

PROGRESS REPORT

Victor Valley College
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A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
Victor Valley College on November 9, 2005

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November 15, 2005

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FROM: Christopher C. O'Hearn, Ph.D., Team Chair

SUBJECT: Report of Progress Report,
Victor Valley College, November 9, 2005

Introduction:

A comprehensive visit was conducted to Victor Valley College on March 8-10, 2005. At its meeting of June 8-10, 2005, the Commission acted to require of Victor Valley College a Progress Report and visit. The Progress Report visiting team, Dr. Christopher C. O'Hearn and Mr. Jeffrey L. Bobbitt, conducted the required site visit to Victor Valley College on November 9, 2005. The purpose of the team visit was to validate the Progress Report prepared by the College and to determine if the College had responded appropriately to seven recommendations identified in the comprehensive visit as areas needing significant focus.

In general, the team found that the College had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with individuals and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair. College personnel were gracious and accommodating, and provided appropriate meeting space and refreshments throughout the day. Over the course of the day, the team met with members of the College community, including the President of the College and the President's Cabinet, representing Instruction, Student Services, Administrative Services, Human Resources, and Research. Evidence and documentation not available during the March comprehensive visit were available for the team's review.

Despite the fact that college personnel were prepared to be interviewed by the visiting team, the college's Progress Report did not adequately reflect progress made to date. The Report did not respond to the Commission's guidelines regarding format and often inappropriately repeated information and data from the Self Study and from my evaluation report dated May 11, 2005. It was difficult, if not impossible, to assess the college's progress made on the seven recommendations based solely on the written report. The College has seen the departure of two accreditation liaison offers since the March visit; therefore, there was not a concentrated focus on submitting a report according to Commission guidelines. Though the Progress Report was lacking, there was significant data available to demonstrate the college's progress in addressing the recommendations. In fact, all of the documentation not available during the March site visit was available to the team on November 9. The team, therefore, was able to validate the College's progress based on interviews and documentation.

Listed below are the seven recommendations which the College was expected to address in its Progress Report. For consistency, the numbers of the following recommendations correspond to those made in the report of the evaluation team.

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)

College Responses to the Team Recommendations:

- 1. 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)**

There was evidence that the college has implemented a new unit planning system to drive resource allocation. This system is tied to the college's mission and goals. Budget and staffing decisions have been made as a result of this new system as evidenced by recent hirings. Initial steps have been made to tie program review to planning, and there is evidence of a program review cycle involving all programs throughout the campus. Educational master planning consultants have been hired. The college is still determining how to integrate technology planning into the overall college plan. A Director of Technology Services has been hired, and there have been other positive personnel changes which should facilitate advancement in this area.

Conclusion:

The President and the Cabinet have made commendable progress in reviewing college planning and integrating all processes. Further work must be done to ensure that all program review processes and Student Learning Outcomes are tied to planning before this recommendation can be fully met.

- 2. 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)**

The incorporation of Student Learning Outcomes into the new planning process is scheduled for academic year 2006-07. There is an understanding of the importance of a focus on Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and the discussion of SLOs is being reintroduced into campus conversations. Progress on establishing and meeting SLOs is being added into evaluation forms and processes. Faculty have been required to reference Student Learning Outcomes in all course outlines since October 13, 2005.

Conclusion:

Though the least amount of progress has been made on this recommendation, there is evidence of some movement. The recent departure of the Vice President of Instruction and the Director of Grant Development/Compliance has resulted in a loss of direction and emphasis. The President and Cabinet are committed to refocusing efforts to ensure compliance. This recommendation has not been adequately addressed by the college.

- 3. 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)**

Staffing has been increased in critical areas as a result of the unit planning process. New positions have been created and, in some cases, vacancies have been filled, which should assist the college in moving forward positively. They are:

- Dean of Institutional Effectiveness;
- Director of Maintenance and Operations;

- Director of Technology Services;
- Director of Facilities and Construction;
- Database Analyst.

A Risk Management function has been established by assigning this responsibility to an existing employee who is being supported by an outside firm, Keenan & Associates. The Safety Committee has been reestablished. Administrative responsibilities of Cabinet officers have been clarified and realigned. There is a plan to hire a Vice President of Community and Corporate Education whose responsibility will be to create external partnerships and increase revenue.

Conclusion:

Although the college has recently lost its Vice President of Instruction and its Director of Grant Development/Compliance, a number of positions and/or functions addressed in the Evaluation Report have been filled as mentioned above. The college has made substantial progress in meeting this recommendation.

- 4. 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)**

Budget analysis and monitoring have been improved. Resource allocation is being more closely tied to annual planning. A modified zero-based budgeting system is being implemented. Budget training sessions have been conducted. Significant grant funding has been secured in the last few months. Consultants have been hired to analyze how best to satisfy the full payment of the 1997 Certificates of Participation (COP). A legal opinion is being sought to determine if dollars currently set aside in a guaranteed investment contract can be used to satisfy the COP obligation. The college is planning for a general obligation initiative in 2007. According to the College President and the Chief Financial Officer, the college is attempting to achieve the goal of establishing a General Fund reserve of five percent.

Conclusion:

While the college needs to further develop an integrated budgeting process for both restricted and unrestricted funds, it has made substantial progress in addressing this recommendation.

- 5. 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)**

The College Assembly has undertaken an inventory and general review of the purpose and membership of all college committees. Vice presidents have been asked to identify committees that should be proposed for "college committee" status through the participatory governance process. The team reviewed the process and forms for this review. Duplicate committees are being evaluated to determine continuing need and function. There seems to be agreement that duplicate committees are redundant and unnecessary. The committee review process has been placed as a regular item on the agenda of the College Assembly, as evidenced in the minutes of that body.

Conclusion:

The college has made substantial progress in addressing this recommendation.

- 6. 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)**

Through recent staff retreats and the new unit planning process campus communications have been improved. A new contract with CSEA has been approved and several CSEA grievances and legal actions have been settled, resulting in a reduction of tensions. Through a concerted effort by the President's Cabinet, the integrity of the decision-making process has improved. An intentional effort is being made to counter the dissemination of misinformation. Bargaining units have expressed a willingness to consider moving to interest-based negotiating and problem solving.

Conclusion:

While the college has made progress in addressing this recommendation, it needs to continue to work on maintaining and improving the integrity of decision-making processes before the recommendation can be said to have been fully met.

- 7. 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)**

The President's relationship with the Board of Trustees continues to be positive. Her work with the Board has resulted in a clear understanding of the appropriate role of the Board in developing policy and the role of the CEO to manage college operations. According to the college's chief negotiator, the separation of the roles and functions of the Academic Senate and faculty union has been agreed to by all parties and is currently being negotiated. This decision has dramatically improved the campus climate and the effectiveness of decision making. Offering training workshops on successful participatory governance is being considered.

Conclusion:

Meaningful progress has been made to date to address this recommendation.