

ORGANIZATION FOR THE SELF STUDY

Organization for the self study began in fall 2001 with agreement by the President's Cabinet and Academic Senate about recruitment of self study chairs and the provision of reassigned time for these duties. The College President and Academic Senate President together sent a memo to the College community describing the self study chair's duties and inviting applications; a subcommittee was formed and two faculty members and one administrator were selected as chairs for the process; they started work in fall 2002. Reassigned time was provided to the faculty chairs from fall 2002 through spring 2004 during the preparation of the self study. One individual assumed responsibility for two standards while the other two each took the responsibility for one standard.

It was established that the President's Cabinet should serve as the steering committee for the accreditation process. The Cabinet meets weekly and is the College's participatory governance council. Chaired by the College President, its membership includes the Vice President of Instruction, the Vice President of Student Services, the Director of Business Services, a representative of Deans' Council, the President and Vice President of the Academic Senate, the President and Vice President of the Classified Senate, the President and Vice President of the Associated Students, the Chair of the Chairs' Committee, and the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee. Many others, including all administrators and accreditation co-chairs, routinely attend meetings.

Work began in fall 2002 on the recruitment of members for subcommittees with the self study chairs attending faculty, administrative, and classified meetings. In mid-fall, the self study chairs organized a workshop to acquaint the College community with the accreditation process, the new standards, and to recruit members for subcommittees. By the start of the spring 2003 semester, subcommittees had been formed and co-chairs selected for each section within the four standards. In January 2003, a meeting for all self study chairs, co-chairs and members was held. The timeline was reviewed and assignments discussed. The standards were described and distributed. A roster of co-chairs and members was established and approved. Important principles about accreditation and the new standards and themes were discussed. The importance of dialogue and necessity for providing evidence was emphasized. The meeting concluded with subcommittee meetings to establish individual meeting times.

Concurrently, the self study chairs and accreditation liaison officer for all three District colleges commenced joint meetings with District Institutional Research and Planning staff to develop campus surveys, identify necessary research support and evidence, and to address District-College matters affecting the accreditation process.

The self study chairs and the accreditation liaison officer met monthly at first and then began weekly meetings in spring 2004 as the self study was in the final stages. The meetings assured that the process was proceeding in a timely fashion, addressed issues, planned for dissemination of the self study at various phases of the process, and organized workshops for subcommittee members. The self study chairs and ALO read all drafts as they were produced, in particular reviewing how the six themes were integrated

through the document, and provided feedback to subcommittees. In August 2003, an editor was added to the group. As well as normal editorial duties, the editor assisted in assuring consistency and accuracy of content throughout the document.

The weekly President's Cabinet included accreditation as a standing agenda item. Regular updates were provided by the three self study chairs and accreditation liaison officer. The President's Cabinet Retreat in May 2003 was devoted to a review of the self study draft, a discussion of the new standards with particular attention to student learning outcomes, and a working session to identify next steps in the writing of the self study. Work proceeded through the summer with meetings for subcommittees.

In October 2003, the President, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Student Services, Academic Senate President, Classified Senate President, three self study chairs, and the editor attended a WASC workshop at Mesa College for San Diego area colleges undergoing accreditation in 2004-05. The workshop was presented by the Director of the Commission, Barbara Beno, and the Associate Director, Darlene Pacheco, and provided helpful assistance in how to address the new standards and themes.

A series of meetings and workshops were held during the 2003-2004 academic year to assist the writing process. As well as regular subcommittee meetings for sections of the standards, the standards also met together to address issues in common. Workshops for all those engaged in the self study were held at critical points in the process: completion of the descriptions, completion of the appraisals, and completion of the plans of action. Each of the workshops was organized to address specific issues and to facilitate dialogue between and among members. The first, held in August 2003, was organized around the theme of dialogue; participants engaged in an exercise to identify the theme of dialogue in the four accreditation standards and in the self study. The workshop also included a review of the self study to date and a discussion of next steps. The second workshop, held in November 2003, was organized as a mini accreditation team visit with a series of questions similar to those a visiting team might ask the College about its self study. The questions were focused on how the theme of student learning outcomes was integrated into the self study. The intent was to provoke a critical look at the self study. The third, held in January 2004, was to evaluate the draft of the plans of action. Again, participants received a set of questions in advance in preparation for the workshop.

The Standard IV committees for all three colleges collaborated to develop a set of questions for a special Board of Trustees study session held in November 2003. The queries were taken from the focus questions for the standard and included a set of interrogatories common to all three colleges and a set of unique questions for each campus. The session provided a unique opportunity to include the Board in the accreditation process and elicited valuable information for the preparation of the self study.

Efforts were made to ensure that the entire Mesa College community was aware of the self study and had ample opportunity for involvement and input. Several College-wide hearings were held. In September 2003, four hearings were held on the descriptions. In

December 2003, two hearings were held on the appraisals. In March 2004, several presentations and hearings were held. These included the President's Cabinet, Academic Senate, Classified Senate, Associated Students, Department Chairs and Deans Retreat, and one open hearing. The hearings were announced to the College by email and memo with forms provided for input for those who could not attend. The self study drafts were made available on the College intranet and printed copies widely distributed. Distribution of 120 copies included all administrators, department chairs, Academic Senate, Classified Senate, Associated Students, with reserve copies available at the Library.

After the final set of hearings, the input was collected and evaluated by the self study chairs and the accreditation liaison officer. The final draft was prepared in April 2004 and a final review held at the President's Cabinet in late April. Suggested changes were incorporated as appropriate and the final document submitted to the District docket office for inclusion for the Board agenda on May 20th. The final document was also posted on the College's internet website in late April. Following acceptance by the Board, the self study was sent to the printer in mid-June and mailed to the Accrediting Commission in August.

As a result of the self study process, Mesa has examined and continues to examine and modify existing processes and procedures. In addition, the new emphases in the standards have led the College to develop new directions including the establishment of the student learning outcomes processes with pilot programs. The self study recognizes the progress made by the College in the past decade and also acknowledges that there is more work to be done. The plans of action provide useful direction for the College. The emphasis of dialogue has been especially useful and has deepened and strengthened the College's continuing strong commitment to participatory decision-making.