

A Follow-Up Visit Report to

MiraCosta College
One Barnard Drive
Oceanside, CA 92056

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
For Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
MiraCosta College
on March 28, 2011

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Introduction and Overview

On March 28, 2011, a team representing the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) visited MiraCosta College in Oceanside, California. The team visit was a follow up to the March 2010 comprehensive visit which resulted in the reaffirmation of accreditation, with a requirement that MiraCosta College complete two Follow-up Reports, both reports to be followed by a visit by Commission representatives. The team consisted of Dr. Andreea Serban, team chair and Dr. Dennis Gervin, team member.

During the visit, the team met with the College Superintendent/President, five of the seven members of the Board of Trustees, the Vice President of Business Services, the Vice President of Student Services, the Vice President of Instruction, the Director of Institutional Research, the Academic Senate President, the President of the Associated Students, the SLO Coordinator, the two co-chairs of the Budget & Planning Committee, the co-chairs of the Program Review Committee, and the President of the Classified Senate.

The team held interviews and examined documents and evidence which were available on the college website, sent by the college in advance of the visit and additional documents provided on site by the college during the visit.

In its June 30, 2010 action letter to the college, the Commission identified Recommendation 1 as the focus for the March 2011 follow-up report and visit. The following represents the visiting team's findings for Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 1: In order to meet the standards, the Team recommends that the college (I.A.4, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, III.A.6, III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.2, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.b, III.D.1.c, III.D.1.d, III.D.3, ER 19, ER 21):

- Implement, align, and integrate various college plans into a fully integrated institutional plan that advances a defined mission statement.
- Develop specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound objectives in relation to clearly stated institution-wide goals that are understood college-wide and represent the foundation of the integrated institutional plan.
- Conduct consistent, systematic and timely evaluations of the integrated institutional plan and its related components based on analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data and ensure the results are communicated and understood by college constituents. Further, in order to promote and sustain a culture of evidence and improve institutional effectiveness, the college should implement an ongoing method of measuring and evaluating its effectiveness in achieving stated institutional performance objectives and student learning outcomes.
- Complete the Education Master Plan and begin implementation. In addition, the college must demonstrate that decisions regarding priorities result from stated institutional goals and are linked to an integrated institutional plan and its related planning components.

With regard to Recommendation 1 above, the Commission noted in its June 30, 2010 action letter to the college the need for MiraCosta College to place significant emphasis on college-wide, integrated planning that is data-driven and which informs institutional decision making.

After the March 2010 comprehensive visit, the college hired two consulting firms to assist the college in the development of the Educational Master Plan. The college organized a Master Plan Team with representation from all college constituencies. The first meeting of the Master Plan Team took place on May 7, 2010. The Master Plan Team, with assistance from consultants, developed a schedule for the work on the Educational Master Plan, which was posted on the college web site.

At the time of the March 28, 2011 visit, the first four chapters of the Educational Master Plan have been written, distributed for college-wide review, discussed in college-wide forums, presented to the Board of Trustees, and further refined, based on college input. The four chapters are: I) Background; II) Profile of the District Community and Students; III) Instructional Disciplines and Student Services; and IV) A Declaration of Institutional Excellence.

The Educational Master Plan is envisioned to be a ten-year plan to be reviewed annually. The college expects to complete the Educational Master Plan in fall 2011. The team was able to verify that the college constituents were informed about the process put in place to develop the Educational Master Plan and that all those interviewed were familiar with the four chapters. The college Superintendent/President and Board of Trustees feel that most important is the process that has been used to develop the Educational Master Plan and the institutional goals and objectives. The college leadership notes that because MiraCosta College has been a college whose culture was not based on data-driven decision making or planning, being at the point they are is a major achievement. The culture of the college is being changed: departments are now looking at data, analyzing the data and trying to plan forward based on evidence.

Chapter IV “A Declaration of Institutional Excellence” defines five strategic goals and each goal has a number of related objectives. Most of the stated objectives are statements related to the desire to develop more processes “Develop a process for establishing and distributing an annual research agenda and reports” or develop other plans such as “Develop the District Technology Plan for 2011-15” or are aspirational in nature “Become a model for environmental education and sustainability.”

Of the 37 objectives associated with the five goals none are time-bound and very few are specific or measurable. The college leadership interviewed acknowledged that these objectives need additional work to become specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound. For the most part these objectives are ‘a plan to plan’ rather than actual guiding objectives that would give specific direction to the college.

Chapter III “Instructional Disciplines and Student Services” includes a section for each of the instructional disciplines and student services at the college. Each section describes the discipline or service, includes growth projections and a number of suggested actions. As with the institutional objectives, the program related actions are, in most cases, not measurable or time bound nor do they appear to be related to the institutional strategic goals or objectives.

A significant disconnect appears to exist between the current chapters in the Educational Master Plan and the efforts of the college to reduce budgets and expenditures. Both chapters III and IV of the Educational Master Plan, the institutional objectives and the suggested actions for individual departments, emphasize growth and expansion. There is no mention or reference to the parallel college direction to reduce expenditures.

Starting in August 2010, the Budget and Planning Committee engaged in discussion related to the program review linkage to resource allocations. The college had built a program review system PERCY which has been refined and improved since its inception. In January 2011, a new committee has been approved: the Institutional Program Review Committee (IPRC). The IPRC started its work in spring 2011 to evaluate and enhance the program review process and strengthen the incorporation of Student Learning Outcomes and Outcomes Assessment in all program reviews. At this time, program reviews have not incorporated a link to the institutional goals or objectives. The college expectation is that once the Educational Master Plan is completed, that link will be established.

Consistent, systematic and timely evaluations are not yet in place, primarily due to the recent development of planning processes. Quantitative and qualitative evidence is made available through PERCY, and presented in program review. Data, however, is rather broad, and does not address indicators at the course level or information regarding the ability of programs to meet (or identify) unmet demand. Analysis in program review does not seem to align with available data, making it difficult to ascertain if projections and planning assumptions are truly evidence based.

Other college plans appear to be implemented and are guided by Administrative Procedures. At the time of the visit there was not clear evidence that the plans were integrated. The most likely operational component for this alignment to occur would be in PERCY, or clear connections to program review. Such connections are not evident, and while the intent is clearly for planning to be driven by the Mission, Vision and Core Values, evidence of how such alignment is occurring is not clear.

The college may want to consider the following elements that appear to be needed for more effective integration of overall institutional planning:

- 1) A clear prioritization mechanism for resource allocation. Such a system needs strong evidence based elements (qualitative and quantitative) that demonstrate resource allocations are in support of the college mission, strategic institutional goals and related, relevant objectives. Prioritization criteria, processes and outcomes need to be visible to the college. Resource requests from program review should have clear connections to the key planning elements noted. This would help to focus resource allocation and would provide a mechanism to evaluate progress towards meeting institutional goals.

- 2) A diagram, illustration or narrative that clearly identifies how annual comprehensive planning (and resource allocation) connects to long-term planning processes and to the Educational Master Plan, once completed.
- 3) Program Development Plans need to be clearly identified in program review.

To conclude, the team acknowledges that progress has been made by the college since the March 2010 comprehensive visit in addressing the Commission's concern with Recommendation 1. The most significant improvement that the team observed relates to an emerging willingness of faculty, administration, staff and the Board of Trustees to embrace institutional planning and work towards developing and implementing college strategic goals, objectives and an overall plan that will guide the work of the college and the allocation of resources.

The team acknowledges that the positive change that was observed at MiraCosta College during the March 2010 visit has continued and it provides the college with the capacity to address the recommendation. The team found evidence of progress in terms of the four components of Recommendation 1, as noted above.

The college has made progress with regard to the development of planning processes, but critical planning components, such as the Educational Master Plan are not yet complete. This is central to challenges that remain unmet relating to the integration of planning processes for the institution.

Planning, data collection, data analysis, resource prioritization and allocation are connected in theory, but little evidence exists that these connections are operational or understood by the college. Planning processes are not yet integrated, and interviews with faculty, staff and administration suggest there is not yet a clear understanding of what mechanisms would strengthen the integration of planning processes for the institution.

Though much work has gone into developing the means to achieve integration across these college processes, the team has concerns about the lack of an overall integrated institutional plan, the fact that the Educational Master Plan has not been completed and that the full implementation and functionality of an integrated evaluation, planning, and resource allocation cycle are yet to be achieved.

This recommendation has not been fully met.