



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 7, 2014

Dr. Larry Buckley, President
Cañada College
4200 Farm Hill Boulevard
Redwood City, CA 94061

Dear President Buckley:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 8-10, 2014, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Cañada College October 21-24, 2013, and considered the presentation by College representatives.

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** with the requirement that the College complete a **Follow-Up Report** that must be submitted by **October 15, 2014**.¹ The Report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is granted when an institution is found to substantially meet or exceed the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Report should demonstrate, and the visiting team will verify, that the institution has addressed the recommendation noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Accreditation Standards.

Need to Correct Deficiencies:

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in any Standard will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students. The Commission found Cañada College deficient in meeting the following Accreditation Standard: II.A.2.e. Please note that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when an institution is not in compliance with Standards, the Commission “must immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the agency’s standards within a time period that must not exceed...two years.” Cañada College should fully resolve the noted deficiency by October 2015.

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College Recommendation 2

In order to meet the Standard, the College must review its system for identifying course outlines of record that are out of date to improve and implement a curriculum process that ensures all Course Outlines of Record are reviewed and curriculum currency is maintained. (II.A.2.e)

Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness:

Recommendations have been made for Cañada College and the San Mateo Community College District to improve institutional effectiveness. Recommendations for improvement may be made to highlight areas for continuing or expanding excellent practices. Recommendations for improvement may also be made when an institution is currently in compliance with Standards, but additional levels of effort should be demonstrated in the future. In the Commission's experience, these recommendations may provide indicators of possible future noncompliance if left unattended by the institution. The College should plan to fully address all improvement recommendations in the Midterm Report.

College Recommendation 1

In order to improve institutional effectiveness the college should provide evidence of the robust dialogue that exists at the College between planning councils and governance groups, particularly the exchanges that relate to planning and resource allocation outcomes and processes. (I.B.4)

District Recommendation 1

In order to increase effectiveness, the District and Colleges should broadly communicate the modification of the evaluation process for faculty and others directly responsible for student progress, which includes student learning outcomes, and ensure that the process is fully implemented. (III.A.1.c)

District Recommendation 2

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the Board of Trustees should develop goals for increasing its professional development and orientation of new Trustees. (IV.B.1.f)

District Recommendation 3

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the District should establish a regular cycle for the evaluation of its services and provide documentation regarding the outcomes of the evaluations. (IV.B.3.b, IV.B.3.g)

The Commission voted to convey the following comments to Cañada College and the San Mateo Community College District.

The team report noted three specific challenges that the evaluation teams experienced during the site visit. First, the District Chancellor was unavailable to

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the team for the majority of the visit. Comprehensive evaluation visits are scheduled well in advance, and the Commission expects top administrators to be available to the team during the visit.

Second, per a reported directive from the Chancellor, additional staff members were required to attend scheduled team interviews with district staff members even though these additional individuals were not invited to participate in the interviews by the members of the evaluation team. Although the evaluation team overcame this challenge and was able to complete its duties, this is problematic. It made the work of the team more difficult and created an awkward situation. The Commission charges evaluation teams with examining evidence from the college, and one of the methods of gathering or confirming evidence is through the interview process. By including observers not requested by the team, interviewees may be reluctant to share information because of a lack of assurance of confidentiality.

Third, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report should, in addition to demonstrating adherence to the Accreditation Standards, demonstrate ongoing efforts by the college to continually improve its performance and effectiveness. (Standard I.B.2) An important way the Commission expects colleges to carry out this task is by including actionable improvement plans in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that contain future actions to be implemented by the college. The Commission noted that the Institutional Self Evaluation Report for Cañada College did not include actionable improvement plans.

The Commission is concerned about the implications of the three challenges experienced by the evaluation team. These actions, not having a key leader available, not respecting the interview requests and confidentiality of the evaluation interview process, and failing to develop and include actionable improvement plans are behaviors not conducive to maintaining positive relations between the College/District and the Commission. Eligibility Requirement 21 concerns the integrity of relations between Colleges and the Commission. It states that the “institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies...”

The Commission carries out its accreditation function in a professional and balanced manner while ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of the process. Accreditation is a complex and demanding process, and the future cooperation of Cañada College and the District will assist the Commission in assuring the quality of institutional activities.

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The External Evaluation Report that was sent to the institution provides details of the team's findings with regard to each Eligibility Requirement and Accreditation Standard and should be read carefully and used to understand the team's findings.

The recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit, but may not describe all that is necessary to come into compliance. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, Cañada College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

A **final** copy of the External Evaluation Team Report is attached. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that the College give the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to College staff and to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the Chancellor, campus leadership, and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this Commission action letter be made available to students and the public by placing a copy on the College website. *Please note that in response to public interest in disclosure, the Commission now requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no farther than one click from the institution's home page.*

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness, and educational quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

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¹Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission*. It contains the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. It is available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).