EVALUATION REPORT

College of the Desert
Palm Desert, California

A confidential report prepared for
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

The report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
College of the Desert from March 14-17, 2011

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Chair

College of the Desert
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March 2011

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

Institution: College of the Desert

Dates of Visit: March 14-17, 2011

Team Chair: Dr. Henry D. Shannon, Superintendent/President

                      Chaffey College

A 13-member team visited College of the Desert from March 14-17, 2011 for the purpose of evaluating how well the institution is achieving its stated purposes, analyzing how well the college is meeting the Commission standards, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the status of the college.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all-day training session on February 3, 2011, conducted by the ACCJC and studied Commission materials prepared for visiting team members. The team was divided into four committees, one for each standard. Team members read the college's self-study report, including recommendations from the 2004 visiting team, and assessed the printed and the online evidence provided by the college.

A pre-visit was conducted by team chair and team assistant on February 18, 2011. Prior to the visit, team members completed written evaluation of the self-study and began identifying areas for further investigation. On the day before the formal beginning of the visit, the team members spent a day discussing their views of the written materials provided by the college and reviewed the Institutional Self Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation completed in December, 2010, and other materials submitted to the commission since its last comprehensive visit.

During the visit, the team met with over 150 faculty, staff, administrators, all members of the Board of Trustees, and students. The team chair met with members of the Board of Trustees, the president of the college, and various administrators. In addition, team members visited the satellite or off-campus sites in Indio and Mecca/Thermal.

The team also attended two open meetings to allow for comments from any members of the college or local community, and a third open meeting was held for students.

The team believed the self-study was organized and well presented. The college was very prudent in its use of the internet for resource documents.

Major Findings and Recommendations of 2011 Visiting Team

Commendations

The members of the accreditation visiting team commend the College of the Desert for its sincere engagement in the accreditation process and its cooperation with visiting team members. The team identified several noteworthy accomplishments and makes the following commendations:

1. The college is to be commended for the dedication and commitment to excellence of the faculty and staff in ensuring high quality curriculum, instructional programs, and providing support and assistance for student learning. The dedication and enthusiasm of many who serve on various committees and provide learning support services is remarkable, and their efforts to ensure this quality for student learning are commendable.

2. Despite minimal staff support, the office of Information Technology and Institutional Research provides college-wide access to comprehensive data that informs all departments at all levels. Research tools and training that the office provides enables a multitude of staff to be self-directed in their research and to pose and answer questions unique to their area's information needs. The research office is diligent and responsive in its support role and an integral part of the college's planning process.

3. The college is to be commended for the systematic review of programs and updating of the same along with the integration of the results of SLO assessments in those reports, all of which are essential components of a sound program planning and improvement process that help ensure the effectiveness of the institution.

4. The college successfully passed a $346.5 million bond in 2004, which provided resources for the college to construct new buildings as well as renovate older facilities. This funding has allowed the college to expand its services to students and continue to meet their needs. The college has delivered each project on time, within budget and with integrated sustainable features included in each.

5. The college is to be commended for developing a substantially endowed foundation in the amount of $22 million which is able to provide significant financial support to student programs and college operations. Additionally, an endowment from the college foundation will, in keeping with the Facilities Master Plan, provide funds to cover facilities maintenance expenses.

6. The college should be commended for its commitment in supporting the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) program related to diversity and cultural awareness and making this staff development opportunity available to its staff.

7. The student organizations and their elected leadership are to be commended for their professionalism and dedication to the College of the Desert. Collectively, they are an

active and important participant in numerous campus committees and activities as well as the shared governance process.

Recommendations

As a result of the March 2011 visit, the team made eight recommendations.

Recommendation 1: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college complete the implementation of the comprehensive planning process by responding to the analysis of assessment results to ensure improvement in student learning. Such a process integrates the various college plans; is informed by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis; systematically assesses outcomes within both instruction and non-instructional services; and provides for an ongoing and systematic cycle of goal setting, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation (I.B.1; I.B.2; I.B.6; I.B.7).

Recommendation 2: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college establish clear written policies and procedures on program elimination or significant changes to program requirements to enable enrolled students to make appropriate arrangements to complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption (II.A.6.b).

Recommendation 3: In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that the college investigate and create a plan to increase student services and library, and learning support services for students in distance education and at off-site locations to ensure that they receive the same level and quality of services as students attending the main Palm Desert campus. The college must ensure equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable student, library, and learning support services regardless of location or means of delivery. This is especially important with regard to library services, including print resources, research assistance, and instruction (II.B.3; II.B.3.a; II.C.1; II.C.1.c; III.C.1).

Recommendation 4: In order to meet Standards, the college should improve the timely and effective completion of faculty and staff evaluations (III.A.1.b).

Recommendation 5: In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that the district develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures that incorporate effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes into the evaluation process of faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving student learning outcomes (III.A.1.c).

Recommendation 6: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college continue to increase the diversity of its faculty, staff and administrators to reflect the diversity of the student body (III.4.2.b).

Recommendation 7: In order to improve communications, the team recommends that the district institute an educational program for all campus constituent groups that seeks to better inform stakeholders on the decision-making processes that are currently in place (IV.A.2).

Recommendation 8: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the board regularly evaluate its policies and practices and revises them as necessary (IV.B.1.e; II.A.6.c).

INTRODUCTION

The College of the Desert is located in Palm Desert, California at the eastern end of Riverside County. The voters approved the formation of their local two-year college in 1958. The district is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees and a non-voting student member selected by the Associated Students of College of the Desert. The Trustees are elected at large but represent the trustee area in which they reside.

The College of the Desert is the geographic center of Coachella Valley and is 110 miles from Los Angeles and San Diego, and 100 miles north of the Mexican border; the college district covers 4,120 miles. The district encompasses three K-12 school districts and portions of Riverside and Imperial counties. There is no other college within a 50-mile radius of the College of the Desert; therefore, the district plays an essential (decisive) role in meeting the educational needs of the area.

The Coachella Valley communities include: Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, and Rancho Mirage. The Coachella Valley has grown dramatically in the last two decades. The current population of over 417,610 represents an increase from 230,865 in 1990. Since 2005, the Coachella Valley has increased by 73,550 people. According to the California Department of Finance and the Southern California Association of Governments, between 2000 and 2009, for every household that moved out of the Coachella Valley, three moved in from outlying counties. The main campus is located in the City of Palm Desert with additional campuses located in the East Valley (Indio and Mecca/Thermal) and the West Valley (currently in Palm Springs High School).

The economy in California and the Coachella Valley, specifically, has negatively impacted the unemployment rate in both; with unemployment reaching a high of 25% in the eastern Coachella Valley, more residents are coming back to school seeking to upgrade current job skills or train in new areas of potential employment. The headcount for the fall 2009 semester was 12,213, of which 10,348 were students enrolled in credit courses; this was an increase over fall 2008 of 5.4% credit students. It should be noted, the California Community College system experienced a workload reduction of 3.2% in the 2009-2010 school year.

The student demographics represent the surrounding communities. Hispanic students are the majority in the student body with 6,790 (55.6%) students in the fall 2009 semester. For the same term, the second largest ethnic group is White students with 3,505 (28.7%). African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans represent 3%, 3%, and 1% of the credit student population respectively.

The College of the Desert's mission statement defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population and its commitment to achieving student learning. The College of the Desert's mission statement is as follows: "College of the Desert provides excellent educational programs and services that contribute to the success of our students and the vitality of the communities we serve."

The fall data shows that 51% of students express the intention to obtain an associate degree or transfer and obtain a bachelor's degree; more than 20% of the students cite a vocational goal or finding/improving career as the reason for coming to the College of the Desert.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2005 VISITING TEAM

The accreditation evaluation team confirmed that the College of the Desert appropriately addressed the recommendations made in 2004 through 2009. The 2005 visit concluded with eight recommendations based on four standards to assess institutional quality and effectiveness. Accreditation was affirmed for six years, and the college was required to complete a Focused Midterm Report (with visit) in April 2008, and a Follow-up Report in March, 2009 that was accepted by the Commission in June, 2009.

Team Recommendation 1
The college is urged to continue diligently with the efforts already underway through the program review process and to assure that all programs and organizational units develop, assess, analyze, and use student learning outcomes (SLOs) information for program improvement. The college must especially place some urgency on the need to develop a process for student services (I.B; I.B.1; I.B.2; I.B.7; II.A.1.a,c; II.A.2.e,f,h,i; II.A.6; II.B.1; II.B.3; II.B.3.c; II.B.4; II.C.2; II.A.1.c; IV.A.5; IV.B.1.g; IV.B.2.b).

Response
This recommendation has been met. College of the Desert's response to Recommendation 1 indicates that an established, ongoing, and systematic program review process for instructional, student support and administrative areas is in place on a 5-year cycle with yearly updates (PRU). The college provides evidence that it conducts annual and comprehensive program review for instructional, student service, and administrative programs. Documentation shows these processes are well-established, ongoing, systematic, and are integrated into budget and planning processes. The college has identified Student Learning Outcomes at all levels. Courses are mapped to program and institutional outcomes, and assessment, analysis, improvement occur on a three-semester cycle. CurricUNET was initiated in 2009 to assist faculty and staff with the management and assessment of student learning, assessment, and curriculum. The Outcomes Assessment Committee, supported by 80% release time for the coordinator, was created to coordinate all efforts to develop and document all the assessment of SLOs, including student affairs and non-instructional units. At the time of the Self Study, the college reported that 100% of courses have SLOs in place and that the focus was on completing the assessment cycle for all courses and on using the assessment results for planning and resource allocation decisions. In 2009-10, six programs presented comprehensive reviews which included assessment and improvements generated by the SLO process. The college is well underway with course-level assessment, is coordinating program-level assessment, and will be beginning college wide assessment of institutional outcomes.

Team Recommendation 2
To achieve an appropriate balance of courses in the curriculum and a "Class Schedule" that meets student needs, the college must assure that the general education philosophy and the

criteria, standards, and process for identifying requirements for general education courses are established and approved through the college's shared governance bodies and the Board of Trustees in a timely fashion (II.A.1.a; II.A,3,a,b,c).

Response
This recommendation has been met. During the 2007-2008, the General Education subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee evaluated the general education SLOs that were previously created by an ad hoc group called the General Education Think Tank. After exhaustive revision, the General Education subcommittee created an updated set of general education learning outcomes following Title V guidelines and University (CSU and UC) transfer requirements. The General Education Subcommittee implemented a process to assure a balanced curriculum appropriate to general education philosophy and a "Class Schedule" that meets student needs. The subcommittee created a general education worksheet which ties the process to general education SLOs following regulation guidelines and university transfer requirements. In 2009, the general education philosophy was revised to include general education program outcomes. The College of the Desert Catalog publishes institutional and general education student learning outcomes but not specific program outcomes. Evidence is not readily available that these program and institutional outcomes are published on the website. College of the Desert has been using this general education process for two-and-one-half years as of this spring semester.

Team Recommendation 3
The team recommends that College of the Desert evaluate staffing patterns to ensure sufficient staffing in all areas to support the college mission (I.B; I.B.7; IIA.1; IIA.2; IIB.1; II.B.3a,c; II.B.4; III.A.2; II.A.6).

Response
This recommendation has been met. In conjunction with the systematic integration of its planning and assessment efforts, the college has been working to identify the staffing needs to ensure support in all areas of the institution. The primary tool is the annual prioritization process which was based on the annual college-wide goals. The prioritization process has been deemed effective since it has been used through five cycles. The annual prioritization process begins with each area of the college conducting a self-assessment and including objectives for improvement in its annual program reviews. Prioritization takes place based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Classified and Administrative positions are also identified in the priority list. Using this process the college has recruited 17 faculty, five of whom have added to the total number of faculty. Because the prioritization process distributes positions, the college was able to increase the number of counselors by four. At the time of the last visit, several counselors had retired or resigned – including the transfer and articulation counselor. Staffing has increased in several areas of the college, including additional personnel to the area of student services.

Team Recommendation 4
The college must, with urgency, review the counseling and advising functions to ensure effective academic advising, general counseling services, and articulation activities (I.B; II.A6.a,b,c; II.B.1; II.B.3; II.B.3.a,c).

Response
This recommendation has been met. In 2008, an Advising Task Force was created which consisted of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Student Support Services, and the President of the Academic Senate. The task force developed an advising handbook which was approved through the Academic Senate. The handbook, placed on the College Portal, distinguishes the roles between counselors and faculty advisors. The College has a full-time counselor to address articulation needs. This individual is a permanent member of the Curriculum Committee and the General Education Subcommittee to ensure articulation continuity to the institution, students, and colleagues. The Articulation Officer maintains currency by attending California and Regional Intersegmental Articulation Council conferences. Articulation agreements are reviewed yearly, and new articulation is proposed when new courses/programs are developed that are appropriate for articulation. The college also identified the need to articulate with high schools, so collaboration with the local unified school districts began in order to better align curriculum as well as developing new career pathways. This new Education Consortium included representatives of the local unified school districts.

Team Recommendation 5
The college needs to use its Facility Master Plan and bond-related construction program definition to engage in a specific planning endeavor to identify service-level requirements and to plan strategically for the human resource and financial resource needs that new facilities will require (I.B.4; II.A.1; II.A.2; III.A.2; III.B.2.a).

Response
The recommendation has been met. In place are staffing and financial support plans for the Mecca/Thermal campus. A recently completed Educational Master Plan includes program recommendations for this campus after additional changes to further buildings are taken into account. Detailed in the report are plans to cover the costs of staffing and maintenance, including reaching the enrollment level specified under AB361 that will mean the district will receive an additional $1M annually for the Mecca/Thermal "center." Endowments cover the maintenance costs for the new Nursing building and the new Public Safety building. Careful analysis/planning are characteristic of the college's response to this recommendation.

Team Recommendation 6
College of the Desert must explore new efforts and initiatives to identify and address the barriers that limit the diversity of their faculty and to ensure that faculty reflect the rich diversity of their student body (I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.A.2.d; II.A.3.c; II.B.3.d; III.A.4.b).

Response
The recommendation has been met. The college embarked on multiple efforts to increase the diversity of the faculty. The college revised its recruiting and hiring procedures and has worked diligently in several areas. It has revised the training of the screening committees, broadened advertising practices of positions, and used software tracking to monitor the various stages of the hiring process. The institution has also strengthened the role of the Diversity Council. For example, currently, the college has 12 Hispanic faculty as compared to 6 in 2005. There has been a net gain of 2 African American faculty members in that same time period. Additionally,

Administrative Procedure 7100 requires that the college follow State Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. Furthermore, the increase in the number of female faculty has been noticeable.

Team Recommendation 7
It is recommended that the college increase the involvement of students in the shared governance process (I.B.4; II.B.3.b; III.B.1.b; III.C.1.a; IV.A.2).

Response
This recommendation has been met. This was accomplished by reviewing and developing a more responsive constitution "to increase student leadership participation in college consultation." The president of the Associated Students of College of the Desert (ASCOD) and the student trustee attend all the ASCOD meetings and hold office hours to listen for student concerns and relay the information to the board. The student trustee was given an advisory vote on the board in 2007, and the college planning council includes two students as members. The process to select student representatives to college committees was also streamlined. This has allowed more participation of students on several committees such as the bookstore committee, the presidential search committee, and the student services center building committee. A student climate survey was conducted in the spring of 2008 to assist the institution in the identification of student concerns, institutional strengths, and institutional challenges. Data from the spring 2008 Student Climate survey informs the Director of Student Life's agenda.

Team Recommendation 8
That the Board of Trustees develop a written policy describing its self-evaluation process that is published in the policy manual (IV.B.1.g).

Response
The recommendation has been met. The board approved a self-assessment tool derived from the "Board Self-Evaluation Item Banks from the Association of Community Colleges in the January 2008 board meeting. Results of the assessment were reviewed by the board at the February 2008 meeting. The Board adopted Board Policy 2745, "Board Self Evaluation" in October 2007. Board Procedure 2745 spells out how the policy is implemented. The board has followed through by approving a self-assessment tool and reviewed the results of the self-assessment at its February 2008 meeting.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. **Authority**
   The evaluation team verified that the College of the Desert is a two-year institution of higher education in the California Community College System and is authorized to provide educational programs by the California Education Code. The college has a Board of Trustees and it is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

2. **Mission**
   The team confirmed that the College of the Desert has a comprehensive mission which defines it educational purpose, its intended student population, and its commitment to student learning. The college's most recently revised mission statement was approved by the governing board in December 2009. The mission statement is published in the college catalog and other appropriate publications as well as the college website. The mission statement is consistent with the California Community College System mission.

3. **Governing Board**
   The team verified that the College of the Desert has a five-member board of trustees who are elected at large but representing the trustee area in which they reside. An additional board member is the non-voting student representative elected by the student body. The board holds monthly meetings and serves as an independent policy making body. No member of the board has employment, family, or a personal financial interest in the college.

4. **Chief Executive Officer**
   The Board of Trustees appoints the president as the full-time chief executive officer and delegates the authority to administer board policies and supervise the general operations of the college. The board also appoints the president as secretary to the board.

5. **Administrative Capacity**
   The team confirmed the College of the Desert has sufficient faculty, staff, and administrative staff with academic preparation and experience to support the college's mission and purpose. The college regularly evaluates the sufficiency of its staff through its annual planning process.

6. **Operational Status**
   The team found College of the Desert to be fully operational with students actively pursuing its degree and certificate programs.

7. **Degrees**
   The College of the Desert offers 56 associate degree programs and has 51 certificate degree programs in recognized fields of study. Degree opportunities and transfer courses are listed in the catalog. Fall 2009 data shows that 51% of the College of the Desert students expressed interest in obtaining an associate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate degree. More than 20% of the students cite a vocational program goal and/or obtaining a bachelor's degree.

8. **Educational Programs**
   The team confirmed the College of the Desert offers a range of degree and certificate programs, and these programs are consistent with the college's mission, vision and values. The college's educational programs are of sufficient content and length and maintain appropriate levels of quality and rigor. Programs are developed with information from external scans and recommendation from discipline experts, input from industry advisory committees, and input from transfer institutions.

9. **Academic Credit**
   Academic credit for coursework is awarded in accordance with Title 5 of the California Education Code.

10. **Student Learning and Achievement**
    College of the Desert's catalog lists the requirements for every degree and certificate offered by the college. The listing includes prerequisites, course numbers, names, and units, as well as descriptive program information. Student Learning Outcomes are identified for all courses and programs of study. All courses are assessed on a three-semester cycle. This process is ongoing, cyclical, and maintained by the Outcomes and Assessment Committee of the Academic Senate. Institutional Outcomes have been created to cover all programs and services at the college. All courses align with program and institutional outcomes as they enter into the assessment cycle.

11. **General Education**
    The team certified that all associate degree programs require a minimum of 18 units of general education courses. The purpose of general education is to broaden students' knowledge and skills and promote intellectual inquiry. All requirements are published in the college catalog. Degree credit is consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education.

12. **Academic Freedom**
    The College of the Desert supports academic freedom of faculty and students. In April 2006, the Board of Trustees approved Policy Number 4030 concerning academic freedom. This policy statement on academic freedom also addresses the students' rights to academic freedom.

13. **Faculty**
    As of fall, 2010, College of the Desert has 110 full-time and 336 part-time faculty who are experienced and qualified to perform their teaching and related responsibilities. The degrees and dates of hire for all full-time faculty are listed in the college catalog.

14. **Student Services**
    The team confirmed that the College of the Desert provides comprehensive student support services. The services are consistent with the size of the institution, the characteristics of the student populations, and the mission of the institution. Major areas of student services are as follows: admissions and records, financial aid, counseling, matriculation, career and transfer centers, course and program articulation, special programs such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Disabled Student Programs and Services, CalWORKS, and Upward Bound, student outreach, international student programs, associated student government, clubs and activities, and student employment.

15. **Admissions**
    College of the Desert has an open-access admission policy in compliance with both the California Education Code and Title V. The college catalog describes the institution's admissions policies and procedures which are in written publications and on the website. Admissions personnel are qualified for and understand their role in relation to established policies.

16. Information and Learning Resources

College of the Desert provides its students sufficient information and learning resources and services in support of its mission and its educational programs. These resources and services are provided through the library, the online databases, and through numerous college computer laboratories.

17. Financial Resources

The team confirmed that College of the Desert has a sufficient funding base, financial reserves, and an excellent budget planning process which follows sound accounting practices. The college has secured numerous grants, and the foundation is a financial asset to the institution. The college's budgeting process ensures that all constituent groups have an opportunity to participate in the allocation of resources that support student learning programs and services to improve institutional effectiveness. The college maintains a Board of Trustees mandated contingency reserve of five percent.

18. Financial Accountability

The team verified that the College of the Desert undergoes an external audit annually by an independent auditing firm. The audit is conducted in accordance with standards applicable to financial audits contained in Governmental Accounting Standard Board Statements Numbers 34 and 35 using Business Type Activity Model recommended by the California State Chancellor's Office. The Board of Trustees reviews the audit findings, exceptions, letters to management, and any recommendations made by the contracted auditing firm.

19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

The team verified that College of the Desert undergoes an annual planning and evaluation process. The college's planning process has a methodology which assures that college activities are consistent with the mission and designed to achieve identified goals. The Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) process is a collegial process involving all governance bodies. The PIE is overseen by the College Planning Council which has the primary responsibility for addressing the college's planning and budget issues.

20. Public Information

The team confirmed that the College of the Desert publishes its catalog each year and class schedules are published each term. The schedule is also available electronically thus providing precise and updated information on the following:

- Official name, address, telephone number(s), and website address of the institution
- Educational mission
- Course, program, and degree offerings
- Academic calendar and program length
- Academic freedom statement
- Available student financial aid
- Available learning resources
- Names and degrees of administrators and faculty
- Names of governing board members
- Admission requirements
- Student fees and other financial obligations

- Degrees, certificates, graduation, and transfer requirements
- Academic regulations, including academic honesty
- Nondiscrimination policy
- Acceptance of transfer credits
- Grievance and complaint procedures
- Sexual harassment policy
- Policies on refund of fees

21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

College of the Desert provides written assurance that it adheres to the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards, and policies of the ACCJC, describes itself in identical term to all its accrediting agencies, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. An assurance statement is signed by both the President of the College and the President of the Board of Trustees.

STANDARD I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

General Observations

College of the Desert has a clear mission statement, supported by the vision and values statements, defining the college as a learning-centered institution with student success central to all that is done. The college is current in its understanding of its student composition and has the programs and services in place to meet those students' unique needs. It is apparent that the college has identified certain demographic characteristics —55% Hispanic student population, 95% of entering students underprepared in at least one basic skill area—and is creative and resourceful in addressing the needs of its student population, consistent with the college mission, despite the challenges it faces to significantly reduce course offerings.

The alignment of the college's programs and services with the purpose, character, and student population of the college is presented as the result of purposed dialogue and planning. It appears that discussion of the strategic planning process was begun in 2005 and the current Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) process was adopted three years later. Once adopted, the current college mission statement and its relevance to the student population was developed and became a point of discussion at several levels within the college community. Various sources of research and data are mentioned as supporting the discussions, including the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The college acknowledges that the analysis of, and the dialogue about, the CCSSE is yet to come. It would be strategic to have analyzed student satisfaction and student engagement as an integral part of aligning student learning programs and services with the needs of the student population. However, the college has, and has made use of, a wealth of data that guides the dialogue about the characteristics of the students, their needs, and their success.

Much is made of the $346.5 million bond and the facilities that were constructed; little is mentioned of how decisions were made and on what basis were they made to best serve the student learning needs of College of the Desert's unique student population. There is mention of an environmental scan but scant evidence of how it was incorporated into determining how bond monies were spent (I.A.1).

The college appropriately reviewed and revised its mission statement in accordance with the development of the current strategic plan. The revision was prompted by the work of an outside consultant, who created an environmental scan and suggested a new mission statement. The College Planning Council (CPC) reviewed and revised the suggested mission statement, making it their own. The new statement was approved by the Board of Trustees. The college has subsequently stated that the mission statement will be reviewed every year (I.A.2; I.A.3).

Findings and Evidence

Although the college appears to have taken some time in establishing a strategic planning process that regularly reviews the college mission and makes it central to planning, the resulting PIE and Strategic Planning Model are well-conceived and well-developed. The mission statement was collaboratively derived and is clearly articulated; it is aligned with and responsive to the student population. The most recent review of the mission generated a great deal of enthusiasm and inspired several new activities on the campus to further provoke student learning. The mission drives planning and is used to make strategic decisions. The college meets this standard (I.A).

Conclusions

The college has a well-defined planning process, guided by the CPC, and incorporating a planning strategy that is both "top down" and "bottom up." All areas of the college (academic affairs, student affairs, business affairs, and the president's office) are involved in the planning process, and the college strives to make the institutional mission central to planning and decision making. This PIE process is well-conceived and, in theory, integrates program review, annual planning processes, and resource allocation. What is missing is "time"—enough time for everything outlined in the PIE to have cycled through the process often enough to establish its sustainability and time enough to answer the questions posited within the Strategic Planning Model using and analyzing numerous data sources (I.A.4).

Recommendations

None.

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

General Observations

The college demonstrates ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about student learning and institutional processes. In addition to formal committees and forums, it appears that the college fosters dialogue at all levels. Not only is dialogue training provided, dialogue is philosophically guided by stated principles of collegial consultation, college wide guidelines for transparency, authenticity, and mutual respect. The content of the dialogue does focus on student learning and institutional processes, and the dialogue seeks to be informed by data. The college also makes an effort to go beyond mere discussion of data to understanding how to use the data to inform planning and to drive program improvement (I.B.1).

Findings and Evidence

The college has developed an integrated, annual planning process that melds program review and resource allocation—both tied to college goals and objectives. However, the process has not cycled completely through. Recognizing that this planning process is new, the college has been proactive in providing ongoing training throughout the institution to ensure the planning process is correctly and consistently implemented. The college also plans training opportunities on the understanding and use of its abundance of available data (I.B.1).

The college has in place an effective program review and, on the instructional side, is poised to close the loop on SLOs. The program review processes for student affairs, business affairs, and the president's office are underway, but there are program reviews in these areas yet to be completed.

There is in place a process for integrating planning and assessment with resource allocation. The College Master Plan puts forward measurable goals, including timelines for completion and identification of individuals with primary responsibility for accomplishing the goals. Faculty and staff throughout the college understand these goals and use them to guide the development of department and program level plans. The college has made strides toward integrating a focus on learning outcomes into all college processes. While the transition is not complete, the progress is significant. Participation in the planning process is broad-based and includes representatives from all sectors of the college, including significant contributions by some of the adjunct faculty.

Currently, the assessment feedback component of the PIE appears to lack a consolidating analyst—whether that be the CPC or one of its subcommittees—to align unit outcomes with college goals and objectives and to identify college wide goals and objectives that may not be addressed by any individual unit (I.B.2).

With the PIE, the college has in place a conceptual planning model that is well conceived and thorough. All the parts are in place for consistent, ongoing planning and assessment. The program review process is doing a good job of addressing how well student learning and student success are analyzed at the department levels, and it is evident that adequate data for the analysis has been made available from the research office.

That 100% of the courses have SLOs, and that a large number of the course SLOs have been assessed, indicates a strong effort by the college to meet the standards and to have responded to the recommendation citing SLOs in the Focused Midterm Report. The results of these SLO

assessments and how they correspond to the college mission and student learning goals—and more importantly, how the college responds to the assessment results—will be crucial. These results comprise the data, analysis, and response that help drive the planning cycle and ensure that student learning programs and services are aligned with the college's purposes, character, and student population. This is the opportunity for the college to close the loop on the planning cycle for courses and instructional program reviews. Non-instructional programs and services have not yet reached the point where they are ready to complete their planning cycles.

In response to the last accreditation visit, the college created the Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) with the specific objective to improve programs and services and to improve institutional understanding of assessment.

The End User Data Subcommittee—tasked with filling the communication and dissemination gap between data availability and how data can effectively be used in the dialogue about continuous quality improvement—has only recently been implemented. It is comprised of members representing both the instructional and non-instructional units. The committee's ultimate usefulness is evident but has yet to be substantiated (I.B.3).

The college's planning processes are well designed, inclusive, and accessible by all college constituents. The CPC ensures broad representation in the planning process for all groups across the campus and provides a forum for meaningful exchange of dialogue. The CPC is the hub around which all planning groups and all plans revolve. Prior to the creation of the CPC, it appears planning was driven primarily by the desire of the college to increase enrollment and thereby increase apportionment, in order to foster yet more enrollment. Current budget issues and the inauguration of CPC seem to have, appropriately, focused planning more on institutional effectiveness and student learning.

Despite these statewide budget issues that affect all community colleges, College of the Desert appears to have done an outstanding job in raising funds apart from state apportionment. The list of projects funded apart from normal operating budgets is remarkable. However, there is no evidence of how all these projects were deemed to be in support of institutional effectiveness or student learning. Granted, a legitimate case could be made for each of the projects, but there is no evidence of how funds were aligned with stated college goals and objectives. Did college goals drive the allocation of bond money, or did bond money drive the creation of college goals? A task of the CPC will be to ensure the former. Fortunately, the charge given to each of the college's task forces on organizational restructuring clearly address this issue.

Because the CPC plays a key role in college planning, it is important to have broadly-based participation and clear lines of communication. The college is aware of this and of the need to continually inform and engage all constituent groups. The CPC has been proactive and a subcommittee of CPC is charged with outreach and training so all members of the college community can understand and participate in planning activities (I.B.4).

The college has embraced the notion of a "culture of evidence" in both its decision-making processes and assessment strategies. The office of institutional research provides solid professional support for programs and offices across the campus in gathering data to inform their

planning processes. The college is also proactive in communicating the availability of the data and in training faculty and staff in how to use the data in assessment and planning.
The institutional research website was updated during summer 2010 and has improved ease of use. With the absence of an institutional researcher and the impending elimination of the office of institutional effectiveness, it is imperative that the college provide an office responsible for the analysis and effective use of the available data (I.B.5).

As stated elsewhere in this report, the college has a well-conceived and well-documented planning process. The numerous changes to the program review process demonstrate the college's commitment to developing, assessing, and improving evaluative mechanisms that assess student learning. However, there is no evidence of systematic review of all the planning cycle elements, nor is there evidence of a systematic assessment of research efforts and their correspondence to the planning needs of the college (I.B.6).

The college has in place several assessment mechanisms, including program review. It also has a planning model—the PIE—which is currently being implemented. However, it does not appear that there is a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the planning and assessment processes themselves. The college speaks of the effectiveness of its processes, but has yet to provide evidence to support such claims (I.B.7).

Conclusion

The college has in place a conceptual planning model that is comprehensive and appears to integrate planning, assessment, and resource allocation. It appears that a significant amount of work was recently completed—SLOs and their preliminary assessment, CCSSE, as examples—and their completion is laudable. The college has not yet fully implemented the process and closed the loop on the process, nor has it had enough time to demonstrate that the model is sustainable. Some elements of the model have been implemented (course SLOs and their assessment) while others are only partially implemented (noninstructional SLOs and their assessment) or have not yet begun (process assessment). However, the college must make every effort to ensure that these completions are the first of a series of regular, ongoing assessment and planning processes rather than merely a mad scramble to meet self-study deadlines. The planning process, as conceptualized, now has to be continually operational and consistently integrated among its various parts, including research. Recently added
components of the planning process—the End User Data Subcommittee and the new subcommittee to assess planning processes—remain unproven. Until the planning model has been implemented and shown to be sustainable, the college has only partially met the standard (I.B).

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college complete the implementation of the comprehensive planning process by responding to the analysis of assessment results to ensure improvement in student learning. Such a process integrates the various college plans; is informed by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis; systematically assesses outcomes within both instruction and non-instructional services; and

provides for an ongoing and systematic cycle of goal setting, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation (I.B.1; I.B.2; I.B.6; I.B.7).

STANDARD II: Student Learning Programs and Services

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

A. Instructional Programs

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

General Observations

College of the Desert offers high-quality instructional programs at its main campus in the City of Palm Desert with additional campuses located in the East Valley (Indio and Mecca-Thermal) and in the West Valley (currently in Palm Springs High School). The instructional area, organized under the leadership of academic affairs, delivers classes to a diverse student body and balances new class offerings between academic, basic skills, noncredit and career technical classes. Instructional programs are administered by faculty, guided by the curriculum committee, and utilize program review, SLOs and the assessment cycle to meet the needs of students, community and local employers.

The college offers fifty-six associate degrees in arts and/or science majors, thirty-three credit certificate of achievement programs, nine certificates of completion through noncredit, as well as nine lower unit certificates. The college responds to local industry needs in emerging fields such as alternative energy (wind turbine technology, solar, and alternative fuels) and real estate development. It determines community needs by analyzing labor market data and through community advisory boards.

Despite decreased state funding, College of the Desert continues to serve a diverse student population by offering courses and programs central to its stated mission. In addition to offering classes in a variety of formats, days, and times, the institution has a wide variety of for-credit, noncredit, and not-for-credit courses and programs. Additionally, courses, programs, and support services are designed to meet the needs of the student population and are provided at several educational sites within the college's service area including the main campus located on Palm Desert, the Eastern Valley Campus at Indio, and the Western Valley Campus. The college offers coursework in basic skills, general education transfer, and career and technical education.

Findings and Evidence

The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs through a rigorous curriculum approval process and a comprehensive program review process. The Curriculum Committee reviews all instructional course and program proposals that meet degree completion requirements for associate in arts degrees, general education transfer requirements and career and technical education. New Curriculum Committee members receive training via a curriculum handbook, presentations from the chancellor's office and the academic senate publication "The Course Outline of Record."

The curriculum approval process includes multiple levels of review. First, the curriculum committee checks the proposal for adherence to college policies and required elements including the identification of student learning outcomes. The full Curriculum Committee then reviews the proposal for specific course components, including course description, objectives, methods of presentation and evaluation, content, and sample assignments. Distinct processes exist for traditional and distance learning and ensure quality and integrity in all courses and programs. The full committee also reviews the ways in which the course supports program learning outcomes and related institutional learning outcomes. Proposals are also reviewed by the college articulation officer to ensure transferability. Moreover, the entire committee reviews the proposal to determine appropriate placement within the general education patterns established by the college and listed in the college catalog.

Proposals for new programs are initiated in a variety of forums and may emerge from a college process, such as the review and revision of the college mission and program review, or as a response to external factors, such as changes in work force development as evidenced by the establishment of the alternative energy program. To ensure the continued high quality of its programs and services, the college has implemented a rigorous program review process. The program review cycle for most programs is five years enhanced by yearly program review updates (PRUs) (II.A.1).

The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the needs of its students. In addition to the main campus, the college maintains a variety of satellite sites each with unique instructional programs as well as a limited offering of general education courses. In addition, the institution has experienced an explosive growth in distance education offerings: from a planned five percent to a realized thirty percent growth.

The college has engaged in a widespread dialogue about student learning outcomes for courses, programs, departments, and support services. Beginning with the creation of the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force in 2005, the college engaged in a grassroots effort to establish learning outcomes and assessments. From 2005 to 2008, the task force recruited and worked with identified representatives from each discipline to facilitate the development of outcomes for courses. According to the final report of the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force, the college community received training in the development of course and program student learning outcomes through a series of activities intended to create a grassroots acceptance of the change.

In addition to sponsoring various events to spark the dialogue, the task force developed a series of handbooks to facilitate the development of outcomes and assessment methodologies for courses as well as department, degree, certificate, and program levels. As the college was engaged in the dialogue about course and program learning outcomes, the task force, in collaboration with the Professional Development Committee, planned and implemented a college-wide process that was used to write the college's institutional learning outcomes. The initial effort was conducted as a day-long flex activity and the subsequent college review was widespread, included all stakeholders, and led to adoption of the institutional learning outcomes by the Board of Trustees in May 2007 (II.A.1.a; II.A.1.b).

The institution is engaged proactively in the process of assessment. The college has devoted resources for the development and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The college has focused on getting the faculty engaged in the process by defining SLOs at the course, program and institutional levels. The majority of assessments are currently being done at the course level. The college has integrated assessment findings in 5-year cycled program reviews and annual program review updates. These findings are validated by the Curriculum Committee. Findings are gathered and directed through proper channels in the college's budget and planning processes. In addition to the program reviews, assessment reports which are maintained by the Outcomes Assessment Committee are also reviewed.

The quality of the SLOs and assessments vary among the different instructional and non-instructional programs and service areas. As the college moves forward, it will be essential for faculty and staff to maintain a high consistent quality of assessment towards improving learning outcomes. Faculty leadership recognizes that an evaluation of the assessment process has yet to be developed. Team assessment of program reviews substantiates these statements made by the Curriculum Committee and Outcomes Assessment Committee.

The college has an ambitious assessment program. A growing critical mass of departments has implemented carefully-constructed assessments of key learning outcomes and used the results of these assessments to make modifications in curricula. Program goals have been written to express student learning outcomes.

The most recent instructional and non-instructional SLO assessment report submitted to the Accreditation team during the site visit identifies 49.5% of courses and 77% of programs undergoing an initial assessment. College wide assessments of institutional outcomes are slated to begin in spring 2012.

Although the SLO initiative is at the Development Level on the Commission's Rubric, the college's agenda for the future demonstrates a clear understanding of assessment, with emphasis between better teaching and assessment of student learning. The college identifies a planning agenda that will continue to train and assist faculty in all areas of course and program level assessment (II.A.1.c).

The standards are consistent for all instructional courses and programs at the College of the Desert to assure their quality and improvement independent of their purpose, such as collegiate, developmental, pre-collegiate, continuing and community education, short-term training,

programs for international students and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode or location.

The mission of the college drives the focus of institutional course and program offerings that are initiated by faculty and are vetted and approved through the Curriculum Committee process. In addition, course and program needs are identified through environmental scans and priorities illuminated through advisory boards. For example, the vocational nursing program has modified course curricula to meet community needs through input from students and community partners. The Curriculum Committee uses accepted practices that ensure development and implementation of high quality programs. Rigorous processes for initiating new programs, courses and curricular change are clearly articulated, as are the roles of faculty and administration within the processes. Rigorous processes for initiating new programs, courses, and curricular change are clearly articulated, as are the roles of faculty and administration within the processes.

Faculty, supported by administration and staff, create, develop approve and evaluate all courses and programs. Courses and program originate from a variety of sources including discipline faculty, standing committees, ad hoc committees, and task forces along with business and community partners and agencies. Suggestions and proposals are routed to the appropriate discipline or division for review and implementation. The college determines which courses to offer through advisory committees (for career and technical education), student and community surveys, and through consultation with local universities to determine required courses for transfer (IIA-3; IIA-25) (II.A.2.a).

Through the Curriculum Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, the college has established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver and evaluate courses and programs. Faculty members have primary roles in strengthening and developing instructional programs and courses including the development and assessment of student learning outcomes. Committee membership comes from all instructional areas of the college. Members abide by the guidelines of Title 5, the Education Code, Executive Orders and Governing Board Policy, and the program and Course Approval Handbook from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's office.

To ensure compliance with guidelines for distance education in the California Community College System, the distance education subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee has designed a Distance Education worksheet for faculty to complete any time there is a distance education modality included in the course outline of record. The Curriculum Committee recently incorporated CurricUNET as a tool for tracking curriculum processes. In theory, CurricUNET will facilitate the review process. However, the team found through interviews that a full implementation of this tool has yet to be completed (II.A.2.a).

The college relies on faculty expertise and advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees. Evidence indicates that the outcomes assessment committee, in conjunction with departmental faculty, has primary responsibility for the development of student learning outcomes. The college has made considerable progress in this area since it has completed all course, program and institutional learning outcomes, and assessment of the majority of the

course learning outcomes is taking place. Yet, program and institutional level assessments are in the early stages of development (II.A.2.b).

The college adheres to district policy in accordance with Title 5 regulations implemented through curriculum and program review processes. These rigorous processes set criteria for deciding the breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning for its courses and programs. Outcomes assessment and program review processes have become an important source of information for improving programs. A good example is the collaboration of the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program and the physical sciences program that identified the need of new engineering program to increase transfer rates in STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (II.A.2.c).

The college uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students. Instructional delivery modes include online, hybrid, lecture, labs, hands-on, and learning communities. The learning management system blackboard and extensive training has added a new dimension to the delivery of instruction. Appropriate delivery modes are determined by course level, subject, the success of students in other courses and the completion of transfer and/or career goals. Instructors determine the most appropriate form of delivery and assessment (II.A.2.d).

The college evaluates all courses and programs through an ongoing systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans. As well, the college engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of stated student learning outcomes.

Courses are reviewed and evaluated through an established five-year cycle. Course outcomes assessment is in a three-semester cycle for all courses. Assessment reports are maintained by the Outcomes Assessment Committee. The curriculum specialist provides an inventory of courses that require revision and updating including course content and SLOs. Faculty are free to update courses based on assessment of the student learning outcomes results prior to the established five-year cycle. The program review process has been developed and continuously refined since the last self study: programs are reviewed annually and every five years. For the comprehensive five-year academic program review, faculty and staff use standard student achievement data provided by the IT/IR department as a starting point for the review. Course review is independent of program review, but it is documented in the program review. The course level SLO assessments find their way into the program review process, specifically the annual update of the program review. Annual program reviews are submitted to the curriculum committee and then to the College Planning Council to be used in the PIE process. The college has a validation process of the academic program review, but the college recognizes that the validation process needs to be further developed and codified (II.A.2.e; II.A.2.f).

The college uses state-approved assessment instruments to place students in English, reading, math, and English as a Second Language courses. The college uses multiple measures to minimize test bias and validate test effectiveness in measuring student learning (II.A.2.g).

The college awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. The college has made significant progress in the area of assessment of course learning outcomes: SLOs are part of the course outlines of record and the Curriculum Committee reviews objectives, content, learning outcomes and the scope of each class; however, the college has not completed the full cycle of assessment for courses and programs. The college aligns its practice of awarding credit with those of other systems of public higher education in California. The college uses the SLO assessment results as evidence that the student has gained the knowledge associated with the coursework. The college partially meets this standard (II.A.2.h).

The college has developed and published student learning outcomes for program, degrees and certificates. However, since assessment of program learning outcomes is at the beginning stages, the college cannot yet demonstrate that degrees and certificates are awarded based on student achievement of a program's learning outcomes (II.A.2.i).

The College of the Desert requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on the college's general education philosophy. The general education outcomes were developed through coordinated efforts of the Curriculum Committee, the Outcomes and Assessment Committee, and the Academic Senate and ultimately approved by the Board of Trustees in fall 2008. A General Education Subcommittee was formed whose mission is to achieve the appropriate balance of courses and a schedule of classes that meets student needs, to ensure general education SLOs align with education regulations and provide a general education philosophy that is unique to the college, and to create criteria, standards, and a process for identifying general education requirements that align with general education SLOs. A general education tool has been developed to assist faculty in maintaining the integrity of courses included in the general education curriculum (II.A.3.a; II.A.3.b; II.A.3.c).

All degrees and certificates include one area of focused study in at least one area of inquiry or interdisciplinary core for each degree. Additionally, all vocational programs are competency based and meet the standards of the applicable external licensing or accreditation agency. Programs such as Peace Officers Standards and Training, Nursing, and Early Childhood Education follow prescribed standards of instruction and course content required by the appropriate board or external accrediting agencies (II.A.4; II.A.5).

The college catalog, schedule, and website provide students with appropriate and accurate information about educational courses, programs and transfer policies. These materials are easy to read and readily available for students at various locations on campus. The catalog undergoes annual review to ensure integrity and currency. The college has appropriate processes in place for staff to review and edit publications throughout the year. The most current information regarding programs, "class schedule," or any catalog modifications are updated on the college website.

College of the Desert conveys transfer policies via course catalogs, class schedules, and through advisement, indicating the transferability of college courses to both the California State University and University of California systems. Degrees and certificates are described for students in various publications. Articulation agreements are reviewed yearly and new articulation is proposed when new courses/programs are developed and are appropriate for

articulation. The accreditation team encourages the institution to prioritize publishing the articulation webpage for public access.

Faculty prepare syllabi, which contain clear and accurate information, for every section of every class offered at the college. Course objectives and SLOs align with course outlines (II.A.6.a; II.A.6.c).

The self-study states a process regarding program modifications or eliminations; however, there is no policy or written process. Curriculum Committee and Academic Senate agendas and minutes reveal discussion and vetting on this topic are taking place, and the college has identified a planning agenda to address this standard deficiency (II.A.6.b).

Board-approved policies on academic freedom and integrity were approved in 2006 and are readily available to students and the community via the college catalog, schedules and website. The faculty code of professional ethics is published in the college catalog and the 2008-2009 Faculty and Adjunct Faculty Handbooks. Academic honesty, minimally referenced, and dishonesty expectations are located in the college catalog, schedule and website. Plagiarism and Cheating is explicitly defined only in the college catalog.   A definition of academic honesty must be established and added to provide a well-defined student policy (II.A.7.a; II.A.7.b).

College of the Desert does not seek to instill specific beliefs or worldviews and, thus, this Standard does not apply (II.A.7.c).

College of the Desert does not offer curricula in foreign locations and therefore this Standard does not apply (II.A.8).

Conclusions

The college meets most of Standard IIA. The institution provides high quality instructional courses and programs, which it assures through a rigorous curriculum approval and a comprehensive program review process. The program review process requires thoughtful analysis of program strengths and weaknesses, allowing departments and programs to identify resources needed for improvement. With the implementation of CurricUNET, the general public will be able to access student learning outcomes for each of the courses. The team found that effective practices embedded in the curriculum development process, as well as a formal curriculum review and approval process, support the quality and integrity of the academic programs. There is clearly documented success in refining an educationally sound, carefully conceived, useful, and working commitment to a set of General Education expectations.

The College of the Desert curriculum clearly is one that reflects the engagement of a dedicated and knowledgeable faculty. The curriculum seems to address the mission of the College and is also responsive to local community needs.

There is no indication that the college assesses the learning style of its students in order to assist them in choosing an appropriate delivery method for a class. Moreover, the college has designed

its curricula so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning.

Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for all courses and many programs, and degrees; results are being used for improvement; decision-making at the program level is centered on the results of assessment and purposefully directed toward improving student learning.

The team suggests that the college build upon the structure established for the development and review of student learning outcomes, accelerate the full implementation and completion of the student learning outcomes assessment cycle, and utilize these assessment findings to guide future decision making and institutional improvements. The college currently does not have a formal policy for the elimination of programs.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college establish clear written policies and procedures on program elimination or significant changes to program requirements to enable enrolled students to make appropriate arrangements to complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption (II.A.6.b).

B.   Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

General Observations

The College of the Desert provides twenty programs and services within the student affairs division to address the educational, health and well-being of a diverse set of students. It is clear that the "entire student pathway through the institutional experience" reflects a strong concern for student access, engagement and learning. Those programs and services range from the traditional assessment, admissions and registration, financial aid, counseling, and other matriculation related areas to the learning communities of categorical programs such as EOPS/CARE, CalWORKs and DSPS.

All student support services are situated at the main campus, College of the Desert. However, some are also permanently housed at the satellite campus to better serve students at the eastern Coachella Valley campuses. Based on identified need, additional services are provided to those

satellite sites. There are plans to provide comparable services to the third campus that is being developed on the western end of the valley.

The external sites are cognizant of their obligation to provide equal access to student services. Those satellite campuses do arrange appointments for students as needed. In many student support services areas, the service professionals from the main campus go to the satellite locations to provide services. This system is modified in the case of the library and student research needs. In those instances, the student must travel to the main campus to meet with a librarian. Plans are underway to use a real time computer based visual communication system that would allow electronic "face-to-face" communication. No timeline was offered regarding the installation of this software.

The college provides outreach and matriculation services to local high schools and community entities. Correlated with these efforts, student enrollments have increased, and with the increase are changes in the performance levels of students. Likewise, changes have occurred to improve staffing, planning, assessment and research efforts.

The 13,000 students at the College of the Desert reflect the diversity of the service area with a higher percentage of Hispanics/Latino(a)s (56.6%) followed by Whites (24.7%). The majority of entering students declare educational goals with the majority (51%) seeking to secure associate's or bachelor's degrees. Thus, most are matriculating students. Over ninety percent who enter take the ACCUPlacer sentence skills, reading and mathematics assessment tests with the majority, well over seventy percent, requiring some basic skills support. Also, a majority of the students are Hispanics and self-identify as first-time college students.

The college developed student learning outcomes for its student support services and related institutional outcomes. It is systematically assessing student support services through a shared governance process that aligns with other units of the college. This process includes leadership of the College Planning Council, Curriculum Committee, and the Outcomes and Assessment Committee. Led by a college-wide Outcomes Assessment Coordinator (OAC) in sync with division OAC coordinators for a total of eight, the college has developed assessment timelines and protocols to carry out full-cycle assessments regularly and increasingly throughout the college. To date, 100% of courses and 100% of programs and service units have SLOs within student support services, and over forty percent have been assessed.

The college provided evidence that it is using the results of assessment findings to improve services to students. An example entails changes to the EOPS/CARE/CalWORKs in response to assessment findings with mixed results. Other examples were in tutoring and counseling services with significant changes in student usage and confidence levels. Integral to SLO assessment efforts, the college had previously developed and has implemented on-going 5-year program reviews and annual program review updates.

Guided by annual institutional goals, planning guidelines, program review requirements and timelines, and student learning outcomes and related assessment rubrics, the college is re-organizing its planning infrastructure. Beginning spring 2011, these efforts are being organized further within the College of the Desert Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Process (PIE).

This strategic re-organizing of the college with assessment at the core as part of a shared governance effort has encouraged inclusive, informed, and intentional dialogue that ensures the commitment of the institution to provide high quality education congruent with the mission of the college.

These and other efforts evidence the college's commitment to continuous improvement of learning conditions for its students. This is reflected in the on-going professional development of faculty and staff, collaboration across student affairs and some instructional units, support for student leadership and student engagement in the life of the institution, and the addition of learning resources, i.e. new facilities, such as the Student Services Center, and full-time counselors. Those facilities provide an aesthetically pleasing, inviting space with varied operational hours responsive to day and early evening students. The environment is light, airy, and art-filled. A similar concern for the service and comfort of students occurs in other multiple locations such as the student commons at the Mecca-Thermal Center and the remodeled cafeteria on the main campus.

Courses and instructional support services have changed to address needs revealed through SLO assessment and program reviews. Likewise, restructuring efforts have occurred within student support services, and some aligned with instructional services as a result of student learning needs. In response to a focus on being strategic in meeting the needs of students, all instructional support services are being centralized within the purview of one administrator in instruction, the dean of Library, Learning Resources and Distance Education. This is being done with the support from both the Vice Presidents of Academic and Student Affairs in addition to the direct leadership of the affected deans and instructional support staff.

The college has taken deliberate steps to address the Accrediting Commission's recommendations. In doing so, it has had the spill-over effect on the college by reducing the level of silos among student support services, instruction, and administrative services. Given the reports, more open discourse seems to be occurring that encourages college-wide dialog about and planning, the organizational structure all related to address the learning needs and challenges of students.

The college has made significant progress in developing a more rigorous planning and evaluation process that promotes dialog, integrity, and the centrality of student learning. Starting with the development and use of unit plans within student affairs, the college morphed into the use of program reviews and program review updates. Now, it incorporates the results including learning from student learning outcomes assessment to ensure improvements throughout the college and its satellite centers while ensuring widespread evidence of excellence and institutional integrity.

Findings and Evidence

The institution engages in sound practices using a comprehensive set of strategies to assure that students experience quality support services independent of location and delivery method. The tutoring practices are examples of a rigorous effort to improve student learning. Units that were once dispersed in various locations throughout the main campus are now centrally coordinated

and collaborate instructional support services and leadership at the main Palm Desert campus. Those efforts entail collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs to ensure that efficient and high quality tutoring is delivered to students through the Academic Services Centers at the main campus and the remote centers. This coordination reflects the college's concerted effort to respond to outcomes assessment data, which revealed the need for aligning these services, centralizing the training of tutors and administrative procedures. Use of assessment findings also resulted in the provision for counseling services through use of adjunct counselor assigned three days a week at the Indio Center and a new full-time grant funded position to serve the students at the Mecca-Thermal Center (II.B.1).

The College Catalog is thorough, precise and accurately reflects current key aspects about the institution such as its mission, contact information, course offerings, requirements, and the majority of the policies and procedures.

The only area that renders this standard only "partially…" met is the policy on academic honesty, for it is not clearly defined. As it stands, the catalog places primary emphasis on plagiarism and cheating with a brief normative statement about academic honesty. Some guiding parameters for engaging in appropriate behaviors consistent with academic honesty would render clearer the importance and just how students can ensure academic integrity. The college has plans to vet an academic honesty policy through the Education Policy Committee of the Academic Senate to be followed by a review and approval by the Board of Trustees. (The preliminary draft may be shared with both the College Planning Council and the Executive Cabinet for review and input prior to its submittal to the board.)

The catalog is reviewed for accuracy and currency through an organized effort. The catalog is updated annually by authors who send their updates to the Curriculum and Catalog Specialist. This specialist is dedicated to "ensuring the information in the College of the Desert Catalog" is accurate and complete. The efforts of this specialist are complemented by a Catalog Advisory Group along with the Academic Senate's Curriculum Committee, on which the specialist sits.

The location or publications where other policies may be found are also made clear. The class schedule, student handbook, board policies and the college website are the locations identified (II.B.2).

The college researches and identifies the support needs of its student population. It provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs. It has employed effective practices to identify the support needs of students. It is using program reviews, annual program review updates, student surveys i.e., CCSSE, ASCOD, assessment tests, electronic/virtual systems such as MyCOD, "Ask the Roadrunner," and results from meetings among professionals. This data is complemented by data gathered and analyzed by a dean responsible for research and technology along with a staff support person. Together, this small team has amassed a rich source of data that enables a multitude of staff to be self-directed in their research and to pose and answer questions unique to their area's information needs. The research office is diligent and responsive in its support role and an integral part of the college's well-conceived planning process.

The college addresses the needs of most of its students in concerted ways and effectively from intake, advising, resource allocation services e.g., financial aid, to course placement, student life engagement activities, instructional support services and career services. The college is most efficient in this regard for students at the main Palm Desert campus. Given the lack of comprehensive support services at the remote locations, students' needs may be unevenly met (II.B.3).

The college assures equitable access to all of its students at the main Palm Desert campus by providing appropriate, comprehensive and reliable services to students regardless of delivery method. The same cannot be validated for the satellite campuses given that financial aid, the bookstore and admissions and records are not permanent resources available throughout the term at those locations. In order to secure access to these resources, students must set up appointments and visit the main campus during the term.

Related, during visits to the East Valley Indio and the Mecca/Thermal campuses, the site visit team noted that despite the very high proportion of Latino students who take classes at these locations (80% at East Valley and 95% at Mecca/Thermal), very few of the informational handout documents or brochures were printed in Spanish. Further, one brochure with some limited printed Spanish text had a word misspelled, and one of four bulleted items in Spanish contained the information that a student would need to present a photo ID before being able to register for classes. This statement did not appear in English anywhere in the brochure. As part of its efforts to promote diversity and cultural awareness, the college should provide more versions of informational documents and brochures in Spanish text (IIIA.4).

Nevertheless, assessment efforts described in previous responses above are occurring throughout the college and at its various on-line and off-campus center locations. They are comprehensive allowing for course-, program-, and institution-level reviews—via program reviews, SLO assessment, institutional surveys—as well as student use of self-initiated assessment via on-line and survey methods. Further, the Student Affairs Coordinating Council (SACC) provides another means to evaluate on-line and off site services via meetings. With an emphasis on dialog that is continuous. For example, all counselors meet as a unit independent of unit or type of program in which they work in order to establish shared goals and share information. A similar system has developed within instruction with departmental faculty meeting as a unit to dialog about curricula needs and between student affairs and academic affairs via the dean's council (II.B.3.a).

The institution provides a rich environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students. It demonstrates this through the very diverse offerings of student life, conferences and leadership opportunities, board proclamations, and Office of Student Affairs sponsored weekly forums series. These efforts are complemented by a host of other resources, namely: academic support center and library learning environments via faculty collaborations; cooperative education work experiences; learning communities; department sponsored discipline seminars; student development courses; the tutoring center; and institutional upgrades via a local bond, innovative, aesthetically pleasing new buildings with art exhibits, and a host of other physical and educational offerings that renders the college more resourceful and inviting (II.B.3.b).

The institution designs, maintains and evaluates counseling and academic advising programs to support student development and success. Supporting student development and success is sought through a comprehensive set of counseling and advising services for all students. Those services are organized rationally to guide students through the matriculation process. They include assessment interpretations, orientation, student education plan development and early alert follow-up services for students on probation offered via the Counseling Center. An additional fifteen student support services units including DSPS, EOPS/CARE, MESA, reentry services, and Veteran Services also provide those services.

The college provides this support with regular training of all counselors within the college. The Chancellor's Office Student Services Program Review and Technical Assistance in 2009 noted the college for its exemplary practice with the Matriculation Advance Training Initiative as it accomplished student-centered and improvement efforts that included bringing together academic and student affairs professionals to team build, develop professionally and plan activities that were strategic.

These initiatives informed and were informed by the ongoing program reviews and program review updates that also facilitated the evaluation of counseling and how to enhance student development and success (II.B.3.c).

The institution designs and maintains programs, practices, and services that support and enhances students' understanding and appreciation of diversity. The college provides some diverse options for learning about different cultures, values, and experiences. This is evident in the types of historical awareness events, open forums for sharing expertise and ideas, ethnic, performance-centered and identity clubs. It is also revealed in the nearly twenty courses that integrate or emphasize issues of diversity. The college demonstrates sustained commitment for diversity. It has increased the number and percentage of ethnic minorities among the faculty and staff. It formed the Diversity Council and other groups such as Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) and the Women's Issues Network while supporting increased college-wide activities that promote diversity.   The Diversity Council has faculty and counselors as members along with the Office of Human Resources personnel. The council is active on diversity issues in hiring and also sponsors monthly activities to showcase various social or ethnic groups, e.g., October is Disability Awareness Month and November includes a celebration of the "Day of the Dead." The council leverages a small budget to develop these activities (II.B.3.d).

The institution regularly evaluates placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases. The college uses the ACCUPLACER exam for placing students in English, reading and mathematics. The College Board determines ability to benefit scores for students who are seeking financial aid resources but do not have a high school diploma. Following the guidelines of the Systems Office, the Assessment Center staff led the effort to complete the content validation and cut scores validation conducted every six years for approval renewal. This work includes faculty members from the disciplines and staff from the college's Office of Institutional Research (IR). The Office of IR conducts the disproportionate impact study. The validation studies for the Standards of Reliability and Test Bias are conducted and submitted by the College Board. Currently, Student Affairs and faculty within Academic

Affairs are discussing the efficacy of ACCUPLACER and determining the need to maintain its use especially as the college uses other "multiple measures."

The institution does not use assessment instruments for admissions purposes (II.B.3.e).

The institution takes steps to insure that it complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), California Education Code, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, other pertinent bodies of law, and local board policies and procedures. This is done to insure that student confidentiality is not breached.

The institution maintains student records permanently, securely and confidentially with provision for secure backup of all files regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records. Records are maintained in the admissions and recrods, DSPS, financial aid, health services, deans and vice president of student affairs offices. The college has transitioned from storage of records that are primarily the traditional paper documents and micro-film to electronic storage via the Datatel system (II.B.3.f).

The institution has systematized the evaluation of its student support services to ensure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Systematic evaluation is accomplished via SLO assessment, and program reviews and related annual unit reports, and the program review updates.

SLO Assessment: Specifically, in 2005-06, the Vice President of Student Affairs developed the Student Affairs Coordinating Council (SACC) wherein an assessment timeline was established. In August 2008, faculty and the college president established the Outcomes and Assessment Committee. Each division of the college including Student Affairs (SA) was designated a SLO coordinator with release time. By December 2008, the SACC with the assistance of the Student Affairs Division SLO Coordinator developed course and program level SLOs. By spring 2010, student affairs had completed forty percent of the assessments, and this division anticipates assessing the balance of the SLOs in time to meet the proficiency level during fall 2012. This includes nine of the twenty SA programs. Currently, the college is measuring student learning across all program and service areas and using the results to plan and implement institutional improvements.

Program Review and Annual Unit Reports and Program Review Updates: In Fall 2009, student affairs created an overarching annual review document, "Student Affairs Program Review Update (PRU)" that incorporates information from other reports in order to inform the prioritization process for program and institutional planning. Aligned with the assessment schedule, the findings from assessment of courses and programs are reported in the annual PRUs. These PRUs, which are submitted by September of each year, also include the description of the program, mission, funding sources/levels and achievements, and the identified goals for the upcoming year based on institutional outcomes and goals.

The evidence reveals the use of the assessment results to inform improvement efforts that facilitate student engagement, persistence, and achievement. Examples provided were in

EOPS/CARE/CALWORKS, student development in DSPS and student services tutoring. The discussion of the outcomes and results reflected objective analyses and consideration of multiple reasons for results to address the diverse needs of students.

In general, the college meets the majority of the areas of Standard IIB. Its strengths lie in the program review and assessment development processes and the comprehensiveness of the offerings in student support services. Both have informed the degree of institutional dialogue about student learning and student achievement as well as about institutional processes for evaluation and plans for improvement. Now, the institution is beginning a focus more on the quality of the assessment efforts—i.e., the SLOs, the rubrics, and assessment instruments. In doing so, it is evidencing a culture and practice that supports continuous improvement (II.B.4).

Conclusions

Overall, the college's report of conditions, priorities and actions in Standard IIB reflect concerted efforts to address the support needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Even so, the college did not meet Standard II.B.3.a as it did not assure equitable access to its students to student support services independent of their campus location.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 To meet Standards, the team recommends that the college investigate and create a plan to increase student services and library and learning support services for students in distance education and at off-site locations to ensure that they receive the same level and quality of services as students attending the main Palm Desert campus. The college must ensure equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable student, library, and learning support services regardless of location or means of delivery. This is especially important with regard to library services, including print resources, research assistance, and instruction (II.B.3; II.B.3.a; II.C.1; II.C.1.c; III.C.1).

C.   Library and Learning Support Services

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services

General Observations

The college meets Standard II.C with one exception. Although library and learning support services seem to be well supported at the main Palm Desert campus, there is some concern over the level of these services provided to students at off-site locations. Students have access to a wide variety of resources on campus, including a library, academic skills center, tutoring center, and a number of class or subject specific labs. In addition to the resources available on-campus, students also have access to an array of online resources, including databases and e-books. Students at the Eastern Valley Center and Mecca-Thermal Center have access to an on-site academic skills center and tutoring but there are no on-site library services available. Students at the West Valley Center must come to the main Palm Desert campus for all library and learning support services.

Faculty input into selection of library materials is actively sought, and the resources to suggest items for the collection are readily available via the library web site. Effort is made to ensure that the collection remains current and up-to-date by utilizing a number of professional review sources and input from departmental faculty. The library offers multiple means of instruction in information competency, including one-on-one instruction at the reference desk, course integrated information competency instruction sessions, and a new two-unit introduction to basic research skills course. Student learning outcomes have been identified for library services, one-on-one instruction, course integrated information competency sessions, and the newly offered two-credit information competency course, LIS-001. Now that SLOs have been identified, forward momentum will need to continue in terms of assessment and use of results.

Findings and Supporting Evidence

College of the Desert provides a variety of quality and current library and learning support services that are sufficient in depth to students on the main Palm Desert campus. The library, with two full-time and five adjunct librarians, provides students with access to a book collection of over 50,000 print titles and over 25,000 electronic books. Students are provided with access to electronic periodical resources through a selection of twelve online databases, all of which are accessible to students remotely as well as on-campus. Access is also provided to sixty-six print periodical titles. The library currently has forty-two computers available for students to use in the library and more are in the process of being added. In addition to being internet-enabled, these computers also provide access to a variety of software, including Microsoft Office. The library offers the only computers available to all students on the Palm Desert campus regardless of whether they've registered for a particular class or the ASC 100 tutoring class. Currently, there are no on-site library services available at the Eastern Valley, Mecca-Thermal, or West Valley Centers. Students wishing to make use of the print collection or inter-library loan services must visit the main Palm Desert campus in order to do so. As the college continues to expand and open more off-site locations, care should be taken to ensure that there are sufficient library and learning support services available on-site to all students regardless of location or means of delivery. It is essential that library and learning support services and instruction are not only able to be maintained but continue to grow with the college.

Students have access to a wide variety of computer, reading, writing, and foreign language lab resources at the academic skills center. A full range of software products to support the curriculum are provided there. Although primarily used to support foreign language, basic skills

level reading and English, ESL and non-credit ESL, any student on campus may register for the ASC 100 Supervised Tutoring course and make use of the ASC Writing Lab. During the 2009-2010 year, the ASC had a total enrollment of 6,550 and provided 106,583 student contact hours. Both the Eastern Valley Center and the Mecca-Thermal Center also have thriving academic skills centers on-site, providing nearly identical services. The Eastern Valley Center ASC had a 2009-2010 enrollment of 806 and provided 16,149 student contact hours while the Mecca-Thermal Center ASC had an enrollment of 271 and provided 4,669 student contact hours. The tutoring center provides free tutoring for all levels for nearly every subject offered to all currently enrolled College of the Desert students. Students register for a zero unit, no fee ASC 100 Tutoring course if tutoring is desired. Tutoring is then available on a walk-in basis at the tutoring center on the main Palm Desert campus, as well as in the academic skills center. Students at the Eastern Valley Center and the Mecca-Thermal Center have access to math and English tutors through the academic skills centers at those locations. Students at the West Valley Center must come to the main Palm Desert campus for these services. During the 2009-2010 year, 1,135 students logged 22,494 positive attendance hours in tutoring at all locations, supported by 126 tutors (II.C.1).

The library actively seeks input from faculty when choosing items for the collection. Request forms are readily available through the Library web site. Librarians send a monthly email newsletter to all faculty to keep them up to date on library events and to provide them with a list of all the new books added to the library for that month. Faculty are invited and encouraged to not only select titles but to help weed relevant areas of the collection. The library budget has traditionally relied heavily on state funding sources, such as TTIP and lottery funds. As those funding sources are discontinued or reduced, steps will need to be taken to ensure that adequate materials and resource funding is available for library resources. New courses and programs under development must complete a joint review worksheet for library and learning resources, including the adequacy of the print and electronic resources collection and the estimated cost of new materials. This form must then be signed by both a librarian and the faculty initiator (II.C.1.a).

The College of the Desert Library provides numerous opportunities for instruction and information competency. Faculty members have the opportunity to schedule course integrated information competency sessions for their class during the semester. Instructors further have the ability to specify what skills and resources they would like covered during these sessions. Faculty who are teaching at the off-site locations also have the ability to schedule these information competency sessions, generally bringing their classes to the library, although the instruction librarian is willing to go to the off-site location. Seventy-four of these sessions were held during the 2009-2010 year. Beginning in fall 2010, students also have the ability to take a two-unit course on information competency, LIS-001, Introduction to Basic Research Skills. Students may also receive one-on-one instruction at the library reference desk. During the 2009-2010 year, 9,345 reference transactions of this type took place in the library. There are no on-site library services at the Eastern Valley Center, Mecca-Thermal Center, or the West Valley Center. Students are able to make an appointment with a librarian for research assistance. These appointments require the student to travel to the main Palm Desert campus for the appointment, however (II.C.1.b).

The library is currently open fifty-seven hours per week, including four evenings until 8:00 p.m. and Fridays until 5:00 p.m. There are no weekend hours at this time due to budget cuts. Additionally, the library provides 24/7 access to an array of electronic resources, including e-books and periodical databases. The academic skills center on the Palm Desert campus is open 60.5 hours per week, including four evenings until 9:00 p.m. and Fridays until 4:30 p.m. The Eastern Valley Center ASC is open fifty-four hours per week and the Mecca-Thermal Center's ASC is open thirty hours per week. Tutoring in English and math is available to students at the Eastern Valley and Mecca-Thermal Centers during the hours the ASC is open on those campuses. Students at the West Valley Center must currently come to the main campus for access to these services. The tutoring center is currently open from 9:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday, and from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Friday. Although access to library and learning resources appear to be readily available for all students at the Palm Desert campus, students attending courses at the Eastern Valley, Mecca-Thermal, and West Valley Centers do not have comparable access to on-site library resources. Students at the West Valley Campus do not have access to any on-site library or learning support services (II.C.1.c).

The library is well maintained by the College of the Desert Maintenance and Operations Department. The library currently shares a building with the Palm Desert Public Library. The two entities contract together with an outside agency for custodial service, which seems to be working well. Internal security at the library is provided by 3M security gates at the entrance. The library is part of the College of the Desert campus security area, and library faculty and staff may contact the Campus Security Office any time assistance is required. Maintenance and security at the Eastern Valley Center is provided included as part of the lease. Maintenance and security at the Mecca-Thermal Center is the responsibility of the college, and someone is on-site during the hours the center is open. Maintenance and security at the West Valley Center is provided by Palm Springs High School, where the center is currently located. Computer needs and technology support, for faculty and staff is provided by information services. IS staff maintains the computers, peripherals, and software on all areas of campus, including the Eastern Valley, Mecca-Thermal, and West Valley Centers. Technology support is not available at any location in the evenings or on weekends however. Generally, maintenance and security for these areas and resources seems to be adequate and effective (II.C.1.d).

The library currently contracts with the County of Riverside to provide a number of library services, including cataloging and circulation services through Sirsi. The County of Riverside then sub-contracts those services out to Library Systems and Services, LLC. As part of this arrangement, students at College of the Desert have access to all libraries within the Inland Library Network, which consists of approximately seventy-five member libraries in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Inyo counties. With the exception of College of the Desert Library, all of the other libraries in the network are public. The library also participates in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) Interlibrary Loan (ILL) program. Since the library currently supplies more titles to other libraries than it requests, it is designated as a "net lending library" and is compensated financially for every item it lends. Formal contracts, annual amendments, and agreements for these services are kept on file in the College of the Desert Library (II.C.1.e).

The library participates in the program review process and uses that information to improve programs and services. Although preliminary steps have been taken to identify student learning

outcomes for all levels of library services and instruction, no benchmarks of student success or assessment tools have been specified. There is little evidence that systematic, ongoing evaluation that assesses use, access, and relationship of library and learning support services to intended student learning is taking place. While some areas of library and learning support services, such as course integrated information competency instruction and tutoring (ASC), have attempted to assess student learning, it is unclear what they are measuring as success and to what use these results will be put. The library and other learning support services will need to move forward with identifying assessment tools and criteria for assessing student learning outcomes for their areas in order to use outcome assessment data to improve learning (II.C.2).

Conclusions

The campus does not fully meet Standard II.C in terms of depth and variety of library and learning support services to students regardless of location or mode of delivery. While there is depth and variety to these support services, students who are not located on the main Palm Desert campus do not currently receive the same level of services, particularly in terms of library services and instruction. Additionally, students attending the West Valley Center have no on-site library or learning support services. As the college continues to increase its off-site programs and locations, there is concern that library and learning support services will continue to be inadequate for those at the off-site locations.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 3.

STANDARD III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

A.   Human Resources

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

General Observations

The College of the Desert has policies and practices in place to assure that qualified personnel are hired to support learning programs and to improve institutional effectiveness. Employees at the college expressed pride in working at College of the Desert. The general sense expressed by those working for the college is that the faculty and staff at the college are highly qualified and passionate about teaching and serving students. Moreover, it was noted that the opportunities for staff development have increased in recent years.

Additionally, the college has satisfactorily addressed concerns made by the previous site visit team in almost all areas of human resources. The department continues its efforts in the area of evaluating employees in a manner that is timely, formal, and documented. The college uses evaluation results to recognize good work and to help staff members improve in those areas identified in the evaluation. The college has developed a diversity awareness program for faculty and staff, Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEEDS), that supports the diversity and inclusion value codified in the college's values statements.

College of the Desert Community College District serves a 4,120 square mile area from its campus in Palm Desert and Eastern Valley campus with sites in Indio and Mecca/Thermal. In 2004, a $346.5 million bond measure was approved that provided resources for the college to construct new buildings as well as renovate older facilities. To help serve the needs of the college's community learning needs, the college opened two new campuses: the Mecca/Thermal Campus in the east valley and the Desert Enterprise Energy Center in Palm Springs. The college added several new buildings to its main Palm Desert campus in 2009 and 2010: the public safety academy, nursing complex, alumni center, student services center, and renovated dining hall and student life center.

The college continues to offer classes at its Palm Desert campus and several outreach locations. The East Valley campus in Indio contains six classrooms, a computer lab and administrative

offices and is currently located in part of an office building leased from the county. Plans call for this campus to be relocated to a brand new facility to be constructed in downtown Indio at a site owned by the college formerly used by the Greyhound Bus Company, with construction to be completed in 2013. It was also noted that the college offers about eighty classes per semester via distance education.

The Facilities Master Plan (FMP) calls for construction of a large west valley campus in Palm Springs to begin in 2013. In the meantime, classes will continue to be offered at Palm Springs High School. The college has delivered each project on time, within budget and with integrated sustainable features included in each. An endowment from the college foundation will, in keeping with the FMP, provide funds to cover annual facilities maintenance.
Technology at College of the Desert is supervised by the Information Technology and Institutional Research IT/IR Department, with guidance from technology advisory committees such as Educational Technology Committee and the Datatel Administrative Users Group. As stated in the technology master plan, the mission of the IT/IR department is to deliver "both an efficient computing environment and quality customer service to support the mission and goals of the college." In fact, technology services, support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution. Technology needs supporting student learning and classroom environment are addressed in close consultation with the academic senate's educational technologies committee. Other technology needs such as administrative computing, college-wide communications, institutional research and reporting, and operational systems in general, are made through participatory committees and processes for institutional planning such as program review, the annual planning process and the yearly resource allocation dialogue that occurs at the College Planning Council. Additionally, the institution offers ample opportunities for technology training for both staff and students.

College of the Desert provides adequate controls to ensure the integrity and responsible use of the institutions financial resources. Currently, the college is in a strong financial position and appears to have control of its financial resources. Despite the severe state budget crisis over the past few years, the district has increased its reserve level. However, as the fiscal forecasts from the state continue to decline, the district is planning to utilize some reserves to minimize the impact of budget shortfalls on students, community and college operations. Reserve levels are budgeted to decline from 20.35% to 18.68%, which is still well above the minimum board policy-recommended reserve level of at least 5%. Additionally, the budget planning process follows the guidelines established in the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Handbook Appendix C-Allocation of Resources. The process involves the allocation methodology of financial resources to the college. The college planning process involves all areas of college stakeholders'. The annual budget is currently developed with the primary guidance and oversight of the president, Budget Committee, and College Planning Council.

Findings and Evidence

Hiring procedures for both faculty and staff comply with general guidelines set forth by the state and state-wide academic senate. The college continues to use job announcements for all open positions that include complete job descriptions, qualifications and procedures to be followed for the selection of new college personnel. Individual announcements for faculty and administrators

include what the required knowledge is for a particular position, what the minimum qualifications are, any additional desirable qualifications and a list of the duties to be performed. Departments and programs are required to submit an annual program and services review (Program Review Updates). A review of all requests for staffing is then reviewed and considered as part of the program review and assessment process (III.A.1.a).

Members of hiring committees are required to attend diversity training sessions and are informed of college goals for diversity of its workforce in order to serve on a hiring committee. All new faculty hired meet state minimum qualifications for the discipline in which they teach. Only degrees from institutions accredited by recognized United States accrediting agencies or foreign country degrees which have been evaluated by acceptable reviewing organizations are accepted. Selection committees for administrators have representatives from the different college constituencies. Committees for hiring new classified staff members typically include the supervisor of the area doing the hiring and two classified employees, at least one of whom is of the same classification as the position being hired (III.A.3; III.A.4).

Despite its efforts to date, the ethnic profile of college faculty, administrators and staff remains very different from that of its students. Also, while the college has stated there has been improvement in the timely completion of employee evaluations, the site visit team was provided evidence that indicates that only 24% of full-time faculty, 41% of adjunct faculty, and 49% of classified staff have been completed. Evaluations of administrators were 100% complete. More effort needs to be exerted in this area. This effort needs to include using completed evaluations as a tool for recognizing commendable effort and also for helping employees to improve in areas of identified weakness related to job performance. Also, the site visit team was not able to find evidence of an employee survey indicating whether or not the evaluation process provides meaningful feedback about job performance (III.A.1.b; III.A.1.c).

Part of the evaluation process is the expectation that faculty will follow the suggested format guidelines for completing their self evaluation by including comments related to identification of steps taken to evaluate or improve teaching (III.A.1.c).

Ethics standards are specified in the Leadership Employment handbook, Standards on Professional Ethics adopted by the Academic Senate, CSEA union contract section XIX, Article 19.2, and in the Board of Trustees' policy (III.A.1.d).

The college affected a relatively recent reorganization of its structure reducing the number of deans from eight to four and creating the position of lead faculty for a number of disciplines. In addition, the college is still adjusting its new program review process through which data is collected, reviewed and analyzed (III.A.2).

The college's policies and bargaining agreements include criteria for fair employment practices and procedures and require that the college follow these policies and procedures in a fair and equitable manner (III.A.3.a).

Personnel and payroll records are kept in fire-proof cabinets located in secure areas accessible by only authorized employees (III.A.3.b).

During visits to the East Valley Indio campus and the Mecca/Thermal campus the site visit team noted that despite the very high proportion of Latino students who take classes at these locations (80% at East Valley and 95% at Mecca/Thermal) very few of the informational hand out documents or brochures were printed in Spanish. Further, one brochure with some limited printed Spanish text had a word misspelled and one of four bulleted items in Spanish contained the information that a student would need to present a photo ID before being able to register for classes. This statement did not appear in English anywhere in the brochure. As part of its efforts to promote diversity and cultural awareness, the college should provide more versions of informational documents and brochure in Spanish text (III.A.4).

The college does create and maintain programs and services that support its diverse personnel as evidenced by the minutes of the Diversity Council and the SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) program that since 2001 has involved approximately six different groups of 15 to 20 faculty and staff members in activities that run for an entire semester (III.A.4.a).

The college does regularly assess the degree of diversity reflected amongst its faculty, staff and administrators. A review of the employees by ethnicity data provided with the self study report indicates from fall 2004 to fall 2009 the college has increased the diversity in its full-time faculty from 10 to 18 instructors, among its adjunct faculty from 58 to 93 and the number of its classified staff from 58 to 93. However, certificated and classified administrators for this same time period saw a decline in the diversity numbers from 7 to 6 while the total number of administrators increased from 22 to 25 (III.A.4.b).

By examining documentation provided in the self study and through interviews with college staff, the site visit team found that the college provides all personnel with opportunities for continued professional development, principally through flex day activities that occur at the beginning of each semester. Professional development activities are developed, planned, implemented, and evaluated by the Faculty Development Committee (III.A.5).

The revised program review process and the strategic planning process now in place at the college indicates that human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning and the results of this process is used as the basis for improvement (III.A.6).

Conclusion

The college partially meets Standard III.A. The site visit team found that while the college meets the standard in terms of having defined hiring policies and practices, ethics standards for employees, and opportunities for staff development, there are areas that need immediate and significant attention. This would be in the area of timely and effective completion of faculty and staff evaluations, including as part of faculty evaluations participation in producing student learning outcomes and assessments. In addition, the college needs to continue its efforts related to diversifying its staff, especially as to its administrators. The college's student body continues to become more diverse and this trend might be considered in future staffing plans.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: To meet Standards, the college should improve the timely and effective completion of faculty and staff evaluations (III.A.1.b).

Recommendation 5: To meet Standards, the team recommends that the district develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures that incorporate effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes into the evaluation process of faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving student learning outcomes (III.A.1.c).

Recommendation 6: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college continue to increase the diversity of its faculty, staff and especially administrators to reflect the diversity of the student body (III.A.2.b).

B.   Physical Resources

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

General Observations

The college has physical resources that support student learning programs and improve institutional effectiveness. With the passage of a $346.5 million general obligation bond in 2004 added to state provided construction funds, the college has been able to expand and modernize its physical plant, infrastructure and technology. The physical resource planning is integrated with the college's mission and institutional planning (III.B).

The college has completed its planning and development of the modular Mecca/Thermal campus, the Desert Enterprise Energy Center in the west valley, plans to relocate the East Valley campus to downtown Indio, and the planned development of a new Palm Springs campus in an effort to meet student needs.

Findings and Evidence

By reviewing the educational, technology and educational master plans, by visiting classrooms and facilities on the Palm Desert campus, the East Valley Center in Indio and the Mecca/Thermal Center the team was able to validate that the college plans, builds, renovates or maintains facilities that support effective programs and services (III.B.1). New building and renovation activities have been made possible through the passage of $346.5 million local bond. The 2010-15 Facilities Master Plan addresses the planning identified in the 2010-15 Educational Master Plan.

However, while plans for the $40 million permanent building which will augment the current modular structures at the Mecca/Thermal campus include plans for general education and

transfer classes. No decision has been reached as to what types of career technical education classes and programs will be provided at this site. Determining what types of classes will be offered in a new building, accompanied by any special requirements related to those classes, is a critical matter that should be resolved before proceeding with design plans (III.B.2).

Conclusions

The college has met the requirements of Standard IIIB. This is especially true in regards to new buildings, renovations and upgrades to infrastructure it has completed as a result of the bond measure funds.

Recommendations

None.

C.   Technology Resources

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

General Observations

Technology at the institution is managed by the Information Technology and Institutional Research (IT/IR) Department in collaboration with technology advisory committees such as the Educational Technology Committee and The Datatel Administrative User's group. The Educational Technology Committee, a committee of the Academic Senate, develops policies and procedures related to technological standards utilized for instruction as well as various student affairs activities. The Datatel Administrative User's Group function is to develop procedures and policies to optimize available data and usage of the Datatel/ERP system. The technology master plan was conceived in a participatory and collaborative manner. The development of the plan began with the creation of an ad-hoc task force by the College Planning Council and included representatives of all the constituent groups of the college.

The college maintains a robust network that provides access to numerous technologies and applications to college constituents (faculty, staff, and students). In addition to the comprehensive ERP/Datatel system which is used for student records, registration, financial aid, human resources, budgeting, and purchasing, additional resources supported by the IT/IR department include: smart classrooms, wireless access, multiple computer labs, SARS (appointment scheduling software), portals, VoIP/email/Helpdesk services, Blackboard (learning management system), WebAdvisor (web self-services), the college website, Informer (web-based reporting tool), and CurricUNET (curriculum development software). Moreover, the institutional research area maintains a rich variety of current data on its webpage.

Findings and Evidence

The institution makes decisions regarding the use of technology services, facilities, hardware, and software by examining several areas: IT/IR, Program review, the Annual Planning Process, the Facilities Master Plan, the Technology Master Plan and the Educational Master Plan (III.C; III.C.1.a).

The college continues to provide sufficient opportunities for professional development in the area of technology. Two Technology Institute in-service days, covering a wide variety of technology topics, are offered annually for all faculty, classified staff, and administrators. The Technology Learning Center provides faculty and staff weekly training in the use of various software applications. The Classified Tech Institute provides two half-days of training sessions on a variety of technology topics. The Classified Tech Institute is held every year for all classified staff and classified supervisors and classified confidential. To evaluate the effectiveness of the training, IT/IR conducts post-class surveys that are completed at the end of the classes and workshops. By keeping track of the individual requests (tickets) for technical assistance and doing an analysis of the number and type of individual requests, the IT/IR department determines the monthly schedule of the training offered at the Technology Learning Center. During the student orientation process, student affairs employees train students in the use of WebAdvisor, a secure web application that allows the student to access college information and their person profile—part of their official records at the college. The training and support for students using Blackboard or other technologies on the college is less extensive. The EMP calls for a five percent yearly growth in distance learning through the offering of more online and hybrid courses. The college currently has met and exceeded that goal with an average yearly increase of 30 percent in online classes. The introduction of Blackboard has been very successful since it has allowed for the expansion of many online classes. During this accreditation cycle, online course offerings have grown from 52 classes in the fall of 2006 to 76 classes offered in the fall of 2009 (IIIC.1.b). The team suggests that the college look into the need to submit a Substantive Change Proposal to the Commission for the growth it has experienced in distance education.

Since the last accreditation visit, the technological needs of the college have continued to grow. The college has used bond funding to upgrade servers, communication (VoIP) and backup systems across the college. New facilities funded by bond monies will have the latest core routers and backup systems. In addition to Blackboard, the IT/IR department has also integrated WebAdvisor with Datatel, and it is in the process of implementing CurricUNET, a well-known online automated curriculum solution that will provide the college with online curriculum information, including syllabus templates and course outline of record, when it becomes fully functional. Because bond funding has provided much of the infrastructure, the college recognizes the need to develop and implement a lifecycle replacement plan with supporting procedures to facilitate the replacement of outdated computers and technology equipment as indicated by an Action Plan for this Standard (IIIC.1.c).

Technology resources are distributed throughout the college to serve the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services. Numerous technological

advancements have taken place at the college in both instructional and student services areas over the past years, including: smart classrooms and conference rooms; delivery of student services, e.g., online applications for registration; expanded webpages for students to access information about courses, programs and services; use of SARS Grid (a student tracking and accountability system); and WebAdvisor integration with Datatel for personal access to student profiles. There are numerous computer labs all over campus. Yet, the number of staff to support these resources has remained constant. As new buildings are built and technology is deployed, training and support needs will likely increase (III.C.1.d).

As part of the program review process, technology planning is integrated with the institutional planning process and requests are generated at the unit level. Technology needs are identified and brought to the annual planning process where those needs are prioritized. The development of the Technology Master Plan carried out by a task force appointed by the College Planning Council has determined technology priorities for the college. It is based on identified student learning needs and institutional effectiveness. The planning process allows for evaluation of current processes and identifies needs for improvement with a link to resource allocation (III.C.2).

Conclusions

Currently, there is an effective technology infrastructure at the college both in terms of personnel, software applications and hardware. Bond funds and other external sources have helped to build a fairly rich array of technical support for academic programs and college operations. Technology resource planning has clear planning processes and is tied to college planning processes as well. There is evidence of clear goals, a timeline for evaluation, and continuous quality improvement. The IT/IR department staff is knowledgeable and work well in supporting the technology and in the planning arena. The Educational Technology Committee works well in setting priorities and establishing policy related to technology at the college. However, the college has not provided comprehensive evidence that technology planning and decisions are based on assessments of the impact of such systems on student learning. The college has made exceptional strides in meeting Standard IIIC. There have been great improvements in infrastructure, computing services and information which have all contributed to increased benefits for students, faculty and administrators. The college will need to develop a plan for total cost of ownership as identified in the Planning Agenda for this Standard.

Recommendations

None.

D.   Financial Resources

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of

financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

General Observations

The college budget planning process is integrated with it's the overall institutional planning process. Financial planning occurs at all levels throughout the college. This was tested by tracking the recommendations of the college's program review forward through to the college's actual budget plans. The Outcomes Assessment Committee has been charged with ensuring that the strategic planning and program review processes are linked to College financial planning (Standard III.D.1.a).

Findings and Evidence

The financial planning of the college reflects a realistic assessment of financial resource availability. The campus Budget Committee, College Planning Council, and the president receive regular updates on the state and college operations. The vice president of business affairs develops and continually updates five-year Pro-Forma calculations and presents this to Budget Committee and College Planning Council to keep them abreast of the financial condition of the institution (III.D.1.b).

The College of the Desert considers its long-term financial obligations including debt obligations, health benefits, insurance costs, maintenance and operations costs, etc. when developing short term financial plans. Although the college plans to use reserves to augment their budget for 2010-11, the college is in the process of developing mission focused action plans to mitigate the use of reserves on an on-going basis and maintain prudent reserve levels. That said, input from college stakeholders indicate that clear strategies must be developed in order for the college to realize its reduction goal.   For 2011-12, these action plans maintain focus on its core mission; however, numerous stakeholders felt their input was not sought in the development of the strategies required to achieve the reduction. This is evidenced in the five-year Pro Forma, which identifies proposed action plans (III.D.1.c).

The college has generally defined its budget process in the *Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) Handbook*. Evidence indicates that all college stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to participate. Participation occurs at all college levels through various units and committees linked to the budgeting process. However, with the most recent state budget crisis, the budget planning process has taken on a more top down approach (III.D.1.d).

College of the Desert has appropriate financial controls in place to protect the financial integrity of its institution. Responsible use of resources and reporting capabilities for institutional assets and investments are available through its limited financial management system. This is evidenced in the annual external auditors report performed by an independent certified public accountant (III.D.2).

Independent audit and budget documents reflect appropriate allocation and use of resources. Responses to audit findings are complete and timely. Monthly financial reports are available for

budget managers throughout the year for effective budget monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, campus-wide forums are held by the Vice President of Business Affairs to inform constituents on the state of the college budget (III.D.2.a; III.D.2.b).

College of the Desert regularly reviews reserves and cash flow requirements. Regular reports are presented to the Board of Trustees and other college stakeholders. The board has established a prudent minimum resolve policy of 5% to deal with fiscal emergencies and unforeseen changes to the budget. Additionally, the college has the ability to use tax anticipation notes to assist in managing cash flow throughout the fiscal year (III.D.2.c).

Through its institutional planning processes and the fiscal services department, the college ensures that all financial resources are in accordance with its mission and goals and are in compliance with documented policies and procedures, public contract code, federal tax code, government code and the education code. This process and oversight also includes contractual agreements with external entities or independent contractors (III.D.2e; III.D.2f).

College of the Desert regularly evaluates and improves upon its financial management processes through external audits, college budget committee, and the college planning council. Obtaining financial information through the Electronic Reporting Processing Systems limits this analysis; however, the college continues to assess its use of financial resources for allocation (III.D.2.g; III.D.3).

Conclusions

The College has adequate resources and is effectively addressing the state budget crisis in a five year reduction approach. As a result, the financial integrity of the college will remain strong. However, the processes proposed to implement these reductions do not appear to be transparent to all constituents and perception is that the strategies are top down.

Recommendations

None.

STANDARD IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

General Observations

As cited in the College of the Desert's self-study and validated through on-site observations, interviews and evidence review, the college recognizes the importance of effective leadership in the achievement of its student learning mission and in the continuous improvement of institutional effectiveness. The president has set the tone for this and works with the board, the faculty, staff and administrators.

The College of the Desert has a leadership structure which lends itself to a system which allows decisions to be made at the lowest level. There is broad campus representation at each and every level of the organization. All decisions are being made based upon what is best for the students. However, the college is currently going through a major reorganization that is being impacted by the possibility of severe cuts to the district's budget. The first organizational change involved going from a structure which included eight academic deans down to one which now has four. The second organizational change involves the creation of interim faculty leads who will eventually become department chairs. On January 18, 2011, the five-member Board of Trustees unanimously passed Resolution #215 which addressed fiscal solvency for the district. It directed the president to "consider all alternatives necessary to ensure that the college remains fiscally solvent while continuing to offer high quality programs and student support services." The Executive Cabinet, which works under the purview of the President, crafted a budget matrix that is designed to educate all constituent groups in the best methods for instituting the mandated budget priorities. This cabinet is made up of the CSEA President, the Academic Senate President, the full-time Faculty Association President, the Adjunct Faculty Association President, the Student Trustee, the Associated Student Body President, the President, the Foundation Director, and the three Vice Presidents. The newly crafted budget matrix then went to the College Planning Council (CPC) for approval. This council is only a recommending body to the President. That said it is made up of 30 employees who represent a broad spectrum of the campus constituent groups. Nearly 50% of this council is made up of both full-time and part-time members of the faculty. The budget matrix, which the CPC recommended for approval, used best and worst case scenarios in terms of funding so that campus leadership could make the necessary class reductions in order to reduce overall FTES. The primary focus for the budget underlines the California Community College Mission of Transfer, Career & Technical

Education, and Basic Skills classes. In addition, it clearly states that the priorities which are to be used for class reductions are Recreational/Avocation, Stand-Alone, Under-Enrolled, Electives, and IGETC offerings. This was a top-to-bottom process which is designed to have the district reduce their overall FTES by as much as 1,085 should a 5% reduction in cap be mandated by the State.

Findings and Evidence

The current planning process at the College of the Desert was developed in fall 2009; the processes are codified in Board Policies in 1200 series cited in Board documents and on the web. Documents verify that the college has worked to make decision making open and participatory. The changes to make decision making more transparent were developed through several advisory groups: the Academic Senate, the Strategic Education Planning Process Committee and the Planning Council (IV.A.2; IV.2.A.1-5).

The hiring of the current president in fall 2007 set the tone for the current open college climate. The president is highly respected and is providing momentum for planning reorganization and active response to the state budget cuts that have occurred the last two years and those that are pending. An example of the new direction in governance was the president's decision to expand his cabinet…from one to two levels; the first level cabinet includes the vice presidents and the foundation director while the second level or tier of the (full) cabinet has the presidents of the three unions, and the president of associated students of the College of the Desert. The full cabinet concerns itself with strategic concerns of the college; efforts involving institutional change is the charge of the College Planning Council (CPC) (IV.A.3).

The president has made student learning outcomes a major college initiative. Under his leadership, the college has revised its mission, vision, and values statements. The college convocation is just one of the venues the president utilizes to articulate the college mission, vision and values; the board approved the current mission statement in 2009 (IV.A.3).

The visiting team found evidence that the president led an administrative reorganization effort to respond to long-term concerns expressed by the faculty about downsizing administration. Other cost cutting strategies include: cuts to summer, fall, and spring courses and administrative furloughs. The changes in administrative as well as academic structures are problematic to some faculty and staff. For example, pending cuts to basic skills courses is of concern to some members of the faculty and staff. The academic senate expressed in the self-study that there is a level of confusion about options and decision making procedures. Thus, there is need for the college to institute an educational program for all campus constituents to better inform stakeholders of the college's decision making processes. Yet, the College Orientation Program for new faculty, the flex activities for full and part-time faculty and the president's convocation and interviews with all new full-time faculty need to continue (IV.A.2.a; IV.A.2.b).

The College of the Desert established its planning and processes to make college decision making transparent, systematic and open to broad participation. These changes have been developed through various advisory groups: the Academic Senate, the Strategic Education Mater Planning (SEMP) Process Committee), the Planning Council, and the current College

Planning Council (CPC). The last three groups represent different stages in this process, with the SEMP Process Committee becoming the Planning Council, which was combined with the College Council into the CPC (IV.A.1; IV.2.a; IV.2.b).

The minutes and other documents support the meetings and decisions by various college groups. Furthermore, the president has provided leadership to and for all governance groups. In addition, the college has revised its mission, vision and values statements (IV.A.1a; IV.A.1b; IV.A.1c; IV.A.3).

The College of the Desert continues to plan and respond to the California Community College budget cuts by making program and services reductions and reorganizing administrative functions. Unfortunately, communication about many significant changes has been problematic to some staff. For example, there is a sentiment expressed by some faculty and staff that communication problems exist and they are unaware of the decision-making processes (IV.A.4).

The College of the Desert has established and implements policies and procedures for faculty, administrators and students in decision-making processes. In areas of policy, the roles of faculty and administration in decision-making are defined through Education Code 70901(b)(1)(E) and Assembly Bill 1725, which clearly delineate the areas in that the board and administration should "rely primarily upon" the Academic Senate and where the two groups should seek mutual agreement. Recently, these rules were formally reasserted when the board approved Academic Senate Resolution ASR 1-82. In April 2008, the College of the Desert Governing Board approved the Academic Senate Resolution 1.82; this action allows that the Academic Senate be consulted on 10 plus 1 categories of academic and professional matters of Title 5 and AB 1725 (IV.A.2.a.5; IV.A.2.a.6).

The deans' responsibilities are to implement board policy and district or college procedures as applicable. Under the direction of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the dean is to plan, manage, coordinate, schedule, and evaluate academic activities. Student needs are identified through SLO assessments, faculty observations, or by students bringing concerns to faculty or deans. These concerns, and recommendations to address them, are discussed in division and deans' meetings.

Students have a voice through ASCOD, which has regular campus elections for its officers and appoints representatives to the board, the CPC, and the Academic Senate. The ASCOD meets regularly to discuss issues of importance to students and to disseminate information to students about decisions made by the college (IV.A.2.a.7).

Strategic and annual planning for the college is managed through the CPC. The Council's existence, role, and operation are defined in the CPC handbook. The CPC is the primary shared governance body at College of the Desert and includes faculty representation from each academic division, from the Academic Senate, and from the two unions. Students and staff members also serve on the CPC. The planning process itself, as described in the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Process is highly detailed, starting from program review in all areas of the college and connecting by means of several coordinating steps to budget decisions and general resource allocations (IV.A.2.a.8-10).

Conclusions

The College of the Desert's leadership advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationship with external agencies. The institution responds to recommendations by external agencies in a prompt manner. The college has sound leadership which is focused on the college's mission as an institution with learning as its central mission. The state budget cuts have impacted the college, and the new academic and administrative reorganization which has occurred in recent years is a direct response to the budget issues.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7: In order to improve communications, the team recommends that the district institute an educational program for all campus constituent groups that seeks to better inform stakeholders on the decision-making processes that are currently in place (IV.A.2).

B.   Board and Administrative Organization

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.

Findings and Evidence

All board members were interviewed by selected team members, board minutes reviewed and the president was questioned to validate the board and president's role. The governing board is an independent policy making body and acts as one body. There were previous concerns about board micromanagement; yet, these are in the distant past. Regular board meetings are open to the public and meet at the main campus as well as other college locations. The board has a conflict of interest policy. Also, the board expressed that its job was twofold: (1) hire the president, and (2) delegate authority to the president to lead the institution. Bylaws of the Board of Trustees are contained in its Board Policy series and posted on the college's website. The five elected board members serve staggered terms of four years, and a student trustee, elected by the student body, serves a one-year term (IV.B.1.a; IV.B.1.j; IV.B.1.e).

The current college president was selected by the board and is evaluated annually. The board grants the president full authority, without interference from them, and hold him accountable for the day to day operations of the college. The president is highly visible and has an open door policy. There is evidence that the president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that the institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and practices (IV.B.1.j; IV.B.2.a-e; IV.B.2.c).

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Conclusions

Board Policy 2200 delineates the board's duties and responsibilities. It states that the board delegates power and authority to the chief executive to effectively lead the district. Board Policy 2430 delegates to the president the executive responsibility for administering the policies adopted by the board and executing all decisions of the board requiring administrative action. The board is made up of five members, which in effect means it only takes a majority vote to make things happen. The board needs to act as one body and in a way that ensures that decisions are being made based upon what is best for students. Board members should not be involved in the day-to-day operations of the college. The board's job is to establish policy and not to get involved with the day-to-day operations of the campus. The responsibility lies with the chief executive.

Board Policy 3100 states that the president shall establish organizational charts that delineate the lines of responsibility and fix the general duties of employees within the district. Under the auspices of the reorganization there are a number of decision-making layers within the college district which allow for input from all the constituent groups on campus. However, even though this decision-making model is in place it is not clearly understood by all campus constituent groups.

The College of the Desert meets standard 4.A, Decision-Making Roles and Processes and meets Standard 4.B, Board and Administrative Organization.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary (IV.B.1.e; II.A.6.c).