

EVALUATION REPORT

Ventura College

Ventura, California

A Confidential Report Prepared for
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team's visit
to Ventura College from October 19-21, 2004

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Introduction

A junior college department was added to the Ventura Union High School in 1925, providing the impetus for the eventual establishment of a junior college, which opened in 1930 on the current site of Ventura High School. The College transitioned from Ventura Junior College to Ventura College in 1952. It took occupancy of its current 112-acre hillside campus in 1955 and in 1962 the voters of Ventura County formed a separate and distinct county community college district. An east campus site was established in 1974 and, at present, the process of applying for state educational center status has begun.

At the time of the writing of the Self Study report, the College had a population of approximately 12,500 students. Full time equivalent student (FTES) numbers had risen from year to year from 1995 through 2001, but the College has experienced a loss of FTES in the past two academic years. The College offers more than forty-five associate degree programs and more than fifty certificate study areas. Ventura serves a diverse student body drawn from the immediate area as well as various states and foreign countries. The College has been designated a Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. It provides a variety of support services to students. Of particular note are the second language services provided to Spanish speakers.

Ventura College's last comprehensive accreditation visit took place in 1996 and resulted in 15 recommendations, which were the focus of a 1998 directed Midterm report. A progress report followed in 2000. The Accrediting Commission asked the College to complete an abbreviated Self Study in 2002 in an effort to bring all Colleges in the Ventura County Community College District into a uniform cycle of accreditation visits. Due to Commission concerns about the 2002 Self Study and the accompanying visit by a six-member team, the College was placed on "Warning" status and given ten recommendations to respond to within a year. A six member visiting team in spring 2003 found that there was a noticeable difference in participation, involvement, and communication about the issues and process of accreditation, and accreditation was reaffirmed. The previous ten recommendations were reduced to four going into the current self study cycle.

Preparations for the current Self Study and accreditation visit began in fall 2003. The Executive Vice President of Student Learning and the Academic Senate President served as Co-Chairs for the entire Self Study. Many standard committee members from the previous year's report and visit signed on to work on the 2004 Self Study. Standard co-chairs were identified from the ranks of administrators, faculty, classified staff, and students. Throughout the spring, Standard committee co-chairs reported on progress through established College channels. A Self Study report draft was distributed via e-mail to solicit feedback and input. The Self Study and upcoming visit were a featured part of fall 2004 Flex Day activities. The Board of Trustees approved the Self Study report in August 2004.

From October 19-21, 2004, a nine-member accreditation team accompanied by two team assistants visited Ventura College for the purpose of evaluating the College's application for reaffirmation of accreditation. In preparation for the visit, team members reviewed

the Accreditation Reference Handbook, Team Evaluator Manual, and Guide to Evaluating Institutions; attended training on the 2002 standards as a team; and carefully reviewed the College's Self Study report and documentation related to previous Midterm and progress reports and visits. Prior to arrival on campus, each team member prepared written reactions and questions to be addressed during the visit based on the Self Study report and related documents. Based on lists of potential inquiries to be made, numerous meetings and appointments, as well as visits to labs and classrooms, were scheduled.

On the afternoon and evening prior to the beginning of the October visit, team members met to review the Self Study report and the schedule for the visit. At that time, those with primary responsibility for certain standards met with the team members identified as secondary standard reviewers. During the three days of the accreditation visit, team members met with faculty, classified staff, administrators, Board of Trustees members, and students; visited the District office and the east campus site; and attended day and evening classes.

General Observations

Upon arrival at the College, the team was impressed by the warmth and enthusiasm of the College's welcome and the high level of participation in meetings and interviews. Moreover, the team sensed the College community's pride in the recent burst in facilities construction and development initiated by the passage of a bond measure in the Ventura District in 2002. The breadth of the educational programs and the College's responsiveness to the needs of its diverse community are reinforced by staff, faculty, and administrators, some of whom have affiliations that extend over many years and different capacities. Students and employees appreciate each other's contributions. They are proud to be affiliated with the original community college within their District and have great plans for its growth and development to meet the needs of its community over the coming years.

Those with whom the team interacted seemed excited to have the team on campus and committed to the process of accreditation, especially the opportunity for validation inherent in the site visit. College community members have persevered through a multiplicity of Midterm and progress reports, as well as several visits since the last comprehensive accreditation process, and their strong desire to see the current cycle successfully completed was manifest.

Many members of the College community were involved in the dialogue around and preparation of the Self Study report. Perhaps because of the involvement of numerous individuals, the Self Study report lacks a single voice and is internally inconsistent in its organization. The report would have been stronger if the energy and input of the large numbers of participants had been more coherently integrated into the final Self Study document. The standard chapters of the final document were uneven in their treatment of the standards. Of particular concern are the planning agendas. Consistently, the planning sections lacked specificity or simply stated that the College "should" or would "continue" to do something. The plans do not indicate who will be responsible for the follow through on the recommended planning agenda. Many plans also lack timelines, and in

most cases, measurable outcomes so the College will not know when the objectives have been achieved. The lack of clear focus in the planning agendas will prove to be problematic as the College pursues follow-up analysis and preparation of subsequent accreditation reports. This should be considered and evaluated by the College as it moves forward with planning and as it completes future accreditation reports.

The District and the College have been without permanent chief executives for extended periods of time over the past few years and there have been significant temporary changes in the duties of senior administration in the recent past to fill gaps on an “interim” or “acting” basis. This has left the College anxious about moving forward, but eager to do so with the direction and advocacy of more permanent executive leadership. The team found much for which the College could be commended, especially in light of current challenges.

Summary

The themes that thread throughout the 2002 standards informed the team's observations and findings and formed the basis for the commendations and recommendations that follow.

Institutional Commitments

Ventura College has done much in the past several years to focus on its mission statement as the driver for planning, using the statement as the foundation for establishing vision, values, and practices. The institution's mission and goals are well publicized and foundational in ongoing planning at the college level.

Evaluation, Planning, and Improvement

The program review process implemented by the College is well understood in the instruction area and serves as a basis for identification of needs concerning faculty hiring and programmatic improvement. Such is not the case in service areas, where processes for identifying the needs for classified staffing and responding proactively to state budget constraints do not appear to be effective. Student learning outcomes are not well understood. On the other hand, the Council for Institutional Development and Facilities Oversight Group are groups that have shown some success in pursuing coordinated planning for improvement through dialogue and engaged participation.

Although some processes function well, especially in the area of facilities planning and internal collegewide communication concerning the response to the state and District budget crises, the same cannot be said for the areas of technology, human resources, and coordination of planning in general at the district level. For example, although the College had clearly communicated about and implemented revised processes for allocation of resources internally last year, the overall allocation model used by the District is problematic.

Student Learning Outcomes

The team found some examples of student learning outcomes, but no substantial evidence of development of a student learning outcomes model of assessment and improvement across the College. Ventura has made some solid progress initiating the articulation of learning outcomes at the course level through the Course Outline of Record and the curriculum review process. At the program level, there is evidence of program student learning outcomes for some programs. The team was pleased to note evidence of the beginning of implementation of campuswide student learning outcomes assessment in the area of critical thinking. The College should build on its initial steps in the area of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level. As called for in the Evaluation, Planning, and Improvement theme, there are components of evaluation, goal setting, resource distribution, implementation, and reevaluation in place, but coordinated, integrated planning across the institution firmly based on student learning outcomes is not evident.

Organization

The College faces several organizational challenges as it pursues efforts to establish and institutionalize a focus on student learning outcomes. Classified support has been reduced due to severe budget constraints and a need to meet the obligation of full-time faculty imposed by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. An assessment of management structure and identification of management needs to realize institutional goals called for in the previous accreditation cycle has yet to take place. In the area of technology, the plan currently in development is more a framework and timeline than a true plan. Finally, there remains a need to better identify and make public learning outcomes, creating an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Dialogue

Ventura College excels in the area of dialogue. Throughout the institution, people are informed, aware, and engaged in meaningful discussion, focused representation, and active participation. Students, classified staff, faculty, and administrators work together as colleagues. The accreditation processes, planning for facilities construction made possible by the passage of a local bond measure, and the difficult decisions prompted by recent budgetary constraints in which the College has engaged over the past several years are but a few examples of the College community's informed and purposeful dialogue. The dialogue has been based on quantitative and qualitative information. Although the program review process exhibits a similar level of dialogue, it will be important for the College to continue to build on past success and initiate new and deeper dialogue on student learning outcomes across the institution.

Institutional Integrity

Ventura is a self-reflective and honest college, deeply committed to improvement and being an example to other colleges. Faculty members are dedicated to student success and to the process of learning. Within the College, there is an ongoing assessment of the integrity of its publications, policies, and processes. There is a focus on equity and diversity within the organization and in its efforts to better serve its external community. The College is intent on maintaining a strong relationship with the Commission and other external agencies. Work remains to be done at the district level regarding the review and revision of District policies and the institutionalization of consistent, comprehensive, and efficient human resource, budget, and technology planning and administration.

Overall, the team found Ventura to be an enthusiastic college, eager for and intent upon self-improvement and growth. Competent and caring faculty and staff and engaged student leaders have a real love for their campus. The specific commendations and recommendations listed below are offered to help the College in its process of self-reflection, dialogue, and planning for the future.

Commendations

The team commends the College for:

- Developing and actively utilizing the statements of vision, values and practices, which further articulate the College’s mission in helping guide the institution’s plans and day-to-day decisions. (Standards I.A and IV.A.1)
- Its planned and systematic attention to the substantial population of second language students. The College takes pride in its designation as a “Hispanic Serving Institution” and has targeted support in tangible ways, such as the Gateway Course Project and translation of the majority of information in the schedule of classes into Spanish. Other key campus documents are also translated, including the Student Handbook and application for admission. (Standards I.A.1 and II.A.1.a)
- The collaborative, collegial planning process used to craft planning documents and inform important College decisions. Broad-based input, as evidenced by the Council for Institutional Development, Facilities Oversight Group, and the shared governance planning process, contributes to a sense of inclusiveness and depth of understanding of operational and policy issues across the campus. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4, and IV.A.1)
- Having created an environment that encourages faculty and staff to develop innovative strategies to improve the quality of programs and services that are designed to achieve institutional goals. Examples are the Student Success Team’s use of College goals as an evaluation tool to assess the fulfillment of their service targets and the creation of “What Students Should Know” as a first step in identifying Student Learning Outcomes. (Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, II.B.4, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2)
- The strong integration of the Educational Master Plan into the Facilities Master Plan. The construction and renovation of buildings on campus clearly follows the goals set forth in the Educational Master Plan. (Standards I.B.3 and III.B.2.b)
- The manner in which classified staff is deeply integrated into the governance of the institution and in College activities. This integration is clearly demonstrated in the strong role of the Classified Senate and the classified staff participation in graduation ceremonies. (Standards I.B.4, III.A.b.1, and IV.A.2.a)
- Its progress in the curriculum review process, including the development of a useful Curriculum Handbook, course outline templates, and supporting information and training to assist faculty developing or revising curriculum. (Standard II.A.2.a)
- Using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Standards (LEEDS) in the construction of its new facilities. This is a clear demonstration of the

College's willingness to exceed state and local building standards to demonstrate stewardship of natural resources. (Standards III.B.1.b, III.B.2.c, and IV.A.1)

- Its resilience and sense of community in the face of extreme challenge and adversity. Grass roots governance and leadership was and continues to be much in evidence during a difficult period. Several notable examples include: the students' extraordinary financial contribution toward the continuation of a summer school program; compassionate donations by administrators for financially impacted classified staff; the faculty's commitment to maintaining a comprehensive college when recommending academic program reductions; the willingness by individuals from all constituent groups to shoulder the increased workload necessary to maintain quality instruction, student services, and learning support in the wake of program and staff reductions; as well as the broad-based participation in and enthusiasm for the accreditation review processes and the creation of accreditation documents. (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2.a, and IV.A.3)

Recommendations

The team recommends that:

Recommendation 1

The College engage in a process of broad-based dialogue that leads to the establishment of student learning outcomes assessment at the course; program (instruction, student services, and learning support); certificate; and degree levels, and that the College integrate student learning outcomes assessment into the College planning process and key institutional documents, including the Mission Statement. (Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, and II.C.2)

Recommendation 2

The College develop a formal unit review process to assess and prioritize staffing needs in hiring decisions regarding classified personnel. (Standards III.A.2 and III.A.6)

Recommendation 3

The College utilize the resources of the District, in consultation with the College Administrative Council, to conduct a highly visible and inclusive evaluation process regarding the effectiveness of the College administrative structure. (1996 Standards 10B.3 and 10B.4; 2002 Standards III.A.2, III.A.6, and IV.B.2.a)

Recommendation 4

The District develop written personnel procedures that are equitable and consistently administered to ensure fairness in all employment practices. This should include a clearly defined and well-articulated policy for the selection and evaluation of the Presidents of the Colleges. (Standards III.A.3.a and IV.B.1.j)

Recommendation 5

The College build a budget forecast, which will anticipate staffing, equipment, and operating expenses for new facilities coming on line as a result of Measure S, so funding streams can be identified to support this expansion. The College should work with the

District on this task, as the anticipated funding streams will necessarily include some portion to be funded as part of a comprehensive resource allocation model as referenced below. (Standards III.B.1.a; III.B.2.a, and III.C. 1.c)

Recommendation 6

The College create a truly comprehensive institutional multi-year technology plan, beyond the initial framework and timeline already developed, in order to solidify organizational structure for campus technology leadership, clarify college/district responsibilities, and implement the process to evaluate the effectiveness of technology as it relates to student learning outcomes. (1996 Standards 4A.4, 6, 8.4, and 8.5; 2002 Standards III.C.1 and III.C.2)

Recommendation 7

The District, in cooperation with the Colleges, formulate a districtwide resource allocation model, which will be flexible enough to guide increases or reductions in budget allocations, which will follow goals for districtwide student learning outcomes, and which will ensure accountability to operate within agreed upon allocations. (Standards III.D.1.a and III.D.1.c)

Recommendation 8

The District develop a funding plan for the unfunded retiree medical liability following the recommendations contained in the actuarial study completed in October 2004. (Standard III.D.1.c)

Recommendation 9

The District honor its policy on shared decision-making by implementing operational and evaluative procedures that delineate the roles and responsibilities of the various college/district constituencies that participate in collegial governance. (Standards IV.A.2.a and IV.A.3)

Recommendation 10

The Board of Trustees implement a process to regularly evaluate and revise District policies, and implement and participate in an on-going process for professional development and orientation for new Board members, which includes a review of Board roles and responsibilities. (Standards IV.B.1.e and IV.B.1.f)

Recommendation 11

The District assume leadership for a districtwide, collaboratively developed strategic plan that is informed by District research and coordinated with College planning. (Standard IV.B.3)

Recommendation 12

The Chancellor establish and implement a process for open communication with the Colleges by providing information and ensuring staff understanding of Board direction and expectations. Further, the District should develop a more effective process for ensuring accountability in achieving standards of educational excellence, fiscal integrity, and operational efficiency within a culture of evidence. (Standard IV.B.3.a-f)

Responses to Recommendations of the Previous Team

Recommendation 1

The College should implement a broadly based, institutionally supported program to offer the faculty the opportunity to explore a variety of student learning styles and the associated teaching strategies. (1996 Standards 4A.1, 4B.3, and 4D.5)

The College has developed several programs, such as the Teaching Technique Exchange Group, to discuss and share successful teaching and learning classroom techniques that address the different learning styles of diverse student populations. Other activities that addressed this recommendation included a robust staff development program and the Multicultural Learning Consortium. In this respect, Ventura College has adequately addressed the primary concern of the recommendation.

To its credit, the College's response to the recommendation went beyond issues of learning styles and teaching strategies. In the Self Study, the College began to address the broader issue of faculty and institutional capacity for addressing student learning. Clearly, the College recognized that focusing on establishing and assessing student learning outcomes was an appropriate direction in which to move. It recognized its weakness in this area and pledged to attend to student learning outcomes vigorously and systematically. As is pointed out in this report, the dialogue has begun and there is evidence that practices and principles associated with student learning outcomes are working their way into the College's culture. Thus, not only has the College met the recommendation, but it has positioned itself to address student learning in important new ways.

Recommendation 3

The College should assess not only the delivery of services, but also the structures through which the services are provided in determining the levels for staffing required to ensure timely and accessible services to students. (1996 Standards 5.3, 5.10, and 7A.1)

During the site visit, the team found evidence of the following activities, as described in the Self Study report. The College effected broader participation among student services staff in program review and analysis to improve the delivery and structures of services. Technology solutions were implemented to provide greater access for students through online schedules, catalogs, transcripts, adds/drops, payments, and financial aid applications. Efforts are underway to develop a computerized degree audit program and an "e-binder," all intended to help students with access to degree requirements.

With regard to the structure of these services, the Self Study report makes reference to budget cuts that resulted in lost positions or reductions in staff hours. In spite of these losses and reductions, the student services staff has remained positive and has been willing to take on additional responsibilities to offset the lost positions.

The reorganizing and restructuring done in student services is addressed in the body of the Self Study report. As noted above, technology has become a more important vehicle

for meeting students' needs for information and services. The College now has more, and better, information available on its Web site.

At this point, the College has done as much as it can to meet this specific recommendation. The related issue of prioritizing classified positions to be filled as the College experiences vacancies or is authorized to create new positions, remains a challenge for the College. The Self Study report clearly indicates this is a current problem. The challenge will be to merge the requests for classified positions identified in the program review process with the requests identified from other service areas such as custodial, plant services, and business services to produce a single prioritization that is aligned with the Educational Master Plan.

Recommendation 6

The College should create a single comprehensive institutional multi-year technology plan that will provide the framework for systematically meeting its needs in technology. (1996 Standards 4A.4, 6.7, 8.4, and 8.5)

As noted in the comprehensive Self Study report, “many of the conditions that led to the development of this recommendation still exist. These include continuing budget uncertainties, turnover in college and district leadership, delays in the completion of the infrastructure audit and other pressing issues...” (p. xvii) Some forward movement has been initiated in planning, although technology planning has been done at a committee (not a college) level and does not appear to be fully integrated with institutional planning as a whole. During academic year 2003-04, the College reconstituted its technology committee with both new and former members committed to improving the state of the technological infrastructure at the College. With this goal in mind, the committee worked to produce a timetable for the completion of the technology plan. Once this was accomplished, a draft campus Long Range Strategic Technology Plan was finalized in September 2004 and revised October 6, 2004.

The Plan identifies the challenge to technology created by the current fiscal status of the College and highlights what the College has done using Technology and Telecommunications Infrastructure Program (TTIP) funds. The Plan also demonstrates that the College engaged in dialogue about technology, evidenced through the section on “Planning Assumptions” included in the document. These are broad-based statements, and provide evidence that a great deal of dialogue did indeed take place to address technology concerns across the disciplines. A multiyear timeline for technological upgrades to campus equipment is outlined. The Plan, however, is lacking the concrete developmental components needed to make it a workable technology plan. Necessary planning components on assessment of needs, decision making, funding allocation (including base budget and outside funding resources and partnerships), distribution of workload, technology inventory, redistribution and disposal of used equipment, et cetera, still remain to be addressed.

The plan, as presented, provides components of what the previous recommendation specified: it is multi-year and it provides a framework for systematically meeting campus technological needs. It is not, however, a “comprehensive institutional multi-year

technology plan.” While goals to be implemented are provided, no specific structure is outlined to provide the College with a mechanism with which to reach these goals. The plan does not address dealing with growth and it is not comprehensive in nature. What the plan does include is an annual revision schedule for the plan that will allow for institutional dialogue, a built-in acknowledgment of the awareness expressed by committee members that the plan is a work in progress and will be continuously updated to become a truly comprehensive, effective working plan. Finally, in compliance with the recommendation, the plan includes a multiyear timeline for upgrades to campus technology and services, such as replacement of personal computers, an increase of online course offerings, and staff training. The College, therefore, has not met all aspects of the prior Recommendation 6; and the prior recommendation forms the basis of the current team’s Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 9

The College should identify the nature and scope of administrative tasks to be performed by College management staff, identify administrative positions, duties, and structure to accomplish those tasks, and create and maintain a stable cadre of professionals to fill those positions. (1996 Standards 10B.3 and 10B.4)

The Board of Trustees has adopted job descriptions, which had been in draft form at the time of the last Commission review, for the senior administrators of the District and College (including President, Executive Vice President, and Dean). In the 2004 Self Study report, the College’s response to this recommendation indicated that no formal evaluations of the management structure have been conducted due to the loss of management positions at the College and the current budget situation, which necessitated a focus on the hiring of faculty to meet the state-mandated Faculty Obligation Number (FON). This assertion was confirmed by interviews with management at the College and District and examination of available evidence. College administrators reported that the management structure had been discussed at a summer retreat this year and the team found evidence that the Chancellor had recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a study of management structure, duties, and District organization. It was unclear, however, whether the managers at the college level and the Chancellor had engaged in significant dialogue concerning the issues raised in this recommendation. Additionally, the College has a president in an acting capacity and some individuals expressed a feeling that the College should wait for a permanent president to evaluate the current scope of management duties. The team concluded that the College/District has insufficiently addressed this recommendation and this previous recommendation now forms the basis for Recommendation 3.

Eligibility Requirements

In its Self Study report, Ventura College stated that it meets all eligibility requirements as set forth by the Commission. The team found that the College broadly met the requirements. There are some areas that the team recognized as needing attention, and those areas are more fully described throughout the team report, with several recommendations encompassing not only the standards but also tenets of the eligibility requirements themselves.

1. Authority

Ventura College is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the U.S. Department of Education.

2. Mission

The team found that although the College's educational mission is defined, adopted, and published by its Board of Trustees consistent with its legal authorization and appropriate to its purpose and constituency, it does not define its commitment to the achievement of student learning outcomes. This finding is discussed in the Standard 1 section of this report and is incorporated in Recommendation 1.

3. Governing Board

The Ventura Community College District, of which Ventura College is a part, has an elected Board of Trustees that independently governs the District and sets all policies. The Board members annually submit a conflict of interest statement certifying that they have no employment or personal financial interest in the District.

4. Chief Executive Officer

At the time of the site visit, the team found no evidence that the current acting president was appointed by Board action. The team chair advised the District Chancellor that this situation needed to be rectified. Neither the District chief administrator nor the chief administrator of the College are able to chair the Board of Trustees.

5. Administrative Capacity

Although the team found that the College was functioning with the staff on hand at the time of the visit, it was acknowledged that previous Recommendation 9 has not been adequately addressed. This eligibility requirement informs Recommendation 3 from the 2004 visiting team.

6. Operational Status

Twelve to thirteen thousand students attend a functioning college each semester and pursue degree and other programs.

7. Degrees

A vast majority of credit courses at the College apply to achievement of associate

degrees of certificates of completion and a “significant proportion” of students are enrolled in these course offerings.

8. Educational Programs

Ventura’s degree programs are consistent with its mission and, when combined with general education components, “represent two years of full-time academic work.” The curriculum committee ensures that programs are of appropriate length and content and are conducted at levels appropriate to the degrees offered.

9. Academic Credit

The College awards credit for credit courses based on the Carnegie unit formula.

10. Student Learning and Achievement

Although the College is committed to the concept of student learning outcomes and their measurement, and there are some examples of student learning outcomes at Ventura, the institution has not yet addressed the development of a collegewide student learning outcomes model of assessment and improvement. Without identifying and assessing learning outcomes, discussions regarding improving student learning will remain vague. The College is at a point where widespread dialogue must occur, leading to the establishment of clear student learning outcomes for courses, instructional and non-instructional programs, certificates, and degrees. This requirement is further discussed throughout the team report and forms the foundation for Recommendation 1.

11. General Education

Between one third and one half of coursework for a degree is in general education. Degree programs and their course components conform to regulatory requirements and are at levels of “rigor, scope, intensity, and quality” appropriate to higher education.

12. Academic Freedom

District Board policy and information in College and District publications indicate faculty and student rights to intellectual freedom, independent inquiry, and open expression.

13. Faculty

The number of faculty at the College meet the state-mandated faculty obligation number (FON). Sixty percent of all credit hours are taught by full time faculty. Faculty members generally exceed minimum qualifications and their roles and responsibilities are delineated in the Faculty Handbook and collective bargaining unit agreement.

14. Student Services

Within the context of its mission, the College provides an array of student support services and programs for all its students.

15. Admissions

Published in the College catalog and on its Web site, Ventura's admission policies are consistent with its mission as well as California Code of Regulations, Title 5.

16. Information and Learning Resources

Through its library, learning labs, and related programs and services, the College provides long-term access to electronic and print resources sufficient to its educational purpose.

17. Financial Resources

Ventura College has many of the fundamental structures for allocating and controlling its budget. The College has demonstrated a strong commitment to communicating budget issues to the College community. Work on a District resource allocation model has been highlighted as a priority at both the District and the College and is discussed in the Standard III section of this report. The need to address the budget allocation model forms the basis for Recommendation 7.

18. Financial Accountability

The District is annually audited by an independent audit firm and complies with routine financial reporting requirements of appropriate state and federal educational agencies. The team was provided with copies of the two most recent audited financial statements.

19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

There is evidence that the College maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about institutional effectiveness, and that the College sets goals to improve its effectiveness. The well-publicized list of ten "Strategic Goals" is consistent with the College's stated purposes. While various planning documents seem integrated, others do not. The Educational Master Plan integrates well with the Facilities Master Plan. The team did not find much evidence that the institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness. As the planning process evolves, the College needs to evaluate the planning and evaluation process, further integrate College plans, and more strongly connect resource allocation and planning with the goal of improving institutional effectiveness. Moreover, as is stated throughout this report, more institutional focus on student learning outcomes assessment is required. These findings lead to Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12.

20. Public Information

Ventura College provides information on all required areas of public information in a variety of print and electronic resources.

21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The District and College have demonstrated an ongoing willingness to meet requirements of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and to comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies. Issues related to compliance with Commission eligibility requirements, to response to

previous recommendations, and to realization of Standards of Accreditation are discussed throughout the body of this report.

Standard I
Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

Findings and Evidence

There is evidence that Ventura College is committed to its mission, and that the mission is communicated internally and externally. The College provides appropriate programs and services to carry out the mission, and the mission statement is prominent in many locations, from the catalog and Web site to the Faculty Handbook and internal planning documents. Through on site interviews, it became clear that individual classified staff, faculty, and administrators are familiar with the mission and use it regularly in institutional planning and decision making. (Standards I, I.A, I.A.1, and I.A.4)

The mission statement defines the College's broad educational purposes, as required by Standard I. Though it is indirectly implied, the mission does not directly or explicitly communicate the College's commitment to achieving student learning. The mission does not directly or explicitly define the intended student population, with the exception of students with disabilities, although the variety of curriculum listed might be construed to address student population. (Standard I.A)

The mission statement was updated and approved by the Board of Trustees on February 10, 2004. There was broad-based dialogue to inform the revision of the mission statement, as evidenced by committee meeting minutes, scheduled open forums, and a letter from the former president to all faculty and staff inviting feedback. (Standards I.A.2 and I.A.3)

In conjunction with its mission, College faculty, staff and management have collaboratively developed and revised a Vision Statement, Statement of Values, and Statement of Goals. These additional statements enhance and extend the mission by articulating the College's anticipated future and guiding the College in how to arrive there. The team was impressed by the extent to which the mission, vision, and values are lived out by College staff. (Standards I and IV.A.1)

While there are some examples of student learning outcomes at Ventura College, the institution has not yet addressed the development of a collegewide student learning outcomes model of assessment and improvement. The Self Study states, and the team found, that "student learning outcomes are not clearly evaluated." (p. 30)

In a review of institutional planning documents, the team found little or no reference to learning outcomes assessment, which is the centerpiece of the new accreditation standards. Key documents where direct references to student learning outcomes appeared to be lacking include: Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Statement of Values, Statement of Goals, Educational Master Plan, and Curriculum Handbook. The team found little evidence of administrative leadership in promoting student learning outcomes assessment across the College. (Standards I and II)

In the Self Study, it is stated that, "the Curriculum Committee and the Program Review committees will be given the charge to...plan and implement guidelines for identification

and development of student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees.” (p. xxxi) While on campus, the team found evidence that the Academic Senate has assumed responsibility and purview for establishing and assessing a system of student learning outcomes. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4, and II.A.2.a)

The Self Study cites several examples of learning outcomes assessment at the College, some of which appear to measure student achievement rather than learning outcomes (student perception surveys, assessment for course placement, transfer rates, and success in English placement for students who transfer to California State University, Northridge, for example). Other learning outcomes assessment efforts cited by the College, and some the team learned about while visiting the campus, are referenced below. (Standards I and II)

The College made great progress initiating the articulation of learning outcomes at the course level through the Course Outline of Record and the curriculum review process. The next step in this process would be to assess whether learning outcomes are being achieved, and to revise courses and teaching as appropriate to improve student learning, if warranted. The Curriculum Handbook and review process could be an effective venue for the College to provide professional development and expertise in the area of articulating and assessing student learning outcomes. Faculty reported to the team that the changes in the course outline and curriculum review process have resulted in a positive change whereby faculty thinking is now focused more on student learning. The apparent widespread use of Classroom Assessment Techniques is a strong example of student learning outcomes at the course level. (Standards I.B, II, II.A, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, and II.A.2.e)

At the program level, there is evidence of program student learning outcomes for some programs. In particular, allied health and other vocational programs tend to have well developed learning outcomes assessment practices due to their specialized accrediting and reporting requirements. The team learned of a few other program level learning outcomes at Ventura, including the Student Success Team’s significant efforts to begin defining student learning outcomes within student services programs. Those who have implemented program learning outcomes assessment practices could become effective mentors for others on campus. (Standards I.B, II, II.A, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, and II.A.2.e)

At the institutional level, there is evidence of the beginning of implementation of collegewide student learning outcomes assessment in the area of critical thinking. As a part of the course outline and curriculum review process, faculty members are asked to identify how their courses address critical thinking skills. The next step in this process would be to identify other institutional or degree outcomes, assess them, and make changes for improvement. (Standards I.B, II.A, II.A.1.c, and II.A.2.b)

Lack of institutional research support is cited as a hindrance to the College’s ability to assess its effectiveness in achieving its mission and carrying out its goals. The College plans to hire a campus researcher, but this effort has been thwarted by inadequate resources. Even with this perceived impediment, there is evidence that the College has

devoted attention to some assessments of institution and program performance, such as ongoing program review and the innovative “Activities Matrix Summary” that assesses how the institutional goals are being carried out across the institution. Through the Matrix, the College has identified many ways that its ten goals are being implemented across the College. The next steps in this assessment effort would be to identify where the goals are not being adequately met, strategize how to improve, and make necessary changes for continuous improvement. Addressing goals is commendable, but the College is reminded that the standards call for a cycle of continuous improvement driven by an assessment of student learning outcomes. Writing goals in a format that is measurable would help facilitate this process. (Standards I.B, I.B.2, and II.A.1.a)

There is evidence that the College maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about institutional effectiveness, and that the College sets goals to improve its effectiveness. The well-publicized list of ten “Strategic Goals” is consistent with the College’s stated purposes. The team found evidence through interviews on campus that a great deal of this assessment of institutional effectiveness occurs (without much written documentation) through venues such as the Council on Institutional Development, Administrative Council, Department Chairs, other collegial groups, and shared governance bodies, which regularly discuss data and other information on operational and policy issues to improve institutional effectiveness. (Standards I.B, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, and I.B.6)

The team confirmed that the College uses assessment results, primarily student achievement data (such as: student perception surveys, assessment for course placement, transfer rates, success in English placement at California State University Northridge), to communicate quality assurance, and to evaluate and improve learning programs and services. (Standard I.B.5)

The passage of Measure S in spring 2002 refocused efforts on the College planning process. As a result, the College has developed a detailed Educational Master Plan and Facilities Master Plan. Other College plans, notably the Enrollment Management Plan, utilizing home-grown institutional research through the efforts of the College Data Specialist, use data to inform recommended policy. The District institutional research Web site recently began posting more extensive District data, making useful planning information more accessible to individuals at the College. (Standard I.B.6)

While various plans seem integrated, others do not. The Educational Master Plan integrates well with the Facilities Master Plan. Other efforts have begun to integrate planning. For example, the Program Review process includes a section for identifying how the program plan fits in with institutional plans. Upon examination, however, the team found that few programs indicated on their electronic form how their plan relates to institutional plans. In addition, the team did not find much evidence that the institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness. In some instances, resource allocation is tied to planning, notably unit plans (whereby Department Chairs understand they cannot receive new resources unless the need is justified in their unit plan). As the planning process evolves, the College is encouraged to evaluate the planning and evaluation process, further integrate College plans, and more

strongly connect resource allocation and planning with the goal of improving institutional effectiveness. (Standards I.B.3 and I.B.7)

Conclusions

As evidenced by the Self Study report and the team's findings through interviews during the visit, there is a recognized dearth of institutional research at Ventura College, yet various data and information are readily available and utilized on campus. Additional institutional research could be of great assistance to the College, but it is important to remember that continuous improvement through assessing student learning is a collegewide responsibility.

Without identifying and assessing learning outcomes, discussions regarding improving student learning will remain vague. The College is at a point where widespread dialogue must occur, leading to the establishment of clear student learning outcomes for courses, instructional and non-instructional programs, certificates, and degrees. The importance of these efforts should be emphasized through administrative leadership and codified in planning and key institutional documents. The team suggests that the College clarify administrative, faculty, and operational responsibility for the development and implementation of a student learning outcomes assessment model.

Recommendation

The team recommends that:

Recommendation 1

The College engage in a process of broad-based dialogue that leads to the establishment of student learning outcomes assessment at the course; program (instruction, student services, and learning support); certificate; and degree levels, and that the College integrate student learning outcomes assessment into the College planning process and key institutional documents, including the Mission Statement. (Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, and II.C.2)

Standard II **Student Learning Programs and Services**

Findings and Evidence

Instructional Programs

To maintain the quality of the curriculum, Ventura College requires periodic review of the curriculum at least every three years. The College employs a full-time articulation officer who participates as a voting member on the Curriculum Committee in order to ensure the curriculum is up-to-date and transferable. The College Curriculum Handbook, dated August 2004, is used as a resource for faculty preparing a new or revised course outline because it contains the College template for the Course Outline of Record and supplementary information that includes California Code of Regulations, Title 5, best practices, Bloom's Taxonomy, components of model course outlines, the role and

responsibility of the Ventura College Curriculum Committee, and other critical information necessary for faculty members to understand the importance of the curriculum review process. (Standard II.A)

The most recent version of the Course Outline of Record template is comprehensive and includes a section that requires the writer to address course objectives and student learning outcomes. In addition, the course outline requires the writer to describe how (through use of a matrix that matches ten critical thinking skills with nine types of assignments instructors may give) assignments will develop students' critical thinking skills. The College has a General Education Philosophy Statement that explains the rationale of general education and specifically describes its objectives. The Curriculum Handbook is available on the College Web site and includes an electronic version of the Course Outline of Record template and another template for instructors to write their course syllabi. Department Chairs reported that a course syllabus is reviewed during the peer evaluation process to ensure it complies with the recommended template. The Self Study report states, however, that some instructors use the template and others do not. (Standard II.A.6)

According to the class schedule, classes are primarily scheduled for the full semester, although late starting and short-term classes are also available. There are about 30 distance education course or class offerings delivered via Internet/TV and video hybrid format. The majority of classes is offered on the Ventura College campus. The College also offers outreach classes at its Fillmore High School site, Nordhoff High School in Ojai, and Santa Paula High School in addition to the Santa Paula East Campus Center. Per interviews at the East Campus Center, the outreach schedule is controlled by the main campus at the department/division level through coordination with the East Campus Center Coordinator. Staff members interviewed at the Center report that this arrangement appears to work satisfactorily. (Standard II.A)

The College is responsive to the local labor market and has developed short-term job training programs such as Professional Reception Skills Training, Administrative Assistant Training, Multi Skilled Medical Assistant Training, and Certified Nursing Assistant Training. In addition to short-term training programs, the College has a broad spectrum of vocational programs. However, it was difficult to find information about the number of degrees and certificates awarded in each program beyond the aggregate data presented on the District Research Web site. The catalog information regarding certificate and degree programs is not comprehensive in nature because it does not include narrative descriptions about the program and the types of occupations or career paths that exist. The catalog and the vocational program Web sites do not include student learning outcomes in the descriptions of the courses and programs. (Standards II.A.5 and II.A.6)

While the College made progress in efforts to complete program reviews in time for the accreditation site visit, based on interviews and analysis of existing program reviews, much work remains to be done. Program review recommendations are entered into a database (Quickplace), which stores them in the unit plans. Improvements in the program review template reduced the document from 7 to 2 pages of guidelines, and, in

so doing, made the process more user-friendly. The Office of Student Learning provides programs with a copy of enrollment information, thus eliminating departments' need to search for data. Review of department program reviews suggested the need for more emphasis on student learning outcomes assessment. Interviews revealed that program review results are used to prioritize staffing, instructional equipment, and VTEA funding allocations. (Standard II.A.2.e)

Student Support Services

Enrollment records show that the College recruits and admits students from Ventura, Santa Paula, Ojai, Oak View, Camarillo, Fillmore, and Piru. According to published data, the student body slightly under represents the service area's Caucasian population and over represents its Hispanic population. Students range in age from under 18 to over 60, with over half between the ages of 18 and 29. According to its current catalog, the College admits any California resident who has a high school diploma or equivalent, or any person 18 years of age or older who can benefit. College policy requires students to take a placement test, which is used to guide course recommendations and selection. To assure their continued usefulness, placement tests and other assessment tools are periodically evaluated to ensure fairness and accuracy. (Standards II.B.1 and II.B.3.e)

Based on recruitment materials and interviews, the counselors and admissions staff work with area high schools to let students know about the College's programs. The College also strives to attract adults beyond high school age through fairs and communications sent directly to community organizations. The information presented in the College's catalog and other sources is complete and accurate, periodically reviewed, and edited when necessary. The College's representation to the public of its services shows that it offers advising, career, and transfer services that help prospective students understand the relationship between their interests or goals and the degrees and certificates awarded. (Standard II.B.2)

The College reaches out to special populations by means of its Emeritus Program, for example, which allows serious, older students an opportunity to learn without requiring them to participate in the assessments and evaluations given to regular, credit-earning students. Ventura offers a range of services and opportunities through general and discretionary funds aimed at effectively transitioning students into the College, through the College, and then on to other life experiences. Many recruitment and admissions materials are printed in Spanish to bolster the College's appeal to second language students. It provides considerable support to disabled and other at-risk populations. The Educational Assistance Center (EAC) has received much-deserved recognition. As shown in its brochures, the College also offers hundreds of community education programs each year that serve a wide range of community interests. (Standard II.B.3)

Ventura has revised and expanded delivery of support services based on responses to student surveys, the changing characteristics of the community, and the availability of new technology. The College's student information system, Banner, has proven to be a practical and useful tool for students and faculty. Users report that as new applications come on line, or others are improved, the campus environment improves. (Standards II.B.3 and II.B.4)

The College provides a combination of in-person and online information and services at both the main campus and the Santa Paula site consistent with its current resources and reflective of students' needs. With more information and services now online, students are being encouraged to use these services through innovations such as the Internet Café. The Internet Café is proving to be a much-needed source of access to technology for students at both the main and Santa Paula campuses, as confirmed by a student government officer. (Standard II.B.3.a)

Like many others, the counseling department lost resources and had to rethink its delivery of services in the recent past. As an example of its commitment to students and quality services, work was begun with instructional colleagues to develop a better registration schedule. The aim was to spread the workload across a longer time period so that services to students would be affected as little as possible. This is but one example of the effort to build bridges with instruction in order to create better learning environments and greater opportunities for students as noted in the Student Success Committee's 2003-04 list of accomplishments. (Standard II.B.3.c)

Much of the student pathway through the institution is led by the Student Success Team, a group of caring and competent student services professionals whose work demonstrates considerable interest in student welfare, as learned from interviews and a review of its meeting minutes. In general, the student services staff has consolidated and cooperated in response to considerable losses in order to continue to serve students as well as possible. The counseling faculty, for example, shifted to group counseling in response to resource cuts. They were able to do it quickly and effectively while at the same time helping students learn about online courses and services. (Standard II.B.1 and II.B.3)

Student services faculty and staff are on College governance, curriculum, personnel, planning, and recommending bodies as confirmed in interviews and committee documents. In these venues, they promote student interests with respect to access, progress, learning, and success. A few examples of their response to student needs include the creation of an "e-binder" that allows counselors easier and quicker access to information useful in advising and directing students, the development of three online guidance classes, and the reconfiguration of transfer and career services. (Standards II.B.1 and II.B.3.b)

Students also report that they participate in committee work and represent their fellow students on governance bodies. As with most colleges, the level of participation varies greatly from year to year depending on which students participate and the issues of concern. The student government strives to bring more students into leadership roles, but it has been difficult, in part due to the students' busy lives. As an example of its considerable commitment to the College, the student government donated \$25,000 for summer classes out of concern that the classes would otherwise not be offered and many students harmed. Other examples of the pathway to success built by the College are the Education Assistance Center (EAC), which offers a first-class range of services and support to the campus' disabled students; the Middle College program, which was designed to meet the particular needs of interested high school students; and the special

support given to students who need help submitting the federal financial aid application. (Standards II.B.3 and II.B.3.b)

The Student Success Team, as shown in documentation of their work, developed one of the best pieces of evidence that faculty and staff are beginning to plan with assessment of student learning outcomes in mind. The team developed a tool entitled “What Students Should Know” that is an important first step toward aiding all departments and programs. (Standards II.B.1 and II.B.4)

The College uses other methods to assess the effectiveness of its services. It periodically conducts student perception surveys, reviews the results, and uses results to modify or develop new services (Student Success Team’s 2001-02 accomplishments). Eight of eleven student services areas have completed program reviews. These program reviews feed into unit plans, which then feed into institutional planning. Student services staff sit on committees involved in institutional planning and resource allocation. (Standard II.B.4)

Program review might improve if the description and analysis sections would add items that focus attention on student learning outcomes. Establishing and measuring student learning outcomes in services areas like financial aid is “new business” for many colleges. Any progress the College might make in this area would move them ahead and perhaps be of value to other colleges. (Standard II.B.4)

Library and Learning Support Services

Interviews were conducted with librarians, administrators, and classified staff regarding the current and planned provision of learning resource programs and services to support the College’s instructional programs and activities. Particular emphasis was placed on the sufficiency of learning resources and access to these resources for students enrolled at locations other than the main campus. Evidence examined included program reviews, unit plans, the Distance Learning Plan, the Library Policy Manual, a tutoring usage report, and spring 2004 Library Use Surveys for employees and students.

The library’s days and hours of operation match the days and hours in which instruction is offered, except that the facility closes one hour prior to the end of the last class of the evening. The College participates in an interlibrary loan program with the Colleges in the District, the local public library, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the California State University, Channel Islands. Also, database subscriptions, including LEXIS/NEXUS, supplement the library collection. Access to these database subscriptions is available to students enrolled at the College’s east campus outreach center as well as those enrolled in distance education classes. (Standard II.C.1.e)

The current facility’s space limits the quantity of library books. Even when the College relocates into the new Library and Learning Resource Center (LRC) facility, however, the collection size will be low relative to library standards (determined by the Association of College and Research Librarians and other national and state groups) for the number of students enrolled at the College. Ventura is aware of the shortfall and has expressed a goal to close the gap. In the absence of funds, the College is relying on a donations program directed at the community, helping to minimize the cost of the

collection. There was no evidence found indicating a focused and/or researched collection development plan. (Standard II.A.1.a)

Staff support is a critical issue for the College's library and learning support services. A Distance Education Coordinator has been hired using grant funding. Though there is a new and beautiful facility anticipated to open in spring 2005, the College's financial situation makes it difficult to pay for the adequate levels of classified staff, tutors, and librarians necessary to support student learning at an appropriate level. To compensate for the staffing shortage, the College has effectively employed the use of technology on campus and at outreach locations. Examples of computer assisted learning support include software for the English as a Second Language, mathematics, and English programs. Much of the computer equipment to run the software was funded by a federal grant for Hispanic Serving Institutions. (Standard II.A.1.c)

The library and learning resource department has a planning and goal setting process that includes a mission statement and a 2003-04 statement of goals and objectives. Representatives from the department also participate in the Council for Institutional Development. The unit plan for the library and media services, however, is more than seven years old. Additionally, while the College has begun a dialogue about student learning outcomes for its instructional programs and has made progress in the area of student support services, no evidence could be found that this dialogue extends to library and learning support services. Finally, there is no evidence other than the library surveys mentioned above that there is an evaluation process for the department's contribution to the achievement of student learning outcomes. (Standard II.A.2)

Conclusions

In the area of instructional programs, the College has served its community well by developing quality instructional programs that address a wide range of educational interests. The College Curriculum Handbook and the Course Outline of Record are two valuable resources now available online. Advances in distance education and outreach services have improved student opportunity and access. The College's response to local labor market needs remains strong.

Support for students is considerable and focused on maximizing the limited resources available. The student services faculty and staff have realigned some services, introduced others, and adjusted workloads in order to better serve students. The College's Web site now offers more information and services, which facilitates student learning as well as improves access and opportunity. The College's library and learning resources are moving to new, well-designed facilities. The services provide students with opportunities to locate and receive print and electronic information.

The College broadly meets the requirements of Standard II as well as its many sub-standards. There are, however, areas in need of attention and improvement. Program review in all areas should be strengthened. Student learning outcomes need to be better understood and incorporated in policies and procedures. More course information may

be needed in the catalog and the library will likely need additional and appropriate materials and staff resources.

Recommendation

Please refer to Recommendation 1.

Standard III Resources

Findings and Evidence

Human Resources

Ventura College has made significant efforts to maximize human resources in an environment of drastically reduced budgets. To maximize its human resources and to meet the needs for greater student access, in spite of a shortage of staff in the student services area, Ventura College has developed alternative information delivery systems, such as a user-friendly online schedule of classes and college catalog. The College Web site hosts a Student Central link which offers easy access to scheduling information. In addition, the counseling department has recommended the option of allowing students to register for fall during spring semester to alleviate the pressure placed on student services staff during peak registration periods at the beginning of each term. (Standard III.A.1)

The College was able to hire nineteen new faculty members for the fall 2004 semester, following a process of program review and prioritization of faculty staffing needs. This process was conducted by the Academic Senate's Staffing Priorities Committee after obtaining input from all academic and student services divisions. Ventura has proposed a new hiring process (Board Policy 7120) to improve the selection of full-time and part-time faculty, and to address issues of diversity, qualifications, and equal pay. A similar process for hiring or replacing management or classified staff does not exist, even though the divisions identify staffing needs through the program review process. A faculty evaluation process is in place that measures teaching techniques and effectiveness as well as participation in shared governance, but it does not measure student learning outcomes as the Self Study suggests. Most course syllabi identify course objectives, but only a small percentage identify learning outcomes. The Academic Senate or the Curriculum Committee, in conjunction with the Office of Instruction, could assume the leadership in initiating discussion about the nature of student learning outcomes and their important role in assessing course and program effectiveness. (Standard III.A)

It was reported to team members that the management structure and its efficacy were discussed at the College during the summer of 2004. There had been no formal review prior to that time to address the issues identified in the previous Recommendation 9 for a number of reasons, including budgetary constraints and the refocus on priorities caused by fiscal uncertainty at the state and local level. During the site visit, the team heard from staff and found evidence that the Chancellor had recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a study of management structure, duties, and District organization. It was unclear to the team, however, whether the managers at the College and the Chancellor had engaged in significant dialogue concerning the issues raised in Recommendation 9. (Standards III.A.2 and III.A.6)

Ventura has published a revised code of behavior entitled "Our Values," which is referenced in documents throughout the College, and the District has published the Board of Trustees Policy Manual, which requires members of the governing board to abide by

its Ethics Code. The District has also created an Electronic Communication Systems and Services Policy that gives guidance to the Colleges regarding ethical issues of confidentiality, fair use of materials, and personal responsibility in the use of technology. The College has published a Statement of Academic Freedom for its faculty, which is included in its updated Handbook for full-time faculty. A new diversity coordinator has also been assigned to provide training to all College staff in sensitivity and sexual harassment issues in order to provide an environment supportive of diverse personnel. The hiring of a diverse academic staff contributed to meeting this standard (Standard III.A.1.d)

Hiring decisions at the College grow out of the program review process, which ties its program review cycle to the Master Planning Matrix, the Master Planning Flow Chart, and comprehensive institutional planning cycles. Most program review processes identify the need for support staff. The College, however, has not been able to fill or replace needed support positions in all areas of technical and clerical assistance, nor in maintenance and grounds crew. (Standard III.A.1.d)

Since the last visit, the College has taken the initiative in developing a well-designed Professional Development Committee with broad representation that provides multiple opportunities for academic and classified staff to participate in a variety of programs consistent with the College's mission and designed to meet identified career and professional goals. All professional development activities comply with an evaluation requirement to gauge their effectiveness and to plan for improvement. The Professional Development Committee might consider expanding its program opportunities to members of the administrative staff, particularly in the area of identification, data collection, and assessment of student learning outcomes. (Standard III.A.4)

Physical Resources

The College has current Educational and Facilities Master Plans, which are used in the facilities development process. The facilities plan is used to guide the implementation of renovation and construction activities at the College. The team visited the east campus operation in Santa Paula and found that the facility met the standards of safety, access, security and healthful learning as required by this standard. Major concerns were identified regarding the College's ability to replace equipment (instructional and non-instructional) in an orderly and predictable manner. Significant problems were identified concerning the condition of some equipment and more problems will arise as new equipment purchased with Measure S and grant funds becomes obsolete. Concerns were also noted regarding the ability to expand space at the Santa Paula site because lease money is not available to provide for short-term expansion. The College is proud of the new Learning Resource Center (LRC), which will open in January 2005. The final design was a true reflection of the many staff members involved in the conceptual design, who were intent on making this an outstanding learning environment. The Educational and Facilities Master Plans are clearly integrated and are guiding the development of the College under Measure S and state capital outlay funding mechanisms. This was evidenced by the documents themselves and confirmed in interviews with staff who worked on Standard III of the Self Study. (Standard III.B.2.b)

Ventura has recognized the total cost of ownership of buildings by utilizing the environmental standards in the Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design Standards (LEEDS), which will save energy and maintenance costs in the long run. The Facilities Oversight Group (FOG) is a well accepted shared governance committee that provides guidance for facilities planning throughout the College. (Standard III.B.2.a)

Technology Resources

As mentioned in the response to previous Recommendation 6, the College noted and the visiting team confirmed that many of the conditions that led to the development of the original recommendation still exist. A draft Long Range Strategic Technology Plan was created, but is more of a framework for planning than a technology plan that can be implemented. Necessary planning components including assessment of needs, decision-making, funding resources and allocations), and distribution of workload still remain to be addressed. (Standard III.C.2)

Although there was no evidence of a direct connection with the technology plan, the recent announcement that the District has earmarked funding for a new Information Technology (IT) position for the College seems to have coincided with the plan's finalization. Anticipating the new hire, the College has moved ahead and pulled all IT services together under a campus manager. An additional IT position is undoubtedly necessary; however, there is a distinct difference of opinion as to what type of position is actually needed, and the campus is currently in discussion with the District on what type of position would best suit the overall needs: an administrative person to coordinate all IT services on campus to make better use of the meager budget and few full-time personnel; a hands-on computer technician to keep the College stable technologically, especially with the imminent completion of the new LRC building and its additional load of 400 computers for the campus; or a combination of both such as in the hiring of a lower-level coordinator *and* a hands-on technician. (Standard III.C.2)

It is assumed that technological support from a new position will be designed to meet the needs of the College in reference to learning, teaching, collegewide communications, research, and operational systems, but as yet the job description for the position has not been written. The District is waiting for the College to decide what type of position will be designated. (Standard III.C.1.a)

At present, information technology needs are not planned for on campus in any cohesive, comprehensive fashion. Departments purchase what they need whenever funding is available. Deans have departmental network specialists in areas where computers are most heavily used for classroom and laboratory needs; other areas do not have a dedicated employee for this type of service. (Standards III.C.1.a-b)

The College provides 21 computer-based laboratories for direct instruction and auxiliary access for students. The new LRC building will add an additional 400 computers to the workload of the four campus network specialists and various student workers. In the learning center and library, orientations to the use of computers are provided to enable students to utilize the equipment. With the new LRC and its extensive computer lab nearing completion, computer-based instruction on campus will be enhanced, but without

technology coordination the College will be facing a crippling workload as it expands its technological offerings. (Standards III.C.1.a and III.C.1.c-d)

No planning for the systematic coordination of the Colleges' disparate IT concerns is evident in the current technology plan. In reviewing the evidence and from interviews with committee members, it also appears that there is no formal planning for technological infrastructure. There has been no assessment of the technological needs of the entire College, so there is no clear picture of how much funding is needed to keep the College operating at the current level, let alone assuring enough funding for anticipated future growth. The College has no plan to acquire, develop, or augment a dedicated budget for equipment replacement; no budget for equipment repair or upgrades; no inventory of any computer equipment on site; no plan for redistribution or rotation of older computers and other devices when newer equipment is purchased; and no mechanism for program development and laboratory creation. (Standard III.C.1.c)

Technology planning is not integrated with institutional planning at this time. The effectiveness of student learning through the use of technology resources at the College has not been measured in any comprehensive way. The use of technology has been slowly developed by the various departments on campus through classroom instruction, computer labs, and library research resources. Interviews with faculty and staff confirm that needs assessment and planning for collegewide technological needs still remain to be done. Without this type of assessment, student learning outcomes cannot be measured and evaluated in any sort of institutional manner. (Standard III.C.2)

Financial Resources

The College has current Educational and Facilities Master Plans that are used in the budget decision-making process. These plans were reviewed by team members during the visit. The College stated in the Self Study report that educational goals have been difficult to achieve in light of shrinking budgets. A number of new initiatives have been launched to secure non-state funding through grants and the creation of the Institute for Community and Professional Development (ICPD). The College planning agenda outlines the goal of developing long-term strategies to replace lost positions and to aggressively secure outside grants to stabilize funding. Concerns were raised in the Self Study report regarding the District resource allocation model, especially in light of its flexibility to address the different needs of the Colleges within the District. This has become an issue as the three Colleges have different growth patterns, FTES levels, staff, age of facilities, and student demographics. The College budget problems are largely a result of falling state revenues and ever increasing costs. As a result of these reductions, the College has eliminated much of its discretionary funding and forced reductions in key instructional, student support, and administrative support services. Despite shrinking resources, Ventura has focused the allocation of remaining resources on student learning and tried to make budget reductions as far away from the classroom as possible. Student learning remains a high priority when budget decisions are made. (Standard III.D.1.a-d)

The College relies on a computerized financial system, which provides timely and accurate data for financial controls. This system has been working effectively for the College and, therefore, no issues were raised regarding the requirements for this standard.

The College has demonstrated a strong commitment to communicate budget status to the College community through formal presentations to the various committees, and by initiating collegewide Budget Forums. Communications about the budget status were well received on campus. Districtwide financial audits are completed as required and raised no significant financial control or reporting problems. The District did suffer a reduction to its reserves below the state recommended minimum and was placed on the state “watch list.” The designation was revised by the state and the District was removed from the “watch list” last year, reflecting the commitment of the Board of Trustees and the Colleges to make the necessary budget adjustments to return the reserves to the required minimum. This was confirmed in conversations with District office staff. The District has identified the scope of the unfunded retiree medical liability for health benefits by commissioning an actuarial report to analyze the issue. Team members reviewed the actuarial report. Reports on the unfunded medical liability have been presented to the Board over the last several months. The District has expressed a desire to start funding this obligation, but no specific strategies have yet been formulated to implement this plan according to District staff. (Standard III.D.2.b-c)

Interviews with District office staff generally confirmed financial concerns raised by College staff in the Self Study report. The common concerns centered around the District resource allocation process and the need to identify funding sources for equipment replacement and staffing for new buildings being constructed through Measure S bond funds. (Standards III.D.1.d and III.D.2.a)

Conclusions

Human Resources

Ventura College is still experiencing financial difficulties, which have had a negative impact on programs and services throughout the institution, but the Warning status assigned to the College in 2002 by the Commission appears to have energized all segments of the institution to engage in meaningful dialogue to discuss multiple alternatives to the provision of necessary services to fulfill the College’s established mission. The College is actively engaged in a widely-participatory planning mode, which in turn seems to have facilitated new avenues for communication about shared governance and decision-making processes. The College should be able to utilize this momentum to initiate discussions at all levels of College operations dealing with the severe shortage of classified personnel in support services, technical assistance, and grounds and maintenance operations, which is compounded by an increase in square footage due to the construction of new buildings and the maintenance of new and old equipment housed in the new LRC. Ventura College and the District as a whole need to attend to the issues raised in previous Recommendation 9, critically evaluating the management structure and the role of management in the institution.

The College has a strong staff development program, which extends to all segments of the College. The classified staff is fully integrated into these staff activities as well as the governance structure of the institution.

Physical Resources

The College has a strong facilities planning process. It has identified areas to improve where systematic planning is needed for the replacement of equipment. The Educational Master Plan has been utilized to guide facility construction and renovation. The College has committed to design principles of environmental stewardship by adopting the LEEDS recommendations, reflecting its commitment to preservation of natural resources. The funding for the cost of additional space that is FTES generating at Santa Paula should be woven into a new District resource allocation model. The expansion of space at Santa Paula will necessarily be part of a districtwide resource allocation model, which anticipates funded FTES and the ability of the District to grow.

While capital planning is closely tied to the Educational Master Plan, it is recommended that the College adopt the concepts of total cost of ownership as outlined in Standard III.B.2.c. This will become more critical as new equipment is purchased through grants, Measure S funds, and other sources.

Technology Resources

The College's technology plan, as presented, provides components of what the previous recommendation specified: it is multi-year and provides a framework for systematically meeting technological needs. It is not, however, a "single comprehensive institutional multi-year technology plan." As stated earlier in the response to previous Recommendation 6, while goals to be implemented are provided, no specific structure is outlined to provide the College with a mechanism with which to reach the goals. Concrete institutional goals are not outlined; no statement on the issue of dealing with growth is made; and no annual effort to be comprehensive in nature is stated or addressed.

Financial Resources

Ventura College has many of the fundamental structures for allocating and controlling its budget. The College has demonstrated a strong commitment to communicating budget issues to the College community through the budget forums. The District has adjusted its budget to reflect declining state revenues and increasing expenses, forcing reductions in operating expenses. As a result of receiving a designation from the State Chancellor's Office placing it on the state "watch list," the District made necessary corrections and has restored reserves to the required level. Bond money has provided a stimulus for new development and a new look for the campus. Efforts to identify funding sources for operating the new buildings (maintenance, custodial, et cetera) are just beginning. Funding sources for replacement of existing equipment, as well as for anticipated replacement of new equipment being purchased as part of funding provided by Measure S, needs to be identified. Continuing work on a District resource allocation model has been highlighted as a priority by both the District and the College. The issue of unfunded retiree medical liability has been presented to the Board of Trustees. A comprehensive actuarial study defined the scope of this issue. The administrative staff is anticipating recommending a plan to the Board to actually begin funding this liability.

Recommendations

The team recommends that:

Recommendation 2

The College develop a formal unit review process to assess and prioritize staffing needs in hiring decisions regarding classified personnel. (Standards III.A.2 and III.A.6)

Recommendation 3

The College utilize the resources of the District, in consultation with the College Administrative Council, to conduct a highly visible and inclusive evaluation process regarding the effectiveness of the College administrative structure. (1996 Standards 10B.3 and 10B.4; 2002 Standards III.A.2, III.A.6, and IV.B.2.a)

Recommendation 4

The District develop written personnel procedures that are equitable and consistently administered to ensure fairness in all employment practices. This should include a clearly defined and well articulated policy for the selection and evaluation of the presidents of the Colleges. (Standards III.A.3.a and IV.B.1.j)

Recommendation 5

The College build a budget forecast, which will anticipate staffing, equipment, and operating expenses for new facilities coming on line as a result of Measure S, so funding streams can be identified to support this expansion. The College should work with the District on this task, as the anticipated funding streams will necessarily include some portion to be funded as part of a comprehensive resource allocation model as referenced below. (Standards III.B.1.a; III.B.2.a, and III.C. 1.c)

Recommendation 6

The College create a truly comprehensive institutional multi-year technology plan, beyond the initial framework and timeline already developed, in order to solidify organizational structure for campus technology leadership, clarify college/district responsibilities, and implement the process to evaluate the effectiveness of technology as it relates to student learning outcomes. (1996 Standards 4A.4, 6, 8.4, and 8.5; 2002 Standards III.C.1 and III.C.2)

Recommendation 7

The District, in cooperation with the Colleges, formulate a districtwide resource allocation model, which will be flexible enough to guide increases or reductions in budget allocations, which will follow goals for districtwide student learning outcomes, and which will ensure accountability to operate within agreed upon allocations. (Standards III.D.1.a and III.D.1.c)

Recommendation 8

The District develop a funding plan for the unfunded retiree medical liability following the recommendations contained in the actuarial study completed in October 2004. (Standard III.D.1.c)

Standard IV **Leadership and Governance**

Decision-Making Roles and Processes

Ventura College has succeeded in creating an environment that has empowered faculty and staff to develop innovative strategies for achieving the mission and acting on the values in significant ways to realize College goals. A review of the materials distributed during the March 2004 budget forums reveals that these innovations occurred in spite of reductions in funds, staff cutbacks, and changes in administrative positions. The recent funding crisis galvanized the College into action and resulted in the development and implementation of creative solutions to resolve very challenging problems. The Student Success Team's use of College goals to evaluate program achievements and the initiation of dialogue regarding student learning outcomes in student services programs are additional examples of innovative governance planning initiatives designed to improve institutional effectiveness. Other examples of innovative initiatives are the collaborative College forums hosted by the academic and classified senates and inclusion of the classified senate president and the president of associated students on the Council for Institutional Development (CID) and on the Administrative Council. These processes allow the senate presidents to participate in institutional governance in a meaningful way. The minutes of the committee responsible for planning the construction of the science and art center provided an indication of how faculty, students, and staff are engaged in governance planning and decision-making. (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2.a, and IV.A.3)

The team observed that the CID engaged the College in a process that resulted in dialogue that led to the development of the mission, core values, and goals of the College as well as policies and practices that institutionalized participatory decision-making. The expansion of the Staff Development Committee's orientation process in the physical education/health education, health services, and learning resources departments provide evidence of the implementation of these strategies. (Standards IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, and IV.A.3)

Faculty and staff engagement in College governance includes participation in District planning efforts. As part of the implementation phase of the Banner enterprise system, the District's chief information technology manager participated in a campus forum, which led to the development of strategies that responded to the concerns of student users. This example demonstrates how the members of governance planning groups have provided leadership to achieve District goals. (Standard IV.A.3)

While finding evidence in Board policy of the inclusion of various constituencies in shared decision-making, processes and practices were not clear at the district level. Classified staff leaders with whom the team spoke, while enthusiastic about participation in the governance of the College and in its rituals, were less clear about involvement at the district level. (Standards IV.A.2.a and IV.A.3)

Board and Administrative Organization

In reviewing the Board of Trustees' policy manual, the team determined that there are Board adopted policies that address the effective operations of the District. The policies refer to the Board's intent to fulfill its mission by offering quality student learning programs and services. Although the Board schedules orientations for new members and has held several study sessions in the past, a coordinated program of Board development is not evident. Additionally, the team found a need for regular review and possible revision of established District policies as well as further policy development to achieve the mission. For example, the Board does not have a written policy that clearly defines the process for selection and evaluation of the College president. The president provides the College leadership and vision necessary to achieve the Board's goals. The absence of such policies related to this position has a direct impact on all College governance procedures, decision-making processes, and the degree to which the College is capable of achieving its goals. (Standards IV.B.1.a-j)

As discussed in the Standard III section of this report, the response to previous Recommendation 9 was incomplete. The College has not undertaken substantive dialogue about and analysis of its management structure. This creates challenges for a president in delegating authority to administrators consistent with their responsibilities. (Standard IV.B.2.a)

As a member college of a three-college district, Ventura staff expressed some frustration at the level of service and the degree of communication received from the District office. As identified in other areas of this report, the team found evidence of dissatisfaction with the District budget allocation model. Additionally, some of those interviewed by team members were anxious about the level of authority granted the College leadership and the consistency of Human Resources processes and practices. Concerns about the analysis of the management structure, District communication to employees and students, and support for planning at a level above the individual Colleges were voiced. (Standard IV.B.3)

Conclusions

Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The College has implemented exemplary and innovative governance practices that are succeeding in meeting this section of Standard IV. The collaborative, collegial planning that has engaged members of each constituency in proactively responding to the needs of the College community has made a significant difference in achieving the mission and goals of the College. Many aspects of the College, including instructional programs; student support services and learning resources; facilities planning and staffing; and the allocation of fiscal resources have all been positively impacted by these practices. What needs improvement is documentation of the ways that constituent groups can similarly participate at the District level.

Board and Administrative Organization

The College and the District have challenges that require focused attention. The Board needs to regularly review and revise its policies and make certain that the processes for participation by all members of the District community are made clear. The Chancellor and Board need to ensure that an organized and coordinated program of Board development is established and followed. The Board must be certain that job descriptions for management are Board approved and that the processes for selection of senior leaders are well understood at the college level. The actual structure of management at the College, cited for review in a previous accreditation cycle, must be analyzed and revised as necessary so that management tasks can be accomplished and a stable cadre of administrators can be maintained. Finally, the District should assume responsibility for ensuring the participation of the Colleges in goal setting and planning at a district level and should communicate clearly with the District community about issues handled at the district level, such as budgetary and personnel matters.

Recommendations

The team recommends that:

Recommendation 9

The District honor its policy on shared decision-making by implementing operational and evaluative procedures that delineate the roles and responsibilities of the various college/district constituencies that participate in collegial governance. (Standards IV.A.2.a and IV.A.3)

Recommendation 10

The Board of Trustees implement a process to regularly evaluate and revise District policies, and implement and participate in an on-going process for professional development and orientation for new Board members, which includes a review of Board roles and responsibilities. (Standards IV.B.1.e and IV.B.1.f)

Recommendation 11

The District assume leadership for a districtwide, collaboratively developed strategic plan that is informed by District research and coordinated with College planning. (Standard IV.B.3)

Recommendation 12

The Chancellor establish and implement a process for open communication with the Colleges by providing information and ensuring staff understanding of Board direction and expectations. Further, the District should develop a more effective process for ensuring accountability in achieving standards of educational excellence, fiscal integrity, and operational efficiency within a culture of evidence. (Standard IV.B.3.a-f)

Please refer to Recommendations 3 and 4.