



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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June 30, 2008

Dr. James Hottois  
Superintendent/President  
Palo Verde College  
One College Drive  
Blythe, CA 92225

Dear President Hottois:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on June 4-6, 2008, reviewed the institutional self study report and the report of the evaluation team which visited Palo Verde College on Sunday March 16 - Thursday, March 20, 2008. The Commission acted to issue a **Warning** and to ask that Palo Verde College correct the deficiencies noted. The College is required to complete a Report by **October 15, 2008**. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

A **warning** is issued when the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course of action which deviates from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards of accreditation, or policy to an extent that raises a concern regarding the ability of the institution to meet accreditation standards. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period. However, the institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed until the conditions, which warranted the warning, are removed.

This sanction constitutes a public sanction as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions in the Commission's *Accreditation Reference Handbook*. As such, the action will be noted on the Commission's website.

I also wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. Palo Verde College must correct the deficiencies noted by the Commission meeting in **January 2009**.

**R E C E I V E D**  
JUL - 3 2008

SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT  
PALO VERDE COLLEGE

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While the recommendations identified as deficiencies were also noted by the year 2002 evaluation team (1 and 3), the Commission noted that the College's Focused Midterm report demonstrated progress addressing the previously-noted recommendation on the institutional planning process (2002 Recommendation 1), and the Commission encouraged continued progress. However, the current visiting team report notes that the institution has failed to sustain progress toward meeting Commission standards and is out of compliance. Similarly, the College addressed the recommendation on the catalog (Recommendation 3) to the satisfaction of the Commission at the time of the 2005 Midterm Report; however, the 2008 evaluation observed that the catalog failed to maintain clear and complete course information, to list student learning outcomes, or to be consistent with the listing of course hours (sometimes by week, sometimes by the total for the semester). Therefore, this recommendation is repeated by the 2008 visiting team.

The Report of October 15, 2008 should focus on the institution's resolution of the recommendations noted below:

**Recommendation #1:** The team recommends that the College engage in systematic educational program planning guided by strategic dialogue and data. This planning should include the following:

- Planning course offerings so students can complete a program in a timely manner (II.A.2);
- Educational program planning based on data about community and student needs (II.A.2);
- Clearly disseminating information about procedures to approve and evaluate courses and programs (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e).

With regard to Recommendation #1, the Commission is concerned that institutional planning is not anticipating the fiscal vulnerability of the College given the reliance on enrollment from correctional facilities and an Instructional Services Agreement (ISA) for in-service training provided in another college district. If that agreement were to be rescinded, a large portion of the College enrollment would be lost. The October 2008 Report should demonstrate that the College has developed an enrollment management plan that includes contingencies to address over-reliance on ISA enrollments. Therefore the Commission makes the following recommendation:

**Commission Recommendation #1:** The college should analyze and discuss the impact of current enrollment patterns, specifically the overreliance on a single ISA, on the fiscal stability of the college and develop a contingency plan for fiscal stability should the ISA be reduced or lost.

**Recommendation #2:** The team recommends that the College more systematically evaluate its processes using both quantitative and qualitative data. The following processes are especially in need of systematic assessment:

- Professional Development Programs (III.A.5.b);
- Effective use of human resources – allocation of human resources (III.A.6);
- Strategic Planning and Budgeting processes (I.B.6, III.D.2);
- Financial Management practices (III.D.2.g).

**Commission Recommendation #2:** The College should provide evidence that faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes (III.A.1.c).

**Recommendation #3:** As noted by the 2002 team, the College should ensure that the College catalog provides clear and precise program and course description information about their degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected SLOs (II.A.6, II.B.2, ER 20).

**Commission Recommendation #3:** The College should ensure its compliance with standards relating to the evaluation of administrators (III.A.1.b, III.A.5, IV.B.1.j).

**Commission Recommendation #4:** The College should demonstrate that its Program Review processes are fully integrated with the budget and planning processes and at the proficiency level as described in the Commission's Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness Parts I and II (I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, III.A.6, III.B.2.a-b, III.C.2, III.D.3).

The recommendations contained in the evaluation team report represent the observations of the evaluation team at the time of the visit. The Commission reminds you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the team report, the College is expected to use the report to improve the educational programs and services of the institution.

A revised copy of the evaluation team report is attached. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires you to give the team report and this letter appropriate dissemination to your College staff and to those who were signatories of your College self study report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that the team report and the self study report be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the College library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your web site or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.

All colleges are required to file a Midterm Report in the third year after each comprehensive evaluation. Palo Verde College should submit the Midterm Report by **March 15, 2011**. Midterm Reports indicate continued resolution toward meeting the evaluation team's recommendations and forecast where the College expects to be by the time of the next comprehensive evaluation. The Report also includes a summary of progress on College-identified plans for improvement as expressed in the self study.

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The College conducted a comprehensive self study as part of its evaluation. The Commission suggests that the plans for improvement of the institution included in that document be taken into account in the continuing development of Palo Verde College. The next comprehensive evaluation of the College will occur during Spring 2014.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to remind you that federal legislation affecting accrediting agencies requires that accredited Colleges conduct systematic assessment of educational outcomes (see especially Standards One and Two). A further requirement is that accrediting agencies pay close attention to student loan default rates.

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 quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/tl

cc: Mr. Brian Thieboux, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Board President, Palo Verde CCD  
Dr. W. David Pelham, Team Chair  
Evaluation Team Members  
Ms. Linda Henderson, U.S. DOE



Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

***PREPARATION OF A FOLLOW-UP REPORT WITH A VISIT***

A **Follow-Up Report** is a report requested by the Commission for special purposes. It can occur at any time in the 6-year accreditation cycle. A Follow-Up Report requires that the institution provide information, evidence, and analysis regarding the resolution of the issues to which it was directed by the Commission's Action Letter. The institution's report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the institution will be notified as to what action, if any, it must take next.

Visits accompanying Follow-Up Reports are normally one-day visits by a team of two members, typically the chair of the comprehensive evaluation team familiar with the issues confronting the institution and a member of the Commission or Commission staff. The team is appointed by the Commission and reviewed by the institution in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest. \*

The purposes of the team conducting this visit are to:

- verify the accuracy and relevance of the report submitted by the college in response to the specific action of the Commission
- determine the extent to which the institution now meets the Commission standards cited in the recommendations
- report findings and recommendations to the Commission

**Follow-Up Report Format**

The following format for the report should be used:

1. **Cover Sheet**  
Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Follow-Up Report.
2. **Table of Contents**
3. **Statement on Report Preparation**  
The statement, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.
4. **Response to Team Recommendations and the Commission Action Letter**  
Each recommendation identified by the Commission in its action letter should be identified and discussed. The report should describe the resolution of each recommendation, analyze the results achieved to date, provide evidence of the results, and indicate what additional plans the institution has developed.
5. **The Follow-Up Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission**

**Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges**  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

The institution is required to send **three copies** of its report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. The hard copies of the report should be sent to the Commission's mailing address at 10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949. The electronic version of the report should be transmitted to [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org).

A copy should also be sent to each team member listed on the team roster who will visit the institution. The date of the visit is listed on the team roster.

\* Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process. (Adopted January 2005) *Accrediting Reference Handbook*

JUN 30 2008

EVALUATION REPORT  
PALO VERDE COLLEGE

One College Drive  
Blythe, CA 92225

A Confidential Report Prepared for  
The Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited Palo Verde College from  
March 16 through March 20, 2008.

Dr. W. David Pelham, Chair

Palo Verde College  
Comprehensive Evaluation Visit Team Roster  
March 16-20, 2008

Dr. W. David Pelham (Chair)  
Superintendent/President  
Cuesta College

Dr. Mary Beth Buechner  
Professor, Biology  
Cosumnes River College

Ms. Michelle Van Aalst (Team Asst.)  
Instructor, English  
College of the Siskiyous

Dr. Linda Rose  
Instructional Dean, Liberal Arts  
Cerritos College

Ms. Marilyn McBride  
Vice President of Instruction  
Canada College

Mr. Lawrence Serot  
Vice President, Admin. Services  
Glendale Community College

Mr. Alvin Tagomori  
Vice Chancellor, Student Services  
Maui Community College

Dr. Chui Tsang  
Superintendent/President  
Santa Monica College

Dr. Frederick 'Fritz' Wenck  
Trustee  
Lake Tahoe Community College

Ms. Lisa Gray  
Executive Assistant, President's  
Office  
Cuesta College

## Summary of the Evaluation Report

INSTITUTION: Palo Verde College

DATE OF VISIT: March 16-20, 2008

TEAM CHAIR: W. David Pelham  
Cuesta College

A ten member accreditation team visited Palo Verde College located in Blythe, California in mid-March for the purpose of evaluating the institution's request to reaffirm accreditation. During the time just prior to the visit the team chair was transitioning from Superintendent/President of College of the Siskiyous to the same position at Cuesta College. As a result of the timing of this transition the team chair requested from the Commission permission to have a team assistant from both College of the Siskiyous and Cuesta College. The expense for the additional team member was born by Cuesta College.

Palo Verde College's main campus is located in Blythe and it has a satellite center in Needles, California as well. In addition to these locations, the College offers instruction in numerous other sites both inside and outside the district through a combination of traditional correspondence course type distance learning and instructional service agreements where the College offers distance and face-to-face instruction.

The College staff prepared well for the team visit. The team room was well stocked with the appropriate documents. In virtually every interaction with College staff the team was greeted with openness and friendliness. Requests for information were responded to with quick, complete and honest responses. This was especially true of the College's administration.

The self-study document was prepared in the fall of 2007. While team members expressed concern prior to the visit that the document lacked the level of evidentiary support expected, the team found substantially more evidence to support the assertions in the self-study once they arrived on campus.

Palo Verde College serves a somewhat economically distressed area of the desert southeast of California. College programs are designed and delivered in formats focused on the needs of the residents of the district. A unique aspect to the population of the district is the high number of prison inmates which are contained within its numbers. The College has worked hard to provide inmate education programs that meet both the needs of that group of students and respond to the unique constraints provided by teaching students inside prison walls.

Partially because of the small traditional college aged population being served by the district, Palo Verde College has had to look for innovative ways to serve students. The correspondence program involving large numbers of inmates is an illustration of this innovation. In addition, the College has entered into instructional service agreements in several areas of the state. Having so much of its enrollment contained in these two program areas is a concern for the College. The College may have little or no choice over the need to be involved in these programs. However,

the nature of these programs means that a decision by a single outside agency over which Palo Verde has little control could have a substantial and unforeseen negative impact on its enrollment.

## **Commendations**

Having acknowledged the potentially tenuous nature of the prison program the team was nevertheless impressed with the College's efforts to ensure that this program and other distance education programs provide students with a high quality educational experience.

- 1. The team commends the College for reaching out to the community using modes of instruction that are suited to the specific population being addressed. (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.d)**

Another area which especially impressed the team was the perception of openness of communication and decision-making. The Superintendent/President was frequently singled out for praise in this area. It is worth noting that this was an area which the previous visiting team found merited a recommendation. In addition, since the last accreditation visit the Superintendent/President received a vote of no confidence by the faculty, classified staff and the students.

- 2. The Team observed that the College has made significant progress in developing formal processes for soliciting input from all constituent groups into its operation and decision making. (IV.A)**

## **Recommendations**

After carefully reading the self-study, examining evidence, interviewing college personnel and students and discussing the findings in light of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges August 2007 Guide to Evaluating Institutions the team offers the following recommendations. The recommendations are based upon the specific standards cited in parentheses following each component of the recommendation. In later parts of the report these recommendations are further clarified in the discussions of the specific standards cited in the recommendations.

- 1. The Team recommends that the College engage in systematic educational program planning guided by strategic dialogue and data. This planning should include the following:**
  - Planning course offerings so students can complete a program in a timely manner (II.A.2)**
  - Educational program planning based on data about community and student needs (II.A.2)**



- **Clearly disseminating information about procedures to approve and evaluate courses and programs (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e)**

It was noted by the team that the most recent Education Master Plan is dated 1997. While the team found that planning was going on throughout most of the institution it also found some gaps in institutional planning. For further explanation of each of these areas please reference the Findings and Evidence discussion under Standard II.A.

2. **The Team recommends that the College more systematically evaluate its processes using both quantitative and qualitative data. The following processes are especially in need of systematic assessment:**

- **Professional Development Programs (III.A.5.b)**
- **Effective use of human resources – allocation of human resources (III.A.6)**
- **Strategic Planning and Budgeting processes (I.B.6, III.D.2)**
- **Financial Management practices (III.D.2.g)**

While the team found processes which seem to be operating effectively for the College in each of these areas there did not seem to be regular assessment procedures in place to ensure that these processes continue to operate to the benefit of the College. For further explanation of each of these areas please reference the Findings and Evidence discussions under Standard III.A, III.B and III.D.

3. **The College should ensure that the college catalog provides clear and precise program and course description information about their degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected SLOs. (Standard II.A.6,II.B.2)**

Course descriptions are consistent with course outlines of record, but programs and courses are not adequately described in clear and complete terms. In particular, course descriptions are not consistent with respect to required hours of instruction, and program descriptions are incomplete and confusing.

# ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR PALO VERDE COLLEGE MARCH 16-20, 2008

## INTRODUCTION

The Palo Verde Community College District serves a geographically large district in Southeastern California. The College's enrollment in the Fall of 2007 was 3,919 students. These students were divided between the Blythe Campus, Needles Center, Spring Street Campus, various correctional facilities and several in-service training contracts.

In mid-March of 2008 a ten person accreditation visiting team visited the campus for the purpose of evaluating the Colleges request for reaffirmation of accreditation. The following report reflects the results of that visit.

### Palo Verde College History

Palo Verde College was founded on September 15, 1947 as part of the Palo Verde Unified School District. Its first home was with Palo Verde High School on a former Army Air Corp training base six miles from the center of Blythe. By 1950 the College's enrollment had reached 250 students.

In September 1958, the College moved to a Spanish style building on East Hobsonway in Blythe which had previously served as an elementary school and high school. At about that time athletics began to develop at the College. 1966 was the College's last year at the East Hobsonway campus and its enrollment had reached 472 students.

In September of 1967 Palo Verde College moved to a site adjacent to the high school campus on the corner of Lovekin Blvd. and Chanslorway in Blythe. On July 1, 1973 the Palo Verde Community College District separated from the Palo Verde Unified School District. The College had a 5 person Board of Trustees and it was at about this time that the curriculum at Palo Verde expanded to include vocational-technical, developmental and continuing education instruction. In 1978 athletics were discontinued at the College due to financial concerns.

In 1998 the Palo Verde Community College District annexed the eastern section of San Bernardino County – an area coterminous with the Needles Unified School District – and added two seats to its Board of Trustees. This brought the total the total membership on the Board to 7 and provided representation to the San Bernardino section of the district. In 1998 the College began staffing a center at Needles High School. In 2005 the College created School Facilities District Number 1 which encompasses the entire San Bernardino section of the Palo Verde Community College District. The voters in SFID #1 approved school bonds to remodel a former retail building in Needles with a 66.6666% vote in the affirmative. That facility will become the Needles Center and is scheduled to be occupied in September, 2008. Enrollment at the Needles center has remained consistent at around 275 for the last several years.

During the Spring of 2001 the College began a partnership with Ironwood State Prison, located in Blythe to offer distance education to inmates at the prison. Since then the College's distance education program has grown significantly and has been recognized by the State of California as a "best practice". The program has also received national recognition by being featured on the National Geographic Channel. In the Fall of 2007 the program reached 932 students and has expanded to other penitentiaries, though most of these students reside at the Ironwood facility.

Also in 2001, the College occupied Phase 1 of a new campus located on a bluff 6 miles outside Blythe. At that time the College's total enrollment had grown to 3,652 students. During the Fall Semester of 2006 the College occupied the Technology Building which represents Phase 2 of the new Blythe campus. The College has nearly completed the construction of the Physical Education Complex, Phase 3, and anticipates occupying that facility sometime in 2008.

### Palo Verde College's Students and Unique Challenges

In the Fall of 2007 the College reported its enrollment as 3,919. Of these students, 23% were at the Main Campus in Blythe, 32% were enrolled in In-Service training, 24% were in correctional facilities 7% were enrolled at the Needles Center and 14% were enrolled at the Spring Street Campus

The College has worked hard to meet the needs of its students at a distance. The College has been diligent in responding to the obvious challenges of providing support services to students in prison facilities. However, Palo Verde has the additional challenge of providing counseling services to students receiving in-service training that is conducted in the service district of other colleges. PVC has attained the needed permission to offer the training but complications can arise when they begin to counsel students on additional educational opportunities.

Another unique challenge for the College is the fact that so many of its students are in two programs. It is worth noting that 54% of the students at Palo Verde College are enrolled in either in-service training programs or reside in corrections facilities. Both of these programs are provided at the pleasure of other agencies. For example, the Department of Corrections could decide to take over inmate education as has been the case in other states (Florida is one example). This situation presents a unique challenge to Palo Verde College's planning efforts. However, it should also be noted that a large number of the inmates enrolled in the distance education program are housed in institutions within the Palo Verde Community College District. As such, these students certainly fall within the mission of the College to educate the members of its district.

## Eligibility Requirements

### 1. Authority

Palo Verde College District is a member of the California Community College System which is regulated by the California Community College Board of Governors. Further, the College is fully accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

### 2. Mission

The team confirmed that the Vision, Mission and Values statements of Palo Verde College were reviewed and adopted by the Board of Trustees. The Mission Statement has been reviewed three times since 2002.

### 3. Governing Board

The college is governed by a seven member Board of Trustees that is locally elected. The team confirmed that the Board makes policy decisions and is kept well informed of significant issues at the College.

### 4. Chief Executive Officer

The team confirmed that the College has a Chief Executive Officer whose sole responsibility is providing leadership for the College.

### 5. Administrative Capacity

The team determined that the College had sufficient administrative staff, all adequately prepared and experienced, to operate the College.

### 6. Operational Status

The team found the College to be fully operational with students actively pursuing degree and certificate programs.

### 7. Degrees

A substantial portion of the College's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in these programs.

### 8. Educational Programs

The team certifies that Palo Verde College offers a range of degree and certificates programs that are consistent with the College Mission and are provided in a manner conventional to community colleges and consistent with Eligibility Requirements.

**9. Academic Credit**

The team confirmed that the College awards academic credit in a manner conventional for community colleges and consistent with generally accepted good practice.

**10. Student Learning and Achievement**

The team examined course outlines and syllabi and found evidence that the College was well into the development stage of establishing student learning outcomes for all courses and programs.

**11. General Education**

The team certified that Palo Verde College has a clear general education component in its degree programs and that writing and computational skills are reflected in these requirements. Further, students are introduced to many of the general areas of knowledge consistent with good practice at an accredited community college.

**12. Academic Freedom**

Two Academic Senate Resolutions which are being codified into Board Policy assure academic freedom for both faculty and students.

**13. Faculty**

The team found that the College had a sufficient number of full-time faculty to serve the needs of its students. Faculty responsibilities in curriculum development and learning assessment are defined in resolutions passed by the Academic Senate. Additional responsibilities are defined in the CTA-District Agreement.

**14. Student Services**

The team found the services provided to students to be consistent with the needs of the student body and the mission of the College. Providing student services is especially challenging for the College given its different instructional locations and modalities.

**15. Admissions**

The team found that the College published its admissions and enrollment policies in the College Catalog and that these policies were consistent with Board policies.



## **16. Information and Learning Resources**

The team found the Library and other learning resources adequate for the students and programs at Palo Verde College. Further, the team found the provision of learning resources to inmate students to also be of high quality.

## **17. Financial Resources**

The team found that the College had sufficient financial resources to conduct its instructional programs adequately. The team was concerned that so much of the College's enrollment resided in two programs. Having so much of the College's potential sources of revenue in two programs could prove problematic in the future.

## **18. Financial Accountability**

The team found that the College's finances were in proper order. Examination of external audits confirmed that the College had appropriate financial controls in place.

## **19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation**

The team found much evidence that planning was taking place in most areas of the College. What the team also often found was that evaluation of those planning activities, to insure that they were serving the needs of the College, was often lacking.

## **20. Public Information**

The Palo Verde College Catalog has all requisite information. The team did find, however, that some of the information on programs was inaccurate and course information was sometimes inconsistently presented and difficult to follow.

## **21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission**

The College President and President of the Board of Trustees signed a document attesting to the fact that the College complies with accreditation standards, policies and guidelines.

## **Previous Recommendations**

The previous visiting accreditation team presented ten recommendations to the College in its 2002 report. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges after its review of the College's Self-Study and the team's report, added an eleventh recommendation. In response to the Commission's request, the College submitted a Progress Report in 2004 addressing three of these recommendations: #1, #4 and #11. The Commission accepted the Progress Report and asked the College to submit a focused midterm report, emphasizing follow-up on #1, as well as the other 2002 team recommendations and other action items presented by



the College in the 2002 Self-Study. The College responded with a Focused Midterm Report in 2005, which the Commission subsequently accepted.

Listed below are the recommendations from the 2002 team. After each recommendation is the 2008 team's evaluation of the status of the College with regard to each recommendation with an accompanying explanation of the evaluation.

- 1. The institutional Planning Committee (i.e., College Council/Strategic Planning Committee) should immediately redefine the institutional planning process to ensure the use of comprehensive, reliable, and relevant data for setting strategic priorities, for defining the intended outcomes of planning efforts, and for linking other college plans. Planning developments should be shared with the college and community at large.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has minimally met this recommendation.**

The College Council / Strategic Planning Committee has and continues to work diligently in refining its planning process. The latest strategic plan (adopted September 2007) contains goals, timelines, outcomes and person responsible. The strategic plan outcomes and timetables could be more specific but are serving Palo Verde College well. As the College works to improve its assessment of planning processes the issue of vague language should be corrected. With the exception of that assessment the process the College is clearly at the proficiency stage of development in planning.

- 2. The Program Review Committee should evaluate its overall structure and process to ensure that all units or appropriate functions are consistently and systematically evaluated and that the results are utilized for decision-making and allocating resources at all levels.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

During the past five years the College completed a full cycle of instructional and non-instructional program reviews. The Program Review process was codified in the Program Review Guide during the fall semester of 2006. Program review seems to be functioning well at the College with only the lack of systematic assessment of the process keeping it from reaching the sustainable continuous quality improvement stage of development.

- 3. The College should review the catalog to insure that all programs and courses are described in clear and complete terms, that course descriptions and requirements are provided to students, and that those descriptions are consistent with the course outlines of record.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has not met this recommendation.**

Course descriptions are consistent with course outlines of record, but programs and courses are not adequately described in clear and complete terms. In particular, course descriptions are not consistent with respect to required hours of instruction, and program descriptions are incomplete and confusing.

- 4. The College should develop and implement an effective enrollment management plan based on current and projected data about the college service area and students served. The plan should address declining and/or increasing student enrollments, changing demographics, current instructional needs of the community and excessive cancellation of the printed course offerings in the schedule of classes.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has minimally met this recommendation.**

The College has developed a plan to manage its enrollment. It has recently worked with an outside agency to conduct an in-depth study of county demographics and economic trends. However, the College continues to have difficulty with cancellation of class sections printed in its course schedule. (Standard IB.6) In interviews with faculty and administration, team found concerns that excessive cancellation of classes may interfere with students' ability to complete programs in acceptable timeframes.

- 5. The college should develop policies and procedures that delineate the roles of counselors and paraprofessional advisors and formalize selection standards, training and referral mechanisms for advisors and counselors to improve student support.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The college has substantially addressed the previous team's recommendation to develop policies and procedures that delineate the roles of counselors and paraprofessional advisors and to formalize selection standards, training, and referral mechanisms for advisors and counselors to improve student support. There is evidence to support the college's claim that they have addressed this recommendation. Job descriptions have been developed and clearly delineate the roles of counselors and paraprofessional advisors. Formal selection standards are described in board policy 4140 and 4460 (In the process of being updated. The updating will be complete by June 2008). In addition, a handbook for counselors and advisors has been developed and distributed to all student services staff and is used as a training tool for counselors and advisors. (Standard IIIA.1.a.)

- 6. The College should review its learning support services for students at off-campus sites, in order to provide comparable access to information and learning resources to support the courses, programs and degrees offered at these sites.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The college has *substantially* addressed the previous team's recommendation to provide comparable access to information and learning resources to support the courses, programs, and degrees offered at off-site locations. For example, students enrolled in distance education courses at Ironwood, and Chuckawalla Valley state prisons access library resources by submitting written requests for library materials to the campus library. Library staff has filled more than 400 requests for information on a variety of research topics since the 2003-2004 academic year. Tutoring services are also provided to student inmates at the prison facility by other inmates, deemed qualified to tutor students in subjects such as English, and Mathematics. Students at other remote locations such as Spring Street, in Blythe, and Needles can access library resources electronically via the library's web page. These students also have access to tutoring services, at the remote sites as well.

- 7. The College should develop a strategy to ensure legal, fair and effective hiring practices and further the diversity of faculty and staff so that they more closely mirror the diversity of the larger community and the students they serve.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The college has substantially addressed the previous team's recommendation. The college has developed strategies to ensure legal, fair, and effective hiring practices and further the diversity of faculty and staff to closely mirror the diversity of the larger community and the students they serve. For example, the college hired a permanent Human Resource manager who also provides EEOC training to members of hiring committees to ensure that an equitable and fair hiring process is followed. Policies and procedures for legal, fair and effective hiring practices are clearly identified in the CTA and CSEA contracts for certificated and classified employees. (III.A.4; IIIA.4.a.; IIIA.4.b.; IIIA.4.c.)

- 8. The College should develop a clear process for the evaluation of academic administrators that is conducted at stated intervals, and, where appropriate includes the participation of faculty and staff.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has minimally met this recommendation.**

The college has minimally met the previous team's recommendation to develop a clear process for the evaluation of academic administrators that is conducted at stated intervals and where appropriate includes the participation of faculty. A clear process for evaluating academic administrators is in place, and where appropriate includes the participation of faculty; however, the evaluations are not conducted in a consistent manner. (IIIA.1.b).

- 9. The College, through the Staff Development Committee, should work to address the expressed training needs of faculty and staff.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The college has substantially responded to the previous team's recommendation. The Staff Development committee coordinates the professional development of management, faculty

and classified staff. The committee develops criteria, and awards grants on the basis of the criteria. Evidence indicates that the committee has facilitated the development of workshops to assist faculty in developing SLO's. The committee that has responsibility for flex days has also planned and implemented flex day activities around SLO's. (III.A.5.; III.A.5.a.)

**10. The College should develop a comprehensive process for soliciting broad input from the campus on issues and providing opportunities for the campus to respond to decisions while they are being formed. This process should include provisions for continuous feedback to all constituent groups regarding the status of decisions. It is equally important that these processes be formed in a manner that facilitates efficient and timely decision-making.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The College worked very hard to get input from trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students and its constituents. All groups on campus feel empowered and their voices are heard. The college has an active full time public information officer and a part time institutional research external officer that keep the information flowing to and from the surrounding communities. (IB.4)

**11. The Commission recommends the following: The qualifications of faculty, especially new faculty, should be adequate to meet the needs of students and programs.**

**2008 Team Evaluation: The College has substantially met this recommendation.**

The College has made substantial progress in its planning and Human Resources area to insure that all faculty meet the identified needs of students and programs. The College has hired a Director of Human Resources and has formalized many of its processes in policy form. (IIIA.1.a; IIIA.2)

### 2008 Evaluation of Palo Verde College

This report pertains to a request for reaffirmation of accreditation for Palo Verde College. The College volunteered to follow the ACCJC standards first adopted in 2002 and now contained in



the August 2007 Accreditation Reference Handbook. The visiting team's findings will be present below organized under the four standards contained in the Handbook.

## **Standard I Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

### **General Observations**

The College began the development of the vision, mission, and values statements as well as the strategic plan in 2001 with broad participation by faculty, staff, and administrators. These initiatives were formalized and approved by the faculty, staff, and Trustees in spring 2002. The vision, mission, and values statements are grounded in the development of the Strategic Plan, which stresses, among other things, the commitment to enhance student learning. The vision, mission, and values appear in the catalog. The mission is printed in the schedule of classes.

### **Standard I A Mission**

#### **Findings and Evidence**

In its mission, the College commits to providing an exemplary learning environment with high quality educational programs and services. While there is no formal review process, these statements and the Strategic Plan were reviewed three times: September 2004, January 2005, and September 2007. During each review, the vision, mission, and values statements were reaffirmed while the strategic plan was modified and updated. Each review occurred in a faculty-staff meeting or Institute Day in which all members of the college were invited to participate. The team found that the mission is referred to when the departments, Budget Committee, and College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee consider action on program review proposals to address strategic planning and budget priorities. There may be a need for the College to develop a formal review process with timelines for the vision, mission, and values statements (Standards I.A; I.A.1; I.A.2; I.A.3; and I.A.4).

## **Standard I B Improving Institutional Effectiveness**

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The College is making progress towards the development of a comprehensive system of institutional effectiveness. Though not all documentation is easily accessible (i.e., via the web), broad-based dialogues of continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes take place among academic, vocational, and student support division meetings; College organizational and committee structures; and faculty-staff meetings, flex days, and institute days. The team found that campus-wide programs and departments are at significantly varying stages and degrees of the development and implementation of program reviews, assessment processes, and student learning outcomes. The planning process structure utilizes representatives from

departments, organizations, and committees from nearly all facets of the campus community for obtaining broad input for the assessment and prioritization of resource allocation designed to improve institutional effectiveness (Standards I.B.1; I.B.4).

The program review results as well as individual and programmatic performance reviews, institution-wide student surveys (conducted in 2002, 2000 and 1995), and emerging environmental issues are among the drivers for determining annual budget directions that ultimately measure strategic plan modifications and progress. In 2006-07, the College implemented revised guidelines for program reviews that call on programs (instructional and non-instructional) to demonstrate their support of student learning. According to our review of the self-study, program reviews and interviews with key college leadership and staff, the College's progress of those using the revised guidelines are an improvement over program reviews using the non-revised guidelines (Standards I.B.3, I.B.5).

The team did not find substantial evidence that the College has a formal review process with timelines to assess and modify the budget cycle including institutional and other research efforts. In addition, the College does not have a formal review process with timelines for evaluating its program review system (Standards I.B.6, I.B.7).

### **Conclusion**

The College substantially meets Standard I.A. The College formalized its vision, mission, and values statements in 2002 with broad input from the college community. These statements are referenced during planning and budget activities. Though these statements were reviewed in spring 2004, January 2005, and September 2007, the reviews were conducted as a result of emerging and shifting programmatic, institutional, and community directions. The College may want consider implementing a formal and regular review process with timelines of the vision, mission, and values statements as well as strategic and budget planning.

The College meets Standard I.B. in some areas. However, as more program reviews are conducted based on the revised guidelines, there should be an increase in programs demonstrating the use of quantitative and qualitative data as well as their assessment and reflective analysis of the data that led to their efforts to continual program improvement. Utilizing the revised guidelines should also show progress in the utilizing of student learning outcomes in the review process.

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard II**

### **Student Learning Programs and Services**



## **General Observations**

Palo Verde College offers a variety of instructional courses and programs including collegiate degrees and certificates, developmental/pre-collegiate courses, noncredit community education, and "in-service training" (specialized instructional programs in police, fire, and hazardous materials handling delivered in areas outside of the district). These programs prepare students for further academic study or entry into the work force. They are of appropriate quality and rigor to serve students well. Program review is completed for each program on a five-year cycle. The program review template was revised in 2006, so some programs have not been reviewed under the new process at this time. Educational opportunities are available at two off-site centers as well as the main campus. A variety of instructional modes are used to provide distance education to students who are not able to come to one of the centers.

The College has developed student learning outcomes at the course, program, and degree level. Most course outlines contain SLOs and faculty members are beginning assessment efforts. These early assessment results are being used to inform pedagogy in some cases. Program outcomes are identified for programs that have undergone program review since 2006 when the program review template was revised. Degree SLOs are identified as outcomes that focus on general education requirements. The College requires that all associate degrees include a component of general education.

The College strives to provide student support services to address the identified needs of students and contribute to a supportive learning environment. The student handbook supplements the catalog. The College offers comprehensive and diverse student support services to meet the varied student needs. These include preparation for transfer to a four-year institution, certificate and degree programs for professions, and opportunities for personal and professional enrichment in credit and noncredit courses and programs. Beyond the core services, student support services may vary from site to site to accommodate the unique needs of students at each site. PVC library and Learning Skills Center employees and student workers provide the college community, including those students in remote locations, with extensive access to services and resources. The staff is friendly and helpful and students are provided with individual attention to help them achieve their learning goals. Information is clearly posted on the web page for library services, and flyers and brochures describing the types of services available in the Learning Skills Center are easily accessible to all who enter the Center. There is also easy access to the open computer area in the LSC at the Blythe campus for students with physical disabilities, and there are an adequate number of computer stations available for student use. Classrooms are located in the area of the Learning Skills Center that provides a level of access by faculty to further assist them in helping students achieve academic success.

## **Standard II A Instructional Programs**

### **Findings and Evidence**

Palo Verde College offers a limited number of Associate degrees: one Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts intended to prepare students to transfer to a four-year college or university, an Associate of Science degree in General Studies as a terminal liberal arts degree, and ten Associate of Science degrees that prepare students for careers directly. In addition, the College offers 25 certificate programs to students that prepare them to go directly into the workforce. The curriculum committee is the body charged with ensuring all curricular offerings are of high quality and serve the needs of the community. The large majority of courses have student learning outcomes identified as part of the course outline of record (Standard II.A.1).

The College has an extensive program designed to offer educational programs to inmates in local prisons through correspondence materials. All students in the community have the ability to participate in this program, but exceptional processes are in place to specifically serve the needs of the inmates. A large in-service training program in Police, Fire, and Hazardous Material Handling is also offered in other service areas. The Curriculum Committee has recently approved new certificates to support the Fire Science offerings (Standard II.A.2).

The College has made significant progress in identifying student learning outcomes at the course level, moderate progress at the program level and has identified degree level outcomes that focus on general education requirements. There are varying degrees of progress being made in assessing outcomes at all levels. Assessments have been defined for many courses, and there is evidence that some faculty have completed course level assessments, specifically in Mathematics, English, Chemistry, Biology, Accounting and Business. A variety of modes for assessment have been developed in departments to measure outcomes. These assessments include pre/post tests, rubrics, and imbedded questions in examinations. Some faculty members have looked at the results of the assessments and are engaging in dialog with their colleagues at the department level to interpret the results. A few departments have devised rubrics to assess the degree-level outcomes. The Language Arts and Communications Division and the Mathematics and Science Division have completed one cycle of evaluation. It is not yet clear whether they have interpreted the results to make improvements.

The College requires students to complete a series of general education course work that addresses the major areas of knowledge including oral and written communication, humanities and fine arts, natural sciences, and social sciences. However, there are no specified procedures that define the process by which courses are placed in College GE areas. Every course that is included in the College General Education offerings has been accepted by the CSU system as meeting a GE requirement. The College has identified degree-level student learning outcomes and identified the specific courses in which the outcomes could be assessed and validated. Every degree that is awarded requires students to have completed appropriate course work in the specific area of study including courses for which the SLOs can be verified (Standard II.A.3).

The College Catalog specifies that all degrees include a focused core of study in at least one area of inquiry, with the exception of the Associate in Arts Degree (CSU-UC) degree and the General Studies Degree, which follow the General Education Requirements of CSU or UC. The College is aware that these two degrees need to be modified to include a focused area of study or and interdisciplinary core of courses. Faculty is in the process of modifying these two degrees to be

compliant with the standard. The College does not specify GE requirements for the Palo Verde College associates' degrees apart from the CSU/UC patterns. There is no clear statement of general education philosophy (Standards II.A.4, II.A.3).

The College Catalog lists courses required to complete degrees and certificates. However, the program descriptions do not include a description of the purpose or student learning outcomes. The information presented is accurate but is incomplete and unclear. Total unit requirements for the majors are not specified for the area of emphasis. Rather, the requirements are intermixed with general education requirements and other electives. This College makes information about transfer policies and opportunities available to students (Standards II.A.6.a, II.A.6.c).

In addition, while course descriptions are appropriate, there is inconsistency in the citation of required course hours. Some courses appear to list hours of instruction per week and other courses list total hours for the semester. This can lead to student confusion (Standard II.A.6.c).

Palo Verde College offers a variety of instructional courses and programs including collegiate, developmental/pre-collegiate, noncredit community education, and "in-service training" (specialized instructional programs in police, fire, and hazardous materials handling delivered in areas outside of the district). Courses are offered face-to-face (Blythe Campus, Needles Center, and Spring Street Center) and in a variety of distance education delivery modes (Standards II.1.b; II.A.2).

The decisions to offer courses in these formats are made by the faculty and administrators in the individual divisions. Decisions regarding the appropriate credit type, delivery mode, and location of its courses and programs are made in the divisions and are based on divisional dialogue and data developed through the program review process.

Decisions to offer collegiate transfer courses include information from transfer institutions, and in some cases, dialogue between PVC faculty and faculty at the transfer institutions. Decisions regarding offering developmental/pre-collegiate courses are informed by Basic Skills Initiative data. Non-credit community education is planned in response to a survey of community needs. In-service courses are offered in response to the needs of the fire and police departments served (Standards II.A.1.b; II.A.2.c,h,f).

All new and revised courses and programs are reviewed and approved to ensure quality. Review of courses and programs occurs in a decentralized fashion in the divisions under the leadership of division chairs and the Vice President for Instruction. Following divisional review, courses and programs are submitted to the Curriculum Committee for approval and then to the Board of Trustees for final approval. The Curriculum Committee policies require updating of course outlines every five years. Most courses have been updated in the five years preceding the date of this report (Standard II.A.2.a,e).

Policies and institutional processes that guide the development and evaluation of courses and programs are described in the PVC Curriculum Handbook. For example, the handbook provides overall criteria for new courses:

Proposed courses shall meet the following criteria:

Answer or reflect community needs.

Be compatible to the philosophy and objectives of the college.



Reflect cost considerations.  
Not duplicate existing courses, except for co-listed courses.  
Be limited to lower division.

Established practices are effective but are not always captured in the policy documents currently available (note: the Curriculum Handbook is currently being revised). The Curriculum Handbook does not include detailed policies or procedures for some areas, most notably placement of courses into GE areas, specific approval of courses for the DE format, technical review procedures, or strategic program planning. In practice, the college also follows informal course and program evaluation procedures that result in courses and programs with appropriate breadth, depth, and rigor. This is evident from course outlines and was supported by conversations with faculty and visits to some classes. However, discussions with various faculty members, including Curriculum Committee members, demonstrated that not all were fully cognizant of the current college policies related to the development and evaluation of courses and programs (Standard II.A.2.a,e).

The institution uses newly developed procedures to design, identify, and assess learning outcomes for courses, programs (certificates and degrees), and General Education requirements (GE). General Education outcomes were developed and the assessment of these outcomes was assigned to specific divisions under the leadership of the Academic Senate (Academic Senate resolution no 06-07-03). The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for improving instructional courses and programs. This commitment is evidenced in Academic Senate resolutions (Standards II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a,h,i).

Student learning outcomes have been written for each course and program that has undergone review in the last two years. The Academic Senate resolution has general guidelines for this development. The curriculum committee has few written policies regarding the implementation of SLOs but provides models of good practice. During the development of SLOs the Academic Senate led a dialogue concerning the quality and level of College programs (Standards II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a).

Faculty members in GE areas have accepted responsibility for assessing GE outcomes that align with the course and programs in their areas and are piloting assessment tools. Faculty members from each division are developing and piloting course-embedded models of assessment procedures for GE outcomes. The college Internal Researcher provides data that assists these pilot processes. Program reviews also reflect that some departments have undertaken assessment of course SLOs. For example, the program review for the Business Department states, "We have developed entrance and exit exams for the information technology classes as well as standardized exams for the department as a whole." However, the results of these assessments of course outcomes are not presented in all program reviews since some program reviews were conducted prior to the development of program outcomes and assessment procedures (Standard II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a; II.A.3).

The institution relies on faculty expertise, industry standards, and the assistance of advisory committees to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, and programs where appropriate. Faculty-based disciplinary expertise is guided by

general philosophies of the Academic Senate. For vocational programs, the advisory committees in most disciplines provide specific guidance on the student learning outcomes expected of students who will complete work in that discipline. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate professional and technical competencies specified and assessed by advisory committees, review by the Region 9 Occupational Deans' Consortium, external licensure and certification, and review by industry trade organizations (Standards II.A.2.b, c; II.A.4; II.A.5).

The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students. Course outlines indicate that a wide variety of teaching methodologies are utilized. Discussions with faculty and visits to some classes support this. Recent changes in a few programs were made in response to evaluation of the learning needs of specific populations of students. For example, the ESL department recently moved from a 9-week format to an 18-week format for its courses in order to support student learning needs (Standard II.A.2.d).

The College provides different delivery modes that are appropriate for its students. For example, the circumstances of the prison students determine what modes of instruction are available to them (e.g. they are not allowed to access the internet and yet rely on distance education). The college has made effective efforts to provide quality education within the limits imposed by these circumstances through the creative use of correspondence courses. Additionally, the use of interactive TV has allowed students at the Needles Center to access courses taught at the Blythe campus and vice-versa. The College has begun to offer a limited number of on-line courses. Student achievement data indicate that these methods have resulted in successful support for student learning (Standard II.A.2.d).

The institution engages in educational planning at the department level. Program reviews occur every five years. Recent program reviews include data supporting the evaluation of program quality, curriculum history, student performance and completion data, enrollment trends, and pilot SLO assessment data. Discussion with faculty members, the curriculum committee, the divisional chairs, and the VPI, as well as reading of the program reviews indicated that individual faculty are conducting short-term educational planning based on available data. The Program Review Committee reviews all program review documents.

Program planning is only weekly linked to strategic planning. The Strategic Planning map shows only a few branches related to program and course planning. There is no major branch that encompasses program planning (schedule planning is included in the enrollment management section of the plan). Little evidence is available that demonstrates that education planning in a broader strategic context is guided by dialogue based on evidence of student and community needs. Processes for program planning (including program development, program discontinuance, program revision, and planning for course offerings) occur in a distributed manner, where much of the dialogue, evaluation, and planning is conducted in the departments rather than at a broader level. Some departments make changes based on student data, but there is not a systematic integrated program planning process that is based on a comprehensive understanding of community and student needs (Standards II.A.2.a.e.f).

Scheduling of courses allows completion of many certificates and completion of degrees and/or the GE transfer patterns for some students within a two-year time frame. In other cases, timely completion of program requirements is difficult for students because courses are offered infrequently and/or are cancelled due to low enrollment. Overall program planning and schedule planning are not proactive in identifying ways to help students complete programs in a timely manner. The self study notes, "The College recognizes that it must do a better job in projecting time to completion of certain programs, namely, the AA in Liberal Arts, the AS in General Studies, and IGETC." The College Strategic Plan includes an objective for implementation of a two-year schedule of program requirements. Students wishing to transfer in some university majors may not find the needed courses available within two or three years at PVC. For example, the following courses have not been successfully offered over at least one six-semester timeframe: pre-calculus, calculus, animal biology, Survey of American Literature I. Data on course scheduling is available in the program review documents for each division (Standard II.A.2.f).

Basic skills assessment tests are used for placement into English, mathematics, and reading courses. These placement tests are validated by the Learning Skills Center Coordinator in cooperation with English and mathematics faculty. Departmental pre- and post-tests are being developed for the assessment of SLOs but are not used for grading purposes; these are not formally validated at this time (Standard II.A.2.g).

The college has board approved policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national origin (Policy 6370), and officially recognize the essential nature of academic freedom and free discussion of issues. These policies are currently being revised and updated. Two Academic Senate resolutions that address academic freedom were recently developed (06-07-01 and 06-07-02). These resolutions also address the responsibilities of faculty to consider issues objectively and to show respect for the viewpoints of others (Standard II.A.7.a,c).

The college has board-approved policies on student academic honesty, and these policies are communicated to students in the catalog and student handbook. Board Policy 5300 defines expectations for student conduct and disciplinary procedures. In this policy, elements of academic integrity are specified including definitions of cheating and other prohibited conduct, principles of discipline, classroom related disciplinary procedures, and procedures for processing violations of academic honesty. The catalog and student handbook both contain sections on "Students Rights and Responsibilities" that include a student academic honor code, define expected and prohibited types of conduct, and explain disciplinary procedures (Standard II.A.7.b.c).

## **Standard II B**

### **Student Support Services**

#### **Findings and Evidence**



There are continual references to the matriculation process, Noel-Levitz student survey in 2005, and program review to document the efforts to provide quality services and steps that have been taken and are planned to improve services. The program review was conducted for all student support services areas in 2004. The development of student-learning outcomes has also started. Both efforts are good beginnings but are at a preliminary or developmental stage. The leadership and staff are committed to the goal of exceeding accreditation standard benchmarks (Standard II.B.1).

Program reviews for all student support services programs were conducted in 2004. The program review contains the departmental mission, purpose, population served, service summary, assessments, personnel, professional development, meeting identified needs, and recommendations. There are limited quantitative and qualitative data in several departmental reviews as well as minimal assessment and reflective analysis of the data towards continual program improvement. There are no references to how assessment and analysis of student learning outcomes (SLOs) occur and how SLOs are tied to the student support services program reviews. Interviews with College personnel indicate that most student services programs are at the preliminary stages of developing SLOs through the comprehensive program review process although most units have begun to implement pre and post tests to measure students' knowledge of available programs and services. After the 2004 Student Services program review was conducted, the College revised the program review guidelines. Given the preliminary results of programs using the revised guidelines, the team expects that future comprehensive Student Services program reviews will show dramatic improvements (Standard II.B.1).

Except for the statement on academic freedom (which had not been adopted by the Board of Trustees at the time the 2007-08 catalog was published), the catalog contained other appropriate information. The College will incorporate the statement of academic freedom in the 2008-09 catalog. Also, the team noted that there is no mention of specialized instructional services provided to areas outside of district. The description of degrees and certificates in the catalog is formatted and listed as the Palo Verde College Student Education Plan. The team finds that the description in this format is unclear and, in some cases, inaccurate. In addition, there is no description of the degrees or certificates or their purposes and content. Therefore, the team found that the previous team's recommendation #3 is not met, and the recommendation should be reiterated (Standard II.B.2).

The self-study indicates that orientation, assessment and placement, counseling services, financial aid, educational plans, and follow-up on academic performance are available to all students except those in the specialized instructional services (Instructional Service Agreements) that occur outside of the school district. While the College states that it is evaluating the support needs of students in the instructional support services and are addressing them accordingly, there may be ongoing needs for student and academic support services that are currently unmet. Also, with the recent relocation of the Automotive Technology, Welding, and Building Trades to the Palo Verde campus, there may be a need to reexamine student support services to students in these programs to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Academic Senate Resolution No. 03-04-03 dated November 25, 2003, are being met (Standards II.B.3; II.B.3.a).

Co-curricular student activities are cited as examples that encourage personal and civic responsibility through participation in Associated Student Body (ASB), constituent-based College committees and organizations, ASB representative on the Board of Trustees, student clubs, and community outreach and service. While the report does not indicate the level of student participation in these activities, the team found that student participation especially on constituent-based College committees was minimal. In a meeting with team members, one suggestion was made to add a second College Hour during the week. ASB students also suggested the College meet and promote the value of committee participation with student clubs, organizations, and classes including GES 115, The Master Student. ASB students were hopeful that implementation of the new student information system will allow for expanded opportunities to inform students of these opportunities via electronic communication (Standard II.B.3.b).

The College monitors counseling and advising competencies through counseling participation in the 2004 program review, periodic evaluation of its matriculation services and updating of the Matriculation Plan. Counseling job performance evaluations including student evaluations as well as data under specific programs such as EOPS, CARE, DSPS, ACE, and CalWORKS are cited as instruments used to evaluate counselor effectiveness (Standard II.B.3.c).

The Faculty and Staff Diversity Committee sponsors the annual Multicultural Festival on campus. Other initiatives noted by the College include Cinco de Mayo sponsored by EOPS and ASB; Women's Conference sponsored by faculty, staff, and administrators; and Black History Month sponsored by EOPS and ASB. While the College appears to meet this standard, there is an absence of data and of discussion of specific SLOs and related assessment and analysis (Standard II.B.3.d).

The Matriculation Committee regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to assess for effectiveness and that the instrument is free of bias. The majority of counseling and advising staff is bilingual (English and Spanish). Spanish language admissions forms are also available. Results of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey indicated that admissions and registration personnel are among the College's top strengths (Standard II.B.3.e).

The College reports that all student records are appropriately stored. The Informational Technology Department continuously backs up and stores student records' information in various locations on campus. The College images selected student enrollment records and will eventually be linked to the new student information system. The institution observes acceptable professional standards regarding records access (Standard II.B.3.f).

All areas of student support services participated in the 2004 program review. While data was contained in program reviews for the Transfer & Career Center, Financial Aid, and EOPS, the other program reviews did not include any data or analysis and assessment of the data that would be used in the decision making process. There are vague references to SLOs, but there is an absence of discussion on how SLO findings would contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes (Standard II.B.4).

## **Standard II C**

### **Library and Learning Support Services**

Palo Verde College supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery. The Blythe campus library facility is open from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. on Friday. Faculty, staff, and students can access library resources electronically from anywhere on campus and from remote locations 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Standard II.C.1.a.,c).

Specific areas of the library web page are designated for faculty and staff to submit requests for resources, suggestions for library acquisition of materials, recommendations for changes or additions to the library collection (currently 19,000 volumes). These requests are reviewed regularly by library staff to ascertain the need for improving services. Faculty can also request library orientations for a class or a few students. The college also collects data from faculty and students via electronic and paper surveys and compiles this information to improve the services in the library. The latest survey of students conducted in 2005 resulted in the college adding several new databases to the online resources.

Similar data is also collected, via surveys by the Learning Skills Center to determine the type of tutoring services needed by students and to determine staffing needs, especially for tutors and adult hourly staff. The Learning Center utilizes TUTORTRAC as a means to capture accurate information on student visits and services provided. This program is also used to track services provided at the Spring Street, and Needles locations. Tracking of tutoring services provided at Ironwood and Chuckawalla Valley state prison is done manually, at the prison site, and logs are kept to monitor the type and duration of the tutoring service provided.

Palo Verde College provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency. The college has defined information competencies in research methods and technological skills for all students. The statement describing the competencies is clearly posted on the library web page. Orientations that identify the available resources students have access to in the library and the learning skills center are conducted by the librarian, and the Learning Skills Center coordinator or their designated staff. Workshops geared toward helping students acquire the information competencies are also conducted by the library staff. Pre and post tests are used to evaluate student progress or achievement in learning the skills and to aid the library staff in improving the workshops. The orientations are also conducted at the Spring Street and Needles locations (Standard II.C.1.b).

The institution provides effective maintenance and security for library and other learning support services. For example, maintenance of all electronic equipment in the library and the Learning Skills Center is conducted by the college's information technology personnel. Library collections of books, videos, and DVD's are secured by use of a security gate at the entrance the library and the counter at the library entryway and the entryway to the Learning Skills Center is staffed by a



College employee or student worker at all times during normal operating hours. Computer workstations in the Learning Skill Center and the Library are in open areas that can be easily monitored by college employees and student workers (Standard II.C.1.d).

The Library and Learning Skills Center also provides secure storage of VCR/DVD/monitors, overhead projectors, and other types of instructional equipment. A process is in place to track the use of the equipment by faculty, staff, and administrators. All equipment is tagged and inventoried by the College bookstore staff and records are maintained in the office of administrative services.

The College documents that formal agreements exist and that resources and services are adequate for the institutions intended purposes and are easily accessible and utilized. The PVC library participates in a contract agreement with the San Bernardino Inyo Riverside Counties United Libraries Service (SIRCULS). This interlibrary loan system enables the library to meet the needs of students and faculty more effectively by facilitating the borrowing of books and materials from other libraries that subscribe to the same service. The library also contracts with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) which is a world-wide library cooperative that provides cataloging services for its library collections. The PVC library also monitors the use of online subscription periodical databases through an automated tracking system installed in 2004. Information collected via the tracking system is used to improve services provided to students and faculty. Contracts are filed in the office of Administrative Services and copies are kept in the office of the Librarian (Standard II.C.e).

Palo Verde College evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of SLO's and results are used as a basis for improvement. The college tracks the use of Library services via an automated tracking system. Data collected include the number of users, the specific databases they access, and the number of times the database is accessed. SLO's have been identified by the Library staff and evaluations are conducted after orientation workshops to determine the level of progress students are achieving in acquiring library competencies. Paper and online surveys are also conducted to determine if the institution is meeting its stated goals in delivering adequate and needed library services. The Learning Skills Center also uses an electronic program called TUTOR TRAC to track and monitor the level of services being provided to students. Similarly electronic and paper surveys are conducted and analyzed to determine whether stated goals for needed services are being achieved (Standard II.C.2).

## **Conclusions**

Palo Verde College offers programs of study that serve the community well. It provides instruction for students at great distance through a variety of modes. These programs are of appropriate breadth and depth to meet the varied instructional needs of students. Programs are assessed with a recently updated program review template on a five-year cycle. As programs participate in the new program review, student learning outcomes for the programs are developed and assessment tools are identified. Degree SLOs are in place for all associate degrees and

course level SLOs are identified in course outlines of record for all courses updated since 2006. A timeline is in place to complete this process.

The College assures the quality and improvement of courses and programs through program review and curriculum approval and review. Program review processes are in place and have been recently updated. Curriculum review and approval processes are functioning, but many procedures are informal; there are some gaps in the articulated established policies, and existing policies are not well disseminated to faculty, including the Curriculum Committee. Program planning is not well integrated into the strategic plan (Standards II.A.1, II.A.2).

The College catalog contains a comprehensive range of courses. However, planning for course offerings is not strategic, resulting in a situation in which time of completion for some programs presents an obstacle to student success. Overall program planning and schedule planning are not proactive in identifying ways to help students complete programs in a timely manner (Standards II.A.1, II.A.2).

A minimal comprehensive system of program review for student support services is in place at Palo Verde College. Many programs lack the depth of quantitative and qualitative data as well as assessment and analysis that are essential elements of a program review that would be a driver in a decision making process. However, in light of the revised program review guidelines that occurred after the most recent Student Services program review, the team expects that future program reviews will be dramatically improved.

In review of the critical functions of student support services at Palo Verde College, the team acknowledges that some functions are more naturally tied to SLOs than others. For functions more naturally tied to SLOs, there exists very little clear evidence as to how assessment and analysis of student learning outcomes (SLOs) are tied to the program review process. Most student services units are at the preliminary stages of developing SLOs through the comprehensive program review process. The team concluded that there is a strong commitment at all levels to strengthen the comprehensive program review that includes the quantitative and qualitative data, student-learning outcomes, and assessment and analysis activities for all Student Support Services' programs.

The College substantially meets this standard. The services and resources provided by the Library and the Learning Skills Center can help all students achieve their academic goals. However, the college may consider ways in which they can provide effective outreach to students enrolled in career/technical programs such as welding, and auto technology that are not traditional users of Library and Learning Skills Resources.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation #1:** The Team recommends that the College engage in systematic educational program planning guided by strategic dialogue and data. This planning should include the following:

- Planning course offerings so students can complete a program in a timely manner (II.A.2)
- Educational program planning based on data about community and student needs (II.A.2)
- Clearly disseminating information about procedures to approve and evaluate courses and programs (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e)

**Recommendation #3:** As noted by the 2002 team, the College should ensure that the College catalog provides clear and precise program and course description information about their degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected SLOs (II.A.6, II.B.2, ER 20).

### Commendation

The team commends the College for reaching out to the community using modes of instruction that are suited to the specific population being addressed, for example the innovative use of correspondence courses to serve the inmate students at local prisons as well as other students.

## Standard III Resources

### General Observations



Effective planning processes are in place and used by the institution to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees and provide access to professional development opportunities. College administration works cooperatively with the CTA (faculty union) and CSEA (classified union) to ensure a collegial environment exists in the college. Employees have access to personnel records, information about benefits, and workshops to assist them in improving their performance, thereby working to improve student learning.

Palo Verde College provides sufficient facilities and equipment to support instructional programs and student services. In 1992, the College purchased a 200 acre site and in 1997 developed an Educational Master Plan that led to a four-phase facilities master plan. In fall 2001, the College moved into Phase I of a brand new campus. The College has received a commitment from the System Office to build sufficient new facilities to create a complete college campus. Phase I was a classroom building and a college services building including a library, learning resource center, and bookstore. In the past several years, the College completed a technology building (Phase II), a physical education building (Phase III), and is in design for a performing arts facility (Phase IV). A child development building to replace the College's current Child Development Center on its old campus has been proposed to the State but has not yet been approved. A health and public safety building has also been proposed. New equipment, including classroom technology and office equipment, has been provided as part of the new construction. The College also operates the Spring Street center and a child care facility in Blythe and is remodeling a facility to house its center in Needles funded by a local bond measure. The College has an adequate maintenance staff for its current buildings and has recently added two positions to support the technology and physical education buildings. Staff is also planned for the new Needles Center once completed. The facilities are ADA compliant and are considered safe by faculty, staff, and students.

As a new campus, facilities upkeep and renovation are not an issue although the College has recently issued Certificates of Participation to, in part, pay for the replacement of the initial central plant which proved unsuited to the cooling needs of the existing facilities. The College has a five-year capital construction plan that is updated yearly and submitted to the System Office in support of future building needs and a Scheduled Maintenance plan that is also updated annually and submitted to the System Office in support of funding from the State's scheduled maintenance fund. There is not a maintenance plan to outline and support routine maintenance activities, but the Facilities and Operations department is able to address routine maintenance issues with its existing resources. Long range physical resource planning is linked to institutional planning by the Strategic Master plan which drives educational programs. Because the facilities are new, the College has not had to do a systematic assessment of the effective use of its physical resources. It has identified, however, that it has outgrown its nursing facilities and does not have adequate facilities for a fine arts program. Palo Verde uses technology resources to support instruction, student services, and administration, and technology planning has influenced institutional planning. The College has made significant progress in the area of technology since the last Accreditation visit. A fairly comprehensive Technology Master Plan was completed in 2004-05 and the College acknowledges that the Plan needs to be updated. The Plan did not include an equipment replacement program or a discussion of future staffing needs. It did, however, lead to a

discussion of the College's administrative software systems, which ultimately led to a decision to purchase a system, Datatel. The Technology Plan also led to the inclusion of technology into the Strategic Plan. The Technology Plan is seen more as a guide than an operational plan. College technology support for programs and services is very good given the ability to purchase and install new technology as part of the new facilities being built. The College has made a commitment of ongoing resources to support technology equipment purchases and maintenance. The College is exploring the use of technology for distance education, and the costs and support requirements for this should be included in future technology planning. The Self Study acknowledges difficulty with its network due to the absence of fiber optic cable services in the area. The new Datatel administrative software system will significantly improve the use of technology on campus and provide particular assistance to the admissions and student services functions.

Technology training for faculty and staff is provided on an as needed basis. With the exception of the planned Datatel implementation, there is no systematic training available to employees. However, discussion with employees indicate that the IT staff is prompt in providing one on one training as needed. The IT Director indicated that the College has set aside a room, which is equipped to provide the Datatel Implementation training. It is his hope that he will be allowed to keep the room as a training room in the future. The Self Study notes that the College does not have an equipment replacement plan for technology. Funds are available for equipment replacement and equipment is replaced as necessary, but no systematic planning is in place. The College has taken the initial step in integrating technology planning with institutional planning by including technology in its Strategic Plan and tying future Strategic Planning to an updated Technology Plan. The Self Study reports that there is an inactive Technology Committee that reports to the Budget Committee and should oversee the technology function of the College. The IT Director acknowledges that he has not made use of the Committee and plans to do so when he updates the Technology Master Plan.

The financial resources of the College are adequate to support student learning programs and services. The College is very conservative in its financial management, has a capable fiscal management team, and has historically carried an adequate reserve. Financial planning is tied to the Strategic Master Plan and uses Program Review material to inform the budget process. There is a reasonable tie-in to institutional planning and a realistic assessment of financial capability in developing institutional planning. The Vice President of Administrative Services is responsible for financial planning and management and chairs the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee reports to the College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee and provides a clear set of guidelines for budget development that links to institutional planning. The College's annual budget and independent audit reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources. The College uses the accounting system and reports of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools. There is general satisfaction with the system and reports. Financial information is shared on a regular basis with the Board, faculty and staff through monthly reports to the Board, regular meetings of the Budget Committee, and through regularly scheduled staff meetings. The new administrative software package, Datatel, will allow administrators, faculty, and staff to have access to financial data online and in a more timely fashion. Nonetheless, the College plans to remain with the county for payroll and check writing. Fiscal staff is currently undergoing training on the new system. The College does monthly cash

flow analysis, issues TRANS as necessary, and maintains an adequate reserve for fiscal emergencies. The Vice President of Administrative Services provides financial oversight and accounting for the Palo Verde Foundation, Associated Student Body, Bookstore, and Child Development Center as well as a variety of categorical and grant programs. The Budget Committee annually reviews the budget process, and Administrative Services has conducted a program review. However, it does not appear that the College regularly evaluates its overall financial management. This should be undertaken before start up of the new system

### **Standard III A Human Resources**

#### **Findings and Evidence**

Palo Verde College board policies and procedures are in place that assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Board policies, [currently being revised and to be completed by June 2008], as well as section III of the (*Faculty*) CTA contract and Article 3 of the (*Classified*) CSEA contract clearly define written criteria for evaluating personnel, including the performance of assigned duties and participation institutional responsibilities. The faculty evaluation procedures for adjunct faculty are also described in the CTA contract. Procedures and criteria for evaluations of administrative and management personnel have been established and implemented and described in the PVC Board Policies.

Palo Verde College faculty, administrators, and staff are working towards helping students achieve success at the course, program, and degree level. Faculty members work collaboratively in meetings and participate in Academic Senate discussions to identify student learning outcomes. The Student Service and Academic Administration areas have identified SLO's in some key areas. For example, Library and Learning Skills Center personnel have identified learning outcomes for their areas, and faculty at the course and program level such as English have identified SLO's and appear to be using this information to make improvements in teaching and learning.

As part of the Palo Verde College Board revision process the college has developed a written code of professional ethics for all personnel including members of the Board of Trustees. Through the strategic planning process and the program review process the College uses information to determine an appropriate level of staffing for necessary positions to support the institutions mission and purpose.

Personnel policies are available for review in the employee handbook (January 2007). These policies are systematically developed and administered and adhered to by all employees to ensure fairness in all employment procedures. Personnel records are kept in a secure location in the HR manager's office, which is located in the office of administrative services. Employees can access their records through requests to the HR manager.



The College demonstrates an appropriate concern for issues of equity and diversity. Policies and procedures, easily accessible to all employees, are described in the employee handbook, in board policies, the CTA contract, and the CSEA contract. College-wide events are held to celebrate diversity on the campus and student participation is encouraged by faculty, administrators, and staff. There are programs in place to serve students with disabilities and students seeking financial assistance. Furthermore, programs exist for returning students to support their academic and career/technical goals. The HR manager regularly tracks PVC's employment record through analysis of applicant pools.

The Staff Development committee coordinates the professional development of management, faculty, and classified staff. The committee develops criteria and awards grants on the basis of the criteria. Evidence indicates that the committee has facilitated the development of workshops to assist faculty in developing SLO's. The committee that plans flex days has implemented SLOs into flex day programs.

As part of the Strategic Planning and Program Review process HR planning activities take place. The Administrative Services area, which includes the HR manager, actively participates in planning activities. Information from program reviews performed in various areas of the college is used by the HR manager to determine human resources needs in program and service areas for the institution. However, there is no systematic assessment of how this process works to ensure that all HR needs are met.

## **Standard III B Physical Resources**

### **Findings and Evidence**

Palo Verde College has an effective, attractive, and clean campus, with buildings and equipment to support the mission of the institution. As evidenced by its five-year capital construction plan and the System Office's commitment to create a complete campus, the College has effectively planned its facility needs for the immediate future. Scheduled maintenance is also planned on an annual basis to qualify for matching state funds. However, no evidence was found to indicate that the College has a plan to upgrade and replace equipment as it ages or becomes obsolete. Replacement appears to be handled on an as needed basis (Standard III.B.1.a). The College should develop an equipment replacement plan that takes into consideration the needs of programs and services in order to maximize its resource planning activities.

Discussion with employees and a review of the Noel-Levitz student survey indicates that the College provides a safe, secure, and healthful environment. Security is provided by a contractor in the evening, and the maintenance staff provides necessary response during the day. Evacuation drills are conducted on a regular basis. A physical inspection of the College and discussion with the Disabled Students Office indicates that it is ADA compliant. The College is in the process of developing a disaster preparedness plan with the services of a consultant (Standard III.B.1.b).

There is no evidence to indicate that the College regularly evaluates its facilities and equipment in a systematic fashion. Because the facilities are new, this is not an immediate issue. However, equipment wears out and becomes obsolete and as noted above, an equipment replacement plan should be developed (Standard III.B.2). Long-range capital plans are based on the build out of a complete campus and the recognition of the need for a performing and fine arts facility. The College has been diligent, as evidenced by the recent hiring of new maintenance staff, in recognizing the total cost of ownership of its new facilities (Standard III.B.2.a). It is questionable whether the College integrates its physical resource planning with institutional planning. While the budgetary needs of the Facilities and Operations department are tied to the strategic plan and program review, there is no evidence that educational planning is taking place in a systematic fashion to drive the physical resource planning of the College. The College continues to rely on an Educational Master plan that was created in 1997 for its facility planning. However, there has been no formal educational planning since that Plan. This comment does not mean to imply that the College is not regularly assessing its educational and physical resource needs but that there is no systematic educational or student services planning. This was noted in the last Accreditation Report where the team wrote: this plan (the 1997 Educational plan) was not kept alive on campus so that the facilities plan became an isolated plan, rather than a plan supported by a comprehensive view of the educational programs (Standard III.B.2.b).

### **Standard III C Technology Resources**

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The College has made significant strides in the area of technology since the last Accreditation Report. Technology is available throughout the College, is used in instruction and the new administrative software system, Datatel, will greatly improve administrative operations and access to data. The College has a small but competent IT staff that is able to handle current support demands. However, with the new Datatel system and future consideration of on-line education, additional staff will be necessary. The updated Technology Plan should lay out these staffing requirements as the College's technology needs expand. The College has made a strong commitment to support IT equipment through an annual budget allocation (Standard III.C.1.a). Faculty and staff indicated general satisfaction with technology training but the IT Director acknowledged that there is no systematic technology training despite identifying training (Professional Development) as a goal of the Technology Master Plan. Most training is done on an as needed basis or periodically at faculty and staff meetings. With the conversion to Datatel an extensive training program is in place including a dedicated training room. The College should consider keeping this room as a training room and creating a technology training plan (Standard III.C.1.b).

The recent and current building projects have provided the resources and opportunity to plan and acquire technology equipment and infrastructure. The IT Director reported that he has had a greater opportunity to influence the planning and installation of technology equipment and infrastructure in the last two buildings than he did on the first two. This has greatly improved the operational use and effectiveness of technology. The College budget provides funds for the maintenance and repair of technology equipment. The Self Study acknowledges the lack of a



systematic process to “govern technology evaluation and replacement.” The IT Director has indicated that this is a priority for his department once the Datatel conversion is completed. Fortunately for the College, much of its technology is new and there is adequate budget to take care of immediate needs (Standard III.C.1.c).

The College effectively utilizes technology resources to support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The IT Director sits on the Strategic Planning Committee and there is general awareness of the importance of technology to the institution. The new Datatel system is widely anticipated after years of dissatisfaction with the existing administrative systems. The Self Study and the IT Director acknowledge that the effectiveness of the IT department will be enhanced by the active involvement of the Technology Committee which has been inactive. The Self Study indicated several areas where the Technology Committee could contribute to the services provided by the IT Department (Standard III.C.1.d). Technology planning is partially integrated with institutional planning in that the Strategic Plan includes a goal on technology, and the Strategic Plan recognizes that future revisions to the Plan should be based on an updated Technology Plan. The participation of the IT Director on the Administrative Council and College Council/Strategic Planning Steering Committee has improved the coordination between the Technology Department and the technology needs of the College. Once the Technology Plan is updated, including staffing and an equipment replacement program, and the Technology Committee is revitalized and used to assist the Technology department and inform the strategic planning activities of the institution, the College will have met this component of the standard. The Technology Plan identifies as a priority a systematic process for assessing the effective use of technology as part of technology planning. However, no evidence was presented that such a process is used. The Self Study indicates that a revitalized Technology Committee would provide a “way of further integrating technology with other College constituents and with the Budget Committee” (Standard III.C.2).

## **Standard III D Financial Resources**

### **Findings and Evidence**

A review of the annual budget document and the annual audit indicate that the college has adequate resources to meet its needs. The College is very conservative in its estimation of revenues relying on projections of apportionment revenues provided by the System Office and actual revenues from prior years. Over the past four years, the College has maintained a reserve in excess of 10% which will allow it to respond to the current State fiscal crisis without serious impact on programs and services. Evidence was found that indicates that the College relies on various institutional planning activities and program review to establish its annual budget and determine funding augmentations for new positions and capital outlay. A review of three programs, Admissions and Records, Licensed Vocational Nursing, and Biology, concluded that program review processes resulted in identified resource needs which in turn eventually led to an allocation of resources. In each instance, the request for resources was also tied to the Strategic Master Plan (Standard III.D.1.a). The College is conservative in its financial projections and decisions on institutional planning reflect this approach. However, a concern needs to be expressed over the College’s financial reliance on its distance education program at the local

correctional facilities and one large Instructional Services Agreement (ISA) that produce a significant number of FTES and revenues. The College has previously experienced the loss of a large ISA when the local community college withdrew its approval for Palo Verde to offer instruction in its service area. The College administration is aware of this reliance and it is a concern. Institutional planning should look at the ISAs and the steps necessary to limit the fiscal impact of the possible loss or reduction of this one large ISA (Standard III.D.1.b).

Evidence related to the impact of short-term planning on long-range financial priorities was noted in the decisions related to early retirement incentives, post-retirement benefits planning and the use of Certificates of Participation (COP) to help fund capital improvements. The College is to be commended for completing an actuarial study on post-retirement benefits and for funding the actuarial requirements. However, the College should consider earmarking funds over the next several years so that the start of the payment on the COP in 2013 does not have a significant impact on the budget (Standard III.D.1.c).

The College has a well defined budget process that is linked to the Strategic Plan and program review, and prepares monthly cash flow statements that identify when the college must issue Tax Revenue Anticipation Notes to insure that it is always able to meet its financial obligations. The College collective bargaining agreements include a salary formula that allows the College to anticipate annual increases to salaries during its budget process. The College Council/Strategic Planning Committee is an active decision-making body that relies on the Strategic Plan to make budget decisions (Standard III.D.1.d).

The College relies on the financial management system of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools and a review of the monthly reports available to budgetary decision-makers indicates that there are adequate controls on expenditures and that decision-makers have adequate information. The new Datatel administrative system, when implemented, will provide on-line access to information in a more timely fashion, which should further improve decision making. Reviews of past audit reports indicate that the administration promptly responds to audit findings (Standard III.D.2.a & b). As noted above, the College has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability. The College also belongs to a number of risk pools for worker's compensation, liability, and health care benefits. A review of the audit indicates that these pools have adequate resources to support the insurance needs of the College (Standard III.D.2.c).

A review of annual audits and discussions with the Bookstore Manager, Foundation Treasurer, and ASB staff indicates that the College provides reasonable and effective oversight of finances, including auxiliary operations, categorical programs, and grants (Standard III.D.2.d & e). A review of the Instructional Service Agreements and other contracts indicate that the College maintains appropriate provisions to protect the integrity of the institution (Standard III.D.2.f). The Budget Committee annually reviews the budget process and documents, and in fact is revising its budget request form as a result of such a review, and the Administrative Services division has undergone a program review, but the review did not address the financial management of the College. The team found evidence that individual parts of the financial management process are reviewed but the College should conduct a review of its overall financial management practices as part of the implementation of the new Datatel system (Standard III.D.2.g).

## Conclusion

The college meets this standard. However, an assessment of the processes that integrate human resource planning and professional development activities needs to be established. Qualitative and quantitative data need to be used to assist the college in maintaining a systematic assessment process to ensure that planning efforts are consistent with the stated mission of the college. The College is to be commended for its new and attractive campus and for its success in getting the System Office to recognize that its community is entitled to a campus and facilities equivalent to those found at other colleges. The College also is to be commended for its efforts and practices that relate funding decisions to planning and program review, and for completing an actuarial study on post-retirement benefits and for funding the actuarial requirements. The College is encouraged to begin the planning for routine maintenance issues such as the replacement of carpeting, painting, and HVAC maintenance so that it can adequately plan for these expenses. There is a need to do educational and student support planning in a systematic fashion so that new facilities can be planned to meet the needs identified by these planning activities.

The College has greatly benefited from the construction of a new campus that has provided the opportunity for new technology infrastructure and equipment. Technology planning resulted in the decision to acquire a new administrative software system and has informed the strategic planning activities of the institution. The College is encouraged to update its Technology Master Plan to include an equipment replacement plan and the projected staffing needs tied to the projected expansion of technology. The College should revitalize the Technology Committee and make it an effective tool for technology planning and assessment. The College should make technology training a priority by providing adequate space and resources for this purpose. The College should conduct an assessment of its financial management practices as part of the implementation of the new Datatel system. The College should also follow the assessment component in its Technology Plan to insure that technology planning meets the ongoing needs of the institution.

Finally, a concern needs to be expressed over the College's financial reliance on one large Instructional Services Agreement (ISA) and its distance education program at the correctional facilities. A loss of all or part of either of these programs, which could be outside the control of the institution, could have a very serious fiscal impact on the College.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation #2:** The team recommends that the College more systematically evaluate its processes using both quantitative and qualitative data. The following processes are especially in need of systematic assessment:

- Professional Development Programs (III.A.5.b);
- Effective use of human resources – allocation of human resources (III.A.6);
- Strategic Planning and Budgeting processes (I.B.6, III.D.2);
- Financial Management practices (III.D.2.g).



## **Standard IV**

### **Leadership and Governance**

#### **General Observations**

The Self Study by Palo Verde College describes a small, rural, isolated community college located in the south east corner of California. The College has worked diligently to provide the lower-level transfer education and vocational training to its service area.

Both of the two major population centers, Blythe (population 14,000) and Needles (population 5,000) are suffering declining populations and economic slow-down. The per capita income for the Blythe area is \$18,572, while Needles is \$17,707. Both communities are heavily dependent on welfare funds. The area topography is desert with some mountains. The most notable feature is the Colorado River on the eastern edge of the service area. This provides some recreation and tourist income. The service area is quite large and very sparsely populated. The two centers, Blythe and Needles, are located 100 miles apart with a two-lane highway between them.

The College is observed to have made significant progress in developing formal processes for soliciting input from all constituent groups into its operation and decision-making at a very wide scope. The system has been put into place through the establishment of a formal 'shared governance' structure that clearly delineates the process of decision and sharing of information at all levels.

The College has developed an elaborate system of committees, each with membership comprising faculty, staff, and administrators from the appropriate areas. The range of committees is extensive, from the Academic Standards Committee to the Staff Development Committee. Each has identified regular meeting times and dates. In most of the cases, committee members are well identified. The College Council/Strategic Planning Committee functions as the central coordinating committee for the entire College.

Membership of the College Council/Strategic Planning Committee consists of all members of the senior staff, including all of the vice presidents, the head of each of the employee groups CSEA, the Academic Senate, and the CTA as well as the President of the Associated Students. The College's internal institutional researcher, the external researcher and the director of the learning resources director are also members of this committee. This committee is headed up by the President of the College. The constituent representatives have the responsibilities for bringing information and concerns from and back to their respective groups.

The Committee meets twice a month on a regular basis. Agendas for each of the meetings are developed ahead of time and summaries of meetings are kept. Over the last year, this committee has also assumed the responsibility of the Accreditation Self-Study Committee. In that role, the Committee created a college-wide Self Study Steering Committee which served as the overall coordinating body in the production and assembly of the Accreditation Self-Study Report. The College Council/Strategic Planning Committee regularly required and received progress reports

from the Steering Committee. The College internal institutional researcher, a regular member of the College Council/Strategic Planning Committee, also the College's Accreditation Liaison Officer and coordinated the preparation of the Self-Study.

The College Council/Strategic Planning Committee takes its input from the other committees and functioning groups of the College, and it serves as the final deliberative body that provides overall input to the president for his decision. The many functions of this committee include receiving input and concerns from the different constituency groups, overall College concerns and issues, budget recommendations from the budget committee, program review results, etc.

## **Standard IV A Decision Making Roles and Processes**

### **Findings and Evidence**

Palo Verde College has in place a Strategic Plan that was developed in spring 2002, modified three times, the latest in September 2007.

There are unusual parts of the Strategic Plan in that it includes the vision, mission, and values. The vision, mission, and values were developed along with the many initiatives and adopted as a whole in spring 2002. These parts have remained intact since 2002, while the initiatives have been updated three times.

The current College strategic plan contains five initiatives:

1. Instructional Programs and Support Services
2. Student Recruitment and Enrollment
3. Student Success
4. Organizational Effectiveness
5. Technology and Support

Under each initiative, there is a goal and individuals or a committee is assigned to the goal. To develop each goal there are three to eight objectives. Within the objectives there are persons with the key responsibilities, timelines, and evidence.

Although we found plenty of evidence that all of the 26 objectives are either being completed or work is in progress, this evidence was scattered throughout the campus, and not readily available. Furthermore, the evidence was not presented in measurable units but rather in general terms. Through interviews the accreditation team established that the evidence has been observed, collected, and utilized in future planning.

The evidence stated was of a very general, non-specific nature. Effective metrics might include (a) the number of students participating now and a goal of a specific number of students to be



added; (b) a percentage now and a percentage after the objective has been in place; or (c) for various services a survey before and after.

The accreditation team did not find what evidence had been used for the previous three modifications to the strategic plan. There needs to be greater use of metrics in assessment to direct future modifications.

The College Council/Strategic Planning Committee also serves as the ultimate clearing house for information regarding priorities and new initiatives considered and to be implemented by the College. Members of the Committee cited examples of college-wide initiatives that were proposed, organized, and decided by this committee through a series of discussion and consultation. Individuals assigned to carry out the project also report back to the committee on a regular basis on the progress of the projects. One of the current examples cited by members of the Committee is the Community Survey that the College is conducting through focus groups and a large external demographic and economic study conducted by an external group. The Committee initiated the study as a way to ensure the College is fulfilling the community's needs. The Committee is providing oversight to the project. Periodic reports of surveys and findings by the two researchers assigned to this project are brought back to the committee for discussion and input. The Committee is ready to receive a final report and recommendation from the researchers at the end of the semester and will discuss and act on the recommendations in the next academic year. It is noteworthy that all members of this committee with whom the Visiting Team came into contact voiced their satisfaction with the decision to go ahead with the project and the way this project is managed by the College.

The visiting team finds the structure and practices established by the College to be effective (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2., IV.A.3). All of the college members interviewed feel that they are empowered and are given a voice in the decision made by the College. The constituent representatives in the College Council/Strategic Committee feel that the committees work well as a way for each to bring their concerns to the College, including the President. They also expressed satisfaction of the progress the College has made in this area since the last visit. Faculty and Classified representatives commented that communication in both directions have improved by using the 'shared governance' structure. They feel the process is now well established and is a reliable way for communication within the College. The process also helps to form unified vision for the College in many of its endeavors (Standard IV.A.3).

The College responded to the recommendation of the last visiting team in formalizing the shared governance structure and has made successful use of it to help improve college communication and in planning. The Self-Study and its Report was conducted and produced by various standard committees with representative membership. The drafts were reviewed and examined adequately by all constituent groups of the College. The final Report was signed off by all constituent representatives before its submission to the Board for approval (Standard IV.A.4).

The system put into place for planning and communication is working well and is embraced by the College community. It has instilled an atmosphere of collegiality on campus and individuals now feel that they can articulate their views without fear of retaliation. The College should be commended for the substantive effort it has made in this area. The resulting changes in college

climate and staff morale have empowered the college community to feel that the College is working as a unified whole and is moving as one in the same direction. It is recommended that the College formally evaluate this structure and its operation in the coming year to gather input to further improve the effectiveness of this governance structure (Standard IV.A.5).

The visiting team further suggests the College pay particular attention to the function of the College Council/Strategic Committee's work as the evaluative body of the college that provides critical review to the progress of various college priority projects initiated or sanctioned by this body. The Committee in its function as the Strategic Committee can further establish, for each of its objectives under the five major strategic initiatives clear milestones, timelines, outcome indicators, and also provide clear personnel assignments to each of the priority project.

## **Standard IV B**

### **Board and Administrative Organization**

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The Board of Trustees (The Board) of Palo Verde College consists of seven members, five elected from the Blythe area, two from the Needles area, and one student member. In an interview with the Board it was evident that they are very concerned with the student and their communities. This year the College celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and The Board is very proud of that achievement. The Board is very rightly proud of their new campus and is anxiously awaiting the new performing arts and fine arts complex. Within the past week the College had the dedication of its first physical education facility. The board has provided leadership and guidelines for the implementation of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), which have been developed across all disciplines. The Board is justifiably excited about the distance learning provided to the prisoners of Ironwood and Chuckawalla California Men's facilities. Due to prison restrictions, they utilize a correspondence course type of teaching mode. Those inmates participating in the program have a recidivism rate of 20 percent as compared to an 80 percent rate in the general prison population. The Board takes seriously its role in providing a collegial atmosphere and opportunities for all campus communities to dialogue about campus issues. The Board takes seriously its role to advocate and defend the college from undue pressure. The Board feels that they are well informed of issues at all stages of the issues development by the Superintendent/President (President) (Standard IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c).

The Board policies have been recognized as being woefully outdated by the Board and the President. They have made it a priority to completely revise the Board Policies utilizing the Community College League of California Board Policy and Guideline as a template. They hired a knowledgeable person to adopt the old Board Policies to the new template, but unfortunately that person passed away one quarter the way through the project. Due to the pressing needs of accreditations, SLOs and program review, it took a back seat. But this spring the policy revisions will continue with an expected completion in summer 2008 (Standards IV.B.1.d, IV.B.1.e).

The term of the publicly elected board members is four years with staggered elections. The student member is elected annually by the student body. The Board is active locally and in state-wide organization to keep them informed on emerging issues. The Board has a program for new member orientation and board development. Once a year the Board conducts a full-day retreat for self evaluation using a form filled in by each board member. There is a Board Code of Ethics in place. The Board received monthly updates on accreditation from the accreditation liaison officer. At this point there is no Board Policy dealing with Board members' behavior that violates its code (Standards IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.1.h, and IV.B.1.i).

The Board selected the president in 2001 and annually evaluates his performance. There is unanimous agreement among all campus communities that the Board delegates responsibility and authority to the president to implement and administer policies without Board interference (Standard IV.B).

The President was appointed into the current position since 2001. He is well established and has successfully led the College over the past 7 years. He has been a strong leader for the institution. Under him, the College has completed several building projects and passed a local general obligation bond measure to move the center at Needles into a historical building. The College is operating smoothly and staff is in good morale generally. The Staff comment that they are proud of the institution and are happy to report to work. The new campus facilities have enhanced the stature of the College, which is viewed with pride by the local community.

The President's position is supported by three vice presidents assigned respectively to the area of instructional, student, and administrative services. These positions are further supported by positions of deans, assistant deans, department chairs, directors, coordinators, etc. The President is making effective use of his administrative team to lead the College (Standard IV.B.2.a).

Under the direction of the President, the College has established a new planning process that has led to the creation of a Strategic Plan. The creation of the plan and its implementation operates under the oversight of the College Council/Strategic Planning Committee, a shared governance committee headed up by the President himself. This body has the responsibilities of examining the institutional outcomes, making budget recommendations, and monitoring progress of the strategic initiatives while at the same time serving as the major conduit of communication for the rest of the campus and its constituency groups. (Standards IV.B.2.b,d).

The Board of Trustees and the President of the College work in a collegial manner. They have created a trusting working relationship. The President provides regular and frequent reports to the trustees outside of the reports presented at board meetings to ensure the governing body is kept aware of important developments and status of the College. The trustees are, in turn, kept apprised of the work of the College to be certain that policies, mission, and goals are adhered to in the work carried out by all segments of the College. The President and Board of Trustees are active in the local community (Standards IV.B.2.c,e).

#### **Conclusion:**

The College substantially meets this Standard. The visiting team commends the progress made by the College since the last visit in fostering a new environment of inclusiveness and transparency in decision making for its faculty and staff. The College has effectively created a collegial environment in which faculty, staff, administrators, and students feel positively about the College. Members of the College in general feel they have a voice in major decisions that are affecting the College. Both Trustees and the President have worked diligently and conscientiously to ensure smooth information flow to and from them. Through their efforts, they have succeeded in boosting the morale of the College community and created an environment of trust.

### Recommendations

None