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PROGRESS VISIT REPORT
COLLEGE OF THE REDWOODS

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**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 4, 2008

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Introduction:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges issued a Warning to College of the Redwoods in January 2006. The college was required to submit a Progress Report in March 2006. A follow up visit was conducted in April 2006. The April 2006 team's report noted the college had made progress on several of the recommendations. In March 2007, the college prepared another Progress Report and a team visited the college on April 23, 2007. The evaluation team in April 2007 noted that the college made little progress toward implementation of the recommendations cited in the evaluation report of October 2005 and the Progress Report of March 2006. The Commission placed the college on Probation in June 2007 and required that the college submit a Progress Report in October 2007.

The college began work on the recommendations but full implementation had not occurred by the time of the team visit on November 5, 2007. Following a Progress Report and a site visit on November 5, 2007, the Commission continued the college on Probation and requested a Progress Report be submitted by April 1, 2008. A team visit was conducted on April 4, 2008 to assess the college's implementation activities and to determine the extent to which the Commission's recommendations had been implemented.

In conducting the visit, the team reviewed all correspondence between the Commission and the college, including the team report from the November 2007 visit. The team conducted interviews with the president/superintendent, Accreditation Liaison Officer, leadership of the Academic Senate, members of the Coordinated Planning Team, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), the Institutional Research Advisory Board, the Program Review Committee (PRC), the Facilities Planning Committee (FPC), the Facilities Master Plan Development Team and the College Council. Representatives from the Academic Senate, the classified staff and the Associated Student Body were included in the meetings. The team also met with members of the Board of Trustees.

In summary the team found that the college has implemented program review (Recommendation # 1) and is using data to inform decision making (Recommendation # 7). The college has made substantial progress in the development of a comprehensive integrated planning process (Recommendation # 5). Additional details on actions taken by the college to address each recommendation are included in the body of this report.

It is apparent there was a college-wide effort to address the Commission's recommendations. Since the team visit in November 2007, curricula has been updated, an effective program review process has been implemented, work to complete a facilities master plan has begun as has work to integrate plans with the ultimate goal of having an integrated comprehensive planning process driven by program review and supported by data. The team commends the faculty for taking a lead role in completing the work necessary to fully implement the Commission's recommendations.

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, student 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 the annual planning process for all programs and services.

Findings and Evidence:

The team found that an effective program review process is now in place at the college. Foundation work for program review within the instructional areas was put in place during Academic Year 2006-07 when the program review model was developed. The process was implemented for all instructional programs commencing with the academic year 2007-08. A Program Review Self Study Resource Guide was developed in 2007. The guide is now used by departments when preparing self studies. A program review database that includes a Functional Group Interview template captures qualitative information regarding resource requests. The program review template used by departments completing comprehensive reviews prompts departments for specific quantitative data thereby providing both qualitative and quantitative data to assess performance.

The comprehensive program review process is to be conducted every five years. At the time of the team's visit all academic areas, student support services and administrative service areas had completed program reviews. An Annual Self Study is completed by each program in intervening years between comprehensive self study reports. Comprehensive program reviews ask the instructional areas to reflect upon, evaluate, and assess the following:

- Program's relationship to mission and strategic plan of the college
- Program description and pertinent information
- Curricula
- Program-level student learning outcomes
- History
- Measures of effectiveness
- Resources (i.e., library support, professional development, human resources, facilities, equipment)
- Summary and recommendations
- Vision and goals
- Quality improvement plan

Annual reviews provide the opportunity for programs to assess the following:

- Emerging trends and relevant data
- Resource needs (i.e., library support, professional development, student services support, human resources, facilities, equipment)
- Learning outcomes assessment update
- Curriculum update
- Goals and plans

Of note is that both the comprehensive and annual review processes incorporate the following:

- *Curriculum Update Plan*

It has been noted during both the 2005 comprehensive accreditation visit and the 2007 progress visit that the college's official course outline of records had not been regularly updated. As of April 2008, 70% of the course outlines were current. The college noted that many of the remaining course outlines that are not yet current lack full time faculty in those disciplines. The college also commented that the Curriculum Committee, the Academic Senate and the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services are working with division chairs to develop action plans to complete updates to these older course outlines.

- *Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)*

During the comprehensive program review process, departments are required to identify program-level SLOs and map each back to the course(s) that incorporate that particular program-level SLO. Further, programs are asked to submit a narrative describing the assessment of both program-level and course-level SLOs for the instructional area. On an annual basis, programs are asked to provide an update on the assessment of SLOs within the program area.

A review of a sample of completed comprehensive program reviews showed that the departments have identified several areas where student performance can be measured and assessed however, a comprehensive assessment plan is not yet in place. For example, the Automotive Technology program review states that:

“Measures of effectiveness of the program relate to a student completers ability to perform in the workplace and may include but are not limited to the following competencies/skills:

- using automotive tools commonly found in the field
- using common auto shop equipment
- locating and interpreting technical information
- Performing common repair tasks in reasonable time”

Another completed comprehensive program review commented that: “even though data is not available, examples of the methods used to measure course and program SLOs are as follows...” The college is has not implemented assessment of SLOs although institutional processes have been changed to require departments identify data that will be necessary to assess SLOs. The college is encouraged to continue its work to fully develop and implement plans to assess SLOs.

- *Quality Improvement Plan*

This element of the comprehensive program review process is designed to operationalize the program review recommendations and set in motion a means of connecting the program review outcomes with institutional planning and budgeting. The Quality Improvement Plan is meant to be refined annually (as needed) and included in each program's annual program review documentation.

In the instructional areas, program review is faculty-driven, informed by data, collegial, and led by the Program Review Committee (PRC).

Program Review - Student Services and Administrative Services

Comprehensive program reviews for Student Services and Administrative Services were completed at the time of the team's visit in April 2008. The calendar for instructional programs and the support services shows that the comprehensive program review process will occur every fifth year with intervening annual review updates.

The comprehensive process includes an analysis/discussion of each of the following program components:

- Department background, purpose, and goals
- Past quality improvements and transformations
- Outcomes assessment
- Cost effectiveness
- Recommendations and comments

Annual program review updates ask the departments/programs to address the following:

- Outcomes assessment plan report
- Department goals report
- Major accomplishments/achievements

Link to Institutional Planning

Linking of the outcomes of program review to institutional planning and budget development is not yet in place. However, through use of instructional equipment block grant funds and a small amount of discretionary funding from the unrestricted general fund the college pilot tested the use of action plans to fund initiatives identified through program reviews. Currently, the linkage necessary for program review to drive budget development and strategic planning is missing. The use of action plans is the first step toward establishing this critical link to resource allocation decisions.

Conclusions

The college has implemented an effective program review process. The team was impressed by the sincerity and candor of college staff as they described the benefits already derived from the use of this effective program review process. Because of the college's use of program review combined with a change in attitudes apparent from interviews with college staff the team concludes that the program review process is now occurring on an on-going and systematic basis. This recommendation has been substantially met. The team determined that action plans are in place that will link budget to the program reviews and planning by the end of the 2008-09 budget planning cycle.

Recommendation 5 (2005): 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.

Findings and Evidence:

In November 2007, the visiting team noted that the college had developed a framework for strategic planning. Four broad goals had been established. A small number of supporting objectives had also been established. Planning efforts continued at the college with additional measurable objectives being added to enhance the direction established through the four strategic goals.

During the November 2007 visit the team reported that with the guidance of a consultant the college had formed a Coordinated Planning Team and set broad short-term goals and objectives. The goals were as follows:

- Enable attainment of educational goals
- Build a sustainable college organization to effectively support the learning environment
- Maintain fiscal stability
- Contribute to the economic and social well-being of the northeast community

A series of supporting objectives were also created as intermediate milestones that would assist in accomplishment of the goals. Since the last team visit the college has expanded the number of objectives and has identified performance measures that can be used to monitor progress toward completion of objectives. The awareness of planning across the college has risen dramatically.

Interviews with college personnel revealed that staff is discussing the challenge of how to link the individual plans. Specifically, the college has program review in place. Departments that complete program reviews generate requests for resources that are needed to meet program review objectives. This is where the process ends as the resource requests do not yet drive the budget development process. The college realizes it must refine its process to allow program review and strategic planning to drive resource allocation decisions. In response to this weakness the college created an action plan template that is produced as part of the program review process. A small amount of money (\$150,000) was set aside to fund approved action plans. In this limited case, the program review process is important in making resource allocation decisions but only for the \$150,000 set aside for use in funding the action plans. The remaining college budget of \$25 million is allocated mostly on a roll over basis and is not allocated to achieve specific goals and objectives listed in program reviews or the strategic plan. The college needs to expand this practice so that the college's entire complement of resources are prioritized and expended in support of its goals and objectives.

The college has made improvements in the formulation of plans that support the instructional mission of the college. The Technology Advisory Group (TAG) completed development of a

technology plan. The Technology Plan includes an assessment of existing technology, specific technology goals and objectives and performance indicators to serve as the basis for measuring progress. The college is commended for its efforts in completing the technology master plan.

A plan to ensure the college provides adequate facilities in support of student learning has admittedly been the most difficult for the college to conceptualize and create. Given the length of time when the college was not using program review to inform planning efforts, it is understandable how the college has struggled with identifying how facilities either support or fail to support instructional methodologies. Data that would reveal load capacity ratios and other facilities utilization statistics are not available and hence have not yet been incorporated into the assessment process. Those statistics are important pieces of information useful in assessing the efficient use of facilities.

A critical benefit of a facilities master plan is identification of changes in the facilities that are necessary to employ certain instructional methodologies. For example, use of technology-dependent presentations of information to students is not possible when a classroom lacks the required equipment and access to data networks. A facilities master plan will identify shortcomings of facilities and establish an action plan to make appropriate improvements to facilities. Now that the college has institutionalized program review, the team expects the strengths and weaknesses of the facilities used for instruction will become noticeable.

The Facilities Planning Committee (FPC) was formed in October 2007. A second group known as the Facilities Master Plan Development Team was created in March 2008. Consultants have also been retained to assist the college in completing a Facilities Master Plan. The foundation and structure of the planning framework has been prepared.

The college has completed work on a long-range financial plan that offers several planning scenarios given changes that are expected to occur in both enrollment and state funding. These two items have an impact on the amount of revenue the college can expect in any given year. Expenditures are now within budgeted revenue although the college may have to further reduce expenditures in FY 07/08 to offset mid-year reductions in state revenues that have only recently been announced. Enrollment has now stabilized at the college.

A strategic plan, a long-range financial plan, and a technology plan are now complete. As noted previously the program review process is also in place. The final step is to link the plans so that the technology plan, program review, financial planning, including budget development, feed into the strategic plan. A final long-range planning document commonly referred to as an Educational Master can also be prepared when the facilities master plan work is complete.

Conclusions:

The team listened to a large number of college personnel during the site visit. The recurring theme was an expression by employees from all constituency groups that the culture of the college has been changed so that data is a basis for planning at every level.

The college created a strategic plan, a long range financial plan and a technology plan.

The college is continuing work to complete a facilities master plan. The facilities master plan will be a necessary ingredient for the college's educational master plan which also must be completed in order to fully implement all parts of this recommendation. The college has partially implemented this recommendation.

Recommendation 7 (2005): 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.

Findings and Evidence:

The team found the college has improved its capacity for collaborative, data driven decision making. The governance structure is in place and functioning in a manner that provides the college with significant amounts of information. Efforts are continuing to establish appropriate measures of effectiveness. The college's efforts have focused on three primary areas:

- *Developing the capacity for institutional research*
The college hired a permanent full time Director of Institutional Research. The researcher is involved in all planning efforts and is working to ensure all planning efforts include appropriate data to inform decision making. Data bases are being developed and will serve to establish a benchmark for future comparisons and assessment of performance. The college is continuing to expand its use of available data.
- *Embracing the notion that data is important, necessary, and effective in informing the decision-making process*
Overarching efforts to embed data into institutional processes are evidenced by examination of the college's program reviews and the newly established culture of evidence. Increasing access to and use of data and increasing data-driven decision-making is just one objective that the college has identified as a priority within its strategic plan.

The Institutional Research Advisory Committee (IRAC) provides support, advocacy, and neutrality to the evolving research function at the college. The IRAC maintains a commitment to ensuring and protecting the integrity of institutional research at the college. The College Council is also involved in decision-making processes.

Further, the college has expended much effort to understand what it means to use data in an effective manner to (1) inform decision-making, (2) serve as a foundation for governance processes, and (3) form the basis for institutional systems and functions. To further this understanding, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) stated its role as follows:

To provide oversight, coordination, analysis and reporting on the effectiveness of the college. Serving as a neutral clearinghouse for program review and planning information, this committee will use the mission and goals of the college as the lens for evaluating program reviews and college plans.

The IEC uses data and research to assess the effectiveness of programs and plans. It disseminates data-informed assessment reports to college governance partners.

The IEC and College Council are two bodies that are active in the governance and decision making structures. Viewed together, the IEC is considered to be a coordinating body for information, reports, and assessment of effectiveness while the College Council is a long-range policy oriented body. The Coordinating Planning Council (CPC) is the group responsible for planning and setting priorities. The CPC uses the work and efforts of the IEC to inform the planning processes.

- *Dissemination of institutional data*

The college has worked hard to create a culture for decision making that is evidence-based and collaborative. Data is accessible to all, transparent, and serves as a foundation for college decision-making processes and institutional governance. Data in various forms is available on the college's web site. Functional Group Planning Reviews are just one form of data that is available on the web site.

Conclusions

The team determined that the college has met this recommendation. The college has organized its governance structure and planning processes based on a robust research office, led by the college's new, experienced researcher. The college is using data in decisions, and the conversations among the various groups interviewed substantiated the change in the culture of the college to become evidence-based.