

DATE: 8 December 2006  
TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
FROM: Stan R. Arterberry, Team Chair  
SUBJECT: Report of Progress Visit, Ventura College, 13 November 2006

## **Introduction**

A comprehensive visit was conducted at Ventura College in the fall of 2004. At its meeting in January 2005, the Commission acted to require Ventura to complete two progress reports, the first addressing Eligibility Requirement 10 and the second addressing Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 12. The March 2005 report was accepted by the Commission in June 2005. As required by the January 2005 letter, Ventura submitted a second progress report in October 2006, which was followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

The visiting team, Mr. Stan Arterberry and Dr. Francisco Arce, along with Team Assistant Mr. Albert Moore, conducted the site visit on 13 November 2006. The team met with representatives of both the district and the college on the Ventura College campus. The purpose of the team visit was to seek evidence for the accuracy and relevance of the Progress Report and to provide information on issues that are of concern to the Commission.

In general, the team found that the college had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with the individuals and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair and by assembling appropriate documents for review by the team members. Over the course of the day, the team met with the following:

District Chancellor,  
Vice Chancellor, Business and Administrative Services,  
Associate Vice Chancellor, Human Resources,  
College President,  
Executive Vice President of Student Learning,  
Vice President of Administrative Services,  
Dean of Student Services,  
Assistant Dean of Student Services,  
Academic Senate President, and  
Classified Senate President.

The purpose of the visit was to seek evidence of the accuracy and relevance of the Progress Report. The college and district's responses to the recommendations and the findings of the team are stated below.

### **Recommendation 1**

*The team recommends that 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. (Eligibility Requirement 19 and 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)*

### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

Through review of the Progress Report, evidence provided at the college and interviews with the President, Executive Vice President, and the Dean and Assistant Dean of Student Services, it became clear that the college has taken many steps to address this recommendation from a number of perspectives. College-wide and at the division level, work was undertaken to develop college core competencies and identify which were addressed in each course offered as well as establishing student learning outcomes (SLOs) at the program, certificate, and degree levels. The most extensive work has taken place in Student Services, where SLOs were identified in all departments and determination of methods of assessment are well underway. Student learning outcomes are integrated into college planning and the college's mission statement.

The team determined that a great deal of progress has been made on this recommendation, especially in the areas of student services and vocational education. The college is encouraged to continue refinement of the assessment level of student learning outcomes implementation.

### **Recommendation 3**

*The team recommends that 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)*

### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

Upon the arrival of a new college president, Ventura embarked upon a college-wide process to address the Recommendation 3. Retreats were held, constituent input was solicited, participatory governance channels were utilized for review and feedback, and a model was shared with the entire campus. The final proposed model featured the re-establishment of two positions whose deletion had led to some of the college's earlier challenges.

The team found that the college had completed an evaluation of the organizational structure in a comprehensive and open manner, and that it yielded a recommendation that makes sense to the college and appears to address the most prominent concerns expressed to members of the visiting team in 2004. The team was notified two days after its visit

that at the Tuesday, 14 November meeting of the district Board of Trustees, the dean of career education and the dean of social science/humanities positions were approved so that Ventura College can proceed with its new organizational structure.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*The team recommends that 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)*

#### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

The college demonstrated that the district's personnel commission has very precise rules and regulations for the hiring of personnel. These were last revised two years ago. For academic hires, regulations do exist within Human Resources. Conceivably, this could address a position such as president, but it was reported to the team that the Board had committed to creating a separate policy for selection of that position.

The chapter of district policy on human resources is in the process of complete review. It is anticipated that it will be taken to the Board for a first reading during the first quarter of 2007.

The Human Resources department created an "Administrator Performance Evaluation System" in spring 2006, and it is in the pilot stage at this writing. College presidents are included in the pilot group.

The team determined that personnel commission hiring procedures and district procedures for the hiring of academic employees are in place and functioning. There still is no policy on the selection and evaluation of the college presidents. The team notes that searches for a permanent Ventura College president and the selection of an interim president for Oxnard College have both taken place in the absence policy guidance on the matter, and that the selection for a permanent hire at Oxnard is proceeding although policy language still does not exist.

#### **Recommendation 8**

*The team recommends that 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)*

#### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

Based on a fall 2004 actuarial study, the district chose to embark upon a three-year phase-in process to accumulate \$4,000,000 to address the liability. The plan will be fully implemented in one more year. Additionally, an "accrual method of accounting" was implemented in the last academic year to deal with the on-going expense of retiree health

benefits in a comprehensive way. The Board is currently considering the establishment of an irrevocable trust.

The current plan, which is well underway, was proposed by the district budget office and reviewed by the District Council of Administrative Services before being considered by the full Board. Although the team noted that some members of the college community are not happy with the plan as implemented, the college and district have developed and implemented a plan.

### **Recommendation 9**

*The team recommends that 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)*

### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

The Board did approve a general policy on participation in local decision making in 2005. During that same academic year, the Chancellor began meeting with a Chancellor's Consultation Council that is a participatory governance committee with specified membership and responsibilities that are articulated. Work is also being done on a manual for participatory governance. The team also noted that the district has undergone a technical assistance visit from the Community College League of California (CCLC) and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges.

Several of the individuals with whom the team met acknowledged that efforts have been made in this area, but admitted to still being confused about the roles and responsibilities of constituent groups and individuals in the overall process. Although some noted that participation among their group had increased, others stated that the Chancellor's Council does nothing more than approve Board agendas. Confusion, therefore, is still an issue. There are not "operational and evaluative procedures" as required in the recommendation.

### **Recommendation 10**

*The team recommends that 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)*

### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

The district has made efforts in this area by participating in the CCLC Board Model Policy and Procedure Service. Revisions of the complete policy manual were completed in 2005-06 and the policies are published on the district Web site. The Web site, however, is not clear about whether all chapters have been approved. Although certain chapters give approval dates for each individual policy area, several are silent in the area

indicated to record such approval or revision. Trustee workshops were instituted, including two all-day sessions facilitated by the League.

The team did find that the district has instituted Board member orientation and development. There is no clear understanding, however, of the process for Board policy review and revision, and although the district has begun to move in this direction, there is no evidence to its “regularity,” and there is confusion as to who or what group has coordinating responsibility.

### **Recommendation 12**

*The team recommends that 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)*

### **Response to the Recommendation and Team Findings**

The Chancellor has used the Consultation Council as the chief conduit of information to the district constituencies. A periodic district online newsletter highlights Board policy updates, planning decisions, and the accomplishments of the district and its colleges. The district has also been working with a consulting firm to assess marketing position and improve organizational performance. The district proposed, and the Board approved at its meeting on November 14, the position of Director of Administrative Relations, which will be responsible for coordination of communication between the Board, the district office, the colleges and the community. Information going to the Board will become more consistent, comprehensive, and will cite appropriate participatory governance participation.

The district has also begun work on developing a strategic plan for the district, which has had, as its first step, the creation of five District Imperatives. Plans call for continuing work in this area throughout the 2006-07 academic year.

The team found that significant progress in this area has been made through the establishment and working of the Consultation Council, and the creation of the administrative function to coordinate communication between the Board and other constituencies throughout the district. There continues to be concern, however, at all levels of the college and the district office about the effectiveness, consistency, and appropriateness of communication. More than one person with whom the team met mentioned a feeling that decisions come down as “edicts.”

The team was also concerned that the work on strategic planning, necessary for the creation of a “more effective process for ensuring accountability in achieving standards of educational excellence, fiscal integrity, and operational efficiency within a culture of evidence,” is just beginning. Moreover, there were many recommendations made by the

consultants, and several individuals indicated that the district and Board had not yet begun, in any serious way, to address these recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

The team found that Ventura College has made progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2004 visiting team. Recommendations 1, 3, and 8 have been satisfied.

Although parts of Recommendations 4, 9, 10, and 12 have been met, work remains to be done to fully address these recommendations. As has been pointed out, in Recommendation 4, the district still has not developed “*a clearly defined and well-articulated policy for the selection and evaluation of the Presidents of the colleges.*” Although the district has utilized internal and external resources to address Recommendation 9, confusion still exists regarding roles and responsibilities, and the district has not implemented “*operational and evaluative procedures that delineate the roles and responsibilities of the various college/district constituencies that participate in collegial governance.*” Board member orientation and development have taken place, and the Board has begun the process of reviewing and revising all of the district policies. As was the case in Recommendation 9, however, confusion is still a factor, in this case in the area of responsibility for coordination. Moreover, the regularity called for in the recommendation is not in evidence. In Recommendation 12, although significant progress has been made in addressing the visiting team’s recommendation, there is enough work yet to be done as to render it impossible to conclude the recommendation has been met.

It did not go unnoticed by the team that the recommendations that remain incompletely met, depend on significant accomplishments at a level outside of the control of Ventura College. Recommendations 4, 9, 10, and 12 require involvement, action, and/or coordination at the district level or from the Board of Trustees. This team recommends that the district office and the Board act swiftly to complete those requirements of the recommendations under their purview and control.

Finally, the team noted that on more than one occasion concerns of actions that appeared to be indicative of micromanagement at the Board level were raised during interviews. Examples of information shared with the team included that the Board conducted interviews of candidates for positions below the level of CEO as part of Board meetings, an executive vice president position is being filled by moving an individual from one college to the other without using the district’s process for lateral transfers, and Board members participate in serial meetings. The team believes that completion of work on the recommendations that have been only partially met would go a long way toward addressing these types of concerns. Having hiring policies and procedures that are institutionalized, well-understood, and uniformly administered; making sure that roles and responsibilities of various constituencies and positions are documented, communicated, and understood; and effectively communicating Board direction and expectations may alleviate some of these concerns.