

How Do We Measure Up?

A personal views on our progress in responding to the recommendations of ACCJC and meeting all accreditation standards

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“An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution.”

Introduction: Shaping the Dialogue in ACCJC Accreditation Standards
<http://tinyurl.com/pdfAccredStandards>

The Show Cause Report due to ACCJC before March 15th will cover all the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards – essentially it will serve as a self-evaluation (a.k.a. Self Study) of CCSF. A first draft of the Show Cause Report is scheduled to be made available online on January 14th for college review and feedback, with a second draft to follow on February 11th, and all revisions finished for approval by the Board of Trustees on February 28th. Many people worked very hard during the Fall semester to respond to our ACCJC’s recommendations – both to adjust college practices to meet the standards, and to document the activities for the required Reports. During the winter break, Kristin Charles and Gohar Momjian put in long hours to prepare the draft Show Cause Report to be shared in less than two weeks.

Unfortunately, this unavoidably tight timeline will give the college community limited opportunities for the institution-wide dialogue that “must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process” – not only will our time for dialogue be short, but other pressing concerns will be vying for our attention in the early weeks of Spring 2013 -- classes getting underway, pressing SLO work to be done, pay cuts hitting the wallets (of those still employed) and labor contracts in negotiation.

Nonetheless, our Show Cause Report drafts and accompanying institution-wide dialogue will be key to understanding our successes and short-comings in meeting our primary purpose – fostering learning in our students. I recommend that you find some time before Spring 2013 gets under way to add to your familiarity with the standards themselves: <http://tinyurl.com/pdfAccredStandards> and the recommendations given to us by the commission: <http://tinyurl.com/a9ug6bh> . Build into your schedule for late January some time for reviewing the draft Report as soon as it becomes available.

The rest of this paper represents my personal, general overview of what I expect to find in the drafts and how well I think we meet the standards. It is based on my still inadequate knowledge of City College and on what I have learned in accreditation work – reading and rereading the standards and the recommendations of ACCJC, attending the Accreditation Steering Committee, the Board of Trustees meetings, the Chancellor’s Forum, and other assemblies, and reviewing or contributing to some of the templates that are supplying information for the first draft.

I. A. Mission

CCSF now has a policy and practice of an annual review of the mission statement, as was recommended. I expect that our Report will include goals for improving that process – including improvements in the use of data and constituency (especially student) input.

Harder to gauge is how well we are following the visiting team’s advice to “assure the mission of the college is obtainable based on accurate short-term and long-term funding assumptions.” Our current mission statement embeds priorities (primary mission and addition programs and service). I expect that our Report will say that we are doing better than we were, but that this is still a goal rather than an accomplishment.

I. B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The standards require a robust, integrated planning process that links SLO work, performance metrics, program review and college plans to ensure that the budget directs resources towards supporting success in student learning in accordance with the college mission. In March, 2012, the visiting team praised “the potential of the CCSF model for program review” but pointed out unacceptable gaps in our planning process in actual practice. “To improve effectiveness, the planning system needs to be fully implemented and strongly associated with program performance, accountability, and the allocation of resources based on ongoing revenues.” (Visiting team report, p. 12.)

I expect that the Report will acknowledge difficulties and outline continuing work to improve the accuracy and completeness of data, especially data in regards to assigning costs and revenues for programs and for our campuses, centers, and sites.

This year, we have a much more complete planning process articulated. However, our Report will honestly acknowledge that most of the process beyond the submission of unit program reviews has yet to be implemented. We have very well developed plans for planning but have not yet advanced deeply into the activities listed in the timeline that will base our future decisions on solid data. It is also unclear whether the college uses quantitative data in all the contexts that ACCJC recommends.

I have some concern about how well we will meet the requirement that “the planning process is broad-based,” and “offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies.” At other colleges, the process of consolidating information from unit program reviews and identifying priorities for each of the top-level divisions is done with input from committees that include constituent representatives. Our plan does not currently include constituent input in developing the division priorities although it does specify that the Chancellor will convene the Governance Council to determine overall prioritization.

II. A. Instructional Programs

We will be reporting on our SLO work in both the Show Cause Report and in a separate SLO report (that all colleges must file). CCSF now documents substantial compliance with SLO requirements for instructional programs online. Nearly 100% of the departments in Academic Affairs have reached or surpassed the proficiency level of SLO work for courses and programs. For general education requirements, certificates and degrees, SLO work is proceeding but is not yet at the required levels. I expect that the ACCJC will agree that we have made great progress but haven’t yet reached the goal for SLO proficiency.

This section of the Show Cause Report may require some discussion of the uncertain future of the Division of Academic Affairs. Department chairs plan, encourage, coordinate, and document SLO work. I haven't received any information about who will provide the leadership and muscle for SLO work in departments that lose their discipline chairs in the restructuring of Academic Affairs.

II. B. Student Support Services

Great progress has been made in addressing SLO requirements in Student Support Services for both courses and counseling programs. Student Development unit reports due to be posted at the end of January will document this progress. I expect our Show Cause Report to lay out further steps that will be required to fully meet the standards.

ACCJC's recommendations to CCSF asked us to address needs for student services "regardless of location or means of delivery." Our Report will include significant attention to the needs of students at the various campus / centers. However, CCSF has taken few steps to ensure that services (especially counseling) are available to students in our distance learning programs. This issue may be one of our weaker areas.

II. C. Library and Learning Support Services

ACCJC found CCSF to be meeting the standards for Library and Learning Support Services -- the only standard area for which ACCJC did not give us a formal recommendation. Nonetheless, our Report will have planning agendas for further improvement and may address the leadership gap that will result from the Academic Affairs restructuring. That plan (in the most recent version I've seen) calls for Library Services to report directly to a Vice Chancellor, with neither its own department chair nor its own administrator.

III. A. Human Resources

Our Report will show that language has been negotiated with the bargaining units to comply with ACCJC's recommendation that the "evaluation of faculty and others directly responsible for student ... include a component that assesses the effectiveness in bringing about those learning outcomes." I expect the agreed-upon language to be in use in Spring 2013.

ACCJC also advised CCSF about deficiencies in human resources. Since this is a controversial area, I quote some passages from the Commission's letter by Dr. Beno on July 2, 2012

[http://www.accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CCSF Action Letter July 2 2012.pdf](http://www.accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CCSF_Action_Letter_July_2_2012.pdf)

OR <http://tinyurl.com/july2letter>

The Commission is concerned about adequacy of administrative leadership. Many of the administrative staff positions, including the Chancellor position, are filled by temporary employees, and the College lacks adequate numbers of administrators with the appropriate administrative structure and authority to provide oversight and leadership for the institution's operations. (p. 3)

Eligibility Requirement 5, Administrative Capacity

The college does not have sufficient administrative staff with appropriate experience to support the necessary services for an institution of its size, mission, and purpose. (p. 4)

Recommendation 7, Human Resources

To fully meet Standard III.A Human Resources, the team recommends that the college assess the adequacy of its current number of qualified classified staff and administrators and their appropriate preparation and experience necessary to support the institution's mission and purpose. The college must ensure that human resource planning is fully integrated with the institutional program review, planning and budgeting processes and linked to the annual allocations of funding to maintain and improve institutional effectiveness. (p. 6)

Our Administration has focused attention on human resources and initiated many changes. It is unclear to me how well some of the changes align with the standards and eligibility requirements. The commission expressed concern with the stability of our administrative leadership and directed us to fully integrate human resource planning with the planning and budgeting process. Changes currently underway at CCSF have not been integrated with the cycle of planning that starts with program review and some seem more likely to decrease, rather than increase, stability in leadership.

The administration will be hiring for all the administrative positions in Academic Affairs (to start with) with no guarantees that the experienced incumbents will be rehired. The short term uncertainties and the potential for major losses in continuity will challenge, rather than strengthen, administrative oversight and leadership. The reduction in the number of interim Vice Chancellors from four to two is not controversial, but the position announcements for their replacements (posted Dec. 18) favors the hiring of those who have recently retired from similar positions. For retirees from California Community Colleges, there is a legal cap limiting their re-employment pay – unless the State of California legislates a change. Since the two year commitment that the job announcement seeks is not longer than the two years that interim administrators may work, this does not seem to align with the spirit of ACCJC's recommendations. Although ACCJC's found that we have too few classified staff, their numbers continue to decrease, not only through attrition but layoffs are now anticipated. The selection of units to be downsized through these layoffs is not integrated with our planning process. Our Show Cause Report will need to honestly reflect the different perspectives of the college community about our successes and shortcomings in this area.

III. B. Physical Resources

I expect our Report to show that progress is being made in tracking the costs to operate and maintain facilities, with plans for continuing this work.

III. C. Technology Resources

A comprehensive technology plan has been drafted. It has been reviewed by college constituent groups and by the Board of Trustees Facilities, Infrastructure, and Technology Committee. It will go to the full Board of Trustees in a month or two.

III. D. Financial Resources

For this part of the standards, CCSF is responding to two recommendations and two findings concerning eligibility requirements. My (oversimplified) understanding is that the Commission identified for us two types of shortcomings in this area: shortcomings in process (from the budgeting process to the audit process) and a lack of sufficient financial resources to meet our mission. Our Show Cause Report will state that some of the shortcomings in process have been addressed (e.g. audit

competed on time) and that others are planned for the future, but not yet implemented. (e.g. the 2012-2013 Annual Plan was not formally approved by the Board of Trustees. and the 2012-13 Budget was not reviewed by any participatory governance body.) The FCMAT report was received in September and several of its financial recommendations are being implemented. Whether or not we funds are being allocated in the best way to support student learning is another area of controversy.

IV. A. Decision Making Roles and Processes

As recommended, CCSF engaged the services of several external organizations to provide governance training for all college constituencies, including trustees. Additional written recommendations from that process were included in the materials considered by the leaders of constituent groups to make improvements to governance structures. The old Board policy on shared governance was replaced by new policies for participatory governance. The Participatory Governance Council has met and its committees are being formed. The Academic Senate is reforming and restructuring its committees with revised guidelines to remove barriers to decision making and to clarify roles. Initial changes for both the Participatory Governance System and the Academic Senate Committees should be complete by mid March with further changes to be based on evaluation. Associated Students is also working on changes to encourage student participation in Governance.

IV. B. Board and Administrative Organization

I have not seen any preliminary drafts or templates for this section apart from a list of Board accomplishments and planning agenda items that was discussed briefly at the December Board meeting. Section IV.B is being written by the Accreditation Liaison Officer and the Chancellor with input from the Trustees. When the draft of Section IV.B. becomes available, I hope to find the same honesty in acknowledging shortcomings that will inform the other sections of the Show Cause Report, as well as documentation of considerable progress.

Since July, the Board of Trustees has been very focused on accreditation issues. Board Policies that have been rewritten or revised including policies concerning the conduct of meetings and governance. A facilitated retreat for the Board of Trustees was held in August that established a plan for Board Development. The self-evaluation of the Board was conducted in connection with the August retreat. However no process for District constituent groups to offer input on the Board's performance was provided in conjunction with the Board's self-evaluation.

Further Reading

Accreditation Standards http://www.ccsf.edu/Organizations/Academic_Senate/ACCJCStandards.pdf

CCSF Action Letter, July 2, 2012: <http://tinyurl.com/a9ug6bh> .

Evaluation Report by the ACCJC team that visited in March 2012: <http://tinyurl.com/ae4osr8>

CCSF 10/15/12 Progress Report to ACCJC: <http://tinyurl.com/Oct15rpt>