Follow-Up Report

Saddleback College
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A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges
This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Saddleback College
on

November 2 – 3, 2011

Dr. Joan E. Smith, Team Chair

Saddleback College
Follow-Up Report

Visiting Team Members

November 2-3, 2011

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A comprehensive visit was conducted to Saddleback College in October, 2010. At its meeting of January 11-13, 2011, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) reviewed the institutional Self Study Report and the report of the evaluation team which visited Saddleback College Monday, October 18-Thursday, October 21, 2010. On October 15, 2011, Saddleback College submitted a Follow-Up Report pursuant to the direction of the ACCJC in a letter dated January 31, 2011. The Commission acted to issue **Warning** and to ask that Saddleback College correct the deficiencies noted in the Follow-Up Report dated January 31, 2011.

On Wednesday, November 2-3, 2011, a two-person site team visited Saddleback College for a follow-up visitation. On these dates, a two-person team visited Irvine Valley College as well, the second college in the South Orange Coast Community College District. The teams collaborated with respect to this visitation and this report; as the six recommendations to be addressed were District Recommendations. The purpose of the team visit was to verify that the Follow-Up Report prepared by the college was accurate through the examination of evidence, and to determine if sustained, continuous, and positive improvements had been made at the institution. The team was also to document whether the institution has resolved the recommendations made by the comprehensive evaluation team and now meets the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

Overall, the team found that the college had prepared very well for the visit by arranging for meetings with the individuals and individual groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair. Further, the college and district office assembled appropriate documents in the meeting room and provided easy access to college intranet sites. Over the course of the two-day visitation, team members met with the President of the College, the Chancellor, four members of the Board of Trustees, the Accreditation Liaison, the Academic Senate President, the Classified Senate President, all District Office Vice Chancellors, and members of the faculty and staff leadership. In addition, the team chair attended a Board of Trustees and Chancellor Campus Forum at Saddleback College which had well over 100 faculty, staff, administration and students in attendance.

Below is a summary of the team's findings based upon the Follow-Up Report and observations and discussions on November 2-3, 2011.

District Recommendation 1

The teams recommend that the chancellor develop and implement both a strategic short-term and long-term plan that is inclusive of the planning at the colleges and that this

planning structure drive the allocation of district resources for the colleges, Advanced Technology Education Park (ATEP), and the district (I.B.4).

Findings and Evidence: The Follow-Up Report indicates that the district had been engaged in long-term planning efforts prior to receipt of the commission's letter and that the development of the *South Orange County Community College District Education and Facilities Master Plan 2011-2031* (EFMP) had been well underway. The EFMP contains five volumes: an Education Master Plan and Facilities Master Plan for each of the colleges and a district summary. The EFMP provides time horizons for five-, 10- and 20-year periods. The entire EFMP was provided as evidence to the Follow-Up Report and was made available in hard copy to the visiting Follow-Up team. Review of the EFMP confirmed existence of a comprehensive planning document and prioritization criteria that addresses the needs of the district and each college. The prioritization criteria were developed to address the following areas: Instructional Program Need; Student Support Services; Facilities Conditions: Safety and Compliance; Campus Amenities: Benefit to a Student Centered Culture and Funding; and Funding Feasibility/Coordination.

The Follow-Up Report also describes the process utilized to develop a district-wide strategic plan for guiding and integrating the strategic planning for both Irvine Valley College and Saddleback College. The process is described as one that "was grounded in research, meaningful input from all constituent groups, collaboration, and transparency," and this characterization was corroborated by interviews with district and college staff. Congruent with the top priority established and communicated by the new chancellor, the environment in which the district strategic plan was developed was one of mutual respect and collaboration. Interviews with district and college staff revealed that constituents involved in the process began with a new understanding of what "the district" meant: district staff and college staff alike began to embrace the notion that they were all part of "the district" and that district services were to support both the collective whole as well as the specific, albeit at times competing, needs of each of the two colleges.

The goals of the *SOCCCD District-Wide Strategic Plan 2011-2014*, as indicated by the Follow-Up Report, "are designed to encourage productive working relations within the district, to guide resource allocations, and to promote student success." Goal 6 of the District-Wide Strategic Plan states that "SOCCCD will assess the educational needs of the communities within the District boundaries and will pursue joint venture partnerships with educational institutions and business/industry." Two measurable objectives in support of this goal address the Advanced Technology Education Park. The first requires the SOCCCD Chancellor and college presidents to "collaborate to determine responsibility for the use and maintenance of ATEP. The second measurable objective requires like collaboration to develop a 3- to 5-year site development plan for the maintenance and use of the site.

The *SOCCCD Education and Facilities Master Plan 2011-2013* and *SOCCCD District-Wide Strategic Plan 2011-2014* are scheduled for approval at the December 2011 meeting of the Board of Trustees. The need for ongoing oversight of district-wide planning was identified in the Follow-Up Report as well as through interviews with staff. A new District-wide Planning Council, to be constituted from the District-wide Accreditation Committee and the District-wide Task Force for Recommendation 1, has been designated as the body charged to carry out this broad-based collaborative work.

Conclusion: Since the District received this recommendation, the *SOCCCD Education and Facilities Master Plan 2011-2013* are completed (pending completion of an Environmental Impact Report scheduled for December 2011). This plan provides for both short- and long-term planning for the district that is inclusive of planning at the colleges and that drives the allocation of district resources for the colleges, the district, and Advanced Technology Education Park. In addition, the *SOCCCD District-wide Strategic Plan 2011-2014*, the first of its kind in the history of the district, was developed through a highly collaborative process built on participants' mutual respect and shared desire to better integrate the planning and resource allocation processes of the district and the colleges. Implementation of these plans and continued monitoring of the effectiveness of these strategic planning processes as well as regular reviews of district service units are called for by the planning agendas set forth in the Follow-Up Report. The District has partially met the expectations of this recommendation and is encouraged to maintain the mutual respect that has emerged between the district and the colleges and to follow through with implementation of its District-wide plans and with evaluation of the effectiveness of the new planning process.

District Recommendation 2

The teams recommend that the district and the colleges develop and implement a resource allocation model driven by planning that includes all district funds and is open, transparent, inclusive, and that is widely disseminated and reviewed/evaluated periodically for effectiveness (I.a.1., I.B., and III.D.1. III.D.1.b., III.D.1.c., III.D.1.d., IIIID.2.b., III.D.3., IV.B.3.c).

Findings and Evidence: Both the Follow-Up Report and interviews with district and college staff assert that the district's resource allocation of unrestricted general funds through the District Resources Allocation Council (DRAC) had worked well but that the allocation of basic aid funding was deemed less clear, unpredictable, and not demonstrably equitable across the colleges. The focus of the Task Force charged to address this recommendation, therefore, was to "clarify how basic aid expenditures are to be linked to district priorities based on planning." Review of minutes of the Task Force confirm agreement "to keep the planning model open, transparent, and simple, addressing all district funds including, but not exclusively, basic aid funds."

Work on a new Basic Aid Allocation Policy, BP 3110, had begun in December 2010, just after the comprehensive evaluation team visit, and was developed to clearly specify the types of projects appropriate for basic aid funding. Five types of projects are identified in BP 3110, three of which rely significantly upon district and college planning for facilities, technology and maintenance and renovation.

In order to facilitate the district-wide resource allocation model, the District Recommendation 2 Task Force developed a user-friendly flowchart that identifies the resources received by the district and illustrates how the planning processes will be used to drive allocation decisions for the various resources. To ensure further shared understanding of the district-wide process, a glossary of terms used in relation to budget allocations was developed for use by district and college groups. In addition, the Task Force compiled a list of all district funds and a description

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of each to be included in the District budgets. Evidence of the creation of these documents and their inclusion in the *SOCCCD 2011-2012 Final Budget* was confirmed by the Follow-Up team.

Work on Administrative Regulation 3110 that provides precise process delineation for basic aid allocations based on long and short-term plans was confirmed in the Follow-Up Report and by interviews with district and college staff. Discussion about the creation of a new district-wide committee, the Basic Aid Allocation Recommendation Committee (BAARC), is underway, along with discussions about the possible creation of additional committees charged to address specific district-wide needs for the five areas listed in Board Policy 3110. BAARC has been developed and agreed upon by the participatory governance groups and is written in the draft Administrative Regulation 3110.

Interviews with district and college staff revealed that the work of the Task Force had indeed been open and inclusive of district and college constituents, that district and college staff responsible for resource allocations driven by planning had effectively learned from one another through the process of their shared work, and that early signs pointed toward increased communications and collaboration between the district and the colleges.

Part of the implementation of the new resource allocation model is to involve use of the software program TracDat, which is being developed to provide alignment between college and district-wide strategic planning goals and to ultimately generate funding requests that are driven by instructional programs and administrative unit reviews of the colleges and the district.

Conclusion: The district has developed, in an open and collaborative manner, a resource allocation model of all district funds that is driven by planning. The successful implementation of the model depends partly upon completion of Administrative Regulation 3110 which will delineate the specific processes for resource allocations among the five types of projects identified in Board Policy 3110, (please note that the Administrative Regulation is nearing approval at the time of this writing, but not required for implementation of Board Policy 3110). Board Policy 3110 has been implemented and will be followed for the 2011-2012 Basic Aid allocations. The district also plans to utilize TracDat as a tool to further facilitate the district-wide resource allocation process in a manner that is linked to district and college planning. Further, the review of the new Board Policy and Administrative Regulation for Basic Aid Allocation must be regularly assessed for their effectiveness and revised if needed. The district has partially met the expectations of this recommendation.

District Recommendation 3

The teams recommend that the college, district administrators, faculty and staff develop a communications process among the entities on key issues of district-wide concern including academic calendar, planning, (ATEP) Advanced Technology Education Park, technology and building priorities (IV.A.2., IV.B.3).

Findings and Evidence: The Follow-Up Report explains that the district-wide Task Force for this recommendation first identified five major issues that seemed to underlie the more general problem of communication about district-wide concerns. Many of these issues stem from the Task Force's agreement that decision-making processes were often unclear and that committees

needed support in clarifying their charges and the responsibilities of their members as well as in reaching consensus when disagreements among members exist. The Task Force generated possible solutions and specific strategies to address each of the five communication issues identified.

A number of the specific strategies were already being implemented when the Follow-Up Report was written. These include creating a district-wide intranet using Microsoft SharePoint, including the specific charges of all district-wide committees in the newly created *SOCCCD Planning and Decision-Making Manual,* creating a standardized template for meeting agendas and minutes that facilitates decision-reaching and documentation, making Board of Trustee meeting minutes and agendas more easily searchable, creating RSS feeds as part of the SharePoint upgrade so that employees can request and receive notification of recent developments on issues about which they have particular interest, and developing a wiki for district services.

The Follow-Up team was provided access to the district's intranet SharePoint and validated the use of the software to provide access to the work of district-wide committees, planning documents, and communications from the Chancellor and Board of Trustees. Interviews with district and college staff confirmed that training on the use of SharePoint would be needed to support effective use of the tool as its full implementation continues at both colleges and at the district.

Further support for improved communications is established by planning objective 1.2 of the *SOCCCD District-wide Strategic Plan 2011-2014* which directs the Chancellor to periodically communicate directly to employees district-wide through newsletters and on-campus open forums.

Improvements in communication are documented in the Follow-Up Report that address the revision of a District-wide Academic Calendar, development of the *SOCCCD District-wide Strategic Plan 2011-14*, planning and decision-making regarding the Advanced Technology Education Park, prioritization of technology projects and the use of technology to improve communications in general, and the clarification of district-wide building and capital improvement projects.

Interviews with the chancellor and district and college staff also pointed toward improved communications within the district and colleges. Willingness on the part of the Board of Trustees, the chancellor and district services staff to communicate in an open and effective manner is being demonstrated through a variety of means and largely in the context of the work of the six accreditation Task Forces established to address the Commission recommendations. Solid participation in committees and district-wide events marks promising reciprocity in communications that have been deemed a "shared responsibility."

Conclusion: The district has developed a clear set of communication issues and associated solutions and strategies to address each. Implementation of a number of strategies is already well underway. The new communication strategies and tools must be evaluated in an ongoing way to assess their effectiveness, and this need is identified in the Follow-Up Report. The district has met the expectations of this recommendation. The team believes the district/colleges would be

well-served if they evaluated the strategies and make improvements as necessary. It wasn't, however, a requirement of the original recommendation.

Recommendation 4

The teams recommend that the Board of Trustees widely communicated the results of its self evaluation process annually and use this as the basis for improvement. (IV.A.5., IV.B.1.g.).

Findings and Evidence: Saddleback College and the South Orange Coast Community College District (SOCCCD) have made considerable strides with respect to this recommendation. The chancellor and the board of trustees took the Commission's recommendations very seriously. The chancellor, in consultation with the board and the District-wide Accreditation Committee, determined that the process of board evaluation was essentially sound, but they needed to take steps to communicate the results of the self-evaluation to all employees and the public. Further, as stated in the recommendation they would need to ensure that the results were used to create action items for improvement.

The chancellor hired a facilitator to work with the board to create a fuller understanding of the board self evaluation process. Dr. Cindra Smith, who is known for her work with "Boards of Trustees," was selected. In interviews with four board members of the SOCCCD they noted that the training conducted by Dr. Smith was most informative. They also commented on the fact that they did not couple the training with any other item of business as they have done in the past; this gave the process/training more significance. Every trustee interviewed stated that they felt the new process of board self evaluation was both informative and productive. Moreover, they expressed that they realized that their behavior (as a board) set the tone for the district, and that they acknowledged the importance of working together in a civil and respectful manner. They concluded by expressing their trust and confidence in the new chancellor and new board members. It was evident that the new chancellor has modeled cooperation and established a framework for communication among the board that has already resulted in opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

The *Follow-Up Report* delineated ten concrete actions items/tasks that were developed during the board self-evaluation retreat. The board members interviewed agreed with the items and stated that they would be utilizing these items as part of the 2012 self-evaluation process as a way to measure improved performance.

Conclusion: It should be noted that the tone of the interview with the SOCCCD Board of Trustees was very different during this site visitation than that of one year ago. It is apparent that the new trustees and new chancellor have been able to facilitate a "new tone" among the board membership and its working relationship. There also appeared to be a new sense of optimism with respect to collegiality and the board members interviewed stated that they were looking forward to conducting their self evaluation in the future. Trustees interviewed indicated that they would use the evaluation tools to monitor changes in perception about the board and its functioning among district employees as well. The team believes that the college has fully met the expectations of this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

The teams recommend that the Board of Trustees develop a clearly defined policy for a code of ethics which must include dealing with violations of the Board's code of ethics (III.A.1.d., IV.B.1.h.).

Findings and Evidence: The SOCCCD first adopted Board Policy 1400, Code of Ethics—Standards of Practice, in 1977, and has revised it on various occasions over the years. However, the policy did not include a stated process for dealing with board behavior that violates the aforementioned policy; as such it was recommended that such a clause be added to the board policy.

A legal consultant to the CCLC was contacted in order to gather information and documentation which would be used in developing an additional section of the existing policy on board ethics. This section had appropriate college, district, chancellor, and trustee input, and it was unanimously approved by the board of trustees on September 26, 2011.

The SOCCCD recognized that the behavior of the governing board of the district sets the tone for the entire district. When several trustees were interviewed they noted that past, less-than-cordial public displays at board meetings over the years; did not always do a good job in setting the tone of civility and ethical behavior for the district. They also noted that this policy should have been in place prior to this time. It appears that when the recent changes in board membership occurred, with the new membership, also came what was expressed as, "a new era of cooperation among the board and district leadership."

Conclusion: It was noted both in the Follow-Up Report and with the trustees interviewed that addressing this recommendation gave the entire district the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to ethics, respect, and civility. The team believes that this recommendation has been fully satisfied.

Recommendation 6

The teams recommend that the district provide a clear delineation of its functional responsibilities, the district level process for decision making and the role of the district in college planning and decision-making. The district should provide a regular review of district communities, conduct an assessment of the overall effectiveness of services to the college and communicate the results of those reviews (IV.B.3.a., IV.B.3.e., IV.B.3.f.).

Findings and Evidence: The *2010 Accreditation Report* states that the "…roles and scopes of authority has occurred at the college and since 2008, with respect to the board of trustees." However, the role, authority, and responsibilities of the district office personnel and leadership were not clearly defined. The Saddleback *2008 Focused Midterm Visit Report* stated that Standard IV.B.3 had been met, the 2010 visiting team (again) made this recommendation based on the absence of the delineation of district-wide functional responsibilities.

In interviews with constituent groups, both at Saddleback College and the district office, they indicated that a task force was formed under the direction of the vice chancellor of human

resources. They noted that the task force reached a decision that the functional map would be a district-wide effort and would not be developed independently at each college as it had been done in the past. It was reported by those individuals interviewed that the task force looked at discrepancies between the two functional maps at each college and resolved those issues in a collegial manner. The document that resulted from these efforts was viewed as a comprehensive functional map that, according to those interviewed, would serve as the basis for future elaborations of the workflow in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the colleges and district services.

Those interviewed admitted that a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities within the district has been a long-standing problem. The measures outlined in the *Saddleback College Follow-Up Report* stated that it is extremely important that the measures outlined in the report be followed to continue to develop a permanent resolution of the problems that have existed in the past. The creation of the jointly developed district-wide planning processes and implementation procedures are clearly documented in the *SOCCCD Planning and Decision-Making Manual* and are viewed by those at the college and the district as "unmistakable evidence" that the district now understands the importance of the standards for the effectiveness of its institutions. It was expressed repeatedly by everyone interviewed that the district no longer viewed itself as disconnected from the accreditation process with the attitude of, "colleges are accredited, not us." College leadership interviewed noted that the district office has come a long way in the process of delineating their lines of authority and acknowledging the significant contribution of participatory governance. The college leadership also expressed that now that this change has taken place that it needs to hold—no matter what personality is hired in executive leadership at the district office.

Conclusion: The *SOCCCD Planning and Decision-Making Manual* that was developed jointly with the district office and colleges produces evidence that the district is working with the colleges to bring a better understanding of how decisions are made and implemented across the district. This should continue to lead to the improvement of district wide communications and understanding of the decision making processes, workflow, and delineation of responsibilities. The team recognizes that an exemplary attempt is being made regarding this recommendation; however, the changes have only begun to take place. The team concludes that this recommendation has been substantially met.