ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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August 13, 2015

Dr. Rajen Vurdien
President
Pasadena City College
1570 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91106

RE: 2015 Annual Report Responses
Request for Additional Information and Notice of Enhanced Monitoring--Possible Special Report

Dear President Vurdien:

Pasadena City College is asked to provide additional information to the ACCJC. The college is also being given notice of enhanced monitoring and the possibility of a needed special report. We ask that you provide this letter to others on campus as appropriate and to the governing board.

The college has been flagged for enhanced monitoring on the basis of its responses in the March 2015 Annual Report concerning student learning outcomes practice and institution-set standards/student achievement. As part of the ACCJC monitoring process and to assist the college, we recommend the college revisit the Commission's standards in these areas and evaluate and determine strategies for enhancing its practices. The college may be required to submit a special report providing additional information to the Commission following a review of the March 2016 Annual Report.

In its 2015 Annual Report responses concerning institution-set standards and student achievement, the college provided incomplete information and is being asked to submit that information at this time. This additional information should be provided in the form of a letter and can include, for requested data elements, one or more tables consistent with the format in the Annual Report. The additional information should be provided to the ACCJC by **October 15, 2015**.

INSTITUTION-SET STANDARDS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Request for Additional Information on Job Placement Rate

In its Annual Report, Pasadena City College did not provide institution-set standards related to job placement rates for any programs, or any job placement rates, instead stating "none." The college identified nine programs with at least 10 program completers in 2012-2013 on the question about examination passage rates. In addition, the college offers several dozen CTE certificate programs. Thus, it appears the response to this section was in error.

Dr. Rajen Vurdien
Pasadena City College
August 13, 2015

The college is being asked to provide certain additional information concerning job placement rates at this time. This additional information should be provided in the form of a letter and can include, for requested data elements, one or more tables consistent with the format in the Annual Report. The additional information should be provided to the ACCJC by **October 15, 2015**.

For each career-technical education program at the college which had at least 10 program completers in 2012-2013:

- State the institution-set standard for job placement rate.
- Specify the job placement rate for 2012-2013 completers in each program.
- Describe how job placement rates are being tracked.

Recommended Evaluation of Job Placement Rate

For each career-technical education program we recommend that you consider and evaluate:

- The program and provide the number of students who completed each program in 2013-2014 and 2012-2013.
- The institution-set standard for job placement rate.
- How the definition and measure of performance for each program were determined.
- The job placement rate for 2012-2013 completers in each program.
- How job placement rates confirm to expectations in higher education.

Institution-Set Standards

In January 2013, ACCJC President Barbara Beno wrote to the CEOs and ALOs of member institutions, apprising them of the requirement for institutions to establish institution-set standards (ISS) for performance related to student achievement. Member institutions were to define each standard (what was being measured) and establish the level (for that standard) of expected performance pertinent to the institutional mission. The ISS would be appropriate to higher education and would be used by institutions in evaluating student achievement results, assessing institutional achievement of mission, and identifying needed improvements, both within programs and across the institution.

In 2014, and again in 2015, member institutions were asked to provide information concerning institution-set standards in their Annual Reports. Institutions were required to report the ISS and their performance related to course completion across the institution, and to licensure examination passage rates and job placement rates in career and technical education programs, according to ACCJC-defined criteria.[1] All career-technical programs with at least 10 program completers in the designated academic year were to be included in the Annual Report. In their reports, institutions were also asked to provide both the definitions and expected performance levels of ISS they developed for the other areas of student achievement related to their institutional mission.

[1] These three areas of student achievement performance are specifically required in federal regulations to be among the institution-set standards and achievement levels monitored by the ACCJC. For these, the ACCJC established the definitions to be used by member institutions.

As you are aware, the ongoing discussions in Washington around the Higher Education Act and institutional accountability concern the setting of benchmarks by the Department of Education or by regional accreditors as to levels of student achievement which will be required in order for institutions to qualify for accredited status and federal student aid and grants. The ACCJC believes that *institution-set* standards are the appropriate means by which institutional performance as to student achievement is evaluated by accredited institutions and by peer evaluators. The active use of institution-set standards by institutions in assessing program and institution-wide performance as to student achievement is an important element of institutional practice as well as accreditation review. Institution-set standards correspond with principles of effective practice, including: applying accreditation standards to the institutional mission and goals; directing institutional energies toward enhancing student learning and increasing student achievement; promoting academic quality with recognition of student needs and societal expectations; operations which remain current with the evolving higher education expectations for institutional effectiveness; and continuous quality improvement from within the institutions and systems of higher education.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES PRACTICE

Recommended Evaluation Related to SLO Assessment

In its 2015 Annual Report, Pasadena City College reported there was no ongoing assessment in 58% of its 1,030 courses. As to the courses reported in the 2015 Annual Report without ongoing assessment, we recommend that you consider and evaluate:

- The list of the courses, sorted by discipline or program.
    - Identify whether the courses are prerequisite courses, program entry courses, end-of-program courses, and/or general education courses, as appropriate.

- A list of the programs which include the courses without ongoing assessment.
    - 2013-2014 student enrollments in each of these programs.

- Information about how ongoing assessment is included in program review, how the college evaluated the discipline's/program's participation in ongoing assessment, and what impact the level of ongoing assessment had on resource allocation.

- Any other information the institution has found pertinent concerning its own evaluation of courses given there is no ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes.

Ongoing Assessment of SLOs

In accordance with the Accreditation Standards, member institutions are expected to have ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes in all of their courses and programs. When institutions have low levels of ongoing assessment in courses and programs, including the general education program, institutional compliance with standards is called into question. If an institution's courses and programs are not being assessed on an ongoing basis, then institutions may not be able to demonstrate that, across the institution:

- Student learning results are used to determine how well the college is meeting its mission;
- Data and analysis of student learning outcomes assessment are discussed and used in evaluation, planning, and decision-making;
- Instructional programs are being improved with the use of student learning outcomes assessment results;
- Student support and library and learning support programs demonstrate support of student learning;
- Institutional resources are sufficient, are distributed, and are used to enhance student learning;
- Resource allocation decisions and planned improvements are based upon the analysis of student learning results; and
- The governance bodies, CEO, and board of trustees are focused on student learning at the institution, and are taking policy and leadership steps to improve student learning.

Low levels of participation in the ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes also raise questions whether:

- Course outlines of record are current, and whether they include student learning outcomes;
- Course syllabi contain SLOs consistent with those in the course outlines of record;
- Course sequencing and scheduling decisions are made to enhance student learning;
- College catalogs and information posted on the college website provide accurate information about programs;
- Students and prospective students have appropriate information about courses and programs of study at the college;
- Student learning assessment and improvement activities are used effectively in the evaluations of those responsible for student learning;
- Resource allocations are primarily "roll-over" activities and may not result in the reallocation of ongoing funds to improve student learning results; and
- Representations by the institution about academic quality are supported by data from every program at the college.

Since 2014, institutions have been expected to demonstrate they meet the Accreditation Standards pertaining to student learning outcomes (SLOs), in the same manner as with other areas of institutional practice.[2] Moreover, the ACCJC recently announced changes to institutional midterm reports prepared under the Accreditation Standards adopted in 2014. Midterm reports will have two areas of focus, both related to enhancement of student learning and student achievement. These include:

[2] The period for developing institutional practice across the region using sample behaviors compiled in the Rubric for Institutional Effectiveness ended with the College Status Report on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation submitted in 2012-2013.

- An update on the quality improvement projects identified by colleges in their comprehensive self evaluation Quality Focus Essays, including results from those projects; and
- A multi-year analysis of the kinds of data reported to ACCJC in the annual reports, including student learning outcomes data.

Institutional data and its analysis for use at all levels of the institution, in planning, resource allocation and quality improvement, are increasingly important aspects of demonstrating that colleges meet the standards.

Ongoing Assessment Across the Region

According to the 2015 Annual Report data, nearly 87% of the 104,990 courses offered across the region have ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes. Approximately 2/3 of member institutions report ongoing assessment in greater than 90% of classes (most are at the 100% level). Approximately 15 institutions have ongoing assessment in less than 67% of courses.

Of the 12,854 programs offered by member institutions, 91% have ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes. More than 70% of member institutions report ongoing assessment in greater than 90% of programs (with more than half of member institutions at the 100% level). Approximately 15 institutions have ongoing program assessment at a rate of 67% or below.

Please refer to the College's 2015 Annual Report for additional detail concerning the College submission. The report form instructions can be found at www.accjc.org/annualreport/index.php by clicking on *Getting Started Instructions* in the dialog box. No log-in or password is required for the instructions. We also recommend that you review the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards adopted in 2014. These can be found at: http://www.accjc.org/eligibility-requirements-standards.

If you have any questions concerning this request for additional information, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Krista R. Johns
Vice President for Policy and Research

KRJ/mg

cc: Dr. Kathleen Scott, Accreditation Liaison Officer