Committee has identified those components of an overall strategic plan that we have in place already and those components to be developed. Several of the new components are in draft form with the SP Committee. Following is a summary of the status of the work. Those already developed and approved are indicated by an asterisk (*); they are posted on the Mesa website under Strategic Planning link. Draft documents are not posted yet.

A. Mesa College Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals* These were developed and approved at President's Cabinet over a year ago.

B. Long-Term Goals (Up to 5 Years)* These are the same as Goals above, already developed and approved; they are reviewed annually and, if necessary, modified for the subsequent year.

C. A long-term plan that describes the college's direction for programs and services. The long-term plan looks out up to 15 years and provides the context for planning and the model we are aiming to achieve. It provides the answer to the question – where are we going and how do we know when we have arrived at our goal? (To be developed.)

D. Measurable Annual Objectives (1 year); reviewed annually and, if necessary, modified for the subsequent year. These describe the specific objectives that the college intends to pursue for that year in order to meet the goals. (Draft)

E. Annual Priority (1 year); these establish the specific priorities the college will focus on to meet the goals. They drive resource priorities. They work in collaboration with the Measurable Objectives. (Draft)

F. Performance Indicators* A detailed listing of research documents that provide evidence for our overall college performance and indicators of student achievement. This document is

developed by the Mesa Research Office in collaboration with the Research Committee. It includes research data on: Access/Diversity; Persistence; Retention/Engagement; Student Satisfaction; Success; and Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness.

G. Environmental Scan Summary (2010-2011)

This summarizes external and internal factors driving change, strengths and opportunities, and threat and challenges. This document summarizes information in a number of different documents. It informs planning decisions such as the Annual Objectives and Annual Priorities. (Draft)

H. Key Performance Indicators, Measurable Annual Objectives, and Annual Priorities

This document links each of the four Mesa College Goals to Performance Indicator(s), then to Specific Measurable Objectives based on Student Achievement, and establishes Annual Priorities. (draft)

I. Research Planning Agenda 2010-2011*

J. Program Review Process*

K. SDCCD Strategic Plan, 2009-2012*

L. California Community Colleges System Strategic Plan*

M. Resource Allocation Processes

Currently, the SP Committee is actively working on this component. To inform the discussion, the committee review recent planning processes and recommendations. While the complete plan is still in discussion, agreement on certain elements is in place as follows:

1. The Program Review Process

1.1. Program Review is central in the planning process. It is the appropriate venue for programs to document their resource needs (Human resources, equipment, facilities improvement, and discretionary budget (supplies, etc.) All categories of resource requests should be included in program review rather than having separate processes.

1.2. The program review document should be streamlined and less work to create.

1.3. The program review document needs to have collaboration and involvement of all department faculty, staff and the department chair or supervisor to assure it is the central planning document for the program/service area.

1.4. SLOs and their assessment are essential components of program review for planning purposes and need to be clearly documented. Resource allocation needs to be informed by data on student learning outcomes and assessment.

1.5. Year One Program Review is a complete review of all aspects of the program/service area; the annual updates focus on changes and needed resources.

2. Role of Schools and Divisions

2.1. Additional steps are recommended in the resource prioritization process.

2.1.1. Prioritization by schools of their resource needs based on the program review plans within the school/service area.

2.1.2. Prioritization by divisions (instruction, student services, administrative services) of their resource needs in the four resource areas: human resources, equipment, facilities improvements, and discretionary budget.

3. Need for Budget Information

3.1. Budget data on prior years' expenditures will be made available to schools.

3.2. Training for deans and chairs/supervisors on Colleague budget will to be provided.

3.3. With respect to discretionary accounts (4000 and 5000), the initial position is roll-over. The SP Committee will review budgets with a pattern of over- or under-expenditure and has the ability to recommend adjustments, where warranted.

4. Resource Prioritization Process

4.1. Where the Program Review Committee is charged with assuring the completion of the Program Review Plans, another governance committee, possibly the Strategic Planning Committee itself, should be charged with addressing the prioritization of resources in an integrated manner aligned with the overall campus priorities and objectives.

4.2. This committee's role is to review, prioritize and recommend action on the resources requested in the program review process and make the ultimate recommendations for priorities to President's Cabinet in all the resource areas: faculty positions; equipment; facilities modifications; discretionary budget. By housing these decisions within the same committee, integration will be facilitated and the connection to college goals, mission, measurable objectives and annual priorities will occur.

4.3. Integral to the committee's recommendations on resource priorities will be the college-wide Goals, Objectives, and Annual Priorities.

4.4. The President's Cabinet reviews recommendations from the SP Committee and recommends to the college president, who makes the final decisions for the allocation of resources.

The SP Committee intends to complete the work on the draft strategic plan, including the resource allocation processes by the end of the fall semester. At the Spring Faculty Forum, the draft will be presented to begin the participatory governance discussion and review. At the annual President's Cabinet Retreat, scheduled this year for Friday, March 4, Cabinet and Strategic Planning Committee members will review comments and finalize the plan in accordance with campus input and also informed by the Accreditation Report received from the Commission.

At this point, I want to recognize and thank the members of the Mesa College Strategic Planning Committee for their contributions: Cynthia Rico Bravo, Madeleine Hinkes, Donald Abbott (faculty); Mike McLaren (classified); Edward Higuera (student); Tim McGrath, Barbara Kavalier, Yvonne Bergland, Jonathan Fohrman, Jill Baker (consultant to the committee) (administrators); Susan Mun (campus-based researcher and consultant to the committee). This fantastic group of individuals has attended many lengthy meetings, created presentations and materials for the committee's consideration, done research and homework, brainstormed, etc.

Recommendation on Student Learning Outcomes

The second major recommendation made by the team was that we must accelerate our progress on Student Learning Outcomes, especially given the nearness of the 2012 deadline. According to the June, 2009 communication from the Commission, colleges must be at or above the Proficiency level in the identification, assessment and use for improvements of student learning outcomes by Fall 2012. An ACCJC article entitled "Where Do Course SLOs Live" published in Spring 2009 addresses four commonly-asked questions:

- How do course SLOs relate to learning objectives?
- Must SLOs be consistent across all sections/classes of a course?
- Must SLOs appear in official institutional documents such as the official course outline or catalogue?
- Must SLOs appear in the faculty members' course syllabi?

One specific requirement noted in the article is that course-level SLOs must be included in every course syllabus and I ask faculty to plan for this in developing syllabi for next semester. This article, available on the ACCJC website at <http://www.accjc.org> under Newsletter, will provide useful guidance as we move forward in our SLO work.

The lead in this work is being taken at the school level, with deans providing the assistance and coordination, faculty SLO/Task Stream Task Force members providing small group training, and faculty and department chairs creating and inputting SLOs into Task Stream. It would be remiss if I did not pause to acknowledge and thank the many faculty who are responding to my request

in last month's President's Update to make this a top priority even when there are so many other demands at hand. I believe we are on our way to the first step of having SLOs defined and entered into Task Stream. The next step is assessment of SLOs. Several disciplines are well along in assessment and evaluating the assessment results; some have completed a few assessment cycles. The peer mentoring model put in place by the SLO/Task Stream Task Force is ideally suited to assist with this next step.

For their work this semester on SLOs, my special thanks and gratitude go to Professors Ed Helscher and Saloua Saidane, Deans Jonathan Fohrman and Yvonne Bergland, and Interim Dean Chris Sullivan. These individuals are providing training, mentoring and professional expertise. I applaud their commitment to our college. As you see them, please join me in thanking them for their work on behalf of the college.

Spring Accreditation Work

During the spring semester, I am hopeful we can complete our work on addressing these two recommendations. To assure success, the college has identified a total of 0.40 FTEF unused reassigned time (to be made available in the form of ESUs), originally designated for accreditation purposes. Therefore, we will use this to assist our work on compliance with these two major recommendations of strategic planning and SLOs. A separate announcement will be forthcoming very soon describing the job duties, application and process for selection of individual(s).

And finally, please plan to attend the Spring Faculty Forum on Friday, January 21, 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm (Flex Workshop # 59057) for further discussion on our progress on these two accreditation recommendations. My thanks to all members of the Mesa community for the expressions of collaboration as we work together to assure the continued quality and reputation of our college.

Sincerely,

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