Since the Self Study and re-accreditation visit of 2000, City College has been engaged in the pursuit of a singular outcome: increased student success. Driven by its mission, the College initiated the Enhanced Self Study, a college-wide dialogue which focused on the ways and means of improving student achievement and persistence. Involving over 170 faculty, staff and students in five teams, the Enhanced Self Study generated 34 recommendations, many of which have been approved and implemented. Concurrently, with broad participation, the College undertook the development of a comprehensive strategic plan which provided a clear vision for the future and inspired the production of an educational master plan and subsequent annual and unit plans. As a result, the College was able to utilize the planning and budgeting system to select and prioritize key activities, formulate implementation and delivery strategies, and ensure timely investment of scarce resources. Given the intensive effort that has occurred over the past three years, City College is well positioned to document and celebrate substantial progress as an institution with a singular commitment and the capacity to stay the course through the upcoming self study process.

**The WASC Mandate**

The intent of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is to stimulate thoughtful consideration of institutional quality from two perspectives. The first perspective addresses the four accreditation standards – institutional mission and effectiveness, student learning programs and services, institutional resources, and leadership and governance – essentially the traditional self study process. The second perspective addresses six new overarching themes, providing a more holistic view of the institution and its quality:

- A commitment to provide high quality education congruent with the mission of the College;
- An effort to evaluate, plan and improve programs and services for students;
- The development of student learning outcomes leading to improvement in all aspects of teaching and learning;
- The definition of an inclusive, informed, and intentional effort to define, support, and evaluate student learning;
An engagement in inclusive, informed, and intentional dialogue about institutional quality and improvement to support continued improvement; and

A demonstrated concern with honesty and truthfulness in its representation to all internal and external constituencies.

Underlying each of the four standards and the six themes identified by the Association is the concept of student success – that is, the extent to which the College, as an educational community, is actively engaged in identifying and improving its contribution to student learning and development at all levels and in all components of the institution.

The City College Approach

During the last year, City College has reviewed both the process of self study and the new standards and themes for accreditation. Two college-wide workshops on the topic of student learning outcomes were conducted, in the spring and the other in the fall, capitalizing on prior conversations regarding the identification, assessment, and utility of outcomes within selected departments. Last spring the Chancellor distributed a paper entitled Addressing the Challenge of the New Accreditation Standards and Student Learning Outcomes at City College of San Francisco which identified the need for further dialogue on student learning in conjunction with the self study process. Through these investigations, the College has begun to discover the rich variety of approaches that increase student learning in practice throughout the institution. Conversely, the College has realized the need to identify the gaps that still exist, preventing the institution from fulfilling its mission and achieving the intended level of quality. It is this dialogue that is to be fostered through the self study process and the exploration of student learning.

Over the next two years, the Self Study will serve as the focal point of the College community, engaging study teams in the examination of the four standards, encouraging a college wide dialogue on the six themes, and concluding with the preparation of a comprehensive Self Study Report which addresses the four WASC standards and the institution’s assessment from the perspective of the six themes.

Examining the Four Standards

The institutional examination of the four standards is the fundamental requirement of WASC, a process that will capitalize on the extraordinary level of planning and development that has occurred since the last accreditation. As such, the effort will consist primarily of documenting the current status of the College, emphasizing whenever appropriate the progress made in recent years. Through this analysis, remaining gaps will be identified, providing the opportunity
to cite plans to be implemented and to develop additional recommendations for further action. Inherent in the approach, of course, will be the utilization of the six themes to assess the impact of achieving the standards at a high level. In this manner it is anticipated that the examination of the standards can be completed effectively and efficiently by the Self Study Teams under the direction of the Steering Committee.

Exploring the Six Themes

The review of the institution from the perspective of the six themes will be accomplished in two ways. First, the themes will be assessed during the examination of the standards by the Self Study Teams themselves since the themes are referenced very clearly in the standards. Second, the six themes will provide the opportunity for a larger, college-wide dialogue in which the themes will serve as the lens for assessing the impact of the College's manifold initiatives to achieve institutional quality and, therefore, student success. This augmentation of the traditional self study process will be led by the Steering Committee and effected through college-wide dialogue using both the Flex Day opportunity and other venues for participatory assessment. With this approach it is anticipated that the combined perspectives of the College community can be incorporated into a collective assessment of institutional quality.

The net result of the Self Study process will be the production of the Self Study Report containing documentation, analyses, and recommendations with the six WASC themes prominently framing the findings and recommendations. College-wide reviews of the report, utilizing the shared-governance system, will lead to the finalization and adoption of the report in preparation for the WASC visit to the College.

The City College Approach to the Self Study: Structure and Timeline

To address the multiple tasks of studying and analyzing the four accreditation standards as well as integrating the accreditation themes into the final self study report, City College will organize a three phase self study process:

- **Phase 1: People, Preparation and Planning**
- **Phase 2: Analyzing the Evidence Supporting the Standards**
- **Phase 3: Synthesizing What We Learned – A Theme-based Self Study Report**

**Phase 1: People, Preparation and Planning (February – August 2004)**

*Recruitment and Training.* During the Spring 2004 semester we will focus on recruitment and training of CCSF faculty, staff, students and administrators, to
lead and participate in the self study. City College will host an all-day training on Friday, February 20, sponsored by the accrediting commission, a workshop that will ensure CCSF participants are fully aware of all the issues related to conducting an effective self study. Follow-up discussions will be held with workshop participants to consolidate our understanding of the self study process and to complete our planning for the self study which will start in Fall 2004. Membership of committees and work groups will be finalized and a Self Study Steering Committee will be organized to coordinate and oversee the development and delivery of the 2006 Self Study Report.

*Identifying the Evidence.* We will also begin identifying and collecting plans, studies, reports, surveys and other types of evidence that will help document the College’s alignment with the four accreditation standards. The collection of documentary evidence will be organized by each of the four accreditation standards. The membership of the Steering Committee will be representative of all levels and components of the institution, with each member serving as a liaison for one of the four Self Study Teams.

**Phase 2: Analysis of Evidence Supporting the Standards (August – December 2004)**

*Analysis of Evidence.* Beginning in Fall 2004, self study standards committees will analyze and assess the evidence of how well the College meets the standards. The committee members will also identify gaps between the College’s current achievements and the requirements of the standards. Needed data and documentation will be identified and, when possible, will be collected. The second phase of analysis of evidence will be completed in Winter 2004/2005.


*Theme-Based Essays.* During the third phase of the self study, the focus will shift to the examination of the College through the lens of six critical themes. The January 2005 Flex Day will focus on the six themes to involve the entire college community in a reflective dialogue. Organizationally, we will reorganize the standards-based committees to theme-based groups. By synthesizing the analyses of the standards-based evidence from Phase Two, the new theme groups will complete six essays that will comprise the final self study report. The reflection essays are:

a) City College’s commitment to high quality education.

b) College commitment to development of student learning outcomes to promote improvement of all aspects of teaching and learning.
c) City College’s commitment to continuous improvement of student learning within programs and services through research, planning and evaluation.

d) City College’s commitment to honesty and truthful communication with all constituencies

e) City College’s commitment to its diverse student communities and student success.

f) City College’s engagement of constituencies in an inclusive, informed and intentional dialogue about institutional quality and improvement to promote student success.

Each essay will address how the College meets its commitments to quality, continuous improvement, honesty and truthfulness, and engagement of our students, staff, faculty, administrators and the people of San Francisco, and each will contain supporting analyses and evidence derived from the work in Phase Two. In addition to the six essays, the study will contain an extensive appendix containing supporting data, and a series of cross-references linking the essays to the WASC standards. Drafts of the theme based essays will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and by the entire college community during the Fall 2005 Flex Day.

Conclusion

By the spring of 2006, virtually every member of the College community will have had the opportunity to participate in an intensive – perhaps provocative – discussion of student learning and development as the hallmark of institutional quality, identifying and extending the College’s efforts to promote student success. Thus, the College will bring to culmination a cycle of dialogue and development which originated in the formulation of its mission, took shape in its strategic plan, continues in the self study process, and reaches its zenith in the success of its students.