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A Follow-Up Report and Visit

**Cuesta College
P.O. Box 8106
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**A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
For Community and Junior Colleges
This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited**

**Cuesta College
On
October 27, 2009**

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Introduction and Overview

On October 27, 2009, a team representing the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges visited Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, California. The team visit was a follow up to the October 2008 visit which culminated in the college's placement on warning in January 2009. The team consisted of Dr. Fran White, team chair and Dr. Andreea Serban, team member.

During the visit, the team met with the College President, the Interim Vice President of Administrative Services, the Vice President of Student Services, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and SLO Coordinator, the Director of Library Services, Director of Planning and Research, the President and Vice President of the Academic Senate, and the President of the Board of Trustees. The team also partially attended a scheduled meeting of the college's Shared Governance Council.

The team held interviews and examined documents which were available on the website, a CD and hard copy, when requested. The team acknowledges that progress has been made in some areas, but the team was also concerned that more progress had not been achieved in the areas of leadership and governance; as well as the lack of completion for the strategic plan, integrated planning, and institutional resource allocation processes.

The Commission identified nine recommendations in its January 2009 letter to the college. The following represents the visiting team's findings for each of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Mission Statement

To improve, the team recommends that the college integrate more frequent reviews of the mission statement as it implements other institutional planning activities. (Standard 1.A, 1.A.1, 1.A.3).

The visiting team found progress related to the review of the college mission statement. On April 28, 2009, and after a year long process, the college completed a full review and update of the district mission, vision and values statements. The updates were approved by the district board of trustees on July 22, 2009. The college has fully implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

Recommendation 2: Planning and Assessment

To meet standards, the team recommends that the college complete the strategic plan, institute an ongoing systematic evaluation process that communicates and clarifies the assessment tools used to measure the effectiveness of ongoing planning, program review, resource allocation processes and student learning outcomes. (Standard 1.B, 1.B.3, 1.B.4, 1.B.6, 1.B.7).

With regard to Recommendation 2, the Commission is concerned that Cuesta College has not sustained the momentum noted by the visiting team in April 2008 and needs to increase its efforts and fully meet all parts of Standard 1.b.

The team found the college to have developed a college planning and resource allocation model called the Cuesta College Planning and Funding Allocation Cycle. While the model clearly stipulates the planning and funding cycle, including SLOs assessment, institutional, annual and comprehensive program reviews; the model is absent of the strategic plan and the education master plan. This seems to be primarily due to the fact that the college is in a two year strategic planning phase and the strategic plan will not be completed until June 2010.

The team was able to validate the planning and funding allocation process as well as the program review templates. However, without a completed strategic plan, the planning and funding process is not linked to any broader institutional planning or direction. The college has not implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

Recommendation 3: Student Learning Outcomes

To meet standards, the team recommends that the college ensure that student learning outcomes are fully institutionalized as a core element of college operations, with specific focus on curriculum, program development, libraries and on-line resources. Additionally, it is recommended that the college develop a policy for program discontinuance and a policy for academic freedom. (Standard II.A.1, II.A. 1.c, II. A. 2, II. A. 2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A. 6.b, II. A. 7, II. C. 1.b, II.C.1.c, II.C. 2).

The college has made some limited progress with this recommendation, but still lacks a faculty SLO liaison. The team confirmed that SLOs, when they are stated to exist, are a part of all program planning and program reviews. There is also stated assessment of the SLOs to validate allocation of resources. Further, there are some program and course level SLOs and the assessment results are linked to program goals. However, the information regarding the extent to which SLOs for courses and programs have been defined and data are collected is based on self reported responses to a survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research. The statements regarding the number and percentage of courses with SLOs are all based on the results of the Annual Program Planning Worksheet (APPW) and the results of the survey, which had a low response rate. There is no system that actually captures the SLOs and the data assumed to be collected that can be verified.

The information from the assessment results is stated as driving program improvement planning and validating future staffing and other funding needs. However, documentation of evidence for the statements could not be verified and was not available at the time of the visit. The college has not implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

The team found the college without a board approved program discontinuance policy, but it has a program viability policy which was approved in 2004. The program viability policy has a program discontinuance process and template which was recently used to eliminate a dental hygiene program in April 2009. There is a program discontinuance task force continuing to review the existing program viability policy. This task force will present the update of the program viability policy to the academic senate during the 2009-2010, with college-wide acceptance of a program discontinuance policy expected in spring 2010. The college has partially implemented the recommendation.

Recommendation 4: Library and Learning Support Services

To meet standards, the team recommends the college and its libraries develop and implement an on-going formal assessment of their services, on-line services, and student learning outcomes. (Standard II.C.1.b., II.C.1.c., II.C.2)

The team found a formal assessment process and procedures in place to assess library services, collections, online resources and student learning outcomes (SLOs). A Library Assessment Committee (LAC) has been established to ensure ongoing assessment of services and resources. In addition, the library instituted a timeline for completing the assessments on an annual basis. The college has fully implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

Recommendation 5: Human Resources

To meet standards, the team recommends the college define and establish the assessment mechanisms to effectively produce and assess student learning outcomes. (Standard III.A.1.c.)

The team found the college resolving this recommendation. The Institutional Program Planning and Review Committee (IPPRC) is responsible for providing technical assistance to constituents when they are completing the Institutional Program and Planning Review template (IPPR). Analysis of course and program-level SLOs is stated as being integral part of the program reviews by way of the Comprehensive Program and Planning Reviews (CPPR) and the Annual Program and Planning Worksheet (APPW). The CCP also includes an analysis of enrollment and demographic trends as well as student retention, success, and persistence rates. College faculty use the measures identified in the course and program level SLOs as well as completion rates, progress in course sequences, transfer rates, retention rates, and distribution of earned grades to guide improvements to courses and programs. The college will continue to assess course and program level student learning outcomes on an annual basis with use of the APPW, and the CPPR on a 2-5 year cycle.

Although the college has developed the mechanism of using the Institutional Program and Planning Review (IPPR) template to produce and assess SLOs, the approval by the academic senate, the planning and budget committee and the shared governance council didn't occur until May 2009; and, it is too early to evaluate or document ongoing results

and implementation outcomes. The college has partially implemented the recommendation.

Recommendation 6: Technology Resources

To meet standards, the team recommends that the college establish a process for regular and systematic planning, acquisition, maintenance and replacement of its technology infrastructure, existing and newly acquired technology and equipment to meet institutional needs; and that the process is integrated with other college planning, assessment, and resource allocation. (Standard III.C.1.c., III.C.1.d.)

The technology committee is working to provide annual recommendations for the allocation of funds for technology to the planning and budget committee based on the annual Technology Plan and review of all program reviews (APPWs). According to a review of documents and interviews, the procedures and processes to support technology planning, acquisition, and replacement of its technology infrastructure was improved in spring 2009. A report was provided in April 2009 that resulted in a commitment to downsize and reorganize the lab technology infrastructure. Another outcome was a new lab technology management process that provides opportunity to initiate requests for bi-annual lab maintenance and software.

The college's technology committee plans to review and assess the Technology Plan on an annual basis to implement short-term and long-term improvements. However, the strategic planning process has not been completed, and the college has stated in its response to this recommendation that the *Technology Plan* "will be assessed annually based on the Strategic Plan, emergent needs and technology needs reported in each program's APPW". The college has partially implemented the recommendation.

Recommendation 7: Financial Planning and Stability

To meet standards, the team recommends that the college review and assess its long range financial and capital planning strategies to ensure sufficient funding levels for ongoing operations. The team also recommends that the college and the college foundation review and communicate the fiscal status of investments and implement appropriate protections to secure fiscal solvency. (Standard III.D.1.c., III.D.2.a., III.D.2.e., III. D. 3)

The team found the college making efforts to review and assess long range financial and capital planning strategies. Previously, the college had developed three assumptions to guide the capital planning: the college will grow and the state will pay for the growth; equalization funding will provide occasional funding boosts; and the expectation that the college will pass a general obligation bond in the near future. At the time of the visit, the college had seemingly moved away from the previous model to one of enrollment management. The College Enrollment Management Committee had developed a strategy

to manage FTES generation, consequentially leading to \$1 million in stability funding from the state for the next three years, assuming the state follows through on its commitment. Although there are clear efforts to manage growth and stabilize funding, the team is concerned that the capital planning is not integrated with the strategic plan; and the assumptions guiding the current capital planning rely on assumptions on stability funding dollars that may not be forthcoming, given the fiscal news coming out of Sacramento. In addition, continued leadership crises could stymie efforts to pass a general obligation bond, which the college sorely needs. The college has not implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

The Cuesta College Foundation is a separate legal entity from the College and is controlled by its own governing board, runs its own financial accounts, uses no college or state monies, and is subject to its own legal regulations and audits. Although the foundation and college are separate, the two are linked by common reciprocal members and reporting. The team confirmed that the fiscal status of investments is reported to the college community. The annual audit report contains all investment information and is presented in open session at Board of Trustees meetings. The resulting board minutes are posted on the college's public access website. Within the requirements of federal law, Cuesta college is practicing financial due diligence to secure fiscal solvency of all accounts and investments. The college has fully implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

Recommendation 8: Board of Trustees Evaluation and Policies

To meet standards, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees conduct its annual self-evaluation no later than June 2009 and yearly thereafter. Also, the team recommends that a process and timeline be established for regular review of current board policies and development of new policies as needed. (Standard IV.A.1., IV.B.1.b., IV.B.1.e., IV.B.1.g., IV.B.1.j., IV.B.2.a)

The team confirmed that the Board of Trustees established an annual self-evaluation process and conducted a self evaluation on June 3, 2009. The board adopted the Community College League of California templates as its model to create a regular review and update of board policies. Board Policy 2400 and Administrative Procedure 2400 establish an expectation for review and update of existing board policies and creation of new ones as needed. However, no clear mechanism is in place for moving this expectation forward nor is a timeline developed. The college has partially implemented the recommendation.

Recommendation 9: Leadership and Governance

To meet standards, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees delegate full responsibility and authority to the Superintendent/President to implement and administer board policies and the effective operation of the institution. To improve college decision making and institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the college review and establish ongoing assessment of its college governance structures, processes, roles and responsibilities. (Standard IV.A.1., IV.A.2., IV.A.2.a., IV. A.3., IV.A.5., IV.B.1., IV.B.1.b., IV.B.2.a., IV.B.2.b., IV.B.2.c)

Board Policy 2430, Delegation of Authority to the Superintendent/President, was adopted at Cuesta and approved at the October 7, 2009 Board of Trustees meeting. While the policy was adopted on paper, there was no evidence at the time of the visit that actual or real changes have occurred to make the delegation of authority a reality in practice. For example, the Superintendent/President continues to remain a non-voting member of the Shared Governance Council.

Since the last visit, the college scheduled a college workshop on "Participating Effectively in District and College Governance" level II Technical Assistance, March 24, 2009. The workshop was facilitated by the president of the statewide Academic Senate and the president of the Community College League of California. As a follow-up to the workshop, the facilitators provided a report with recommendations for adjustments and changes to the composition and role of two institutional planning committees: the Planning and Budget Committee and the Shared Governance Council. In addition, the college received recommendations for improvement to participatory governance practices.

To address an issue of committee composition, the Planning and Budget committee was modified with agreement from the Board of Trustees to remove the seat held by one member of the board. According to the college Follow-up Report, the Shared Governance Council (SGC) was to schedule a review of its name, size, composition, function and authority, including issues related to the college Superintendent/President as a non-voting vs. regular member for fall 2009. The results of this review are scheduled to be implemented in spring 2010. At the time of the visit, the college had not implemented the recommendation and resolved the deficiency.

