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Sent by: President's
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Please respond to
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To PRES-ALL@MTSAC.EDU

cc

Subject [PRES-ALL] MONTHLY LETTER TO THE CAMPUS
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Colleagues,

As many of you know, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has accepted our Midterm Report and has commended "Mt. SAC for the thorough analysis it provided of its success in addressing the Commission's recommendations.." The Commission's compliment is particularly noteworthy since a record 19 California community colleges on which the Commission took action last month were either placed into some status of sanction or maintained in some status of sanction. While we should take pride from the Commission's action (and thank Barbara McNeice-Stallard and Jemma Blake-Judd for their excellent work in authoring the Midterm Report), we also should recognize and engage the significant and challenging work that lies ahead, as we prepare for the next comprehensive evaluation by ACCJC in 2010.

Of particular concern to the ACCJC are program review, institutional planning, and student learning outcomes (SLOs), all of which we have been engaging since work began on preparation for the 2004 comprehensive evaluation for reaccreditation. (Of course, program review and institutional planning have a long history at Mt. SAC, assuming many names and approaches over the years.) We continue to make good progress in developing and assessing SLOs, expanding this year to include development of SLOs for general education. Coordinated by Professors Darrow Soares and Joe Terreri, in collaboration with a committees focused on General Education Outcomes and on Student Learning Outcomes, our approach and progress relating to SLOs are, I believe, on the right track. However, we still have a lot of work to do in order to meet the ultimate expectations of ACCJC.

The key to successful institutional decision making is the development and assessment of student learning outcomes which are integrated with program review and institutional planning. In this comprehensive model, student learning outcomes assessment forms a foundation for planning, evaluation, and decision making, grounded in evidence and a focus on students. Our Planning for Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) program establishes the core of our approach to program review and institutional planning, and I think we have made good progress in refining and expanding the model. Augmenting our efforts in institutional planning, we have contracted with a consultant who will work with us to develop an Educational Master Plan for Mt. SAC, in collaboration with faculty and staff. (You will hear more about this project in the coming months.) Your good work with PIE, which is coordinated by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, has given Mt. SAC a good start in developing a comprehensive, ongoing, and effective program of institutional planning and evaluation, focused on student access and success.

Using accreditation standards, ACCJC has set a high bar of expectations for program review, institutional planning, and SLOs. As we begin early work on the 2010 self-study for reaccreditation, under the leadership of Barbara McNeice-Stallard and Professor Kristina Allende, we all should become knowledgeable about those expectations and about the status of our work toward meeting them. Campus-wide dialogue and engagement on the three areas of concern are essential to our success with reaccreditation and with our students. ACCJC has published a rubric that colleges can use in assessing their status in relationship to the expectations defined by the Commission for the three areas related to institutional effectiveness. Listed below are the characteristics for each of the three areas that colleges must demonstrate in order to meet accreditation standards:

Program Review – Rubric for Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement:

- Program review processes are ongoing, systematic and used to assess and improve student learning and achievement.
- The institution reviews and refines its program review processes to improve institutional effectiveness.
- The results of program review are used to continually refine and improve program practices resulting in appropriate improvements in student achievement and learning.

Institutional Planning – Rubric for Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement:

- The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.
- There is dialogue about institutional effectiveness that is ongoing, robust and pervasive; data and analyses are widely distributed and used throughout the institution.
- There is ongoing review and adaptation of evaluation and planning processes.
- There is consistent and continuous commitment to improving student learning; and educational effectiveness is a demonstrable priority in all planning structures and processes.

Student Learning Outcomes – Proficiency:

- Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees.
- Results of assessment are being used for improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices.
- There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results.
- Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning.
- Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned.
- Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed on a regular basis.
- Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes.
- Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.

We should all become familiar with the expectations and engage each other in dialogue on our status and on how we can expand and improve our work in the three areas. I look forward to meeting the challenge with you.

John S. Nixon, Ph.D.

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