

Progress Report

GROSSMONT COLLEGE

8800 Grossmont College Drive
El Cajon, California 92020

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

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Grossmont College
on
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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Grossmont College is a comprehensive California Community College. It is one of two such colleges in the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District. The second campus, Cuyamaca College which is located approximately ten miles from Grossmont College, was founded in 1978. The District serves the residents of eastern San Diego County including the Cities of El Cajon and La Mesa as well as other cities and communities.

Since the Comprehensive Visit in October of 2007, the District Chancellor has announced his retirement effective February 2009. One member of the five-member board of trustees was defeated for re-election on November 4, 2008. In addition, most of the administrative positions at Grossmont College, which were filled by “interim” appointments, have been filled permanently over the past twelve months. Beginning in March of 2008 and extending well into August of this year, there was a significant collective bargaining disagreement between the District and the faculty union. As a result, there was a “work to contract” action by the Grossmont College faculty. This followed a similar “work to contract” action in the period prior to the preparation of the self-study for the comprehensive visit.

FOCUS OF THE VISIT

The Team was charged with following up on four of the recommendations from the 2007 comprehensive visit:

Recommendation 1: In order to satisfy the standards on diversity the College must establish policies and practices with the District to ensure equity and diversity are essential components of its human resource planning. The District must regularly assess its record in employment equity and diversity and communicate that record to the college community. (Standards: I.A.1; III.A.4.a; III.A.4.b)

Recommendation 2: The College establishes a specific timeline for producing student learning outcomes at the course level and the program level; incorporate student learning outcomes into the curriculum and program review processes; identify systematic measurable assessments; and use the results for the improvement of student learning and institutional effectiveness. (Standards: I.B.a; II.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.B; II.B.3.f; II.C.1.a; II.C.1.b; III.A.1; III.D.1.a; IV.A.1; IV.B.1.b)

Recommendation 3: In order to satisfy the standards on planning, the College must review and revise as necessary its institutional planning processes and make the timing, processes, and expectations of all staff in the institutional planning process more widely known and understood. (Standards I.B, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, IV.A.2, IV.A.3.

Recommendation 7: The College, the Chancellor, and the District must improve relations among their various constituency groups in order to assure effective discussion, planning and implementation. The entire College community must work together for the good of the institution. (IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.3, IV.B.2).

GENERAL OBSERVERSATIONS

The Team was impressed by what has been accomplished by Grossmont College since the comprehensive visit in October of 2007 despite the “work to contract” action which was described above. We believe those accomplishments were the result of a spirit of professionalism and of collegiality between the different constituent groups which make up Grossmont College. We were especially impressed that Grossmont College has become an institution focused on the future rather than on reliving the past. We observed that the College had moved quickly yet carefully to respond to three of the four recommendations being dealt with here.

Since the comprehensive visit, Grossmont College has committed significant resources to address the recommendations that resulted from that visit. We specifically commend the College for:

1. Establishing the equivalent of Student Learning Outcomes for Student Services (referred to SSOs) and Administrative Services (referred to ASOs) and for establishing Student Learning Outcomes at the program level.
2. Committing significant resources to move forward the process of developing and implementing Student Learning Outcomes at the course, program and institutional level. The result has been significant progress in developing SLOs at the course and program levels.
3. Developing a planning process which self-consciously brings together the formerly disconnected elements of planning and which includes both annual and five-year goals.
4. Becoming an institution focused on the future.

Having said that, the team believes that there is still work to be done in each of the areas we reviewed. As will be noted in the analysis below, the Team found that some areas are well along in their development. One area in particular appears to be closer to the beginning stage of its development.

DISCUSSION OF GROSSMONT COLLEGE'S RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: In order to satisfy the standards on diversity the College must establish policies and practices with the District to ensure equity and diversity are essential components of its human resource planning. The District must regularly assess its record in employment equity and diversity and communicate that record to the college community. (Standards: I.A.1; III.A.4.a; III.A.4.b)

Observations and Analysis of the evidence:

Leadership in Human Resources is managed at the district level by the Vice-Chancellor for Human Resources (VC-HR). Until 2004, the 1994 Staff Diversity Plan was the only policy that addressed EEO and diversity issues. There was no staff diversity plan in place. With the arrival of a new VC-HR, it was decided to review the 1994 Staff Diversity Plan document before moving forward. Unfortunately, that document is cumbersome and has served primarily as a shelf document for many years. At the time of the team visit in 2007 there still was no staff diversity plan in place, and the Staff Diversity Committee (SDC) was just being formed.

The SDC met three times in Fall of 2007 and has produced a Vision Statement and a Mission Statement. In the final meeting, a number of ideas were discussed to increase diversity awareness on campus but seemed to have little to do with HR's diversity in hiring. Four more meetings took place during the next 9 months that resulted in further discussions and reporting out of the accreditation findings. At the time of our visit in November of 2008, the committee had not made significant progress generating new policies on equity and diversity in hiring. At the time of our visit, the College seemed unsure about what direction to take. Should it continue to revise the 1994 Staff Diversity Plan, or should it start with a different model possibly based on plans from one or more neighboring districts. It appears that the College is still in the early discussion stage of either revising the existing plan or developing a new plan. Timelines have not been set to meet the goal of collecting and using diversity data in the hiring process for the Fall Semester of 2010. (Standards III.A.1.a., III.A.3.a)

At the recommendation of the VC-HR, a separate Equal Employment Opportunity Committee (EEOC) was created in April of 2008. It was decided to keep the EEOC function separate from the staff diversity issue but keep EEOC under the Staff Diversity Umbrella. The EEOC subsequently created three sub-committees, A, B, and C. All committees have met once and appear to be at the planning stage. An HRD quarterly newsletter has been established to report on hiring practices as well as staff diversity. The team found that there had been meetings in response to the recommendation; however, we did not find a timeline for implementation. (Standards III.A.2., III.A.4.b.)

Conclusion:

The district is beginning to enter into a fairly complex planning process to address the equity and diversity hiring issue. Work on this recommendation appears to be in the committee planning stage. Currently, there are no timelines listed, and, with the exception of the HRD newsletter, short-term measures that would address some of the key problems have not been implemented. This recommendation has not been adequately addressed.

Recommendation 2: The College establishes a specific timeline for producing student learning outcomes at the course level and the program level; incorporate student learning outcomes into the curriculum and program review processes; identify systematic measurable assessments; and use the results for the improvement of student learning and institutional effectiveness. (Standards: I.B.a; II.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.B; II.B.3.f; II.C.1.a; II.C.1.b; III.A.1; III.D.1.a; IV.A.1; IV.B.1.b)

Observations and Analysis of the evidence:

At the time of the Comprehensive visit, Grossmont College was still establishing a framework and referencing the few completed SLOs that existed. The college has made remarkable progress on SLOs since the 2007 visit. At the time of the Comprehensive visit, less than ten per cent of the College's courses had identified SLOs. That improved to nearly 40% at the time the Follow-Up Report was prepared. Since then, the work has continued and presently over 80% of Grossmont College's courses have identified SLOs.

At the time of the Follow-Up visit, approximately 80% of Grossmont College's educational programs had SLOs in place (II.A.1.c., II.A.2.d., II.A.2.g.). This represents excellent progress since the Comprehensive Visit.

One of the problems identified during the Comprehensive Visit was a lack of commitment of resources to achieve SLO implementation. That problem has been solved. The new SLO coordinator has energized the faculty into moving forward with good progress. Workshops on SLO development dominated much of the August 2008 Professional Development Week activities (I.B.1.). Currently the work on SLO writing is continuing, and faculty who get stalled can call on one of the five members of the SLO Rapid Response Team for immediate assistance. Management has been able to provide stipends to adjunct faculty for writing SLOs in departments where there is no full-time faculty member to do so (II.A.2.a., II.A.2.b.). Recalcitrant SLO writers get a visit from the V.P. for Academic Affairs. Much is in place to ensure success in conversion to SLO based assessment.

The College has established a specific and realistic timeline to complete course SLOs by the end of the Spring, 2009 semester. To meet that self-imposed deadline, the College will need to overcome several potential pitfalls. For example, the written SLOs we saw were at various stages of completion and quality. Often the SLOs had been written, but the assessment methods had not been fully developed. In other cases the SLOs were not complete. A system of quality control needs to be implemented to ensure that acceptance as complete means completed. The SLO coordinator indicated that they would complete the assessment portions for some courses as they saw how others in the same discipline worked. Grossmont College cannot afford the luxury of extending development for any reason and should complete each SLO and move on. All SLOs should be in each course syllabus and course outlines should be in complete form by Spring of 2009. We observed that in the past, other things were allowed to impede SLO development. Firm interim deadlines need to be set and achieved to complete the task by Spring 2009. Finally, even though some SLOs have not been written, it is time to begin doing assessment and using assessment data on some of the more evolved SLOs (e.g. English). The follow-up report cited the same SLOs (Child Development, ESL, et. al.) as it did in the initial report when describing those that were completed. It is time to push more into the assessment phase and begin to incorporate data from some of the newer SLOs into planning and curriculum improvement in order to achieve the Development level on the Commission's Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness.

Given where Grossmont College is in its time-line for developing SLOs, the College has not yet been able to weave SLOs into the evaluation process for faculty and other staff. (II.A.1.c).

Conclusion:

The response by Grossmont College to Recommendation 2 has been positive. Needed resources have been provided for an SLO coordinator and stipends to help adjuncts write SLOs. A five-person SLO Rapid Response Team headed by the Vice President has been established and has been an effective support for the SLO coordinator. The creation of SLOs during the last year has been impressive, as the college has moved from less than 1% completion to over 80% completion. The college should continue to move forward rapidly on SLO implementation with a focus on the spring 2009 goal. To that end, short-term deadlines (to compliment the major deadlines already in place) need to be set and enforced. Where possible, SLOs should be taken to the assessment stage. All SLOs need to be reviewed carefully to ensure quality control and completion. The team concluded that Grossmont College has satisfactorily addressed Recommendation 2

Recommendation 3: In order to satisfy the standards on planning, the College must review and revise as necessary its institutional planning processes and make the timing, processes,

and expectations of all staff in the institutional planning process more widely known and understood. (Standards I.B, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, IV.A.2, IV.A.3.

Observations and Analysis of the evidence:

In January of 2008 the College established an Integrated Planning Task Force. That task force met regularly through the spring and summer of 2008. In the process, the task force sought input from a variety of sources including visits to other colleges to explore their planning models and committee structures. The outcome is a clearly-defined new planning process described as the “Grossmont College Annual Institutional Planning Review and Implementation Cycle.” With that, Grossmont College has developed processes for developing goals and objectives collaboratively (I.B.4) and has developed a systematic planning process to continually review progress toward achieving those goals and objectives and for reviewing the planning process itself. (I.B.2, I.B.6) This is organized into a well-articulated and integrated cycle for planning, evaluation, resource allocation, and implementation. (I.B.3) The cycle includes both short-term (annual) and long-term goals and objectives. It is linked to the budget allocation process and to the six-year accreditation self-study cycle.

The team found evidence that the new planning process has been widely discussed on the campus. In addition, there have been several self-conscious efforts to make the process widely known and understood among the various groups at Grossmont College.

At present, the college is developing the culture of evidence-based decision-making contemplated by the standards (I.B.5). Now that the planning process has been developed and adopted, Grossmont College is moving to this next stage of evidence-based decision making. Given where the college is in assessments, especially assessment of student learning outcomes, it is not at presently able to use assessment data to improve instructional programs or support services excepted in a few of its programs. (I.B.7) Based on our review, the team believes that Grossmont College has progressed beyond the Development Level within the Commission’s Rubric for evaluating the planning part of Institutional Effectiveness.

Conclusion:

Since the 2007 Comprehensive Visit the College has made important strides in systematizing procedures for individuals to bring forward ideas from their constituencies into the planning process. This is most clearly spelled out in the “Annual Institutional Planning Review and Implementation Cycle” which was adopted in the summer of 2008 after a nearly year-long and thoughtful process for review and development. (IV.A.2). The process describes the roles of administrators, organizational units such as departments and shared governance structures in an annual review and goal setting. The new process was adopted by the College using the shared governance process and has been broadly disseminated to the college’s constituent groups. The Team believes that Grossmont College has satisfactorily addressed this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: The College, the Chancellor, and the District must improve relations among their various constituency groups in order to assure effective discussion, planning and implementation. The entire College community must work together for the good of the institution. (IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.3, IV.B.2).

Observations and Analysis of the evidence:

Grossmont College has a long history of shared governance. At the time of the October of 2007 Comprehensive Visit, the team was impressed by dialogue within the institution. But, it was concerned that the dialogue often did not result in decisions. In addition, the team found the collegiality which existed within the institution did not always extend to relations between the college and the district.

In response to the Commission's recommendation, the College established a Taskforce on Excellent Working Relationships which included high-level representation from faculty, staff, and administration representing both the college and the district. The taskforce met six times from early May to mid-July. It discussed some of the issues that had clearly divided the colleges and the district including the Allocation Formula and the distribution of Proposition R funds. Despite what appear to be excellent discussions with many good ideas, it is not clear from the evidence we reviewed that any concrete actions came from the discussion beyond a common agreement that better two-way communications were needed.

The present team observed significant efforts by all constituent groups to work together for the good of the College and its students. As noted below, the Board of Trustees (which were represented on the Taskforce on Excellent Working Relationships) are working on policies which tangentially affect this recommendation. Paradoxically, there was a "work to contract condition" at the college from March 2008 until nearly the end of August 2008 which hampered faculty participation in the preparation of the Follow Up Report.

Since the Comprehensive Visit, the Board of Trustees has revised its policies on faculty (BP 2435) and staff (BP2515) participation in governance, and the District has adopted Administrative Procedures (AP2435 and AP2515 respectively) on the same topics. The District minimally meets Standard IV.A.2. The District has also begun the process of developing Board Policies and Administrative Procedures defining the roles of its college presidents. While this team was not asked to comment on those efforts, we believe development of those policies will help to improve the climate of misunderstanding which the 2007 team observed.

At the time of the team's visit for this report, the District was in the midst of a change in leadership. The Chancellor is retiring on the first of February, and the interviews for a new Chancellor were about to take place. We noted that the Chancellor selection process was inclusive and supported by all the constituent groups at Grossmont College. With the passing of the leadership baton at the District, it will be important to maintain the efforts to improve working relationships.

Conclusion

The College and the District took concrete steps to deal with this recommendation and with other, related recommendations. The team observed a significant improvement in the relationships between the various constituent groups at Grossmont College and between the College and the District. The Team concludes that Grossmont College has satisfactorily addressed this recommendation.,

SUMMARY

Grossmont College took the Team's recommendations and the Commission letter seriously. It has acted on each of the four recommendations which are the focus of this report.

Recommendation 1. Grossmont College and the District appear to be in the committee planning stage of a complex planning process to address the equity and diversity concerns raised in Recommendation 1. The team could not find clear objectives or timelines for this work and concluded that the work has not progressed significantly beyond "the committee planning" stage.

Recommendation 2. Grossmont College has made significant strides in response to this Recommendation. In particular, the College has an enthusiastic and professional SLO coordinator and supporting resources in place to accomplish the all parts of this recommendation. Grossmont College has establishes a specific timeline for producing student learning outcomes at the course level and the program level and student learning outcomes have been incorporated into the curriculum and program review processes. The College is developing systematic measurable assessments; and is beginning to use the results for the improvement of student learning and institutional effectiveness.

Recommendation 3. Grossmont College has responded to Recommendation 3 by completely revamping and coordinating its various planning activities into a single, coherent model. The model was developed and adopted collaboratively and has been appropriately disseminated to the college's constituent groups. The process now needs a year or more experience in order to be able to evaluate its effectiveness. The Team concludes that Grossmont College has satisfied the standards on planning by reviewing and revising its institutional planning processes. In addition, Grossmont College has made the timing, processes, and expectations of all staff in the institutional planning process widely known and understood.

Recommendation 7. Grossmont College and the District have been pro-active in their response to Recommendation 7. All groups came together in the Taskforce on Excellent Working Relationships which was established to seek solutions to the problems identified in this recommendation. Policy and non-policy solutions have been identified. The team observed a significant improvement in relations between the various constituent groups. Based on the College's Report, review of documentary evidence and the observations of the team during our visit, we conclude that Grossmont College has met this recommendation. We found a community that was working together for the good of the institution and its students.