

**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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June 30, 2011

Dr. Christopher O'Hearn  
Superintendent/President  
Victor Valley College  
18422 Bear Valley Road  
Victorville, CA 92395

RECEIVED  
JUL 05 2011  
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Dear President O'Hearn:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting June 8-10, 2011, reviewed the institutional Self Study Report and the report of the evaluation team which visited Victor Valley College Monday, March 14-Thursday, March 17, 2011. The Commission also considered the information submitted by President O'Hearn at the Commission meeting. The Commission took action to impose **Probation**, effective immediately, and require that Victor Valley College submit a Follow-Up Report by **March 15, 2012**. The report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

Probation is issued when the Commission finds that an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or policies, or fails to respond to actions and conditions imposed by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period. However, the institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed until the conditions which warranted the sanction are resolved. Probation is being imposed at this time for deficiencies identified in the team report and associated with Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The Follow-Up Report of **March 15, 2012** should demonstrate that the institution has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Accreditation Standards.

**Recommendation 1:**

In order to meet the Standards, the College should revise its planning documents to reflect the current mission so that the mission is central to institutional planning and decision making. Furthermore, the College should adhere to its policy of annually reviewing its mission statement and update its Educational Master Plan using its current mission statement. (I.A.3, I.A.4).

**Recommendation 2:**

As noted in recommendations 1 and 6 of the 2005 Accreditation Evaluation Report, and in recommendations from the reports of 1993 and 1999, and in order to meet the Standards and the Eligibility Requirements, the College should establish and maintain an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes. (I.B.1, E.R. 19) This process should include:

- Goals to improve effectiveness that are stated in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. (I.B.2)
- An evaluation of all programs throughout the College so that it assesses progress toward those goals and ensures that participation is broad-based throughout the College. (I.B.3, I.B.4)
- Documented assessment results for all courses, programs, and the institution. (I.B.5, II.A.1.a, II.B.4)
- Formal processes to evaluate the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes. (I.B.6, I.B.7)
- Integration of planning with decision-making and budgeting processes to ensure that decisions to allocate staff, equipment, resources, and facilities throughout the College are based on identified strategic priorities and to ensure a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement based upon data. (I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, III.C.2, IV.B.2.b)
- An integration of the total cost of facilities ownership in both the short and long term planning processes. (III.B.1.c)
- An assessment of physical resource planning with the involvement of the campus community. (III.B.1.a, III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b)
- A systematic assessment of the effective use of financial resources, with particular regard to meeting the needs of Library materials and technological resources, and the use of the results of this assessment as the basis for improvement. (II.C.1, II.C.2, III.D.3)

With regard to Recommendation 2 above, the 2008 Follow-Up visiting team did note that Victor Valley College had established a program review and planning process, but the current visiting team could find little evidence that more than a few programs have actually completed a cycle of assessment and improvement.

**Recommendation 4:**

As noted in recommendation 6 of the 2005 Accreditation Evaluation Report, and in order to meet the Standards, the College should cultivate a campus environment of empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence by creating a culture of respect, civility, dialogue and trust. (I.B.1, I.B.4, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.C.1.a, III.A, III.A.1.d, III.A.4.c, IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.2.b [emphasis on “collegial process”])

**Recommendation 5:**

In order to meet the Standards, the College should examine and provide evidence that appropriate leadership ensures the accessibility, quality and eligibility of online and hybrid courses and programs, and that such programs demonstrate that all services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution. (II.A, II.B, IV.A.1)

**Recommendation 6:**

In order to meet the Standards, the College should develop long-term fiscal plans that support student learning programs and services that will not rely on using unrestricted reserves to cover deficits. Additionally, the College should provide timely, accurate and comprehensive financial data and budget projections for review and discussion throughout the institution. (III.D, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.c, III.D.2.b, III.D.2.c, E.R. 17)

**Recommendation 7:**

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College build and maintain a system for effective, stable and sustainable leadership, to include:

- Creating a process for succession planning in order to avoid gaps in leadership.
- Assisting all employees and students to grow professionally by developing their leadership skills and encouraging their participation in governance groups.
- Addressing leadership needs in the key campus areas of student services and distance learning. (IV.A, IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.1, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2, IV.B.2.a)

**Recommendation 8:**

In order to meet the Standards, members of the Board of Trustees must limit their role in governing the College to those responsibilities established in Board Policy, including delegating power and authority to the Superintendent/President to lead the district and to make administrative decisions regarding the effective implementation of Board Policies without Board interference. Trustees must avoid micromanaging institutional operations including their participation in campus committees and governance groups. Additionally, the Board must establish and follow a specific, regular time interval for evaluating its performance. (IV.B, IV.B.1, IV.B.1.a-e, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2, IV.B.2.a-e)

**Commission Recommendation 1:**

In order to meet Standards, the Commission recommends that the Board of Trustees amend its ethics policy (Board Policy 2717) to include a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates the policy. (IV.B.1.h)

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I wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. Victor Valley College must correct the deficiencies noted by **March 2013** or the Commission will be compelled to act.

The Commission observes, and President O'Hearn remarked, that Victor Valley College's accreditation history indicates the college has tried to address some of the previous comprehensive team recommendations, but its work was interrupted by administrative turnover. An accredited institution is expected to meet Standards at all times; there is no grace period when personnel change. All of an institution's staff and trustees are responsible for helping the institution to meet Standards.

The College must now *quickly and finally* resolve the deficiencies noted by past and current accreditation teams and come into compliance with Standards through strategies that reflect institution-wide commitments to appropriate behaviors. New behaviors and institutional processes should be designed to be sustainable through the inevitable turnover of individual employees and trustees. All of the staff as well as the governing board must engage in efforts to release the focus on past grievances and develop a more collegial environment wherein the institution can develop and sustain educational excellence and institutional effectiveness.

I have previously sent you a copy of the Evaluation Team Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires you to give the Evaluation Team Report and this letter dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college Self Study Report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that the Evaluation Team Report and the Self Study Report be made available to students and the public. Placing a copy on the college web site can accomplish this. Should you require an electronic copy of the report to place on your web site or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.


The recommendations contained in the Evaluation Team Report represent the observations of the evaluation team at the time of the visit. The Commission reminds you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the team report, the College is expected to use the report to improve the educational programs and services of the institution.

Finally, ACCJC staff is available to assist the college with consultation and advice on the issues identified in the recommendations noted above.

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On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational quality and students' success. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness and quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/tl

cc: Dr. Mark Zacovic, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Board President, Victor Valley Community College District  
Ms. Kathy Lehner, Team Chair  
Ms. Martina Fernandez-Rosario, U.S.D.E