

ABSTRACT OF THE REPORT

Mission College is committed to student learning and success, as articulated in the opening line of its mission statement. It is also committed to meeting the needs of the communities it serves. It demonstrates that commitment by providing a broad array of educational programs and services; maintaining a culture that engages in continuous learning; systematically assessing, evaluating and improving its effectiveness; and embracing the diversity of its community.

Since 2001, the college has experienced significant change, as has the Silicon Valley. The collapse of the dot-com sector greatly affected the enrollment of the college and a number of the instructional programs, especially high tech programs. Just like Silicon Valley businesses and industries, the college has tried to determine future directions so that it can provide the educational programs that prepare its students for a changing economy. While challenging, these changes have also resulted in opportunities and reinforced the need for continuous assessment, planning, and evaluation at all levels of the institution.

Even as the college has coped with external change and internal challenges, it has managed to make significant progress in many areas. In 2004, the college received a \$2.75 million Title V grant focused on serving Hispanic students and other under-represented groups. Also in 2004, the District passed a \$235 million facilities bond, \$97 million of which is earmarked for Mission College. In the last two years, the college has conducted program review for 100% of its programs and services, implemented student learning outcomes, revised its mission statement, updated its educational plan, and initiated a facilities master planning process that will result in an almost completely new campus design. In 2007, it celebrated its 30th anniversary of providing excellence in education. Since 2002 it has replaced 43% of its full-time faculty with new instructors who have brought fresh energy and innovation to the college. The enrollment decline of several years appears to be reversing. The college is thus poised to enter a new era in its evolution as an institution of higher learning.

The process of conducting this Self Study has confirmed Mission College's belief that it is in substantial compliance with the requirements of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. For each standard, the college has described its current status and evaluated its performance. It has provided evidence to support its statements. The college has attempted to be candid in its self-assessment. It has noted those areas where there is room for improvement and has developed planning agendas to address them. In the course of writing this Self Study, the college was able to engage in sometimes lively but always productive dialogue and it did so in an atmosphere of collegiality and respect. All segments of the college community – faculty, staff, administrators, trustees and students – worked collaboratively to produce this study.

The Accrediting Commission has identified six themes that run throughout the standards. These themes are

1. Institutional commitment (*t1*)
2. Evaluation, planning, and improvement (*t2*)
3. Student learning outcomes (*t3*)
4. Organization (*t4*)
5. Dialogue (*t5*)
6. Institutional integrity (*t6*)

As the Self Study evolved, the college had an opportunity to assess its commitment to each of these themes. To ensure that the themes are tracked throughout the study, each is referenced with a notation (*t1*, *t2*, *t3*, etc.) when it is addressed.

Institutional Commitment: The college is committed to “providing high quality education congruent with institutional mission, to focusing on student learning, and to periodic reflection on the mission statement.” The college spent substantial time reviewing and revising its mission statement to reflect a common understanding of the college’s purpose and the means by which it intends to fulfill that purpose. Student learning and success are clearly articulated as the college’s first priorities. The mission statement is now widely distributed and more strongly integrated into the college’s planning processes. The college also reviewed, revised, and renewed its commitment to its core values, which are included in its recently updated educational plan.

Evaluation, Planning and Improvement: This theme emphasizes the need for an “ongoing and systematic cycle that includes evaluation, goal setting, resource distribution, implementation, and reevaluation,” which are fundamental principles for the type of strategic planning Mission College recognizes as necessary in order to ensure that it fulfills its mission. In fact, the college’s mission statement specifically states that the college is committed to “the systematic assessment, evaluation and improvement of student learning, educational programs and student support services.” Further, the college is committed to maintaining “an organizational culture that engages in continuous learning and uses the results of systematic assessment and evaluation to inform decision making, allocate resources, and improve institutional policies and procedures.”

All of Mission College’s instructional and non-instructional programs and services are current in terms of program review, which was a component of the 2005-2007 educational planning process that also included a component for student learning outcomes. The program review and educational planning processes are data driven, including internal data and external demographic and labor market information. Student surveys are conducted to assess services.

The college is clearly committed to on-going improvement of its planning processes. The college has revised its program review process twice since 2001 and is re-evaluating it again in 2007-2008 to ensure that it meets the college's needs as a planning tool and to ensure that the process includes a link between program evaluation, major planning documents, and resource allocation. In accordance with its principles of participatory governance, all college groups have a voice in shaping the college's planning processes. To strengthen assessment and evaluation, the Office of Institutional Research has been tasked with assisting the college in developing benchmarks and a mechanism for assessing student learning and institutional effectiveness.

In addition to the college's internal planning processes, programs such as Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOPS), Disability Instructional Support Center (DISC), and Title V conduct reviews to meet the requirements of external agencies such as the State System (Chancellor's) Office and the U.S. Department of Education.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): The standards require that colleges "consciously and robustly" demonstrate a commitment to student learning "by developing student learning outcomes at the course, program, certificate, and degree level." The college's mission statement makes clear that student learning and success are the college's first priorities. At many points throughout the Self Study, there is discussion of the college's progress in the development of student learning outcomes. Mission College began its work in earnest in 2004 when it received a Title V grant, which included as one of its components the development of student learning outcomes in basic skills and ESL. To date, the college has reviewed and revised most of its program outcomes and has developed learning outcomes for basic skills and ESL. Under the leadership of the Academic Senate, work continues to expand the development of SLOs, especially at the course level. In Spring 2007, the college completed the SLO matrix required by the Accrediting Commission and found it to be a very useful tool in measuring its progress. In addition, the college is beginning implementation of the Basic Skills Initiative, which will reinforce its efforts in this area.

Organization: Another theme throughout the standards is "organization as demonstrated in having adequate staff, resources and organizational structure (communication and decision making structures) to identify and make public learning outcomes, to evaluate the effectiveness of programs in producing those outcomes, and to make improvements." The college's organizational structure is intended to ensure that all programs and services are adequately supported. Its governance structures are intended to ensure that all constituencies have the opportunity to participate as appropriate in decision-making. Throughout its history, the college has experienced an unusually high turnover among administrative staff, particularly at the president's level, which has in turn affected continuity of policies and procedures. Because of funding constraints, the college has had to reduce support staffing levels and finds itself hard pressed to meet increasing demands for support. The college has made some changes to its organizational structure since the last accreditation, but it is likely that it will need to revisit its structure again. This time, one of the guiding principles will be how an organizational structure can best support student learning. The District's Chancellor has included among his 2007-2008 goals to evaluate the organizational structure throughout the District.

In respect to governance, the college has taken it upon itself to review its governance structures because there appears to be a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of some of the governance groups. This situation may be partly due to the large number of new faculty, staff and administrators hired since the last review of the governance structure. The current review has been initiated by the Governance and Planning Council (GAP) with the support of the Academic Senate. There are specific planning agenda items in the Self Study aimed at this objective as well as the improvement of the ways in which groups document their activities and disseminate that information to the college community.

Dialogue: The purpose of dialogue as an accreditation theme is “a means to ongoing participation in institutional self-reflection based on reliable information about the college’s programs and services and evidence on how well the institution is meeting student needs.” The college is committed to improving student learning and overall institutional effectiveness and doing so based on data and information that are reliable and usable. While the District has no research and planning function, the college has a Research Analyst who provides data and information for qualitative and quantitative analysis for both formative and summative evaluation. This information is used in many planning initiatives such as program review, educational planning, facilities planning, implementation of the student equity plan, development of the faculty and staff diversity plan, grant applications, compliance reports, needs assessments, placement instrument validation, and student learning outcomes. This information is used to inform governance and planning groups, departments, programs and services in the process of program planning. The Research Analyst assists groups in developing research questions and collecting and analyzing data. With this information, faculty and staff have engaged in rich discussions about student learning and ways to make meaningful changes that result in improvement. Such discussions have occurred in many venues, including department meetings, division meetings, the Academic Senate, the Governance and Planning Council, Title V Advisory Committee, Student Learning Outcomes Committee, and in college-wide educational planning forums.

Institutional Integrity: A final theme is institutional integrity, “demonstrated by concern with honesty, truthfulness, and the manner in which the institution represents itself to all stakeholders, internal and external.” Mission College strives to present itself accurately both internally and externally. The college Catalog and schedules of classes are routinely reviewed and revised as necessary. The college regularly updates its web site. Information is provided in Spanish and Vietnamese. Faculty and student handbooks are regularly revised. The college has a marketing and public relations director who ensures that important information is made available through all forms of media – print, television, radio, and on-line. When the college discovers inaccuracies, it makes every attempt to correct them as quickly as possible and always with the primary intent of ensuring that students are not adversely affected.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) has established policies that ensure that it is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest. Board policies promote integrity among the members of the Board as well as among the District’s faculty, staff and administrators.

Mission College embraces the themes that run through the accreditation standards; they are closely aligned with the college's mission, philosophy, core values and goals. The college believes that it has demonstrated its commitment to the standards and the themes as evidenced in the accompanying Self Study. Where the college sees ways in which it can strengthen its commitment, it has developed planning agenda items to guide its progress and lead to continued improvement of student learning.