

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: Victor Valley College

DATE OF VISIT: March 8-10, 2005

TEAM CHAIR: Christopher C. O'Hearn, Ph.D.
President/CEO, Mt. San Antonio College

A nine member accreditation team visited Victor Valley College from March 8 – 10, 2005, for the purposes of determining whether the institution continues to meet accreditation standards, evaluating how well the college is achieving its stated purposes, analyzing how the college is meeting the commission standards, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the accredited status of the college.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all day team training session on January 28, 2005, conducted by AACJC, studied the Commission Handbook for Evaluators, and were divided into four sub-groups according to the accreditation standards. Team members also carefully read the college's self study (including the recommendations from the 1999 accreditation team) and related evidentiary documents provided by Victor Valley College.

Two weeks prior to arriving on campus, each team member prepared written reactions to the Victor Valley College self study and identified inquiries to be made during the visit. One week prior to arriving on campus, team members emailed a list of 70 appointments with college employees to be scheduled by the Victor Valley Accreditation Liaison Officer in preparation for the visit. On March 7, the team met for a three hour meeting to collectively review the self study report and finalize preliminary questions and issues to be addressed during the following three days.

During the three day visit, the team met either individually or in groups with over 100 college faculty, classified staff, students, administrators, and governing board members. In addition, team members held two widely publicized (in the March 3 edition of the campus newsletter titled The President's Pen as well as the local community newspaper known as the Daily Press) sessions open to all members of the college community. The team appreciated the candor of the employees and students throughout the visit.

In general, the self study report contained most of the elements required by the Commission. Although the team appreciated the report's attractive format with convenient tabs, the organization and writing style of the report created some challenges for the visiting team in understanding the activities on which the college was reporting and in determining the college's level of compliance with the standards. The team found that the college was not well prepared for the site visit. Specifically, the supporting documentation was not readily available in the team room and difficult to obtain on campus.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2005 Team

The following seven recommendations are made as a result of the March 8-10, 2005 team visit:

Recommendation 1: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The team recommends that the college provide evidence that it assesses progress toward achieving its goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation. This continuing cycle should include long-term master planning, short-term strategic planning, including technology planning, and an effective, institutionalized program review process. When fully implemented, this cycle of planning, evaluation, and program improvement should result in the creation of a culture of research and evidence that supports all of the college's decision-making processes. (Standard IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7; Standard IIA.1, IIA.2, IIB.3, IIB.4, IIC.2; and Standard IIIA.6, IIIB.1, IIIB.2, IIIC.2, IIID.1, IIID.2g, IIID.3)

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

To meet the standards' focus on ensuring student success and the quality of programs and services, the team recommends the college conducts meaningful, timely, and inclusive dialogue with all campus constituents to identify student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. The college should also systematically assess these student learning outcomes and use the results of these assessments for the improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Standard IB.1, IB.4, IB.7; Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

Recommendation 3: Organizational Structure and Staffing

The team recommends that the college evaluates and addresses its organizational structure and staffing needs. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, technology support, risk management, maintenance and operations, and human resources. The college should take appropriate actions to implement the results of the evaluation and must address the lack of sufficient staffing. (Standard IIIC.1d, IIIC.2, IIIA.2 and Standard IVB.2a)

Recommendation 4: Financial Resources

The team recommends that the college's institutional planning be reviewed so that it reflects a realistic assessment of its financial resources, the development of additional financial resources through public/private partnerships, and the management of expenditures. The team further recommends that the college, to ensure long term financial stability, clearly identifies appropriate resources and plans for full payment of the 1997 Certificate of Participation. (Standard IIID.1b, 1c, 2c, 3)

Recommendation 5: Purpose/Function of Campus Committees

The team recommends that the purpose and functional relationship of campus committees, and their membership, be clearly defined to advance the mission and goals of the institution. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the duplication of committees and committee work. (Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.5)

Recommendation 6: Campus Climate

The team recommends that the college establishes a positive campus climate that embodies a culture of respect, civility, dialogue, and trust designed to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.3, IVA.5)

Recommendation 7: Evaluation of Leadership Roles

The team recommends that the college evaluates the role of collegewide leadership in institutional governance and implements the results of the evaluation to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of organizational processes, practices, and decision-making. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the current leadership configuration of the Academic Senate and the Faculty Union. (Standard IVA.1, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, IVA.5)

ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE

Comprehensive Evaluation Visit March 8-10, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Victor Valley College (VVC) is a comprehensive California community college serving the communities of Adelanto, Apple Valley, Helendale, Hesperia, Las Flores, Lucerne Valley, Oro Grande, Phelan, Pinon Hills, Victorville, and Wrightwood. The district was established in 1961 at Victor Valley High School with approximately 500 students and 14 pioneer instructors. The Victor Valley College campus opened in 1965 and has blossomed into a comprehensive community college with 9,000 full time equivalent day and evening students on the 252-acre campus.

Since the last accrediting team visit in March 1999, the Victor Valley College campus has changed considerably. The old library facility was remodeled into a learning center and language/computer lab facility. In 2002, a new Child Development Center was completed. In addition, parking lots and tennis courts were added.

The communities in the college's service area have experienced tremendous growth in the past several years and the population growth is projected to continue. The enrollment increases at the college have paralleled the growth of surrounding communities. As of Fall 2003, the college's unduplicated headcount at first census was 10,580 students as reported in the college's self study. The projected enrollment is expected to reach over 13,000 students (as referenced in the demographic section of the self study). As of Fall 2003, Victor Valley College had 692 college employees (Opinion Survey Report, April 2004). Victor Valley College offers 56 Associate Degrees and 120 certificate programs which prepare students for career opportunities in the community.

Victor Valley College experienced a great deal of institutional instability and administrative turnover since the last accreditation visit in 1999. The most significant changes occurred at the senior leadership level of the college. With the recent hiring of the College President/CEO (in May 2003), Director of Human Resources (in June 2004), and Chief Financial Officer (in January 2005) among others, the college appears to possess a stronger, more stable administrative team.

The most recent Victor Valley accreditation self study process was initiated in summer 2002 and completed in fall of 2004 with broad participation by the campus community as indicated by the lists of employee names contained in sections of the self study. The alphabetical list of evidence/documentation at the end of the self study report appeared to be extensive, but the visiting team experienced tremendous difficulty and frustration with the college's inability to provide the cited documentation in a timely manner or in some cases at all.

Team Evaluation of Institutional Responses to 1999 Recommendations

The college was left with three general recommendations by the team that visited on March 23-25, 1999. The report does address how each recommendation was given specific attention. The 2005 visiting team conscientiously reviewed the recommendations from the previous team. Overall, the team was pleased with the progress made. The quality of the college's responses demonstrates a timely follow-up and appropriate communication with ACCJC regarding the previous team's recommendations.

The progress reported on prior recommendations included the following:

Recommendation #1

The team recommends that the college retain the services of an independent financial advisory firm to review and evaluate the financing strategies of the college. The resulting report should include the history of financial indebtedness of the District, the current level of indebtedness, and the District plans for repayment. A report of the findings should be submitted to ACCJC no later than a year from the date of acceptance of this report and recommendations by the accrediting commission (Standard 9C.1).

The self study reported that in Spring 2000, an independent financial advisory firm, Sutter Securities Incorporated, analyzed the college's long-term indebtedness and investments. The purpose of the audit was to review the history, a comparison of assets/liabilities and the projected repayment of the college's Certificates of Participation Bond. The report by Sutter Securities Inc. concluded that the college had made provisions for the repayment of the 1997 Certificate of Participation. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges reviewed and accepted the independent financial audit report at their June 2000 meeting.

As the 2005 self study noted several times, the Commission "commends the college for obtaining analysis of its indebtedness by outside experts, and is reassured by the finding that adequate provisions have been made for the repayment of this debt." (ACCJC Letter, 16 June 2000).

Recommendation #2

The team recommends that the college develop a formal process that fully implements the, as yet, unmet portions of the 1993 recommendation number 4: "That the college consider ways of bringing all planning efforts together and integrating them into one college strategic plan which is widely disseminated and used as a framework for decision-making." This process should include decision points such as who is involved in the budget planning process with identification of their responsibilities of the process timelines; and a description of the linkages between the college's various planning processes, budget development, and program review.

The self study report indicated that an Institutional Research Office was created in 1999 and a Planning and Resource Development Office was created in 2001. The report explained that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges commended the college for its efforts to integrate planning, research, and resource allocation. The self study report further indicated that a number of strategic and fiscal decisions were made on the basis of the 1999-2005 Educational Master Plan which is in the process of revision with the goal of incorporating and integrating all other college plans into it. While minimal progress has been made in addressing planning processes on campus, there is little evidence demonstrating that research, assessment, evaluation, and planning are integrated.

Recommendation #3

The team recommends the college should develop and implement a broad-based and integrated system of research, evaluation, and planning to assess the institution and use the results for institutional improvement.

The self study report indicated that the college established an Institutional Research Office which provides institutional data through a Fact Book and an Institutional Research Query Builder. The report cited several examples of how institutional research data is used to support program review and improvement.

The team did not find, however, evidence of integrated planning, nor are planning processes evaluated consistently. The team has reiterated the importance of addressing the 1999 recommendation which is reflected in Recommendation 1 of this team's report.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **AUTHORITY**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College receives State approval of its programs/services and is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges. The college is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to offer undergraduate education.
2. **MISSION**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College's Mission Statement is clearly defined. It was last revised and adopted by the Board of Trustees on November 11, 2003. The college's mission statement is included in the catalog and is posted on the college's website. The mission is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and its Southern California constituency.
3. **GOVERNING BOARD**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.
4. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose primary responsibility is to the institution.
5. **ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College has an administrative staff that supports the necessary services for an institution of its size, mission, and purpose.
6. **OPERATING STATUS**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs.
7. **DEGREES**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College offers 56 Associate Degrees and 120 certificate programs and nearly 75 percent of credit students are enrolled in associate degree applicable courses.
8. **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College's principle degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, and are of sufficient content and length.
9. **ACADEMIC CREDIT**

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree granting institutions of higher education.

10. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College defines and publishes the programs of study leading to an associate degree, certificate, and programs of study leading to transfer.

11. GENERAL EDUCATION

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry.

12. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general.

13. FACULTY

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College employed 135 full-time faculty members as of December 1, 2004. The faculty members are qualified to conduct the institution's programs and meet State mandated minimum requirements.

14. STUDENT SERVICES

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College provides for all of its students appropriate student services and develops programs consistent with student characteristics and the institutional mission.

15. ADMISSIONS

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

16. INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College provides specific long term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs.

17. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services to improve institutional effectiveness and to assure financial stability.

18. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant.

19. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College provides basic planning for the development of the institution. It evaluates how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes. Planning processes, however, need to be integrated, consistent, and evaluated.

20. PUBLIC INFORMATION

The visiting team confirmed that Victor Valley College publishes in its catalog, class schedule, and other publications information concerning the college's purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations affecting students, degrees offered, degree requirements, etc. In addition, the college distributes annual publications that focus on program accomplishments and student graduates.

21. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

The team confirmed that Victor Valley College adheres to the eligibility requirements, standards and policies of ACCJC, describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accreditation status in a timely manner, and agrees to disclose information required by ACCJC to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. However, the team noted that by not being sufficiently ready for the accreditation site visit, Victor Valley College did not comply with Commission requests and directives to be prepared in anticipation of the visit. (Accreditation Reference Handbook, p.12)

Accreditation Themes

- **Dialogue:** The visiting team noted monumental challenges in this area as the lack of communication and distrust hinder the dialogue on campus. The college has been engaged in some initial dialogue with respect to its mission and institutional effectiveness; however, there is not evidence of meaningful dialogue related to governance, institutional planning, campus climate, and building a culture of evidence occurring campuswide. Significant dialogue will be necessary in helping the college reach compliance with the Commission's standards and will serve the institution well as it continues to develop its ability to assess progress toward achieving its stated goals, to make decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness and to develop an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation.

Communication is problematic in the current college environment. The severity of the problem is such that it is interfering with the college's ability to make strategic decisions and to plan effectively for the future. The dual organizational responsibilities of the Academic Senate and Faculty Association leadership are a primary example of a structure that fosters poor communication and threatens institutional integrity.

Institutional Integrity: The visiting team experienced difficulty in obtaining adequate documentation/evidence and support from the college. The lack of readily accessible documentation resulted in the team's inability to work efficiently and significantly hindered the team's goal to validate/verify information stated in the self study. The challenges regarding obtaining the self study documentation directly related to accreditation standard IVA.4 that states, "The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accreditation Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and **Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits**, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission."

- **Student Learning Outcomes:** The visiting team noted that the college needs to tie student learning outcomes (SLOs) into the assessment and improvement cycle. There was only anecdotal evidence of SLOs and processes on campus. The visiting team hopes that the recommendations from this visit will encourage change and prompt the college to plan better for future systemic improvement at the college. The college appears to have made a good start toward developing student learning outcomes for some of its courses. The college has made very little progress toward developing student learning outcomes at the program level. It was very difficult for the visiting team to make an accurate assessment of the college's current state of progress in addressing this theme due to the apparent lack of documentation and the untimely and disorderly manner in which the existing documentation was provided.

- **Planning, Evaluation, and Improvement:** The visiting team noted the college's need to complete the full evaluative loop for assessing student learning outcomes on campus. The one recommendation the visiting team is making with respect to Institutional Mission and Effectiveness deals directly with planning, evaluation, and improvement. The team is recommending that the college provide evidence that it assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation.

The theme of evaluation, planning, and improvement also applies to the decision making process and its relationship to the organization and the governance process. The climate survey conducted by the college may be used for planning and improvement, but it is also a clear indication of low morale on the campus. When individuals are given an opportunity to express their opinion or vent if they choose to do so, and there is only a 29% response, it is a clear indication that employees do not view themselves as connected to the institution. The employees repeatedly indicated in the interviews that they do not believe their voices are heard or valued so "Why respond?" The administration should make every effort to involve all levels of the institution in planning, to make sure their voices are heard and reflected in the outcomes, and implemented. That is the only means for rebuilding trust and respect.

- **Organization:** The college is experiencing serious organizational difficulties that are related to the institutional integrity issues stated above. These organizational difficulties reinforce, and are affected by, the current communication difficulties. The combined effects of these organizational and communication problems have created a tense and inefficient environment in which it is difficult to accomplish the important work that lies ahead for the college. In addition, the visiting team noted that college staff members expressed concerns over lack of training and staff development.

The current campus climate revealed a lack of confidence and trust. Leadership changes that have occurred on campus in the past several years are resulting in control struggles from various segments throughout the campus including internal bickering and cross-divisional power struggles. These leadership changes have fostered a climate of mistrust and uncertainty. While the current campus climate possesses a lack of collegiality in many areas, there has been and continues to be a desire on the part of the key leaders to move beyond the difficulties in order to ensure a successful future.

- **Institutional Commitments:** Victor Valley College's mission statement was recently reviewed and revised. The visiting team found that the college provides high quality education congruent with the college's mission statement. The college is committed to supporting student learning and student success. This commitment was evident from conversations with satisfied students throughout the campus and other college publications.

Reports of the four standards and related recommendations are as follows:

STANDARD I

Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

In the section on Standard I, it was difficult to reach conclusions regarding institutional compliance solely on the basis of the self study report. The Descriptive Summary Sections of the report were not terribly descriptive; the Self Evaluation Sections were often not evaluative to the standards; and the Planning Agenda Sections often do not relate clearly to either. The report frequently offered general responses to specific questions and commingled unnecessary details and data with the text.

A. Mission

General Comments

The college's student learning programs and services appear to be aligned with its purposes, character, and student population. The college is engaged in a preliminary dialogue about student learning and student achievement, as well as about institutional processes for evaluation and improvement. The self study report indicated that the college is making progress in developing student learning outcomes for its programs and services. (IA.1)

The Mission Statement of the college has been approved by its Board of Trustees and is published in appropriate college documents. (IA.2) Victor Valley College has a formal process for reviewing its Mission Statement, which includes appropriate institutional consultation. College planning processes call for review of the Mission Statement every three years. The statement was last reviewed between October 2002 and November 2003. (IA.3)

The self study report indicated that the college uses its Mission Statement to guide its planning and decision making, and survey data verified this fact. (IA.4)

Findings and Evidence

The self study report and the college catalog provided evidence that the college has established programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population. (IA.1) Minutes of the November 11, 2003 meeting of the Board of Trustees confirmed that the Board approved the most recent version of the Mission Statement on that date. The Mission Statement is published in the college catalog, on the college website, and in other appropriate locations. (IA.2)

Conclusions

The college appears to be in adequate compliance with all sections of Standard IA.

Recommendations

None

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness**General Comments**

The self study report included information, data, and examples that indicated that the college has been engaging in a significant dialog with respect to the improvement of student learning and institutional processes. Representatives from the college have attended workshops on how to establish and maintain institutional dialog on the improvement of student learning. (IB.1)

Survey data cited in the self study report did not seem to relate consistently to the specific issues referenced in the standard. In the Self Evaluation Section for this standard, reference was made to an observed disparity between the opinions of faculty/administration and the opinions of college staff on a particular item in the Opinion Survey, with the additional observation that further dialog on the issues should be encouraged. In the Planning Agenda Section of Standard IB.2, however, no action was suggested to further investigate the observed discrepancy, and the one action item included in the Planning Agenda did not relate directly to anything discovered in the Self Evaluation or to the specific issues referenced in the standard.

The self study report listed various offices and committees that are, or have been, engaged in planning and/or evaluation activities. The report also provided a description of the Planning, Implementation (research/analysis), and Evaluation (P.I.E.) Cycle for systematic planning and development and goes on to report additional results of the Opinion Survey. The Planning Agenda Section for Standard IB.3 consisted of one action item that did not directly relate to the specific standard or to anything described or evaluated in this section of the report.

The self study report also provided ample descriptions, facts, and evidence to demonstrate that the college's planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input from appropriate college constituencies, and informs the resource allocation process. The Descriptive Summary Section, though somewhat repetitive of previous sections of the report, is one of the most complete summaries in the Standard I Section of the report. The Self Evaluation Section, however, is only partially evaluative to the requirements of the standard, and the Planning Agenda Section contains one action item that does not bear an obvious relationship to the intent of the standard or to the results of the self evaluation. (IB.4)

In addition, the self study report for this standard consisted primarily of a description of the college's data management hardware and software and a listing of several annual reports that are produced. The Self Evaluation Section was not evaluative to the intent of the standard and the one action item identified in the Planning Agenda Section did not seem to relate directly to the standard or to be derived from anything discovered in the self evaluation. (IB.5)

In Section IB.6 of the self study report, the college described measures for reviewing and modifying its planning and resource allocation processes to ensure continuing effectiveness.

The report included only a brief description of the college's program review process, and nothing provided in the report for this standard actually related to how the institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms. (IB.7)

Findings and Evidence

Though the Self Evaluation and Planning Agenda Sections of this part of the report do not seem to relate directly to the intent of this standard, interviews with college faculty and staff members confirm that the college continues to engage in an appropriate institutional dialogue about the improvement of student learning. (IB.1) Based on campus interviews and a review of available documentation, it appears that the college has established appropriate goals and objectives and has effectively communicated these goals and objectives to the college community. (IB.2)

Although the visiting team found evidence of a planning process, the process has not yet developed to the point where it appropriately links to resource allocation, involves appropriate assessment, and leads to the improvement of institutional effectiveness. (IB.3, IB.4, IB.6) This deficiency will be resolved when the college satisfactorily addresses the recommendation relative to Standard IB.

As the college continues to develop and establish its student learning outcomes and its assessment capabilities, communication with appropriate constituencies on matters of quality assurance will become more useful and meaningful. (IB.5) In addition, the visiting team recognizes that it is probably not appropriate, and may not be possible, to evaluate the effectiveness of a system that is not yet fully developed and implemented. When the college has addressed the recommendation relative to Standard IB, it will be in a better position to address the requirements of this standard. (IB.7)

Conclusions

Although the college has made progress in establishing institutional goals and student learning outcomes for some of its courses, the visiting team was unable to find sufficient evidence to confirm that the college has been able to complete the cycle of assessment and to take specific actions toward program improvement on the basis of this assessment related to

Standard IB. This lack of connection between assessment, resource allocation, and improvement of institutional effectiveness means that the college is not fully meeting Standard IB.4. In addition, the visiting team found that planning processes are not consistently evaluated or integrated campuswide. (IB.6, IB.7) Therefore, the college is not fully meeting Standard IB.

Recommendation 1: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The team recommends that the college provide evidence that it assesses progress toward achieving its goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation. This continuing cycle should include long-term master planning, short-term strategic planning, including technology planning, and an effective, institutionalized program review process. When fully implemented, this cycle of planning, evaluation, and program improvement should result in the creation of a culture of research and evidence that supports all of the college's decision-making processes. (Standard IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7; Standard IIA.1, IIA.2, IIB.3, IIB.4, IIC.2; and Standard IIIA.6, IIIB.1, IIIB.2, IIIC.2, IIID.1, IIID.2g, IIID.3)

STANDARD II

Student Learning Programs and Services

A. Instructional Programs

General Comments

Victor Valley College offers curriculum leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other institutions. These courses of study support the mission of the college and are approved using the college's curriculum committee. (IIA.1) In addition, vocational programs are subject to advisory committee review or outside evaluation. (IIA.2b) The curriculum committee is composed of faculty with management and staff as non-voting members. All courses must be approved regardless of location or means of delivery. (IIA.2e)

In 2001, a Program Review Committee was established including representatives from management and classified staff as well as faculty. The task of this committee was to review and revise the existing, but inactive, program review process. In 2002, the schedule was set to implement the Program Review Process across both the instructional and non-instructional programs. The college has been engaged in program review using a new format since spring of 2002. A Program Review Guide, to assist with program review, was presented to the College Assembly for readings on May 6 and September 16, 2003 and May 18, 2004. Program Review is on a six-year cycle with all areas of the college represented in the schedule. The college developed an Instructional Research Query Builder to assist in the process of completing program review. Many areas of the college have completed the review using the new Guide. The college uses program review as a means of documenting the evaluation of courses and programs.

Throughout the self study report, the college presented contradictory statements regarding student learning outcomes. An understanding of student learning outcomes (SLO) identification varies across the campus, but it appears that the vocational departments have a better understanding of SLO application. There was obviously much confusion on what student learning outcomes are, and there was no mention of how the college might evaluate them and use them for improvement. There is evidence that there has been some dialogue across the campus regarding student learning outcomes. Workshops were held regarding how to write student learning outcomes and each department was asked to bring some student learning outcomes for a course taught in multiple sections to a workshop to work on these outcomes. Members of the Faculty Senate Learning Assessment Committee stated that less than half of the departments complied. Still, the Faculty Senate Learning Assessment Committee proceeded with developing a template for writing student learning outcomes and determining a process for these outcomes to become part of the course outline of record.

Findings and Evidence

Victor Valley College's vocational programs are subject to advisory committee review and/or outside evaluation from other external agencies. (IIA.2b) The specific vocational

programs that are reviewed by external, discipline specific accrediting boards must comply with the requirements of these agencies in order to receive permission to operate such programs. (IIA.5)

Faculty, staff, and administrators are provided with copies of the college catalog and schedule of classes so they can update this information as necessary. A Schedule and Catalog Committee also reviews these college documents for accuracy. (IIA.6c) Although interviews with faculty and administrators indicated that the college's curriculum committee has recently reviewed and revised the general education requirements, team members only saw evidence of the original general education requirements and were not provided with the recently revised version for review. Based on interviews with college employees, it does appear the college's revised general education appears to be sufficient at this time. (IIA.3a, IIA.3b) However, it was unclear as to whether the college satisfies Section IIA3c as evidence/documentation was not available in the team room or readily accessible on campus.

The college has a well defined curriculum review process; however, based on interviews with college personnel, there is no follow up to ensure that all courses and programs are reviewed on a regular cycle and updated as needed. (IIA.4) Documentation of a cycle of curriculum updates was not found. (IIA.2e) The college, however, did provide sufficient evidence that the vocational programs subject to specialized accreditation review by external agencies had met the necessary requirements.

The college has a distance education program offering some 90 courses in various disciplines. These courses must comply with additional curriculum requirements prior to being approved to be taught. (IIA.2d) The college is currently funding only one full time individual for faculty and student support as well as troubleshooting of technical aspects of the online program. At this time, there is no clear means of evaluating online courses except as stated in the self study report in Standard IIA.2e as it specifically relates to Student Learning Outcomes.

The college also seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students as evidenced by the basic skills program for math and English. (IIA.2d) This program meets the needs of a group of students who would experience little success in the regular program at the college. The program is a self-paced, individualized program of independent study where students progress at their own pace. Evidence from interviews with staff members and information from the self study report confirmed that the college is using delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the needs and learning styles of its students. The Basic Skills Program also includes faculty members, tutors, and a computer software program to assist students in reading, writing and mathematics.

The program review process has now been well established and many of the college's programs have completed the review. However, it is apparent that program review at Victor Valley College has a history of starts and stops and because there is no evidence of program review informing the planning or budgetary process, there are no guarantees that this new process will be long lasting. It was stated in interviews with college personnel that there were some areas of the college who had not completed their program reviews at their

scheduled times. In addition, there was no evidence that these program reviews were used to justify resources or were an integral part of college planning. (IIA.2e, IIA.2f)

Although the college has begun the important process of establishing student learning outcomes at the course level, it has been a slow process. After speaking with several faculty, department chairs, management, and committees responsible for student learning outcomes, it was apparent that there were varying levels of understanding regarding SLOs and where the college was with them. On one subject there was agreement. The college has not yet begun to address student learning outcomes at the program levels. The Student Learning Outcomes Steering Committee has just recently been discussing SLOs at the institution level, but there was no documentation at the time of the visit. Various departments at the college are developing SLOs at the course level. Because this critical piece is missing, the college has not engaged in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, programs, degrees and certificates. (IIA.1a, IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2i)

Victor Valley College is approaching student learning outcomes from the course level with the help of the faculty. These SLOs are to be listed in the course outlines under course objectives. (IIA.2b) The assessment of these outcomes occurs within each individual course and is chosen by the instructor. At this time, there is no way of assessing student learning outcomes in courses offering multiple sections. (IIA.2c) The self study report stated that course syllabi must contain learning outcomes; however, there are few courses that have established learning outcomes and those have not gone through the curriculum process to be approved. Therefore, learning outcomes are not currently included in course syllabi. (IIA.6) In addition, the self study report stated that the college “has no formal process to address grading differences or grade distribution within a discipline.” This is where student learning outcomes will prove useful. The college appears to be leaving the “discovery” of grade discrepancies to the faculty by using the Instructional Research Query Builder. The college does feel that there has been some improvement in raising the bar for grading standards over the past five years. (IIA.2h)

Lastly, the team found that Victor Valley College has Board Policies and an ethics statement confirming that the college supports academic freedom, student academic honesty, and other institutional beliefs. (IIA.7)

Conclusions

In terms of the experiences of the team during the visit, it was difficult to completely validate the self study as the documentation was limited and slow in appearing, and it was difficult to schedule appointments with key personnel.

Victor Valley College has experienced many leadership changes in a short period of time and this fact was often referred to in interviews as a reason the college was not able to fully comply with some areas of the accreditation standards. Although the college is struggling to comply, it is evident that they are not fully in compliance with this standard in the areas of

student learning outcomes and program review. The college is not in compliance with all of the aspects of Standard IIA related to SLOs and program review. Although Victor Valley College is struggling to comply, the specific areas of non-compliance include: IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, and IIA.6a.

It is important for all faculty members, advisory committee members, and others involved in the development and revision of curriculum to work toward a clearer and commonly shared understanding of the nature of and relationships between “course objective” and “measurable student learning outcomes.” (IIA.2b) Further development of the student learning outcomes process along with faculty training in the subject of program-level and degree level outcomes, how to assess these outcomes, and use the information for improvements is needed in order to make progress toward meeting Standard IIA.2b.

The college needs to institute a program by which student learning outcomes can be effectively assessed, particularly as they are influenced by delivery modes and teaching methodologies. This would include a means of assessing multiple sections of the same course and assessing at the program and institution levels. In addition, program review must be continued and must inform planning and fiscal decisions that the college makes. There needs to be a clearer link between the work being done for program review and student learning outcomes and the benefits to the students, faculty and ultimately the college.

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

To meet the standards’ focus on ensuring student success and the quality of programs and services, the team recommends the college conducts meaningful, timely, and inclusive dialogue with all campus constituents to identify student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. The college should also systematically assess these student learning outcomes and use the results of these assessments for the improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Standard IB.1, IB.4, IB.7; Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

B. Student Support Services

General Comments

To support the instructional programs, Victor Valley College offers a variety of comprehensive student services and activities including: assessment, admissions, athletics, Career Center, Child Development Center, counseling, Disabled Student Program, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, financial aid, guidance classes, orientation, registration, student activities, student employment assistance, and transfer assistance. The Student Services offices are located in two buildings on campus. Assessment for course placement occurs on campus or at proctored sites off campus. (IIB.3a) Accessibility to Student Services matriculation areas has improved with the new one-stop center with expanded hours of

service. Many services can also be accessed online such as the application, the registration system, and the schedule of classes. (IIB.3a)

The college publishes a schedule of classes and college catalog that is accurate and contains the necessary information. (IIB.2a, IIB.2b, IIB.2c, IIB.2c, IIB.2d) A catalog committee that meets and reviews the catalog prior to publication maintains its currency and accuracy. The college attempted to publish a class schedule in web format only, but quickly abandoned this approach and now publishes a class schedule as well as having a web version for student use. The course descriptions on many courses include information on which semesters the course will be offered. Programs include student outcomes in the most general of terms. (IIB.4)

The current catalog lists 18 units required for general education associate degree graduation requirements. In addition, a student must complete another 18 units in a major. The remaining 24 units were electives. The college has added several new certificate programs, consisting of 18 units or less. (IIB.2b)

The college uses multiple measures for placement of new students into appropriate courses and all assessment instruments have been approved by the Chancellor's Office. (IIB.3) Registration for courses is restricted based on the need to satisfy the mandatory prerequisites. The college does offer a prerequisite challenge process for students who wish to prove that they have met the course prerequisite. Victor Valley College has also completed a student equity plan, and the college mission statement promotes an appreciation for diversity. (IIB.3d)

Findings and Evidence

Not all college service areas are open the same number of hours. Some services maintain Saturdays hours while others do not. Evening students seem to struggle most because the majority of services are not available during evening hours. (IIB.3a)

There is no clear indication as to how the college addresses and promotes the appreciation of diversity with the exception of a reference in the college Mission Statement and information cited in the student equity plan. (IIB.3d) Victor Valley College has implemented an early alert system to enhance and improve student success for high-risk students, but information regarding this and other diversity-related areas is sparse. The importance of providing increased diversity training and employing Spanish-speaking staff members has become evident due to the rapid growth in the local Latino population. English as a Second Language students and other staff members confirmed that college information in a language other than English is not readily available. (IIB.3d)

Although the self study report did not address how student records are maintained, the site visit and interviews with staff members confirmed that the college has satisfactory methods for maintaining student records and related documents. (IIB.3f)

The college's one-stop center matriculation format was one effort made to assist students with the matriculation/registration processes. Students are provided with quick overview of the college as well as information regarding enrollment and registration procedures. Although the approach may work for many students in the general student population, EOPS Office members expressed concern regarding this abbreviated orientation process because it relies upon the rapid delivery of critical information that tends to overwhelm some students who have had limited exposure to a collegiate atmosphere. (IIB.1, IIB.4) The college has used a Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey as a means of validating student satisfaction with student services. (IIB.1, IIB.3c, IIB.3e, IIB.4) However, there is still no mention of student learning outcomes. There is mention of indirect student learning outcomes, but nothing specific. Therefore, the team found a definite need for the student services areas to conduct additional data gathering on the effectiveness of services, analyze the data gathered from a variety of sources, and use the data/findings to make improvements. (IIB.3, IIB.4)

Conclusions

Although the Student Services areas heavily rely upon the Noel Levitz Survey information as the major tool for assessing the success of student services, there is a critical need to develop and employ other assessment methods for the development of measurable student learning outcomes. The college does not appear to be involved in evaluation of student support services to assure they meet identified student needs. Without evaluation, the institution is unable to use the results for improvement. The student services areas clearly would benefit from additional data gathering and further analysis of this data in order to strengthen programs based on student feedback. The establishment of a systematic cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement will result in improved services to students and the creation of well defined, measurable student learning outcomes (IIB.1, IIB.3, IIB.4)

Recommendations

See Recommendation 2 in Standard IIA regarding Student Learning Outcomes with citations for Sections IIB.1 and IIB.4.

C. Library and Learning Support Services

General Comments

Victor Valley College provides support for the instructional programs through the college library, tutoring services, and various computer labs on campus. The Victor Valley College Library supports the instructional program through its collection of books, periodicals, video and audio recordings, and electronic databases. (IIC.1) The college's self study describes that Victor Valley College's Library and Supplemental Instruction/Tutoring Program and Computer Lab are located in the Academic Commons Building whereas the Basic Skills Program and Writing Center are located in the Humanities Center on lower campus. The

logistical separation of complementary programs does create challenges for students seeking these services as well as college employees who could benefit from cross training and improved communication if these areas were in closer proximity.

Findings and Evidence

The library is staffed with two full time librarians and sufficient staff to serve the needs of the students. (IIC.1a) Collection development is supported by recommendations of the faculty through the curriculum process as well as librarian evaluation of needs based on student assignments. The library provides online databases that can be accessed from off campus as well as on campus. These databases are currently funded with grant money from the California Community College's Telecommunications Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP). The library provides a required information competency class as well as an interactive workbook for all students enrolled in the college's English 101 course. The library does a pre and post-test to evaluate the learning taking place with the interactive workbook and class. (IIC.1b) In addition, librarians provide instruction to any Victor Valley College class on request. The librarians are working to establish information competency as a general education graduation requirement and/or college-wide student learning outcome.

The library's website provides continuous remote access to the online catalog and most databases. (IIC.1c) There are also learning guides available on the website. Currently, the process to access the databases from off campus locations requires that a librarian manually verify a student's enrollment status and manually assign the student a password. Requests for student password accounts have dramatically increased to 2,260 in 2003. The library also participates in an interlibrary loan program to provide students with access to additional resources. (IIC.1e)

The Supplemental Instruction/Tutoring and Computer Labs rely on trained tutors who provide students with assistance in math and science as well as nursing and computer science. The tutors also offer study skill sessions. The Computer Lab consists of 84 workstations with several different configurations on the computers to serve the various departments on campus and printing is free. The Language Lab has 30 interactive multi-media computers for student use that are linked to a master instructor console. (IIC.1a)

The Writing Center provides online tutoring support services for students enrolled in courses taught online. The Writing Center also has 11 computers and is staffed by classified employees and a faculty facilitator. (IIC.1a) Unfortunately, the library workbook used for information competency is currently not available for students in online courses. Online students complete a generic tutorial hosted by an outside university. (IIC.1e)

There is a lack of classroom space currently on the campus leading the college to use space designed for other purposes. This has led to some issues in the library with security and issues in the supplemental instruction/tutoring computer lab areas where space is at a premium. (IIC.1d)

It was clear that the college has made attempts to dialogue in some areas, especially as related to student learning outcomes, but communication seems to be a major issue on several levels and communication is necessary for dialogue to be effective. In many areas of the campus, a lack of communication was mentioned as one of the major issues inhibiting improvements and changes on the campus. One of the fallouts from this lack of communication is that the reduction of staff is viewed as an obstacle and there is no understanding of the process that was used to reduce costs on campus. (IIC) It may be that in an attempt to comply with the standards, the college lost sight of the purpose of these standards and got lost in the parts instead of looking at the big picture.

The library and learning resource areas should be encouraged to develop an approach to establishing student learning outcomes that includes additional data gathering and research analysis to create measurable outcomes that lead to program improvement. Once student learning outcomes have been identified, the outcomes must then be integrated into the planning and implementation process to ensure an on-going cycle of improvement. (IIC.2)

Conclusions

While some sporadic evaluations have occurred in the student learning programs and services areas, there is a critical need to improve specific training, foster communication, conduct coordinated evaluation, and develop comprehensive program level student learning outcomes. Because the current assessment of quality and sufficiency of learning resources is primarily anecdotal, it is evident that a systematic process for gathering information, assessing services, and conducting a comprehensive analysis of how services can be improved is necessary. (IIC.1a, IIC.2) By aligning the evaluation of program/service effectiveness with well defined student learning outcomes, Victor Valley College's learning resources areas could better coordinate their efforts to serve students now and in the future as well as concentrate staff and material resources where it is most critically needed.

Lastly, it appears that many of the frustrations articulated by learning resources staff members could be significantly reduced with the establishment of improved communication channels. (IIC)

Recommendations

See Recommendation 2 in Standard IIA regarding Student Learning Outcomes with citations for Sections IIC.1a and IIC.2.

STANDARD III

Resources

A. Human Resources

General Comments

From late 2001 until June of 2004, Victor Valley College did not have a permanent full time Director of Human Resources. During this period, staff members in this department had to carry out all of the required activities and responsibilities of this area. The current Director was initially hired as Interim Director in February 2003 and assumed the permanent position of Director of Human Resources in June of 2004. The department now consists of two Human Resources (HR) analysts, one administrative assistant, two HR technicians, one office assistant, a coordinator of payroll and benefits, and a payroll technician. The Director and staff members develop HR policies which are presented to the Cabinet, then the College Assembly and, ultimately, to the Board of Trustees. Human Resources organizes training sessions for college staff on sexual harassment policies and procedures and other topics. The office is responsible for conducting evaluations of classified, management, full time and associate faculty.

Findings and Evidence

The unfavorable economic climate has resulted in the reduction of the full time staff development coordinator to half time, and faculty members are currently not funded for attendance at professional conferences. (IIIA.5) The 2004 opinion survey reflects dissatisfaction with the diminution of staff development activities by all three constituent groups. (IIIA.5a; survey item #36) Since the college suspended flex activities in 2003, HR's ability to provide training on topics such as sexual harassment, discrimination/hostile work environment and other issues has been diminished, although such training is still offered to those willing or able to attend. (IIIA.4a)

While the position of Director of Human Resources was filled by interims for approximately 2½ years at Victor Valley College, the staff members were able to keep the department running. However, timely evaluations have not been conducted, especially for associate faculty members. (IIIA.1b) The opinion survey conducted in spring 2004 indicates that faculty, staff, and management strongly disagreed with the statement that "Victor Valley College assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals." Currently the HR Director has submitted an evaluation plan for management that features articulation and measurement of goals. (IIIA.1b) To address the issue of timely evaluations, the HR Director recently provided training sessions on evaluation and documentation to managers. Spreadsheets have also been developed to track evaluations and ensure submittal in a timely way.

Although student learning outcomes are discussed in Standard IIIA.1c as a component of faculty evaluations, there is no hard evidence that SLOs are used in this way. Some departments are still working on identifying SLOs for their programs, aided by the institutional researcher (evidence: conversations with academic department chairs).

Some examples of activities in the HR area include the production of a code of ethics that was recently adopted by the Board of Trustees (IIIA.1d), updating Board Policies governing personnel practices (IIIA.3), and training faculty and classified employees to serve as Fair Employment Representatives on hiring committees. (IIIA.3a) Human Resources is in the process of conducting a classification and salary study for classified staff positions; such a study has not been done since 1992-93. (IIIA.2)

Diversity among staff and faculty at Victor Valley College is a goal of the college mission statement and is a prominent concern of HR, yet the percentage of Hispanic employees at the college is smaller than reflected in the student body. According to the HR Director, this will be addressed by identifying new pools of potential employees and sending job notices to this population. (IIIA.4) The self study expressed concern over recent increased complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment charges, noting plans to address this with additional training. (IIIA.4a, IIIA.4b)

Recent budget constraints have affected professional development opportunities at the college (IIIA.5). Faculty no longer has designated flex days since these were negotiated out of the calendar by the faculty bargaining unit; therefore, "generating and maintaining interest in workshops and seminars has been a challenge." (IIIA.5a, IIIA.5b)

Conclusions

While Human Resources staff was stressed by instability due to the unfilled permanent director position from 2001 until 2004, currently all major human resources functions are being adequately addressed and the college meets Standard IIIA.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 3 in Standard IIIC on page 31.

B. Physical Resources

General Comments

Victor Valley College's lovely vegetation and lake provide a peaceful setting to the college's many activities. Its buildings appear well maintained and clean. Since the last accreditation visit, Victor Valley College has built a child development center, and three new buildings are scheduled: a Speech/Drama addition to the existing Performing Arts Center; an Advanced Technology Center; and a new auxiliary gymnasium to replace one damaged by the Northridge earthquake. A number of major repairs and infrastructure improvements have occurred in the last several years. In its planning documents and the resulting campus additions/modifications, Maintenance and Operations has been attentive to ADA requirements as well as aesthetic concerns.

Findings and Evidence

The college should be commended for the care so evidently bestowed on its facilities and grounds. The custodial and grounds keeping crews, despite increased workloads from the development of new athletic fields and stretched budgets, appear to take great pride in their work. (IIIB.1a)

Throughout the standard, and in its supporting documents, there is evidence of thoughtful, effective planning. For example, the recently formed (2003) Facilities Focus Group provides campuswide input that helps to clarify how instructional requirements determine facilities maintenance and construction. As the Focus Group also evaluates the efficiency of Maintenance and Operations support for programs and services, it provides a good example of a well-integrated planning cycle at the college. (IIIB.1)

The college has demonstrated appropriate planning for maintaining its buildings, conducting space utilization studies and using priority ranking work order requests and cyclic repair schemas to address campus needs. (IIIB.1a, IIIB.1b, and IIIB.2b) Health and safety issues are adequately met by scheduling remedial maintenance; the Safety Committee monitors conditions and makes recommendations. (IIIB.1a, IIIB.1b)

Capital project participants play a role in facilities planning. Resulting proposals are prioritized and integrated into the overall college planning cycle. (IIIB.2b)

Conclusions

The college appears in compliance with the standard regarding physical resources.

Recommendations

None

C. Technology**General Comments**

Victor Valley College has, over the years, developed an impressive technology support infrastructure that connects all areas of the campus. However, while the college claims to be "committed to providing access to technology and to using technology effectively to reach its goals," the Information Technology and Management Information Systems Departments seem to be in total disarray. Organizationally, these two departments report to two different Vice Presidents that have resulted in ineffective support of technology on the campus.

The old Technology Plan provided a great vision for the campus, but little emphasis was placed on implementing the plan except for the networking of the campus. A revised and updated Technology Plan has been drafted but has not been reviewed through the committee process before recommendation to the administration or the Board of Trustees.

Through the development of the technology committee, which represents a participatory governance model, the college is able to receive input from all constituency groups. The committee also establishes plans, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology to accommodate the demands for technology in instruction and in daily operations at the college.

Findings and Evidence

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs, which are evidenced by the installation of a powerful technology infrastructure at the campus. The college administration recognized the need to update its Technology Plan and demonstrated the need by assigning a Computer Information Systems faculty member to develop a new Technology Plan for the college. The plan has been drafted and needs to be discussed at the committee level with the recommendation to administration and then to the Board. (IIC, IIC.1)

The college has invested heavily in hardware, as demonstrated by the installation of a powerful fiber backbone and over 2,200 workstations and 50 servers. The college currently lacks the staff to install, maintain, and troubleshoot the network and hardware on campus. Staffing in the IT Department is below recommended levels, and three key positions are in various stages of recruitment. The planned Advanced Technology Center will add to the burden of an already overextended staff. In addition, the recent migration to Datatel for its Student Information System has been far from trouble free. (IIC.1a) While the Datatel

System issues do not impact the college's ability to comply with the accreditation standards, the college's lack of support staff is problematic. (IIC.1d, IIC.2)

An area of concern is the organizational structure necessary to meet information technology requirements as well as the staffing support provided in these critical areas. The Information Technology Department reports to the Vice President for Administrative Services while the Management Information Services Department reports to the Vice President for Student Services. The Information Technology Department's primary responsibility is the design, implementation, and maintenance of the college's complex information network. The college is presently recruiting for a Director of Technical Services to manage the Information Technology Department. This department is currently unable to provide the support necessary to maintain the information network and hardware of the campus due to turnover and reduction in the number of positions authorized for this department. (IIIA.2, IIC.1a, IIC.1c)

The Management Information Services Department creates, maintains, and expands the college's primary centralized information system in support of admissions and records, business services, human resources, student information system, and other administrative programs. Given the staffing needs in the information technology area, much more could be supported by having these two departments work more closely together and combining them under one Vice President. (IIC.1a)

The college has completed the revisions to its Technology Plan, but has yet to take any action on it. Without an approved Technology Plan, the college will continue to identify its technology needs on an "as needed" basis. There is no evidence that the college systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs. In addition, without an approved Technology Plan, technology planning efforts cannot be integrated with institutional planning at the college. (IIC.1c, IIC.1d)

Conclusions

The college has an impressive technology support infrastructure that connects all areas of the campus. However, organization and staffing issues continue to hamper the ability of the college to effectively build upon the support infrastructure. The lack of an approved Technology Plan hinders the college's ability to 1) consider how institutional research plays a part in measuring and evaluating institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, 2) incorporate technology planning and implementation into the program review process, and 3) proceed with the technology plans of action identified in the revised Technology Plan. Thus, the college does not meet this accreditation standard specifically in the areas of IIC.1d and IIC.2.

Recommendation 3: Organizational Structure and Staffing

The team recommends that the college evaluates and addresses its organizational structure and staffing needs. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, technology support, risk management, maintenance and operations, and human resources. The college should take appropriate actions to implement the results of the evaluation and must address the lack of sufficient staffing. (Standard IIIC.1d, IIIC.2, IIIA.2 and Standard IVB.2a)

D. Financial Resources

General Comments

Victor Valley College is in general compliance with the standards related to Financial Resources. However, while the self study report does not provide a good background in addressing the standards, a review of the institution's policies, procedures, and financial audits, along with interviews with key staff, indicates the college is in control of its financial situation. There is indication that the new Vice President of Administrative Services has a firm handle of the finances of the college. The budgeting and planning process is being addressed to provide an integrated planning/budgeting system that, if accepted, will provide the college with a unit based, priority driven budget planning and allocation system.

Findings and Evidence

Victor Valley College's financial resources support the college's mission by focusing on student success and student centered learning. (IIID.1) Under the guidance of the new Vice President of Administrative Services, the college has created an integrated process for budget planning and resources allocation. This process is currently being presented to the various governing groups on the campus for approval. If approved, the college will have an effective budget allocation process that integrates resource allocation at the college with strategic planning initiatives and institutional goals and objectives. (IIID.1a)

This proposed annual budget allocation process is based on budget priorities developed by the major units of the college and consolidated into a college budget upon which resource allocations are determined. Budget recommendations are forwarded to the college cabinet, which presents final budget recommendations for the board of trustees for approval. (IIID.1b, IIID.1d)

An important part of this process is the establishment of the Budget Resource Identification Committee made up of representatives from all factions of the college community. Unfortunately, the faculty has chosen not to participate, and there is indication that the classified unit is also contemplating withdrawing from the committee. The college constituents should give this process a chance to evolve and be a successful model for college allocation of resources. (IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, IVA.5)

Victor Valley College has been a member of the California Educational Computer Consortium and utilizes its financial system to effectively monitor expenditures against approved allocation plans. The college has recently implemented the new Position Control and Human Resources System and new payroll system. This system provides financial management reporting and accountability of all funds allocated to programs. (IIID.2)

Financial audits are performed annually and no material weaknesses have been reported (IIID.2a). The audit firm of Brown Armstrong Paulden McCown Starbuck & Keeter Accountancy Corporation is in its third year of a five year contract. Audited statements as of June 30, 2004, reflect Total Assets of \$89,101,322 and Total Net Assets of \$25,937,051 after taking into account the \$53,450,000 for the Certificate of Participation and \$33,428,443 in restricted Net Assets for debt service. The auditors found "no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*." In addition, while the auditor did provide a few findings and recommendations, "none of the reported conditions described above is a material weakness."

Although the audit report did not specifically address the importance of fully retiring the college's 1997 Certificate of Participation, in order to maintain long-term fiscal stability, the college must take measures to address this issue and implement plans accordingly. Because Section IIID of the self study report lacked significant planning agendas to address general financial planning at the college, this significant omission became apparent during the site visit and should be of critical concern to the college due to the \$3.09 million payment to the Internal Revenue Service that resulted in a reduction of the corpus in the Guaranteed Investment Contract. (IIID.2c)

Further, the Board of Trustees' Policy provides that "Unrestricted general reserves shall be no less than 5%." During fiscal year 2003-04 the college's general reserves dipped to 4.7% and is currently projected at below the mandated 5% level for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. The need to develop sound long-term financial planning to ensure fiscal stability is paramount. (IIID.2c)

The college is only now developing a risk management program to assess potential risks that may result in large monetary outlays and create a financial hardship on the campus. Victor Valley College is self-insured in the areas of worker's compensation, liability, and property insurance. The college is a member of the Joint Power Association to mitigate the financial liability associated with these risks. (IIID.2c)

In understanding the resource allocation process and the accounting of the available resources, the college seems financially solvent with sufficient reserves to meet fiscal emergencies, which may confront the college. (IIID)

Conclusions

Victor Valley College meets the standards of financial resources. Its proposed resource allocation process is integrated with its planning process and is participative through the

establishment of the Budget Resource Identification Committee (IIID.1), but the proposed process is not yet approved or implemented.

The college meets the standard of financial integrity through effective management of its financial resources. The financial system provided by the California Educational Computer Consortium monitors expenditures against allocations and income against projected revenues. (IIID.2)

The college appears to have sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain current financial stability and has just begun to develop a risk management program to mitigate large financial losses in the vulnerable areas of worker compensation and liability and property losses. The concerns raised over the Certificates of Participation were addressed through a study by Sutter Securities Incorporated, who concluded that the college has made adequate provisions for the retirement of the 1997 Certificate of Participation. (IIID.2c)

Victor Valley College certainly can benefit from the establishment of a Risk Management Unit to ensure that the college adequately addresses liability issues. In addition, the college might consider the inclusion of workers compensation within the Risk Management Unit. Finally, there is a definite and pressing need for Victor Valley College to reevaluate its ability to fully retire the 1997 Certificate of Participation in light of the \$3.09 million paid to the IRS that reduced the corpus in the Guaranteed Investment Contract. (IIID.2c)

Recommendation 4: Financial Resources

The team recommends that the college's institutional planning be reviewed so that it reflects a realistic assessment of its financial resources, the development of additional financial resources through public/private partnerships, and the management of expenditures. The team further recommends that the college, to ensure long term financial stability, clearly identifies appropriate resources and plans for full payment of the 1997 Certificate of Participation. (Standard IIID.1b, 1c, 2c, 3)

STANDARD IV

Leadership and Governance

General Comments

Victor Valley College has all of the existing elements to become a collegial and collaborative institution. The structures exist to enable all of the members of the college community to participate in decision-making and college governance. The organization structure is traditional and in a pyramid format including the Board of Trustees; the college President/CEO; chief academic, student services and fiscal resource officers; a human resources department; four deans; two unions; and academic senate and all of the elements one would anticipate encountering in a community college environment. The College President has a Cabinet that makes recommendations on college operations. The Senior Cabinet members meet with the College President initially and they are joined by the institutional deans at a later time.

The college has a new College President/CEO and several new administrators who are in the process of making changes in college operations. The college is also experiencing rapid growth and has added as many as 18 new faculty positions in one year. The community and its demands for service have intensified tremendously in the past few years as evidenced by the 45,000 housing starts currently on the books. As in any organization, change can create some discomfort and confusion. Victor Valley College meets the governance requirements in Standard IV but appears to be struggling with the issues of sudden growth and a significant change within its administrative ranks.

The Board of Trustees has well defined goals for the institution. However, based upon the climate survey, at least 33% of the employees of the college do not believe that the mission of the college drives the decision making process. (IVB.1b) The Program Review, Accreditation, and Educational Master Plan Committee indicates that the committee has defined a structure to create student learning outcomes that support the goals of the Board, the college, and college programs. The structure is a work in progress and the committee does not appear to be in agreement about the future direction of the college although portions of the master plan are in place. This committee has worked together for five years and appears to work in a collegial atmosphere in support of college endeavors.

Findings and Evidence

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The primary representative governance body of the college is the College Assembly. The Assembly consists of two representatives of each constituent group: faculty, classified, students, managers, and administrators. The College President is a member of the Assembly and attends these meetings. There is no evidence of how the information from these meetings is used by the College President or is communicated to the Board of Trustees.

(IVA.1) The Self Study indicates that "The College Assembly assures the Board of Trustees that policies, procedures, and other important recommendations brought to it have been thoroughly reviewed and considered and subsequently provided to the Board and Superintendent/Trustee."

While there is a requirement that (IVA.3) through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution, there is little evidence that the requirement is being met which had led to a significant, negative impact on college morale. Because of a lack of clarity regarding decision-making processes, a parallel structure of committees has begun to emerge and Academic Senate members and classified staff have withdrawn from collegewide committees.

Members on the Academic Senate Executive Board are the same as the members of the Faculty Union Executive Board. The team also found that there is particular lack of participation in the new Budget Advisory Committee due to a perceived lack of information and communication available to committee members.

The college appears to be in a substantial growth mode as the population in local communities surrounding the college steadily increases. To accommodate this growth, the college administration intends to conduct a Proposition 39 bond election which will address the anticipated space needs of the institution.

The Board of Trustees has clearly defined goals tied to the College's Master Plan goals. These goals were disseminated campuswide.

Victor Valley College conducted a climate survey for the purposes of the accreditation site visit. (Self Study Report, p.11-4) The participation rate in the survey was 29% of full-time staff, and the largest per capita participating group was the college administration although in some categories nearly 50% of the faculty participated. There has been action taken as a result of the survey including the creation of the Budget Resource Identification Committee. Standard IVA.3 addresses the need for faculty, staff, and administration to work together for the good of the institution.

B. Board and Administrative Organization

The organizational chart for the institution that is located in the Organization Section of the self study report is not clear. (IVB.2) The initial chart that lists the total structure is not supported by the supplementary charts. (self study report, p.6-1) There is no organizational structure listed for the instructional unit of the institution with the exception of what appears on the general chart. The other college units have separate charts. While Information Technology appears in the original chart, it is not evident in the Administration Section of the organization chart.

The Board of Trustees is pleased with the performance of the College President. They have indicated support for her vision and leadership. Given the previous difficulties at the college, the College President has done an excellent job of attempting to refocus college efforts and resources.

Victor Valley College gathers data related to the success of their students and programs (self study report, p.11-3). It is not clear, however, how the data is used to make decisions (IVB.2a) related to student success and retention. Program review is a "self-evaluation" process. However, the Senate has recently convened a committee that is responsible for program mergers and dissolution of programs. It is not clear how this committee relates to the Program Review, Educational Master Planning, and Accreditation Committee. Even committee members are not clear about the relationship.

While the College President and senior administration have a very good working relationship with the Board of Trustees, there appears to be a disconnect in communication among other constituent groups. (IVB.2e) As of Mid-March 2005, the faculty continues to refuse to negotiate the academic calendar for the 2005-06 year with the administration. In the climate survey conducted by the college, less than 40% indicated confidence in the Board's commitment to the public interest. (IVB.1a) Although the Board does evaluate its activities, few on campus have any awareness that they do so. The Board needs to be more visible and develop a better understanding of their role within the college community. CSEA contends that the Board President used his own personal attorney to serve as the institution's attorney despite information that suggested that this practice is inconsistent with college standards.

Conclusions

Victor Valley College partially meets Standard IV. It was clear to the visitation team that due to the continued anticipated growth of Victor Valley College and the local communities it serves, the campus will experience significant challenges ahead. The organizational structure, the number of employees, the configuration of buildings, and the way business is conducted must be re-evaluated to address these changes and plan for the future. Some employees have indicated discomfort with the growth and long for the "good old days" in terms of structure, organization, and the ability of all members of the college community to participate in the decision making process.

The College President is to be commended for meeting with new members of the city councils and attempting to establish new partnerships in the community. She is re-establishing a local presence that has not existed in some time.

Recommendation 5: Purpose/Function of Campus Committees

The team recommends that the purpose and functional relationship of campus committees, and their membership, be clearly defined to advance the mission and goals of the institution. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the duplication of committees and committee work. (Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.5)

Recommendation 6: Campus Climate

The team recommends that the college establishes a positive campus climate that embodies a culture of respect, civility, dialogue, and trust designed to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.3, IVA.5)

Recommendation 7: Evaluation of Leadership Roles

The team recommends that the college evaluates the role of collegewide leadership in institutional governance and implements the results of the evaluation to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of organizational processes, practices, and decision-making. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the current leadership configuration of the Academic Senate and the Faculty Union. (Standard IVA.1, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, IVA.5)

Summary

Overall, the visitation team was impressed with the college's programs/services and the long and continuing tradition of excellence in meeting educational needs in the community. In particular, the team observed the following strengths:

1. Dedicated faculty, staff, administrators, and Board members;
2. Comprehensive instructional and student services programs with which students are very satisfied;
3. Maintenance of campus grounds to create an aesthetically appealing environment;
4. The college's aggressive efforts in seeking to remedy past fiscal challenges;
5. Acquisition of federally funded and state funded grants including a recent Title V Hispanic Serving Institutions Grant; and
6. Strong connections with and support of the region's major businesses and industry.

While a great deal has been accomplished at Victor Valley College over the past few years, much remains to be done to more effectively address accreditation standards and learning outcomes. The visitation team recommendations give special emphasis to and build upon the most critical planning areas presented in the college's self study. In summary, the team recommendations are:

1) Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The team recommends that the college provide evidence that it assesses progress toward achieving its goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation. This continuing cycle should include long-term master planning, short-term strategic planning, including technology planning, and an effective, institutionalized program review process. When fully implemented, this cycle of planning, evaluation, and program improvement should result in the creation of a culture of research and evidence that supports all of the college's decision-making processes. (Standard IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7; Standard IIA.1, IIA.2, IIB.3, IIB.4, IIC.2; and Standard IIIA.6, IIIB.1, IIIB.2, IIIC.2, IIID.1, IIID.2g, IIID.3)

2) Student Learning Outcomes

To meet the standards' focus on ensuring student success and the quality of programs and services, the team recommends the college conducts meaningful, timely, and inclusive dialogue with all campus constituents to identify student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. The college should also systematically assess these student learning outcomes and use the results of these assessments for the improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Standard IB.1, IB.4, IB.7; Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

3) Organizational Structure and Staffing

The team recommends that the college evaluates and addresses its organizational structure and staffing needs. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, technology support, risk management, maintenance and operations, and human resources. The college should take appropriate actions to implement the results of the evaluation and must address the lack of sufficient staffing. (Standard IIIC.1d, IIIC.2, IIIA.2 and Standard IVB.2a)

4) Financial Resources

The team recommends that the college's institutional planning be reviewed so that it reflects a realistic assessment of its financial resources, the development of additional financial resources through public/private partnerships, and the management of expenditures. The team further recommends that the college, to ensure long term financial stability, clearly identifies appropriate resources and plans for full payment of the 1997 Certificate of Participation. (Standard IIID.1b, 1c, 2c, 3)

5) Purpose/Function of Campus Committees

The team recommends that the purpose and functional relationship of campus committees, and their membership, be clearly defined to advance the mission and goals of the institution. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the duplication of committees and committee work. (Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.5)

6) Campus Climate

The team recommends that the college establishes a positive campus climate that embodies a culture of respect, civility, dialogue, and trust designed to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.3, IVA.5)

7) Evaluation of Leadership Roles

The team recommends that the college evaluates the role of collegewide leadership in institutional governance and implements the results of the evaluation to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of organizational processes, practices, and decision-making. Furthermore, the college should eliminate the current leadership configuration of the Academic Senate and the Faculty Union. (Standard IVA.1, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, IVA.5)