ACCJC REAFFIRMS ACCREDITATION OF PASADENA CITY COLLEGE

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 11-13, 2011 reviewed the Follow-Up Report submitted by the College and the report of the evaluation team which visited the College Wednesday, November 17, 2010. The Commission took action to <u>remove Warning and reaffirm accreditation</u>. The Commission notes that the College has resolved Recommendation 1, as identified in the Commission's action letter of June 30, 2010." (ACCJC Letter to Dr. Mark Rocha, January 31, 2011)

A copy of the Commission's full letter is posted on the college's accreditation website (http://www.pasadena.edu/ipro/accreditation/).

Planning Agenda Items

In addition to resolving Recommendation 1, PCC also provided evidence of the resolution of recommendations 3, 4, and 5. Our next official accreditation site visit is scheduled for 2014-2015 academic year with a midterm report due in the Fall of 2012. In the mean time the college has committed itself to fulfilling the 25 Planning Agenda items stated in the 2009 self study.

As part of the self-study process and in reviewing each of the accreditation standards, the college identified and stated 25 Planning Agenda items that were intended to foster improvement on the accreditation standards and the overall effectiveness of the institution. The good news is that two of the Planning Agenda items have already been accomplished: the administration of a revised Campus Technology survey; and the development of Codes of Ethics for Managers and Classified staff.

The remaining Planning Agenda items can be grouped into 3 main topics: Human Resources, Infrastructure, and Student Learning. The following three tables present the Planning Agenda Items by topic.

It is expected that by our next self-study we will have accomplished each item or we will provide evidence as to why the item was abandoned, revised, or is in process. As you read each one through, you will notice that changes at the College since the items were written may require us to rethink how they will be achieved.

Table 1: Human Resources

1	Incorporate the planning and program review process into new employee orientation
2	Provide professional development opportunities on innovative and effective pedagogies
3	Review and revise the colleges hiring policies and procedures
4	Review and revise the employee evaluation process
5	Conduct an organizational needs assessment
6	Update the Management handbook
7	Assess and revise diversity programs as needed
8	Review and assess staffing and skills levels
9	Create a well articulated and supported professional development plan

Table 2: Infrastructure

1	Improve indoor security and coordinate ongoing security projects with other colleges and networks
2	Develop the next facilities master plan in concert with the educational master plan
3	Use the findings of the Strata Information Group (SIG) and PlanNet Consulting studies to design an organizational structure for technology support
4	The Technology Master Plan of 2006 will be reviewed by the Campus Technology Committee and revised as necessary
5	All policies, procedures, and operating manuals in all areas of the college will be reviewed and updated as necessary

Table 3: Student Learning

1	Improve the success and retention rates of online and distance education courses
2	Expand the use of SLO assessment for institutional improvement
3	Institutionalize funding for SLO assessment and analysis
4	SLO assessment and achievement data will be incorporated into the program review process
5	SLO assessment and use of assessment results will be institutionalized
6	Award degrees and certificates based on learning outcomes
7	Develop and implement consistent and systematic evaluations of counseling and academic advising programs to improve services to students
8	Incorporate and expand assessment of learning and or process outcomes for all support programs
9	Complete the incorporation of SLOs, as appropriate, into the employee evaluation process

Recommendation #2

Each of the five recommendations presented to the college by the Accreditation Evaluation Team was created to improve the overall effectiveness of the our institution. Recommendation #2 is no different.

The team recommends that the college expand its assessment of student learning outcomes to include all programs, degrees, and certificates, and, if applicable, learning and support service areas. The team further recommends that the student learning outcomes assessment be incorporated into the program review; program planning, and resource allocation processes. (IB, IIA.2.e, and IIA.2.f, IIB, IIC)

Currently the Academic Senate in conjunction with the Curriculum and Instruction Committee (C&I), have been working to complete the SLO development phase for programs: basic skills, degrees, certificates, General Education patterns, majors, areas of emphasis and transfer disciplines. In addition to the development of SLOs, C&I has been charged with ensuring that appropriate assessment strategies have been defined for courses and programs. The commission (ACCJC) has set an October 2012 deadline for all colleges within the commission's purview to be at the "proficiency" level on the student learning outcomes rubric for institutional effectiveness. The criterion for the proficiency level is listed below.

Proficiency	• Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees. • Results of assessment are being used for improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices. • There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results. • Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning. • Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned. • Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed on a regular basis. • Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes. • Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.

This is a daunting task indeed, but surely PCC is up to the challenge. The re-envisioned program review process through TaskStream incorporates learning outcomes data , as well as achievement data, into the measures for determining the program's overall success. Notice that the recommendation also asks us to include learning outcomes data into our support service areas as well. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) will be looking for the inclusion of learning outcomes data in each program review submitted for evaluation.

The next step will be to make clear links between the review process and the planning and resource allocation processes. TaskStream is also used for our planning process and provides a specific section (Create Improvement Actions) to address the recommendations that will emerge from our internal program review process. It is an exciting time as student learning becomes the central focus of our program review, action planning, and resource allocation processes.

Curiosity, not compliance

- Nika Hogan, English Division

Why am I contributing to "Accreditation Dialogue #9"? How in the world did I get here?

I am not someone who sees myself as particularly concerned with accreditation, SLOs, accountability, and so on. I generally associate these topics with politicians and other non- educators wanting to quantify and control what is essentially mysterious about the processes of teaching and learning. Many of us faculty feel, if not out-right hostility towards "outcomes," at least an impatient sense that we simply don't have time to worry about them in the midst of our work with students, which can be consuming.

Like most faculty I know, I am passionate about helping students gain access to post-secondary education and to some kind of "American Dream," especially students who have not been nurtured by their previous educational and social experiences. As far as I'm concerned, the California community colleges are one last bright spot of hope in an increasingly stratified and cynical society. I think that EVERYONE deserves an opportunity to pursue an intellectual life, and although I know it is sappy and sentimental, I have to quote both my parents and my partner's parents who continuously intoned to us that "an education is something that nobody can ever take away from you." (Actually, my mom would qualify that by saying that there's always the possibility that a brick could fall on your head and that you would forget who you were and maybe even become a serial killer, but that's a story for some other, longer writing, like a tell-all autobiography about the lovely but crazy people who raised me.) My dad would say, from his 25 years teaching foundational skills to inmates in the Michigan state prisons, that education is the only route to changing yourself and changing your life, and it is not for the faint of heart. For me, the point of educational access is not just access to a potentially better paying job, but access to a world of ideas, to unanswerable, ineffable questions, and to the ability to courageously connect those questions to oneself and others—in other words, access to the ability to change.

So you can see who I am. I'm a humanities person, suspicious of numbers and measurements. I'm someone who likes to use phrases like "ineffable questions" and seeks to inspire others to do the same. I have a tendency to question the wisdom of authority figures and their plans, for various reasons (life experience, the lovely but crazy people who raised me, being gay, etc.) I am heartbroken by the state of public K-12 education in California and I want to do something about it. And now I find myself needing to change so that I can learn how to do something about it. I have realized that I actually need assessment, but I only came to this realization by re-thinking how assessment—what we try to measure and why—could be redefined on this campus.

*Ever since the budget crisis started to severely constrain students' ability to register for the classes they need most, I have felt an ever-increasing urgency to make sure that those students who actually DO get a seat in my English 400, 100, or 1A class are able to make use of the opportunity. Every first day of every term, I am obliged to turn away 50 students for every 25 or 30 who can actually enroll in the class, and that's only representing the physical bodies present during those crazy first days, not counting the hundreds of emails and office visits we all get from "hoping to add's." So while of course I have always cared about retention and success, always cared that my students left my course better prepared for future challenges, always hoped that my assignments are meaningful, now I am beyond caring and hoping. I am in crisis mode. Every student drop feels like I have failed not only that one student but the 50 others who hoped for a seat in the class. Adding to the sense of urgency are the multiple reports that have recently emerged, state and nation wide, showing us how few of our students really ever achieve their stated goals—not to mention PCC's own data (see Research Finding #30, Educational Achievements of the Fall 2004 Cohort: Six Years in the Making). Certainly there is room to debate aspects of these reports, but I see a clear ethical imperative to do better. **We need to change.** But how? What are the most effective pedagogical approaches? How does the college best allocate resources to help students succeed? Who is already doing what on campus that I could learn from or get involved in? What kind of tutoring, what kind of technology do we need? How do we know?*

What I am talking about here is ongoing, meaningful assessment driven by intellectual curiosity and social purpose. I know that I'm a "good teacher," but I think it's morally reprehensible, in this high stakes climate, to rest on that identity. I should be curious about how to best reach my students, how to maximize my potentiality and theirs.

Also, I often don't know what programs and practices to fight for in an increasingly impacted budget environment—I need more information about what works and how. I know that there are no absolute answers to my "ineffable questions"; as Lee Schulman has argued, all assessment is essentially about narrative. Whatever gets "measured" or observed is interpreted in order to tell a story, and these stories are often extremely persuasive. I take the unreliability of our interpretations as a given, but at this point, I'm no longer willing to leave it up to some other group of people to define the questions, measure the answers, and narrate the interpretations that define who our students are and what our work can be.

I volunteered to contribute to this Accreditation Dialogue because I want to invite other faculty who would define themselves as intellectually engaged, social justice oriented, interested in pedagogical innovations, and seriously concerned about our students to join me in redefining what assessment looks like on this campus. How do we know that what we are doing is working? How can we utilize our resources to plan classroom research pilots, and how can we effectively share our results with one another? How can we use assessment and program evaluation as a way to communicate, stretch, learn, and get better? Undertaking action research as I'm describing here is going to be more work than assessing one outcome per class, or whatever the minimum engagement we're being asked to do right now is, but we might actually find time to do it because we will learn something about what we really care about: teaching, learning, and student success.

On the first day of classes this semester, I was visited by a former student who I recognized, but couldn't remember much about. I didn't remember his name, I didn't remember what class he had been in or what semester, and I don't even remember if he passed the class! I did remember his face. I invited him in to my office and took a shot in the dark: "So, have you transferred?" No, he hadn't. He had left PCC (after failing my class? I don't remember!) and he had experienced some health problems. His mom had, too. They were both out of work. They were staying in a hotel, and he had walked over to campus from the hotel and found my office. No, he doesn't want to come back to school.

Ineffable, unanswerable questions: Why did he come to see me? What can I tell him? What will become of him? Where should he go for help, support, guidance? What did he learn in my class? What good is it doing him? How can I help this person?

I told him that I thought he should come back to school, knowing as I said so that he would probably find it impossible to either register for a class or pay for one.

I know that it is important for our accreditation to show that we are working on assessment as a campus community, but I have never felt particularly engaged with that process. I am not somebody who is ever going to be moved to action by a goal or deadline defined and imposed by outside agencies—I don't mean that to be dismissive or disrespectful; it is simply true. My motivation, my sense of urgency, the mission that drives me to spend far more time on this campus working than playing with my exceptionally cute 3-year old son is that I want to be able to tell that student, as I have always been told, always believed, and as has proven true for me, that education can give him hope.

But how do I know?