
RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 1998 ACCREDITATION VISITING TEAM

STANDARD TWO *INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY*

The team recommends that Santa Monica College review, and where appropriate revise College policies, regulations, and procedures to reflect current or intended practices at the College.

The process of reviewing and updating Board of Trustees Policies and college administrative regulations began in January 1999, when a consultant reviewed the existing Board Policy Manual and recommended a new organizational format for the manual, identified specific sections in which new policies and regulations needed to be developed, and made suggestions to facilitate the process of updating existing policies and regulations. Administrative teams were appointed to prepare drafts of updated policies and regulations to be reviewed by college constituencies and, where appropriate, taken through participatory governance approval processes. Simultaneously, the Board of Trustees thoroughly reviewed and updated the Bylaws of the Board. These processes were completed in December 1999. Review of the draft policies by appropriate campus constituencies took place during Spring 2000, and the resulting final versions of the policies were approved by the Board of Trustees between May 2000 and July 2001. Participatory governance processes for reviewing the draft administrative regulations began in September 2000. To date, this has resulted in completed revisions of the Student Services and Curriculum and Instruction sections.

The process for this ambitious project has been as beneficial to the College as the desired result—a better-organized and current guide to basic institutional processes and operations. Each area of the College has taken the time to review, and in some instances, rethink its basic functions, update existing documentation to reflect current practices, and create new policies and regulations to support functions that were not previously documented. In enabling broader discussion of the policies and regulations, the review process has served the purpose of reinforcing agreed upon institutional practices, as well as improving the final written product. The College is now committed to the idea that the Board Policy Manual will continue to be a “work in progress.” In addition to the established practice of updating specific policies and regulations as needed, the College will periodically review and update the entire manual.

STANDARD FOUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Since enlarging the scope of Contract Education is one of the current objectives of the Educational Master Plan, serious and timely consideration should be given to the program's continued development.

At the time of the 1998 Accreditation Team visit, Santa Monica College's objective to enlarge the scope of contract education was in its initial phase of implementation. When the accreditation mid-term report was submitted in 2000, the College had demonstrated significant commitment to the continued development of what had been renamed the Workforce and Economic Development Program. An assistant dean was hired in 1999 to administer the program and broaden its scope. Subsequently, a Director, Customized Training and a Director, Mini-Career Center were hired as categorically funded employees to provide operational leadership for the training and student support functions of the program, and the Board of Trustees approved the four-year lease of an off-campus facility to house the program.

This commitment by the College was justified by the demonstrated success of the Workforce and Economic Development Program. The program began the 2000-2001 fiscal year administering eight active contracts and grants, with budgets totaling over two million dollars. These included agreements to provide training for employees of American Airlines, Santa Monica Place, a Hotel Consortium, and a Restaurant Consortium. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, training in Computer Applications, Customer Service, English for Special Purposes, Management Skills, and Telecommunications was provided to 1,588 individuals, and over 7,000 participants benefited from job placement workshops, seminars, career fairs, and presentations.

Beginning in the 2001-2002 academic year, an over-reliance on grant funding, combined with the general economic downturn and changes in criteria for Chancellor's Office grants, created the need to completely restructure the College's Workforce and Economic Development Program. When the Assistant Dean, Workforce and Economic Development left the District, the duties of that position were divided between the Associate Vice President, Planning and Development and the Assistant Dean, Continuing Education. When there was no longer sufficient grant funding to support the former level of operation, the two categorically funded administrative positions were abolished, and the remaining staff members were moved from the leased facility to the Academy of Entertainment and Technology. (The College is currently attempting to sublet the leased facility.) The current goal of the program is to avoid future reliance upon grants to support its infrastructure by pursuing ongoing contracts to provide more operational stability. All current staffing for the program is temporary—for the duration of the specific contracts and grants being fulfilled.

Despite the considerable difficulty the Workforce and Economic Development Program has encountered, there are successful endeavors to report. Key partnerships with local businesses and "one-stop" service centers have resulted in many training contracts funded under the Workforce Investment Act, the Employment Training Panel, and company-related foundations. Among these are an innovative computerized knitting training program, conducted at the Cooper Building in Downtown Los Angeles and Certified Nurse

Assistant training. Recent contract education efforts are concentrated in the healthcare industry and include two career ladder, credit-bearing training programs for licensed vocational nurses to become registered nurses. These programs are delivered through partnerships of the Santa Monica College Nursing Program with the Cedars-Sinai and UCLA medical centers.

STANDARD SIX INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

With the College's emphasis on increased access and use of technologies, and a self-identified need for remodeled and/or expanded library facilities, the team recommends that careful consideration be given to future budget allocations that support library and information resources.

Since the visit of the Accreditation Team, library services for Santa Monica College students and staff have undergone significant changes, many of which directly address comments in the report of the visiting team. In August 1998, the Library migrated from a menu-driven library automation system to a new web-based system. This integrated system (SIRSI) is used for circulation, cataloging, serials control, acquisitions, and for the online public catalog. With this new web-based system, library users have access to the Library's catalog from any Internet connection, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. At the same time the automation system was implemented, the Library increased the number of personal computers for its users from twenty workstations to over sixty personal computer workstations. Twenty-eight of these computers were placed in the Bibliographic Instruction classroom, allowing for hands-on instruction in the library courses. When the classroom was not being used for library-related instruction, it served as an open computer lab for the College. These enhanced services transferred well to the small, but highly functional, temporary quarters that housed the Library for almost two years, during construction of the remodeled and expanded new facility.

In the new facility which opened in August 2003, the Library now has 216 personal computer workstations for students, including 47 in a dedicated "hands-on" bibliographic instruction classroom. In addition to providing access to the Library's catalog, electronic databases, and the Internet, 112 of these workstations feature Microsoft Office software (Word, Excel, Access, Publisher, and FrontPage). These resources provide students with the tools necessary to complete all of the steps of their research projects and assignments. In addition, most of the Library's 1,000+ reader seats have access to data and electrical connections, enabling the growing number of students with laptop computers to access the Internet and library resources. Wireless network access is also available.

For the years immediately following the 1998 accreditation visit, increased budgets for library materials, made possible through the use of categorical funding sources, such as the Instructional Equipment and Library Materials and the Telecommunications and Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP) grants, enabled the Library to increase both online databases and print resources. In addition, the Santa Monica College Library fully participates in the Council of Chief Librarians, California Community Colleges' consortium for electronic resources. The Library now has subscriptions to twenty-four web-based databases, providing students with access to over three thousand full-text periodi-

cals and reference sources. These web-based resources are available to students from off campus, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The Library has also instituted an electronic reference service, with questions being answered by a librarian within forty-eight hours. This service is of particular value to the College's large number of students enrolled in online courses. Ironically, the move into the remodeled, expanded, and technologically equipped new facility has come at a time when expenditures on new print and online resources have been significantly reduced, as a result of a collegewide reduction in discretionary funds. For the last two years, the book budget has been limited to funds allocated from the Chancellor's Office Instructional Equipment and Library Materials Block Grant.

The remodeled and expanded library is fully accessible and ADA-compliant. The Library continues to work closely with Disabled Students Center staff to provide appropriate assistive technology in the Library. This includes Kurzweil scan-read software (both the 1000 and 3000 series) to serve the visually impaired and learning disabled, ZoomText software (computer screen enlargement), Jaws screen reader software, two CCTVs (print text enlargers), and fourteen workstations with extra large monitors for visually impaired students. Eleven of the Library's computers are on motorized adjustable tables to accommodate library users in wheelchairs. The library classroom is equipped with a sound amplification system and an assistive listening device for the hearing impaired. In addition, real-time in-class captioning is available. Both the library homepage and the library automation system are ADA-compliant.

During the years immediately following the last accreditation visit, the Library experienced staff increases that enabled the implementation of plans that had been in development for several years. In Fall 1998, the vacant Bibliographic Instruction Librarian position was filled, along with a new Systems Librarian position. In Fall 1999, the Library filled two newly created positions—Collection Development Librarian and Computer Support Specialist. Unfortunately, the hiring freeze initiated because of the College's current budget constraints has affected library staffing dramatically. Although the number of librarians has remained constant, five (4 FTE) support positions are currently vacant.

STANDARD SEVEN FACULTY AND STAFF

The team observed that in reaction to a number of historical College events substantial interpersonal dissension threatens to distract the College from a critical focus on its recently developed Master Planning agenda and other significant issues. The team recommends that representatives of all stakeholders of the College be convened to identify these interpersonal issues and determine a process to reach an expeditious and lasting resolution.

Although the Accreditation Report refers to several historical events that had negatively impacted college climate, this recommendation was most directly the result of the issues surrounding the election through which classified employees voted to retain the Merit System for the recruitment and qualification of classified employees. This election had occurred just a few days prior to the arrival of the visiting team, so the various interper-

sonal tensions that had developed during the election process were apparent to team members.

After the election, the District, the Office of Human Resources, the Personnel Commission, and the organizations representing classified staff members vowed to improve the environment for classified staff members by establishing a positive working relationship between the District and the Personnel Commission. The cordial and respectful negotiating process that resulted in the CSEA contract ratified in 2000 exemplified a generally improved relationship between the District and the classified staff.

Unfortunately, several events inhibited immediate progress toward the envisioned working relationship between the District and the Personnel Commission. As a result of the regular appointment process for personnel commissioners and the subsequent resignation of two individuals appointed through this process, there were several periods during which the functions of the Personnel Commission were interrupted. In addition, the Director, Classified Personnel retired, and his immediate successor left the District after a very brief time. Commission operations have now stabilized under the leadership of the current Director, Classified Personnel, who assumed the role in 2001. Also, the Board of Trustees selection process for Personnel Commissioners has been refined and revised, in accordance with recent changes in the law. Over the last three years, the Commission has consistently had a full complement of members.

In April 1998, the District and the Faculty Association began a contract negotiations process (for the 1998-2001 contract) that was not completed until March 2000. Unfortunately, this process was extremely divisive and produced a level of tension and, at times, hostility that undermined all efforts to maintain a positive campus climate. After the mediation and fact-finding impasse procedures had failed to result in agreement, the Board of Trustees took action at its January 2000 meeting to unilaterally implement a 10% salary increase (effective January 2000) for faculty.

In February 2000, the District and the Faculty Association agreed to seek the services of facilitators from the Center for Dispute Resolution to assist the parties in reaching contract agreement. For these facilitated negotiations, the membership of the District Negotiating Team was changed to include the Superintendent/President and the Vice President, Academic Affairs, in addition to the Vice President, Human Resources, who had served as the District's Chief Negotiator. Over an intense two-week period, what became known as the "Joint Negotiating Team" constructively worked through all contractual issues and reached agreement. As a part of this process, the team also dealt openly, honestly, and effectively with the anger and interpersonal conflict that had developed as a result of the negotiating process. These facilitated negotiations resulted not only in contract agreement, but also in the opportunity to improve the ongoing relationship between the District and the Faculty Association. Characteristic of this resolve is a contract provision that the District and the Faculty Association will again seek the assistance of facilitators at any point that future negotiations approach impasse.

During these protracted negotiations, the Faculty Association initiated a lawsuit alleging that the District had not been in compliance with Education Code Section 84362 (the "50% Law") for fiscal years 1995-1996, 1996-1997, and 1997-1998. This lawsuit was dismissed "without prejudice" by the Los Angeles Superior Court, with the opinion that

the Faculty Association had not exhausted administrative remedies through the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors.

The Faculty Association then directed this issue to the Chancellor's Office. The Chancellor's legal staff determined that regulations did not provide for dealing with compliance issues beyond the prior year, so a process was initiated to determine whether Santa Monica College had complied with the provisions of the 50% Law for the 1998-1999 fiscal year. This process resulted in the determination that the College had been in compliance with the 50% Law for 1998-1999, despite the fact that an accompanying legal opinion regarding faculty reassigned time as it relates to the "salaries of classroom instructors" portion of the 50% Law calculation significantly reduced the College's originally reported percentage. Issues surrounding compliance with the 50% Law captured statewide attention, and the Chancellor assembled a 50% Law Task Force in an attempt to deal with system-wide policy issues regarding future compliance requirements. Santa Monica College's Vice President, Academic Affairs, Vice President, Student Affairs, and former Faculty Association Chief Negotiator were all appointed by their statewide constituent groups to serve on this task force. A second lawsuit alleging noncompliance with the 50% Law, filed by the Faculty Association against both the District and the Chancellor's Office, was settled in November 2001, at the same time negotiations for the 2001-2004 faculty contract were completed.

Although campus climate and interpersonal relationships improved considerably for a period of time, planning efforts undertaken during Spring 2003 to address significant state funding uncertainties culminated in a May 15 action of the Board of Trustees to discontinue five academic programs and eventually led to a June 2003 vote of no confidence in the Superintendent/President by the faculty and classified staff. The Board also acted subsequently to authorize layoffs of 23 classified staff members. Dramatically different perceptions exist regarding the necessity of these actions and whether participatory governance processes were appropriately used to inform the decision-making. However, there is general agreement that these events and the differing perceptions surrounding them have significantly eroded organizational trust.