



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD  
SUITE 204  
NOVATO, CA 94949  
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234  
FAX: (415) 506-0238  
E-MAIL: [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org)  
[www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)

Chairperson  
STEVEN KINSELLA  
Administrative Member

Vice Chairperson  
SUSAN KAZAMA  
Academic Member

President  
BARBARA A. BENO

Vice President  
SUSAN B. CLIFFORD

Vice President  
KRISTA JOHNS

Vice President  
GARMAN JACK POND

Associate Vice President  
JOHN NIXON

Associate Vice President  
NORVAL WELLSFRY

February 6, 2015

Dr. Gilbert Stork  
Superintendent/President  
Cuesta College  
P.O. Box 8106  
San Luis Obispo CA 93403-8106

Dear President Stork:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 7-9, 2015, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Cuesta College September 29-October 2, 2014, and heard the presentation from College representatives.

**College Accreditation Reaffirmed:**

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** and require a Follow-Up Report in October 2016.

Reaffirmation is granted when the institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is required when there are deficiencies leading to noncompliance which do not create an immediate risk to the institution's quality and effectiveness. However, if they are not addressed and fully resolved in a short time, they may threaten quality and effectiveness, and lead to increased noncompliance.

Cuesta College should submit the **Follow-Up Report by October 15, 2016.**<sup>1</sup> The Report should demonstrate that the College has resolved the deficiencies which led to noncompliance and that it meets the Standards. The Report should address the recommendation noted below.

**Need to Resolve Deficiencies:**

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in institutional policies, procedures, practices and outcomes which lead to noncompliance with any Standards will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students. The Commission found Cuesta College out of compliance with the following Accreditation Standards noted in Recommendation 1: II.A, II.A.1, II.A.2.c, and II.A.2.e.

Dr. Gilbert Stork  
Cuesta College  
February 6, 2015

**Recommendation #1**

In order to meet the Standards and to ensure that distance education courses are of the same quality as on-ground courses, Cuesta College should assure that distance education programs and services are of the same quality as on-ground programs and services, assess course materials developed outside the institution and used in distance education to ensure that the academic standards are comparable with its other programs, and evaluate training methods for distance education instructors (II.A, II.A.1, II.A.2.c, II.A.2.e).

Under U.S. Department of Education enforcement regulations, the Commission is required to take immediate action to terminate the accreditation of an institution which is out of compliance with any standard. In the alternative, the Commission can provide the institution with additional notice and a deadline for coming into compliance that is no later than two years from when the institution was first informed of the noncompliance. With this letter, Cuesta College is being provided with notice of the standards for which it is out of compliance and is being provided time to meet the standards.

The Commission would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Cuesta College on the remarkable turnaround that it has accomplished between 2011 and 2013. It has followed all Commission directives for reports and visits and resolved the considerable deficiencies in practices that led the College to non-compliance with Accreditation Standards. The College has resolved those deficiencies, meets Standards and should take pride in its accomplishments.

**Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness:**

In its report, the team noted recommendations for increasing institutional effectiveness. These recommendations do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice, but do highlight areas of practice for which College attention is needed. The Commission requires that institutions address recommendations for increasing institutional effectiveness as an aspect of maintaining compliance with standards and continuous quality improvement. The College should plan to fully address improvement recommendations 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the Midterm Report.

Cuesta College conducted an educational quality and institutional effectiveness review as part of its self evaluation. College-identified improvement plans are another important outcome of the comprehensive self-evaluation process. These plans provide a way for the institution to link its self-evaluation to the regular ongoing evaluation of institutional plans and processes, and to integrate accreditation self-evaluation into the ongoing planning and improvement efforts at the institution. The College will want to track and document changes coming out of its self-identified improvement plans for reporting during the accreditation cycle.

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

Dr. Gilbert Stork  
Cuesta College  
February 6, 2015

to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the 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 more than one click from the institution's home page.*

The guidance and 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 for the College to come into compliance. The College's own self evaluation and responsive action is a vital part of a successful voluntary peer evaluation process. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to continuously comply with Eligibility 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, Cuesta College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve its programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

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/tl

---

<sup>1</sup>Institutions 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>).