

FOCUSED MIDTERM VISIT REPORT

Skyline Community College
3300 College Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066

A confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
Skyline Community College on March 29, 2004

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To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

From: Benjamin T. Duran, Team Chair

Subject: Report of Focused Midterm Visit Report, Skyline College,
February 23, 2004

Introduction

At its meeting of January 8-10, 2003, the Commission acted to require of Skyline Community College a Focused Midterm Report and visit. A comprehensive visit was conducted to Skyline College on March 27-29, 2001. The focused midterm visiting team, Dr. Benjamin T. Duran and Ms. Lurelean B. Gaines, conducted the site visit at Skyline College on March 29, 2004. The purpose of the team visit was to validate the Focused Midterm Report prepared by the college and to determine if sustained, continuous, and positive movement toward institutional good practice had occurred.

In general, the team found that the college had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with the individual and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair and by assembling appropriate documents in the meeting room used by the team. Over the course of the day, the team met with the President of the College, two Vice Presidents, the Accreditation Liaison Officer, the Director of Planning and Research, the Academic Senate President, and the District Director of Facilities and Operations.

The Focused Midterm Report and visit were expected to document improvement in the following areas:

1. The college should gather current survey data, review policy manuals and handbooks, and update major written documents to identify more explicitly the responsibilities and composition of committees and functional units, especially with regard to the research component. (Theme I-1: Clarifying Communication Processes)
2. The college should explicitly clarify the processes for decision making and more closely align the relationships between and among the various decision-making bodies in order to support short- and long-term planning. (Theme I-4: Clarifying Communication Processes)
3. In order to plan effectively, the college should conduct objective research, identify institutional outcomes, and engage in systematic continuous assessment, especially with regard to enrollment management, program development and learning resources. (Theme II-2: Conducting Comprehensive Integrated Planning)

4. The College and District jointly need to address issues related to the scheduled maintenance and operation of the campus by identifying ways to provide adequate services with access to sufficient resources and equipment to support the college priorities and its educational plan. (Theme III: Completing the Development of the Physical Environment)
5. The district should conduct regular training for supervisors of classified staff and meet the obligation to initiate and guide staff evaluation processes so that they are timely and consistent, and the college administration should follow through in conducting those evaluations. (Additional Recommendation)

College Responses to the Team Recommendations:

1. **The college should gather current survey data, review policy manuals and handbooks, and update major written documents to identify more explicitly the responsibilities and composition of committees and functional units, especially with regard to the research component. (Theme I-1: Clarifying Communication Processes)**

The team found that since the accreditation visit of 2001 the college has made significant improvements in the development of service, policy manuals, handbooks and major written documents to identify more explicitly the responsibility and composition of committees and functional units. This was primarily accomplished as a result of the employment of the Director of Planning and Research and the subsequent work he accomplished.

Initially, the college, under the direction of the Director of Planning and Research and the CEO, determined there was a lack of documents available—the how and why things had been done over the years. Once an assessment of the existing culture was completed, which included distrust of the existing shared governance structure, the college teams set about developing strategies for dealing with those issues. Three semesters were spent developing a strategic plan for the institution with the intention of ensuring buy-in from the various college constituencies. This was the beginning of the rebuilding of trust among those groups.

The same approach and philosophy was taken into account in the creation of the budget and institutional planning committees. The team found that since the last visit there has been a significant change in the culture of the college and there is a sense within the college community that they have been involved in the planning process and are knowledgeable and accepting of what needs to be done. In the review of documents provided by the college it was evident that significant work had been done over the previous three years in addressing this particular issue. One of the most significant efforts was the development of like operational definitions for the various elements in the planning process. It was determined that in the past not

everyone was on the same page because different groups were using different definitions and language in their discussions of college issues.

The team was complimentary of the Director of Planning and Research for the inclusive process he used. The team was also complimentary of the new CEO for fostering and encouraging the move into a new culture for the institution and for the rebuilding of trust among the members of the college community.

Conclusion:

The team found that there is ample evidence and documentation that the college has worked very hard to get survey data, to review policy materials and handbooks, and to create appropriate documentation so that all college constituencies can more clearly identify the responsibilities and composition of committees and functional units, especially with regard to the research component. These findings were verified by interviews with various constituent representatives.

2. The college should explicitly clarify the processes for decision making and more closely align the relationships between and among the various decision-making bodies in order to support short- and long-term planning. (Theme I-4: Clarifying Communication Processes)

The team found that the college has come a long way in the past three years with respect to clarifying its communications process. It was noted by the Team and representatives of the college that the culture of the campus has changed immensely in the last three years. This is significant in that there had been a vote of no confidence with respect to the previous CEO. The improvements in this area were attributed primarily to the efforts of the new CEO and to the work of the Director of Planning and Research who came to the college shortly after the last accreditation visit.

It was determined by the team, and confirmed by the Faculty Senate President, that there was now in place a functioning collegial governance structure where input was not only heard, it was one where people felt a part of the decision-making process. This was cited as a major change for the institution. With the arrival of the Director of Planning and Research there was an initiation of a strategic planning process and the beginning of trust building that had not existed before. In the setting of goals for the college, the new administration has included grassroots level individuals and there is a sense that their input is taken into consideration. Specifically, the input has been taken into consideration in the development of the college budget, which apparently was not the case under the old administration.

In 2002 and 2003 the Strategic Alternatives for Innovative Funding (SAIF) Committee was formed and faculty were appointed to the new budget committee. In this new process each division is represented by at least one individual and in some cases more than one depending on the size of the division. The SAIF Committee

was especially effective last year when the entire system was experiencing significant budget reductions, and it was the conclusion of the college constituencies that as tough and difficult decisions were made, they were based on the CEO's willingness to accept recommendations from the college community. As a result of the success of the SAIF Committee, the budget committee and the SAIF Committee have now been melded into one, with a sense from the college community that there is adequate representation from throughout the campus. Additionally, it was pointed out that program review is now an integral part of planning and is evidenced in the planning and budgeting process. The Faculty Senate has initiated a program review policy and provides oversight and coordination for the modification and discontinuation of classes, etc.

In order to ensure communication of decisions in the collegial governance process, constituency groups are making sure that appointees return to their groups to share information. In addition, materials for the various committees are being posted on the college's web pages so that anyone at the campus can access committee notes and minutes.

It was also determined that the goal setting and strategic planning, though based on local research and decisions, were not tied to district goals at this time. It was noted that the District at this time does not have a Vice Chancellor for Education Services, and as a result, the college has proceeded in this area on its own.

Conclusion:

The team concludes that the college has worked extremely hard at clarifying the communications process within the campus and has been successful in doing so. However, it should be noted there is still need for the district to exert leadership at the college in the area of education services.

- 3. In order to plan effectively, the college should conduct objective research, identify institutional outcomes and engage in systematic continuous assessment, especially with regard to enrollment management, program development and learning resources. (Theme II-2: Conducting Comprehensive Integrated Planning)**

Immediately following the visit of the accreditation team in 2001 the college employed a full-time Director of Planning and Research. This is significant because prior to this the research for the district was generated by the Information Services Technology Department and by a part-time faculty researcher whose primary responsibility was to take ITS reports and package them for distribution. Under the new organization, the research department has been able to provide data that can be accessed at a number of levels, which has proven beneficial for the planning at the college.

Prior to the employment of the Director of Planning and Research, it was difficult to develop an FTE allocation formula, with decisions simply being made based on the replacement of retired teaching positions. For the first time, research is being provided to the campus by a staff researcher as opposed to depending on more general data that comes from the district office. For instance, the information that has been provided by the local researcher has proved useful to the Vice President of Instruction to allow her to better handle implementing prerequisites and determining the appropriate placement of class sections within the schedule. Deans are able to look at the data and determine capacity loads and which sections are needed within the schedule. The use of research in this way has alleviated tension between the deans and faculty as the instructional program is planned. This process, coupled with program review and institutional planning now in place, also assists with the development of the budget, especially when additional dollars become available.

The new process provides an ongoing source of data for systematic, continuous assessment with respect to enrollment management, program development, and learning resources. It was apparent that people on campus can now see a difference between where the college had been and where it is now. There is an ongoing effort to integrate the research function on campus with the various and different structures to provide more comprehensive planning. As a result of using research in the integrated planning, productivity has increased because better information is available and the appropriate questions are being asked.

Conclusion:

The team concludes that there is evidence that comprehensive, integrated planning is far better than it had been prior to the last visit. The team encourages the college to continue developing its planning processes with the use of the newly acquired research function.

4. The College and District jointly need to address issues related to the scheduled maintenance and operation of the campus by identifying ways to provide adequate services with access to sufficient resources and equipment to support the college priorities and its educational plan. (Theme III: Completing the Development of the Physical Environment)

It was reported by the Director of Facilities and Operations that an earnest effort has been made to address the facilities needs on the campus. Since the last visit the lump sum provided to the Director has been separated into account lines for operating supplies, salaries, etc. for every college, thus allowing each campus and operations manager to manage his/her own budget allotment. Additionally, the district has attempted to cutback on discretionary overtime in order to get a better handle on the use of overtime as well as to capture some dollars to assist with filling vacancies on a temporary basis until the hiring process catches up with the process for filling existing vacancies. More specifically, with respect to the college, there has been a concerted effort to review the efficiency of custodial and grounds crews. This

has resulted in significant increases in efficiency of the existing staff. It was determined that staff were performing tasks that took them away from their regular duties (e.g. walking someone to their car late at night, opening rooms, helping lost students, raising and lowering the flag). As a result, one example that has contributed to the efficiency was the addition of a light at the flagpole and the addition of an all-weather flag which eliminated the need for daily attention to this task. With the addition of a new Chief Engineer and new Lead Custodian the efficiency of the existing staff has also improved resulting in better service to the college as a whole.

There still appears to be a sense on campus that the college is not given the attention due from the district office when district wide projects are considered. There is a sense that the local colleges do not have as much of a say in district decisions regarding district facilities as they would like. However, it was also noted that the district had recently passed a \$210 million bond measure. These dollars, coupled with the State Capital Construction Program dollars, have resulted in \$77 million being allocated for construction of a new student union building and \$90 million for repair and renovation on the Skyline campus. In that respect, it was felt the college was being fairly treated by the district. It was also noted that the facilities department has included staff members in their meetings to impress upon the college community the department's advocacy on behalf of Skyline College.

Since the last visit, there has been an initiation of safety training sessions for staff at the district level and these training opportunities will be made available at the campus in the hope of increasing awareness. With respect to scheduled maintenance projects, each college in the district prioritizes its projects, which are then funded on a rotational basis at the district level. In this way all colleges are given due consideration for their projects.

Conclusion:

The team concludes that significant improvement has taken place in terms of communications between the district and the college regarding scheduled maintenance and the grounds and custodial operations by initiating efforts to improve efficiency and to bring support dollars to the college. There is still a sense that due to the lack of a Vice Chancellor for Education Services at the district level, the allocation of program improvement dollars for facilities are often driven by budgetary considerations as opposed to programmatic considerations.

- 5. The district should conduct regular training for supervisors of classified staff and meet the obligation to initiate and guide staff evaluation processes so that they are timely and consistent, and the college administration should follow through in conducting those evaluations. (Additional Recommendation)**

The team found that since the last accreditation visit there is evidence the district is now sending out via e-mail a list of people who are up for evaluation. Staff on

campus then are required to check to ensure that evaluations are being completed in a timely fashion. Though evaluations are done on a rotating schedule, there is still an opportunity to conduct evaluations under special circumstances. The Human Resources Office is responsible for apprising managers when evaluations are due. Annually, a manager's meeting is held specifically to discuss the evaluation process. As a result, an internal tracking system has been designed through the vice presidents to ensure a timely completion of evaluations. In addition, a publication has been developed titled "Management Guide to Classified Performance Evaluations." Completed evaluations are then routed through the vice presidents who send them on to the district office.

At the district level there are several new human resources staff – a new Vice Chancellor for Human Resources as well as a new Director of Personnel. Since the last visit it is also evident the district has undertaken a process for training managers on the evaluation process, as is evidenced by the publication and the annual meeting to discuss the evaluation process. The training not only consists of a discussion of the evaluation process, it also includes the pitfalls and issues related to evaluations. In addition, part of the manager's orientation includes training on conducting evaluations, which covers the three separate documents for faculty, classified and management.

Conclusion:

The team found that the district and the college have worked together to establish regular training for supervisors involved in classified staff evaluations and the process has led to a timely and consistent completion of evaluations at the college.