



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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July 2, 2012

Dr. Benjamin T. Duran
Superintendent/President
Merced College
3600 M Street
Merced, CA 95348

Dear President Duran:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting June 6-8, 2012, reviewed the Follow-Up Report submitted by the College and the report of the evaluation team which visited Thursday, April 12-Friday, April 13, 2012. The Commission took action to continue Merced College on **Warning**, and require that the College complete a Follow-Up Report by **March 15, 2013**. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.¹

Warning is issued when the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or Commission policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission. The Commission may require an institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies and may subject the institution to required reports and evaluation visits. During the warning period the institution remains accredited.

The Merced College Follow-Up Report should demonstrate that the institution has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets the Commission's Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

Recommendation 1: Program Review

In order to meet the standard and ensure that progress continues toward achieving the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges' rubric for program review, the team recommends that the college continue to apply the recommendations of the 1999 and 2005 comprehensive evaluation teams, fully implement its new program review process, and ensure that the process is ongoing, systematic and used to assess and improve student learning and achievement and that the results of program review are used to continually refine and improve program practices. (I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.5, II.A, II.A.5, II.C.2, III.D.3)

Recommendation 3: Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation, and Decision-Making Process

In order to meet the standard and ensure that the college progresses toward the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges' rubric for planning, the team recommends that the college continue to apply the recommendations of the 1999 and 2005 comprehensive evaluation teams and ensure that its established planning processes included ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning with clearly established timelines to refine its key processes and improve student learning. The team recommends that the college conduct dialogue about institutional effectiveness that is ongoing, robust and pervasive, continue collecting data, and ensure that analyses of the data are widely distributed and used throughout the institution, that there is ongoing review and adaptation of evaluation and planning processes; that there is a consistent and continuous commitment to improving student learning; and that educational effectiveness is a demonstrable priority in all planning structures and processes. (I.A.4, I.B.2, I.B.3, 4, II.A.2, III.A.2, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.1.a)

Recommendation 4: Communication:

In order to meet this standard, the team recommends that the College improve communication by engaging in dialogue that is inclusive, respectful, intentional informed, and documented and about institutional quality and improvement. The dialogue should purposefully guide institutional change. This dialogue must include the use of the participatory governance process to develop and implement a plan for effective communication links so that information and recommendations are disseminated to all constituent groups. (I.A.4, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, III.A.4.c)

Recommendation 5: Governing Board

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the Board model to the college its commitment to continuous improvement, develop and implement a written comprehensive Board development plan that includes, but does not rely primarily on travel and attendance at conferences, and specifically includes delegation of authority to the CEO (policy) without interference in the operation of the college, an examination of the participatory governance processes and the extent to which the Board's behavior supports those governance structures, accreditation standards for Board performance; and analysis of the governing board's 2010 self-evaluation and a plan for improvement. (IV.A.2.a, b; IV.A.3, IV.A.4, IV.A.5, IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.1.i, IV.B.1.j)

With regard to Recommendation 5, please note that all recommendations from the comprehensive evaluation are to be monitored for maintenance of effort after they have been resolved. Although Recommendation 5: Governing Board, was noted as fully met in the team report, the board development activities should continue to address delegation of authority to the CEO without interference in the operation of the college, examination of the participatory governance processes, and the extent to which the Board's behavior supports those governance structures, Accreditation Standards for Board performance, and the Board's self-evaluation with plans for improvement.

Dr. Benjamin T. Duran
Merced College
July 2, 2012

Recommendation 8: Human Resources

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the college develop and implement an organizational structure that includes a fully functional human resources division and develop, implement, and evaluate a Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan in order to adequately assess its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission. The team recommends that processes for hiring classified and management staff be integrated with Institutional Planning. The College also needs to systematically assess the effective use of human resources and use the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement. (III.A.1.b, III.A.3, III.A.4.a-c, III.A.6.)

The Commission notes that Recommendation 1 on Program Review and Recommendation 3 on Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation, and Decision-Making Process were deficiencies noted by the 1999 and 2005 evaluation teams. Merced College's inability to completely address these issues in a reasonable period of time is a matter of grave concern to the Commission.

I wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with Accreditation Standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. Merced College must completely resolve the deficiencies by **March 2013** or the Commission will be compelled to act. Sustaining the activities after deficiencies are resolved is a critical element of institutional effectiveness and accreditation.

The Follow-Up Visit 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 Follow-Up Visit 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, Merced College is expected to use the Follow-Up Visit Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

The Follow-Up Report will become part of the accreditation history of the College and should be used in preparing for the next comprehensive evaluation. I have previously sent you a copy of the Follow-Up Visit Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that you give the report and this letter appropriate dissemination to your College staff and to those who were signatories of your College report. This group should include the campus leadership, and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that all reports be made available to students and the public. Placing a copy on the College website can accomplish this.

Dr. Benjamin T. Duran
Merced College
July 2, 2012

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

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Dr. Anne Newins, Accreditation Liaison Officer
President, Board of Trustees, Merced Community College District
Dr. Jackie Fisher, Sr., Team Chair

¹ Institutions that will be preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review the new publication *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: (www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc).