



Los Angeles Valley College
5800 Fulton Avenue
Valley Glen, CA 91401

Progress Report

March 15, 2008

Submitted to the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges

Western Association of Schools and
Colleges

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Statement on Report Preparation

Since Los Angeles Valley College was required to respond only to district recommendations for this progress report, the narrative was prepared and the evidence was provided by the District Liaison for Accreditation, Deborah Kaye. One piece of information, regarding college efforts related to district recommendation #1, was added by Ms. Kaye, who previously served as the college's faculty accreditation chair.

The report was reviewed by the College Council, the college's primary shared governance body, on January 22, 2008. The report was also reviewed by members of the college Academic Senate prior to its meeting on February 21, 2008. Both governing bodies found the information contained in the report to be acceptable.

On February 27, 2008, the Board of Trustees' Committee on Planning and Student Success heard a presentation from the college and approved the progress report. All of the Board members received copies of the report prior to the meeting.

Dr. Tyree Wieder, President, Los Angeles Valley College

Responses to District Recommendations

Recommendation 1: District Progress on SLOs & Faculty Evaluation (March '08)

The team recommends that the District should provide leadership in supporting the progress toward incorporating achievement of stated student learning outcomes as a component of faculty evaluation (Standard III.A.1.c).

Anticipating the need to address this issue prior to the 2007 accreditation team visit, the district created a Faculty Evaluation Taskforce in spring 2006 to bring together members of the District Academic Senate and the AFT College Faculty Guild in order to provide the colleges with guidance in fulfilling this standard. The task force was comprised of the District Academic Senate president, two college Academic Senate presidents, two college senate members, three Faculty Guild chapter presidents, the Guild's executive secretary, and the Chancellor's Liaison (currently the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness). After reviewing the collective bargaining agreement and determining that its provisions did not preclude consideration of student learning outcomes in the evaluation process, the Taskforce issued a report with several recommendations (1.1).

These recommendations involve a model for incorporating student learning outcomes in faculty evaluations by linking them to the long-term professional development goals of individual faculty. This approach "closes the loop" of institutional improvement by connecting faculty development activities to college-wide efforts to improve student learning.

The proposed model is designed to be used in the comprehensive evaluation process as defined in Article 19 of the AFT collective bargaining agreement, the more rigorous of the periodic faculty evaluation processes, which is based on "information derived from considerable structured data gathering under the supervision of a peer review committee." Within this model, the comprehensive evaluation process includes a self-evaluation component to provide faculty members an opportunity for serious reflection and goal setting. This self-assessment would offer a snapshot of the faculty member's professional development activities since the last major evaluation, an assessment of his/her contribution to campus-wide and departmental SLO assessment and improvement efforts, and a clear statement of future goals and action plans for improvement. Because faculty play such a central role in institutional improvement and student learning, these personal goals would support or link to overarching college goals and objectives, including goals established in the college's educational master plan and in departmental program review.

Within the proposed model, as faculty members reflect on their activities over the past six years and set future professional development goals, they would link these future plans for self improvement to areas identified at the college and departmental levels as needing improvement in relation to SLOs. So, for example, in response to an identified college-wide, departmental, or discipline-specific need to focus more attention to developing critical thinking competencies, a faculty member might elect to research critical thinking

pedagogies in relation to his or her academic field, attend a conference on critical thinking and individual learning styles, develop a new critical thinking module for courses in his/her discipline, or design and conduct a workshop for professional development credit on the topic. Or, in response to an assessed need to strengthen “computational competencies” among students in the sciences, a biology instructor might set professional development goals that involve building more math problems into homework assignments, revising course outlines to include more computational content, or devoting some hours to service in the college’s math tutorial lab. Linking professional development goals to assessed institution-wide and departmental student learning outcome needs would ensure that individual faculty members make a positive contribution to the ongoing improvement of student learning.

The model also requires that each faculty member submit a Professional Activity and Growth Report to the peer evaluation committee. This report could provide an overview of the faculty member’s professional development activities and service to the department and college community since the last comprehensive evaluation. It would also include new professional development goals and action plans that reflect assessed needs relative to campus wide and departmental student learning outcomes. Specifically, the report would include:

I. Professional Achievements -- a summary of the faculty member’s activities in response to goals established in the last comprehensive evaluation, including notation of significant achievements and recognition

II. Institutional Service – documentation of the faculty member’s engagement in service to the college/district (e.g., standing committees, accreditation, etc.); to the department (departmental committees, Title 5 updates, etc.); to the campus community at large (sponsoring clubs, special events, etc.)

III. Professional Development Activities -- documentation of professional development activities, e.g., conferences attended, continuing education, independent research and reading, conference/workshop presentations or papers, membership and participation in professional organizations

IV. Professional Development Goals – the establishment of personal professional development goals, each of which may be linked to educational master plan and/or departmental program review goals (expanding access, enhancing student success, increasing transfer or vocational certifications, etc.) and to one or more assessed institutional “weaknesses” relative to student learning outcomes; included would be action plans and timelines for fulfillment over the next six years

The issue of incorporating SLOs into faculty evaluations is expected to be addressed during contract negotiations in the spring and summer of 2008. Until the collective bargaining agreement is finalized, the recommendations of the 2006 Faculty Evaluation Taskforce can only be adopted as a recommended “best practice” by each of the LACCD colleges at the local level. As specified in the Taskforce’s final recommendations, the

faculty at each college are encouraged to engage in vigorous dialogue on ways to institute these recommendations. These local discussions should be overseen by the college academic senates in consultation with the College Faculty Guild chapter. A joint Academic Senate-AFT College Faculty Guild subcommittee was formed in December 2007 to address this issue at LAVC.

Evidence

1.1 LACCD Faculty Evaluation Taskforce report August 2006

Recommendation 2: District Plan for Retiree Health Benefit Liability (March '08)

The team recommends that the college should closely monitor in future years the success of the District's plan for addressing retiree health benefit liability to assure that out-year obligations are met without significant impact on the financial health of the institution (Standard III.D.1.c).

The district has taken significant steps to minimize the impact of its retiree health care obligation by instituting an innovative plan to address its GASB liability. Based on an actuarial study conducted in 2005 (2.1), the plan was negotiated by the employee unions and district management. Beginning in the 2006-07 academic year, 1.92% of the previous fiscal year's fulltime employee payroll (almost one-third of the 2006-07 state COLA) was set aside with the intention of placing the funds in an irrevocable trust to begin to pre-fund retiree health benefits. The district will be depositing the same percentage of the previous year's full-time salaries into the trust on an ongoing annual basis.

Late in 2006, representatives of all employee unions and district management, searching for GASB investment options, unanimously selected CalPERS to administer the district's GASB trust. Working together, CalPERS and the district were able to get legislation passed and signed into law in 2007 to permit public entities not in CalPERS' health care program to use CalPERS as the manager for their GASB trusts. The district agreed to "fast-track" an updated actuarial study so that the money can be moved from a reserve account with Los Angeles County to CalPERS, where it is expected to earn a better rate of interest. Currently, there is about \$11-12 million in the fund.

Our district's prefunding plan recently received special recognition from the Public Employee Post-Employment Benefits Commission, a state commission established by Governor Schwarzenegger, which spent all of 2007 looking at unfunded obligations of California's public entities for pensions and retiree health care. College Faculty Guild President Carl Friedlander and former LACCD Chancellor Rocky Young testified before the commission in September of 2007. Included in the commission's final recommendations was a "hybrid" plan very similar to our district's, suggesting that public employers with large GASB obligations from decades of promised retiree health care continue to use "pay-as-you-go" funding but begin to pre-fund future obligations. The LACCD's plan was cited as a model of best practices in the commission's final report (2.2).

This recognition validates the district's philosophy of shared responsibility for health care and rewards the hard work done collaboratively on this issue. [More details are contained in an update issued by the Faculty Guild in Fall 2007 (2.3).]

Evidence

2.1 LACCD Actuarial Valuation as of July 1, 2005 for the District's Retiree Health Insurance Program

2.2 Funding Pensions & Retiree Health Care for Public Employees, a report of the Public Employee Post-Employment Benefits Commission, p. 169-173

2.3 2007 GASB Report, Carolyn Widener, Los Angeles College Faculty Guild

Recommendation 3: Board Self Evaluation (March '08)

The team recommends that the Board of Trustees should complete the self-evaluation process by discussing and developing a set of board goals to respond to any issues identified in their self-evaluation. The Board should institutionalize the goal setting and measuring of accomplishments as part of the self-evaluation process (Standard IV.B.1.g).

To respond to this ACCJC concern, the Board of Trustees adopted a board rule on October 17, 2007 that established the setting of board goals as part of its annual process of self-evaluation (3.1). As it does in the Fall of every year, the board conducts a self evaluation on 20 general areas and scores its performance (3.2). At a committee of the whole meeting on December 19, 2007 (3.3), the board reviewed its annual self evaluation in open session and made overall comments (3.4). At its January 30, 2008 meeting, the board established a new set of annual board goals (3.5). The 2008 goals are:

Access: Expand Educational Opportunity and Access

1. Increase outreach to communities and groups that have been historically underserved by higher education (such as African Americans, Latino males, etc.) to increase college awareness and participation.
2. Encourage the development of programs meant to connect the “disengaged” and those at risk of becoming disengaged with productive educational pathways.

Success: Enhance all Measures of Student Success

3. Support the development and implementation of district-wide strategies aimed at increasing student success outcomes.

Excellence: Support Student Learning and Educational Excellence

4. Foster the development of new Career/Technical Educational programs that are designed to provide area residents with economically sustainable jobs and that lead to future educational and career options.
5. Encourage the development of green educational degree and certificate programs that complement the District’s award-winning bond building efforts.

Accountability: Foster a District-wide Culture of Service and Accountability

6. Continue the District-wide dialogue on decentralization and further clarify the division of roles and responsibilities between the colleges and the District Office.
7. Require regular reports to the Board of Trustees on college and district efforts to implement the goals and objectives in the District Strategic Plan.
8. Monitor the effectiveness of efforts at the colleges and the district office that are meant to foster a district-wide culture of customer “service and accountability.”
9. Support the implementation of a district-wide recycling program.

Collaboration & Resources: Explore New Resources and External Partnerships

10. Forward legislative initiatives intended to increase college access, stabilize college funding, and reduce unnecessary red-tape.
11. Continue to address the physical and capital needs of the District.

In the Fall of 2008, the board will again assess its progress in accomplishing its goals as part of its self-evaluation process and will set new goals for the following year.

Evidence

3.1 Board Rule 2301.10

3.2 Board Self-Evaluation 2007

3.3 Minutes of the December 19, 2007 BOT meeting

3.4 Board Evaluation Comments

3.5 Minutes of the January 30, 2008 BOT meeting

Recommendation 4: Evaluation of College Presidents & Chancellor (March '08)

Although in practice the evaluation of the college presidents and district chancellor occurs on a regular basis and is an inclusive process, the team recommends that the district develop a written policy that clearly defines the evaluation process (Standard IV.B.1.j).

To address this ACCJC recommendation in reference to the evaluation of college presidents, the district HR division drafted a formal written policy, the Performance Evaluation Process for College Presidents (4.1), which clearly spells out the evaluation process that has been and continues to be followed. The description is now included in the packet with the evaluation forms that are used (4.2).

The current process for the evaluation of college presidents has been in place since 2002 and was originally developed by the former Senior Vice Chancellor/Interim Chancellor. The process was continued by Chancellor Rocky Young, and our current Chancellor, Dr. Mark Drummond, has no immediate plans to make any changes. The presidential evaluation process is facilitated by the Chancellor's Office. The procedure is followed each spring with about three presidents undergoing the comprehensive process each year.

To address this ACCJC recommendation in reference to the chancellor's evaluation process, the Chancellor's Office issued a directive that spells out the procedure that has been and continues to be followed (4.3). The board, using the General Counsel as staff, conducts the evaluation of the chancellor, whose contract includes a provision for an annual evaluation. Each year, the board reviews its previous evaluation and directs the General Counsel regarding the process for the current year. In most years, the board solicits input from various constituencies, typically including the college presidents, district senior staff, the academic senate presidents, and union representatives. To achieve this, the General Counsel's Office sends out a data collection form (4.4) to evaluate the chancellor's performance on a number of criteria and elicit comments, which are submitted anonymously. Postcards are sent to confirm that these forms have been received. All of this material is provided to the trustees.

The chancellor typically prepares a written self-evaluation based upon his stated goals, which is given to the board.

The trustees submit their own appraisals on an evaluation form (4.5). These are collected and sent to a designated trustee for summarization or to the General Counsel for consolidation. The trustees then discuss the matter in closed session, and a designated trustee prepares a final draft for the full board's review. The trustees then meet with the chancellor and provide the final written document.

Evidence

4.1 Performance Evaluation Process for College Presidents

4.2 Presidential Evaluation Packet

4.3 Chancellor's Directive #122 on chancellor evaluation

4.4 Chancellor Evaluation Data Collection

4.5 Chancellor Evaluation form

Appendix

- 1.1 LACCD Faculty Evaluation Taskforce report August 2006
- 2.1 LACCD Actuarial Valuation as of July 1, 2005 for the District's Retiree Health Insurance Program
- 2.2 Funding Pensions & Retiree Health Care for Public Employees, a report of the Public Employee Post-Employment Benefits Commission, p. 169-173
- 2.3 2007 GASB Report, Carolyn Widener, Los Angeles College Faculty Guild
- 3.1 Board Rule 2301.10
- 3.2 Board Self-Evaluation 2007
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- 3.4 Board Evaluation Comments
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- 4.2 Presidential Evaluation Packet
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- 4.4 Chancellor Evaluation Data Collection
- 4.5 Chancellor Evaluation form