Follow-Up Report 2012

College of Marin
835 College Avenue
Kentfield, CA 94904

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
For Community and Junior Colleges
This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
College of Marin

November 7 and 8, 2012

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Peralta CCD
College of Marin Follow-Up Visit Team Report

December 5, 2012

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FR: Dr. José M. Ortiz, Team Chair

RE: Report of Follow-Up Visiting Team to College of Marin, November 2012

Introduction:
A comprehensive visit was conducted at the College of Marin in October 2010, with an initial Follow-Up Report and visit required in 2011. At its meeting of January 10-12, 2012, the Commission acted to issue Warning and required the College of Marin to submit a second Follow-Up Report in October 2012, followed by a visit. The follow-up visiting team conducted the site visit to College of Marin on November 7 and 8, 2012. The purpose of the team visit was to verify that the Follow-Up Report 2012, prepared by the college, was accurate through examination of evidence and interviews of key personnel, and to determine if sustained, continuous and positive improvements had been made at the institution. Further, the visiting team sought to ascertain whether the institution has resolved the recommendations made by the comprehensive evaluation team and now meets the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

The college had prepared well for the visit by preparing a Follow-Up Report (October 2012) and by arranging for meetings with the individuals and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair. The Follow-Up Report was well written and the visiting team was able to access the appropriate evidence both online and in the meeting room provided by the college. Over the course of the two days, the team met with the Superintendent/President of the College, two members of the Board of Trustees, committee chairs, the Academic Senate President, and several members of the faculty and staff. One team member visited the Indian Valley Campus.

The Follow-Up Report and visit were expected to document resolution of the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college regularly update all institutional plans and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of all planning and resource allocation processes. The college should communicate to all college stakeholders the results of these assessment activities, and implement identified improvements on a continuous basis to support and improve student learning. Additionally, the team recommends that the college ensure that planning is linked to budgeting for the effective use of its resources. (I.B; I.B.6; I.B.7; III.D.1.a; III.D.3)
Recommendation #2

In order to meet the Commission’s fall 2012 deadline, the team recommends that the college accelerate its efforts to identify and assess measurable student learning outcomes for every instructional, library and student support program. The team further recommends that the college incorporate student learning outcome assessment results into program planning and resource allocation for the improvement of student learning. (II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.A.2.f; II.A.3.a, b; II.B.4; II.C.2)

Recommendation #3

In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college allocate resources to create a sustainable infrastructure to support a distance education program that can deliver high quality curricula and support student access and success. (II.A.1.b; II.A.2.d; II.B.3.a; III.C.1)

Recommendation #5

In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college remedy the lack of library services, learning resources and student support services for evening, Indian Valley Campus, and online students. (II.B.3.a; II.C.1.c, ER 14, ER 16)

Recommendation #7

In order to meet standard, the team recommends that the college develop a facilities master plan to ensure the effective utilization and quality of physical resources which are necessary to support its programs and services. (III.B.2.b)

Recommendation #8

In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college establish and communicate a sustainable technology plan for the acquisition, maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure, equipment, support and training to meet institutional needs. The team further recommends regular evaluation of this plan for its effectiveness in prioritizing and funding current and projected long term technology needs. (III.C.1.a; III.C.1.b; III.C.1.c; III.C.1.d)

Recommendation #9

In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the board focus on developing policies that support the quality, integrity and effectiveness of student learning programs and services. The board should deliberate with due diligence and make timely decisions that are in the best interests of the institution.

The board should act as a whole and adhere to board policy once a decision has been made, and support the superintendent/president’s authority in administering board policies and procedures. (IV.B.1; IV.B.1.a; IV.B.1.f; IV.B.1.j; IV.B.2; IV.B.2.c)

College Responses to the Team Recommendations:
Recommendation #1: In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college regularly update all institutional plans and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of all planning and resource allocation processes. The college should communicate to all stakeholders the results of these assessment activities, and implement identified improvements on a continuous basis to support and improve student learning. Additionally, the team recommends that the college ensure that planning is linked to budgeting for the effective use of its resources.

Findings and Evidence: The team reviewed the planning processes and institutional plans in place at the college. The Integrated Planning Manual (IPM) continues to guide planning and reflects a well-conceived and continuously implemented process. The college mission statement informs the entire planning process, particularly the ten-year Educational Master Plan (EMP). The EMP is made operational through the objectives of the two latest three-year strategic plans. All college plans relate back to the objectives expressed in the Strategic Plan and all are informed by program review. All the Action Steps within the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan have been completed, and a new 2012-2015 Strategic Plan has been crafted based upon internal and external data, input from college stakeholders, accreditation standards, and the new Student Success Act.

Program review is an integral part of the planning process and includes instruction, student services, and administrative services. Budget planning and resource allocation are inextricably linked to program review, and college staff understand and support this linkage. Significant resources have been awarded for program improvement on the basis of program review, and this has validated the relevance of the program reviews among staff, according to several interviews conducted. Throughout the 2011-2012 academic year, every department completed either a full or a mini program review. All programs and services are on an ongoing, two to three year staggered cycle for full program review with mini reviews in the off-years to inform budget requests.

Overseeing the planning process is the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC) and College Council, the college’s shared governance group. PRAC is also responsible for process assessment and subsequent revisions to the planning processes. Numerous verbal and documented reports from college staff indicate that program review and other planning processes are clearly a part of the college culture. What at one time was seen to be prescribed compliance is now regarded as an essential component of institutional improvement, with both students and staff as beneficiaries. The college’s Follow-Up Report provides a list of the major institutional plans and processes developed, updated, or completed in 2011-2012.

Conclusion: The College has clearly made significant progress in completing plans and program reviews in the past year, and aligning them with resource allocation. All major plans have been revised or completed as recommended in the 2011 Follow-Up Visit. The concept of program review as a grass roots planning and resource allocation process has energized the college. Despite wearisome efforts to meet planning deadlines, program review is now regarded as relevant and effective.
The current iteration of the Staffing Plan is a description of what is now in place. The visiting team suggests that the Staffing Plan become a projection of future staffing needs, based on comparative data. With that needed improvement noted, the college has integrated its planning processes and resource allocations, has used data to inform planning, has assessed and revised processes and plans, and has changed the college culture to welcome planning efforts and to appreciate their relevance to student learning and staff effectiveness.

The team concludes this recommendation has been addressed and the college meets the Standards.

**Recommendation #2:** In order to meet the Commission’s fall 2012 deadline, the team recommends that the college accelerate its efforts to identify and assess measurable student learning outcomes for every instructional, library and student support program. The team further recommends that the college incorporate student learning outcome assessment results into program planning and resource allocation for the improvement of student learning.

**Findings and Evidence:** The College has invested substantial resources, notably staff and time, into identifying and assessing student learning outcomes (SLOs) for all courses, programs, and services throughout the institution. The College was able to use the assessment process eliminate some unused or inappropriate courses and programs. Courses and programs that do not have SLOs were deactivated. Student Services (including the Library) reports a division-wide commitment to relating department services to division SLOs. There are growing partnerships among the various student services departments and between Student Services and Instruction in identifying and meeting common SLOs and opportunities to promote student learning. A regular schedule of assessment of SLOs has been established and is being implemented. Staff attest to a sense of ownership for meeting identified SLOs and are intrinsically motivated toward ongoing assessment. The office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE) continues to assist with web-based tools and resources to aid in the tracking and mapping of SLOs.

**Conclusion:** What began as a compliance issue has transformed into a quest for quality assurance. Staff are knowledgeable and excited about SLOs, assessment, and program and services improvement. Although there are no guarantees of additional funding for continuous improvements, the dialogue among peers about ways to improve student learning is rich and self-rewarding. Staff selected to initiate the process report that they could leave the institution and the discussions leading to student improvement would continue unabated. The college would do well to continue to foster such dialogue while also helping to dispel the waning belief among a few that the assessment is a meaningless check-off list.

The Student Services credo that SLOs should be “simple, meaningful, and sustainable” has resonated throughout and beyond the Student Services division and should continue to be encouraged. Assessment and discussion of SLOs has become, in the words of one administrator, “the most exciting thing we are doing.” It is clear that there has been a shift in the college culture (admittedly provoked in part by the addition of several new, energetic faculty), and staff are more engaged and more likely to be innovative in addressing student learning outcomes. Staff ownership of SLOs is undaunted by administrative turnover, and the process of improving
student learning through assessment and discussion of SLOs is imbedded within the fabric of the college. Although some of the SLO processes have been newly implemented, the commitment and energy levels of staff bode well for the ongoing sustainability of SLOs and their assessments. Certainly there are outliers among some staff, but in general, there is college wide engagement with SLOs and assessment practices.

The team concludes the college has reached a proficiency level adequate to meet the recommendation and the Standards.

Recommendation #3: In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college allocate resources to create a sustainable infrastructure to support a distance education program that can deliver high quality curricula and support student access and success.

Findings and Evidence: The College of Marin continues to work diligently to create a sustainable infrastructure for distance education. The visiting team confirmed that a three year Distance Education (DE) Plan has been developed, which is integrated into other college planning processes. A distance education operational team has been established that includes: an instructional designer who provides the majority of training and support, a faculty member with reassigned time to act as the DE facilitator, and an administrator with assigned time for DE oversight. Support services for online students are improving, with notable efforts in the library and tutorial areas. Moodle has been firmly established as the college DE platform, with all instructors (including onsite and noncredit/community education) receiving a Moodle course shell. Distance Education participates in program review, and may request resources through the established college process. The DE operational team feels the Superintendent/President is very supportive, and they are confident that there will be adequate resources for the duration of the three year plan.

Conclusion: The College has a formal three year plan that aligns with the strategic and educational master plans. The DE operational team provides training, support and structure. Budgets have been developed and resources allocated through the end of the 2013 academic year. Moodle is in place for all instructors. The DE program is static at this time at about 40 sections, with no expectation of either substantially increasing or decreasing for the next few years. As one DE instructor who was interviewed stated, “Everything is in place now: all the groundwork has been completed. Now it’s up to the College to sustain it.”

The college meets the recommendation at this time.
Recommendation #5: In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college remedy the lack of library services, learning resources and student support services for evening, Indian Valley Campus and online students.

Findings and Evidence: It is evident that the college has done a great deal of work to respond to this recommendation, particularly at the Indian Valley Campus (IVC) in Novato. Services are now clearly identified at that campus with ample signage. While hours of some services, for example the bookstore, are still very limited, there are more online options available. In addition, College of Marin conducted a survey that showed only 10 to 12 per cent of their students attend solely at IVC; some services are utilized by IVC students at the main Kentfield campus. The library is now fully functional, and staffed by a new full time librarian who divides his time between the two campuses. Evening services are offered one night per week at IVC. The librarian has made a cost/benefit study and recommended that the college join the MARINet.com library consortium, which would increase interlibrary loan and database benefits for students. The Interim Vice President of Student Services has worked extensively with employee groups to shift some service hours later in the day for evening students, especially Monday nights. A color flyer featuring available services at both campuses has been developed and is distributed to as many students as possible. Services in general now have a strong presence on the college website. The tutorial coordinator has made additional separate efforts to market online tutoring to students.

Conclusion: The College has remedied the lack of support services on the Indian Valley campus. Increased evening and online services are available to DE students and students at both campuses. There are ongoing efforts to make all students aware of the services available to them. Administrators in charge of academic services, student services, and the IVC all credit the Superintendent/President with creating a culture shift that is more inclusive of student needs.

The college has met this recommendation.

Recommendation #7: In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the college develop a facilities master plan to ensure the effective utilization and quality of physical resources which are necessary to support its programs and services.

Findings and Evidence: In response to this recommendation, the superintendent/president requested the Facilities Planning Committee (FPC) to establish plans to meet the terms of this recommendation. The FPC began its work in November 2010. Grounded in the institution’s mission, vision, and values, the FPC moved forward by hiring a consulting firm to facilitate the development of the facilities master plan.

The Facilities Planning Committee had been functioning regularly for the last several years under the guidance of a facilities master plan completed in 2004. At the time, the college facilities were assessed and projects were identified and documented for the development of the general obligation bond campaign. (Measure C for $249 million). The Facilities Planning Committee had continued to function regularly in recent years without the benefit of an updated facilities master plan. Intended to correct this shortcoming, the initiative by the FPC toward
creating an updated facilities master plan galvanized the college community to participate in not only understanding the past projects, but also to help create the future projects.

On November 30, 2011, the FPC and the consultants activated their immediate course of action by doing the following: 1) reconfirmed their goal to create a sustainable plan and planning process for the development and maintenance of facilities to support the college’s programs and services, including total cost of ownership, at both the Kentfield and Indian Valley Campuses; 2) agreed to produce a document that clearly describes the development of this plan; and 3) reiterated the importance of clearly linking facilities planning processes and priorities to those embodied in the college’s Integrated Planning Model, specifically to the Educational Master Plan.

Together VBN and the FPC developed a process that emphasized data analysis, identification and evaluation of unmet facilities needs, development of criteria for prioritizing projects, ranking of identified projects, and finally creation of an estimated timeline for project implementation.

Because the college is still in the midst of a major bond-funded modernization program, at both the Kentfield and Indian Valley campuses, which commenced in 2005 and will conclude in approximately 2017, the FPC felt that it was appropriate and necessary to fully document this bond-related work (completed and in progress) as part of the Facilities Plan document. Although most of the planning for these projects took place prior to 2011, these modernization-related activities not only affected future facilities planning, but also led to a new motivation by the campus community to seriously contemplate their facilities processes, priorities, and tools that already exist in the college’s planning efforts. Lists of completed and in-progress projects, as well as case studies describing key planning examples, are provided in the Facilities Plan.

All parts of the plan were vetted and edited by the Facilities Planning Committee. The final version of the College of Marin 2012 Facilities Plan was approved by the College’s Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC) on July 24th, 2012, by the College Council on September 12, 2012, and by the Board of Trustees on September 18, 2012. The visiting team’s interviews with staff members on the FPC and review of the existing documentation confirmed the statements made in the Follow-Up Report.

**Conclusion:** The College has made remarkable strides in addressing the recommendation on facilities planning. Since the last visit (2011) the college’s Facilities Planning Committee has worked tirelessly to complete a solid, well-developed facilities master plan. It is a plan that is the pride of not only those who worked on the documentation, but also those who must implement the plan. Employees now have a documented plan with a list of projects, their schedule for start and completion, and the funding status. The development process included participation by a broad range of stakeholder groups including college trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as well as external community members. The visiting team witnessed much enthusiasm around this accomplishment.

The team finds the college has fully met the requirements of this recommendation.
Recommendation #8: In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college establish and communicate a sustainable technology plan for the acquisition, maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure, equipment, support and training to meet institutional needs. The team further recommends regular evaluation of this plan for its effectiveness in prioritizing and funding current and projected long term technology needs.

Findings and Evidence: The College of Marin created a 2012-2017 technology plan with assistance from consultants and with coordination and input from the shared governance Technology Planning Committee (TPC). The plan lists technology initiatives by category such as Administrative Computing and Communications, Instructional Technology, and Technology Infrastructure. In the plan, initiatives are broken down into technology projects for acquisition and replacement of various technology systems, with timelines for implementation. In an interview with the TPC, it was stated that the Board of Trustees makes the final decision on which of the projects receives priority within the planned timelines. A table in the plan lists projected costs for some of the initiatives, but many are shown as TBD. In an interview with members of the TPC, it was mentioned that there are several current revenue streams for technology, including Bond Measure C and district funds. The Committee is confident that the plan has stable funding for the next few years. The superintendent/president has identified corporate partners, Foundation donors, and eventual increased state apportionment to sustain the technology initiatives.

The plan indicates the college has included energy cost savings and green initiatives as part of their planning process. A specific example is a large pilot of thin-client systems in student labs that utilize a virtual desktop environment, which saves both energy and possible equipment replacement costs. The Information Technology department recently took over the Media Services department in order to increase efficiency in services. Flex training technology workshops that have been made available. The TPC Committee has taken responsibility for updating the technology plan annually. The Committee feels that the process for requesting technology resources through program review is working effectively.

Conclusion: The College has a formal technology plan that considers the factors in Recommendation 8. The shared governance Technology Planning Committee meets regularly and includes input from student members. The Committee plans to conduct technology satisfaction surveys for all college constituents as part of evaluating and updating the technology plan annually. The Vice President of College Operations stated that the Board of Trustees is beginning to discuss and consider fund raising and other alternative source of funds dedicated to technology which could include another general obligation bond measure. In order to continue to meet the Standards, the College should clearly define a funding source for the last few years of the technology plan. For long-term sustainability in technology, the college should ensure it does not make technology funding dependent on special external funding sources.

The college has fulfilled this recommendation.
Recommendation #9: In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the board focus on developing policies that support the quality, integrity and effectiveness of student learning programs and services. The board should deliberate with due diligence and make timely decisions that are in the best interests of the institution. The board should act as a whole and adhere to board policy once a decision has been made, and support the superintendent/president’s authority in administering board policies and procedures.

Findings and Evidence:

In the intervening two years since the last comprehensive visit, the Board of Trustees has worked collectively with the superintendent/president to address each of the elements of this recommendation and collaborated in the preparation of the Follow-Up Report. The College has made significant accomplishments at all levels and board governance is now efficient and effective. The most overarching measure of the board's effectiveness is the general improved morale of the college, evidenced in anecdotal information volunteered by staff members, by the outcome of survey results, and by the general developments that have occurred with the hiring of the superintendent/president in December 2010.

The board acted as a whole on the project to revise and update all board policies and administrative procedures with assistance from the Community College League of California. The District is currently finalizing its work in reviewing and revising CoM’s board policies and administrative procedures; it has completed the revision of 182 board policies (98 percent complete) and 176 administrative procedures (97 percent complete).

The superintendent/president and the board have participated in several retreats and study session with positive results, including identification of concepts related to timely and effective decision making which will aid them as they move forward. There has also been improvement in the development of board agendas and communication between the president and the board. The superintendent/president continues to work with the various board members toward creating a unified, effective board. Voting patterns, meeting records, and actual interviews with trustees, reveal that board decision-making has improved and decisions are being made in a timely fashion. Previous patterns of schism in voting are no longer evident. The board is working well together, respecting differences, and finding compromises when necessary.

Conclusion: Building on the visit in October 2011, the team ascertained that the Board of Trustees and the superintendent/president have approached this recommendation in a serious and deliberate manner. The reward for this effort is a remarkable turnaround for the board as it now focuses on the policy making role as expected by this recommendation. Many of the challenges identified in the comprehensive visit have been addressed. The team recognizes that this is an adjustment that must continue over time if the institution is to sustain this effort. The team recommends that the Board of Trustees and the superintendent/president continue to make progress in this area a priority.

The team finds the college has fully met this recommendation.