

ACCREDITATION EVALUATION VISIT

**City College of San Francisco
(March 19 – 23, 2006)**

CLOSING REMARKS

AN UNOFFICIAL REPORT TO THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY

**Dr. Constance M. Carroll (Team Chair)
Chancellor, San Diego Community College District**

Good afternoon. I am pleased that so many of you were able to come today to hear our closing presentation.

Chairing this accreditation evaluation team is a privilege for me, especially on a visit to such an excellent institution as City College of San Francisco. The team members and I have enjoyed this opportunity to experience firsthand how much your institution means in the lives of almost 100,000 students each semester and the benefits you have provided to countless thousands over the years.

Let me begin by introducing the members of the visiting evaluation team:

Dr. Constance Carroll (Chair)
Chancellor
San Diego Community College District

William Craft (Team Assistant)
Dean, School of Learning Resources
San Diego Mesa College

Lisa Anderson
Associate Professor of Mathematics
Ventura College

Victoria Atherton
Library Director
Evergreen Valley College

Cathy Itnyre
Associate Professor of Philosophy and History
Copper Mountain College

Eva Kinsman
Member of the Board of Trustees
Copper Mountain Community College District

Dr. Jing Luan

Chief Planning Research and Knowledge Systems Officer
Cabrillo College

Vangie Meneses

Vice President of Student Services
Coastline Community College

Dr. Erlinda Martinez

President
Santa Ana College

Kerrin McMahan

Distance Education Coordinator
East Los Angeles College

Dr. Richard van Pelt

Facilities Director
Pasadena City College

Henry Quan

Professor of Philosophy
Southwestern College

Scott Thomason

Vice President and Chief Business Officer
College of the Redwoods

Dr. Dennis White

Vice President of Instruction
Irvine Valley College

On behalf of the team, let me express appreciation to many members of the City College of San Francisco organization who have assisted us in this visit and who have provided leadership for your self study process. First, let me publicly thank your chancellor, Dr. Phil Day, who is known throughout California and the nation for his commitment to educational excellence and who represents you effectively in many, many settings. We also thank the members of your Board of Trustees who made themselves available for our visit. Dr. Bob Gabriner, your vice chancellor for institutional advancement, provided exceptional leadership as accreditation liaison officer. Also, Gohar Momjian in the office of institutional advancement provided extraordinary assistance to our team, handling all of the logistics with competence and skill.

There are many others we would like to thank – all of the faculty, administrators, classified staff, and students who met with us and who served on the self study committees. And of course, thanks are in order for the staff of the Rosenberg Library who allowed us to reside in their facility, like an invading army – with food! You have all been available, professional, candid, and honest in our work together these past few days. You have shared with us your understandable pride in your wonderful college and its diverse campuses. You have demonstrated your own effective styles of instruction and support services. You have demonstrated clearly that students do come first and are much loved at City College of San Francisco. And you have clearly emphasized that you take service to the City and County of San Francisco very seriously.

Our team was assigned to this visit by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, known more informally by the acronym WASC. Let me share just a few words about the accreditation process, which I hope is informative, especially for those of you who have not had experience with it before.

American education emulates its European ancestors in many ways, which we see in the organizational structure, titles, formats and academic disciplines of our institutions. American institutions also differ from their European counterparts, most particularly in the areas of institutional evaluation and quality assurance. In most cases, European governments control this aspect of educational oversight, usually through a ministry of education or related department.

The United States has, for the current and for most of the previous century, utilized a very different model. Our philosophy is that institutional evaluation and quality assurance should be matters of peer determination, subject to peer review, rather than part of a governmentally-controlled process. To this end, over time, 6 regional accreditation bodies were formed, composed of member institutions from the regions, and operating with reciprocity among the regions – the New England Association, the Middle States Association, the Southern Association, the North Central Association, the Northwest Association, and, finally, ours, the Western Association.

Each of the associations has a commission that regulates K-12 schools and each of the associations has a commission that regulates higher education (both public and private). However, because of the large number of its member institutions, WASC operates with three accrediting commissions: a Commission for Schools, Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, and a Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The commissions are made up of representatives selected by the member institutions – from the faculty, from the administration, from governing boards, and from the public at large.

And the key element in this structure, the essence of the dynamic, is that the commissions derive their authority from and are accountable to their members for upholding and enforcing the standards by which the member institutions have agreed to be measured and judged.

The accreditation process is an ongoing process of institutional self study and peer review. First, an institution is granted initial accreditation, following a self study and a comprehensive review by a visiting evaluation team. From that point on, its next self studies and comprehensive reviews are required every six (6) years. During the intervening years, the institution is still required to evaluate itself and provide reports to the Accrediting Commission – an annual report, a mid-term report, and other focused reports that may have been required by the Commission, along with a visit in some cases, based upon the findings during the comprehensive review and visit. And then, six years later, the entire process begins anew with a comprehensive self study and evaluation team visit.

And that is where City College of San Francisco is at this point - at the sixth-year comprehensive review stage. You have spent the last two years developing a thorough self study (hold up document), which our team has read and reread and reread. As part of your self study, you also developed six thematic essays that illustrate aspects of the self study process. And the team has read and reread and reread the essays. You have amassed a room full of documentary evidence to support the findings you have made in your self study and to demonstrate your compliance with the standards of accreditation. The visiting team has thoroughly reviewed these documents as well.

The purpose of this closing session is to bring closure to this week's activities and to give you a sense of the team's major findings and recommendations. Let me offer three caveats in advance to frame our team's report.

1. The first is our assumption that City College of San Francisco is an institution of excellence, in every way. The purpose of our report, however, is to probe those areas that you have identified in your self study and we have validated during our visit that should receive attention for improvement. That is the ongoing dynamic of accreditation review – continuous self assessment and improvement. So please listen to my remarks and read our report as a report-by exception, since it is the exceptions that are being probed in our recommendations.
2. The second is that our team's recommendation on accreditation status is confidential and may not be shared at this time. The recommendation will be considered by the Accrediting Commission at the Commission's June meeting and the Commission will determine what the final action will be. You will be informed of that along with the final report and recommendations of the team following the Commission's meeting.
3. Last, we will not be able to entertain questions at the end of our closing session. I apologize for that, but that is the protocol. So, after this meeting, we will be leaving without further comment. We will, however, send a copy of our draft report to your chancellor so that he will have the opportunity to correct any factual errors that he may find.

Let me now give you a summary of our findings and recommendations.

First, the team was very impressed by the overall organization we found on our visit to your institution. We found much that we consider to be exemplary and commendable. Here are just a few examples:

- You have made your transition from two institutions, credit and noncredit, to one large, diverse institution a complete success. This has been no easy task and we applaud you for the hard work you have devoted to this task.
- You offer programs and services in an entirely student-centered manner. It was clear to the visiting team that students are your primary concern, and the reorganizations and changes you have adopted in recent years have been undertaken for the right reason – responding better to student needs.
- You have an extraordinary faculty and an extraordinary staff, including dedicated administrators, who are the very best in their fields.
- You have a chancellor who is devoted to this institution. He is a strong and visionary leader, who listens well, who makes himself available to the institutional community, and who takes a deep interest in your programs and services, and who is a strong advocate at the state and national levels.
- You have taken the time and made the effort to work collegially as a team. Board members, administrators, faculty members, and student leaders exhibit high regard for their counterparts in other segments of the organization. You have reached a special level in your development and the good will you express for one another is wonderful to see, and it will carry you far as you make the difficult choices and decisions that lie ahead.

Next, I would like to give you a sense of the team's findings.

Eligibility Requirements

City College of San Francisco has remained in compliance with all 21 of the eligibility requirements for accreditation. In a few areas, however, additional attention may be needed to ensure that appropriate actions and review measures are incorporated. But the bottom line is that your institution is in full compliance.

Responses to the Previous Evaluation Team

You were visited by an accreditation evaluation team in 2000 and, since that time, you have been addressing those recommendations. The team found that in almost every instance, you responded well to these recommendations. The few exceptions will be addressed in the present team's recommendations.

Our report will provide the detail of all of this, but I wanted you to know today that your compliance has been excellent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Now we come to our recommendations for your ongoing improvement. The team identified three important areas of concern, which you also noted in your self study and thematic essays. We will have what we refer to as overarching recommendations in these three areas:

1. Concern: The team found much evidence of planning and assessment throughout the institution and the individual planning initiatives are sophisticated and useful. The planning structure itself, through the Planning & Budgeting Council (PBC) also has ingrained this effort within the college's participatory governance format. However, the team found that the individual planning efforts are not as yet fully integrated, especially within the context of the annual budget.

Recommendation: The team recommends that the college build upon its continuing planning and assessment efforts and develop an integrated process of institutional planning and assessment that combines strategic planning, educational planning, facilities planning, technology planning, and personnel planning in a manner that links these planning processes to annual budgets. Planning should be based upon the findings of instructional and non-instructional program review, which should include clear criteria for resource reallocation and/or program and service development, expansion, or termination.

2. Concern: The team appreciated and came to respect the hard work and struggle that you as an institution have been having with the broad issue of Student Learning Outcomes. The demands of the public and legislative bodies for knowing more about institutional outcomes, and the interest of accreditors in making sure that institutions discuss and embrace this new paradigm of institutional accountability are now reflected in the standards of accreditation. Your thematic essay on this and your discussions with team members reflect your own differences of opinion. You have definitely had meaningful dialogue on this topic and you have made progress in some areas. However, it will be important for you to resolve your differences in a timely manner and make progress in shaping appropriate Student Learning Outcomes for the college, at the course and program level, and moving forward.

Recommendation: The team recommends that the college ensure that Student Learning Outcomes are full institutionalized as a core element of college operations, with specific focus on curriculum and program development.

3. Concern: City College of San Francisco is facing some fiscal challenges in the immediate future. In some cases, you have had great success, such as the passage of 3 separate bond measures, totaling \$ 491 million, and through prudent enrollment management and operational choices, you have qualified for State funding and, in some cases, impressive federal grants. However, you continue to face some very serious challenges, many of which you share in common with other California community college districts, and some that are unique to City College San Francisco. You are a stable organization, but you are challenged by personnel costs that now utilize almost 92% of your budget; slightly reduced operational reserves; a serious unfunded liability in the area of retiree health benefits based on a recent actuarial study; and the ongoing injustice of underfunding of your noncredit FTES. The perfect storm that these elements provide in collision will not sink your ship, but they do need to be addressed in the immediate future. Your chancellor, your governing board, Peter Goldstein, and your shared governance leaders are aware of this need and have already begun the discussions necessary.

Recommendation: **The team recommends that the college develop a financial strategy that will: match ongoing expenditures with ongoing revenue; maintain the minimum prudent reserve level; reduce the percentage of its annual budget that is utilized for salaries and benefits; and address funding for retiree health benefits costs.**

These are the three overarching recommendations that you will find in the team's final report.

Let me also share some additional recommendations, as they will appear in the standards:

4. In Standard One: The team noted that the college has a mission statement, but also noted that its review and approval occurs within the context of other topics and projects. **The team recommends that the college regularly employ a discrete review of the college's mission statement.**
5. In Standard Two: The team feels that there is not a need for additional recommendations, since the college's plans seem to be on track for instructional and student development quality assurance. The separate Student Learning Outcomes recommendation is the important item for the team. Because there are some specialized program improvement consultations in the near future that will affect the Student Development area, the team felt that the areas of remaining concern will shortly be addressed.
6. In Standard Three: In addition to the overarching recommendation on finance, there will be one recommendation on technology and two recommendations on facilities:

1. **The team recommends that all unit technology plans be brought up-to-date, and that a unified college-wide technology plan be developed. This plan should be integrated with facilities and budget plans. Funds for technology acquisition and maintenance, including regular replacement of outdated hardware, should be integrated into the institution's budget.**
 2. **The team recommends that the college ensure the development of adequate contingency plans, which should be implemented in a timely manner in order to reduce potential exposure to losses.**
 3. **The team recommends that the college include the future costs of operating and maintaining new and existing facilities in its planning models and allocate funds in a timely manner to assure the effective operation of these facilities.**
- **In Standard Four: As I have noted already, the team was impressed by the collegial interaction among all segments of the college community, including the governing board. However, the team noted that the board was still in the process of determining how to proceed with its evaluation. **The team recommends that the Board of Trustees establish a method of self evaluation, determine the schedule for this process, and complete self evaluations on a regular basis.****

Let me conclude by saying that you will find much more content in the final report where our team findings will be fully explained and the recommendations will follow in context.

The fact that our recommendations are few, but thoughtful, is in keeping with the team's belief that you are an excellent college, and that the trust of the Accrediting Commission in your ability to fulfill your mission is well founded.

It was a pleasure and a privilege for us to visit your institution. Thank you.