

**MAY 15 2006**

**PROGRESS VISIT REPORT**

**COLLEGE OF THE REDWOODS**

**7351 Tompkins Road  
Eureka, CA 95501-9300**

**A Confidential Report Prepared for  
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

**This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited**

**College of the Redwoods  
on  
April 13, 2006**

**Sherrill L. Amador, Ed.D., Team Chair  
Kristina Kauffman, Team Member**

**College of the Redwoods  
Progress Visit Team Report**

**April 13, 2006**

**Introduction**

At its January 2006 meeting, the Commission acted to require the College of the Redwoods to submit a progress report by March 15, 2006, followed by a visit based on the College of the Redwoods' institutional self study report and the report of the evaluation team which visited College of the Redwoods on October 18-20, 2005. The Commission acted to issue a Warning and asked the college to correct the deficiencies noted. The progress report visit was conducted by Dr. Sherrill L. Amador and Ms. Kristina Kauffman on April 13, 2006. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the college's progress report and the evidence provided to determine if sufficient progress had been made since the October 2005 comprehensive evaluation team visit.

The Commission requested that the college focus on four recommendations from the fall 1999 evaluation team visit and four recommendations from the fall 2005 visit. These recommendations require the college to address deficiencies in program review, planning, evaluation, research, and institutional effectiveness which span two accreditation cycles.

The team received the College of the Redwoods Progress Report in time for the visit and the college was prepared for the visit. Staff at the college arranged the requested interviews for the team members with governing board members, faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Documentation appropriate to the recommendations was available to the team.

The college's progress report consisted of descriptions of progress on the 1999 and 2005 recommendations and referenced six attachments and 39 exhibits (to be placed in team room) as evidence.

The team met with the President; senior staff; Accreditation Liaison Officer, representatives from the Associated Students, Academic Senate, Classified Union; management staff; Integrated Planning Committee; College Council, Institutional Research Advisory Committee including the Director of Institutional Research, Title III Coordinator, and Title III Activities Director; Financial Advisory Committee; Program Review Committee; and five Governing Board members (including the Board President).

The team found that the college had taken the Commission's action very seriously and many activities had occurred in the short time since the October 2005 visit to address the recommendations. The team observed that the college had a positive work environment based on trust among all constituent groups and that collegial and collaborative behavior was very evident. Most of the Commission recommendations center on systemic change for the institution; and the team observed that the college is in the beginning stages of

organizing the full implementation of the recommendations. The team suggests that to aid in these organizational activities that a holistic or “big picture” approach be used first to determine how the college governance and planning committees are interrelated by clearly documenting the specific charges for each group, defining the relationships among each to ensure formal communication with the requirement of formal meeting minutes, defining the role of institutional research and evaluation in the work of each group, and stating the intended outcomes for each group to enhance informed decision making within an integrated planning and budgeting model. The team noted that some streamlining and better coordination of institutional work would greatly assist the college.

The college currently has several planning projects running parallel (facilities, educational master, technology, and financial) while at the same time institutional program review processes/products and the institutional research and evaluation function are in the very beginning stages. The college must recognize that this current situation hampers full implementation of the recommendations. Therefore, the team suggests that program reviews for all programs and services be completed in a faster timeline than currently proposed and that institutional research and evaluation become an extremely necessary priority for informing current planning activities. This reordering of institutional work will ensure the success of a fully functional planning and budgeting model in the future. The team also assessed that the college has the institutional capacity to address the Commission recommendations because of the positive working environment which currently exists among all constituent groups.

### **College Responses to the 1999 Commission Recommendations**

The following are the Commission’s four recommendations remaining from the 1999 comprehensive self study and the team’s assessment of progress at the College of the Redwoods.

**Recommendation 1 The team recommends that the college develop and implement a comprehensive integrated strategic planning process that clearly defines the connection between planning, research, evaluation, budget, and program development. The team recommends that planning be based on broad involvement from faculty, students, classified staff, and administration from the campuses as well as from the North Coast communities.**

The team was provided a diagram of the College of Redwoods integrated planning model, entitled “Mission/Values/Goals/Community” (Attachment A of Progress Report). The model uses a three-year strategic plan and incorporates an “Annual Operational Plan.” The team determined that the college has implemented this model and is currently implementing its second strategic plan (2004-2007). The Annual Operational Plan is developed by management to operationalize the strategic plan by determining needed activities and resources. Management then assesses whether these activities have been completed and presents this information to the Governing Board. To determine the strategic plan goals and objectives, the college has relied heavily on broad based community and college data which has been acquired through “listening sessions.” The

listening session data has been synthesized by the Integrated Planning Committee which analyzed themes and related evidence in order to develop a series of strategic drivers. It was reported to the team that this process has been viewed favorably in the region, and has been replicated by other entities, including Humboldt State University. The external scan was completed by a consultant and this information was used to inform the Educational Master Plan (CR 2020) draft. Clearly, the college has done an excellent job of listening to all the stakeholders for its strategic plan. However, the team determined that the current planning processes and plan had not been informed sufficiently by college educational programs and services program reviews, significant institutional research and evaluation using internal data on student achievement/performance, measurement indicators for impact of the strategic plan, or outcomes data.

The team did not find a diagram or documentation that clearly links program review, research/evaluation, and budgeting. The position of institutional researcher was filled in February 2006 after the function remained unfilled or only partially staffed since 1992. In addition, program reviews to determine institutional effectiveness have not been uniformly completed except in some vocational programs and in mostly California Community College mandated student services programs, and the Financial Aid, Bookstore and Facilities offices. These reviews appeared not be used in the strategic planning processes, even though they were reviewed by the senior staff for operational planning and by the Governing Board.

The college provided as evidence of a direct link of budgeting to planning the new hospitality and tourism program; however, the team found no diagram and limited documentation of how planning actually determines budget. In fact, it was stated during interviews that the college has limited discretionary funds, which would indicate that priorities do not result necessarily in reallocation of funds with the exception of some human resources decisions, specifically in faculty positions (hospitality and tourism) and recent unfilled staff positions.

## **Conclusion**

The team found significant evidence on the external scan portion of the college's planning model, though the college purports to have an integrated planning model. The team found that the college's planning model lacks the foundation of program review which should inform plans and activities and that no formal link to institutional evaluation of performance existed. The team found that the college fully met the second part of the recommendation of planning which was to be a broad-based process, but has not fully met the first part which requires a comprehensive integrated strategic planning process. The team determined for purposes of the college's recommendations that this remaining portion be addressed in the Commission's 2005 Recommendations and no longer be considered as a separate 1999 recommendation.

**Recommendation 3 The team recommends that the college use collaborative processes to develop and implement a plan for an organizational structure for technology support and services that is clear, coordinated, efficient, and effective,**

**and that addresses the need for sufficient staff training and funding at all campuses and sites.**

The college documented that it had responded to this recommendation by staffing a new organizational structure that has proved to be efficient and effective in supporting technology services at all campuses and sites.

In 1999 the ITS (Information Technology Services) department was created, replacing the former MIS and Data Processing areas, under the Vice President, Chief Business Officer, and appropriate management job descriptions were created and advertised. In November 2001, a new position (manager for operations and technical integration) was hired to supervise the combined help desk and operations functions within the new department and also help integrate the on-going Datatel implementation with particular unique needs of instructional and administrative departments. That complemented an already existing manager position that coordinated more hardware-based support for Technical Support Services. And, in January 2002 a new Director of Information Technology Services was hired.

In November 2002, the final piece of the current structure was put into place when the subsidiary support unit named Technology Support Services was moved from Facilities and Grounds to the ITS department. Some months earlier, as part of the college's improved service model, new technology specialist support positions had been created and filled at both the Del Norte and the Mendocino Coast centers and linked through the ITS department.

By the end of 2002, the only significant, general technical support function remaining outside the ITS umbrella was instructional technology training (including first level technical support) for faculty. This was a conscious decision, consistent with the college's development of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) as the "one stop" location for all support and training for full and part-time faculty on the Eureka campus. The links between CTE and ITS are collaborative and ongoing.

The team found that the college's Information Technology Services department appeared to be effective in its support of the college's information technology infrastructure. The college's Center for Teaching Excellence's faculty training is valued by the campus community and appears to serve as an effective means by which the institution advances in its commitment to providing high quality instruction.

Evidence indicated that the college had successfully transitioned its information systems infrastructure to the Datatel system and that training was provided for those needing access to, and knowledge of, use of this system.

Planning for technology, as well as conversations about day-to-day problems and implementation issues is conducted by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The team found that TAG was a longstanding, full-fledged, working committee comprised of two district vice-presidents, several directors, and other key staff who collectively are the

"owners" of the various data modules that comprise the major components of the college's integrated database system, as well as other key technology staff.

The team found a lack of written documentation on TAG. The TAG members asserted that, in its composition, function, and results, TAG is a highly effective committee whose only weakness may be the assumption that documentation of their activities has been unnecessary as their work was well known within the college community.

## **Conclusion**

The team determined that the college had taken positive steps to integrate and coordinate overall services at its campus and instructional sites, and has done a particularly good job with the integration and coordination of student services extending these services to their remote sites. However, the team strongly suggests that documentation on structures, services, performance, utilization, inventories, replacement schedules, etc. along with minutes of the TAG meetings be formalized to form the basis for a comprehensive technology plan which will be integrated with other college planning efforts. The team determined that the college has fully met this recommendation.

**Recommendation 4 The team recommends that the college use research, information from the community, current students, and analysis of outcomes to assess and modify as needed the choice of course and program offerings and class scheduling to respond to community needs.**

The college asserted that its decision making is informed in part by a qualitative analysis resulting from a series of listening sessions which included faculty and staff, students, and several hundred community members (as described in this report in 1999 Recommendation 1). The team determined that the college modified several programs and courses in response to community needs articulated during these sessions including the following examples which are linked to strategic drivers from 2000-2007:

- Development of a new Tourism/Hospitality Program
- Conversion to a compressed calendar offering a variety of semester lengths to meet a variety of community needs
- Opening of instructional sites in Arcata and downtown Eureka to bring instruction closer to those communities
- Successful grant application for a feasibility study for a Dental Hygiene program
- Commitment to schedule of nursing pre-requisite courses on the Mendocino Coast Campus
- Design and development of the research on the under-prepared student, along with the subsequent implementation of findings and recommendations
- Development, submission, and funding of a Title III grant to support institutional research
- National independent program accreditation for Construction Technology, Drafting Technology, Manufacturing Technology, Automotive Technology, and Dental Assisting Programs

In early November 2005, as part of the college's initiative to remove barriers to student success, the college's faculty suggested that a "waitlist" function for closed class sections would be useful for both students and faculty in managing the enrollment process. The college reports that the result has been a model of services that are coordinated, efficient, and effective.

The team determined that in most of these programmatic changes that only "front-end" qualitative research methods were used. Because the college lacked a fully implemented program review process and institutional research and evaluation function, no data-driven analysis for impact of these changes or assessment of outcomes had been completed.

The team found that the college has done minimal work on the full implementation of outcomes assessments in all areas of instruction and services. A full implementation of program review is in the planning stages. Interviews with the Program Review Committee, which included the Vice President of Instruction, reported that approximately half of their course outlines of record and syllabi contain student learning outcomes and that the loop has not been closed through assessment of these outcomes. The college has had some experience in these areas in its occupational programs, but this has yet to translate that experience to the rest of the curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

The college is to be commended for being responsive to its communities by using input for programmatic and scheduling changes which have been extensive and well received by the communities and students served. However, the team found that the missing piece in responding to this recommendation is the lack of a fully implemented program review system and a lack of assessing impact and outcomes of the programmatic decisions that were made other than using anecdotal data. It was clear from evidence and interviews that the college has moved rapidly to acquire an understanding of what is needed to fully address this recommendation. Yet, much work remains to be done. The team found that the college fully met this recommendation with the exception of a lack of analysis of outcomes of the programmatic decisions made and a lack of program review. The team determined for purposes of the college's recommendations that this remaining portion be addressed in the Commission's 2005 Recommendations and no longer be considered as a separate 1999 recommendation.

**Recommendation 5 The team recommends that the college collaboratively develop a clear plan for facility modification, facility construction, and/or alternative use of facilities and land resources. This plan should be based on the results of program/service assessment and other strategic plans.**

Since 1999 the college is been engaged in several activities to respond to this recommendation. Documentation indicated that the college uses a consistent practice for small facility modification that routes requests from divisions, through Facilities and Grounds, and then to senior staff. These modifications respond to perceived needs, but

are not based on a facilities plan which is based on program review data and documented need.

The college has undertaken construction and modification projects to meet ADA requirements and access is a priority in the strategic plan. In 2001, the college established an administrative regulation regarding Access to Programs and Facilities. The college's American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Committee developed the regulation which specified an annual operating fiscal budget for ADA barrier removal and a working plan. The college has completed its fourth cycle of funding ADA barrier removal and this has resulted in improved access.

The college, with the use of a consultant and working with the California Community College Chancellor's Office, completed an assessment program of current facilities to determine their condition and needed maintenance and repair. Also, two new facilities, the Learning Resource Center and the Child Development Center, which were completed in 2002 and 2003, essentially completed the college's building plan. Statewide formulas indicated that the district had sufficient classroom space per enrollment; thus, state funding for new construction is unlikely. The issue for the college is modernization as most of the college was built in the 1960's.

The Governing Board determined a plan for modernization and facilities modification and in 2004 the voters approved a \$40.3 million bond to fund it. The team determined that the college does not have a facilities plan that is based on an educational master plan which is informed by program review and assessment of all educational programs and services. It appeared to the team that most decisions for facilities are based on perceived need by faculty and staff because of inadequate and outdated facilities. The team noted that the college has the potential of making modification and construction mistakes by not assessing programmatic needs first, in their totality, before beginning to make costly changes to sites. It was determined by the team that the college, involving all the stakeholders, had done some of the initial work required for a facilities plan within its document CR2010. To complete this plan, the college is requiring answers to several design questions that partially address assessing needs through asking opinions of what needs to be done and why, but this approach appeared to the team to not be data driven. The college's 2004-2007 Strategic Plan has many facilities implications, but the direct link to a facilities plan was unclear to the team.

## **Conclusion**

The college has been engaged in several activities to assess the conditions of its facilities as well as address perceived future needs. These are evidence of the beginning stages for the development and implementation of a facilities plan. The college is to be commended for passing a bond to fund facilities modernization. However, the team found that the majority of activities and decisions to date were not based on program review and assessment or on an educational master plan. The college's lack of completion of these two important pieces for facilities planning had resulted in its only partially meeting the intent of this recommendation. The team determined for purposes



of the college's recommendations that the facilities planning remaining to be completed be a part of the comprehensive planning recommendation addressed in the Commission's 2005 Recommendations and no longer be considered as a separate 1999 recommendation.

### **College Responses to the 2005 Commission Recommendations**

The following are the Commission's four 2005 recommendations and the team's assessment of progress at the College of the Redwoods.

**Recommendation 1 (2005) The team recommends that the college develop and implement a means of systematic, collaborative, and evidence-driven Program Review for all instruction, students services, and institutional support areas. In order to assure maximum effectiveness, such reviews should be conducted on a regular cycle that links the findings to annual planning processes for all programs and services (Standard IB.3, IB.4, IIC.2, IIIA.6, IIB.1, IIB.2, IIC.2, IID.1, IID.2g, and IID.3)**

Based on the evidence it was determined that the college had developed a program review process for academic programs (including occupational programs) that received Governing Board approval in February 2004. To date, a schedule of programs for review was pending approval of the Academic Senate and a template to be utilized by each program is under development. The annual calendar for related program review activities contained the suggested interface between program review, the new faculty position request process, and annual operational planning (management activities) which guides annual budget allocations, but these interfaces have yet to be operationalized.

The program review process is slated to include data analysis as required by the accreditation standard. Interviews revealed that determinations are pending regarding how outcomes and assessments are linked, the potential use of rubrics, and assessment measures. Assessment plans have been developed only in areas that are mandated by programmatic accreditors or state licensing agencies.

Those faculty interviewed expressed a concern that many programs conduct reviews for multiple reasons. As a result the planned process will allow those reviews (or portions of those reviews), if they meet the standards of the college's template, to stand as program reviews. This is a deliberate decision to ensure that programs that extend themselves to measure against industry-standard benchmarks are not also required to do a repetitive or an additional program review report. Thus far the following programs have achieved such recognition through program review and are pending final approvals: Registered Nursing (BRN), Licensed Vocational Nursing (BLVN), Dental Assisting (ADA), Automotive Technology (NATEF/ASE Certification), Law Enforcement (both basic academy and advanced officer training) (POST), Construction Technology (NAIT), Manufacturing Technology (NAIT), and Drafting Technology (NAIT).

The college asserted that due to its lack of a dedicated institutional research staff until February 2006, the gathering, filtering, and distributing of data needed for thorough and

effective program review became increasingly difficult. This directly hampered efforts to revive program review. Ultimately, a Title III grant was obtained to fund this position. A review of the grant application, prepared by more than 40 college faculty, staff and administrators reveals a clear understanding of the value of an institutional researcher and their role in program review. This function, now guided by an advisory group chaired by faculty, will provide data to support the college's program review process beginning in summer of 2006.

The Program Review Committee (PRC) is in discussion on the process and structure options for completing reviews with the Academic Senate, particularly as they relate to the general education program. It is anticipated by the college that these discussions will lead to the development of a process for a college-wide assessment of the general education program. The vision for this project is to review the philosophy and structure of the current general education program and to focus on assessing how the current program is meeting the student learning outcomes for general education, formally adopted by the Senate in December 2004, and to propose any needed changes in the program. The currently proposed timeline for this review would have it completed on the same schedule as the current review of minimum degree requirements in writing and analytical thinking. The college anticipates that all revisions will be in place for the 2007-08 academic year.

The college plans to formalize the calendar for reviewing student services programs after the appointment of a new Vice President, Chief Student Services Officer, who is expected to be appointed in May of 2006.

Non academic programs are reviewed by senior staff and the College Council before going to the Board of Trustees. The team determined that there is no direct link between academic and non academic program review and there is not a plan for such a link. Also, the college's recently developed 12-Month Action Plan does not require a planning governance group to use these reviews to inform plans, and planning and budgeting. The team strongly suggests that the college consider how the completed program reviews of all educational programs and services of the college link to on-going planning by governance groups and in operational planning and budgeting decisions. A diagram and description of that link as well as following it would provide the evidence that the college is meeting the standards related to integrated institutional planning and effectiveness. Since the college is in the beginning stages of fully implementing program review, the team suggests it consider developing annual program review indicators based on data for analysis of trends to maintain currency and viability in planning and budgeting decisions versus relying on a model that requires a full program review of a program every six years.

## **Conclusion**

The team determined that the college had illustrated the value placed on external evaluation in its occupational programs and in its new program review policy. The team did not find evidence that the college has fully embraced the requirements of the 2002

ACCJC standards in its practices. A program review process was suspended in fall 1999, and revised and reactivated in spring 2004 except for the vocational programs. Since the 2005 fall visit the college has made significant progress in its dialogue about the importance of fully integrating program review, student learning outcomes and assessments into its culture of evidence as well as created a 12-Month Action Plan. While continuing this dialogue and outlining activities, the college needs to move forward very quickly with the implementation of the full cycle of reviews. In addition, a process for linking the findings to annual planning and budgeting as well as an integrated planning model should be implemented. The college has not met this recommendation.

**Recommendation 5 The team recommends that the district improve its planning processes to include: the development of a long-range educational plan; the development of a facilities master plan; and the development of an information technology plan. It is further recommended that the district develop a long-range financial planning process to provide early notice of structural imbalances between revenue and expenditures; to identify resources needed to adequately support changes in technology systems, facilities, and enhancement to student support systems; and to regulate the pace of changes consistent with available funds. (Standard IA.1, IA.4, IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7; IIB.2b, IIC.1, IIC.1c, IIC.2, IID.1a, IID.1b, IID.1c, and III.2)**

The descriptions, findings, and conclusions of the team on the 1999 Commission Recommendations 1, 3, and 5 with this report highlight the college's progress on this specific recommendation as it requires the college to have an implemented comprehensive integrated model. As previously stated, the college does not have an integrated planning model that is based on program review of all programs and services and institutional research.

It was evident to the team that the college's 12-Month Action Plans on program review, educational master plan, facilities plan, technology plan, and long range financial plan indicates an understanding of the scope of work required to implement an integrated planning model and that the college has developed a plan of action to implement one. The team suggests that greater attention be paid to how all of this institutional work, which will require a huge effort, links together and informs the final plans. The team suggests that the educational master plan based on program reviews and institutional research be the foundation for the remaining plans. Again, using the "big picture" approach at this point may be helpful in reaching the goal of implementing an integrated planning model. Based on the interviews and evidence provided to the team, it was determined that the college needs to insert institutional research into all the steps requiring assessment of the students' and college's performance to develop the plans. Questions such as "how do we know our students are successful?" and "how do we know this change created a positive direction for the program?" and "what do we want to accomplish and why, and how do we know when we have accomplished it and what will be the results?" should become part of the dialogue that will enrich planning decisions which are based on data as well as the past practices of informal discussions, broad-based listening sessions, and anecdotal outcomes.

The action plans to complete a financial long range plan have been outlined as well. The team noted the effectiveness of having the financial planning activities document annotated with appropriate Accreditation Standards, so that evidence of implemented actions will be easily identified in the future. The Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) has been charged with completing this long range plan. The college is to be commended on its more than adequate past and on-going funding of its long-term health and welfare benefits liability.

## **Conclusion**

It was evident to the team that a lot of the initial work had been done to accomplish this recommendation with the three planning processes for the educational master plan, facilities master plan and technology master plan occurring in parallel as well as initial organizational work on long-range financial planning. The next step for the college to achieve a functioning integrated planning model is to combine all of the plans for action currently in place into a cohesive, streamlined process which includes the appropriate governance groups, links all the plans together, requires evaluation of the intended outcomes, and documents the activities, decisions, and evaluations as evidence that implementation has occurred. The college is making progress; however, this recommendation has not been met.

### **Recommendation 6 (2005) The team recommends that the college develop a financial plan that will accomplish the following goals:**

- **Respond to declining revenue resulting from the loss of full-time equivalent students,**
- **Establish a prudent and sufficient unrestricted general fund balance reserve,**
- **Address changes in annual expenditures to assure that such expenditures are equal to or less than available resources (Standard III.D.2c)**

The team determined that the college had implemented a number of strategies that address this recommendation, namely the careful planning and ongoing management of resources. Some of these include:

- All positions that become vacant must go through a review process. Faculty positions go through a specific process managed by the Academic Senate. Classified, management, and administrative positions are reviewed by Senior Staff. (Although the team would encourage the college to ensure that the two processes do not create a disjointed approach overall total human resources planning and budgeting.)
- The college had initiated allocating part-time faculty salary in a budgeting process. The Title III proposal contains specific language about how scheduling, in general, will be impacted by an enhanced institutional research capacity.
- A committee was formed in February 2003 to look at ways to lower College of the Redwoods' health and welfare costs. During the first nine months of the conversion, the district has netted approximately \$260,000 in cost savings.

- College of the Redwoods has had successful labor relations agreements with the two unions representing all permanent classified staff and faculty. Multi-year agreements have provided a stable, predictable environment for budgeting and planning from year to year. Through interest based negotiations, the College of the Redwoods Faculty Organization contract ties the current year's salary schedule to the previous year's cost of living adjustment. This process provides a known factor, which facilitates greater accuracy and ease in budget planning.
- The college's Title III project incorporates financial decision-making as an area in which the college seeks to increase participation and to improve performance by more specifically tying outcome data to funding. This project, just underway, began with a series of workshops for faculty and staff to build increased sophistication about the way the college receives and expends funding.

The college stated in its progress report that it plans to have a 5 percent reserve at the end of this fiscal year, and is consciously not following the board policy of 6 percent per Governing Board approval. The college is using the assumption that enrollment will remain flat for all revenue projections for the next fiscal. The staff indicated that modeling scenarios of enrollment impacts, full time equivalent students, scheduling efficiencies, etc. had occurred in the past, but it was difficult for the team to find documented evidence of such. It was learned that the college plans in the future to have the FAC play a greater role in the review of financial information as annual budgets are developed.

The team did not find a specific plan or evidence of the type of tools that will be used on an annual basis to project revenue and expenditures, although this information appeared to be reviewed by senior staff and by the Governing Board throughout the year.

The team found that the college was working on some long-range projects to enhance enrollment, such as the Academy of Redwoods, an early college high school program partnering with the local high school districts. External funding by the Gates Foundation had been procured for this project. Also, the First Year Initiative project, which targets under-prepared students, and places them in combined classes to better ensure their mainstreaming into college level courses is another example of addressing enrollment. The college is tracking these students' success through persistence and completion in courses, however, since the project is only in its second year, the final impact is not known.

It did not appear to the team that the college had engaged in a sufficient exploration of the impact of various economic scenarios on their future. However, the college is aware of critical issue of the dramatic shifts in enrollment in the larger California community colleges which could impact the funding formula for college districts with small centers distant from the main campus. And the college has made a commitment of equal quality for students at their small centers and sites, despite fluctuating enrollments. This reality creates an ongoing financial challenge for the college district. The team found this

situation a compelling reason to have several written contingency financial plans in place and reviewed by FAC to avoid unplanned deficit spending on an annual basis.

## **Conclusion**

The team determined that the college had completed sufficient activities to begin the development of a financial plan to provide for contingency planning for unstable funding and low enrollments. The college's 12-Month Action Plans for long-range planning outlines several steps that would help in the implementation of this recommendation. The team recommends that a written plan be developed describing the steps, modeling activities, projections etc. that will be used by FAC and management to meet the board policy of a 6 percent unrestricted reserve. The recommendation has only been partially met.

**Recommendation 7 The team recommends that the college improve its capacity for collaborative and data-driven decision making. Such decision-making should incorporate broad-based participation, use of qualitative and quantitative data, and establish appropriate measures of effectiveness (Standard IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6; IIA.1, IIA.2., IIA2f, IIB.3, IIB.4, IIC.2; IIIA.6, IIIB.1, IIIB.2, IIIC.2, IIID.1, IIID.2g, IIID.3, IVA.1, IVA.2, and IVA.3).**

The team determined that the college realized in early 2001, as it began its work on the under-prepared student, that it was severely hampered by the lack of institutional research. The department was eliminated in 1992 and reconstituted in part 2001 with its research function limited to mandated reporting only and located within the new ITS department. Between 1992 and 2001, all institutional research had consisted of state-required MIS reporting and federal IPEDS reporting, along with an annually produced "fact sheet" that gave basic district information and minimal student demographics. The implementation of Datatel provided managers with the enhanced ability to develop information for use in their work; however, the college lacked a formal unit charged with developing and sustaining a rigorous review of outcomes, program review, and evaluation of institutional effectiveness to support planning.

Preparation of a Title III grant led the college to design both broad-based goals for college-wide institutional research as well as specific projects targeting the college's use of data for decision-making, including longer range plans for outcomes assessment. Funding for the grant began October 1, 2005, with a project coordinator assigned 50 percent and an activities director assigned 100 percent. In February 2006, an Institutional Researcher was hired. The Institutional Researcher has begun to work with an advisory group to move the college's research agenda forward, including integration of research with the college's planning and assessment activities. Interviews suggested that the new staff and office have received significant and broad support as evidenced by the planned addition of a research analyst in advance of the grant's timeframe and which is currently being advertised.

Based on interviews the team determined that the college is attempting to change institutional patterns of decision-making by creating a culture of evidence where the current culture of decisions based on anecdotes prevails. The college appeared to realize that this will be a slow, deliberate process that requires intentional actions, internal support, and continuous reflection. To achieve this goal, the college is establishing a comprehensive institutional research function and has intended plans to integrate this new function into core operations of the college. The team found significant enthusiasm, understanding of, and support for this change by those involved in planning for a robust institutional research function.

The Title III grant details a plan for the advancement of all aspects of institutional research at the college. This includes institutional department consultation with faculty and service directors to begin identifying data indicators to measure specific student learning outcomes at the course and program level, establishing baseline data for these indicators, and training faculty and staff on data collection and reporting protocols specific to these indicators. In addition, the plan calls for the IR office to work with college divisions, departments, and programs to support collaborative and data-driven decision-making by:

- building and maintaining a central collection of data for evidence-based decision-making;
- providing the tools and training for college employees to access and interpret the information they need;
- overseeing data integrity from collection and entry to storage, retrieval, access, analysis and use;
- providing leadership for required external accountability reports; and
- proactively sharing data and information with all college stakeholders (faculty, staff, board of trustees, students and community members) to support institutional goals.

## **Conclusion**

The team determined that the college had made significant organizational progress on this recommendation with the use of the 12-Month Action Plan. The institutional research function is poised to begin the actual implementation of its research activities and stated outcomes. Because this function is new, it provides the college the opportunity to incorporate institutional research into all its planning functions and the new integrated planning model as well as create a culture of evidence in all planning deliberations and actions. This recommendation has only partially been met.