



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 7, 2014

Dr. Regina Stroud, President
Skyline College
3300 College Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066

Dear President Stroud:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 8-10, 2014, considered the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Skyline College October 21-24, 2013.

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** with the requirement that the College complete a **Follow-Up Report** that must be submitted by **October 15, 2014**.¹ Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is granted when an institution is found to substantially meet or exceed the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Report should demonstrate that the institution has addressed the recommendation noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Accreditation Standards.

Need to Correct Deficiencies

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in any Standard will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students. The Commission found Skyline College deficient in meeting the following Accreditation Standard: III.A.1.b. Please note that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when an institution is not in compliance with Standards, the Commission “must immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the agency’s standards within a time period that must not exceed...two years.” Skyline College should fully resolve the noted deficiency by October 2015.

College Recommendation 1

In order to meet the Standard and ensure quality instruction, the team recommends that the College adhere to its systematic and regularly scheduled process of performance evaluations for all adjunct faculty members (Standard III.A.1.b.).

Dr. Regina Stroud, President
Skyline College
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Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness

Recommendations have been made for Skyline College and the San Mateo Community College District to improve institutional effectiveness. Recommendations for improvement may be made to highlight areas for continuing or expanding excellent practices. Recommendations for improvement may also be made when an institution is currently in compliance with Standards, but additional levels of effort should be demonstrated in the future. In the Commission's experience, these recommendations may provide indicators of possible future noncompliance if left unattended by the institution. College should plan to fully address all improvement recommendations in the Midterm Report.

College Recommendation 2

In order to improve and increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the College complete a systematic review of its integrated planning and resource allocation cycle, in its entirety as a holistic process, and to do so in a purposeful and well documented manner to promote transparency and sustainability (Standards I.B, I.B.6, I.B.7).

College Recommendation 3

In order to improve and promote quality instruction, the team recommends that the college adhere to its policy ensuring that all Distance Education courses are effectively facilitating student learning by providing continuous, regular and substantive faculty interaction with students (Standards IIA.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e).

District Recommendation 1

In order to increase effectiveness, the District and Colleges should broadly communicate the modification of the evaluation process for faculty and others directly responsible for student progress, which includes student learning outcomes, and ensure that the process is fully implemented. (III.A.1.c)

District Recommendation 2

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the Board of Trustees should develop goals for increasing its professional development and orientation of new Trustees. (IV.B.1.f)

District Recommendation 3

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the District should establish a regular cycle for the evaluation of its services and provide documentation regarding the outcomes of the evaluations. (IV.B.3.b, IV.B.3.g)

The Commission voted to convey the following comments to Skyline College and the San Mateo Community College District.

The team report noted three specific challenges that the evaluation teams experienced during the site visit. First, the District Chancellor was unavailable to the team for the majority of the visit. Comprehensive evaluation visits are scheduled well in advance, and the Commission expects top administrators to be available to the team during the visit.

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Second, per a reported directive from the Chancellor, additional staff members were required to attend scheduled team interviews with district staff members even though these additional individuals were not invited to participate in the interviews by the members of the evaluation team. Although the evaluation team overcame this challenge and was able to complete its duties, this is problematic. It made the work of the team more difficult and created an awkward situation. Evaluation teams are charged with examining evidence from the college, and one of the methods of gathering or confirming evidence is through the interview process. By including observers not requested by the team, interviewees may be reluctant to share information because of a lack of assurance of confidentiality.

Third, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report should, in addition to demonstrating adherence to the Accreditation Standards, demonstrate ongoing efforts by the college to continually improve its performance and effectiveness (Standard I.B.2). An important way the Commission expects colleges to carry out this task is by including actionable improvement plans in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that contain future actions to be implemented by the college. The Commission noted that the Institutional Self Evaluation Report for Skyline College included a limited number of such improvement plans.

The Commission is concerned about the implications of the three challenges experienced by the evaluation team. These actions, not having a key leader available, not respecting the interview requests and confidentiality of the evaluation interview process, and actionable improvement plans are behaviors not conducive to maintaining positive relations between the College/District and the Commission. Eligibility Requirement 21 concerns the integrity of relations between Colleges and the Commission. It states that the “institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies...”

The Commission carries out its accreditation function in a professional and balanced manner while ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of the process. Accreditation is a complex and demanding process, and the future cooperation of Skyline College and the District will assist the Commission in assuring the quality of institutional activities.

The External Evaluation Report that was sent to the institution provides details of the team’s findings with regard to each Eligibility Requirement and Accreditation Standard and should be read carefully and used to understand the team’s findings.

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The recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit, but may not describe all that is necessary to come into compliance. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, Skyline College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

I have previously sent you a copy of the External Evaluation Team Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that the College give the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to College staff and to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the Chancellor, campus leadership, and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this Commission action letter be made available to students and the public by placing a copy on the College website. *Please note that in response to public interest in disclosure, the Commission now requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no farther than one click from the institution's home page.* If you would like an electronic copy of the External Evaluation Team Report, please contact Commission staff.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness, and educational quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

¹Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission*. It contains the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. It is available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).