

# EVALUATION REPORT

Santa Monica College  
Santa Monica, CA

A confidential report prepared for  
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that  
visited Santa Monica College from March 9-11, 2010

Raúl Rodríguez, Ph.D.  
Chair

## Visiting Team Roster

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: Santa Monica College

DATES OF VISIT: March 9-11, 2010

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Raúl Rodríguez

A ten-member accreditation team visited Santa Monica College from March 9 through March 11, 2010. The purpose of the visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the college. A comprehensive evaluation consists of the following tasks: evaluating how well the institution is achieving its stated mission and goals; analyzing how well the college is meeting the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) standards; providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement; and, submitting recommendations to the ACCJC regarding the accredited status of the college.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all-day training session on February 10, 2010, conducted by the ACCJC. The ACCJC provided the team with information and materials that have been crafted to prepare teams to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of a college.

Prior to the visit, team members read carefully the college's self study report, including the recommendations from the March 23-25, 2004 visiting team, and assessed the evidence provided by the college. Team members completed written evaluations of the self study report and began identifying areas for further investigation. Although the formal beginning of the evaluation visit is traditionally on a Tuesday morning, the team members met on Monday, March 8 with an orientation at the team hotel. That same afternoon, the team met the Santa Monica College Accreditation Steering Committee for more than an hour at the Performing Arts Center (Madison Campus). This initial meeting allowed for a productive question and answer session that assisted the team in learning more about the actions of the college in relation to the accreditation standards. The team later returned to the hotel and spent the remainder of the evening discussing their views of the meeting with the Santa Monica College Accreditation Steering Committee, the college self study, the evidence provided by the college, and other materials submitted to the ACCJC since the college's last comprehensive visit.

During the visit, the team held individual and group meetings with key college personnel and representatives of the various committees, programs, and departments, including the Board of Trustees and students. The team chair met with members of the Board of Trustees, the president of the college and various administrators, faculty members, and staff. On the second day of the visit, the team arranged for and attended two open meetings to allow for comment from any member of the campus or local community. In addition, team members visited several of the satellite campuses. Specifically, the team visited the Academy of Entertainment Arts (AET), the Bundy Campus, and the

aforementioned Madison Campus. Additionally, during the pre-visit, the team chair visited the Emeritus College site.

Overall, the team commends the college for the tremendous turnaround that the college has made since the last accreditation visit. Despite some formidable obstacles and some challenging situations, the college community has rallied together in an impressive fashion and has effectively addressed many of the serious problems that were confronting the college. Specifically, the team commends:

- The Counseling and Retention Services Department for addressing the needs of first-year students through the expansion of the Student Success Seminar, the Welcome Center, the Back to Success program and the online counseling services.
- The students for demonstrating initiative and formidable organizational skills in undertaking the campaign to approve and implement the “Any Line, Any Time” project, which has many benefits for students and for the college.
- The college for its initiative to “serve the world’s diverse communities” by establishing the global citizenship requirement for the AA degree and for instituting the Global Council.
- The college for its efforts to build a comprehensive sustainability program that spans facilities issues, operational practices, and academic programs and curriculum.
- The college for implementing a successful enrollment recovery plan that has boosted college enrollment and reestablished a sound financial base for the college.
- The college for its decision, in a time of constrained resources, to continue working toward achieving the goal of 75% of instructional activity being performed by full-time faculty.
- The college for the positive changes in the campus climate and participatory governance that have occurred over the last six years. In particular, the Academic Senate has been a vital force for change and for building participatory, inclusive, and transparent processes.
- The college for engaging in a college-wide effort to promote student success at every level of the institution by designing thematically driven activities and by sponsoring cross constituent events to promote the development of student learning outcomes at all levels of the institution. The team further commends the college for accomplishing this task while simultaneously working to strengthen a college climate that fosters collegiality, collaboration, and mutual respect.

## **Major Findings and Recommendations of the March 9-11, 2010 Visiting Team**

As a result of the evaluation visit to Santa Monica College, the team made the following nine recommendations:

### **Recommendations**

1. To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college complete the development of a sustainable comprehensive master planning process with the Master Plan for Education at its core. The resultant multi-year plan should contain explicit links to instructional and student services programs, human resources, facilities, technology, and other planning needs that are revealed by the program review process or other assessments of institutional effectiveness. The team further recommends that the college work to achieve among its constituents a uniform understanding of the planning cycle and documentation processes through a mechanism accessible to all audiences regardless of their previous experience with the institution (Standards I.A, I.A.1, I.A.4, I.B.1, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.f, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3, IV.A.5, and IV.B.2.b).
2. To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college formalize the annual process of reporting student learning outcomes assessment and evaluation and develop a plan for codifying this process to ensure continuous improvement, to achieve assessment data, and to make the results of assessment available to the public (Standards I.A, I.B, I.B.2, II.A., II.A.1, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f).
3. To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college evaluate the efficacy of the current staffing model for the institutional research function with a goal of providing timely, in-depth analysis of effectiveness measures and other key institutional metrics to move the college toward the goal of becoming a culture of evidence (Standards I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A.2.g, and II.B.3).
4. To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college act in accordance with its recently adopted Institutional Learning Outcome supporting sustainability by adopting a curriculum management system that allows the curriculum approval and management functions to move from a paper-based to a web-based process (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.3, and II.A.4).
5. To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college conduct a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the decentralized tutorial programs and computing services on campus to assure the quality and scope of services delivered and to ensure student satisfaction and student learning (Standards II.C.1 and II.C.2).
6. To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that Human Resources institute a training program for college personnel engaged in data entry involving either of the two human resources personnel systems (ISIS and HRS) to reduce the error rate and to insure that data integrity is maintained (Standard III.A.1.b).

7. To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that Human Resources, the Academic Senate, Institutional Research, Academic Affairs, and Management Information Systems redouble efforts to resolve issues with student course evaluations and deliver a meaningful assessment document to individual faculty in a timely manner (Standard III.A.1.b).
8. To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college develop a district-wide professional code of ethics that is aligned with the stated mission and values, and reflective of activity to support continuous improvement in all instructional, operational, and service areas (Standard III.A.1.b).
9. To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college produce a professional development plan consistent with the institutional mission, including a teaching and learning needs assessment and an evaluation process that recognizes and serves all members of the college community and that leads to the improvement of teaching and learning (Standards III.A.5.a and III.A.5.b).

# **ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR SANTA MONICA COLLEGE**

## **Introduction**

Santa Monica College is a publicly funded single-college, community college district that is a member of the California Community Colleges System. The college consists of a main campus located on Pico Boulevard with five off-campus sites of varying sizes and focus. These sites include the Academy for Entertainment Technology, the Bundy Campus, the Performing Arts Campus, the Emeritus Campus, and the Airport Arts Campus.

Santa Monica College reports that it and began operations in 1927 under the California Law of 1917 that authorized junior colleges to be created in local districts. The original name of the college was Santa Monica Junior College. In 1937 the college created a Technical School that housed vocational programs. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the first buildings to be erected on the current main campus were held in 1950. In January of 1952, with the opening of the new buildings, all of the classes were now held on the main campus except for science and vocational classes. Buildings for these programs were completed in 1952 and 1957, respectively. The college has continued to change over the years and began to expand off campus in the late 1980s with the first satellite campus located at the Santa Monica Airport. Since 2002, the college has passed three general obligation bond measures to construct new facilities, renovate existing facilities, and acquire land and buildings for future expansion.

The college is in the midst of a demographic shift. The college population is becoming increasingly diverse, increasingly in need of remediation and financial aid, and increasingly Hispanic. The college has responded to these changes with creativity, enthusiasm, and judicious resource allocations. A number of new services and new programs have been implemented to serve the needs of the shifting student body.

The reputation of Santa Monica College is founded on the quality of its programs and the innovation of its faculty and staff. The college is recognized as a leading transfer institution, especially to UCLA and the University of California System. It is viewed as a destination college for the purpose of transfer. These characteristics attract students from across the Los Angeles basin and from beyond the region. Santa Monica College is a national leader in hosting and educating international students.

### **Recent Accreditation History**

The last comprehensive evaluation visit to Santa Monica College took place in March 2004. The accreditation of the college was reaffirmed as a result of that visit. However, the Commission required the college to submit a Progress Report by March 15, 2005.

The Commission requested that the report address four of the seven recommendations contained in the March 2004 Evaluation Report. These four recommendations were:

1. The team recommends the college initiate an institution-wide dialogue about student learning outcomes and processes to facilitate learning. This dialogue should lead to documented implementation and results of a cyclical process of learning outcomes development, systemic assessment, and institutional and programmatic improvement (Standards I.A.1; I.B; I.B.1; I.B.3; II.A.1.a and c; II.A.2.a, b, e, f, h, i; II.A.3 and 6; II.A.6a; II.B; II.b.4; II.C; II.C.2, III.A.1.c IV.B.2.b).
5. To ensure the economic viability of the institution, the team recommends the college must focus on developing and implementing the enrollment recovery plan, while concurrently developing the specific contingency plans to address alternative enrollment and economic scenarios (Standards III.D.1.c and III.D.2.b).
6. The team recommends the college clarify, develop, document and regularly evaluate the roles of individuals and constituent groups in college governance and decision-making structures and processes to ensure their effective participation and communicate the processes and outcomes to the college community as the basis for continued improvement (Standards IV.A.1, 2, 3, 5).
7. The team recommends that the college develop and implement concrete strategies and processes to improve communication and professional relationships in order to create a campus climate characterized by collegiality and mutual respect (Standard IV.A.1 and 3).

The Progress Report submitted by the college in March of 2005 was accepted by the Commission. The Midterm Report submitted by the Santa Monica College on March 22, 2007 was also accepted by the Commission.

### **Santa Monica College Self Study**

The team found the self study report to be well written, well edited, and thorough. The self study addresses in depth the college's efforts to meet the standards. The historical narrative was particularly compelling. It demonstrated the resiliency and spirit of innovation that are the hallmarks of Santa Monica College. The abstract section was a useful way to introduce the major concepts for each section of the self study dealing with the four standards. In the "Our Story" section, the college delineated some of the unique or "organic" aspects of the Santa Monica College culture, which is infused throughout the report and became evident to the team during the visit.

The self study presents a number of charts, tables, and other data concerning the demographic characteristics of the college. Although the demographic and longitudinal data presented in the self study is presented in a clear and visually attractive manner, it is often lacking in detail and analysis. For example, many of the data graphics shown were essentially "snapshot" presentations of a single point in time. It would have been useful



to have seen the progression and changes over the last six years. In another part of the self study, data is presented on the growth of basic skills students. However, the graphic presented does not illustrate that point. It is lacking information regarding the number of students (or categories of students by enrollment status) that have tested into the basic skills levels. It would have been more informative to have presented information on the number of students being placed into these levels over time.

The college personnel who put the self study together should also be commended for their honesty. The self study is an honest appraisal of the college and where it stands in regard to the standards. This fact was underscored to the team when it became apparent that the conclusions the team was making were often corroborated by the planning agendas included in the self study.

One of the areas that the team had questions about, at the beginning of the visit, was the program review process. Much of the confusion about this process could have been avoided if the team had access to program review reports online so that we could have reviewed them prior to the visit. These reports were not available in the information and links provided to the team. Similarly, there were a number of documents that the team had to request copies of that were not included in the evidence files.

The self study included a lengthy planning agenda with many important objectives in that agenda. The team would have liked to have seen more detail associated with the planning agenda so that a tentative timeline with completion date and responsible parties for each agenda item were included.

### **Commendations**

Santa Monica College is an outstanding community college. There are many more areas for commendation than the team could ever acknowledge in a report such as this. However, the team selected the following items for particular commendation:

- The team commends the Counseling and Retention Services Department for addressing the needs of first-year students through the expansion of the Student Success Seminar, the Welcome Center, the Back to Success program and the online counseling services.
- The team commends the Associated Student Body and the students of Santa Monica College for demonstrating initiative and formidable organizational skills in undertaking the campaign to approve and implement the “Any Line, Any Time” project, which has many benefits for students and for the college.
- The team commends the college for its initiative to “serve the world’s diverse communities” by establishing the global citizenship requirement for the AA degree and for instituting the Global Council.

- The team commends the college for its efforts to build a comprehensive sustainability program that spans facilities issues, operational practices, and academic programs and curriculum.
- The team commends the college for implementing a successful enrollment recovery plan that has boosted college enrollment and reestablished a sound financial base for the college.
- The team commends the college for its decision, in a time of constrained resources, to continue working toward achieving the goal of 75% of instructional activity being performed by full-time faculty.
- The team commends the college for the positive changes in the campus climate and participatory governance that have occurred over the last six years. In particular, the Academic Senate has been a vital force for change and for building participatory, inclusive, and transparent processes.
- The team commends the college for engaging in a college-wide effort to promote student success at every level of the institution by designing thematically driven activities and sponsoring cross constituent events to promote the development of student learning outcomes at all levels of the institution. The team further commends the college for accomplishing this task while simultaneously working to strengthen a college climate that fosters collegiality, collaboration, and mutual respect.

### **Major Findings and Recommendations of the March 9-11, 2010 Visiting Team**

As a result of the evaluation visit to Santa Monica College, the team made the following ten recommendations:

#### **Recommendations**

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2. To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college formalize the annual process of reporting student learning outcomes assessment and evaluation

- and develop a plan for codifying this process to ensure continuous improvement, to achieve assessment data, and to make the results of assessment available to the public (Standards I.A, I.B, I.B.2, II.A., II.A.1, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f).
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  4. To increase the effectiveness, the team recommends that the college act in accordance with its recently adopted Institutional Learning Outcome supporting sustainability by adopting a curriculum management system that allows the curriculum approval and management functions to move from a paper-based to a web-based process (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.3, and II.A.4).
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  9. To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college produce a professional development plan consistent with the institutional mission, including a teaching and learning needs assessment and an evaluation process that recognizes and serves all members of the college community and that leads to the improvement of teaching and learning (Standards III.A.5.a and III.A.5.b).

## **Evaluation of Institutional Responses to Previous Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

**The team recommends the college initiate an institution-wide dialogue about student learning outcomes and processes to facilitate learning. This dialogue should lead to documented implementation and results of a cyclical process of learning outcomes development, systemic assessment, and institutional and programmatic improvement (Standards I.A.1; I.B; I.B.1 and 3; II.A.1.a and c; II.A.2.a, b, e, f, h, i; II.A.3 and 6; II.A.6.a; II.B; II.B.4; II.C; II.C.2; III.A.1.c; IV.B.2.b.).**

This recommendation has been addressed. Initially, the college created the Governance Structure Workgroup to develop strategies to improve communication between campus constituencies as well as to begin work on a cyclical planning process. A number of different groups met in campus flex meetings, curriculum committee meetings, meetings of academic leaders including department chairs, Academic Senate, and college vice presidents to continue this work. Their work led to initial, informal student learning outcome (SLO) development efforts in the areas of history, mathematics, and English. The first efforts of these academic units fostered “buy-in” from other academic areas resulting in widespread creation of SLO’s.

The Student Learning Outcomes Task Force created goals as well as a handbook to guide programs through teaching-learning cycles and writing student learning outcomes statements. Further dialogue led to the development of a second handbook. This handbook addresses SLO assessment as well as the process for creating SLO’s for departments, degrees, certificates, and programs. Student services and operations underwent a similar process of dialogue and development of SLOs.

After the first three years, the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force became the Academic Senate Joint Student and Institutional Outcomes Committee, which now maintains resources for writing SLO’s, and reporting assessment results.

Since spring 2005, all new courses or major revisions have been required to include a minimum of two measurable student learning outcomes. The Academic Senate Joint Program Review Committee has worked on certifying that programs had met this requirement. At the time of the visit, the college reported that 100% of courses have at least two SLO’s in place and that the focus is now on assessment. Despite these efforts, the SLO’s are not being assessed across the campus in conjunction with planning processes and evaluation efforts to effect programmatic and institutional improvement. Interviews with representatives of the campus constituencies confirmed this observation. Although the college dialogue has not led to a cyclical process of learning outcomes development, systemic assessment, and institutional and programmatic improvement, the college is making steady progress toward that goal.

### **Recommendation 2**

**To implement the college’s shared vision, the team recommends the college create a long-range comprehensive master plan to include instructional and student services**

**programs, human resources, facilities, technology, and equipment. Annual efforts to improve the institution, budgets and resource development should be derived from this multi-year plan. The college must include in such an integrated comprehensive planning structure the means to evaluate the model and assure itself of the model's effectiveness (Standards I.B; I.B. 3, 4, 6, 7; II.A; II.A.1.a; II.A.2.e and f; II.B.3 and 4; II.C; II.C.2; III.A.6; II.B; III.B.2; III.B.2.a and b; III.C.2; III.D.1.a, b, c, d; III.D.3; IV.B.2.b).**

The college has partially met this recommendation. To address this recommendation, the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC) undertook the task of gradually building an inclusive planning structure to “unfold over several years.” Pending completion of the steps of the strategic initiative, the college has continued to update the Master Plan for Education annually. A number of planning committees report to the DPAC, but the integration of the various plans with the master plan, such as a human resources plan, a technology plan, and other key plans, is inconsistent.

To date, the strategic planning efforts have yielded a comprehensive review and revision of the mission, vision, values and goals statements; the development of institutional learning outcomes and five supporting goals; as well as improved documentation of linkages within the institutional planning process. The items still lacking in the college planning process are the long-range planning linkages to current planning and resource allocation decisions and a planning process that is integrated and comprehensive in the sense that it incorporates a cyclical process of assessment and evaluation to assure the effectiveness of the planning model. The college implemented a new planning process in 2005 and the college has not completed the full planning cycle of that process.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The team encourages the college in the strongest terms possible to pursue strategies that will result in a financial system that will produce clear, reliable, timely, and transparent reports in which all constituents can have full faith and confidence (Standard III.D.2.b).**

This recommendation has been satisfied. The self study cites the District Planning and Advisory Committee's Budget Planning Subcommittee as “unanimously approving” a motion of commendation of the college's Fiscal Services staff for timeliness, accuracy, clarity, and transparency of fiscal information. This body also approved a motion to receive a budget report described as “the result of a transparent process which enabled all stakeholders to participate and provide input.” The commendations for the Fiscal Services department are a far cry from the sentiments expressed in the 2004 accreditation self study or the 2004 evaluation report. The college also cites a financial audit “free from audit findings.”

The team found that the evidence in response to this recommendation is considerable. The changes in this area have resulted in such improvements as the distribution of information electronically, development of new and more timely reports, access to

current budget information, and relevant training through the creation of funding scenarios.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The team recommends the college consider establishing a reserve contingency sufficient to maintain stability and meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences (Standards III.D.1.c and III.D.2.b).**

This recommendation has been met. The college budget reserve for 2008-09 was \$19,408,758 or 14.47 percent of expenditures. For 2009-10, the reserve is approximately \$17,603,195 or 13.09 percent. The drop is due to a significant district-funded backfill for categorical programs to offset funding reductions. The reserve is sufficient to meet financial emergencies or unforeseen occurrences.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**To ensure the economic viability of the institution, the team recommends the college must focus on developing and implementing the enrollment recovery plan, while concurrently developing the specific contingency plans to address alternative enrollment and economic scenarios (Standards III.D.1.c and III.D.2.b).**

This recommendation has been satisfied. The college addressed this recommendation and has recovered the enrollment previously lost. The college implemented a series of outreach and enrollment strategies in the enrollment recovery plan. The college did not reach their goal immediately, but they began to move in the correct direction until a statewide trend of flat or lower enrollments affected the college. Out of necessity, Santa Monica College pursued the practice of “borrowing” from summer enrollments to maintain their FTES base and to maximize their apportionment revenue. They did this in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

After being approached by Compton College to offer classes to their students, the college realized sufficient enrollment to move forward with a calculated strategy that was ultimately successful in regaining a strong enrollment and funding base. To elevate the importance of enrollment, the college created a new division and a new vice president position devoted to enrollment development. The new structure appears to be working as many new ideas have been implemented, enrollment is above the cap, and productivity is at an all-time high.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The team recommends the college clarify, develop, document and regularly evaluate the roles of individuals and constituent groups in college governance and decision-making structures and processes to ensure their effective participation and communicate the processes and outcomes to the college community as the basis for continued improvement (Standards IV.A.1, 2, 3, 5).**

The college has met this recommendation. The creation and success of the District Planning and Advisory Committee (DPAC) has gone a long way toward meeting this

recommendation. This body regularly requires the subcommittees to provide annual reports of their activities and these subcommittees are evaluated on a regular basis. The new planning structure ensures participation of all constituent groups and provides voting rights to each constituent group. The DPAC keeps a running inventory of decisions and recommendations that it makes. This inventory is published and distributed as an attachment to the agenda of each meeting.

**Recommendation 7**

**The team recommends that the college develop and implement concrete strategies and processes to improve communication and professional relationships in order to create a campus climate characterized by collegiality and mutual respect (Standard IV.A.1 and 3).**

The college has met this recommendation. In the last six years, the turnaround in the campus climate is evident in almost all aspects of the college. There is a healthy and open relationship between the Superintendent/President and the constituency groups.

The Academic Senate, in particular, has taken on a leadership role in stabilizing the campus climate and in fostering transparent and productive working relationships and structures.

As previously mentioned, the DPAC is the symbol of the renewed spirit at Santa Monica. The broad participation and the open discussion of ideas, although not always easy and comfortable, has established clear pathways of communication, strong professional relationships, and a palpable sense of a college community working together to accomplish a common set of goals.

## Eligibility Requirements

The team found Santa Monica College to be in compliance with all eligibility requirements as established by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).

**Authority:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College is governed by a seven member Board of Trustees that are locally elected. The college is a member of the California Community College system and offers classes and awards degrees and certificates under the authority of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. The college is accredited by the ACCJC.

**Mission:** The team confirmed that the educational mission of Santa Monica College is clearly defined in a college mission statement that has been reviewed by the college community and adopted by the Board of Trustees.

**Governing Board:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College has a Board of Trustees consisting of seven members who are elected at large and who represent the district as a whole. The board functions as a policy-making body and there are conflict of interest and board code of ethics policies in place.

**Chief Executive Officer:** The Board of Trustees of Santa Monica College is responsible for selecting and for evaluating the Superintendent/President who is the chief executive officer of the college. The Superintendent/President is evaluated on an annual basis and possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies.

**Administrative Capacity:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College employs staff at all levels of the organization with the appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support and to carry out its stated mission and purpose.

**Operational Status:** Santa Monica College offers degree and certificate programs as well as general offerings for students seeking to complete the requirements for transfer.

**Degrees:** Santa Monica College offers the Associate in Arts Degree in a variety of majors and the Certificates of Achievement in selected majors. The majority of students at Santa Monica College are enrolled in the courses associated with the Associate in Arts Degree or the Certificates of Achievement.

**Educational Programs:** The degree programs of Santa Monica College are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. The college offers the Associate in Arts Degree with a range of majors that is two academic years in length. The degree programs of Santa Monica College are at the developmental level of implementation on the rubric for evaluating institutional effectiveness in student learning outcomes.



**Academic Credit:** Santa Monica College awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. The Santa Monica College Curriculum Committee determines credit and non-credit status and they follow the Carnegie unit policies and practice for awarding course credit. This information is provided to students and staff in several college publications.

**Student Learning and Achievement:** Santa Monica College defines and publishes the expected student learning and achievement outcomes for each program. However, this information could be disseminated more widely than it is currently. The assessment of student learning outcomes is still in a developmental stage at Santa Monica College.

**General Education:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry. Both computational skills and writing skills are incorporated into the degree requirements. Student learning outcomes have been defined for the general education components.

**Academic Freedom:** Santa Monica College exhibits an atmosphere of both intellectual freedom and independence. Board Policy 5210 defines the nature and limits of academic freedom and the Academic Senate has adopted a statement on professional ethics.

**Faculty:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College has a core of full-time faculty sufficient in size (approximately 309) and experience to support all of the college's educational programs. The scope of duties of a full-time faculty members are delineated in the faculty collective bargaining agreement and include curriculum development, professional development, and learning assessment.

**Student Services:** The team confirmed that a comprehensive range of student services are provided to students by Santa Monica College and that the provision of these services is consistent with the mission of the college.

**Admissions:** Santa Monica College adheres to an open admissions policy along with procedures that are consistent with that policy, including a mandatory assessment program. Qualifications of students for specific classes and programs are determined through the implementation of prerequisites and co-requisites.

**Information and Learning Resources:** Santa Monica College provides students with access to information and learning resources that are sufficient in scope to support the instructional programs of the college.

**Financial Resources:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College is financially stable and possesses a sound financial base to support its student learning programs, services, and operations.

**Financial Accountability:** The team confirmed that the financial audits of Santa Monica College show steady improvement and that previous audit findings have been corrected.

**Institutional Planning and Evaluation:** The team confirmed that Santa Monica College has made significant progress in its planning efforts. The college has institutionalized many of the major elements of the planning process, but has not yet fully realized all aspects of an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

**Public Information:** Santa Monica College produces an annual catalog in both printed and electronic versions that contains precise, accurate, and current information about the institution, including general information, academic and admission requirements, financial information, and relevant policies and procedures.

**Relations with the Accrediting Commission:** The team confirmed that the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees and the institution, through its self study and other supporting documentation, are committed to maintaining the eligibility requirements and subscribing to the accreditation standards and the policies of the Accrediting Commission.

## **STANDARD I**

### **Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

#### **A. Mission**

##### **General Observations**

The current mission statement of Santa Monica College is as follows:

Santa Monica College strives to create a learning environment that both challenges students and supports them in achieving their educational goals. Students learn to contribute to the global community as they develop an understanding of their personal relationship to the world's social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and natural environments.

To fulfill this mission, Santa Monica College provides open and affordable access to high-quality associate degree and certificate of achievement programs. These programs prepare students for successful careers, develop college-level skills, enable transfer to universities, and foster a personal commitment to lifelong learning.

Santa Monica College serves the world's diverse communities by offering educational opportunities that embrace the exchange of ideas in an open, caring community of learners, and that recognize the critical importance for each individual's contribution to the achievement of the College's vision.

This mission statement concisely captures the purpose of Santa Monica College and provides a glimpse of its core values and institutional aspirations. The institutional vision, core values, goals, and learning outcomes are described in complementary documents that typically accompany the mission statement.

Like most other community colleges in California, Santa Monica College encompasses a district with a legally-defined geographic area. The college is responsible for serving the educational needs of the communities within that boundary. At the same time, because residents of California have open access to community colleges, Santa Monica College serves a student body that reaches far beyond the geographic boundary of the district service area. The fact that thousands of students from beyond the Santa Monica College district boundaries seek out the educational and service opportunities provided by the college is a general and overarching indicator that the college is fulfilling its mission.

##### **Findings and Evidence**

The range of student learning programs and services that have been implemented and maintained by Santa Monica College is impressive. These programs and services are clearly aligned with the purpose and character of the institution and demonstrate a commitment to achieving student learning (Standards I.A and I.A.1).

In response to the changing needs of its student population, Santa Monica College monitors shifts in student demographic trends. For example, the college recently

determined that the number of students needing basic skills remediation has been increasing rapidly. As a result, the college augmented the number of sections of basic skills level English courses. The college responded in a similar manner to the data documenting that the Hispanic population in the greater Los Angeles region was being educationally underserved by higher education providers. The college expanded its outreach services to Hispanic students, which resulted in the college becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and successfully competing for a Title V cooperative grant (Standard I.A.1).

Although not an exhaustive list, below are examples of additional activities undertaken by Santa Monica College to respond to the changing needs of its student population and the larger community:

- Supplemental Instruction (to improve student success in basic skills);
- The Teacher Academy (to foster interest in teaching professions);
- The Small Business Development Center (to promote entrepreneurship);
- The Welcome Center (a one stop resource center for new students);
- The Veterans' Resource Center (to assist Veterans);
- Upward Bound TRIO grant (to support underserved populations);
- The BOG Mobile (a mobile financial aid station);
- An expanded array of distance education FTES; and,
- The Emeritus College (to provide non-credit education for adults).

Despite the changing student demographics, the transfer function is probably the educational purpose held in highest esteem by the members of the campus constituencies. As stated in the self study and echoed by statements expressed to the team, transfer success is an ongoing institutional priority and the college community is justifiably proud of the institutional record of transfer success to UCLA and to other senior institutions. This is in line with the character of the college and with the mission statement's intent to challenge students (Standard I.A.1).

The mission statement is published and accessible in the college website's planning page as well as in the college catalog (Standard 1.A.2). Beyond that, the mission statement does not appear in most other college publications and is not prominently displayed on campus.

The college undertook a highly participatory process to review the mission, vision, values and goals statements of the college. This review began in October of 2007. The mission, vision, values and goals statements were reviewed by all of the college constituent groups and approved by the Board of Trustees in May of 2008. The college claims that this review was not undertaken just because of the impending accreditation visit. However, it is unclear to the team what circumstances cause a review of the mission statement and the corollary statements as there does not appear to be a timetable or defined process for regular review (Standard 1.A.2 and I.A.3). In the past practice of the college, there was a cycle of regular review of the mission statement, but the current practice has diverged from that cycle. It remains to be seen whether or not the institution will develop a regular review cycle (Standard I.A.3).

Santa Monica College has been revamping its internal procedures, participatory governance structures, communication patterns, and institutional research capacity with the ultimate goal of creating a comprehensive and integrated planning and decision-making process that supports and enhances the college mission (Standard I.A.4). These changes have begun to bring together a complex cluster of disparate planning and decision making structures that have not always been synchronous with one another. According to those interviewed, a pivotal step forward came when the college initiated the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC). By all accounts, the DPAC, as the central planning and decision-making body, has been an improvement over the previous Collegewide Coordinating Council (CCC), which did not function with the formal charter or with the clear procedures and protocols to disseminate information that the DPAC has established. Neither did the CCC serve to centralize decision making to the extent that the DPAC has begun to do. In fact, the issues surrounding the CCC became so inflamed that the faculty groups withdrew from participating in that previous structure.

The formation of the DPAC was a response to a crisis situation at the college. The success of the DPAC in reinvigorating participatory governance has helped the college to make a turnaround and to move the college forward on numerous fronts, including planning. Despite the considerable progress made by the college and the evidence discussed in the self study, it is not clear to the team how the DPAC evaluates the effectiveness of the college in accomplishing the mission (Standard I.A.4). Neither the self study nor other evidence provided by the college document “an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation” as stated in the standard. This does not mean, however, that no evaluation activities are taking place. One prominent example relates to the Basic Skills Initiative on campus. Pilot projects funded by this program are evaluated by the college research unit. These evaluations are compiled into an annual report. These reports describe whether or not the project goals have been met and generally assess the effectiveness of the pilot. This information is used to refine existing goals or to develop new goals. While this example is evidence of a step in the right direction, it is not sufficient to demonstrate that the effectiveness by which Santa Monica College accomplishes its mission is being evaluated on a regular basis (Standards I and I.A.4).

### **Conclusions**

The institution’s mission has been collaboratively derived and clearly articulated. It is strongly aligned with and responsive to the student population of Santa Monica College (Standard I.A.1). The most recent review of the college mission statement generated a great deal of enthusiasm and inspired several new activities on campus. The mission statement was reviewed widely and adopted by the Board of Trustees although a process to review the mission on a regular basis has not been articulated or codified (Standards I.A.2 and I.A.3).

The most critical item concerning the mission is the relation of the mission statement to the college planning and evaluation process. The measurement of the effectiveness of the mission appears to depend upon a mosaic of independent variables rather than resulting

from the kind of “ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation” demanded by Standard I. Having said this, it is important to understand that Santa Monica College was in a period of crisis six years ago. The progress that has been made by the college in those six years is remarkable from almost any perspective. Santa Monica College is moving in the right direction and has many of the necessary elements in place to fully comply with the requirements of this standard. However, until the college does so, the college can only be considered as having partially met this standard.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1:**

To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college complete the development of a sustainable comprehensive master planning process with the Master Plan for Education at its core. The resultant multi-year plan should contain explicit links to instructional and student services programs, human resources, facilities, technology, and other planning needs that are revealed by the program review process or other assessments of institutional effectiveness. The team further recommends that the college work to achieve among its constituents a uniform understanding of the planning cycle and documentation processes through a mechanism accessible to all audiences regardless of their previous experience with the institution (Standards I.A, I.A.1, I.A.4, I.B.1, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.f, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3, IV.A.5, and IV.B.2.b).

## **B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness**

### **General Observations**

Six years ago, Santa Monica College was an institution with serious problems. There is no doubt that Santa Monica College has solved most of those problems and is experiencing a renaissance of creativity and constructive collaboration. The college culture values innovation, originality, and student-centeredness. The District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC) is the centerpiece of the college governance and planning structure. As such, it promotes timely, widespread, democratic dialogue throughout the organization. The use of mutual agreement to forge plans for institutional improvement is praiseworthy. There is considerable expertise at Santa Monica College in the faculty and administrative ranks concerning student learning outcomes and there have been several college wide initiatives undertaken to foster the implementation and assessment of student learning outcomes (Standard I.B).

### **Findings and Evidence**

There is considerable evidence in the agendas, minutes, and decisions of the DPAC that self-reflective dialogue on student learning and institutional process improvement is occurring on a regular basis (Standard I.B.1). Additional dialogue on these topics takes place in the Academic Senate joint committees including, among others, Curriculum, Program Review, and Institutional Learning Outcomes. These and other proceedings are communicated to the college community through the efforts of the Professional Development Committee during flex activities, on the floor of the Academic Senate, in

meetings with the Department Chairs, by receiving feedback to informational postings on the Santa Monica College website, and through other collegial exchanges involving all college constituent groups.

The college sets goals through the DPAC that are then included in the Master Plan for Education. The formation of these goals comes from a variety of sources, including the Board of Trustees, the subcommittees that report to DPAC, program review information, and other formal and informal sources (Standard I.B.2). When asked to depict the college planning cycle as they understand it, each interviewee provided a substantially different representation of the college planning process. However, one consistent factor stood out prominently across all responses. Namely, all interviewees understood and commented on the central role of the DPAC. All of the Academic Senate joint committees and the other college planning subcommittees make recommendations to the DPAC. Participation in the DPAC is not limited to the eight voting members who represent students, classified staff, faculty, and management. The participation in this venue is broad-based and inclusive. Stakeholders report genuine satisfaction with the way decisions are made in and out of DPAC and clearly feel that it is a process in which they play a consulting and contributory role (Standard I.B.2).

The self study asserts that there is broad-based understanding of the college goals and the processes used to identify and achieve them. Nonetheless, there is a major disconnect in the integration of institutional goals and objectives with unit goals and objectives and program-level goals and objectives. That is, each program and service area possesses individual goals that are not necessarily directly connected to the institutional learning objectives. Some college entities collect data, but there are no clearly established channels through which that data can contribute to an integrated analysis of student success and institutional efficacy (Standards I.B.2 and I.B.3).

Santa Monica College has a longstanding institutional tradition of formative evaluation to measure program success or success in the delivery of support services. Formative evaluation is a valuable process, but as the principal evaluative mode it does not readily provide longitudinal, comparative, or summative evaluation measures. The college has made efforts to implement more complex and systematic evaluation measures although these implementation efforts are, as admitted in the self study, “still in the early stages” (Standard I.B.3). The college has revamped communication between planning bodies, but neither the self study nor individuals interviewed indicate that there exists a uniform process to carry out comprehensive and ongoing planning aligned with the institutional mission. Institutional data resource collection and analysis is greatly hampered by the limitations in the staffing and resources available to the Office of Institutional Research (Standard I.B.3).

The program review leadership and the program review documents reveal that there are units engaged in effective self-assessment. One example that stands out is the way that the faculty in the English as a Second Language discipline use web-based monitoring software to monitor student use of tutoring services. Their observations guide adjustments in curriculum. Beyond recording contact hours, tutoring topics are carefully recorded to see where students are encountering the most difficulty. Issues identified in

this way then become the focus of more formal workshops and actually guide curricular changes (Standard I.B.4).

There are those on campus who feel that planning, implementation, evaluation, and resource allocation processes are generally well understood. Interviews with college personnel failed to verify that stakeholders understand the various planning processes and how they function (Standard I.B.4). There are certain bi-directional pathways that integrate planning with various kinds of funding, but a description of how each gets its input, and how a committee's output achieves unity with the other planning efforts is not documented or well explained.

In each standard, the team looked at where the institution was in creating and assessing student learning outcomes as related to the standard focus. Santa Monica College appears to be completing the development phase in terms of developing SLOs and moving into proficiency in accordance with the ACCJC rubric. However, on the assessment of those SLOs, the college is at the low end of the development level of implementation. Authentic assessment appears to be less than universal, but progress is being made, with participation by most departments on campus. Faculty leadership on the SLO Task Force is committed to the course mapping and has developed a timeline for the completion of all course level assessments by 2012.

During the team's interview with the SLO Task Force, the members reflected that much of the assessment completed to date was driven by individual department objectives and campus wide inconsistency was apparent. The self study (pg. 153) states that "Santa Monica has a history of conducting individual program assessment, sometimes on an ad hoc basis or at the end of a project period when there is little or no time to use the assessment to improve the quality of the program. The college must transition from engaging program assessment that is largely disconnected from the needs of the greater campus community to a more systematic research agenda that links program assessment with student and institutional assessment." The team concurs with this assessment (Standard I.B.6).

At this time, there are few formal institutional learning outcomes assessments in place although some are in the design stage (Standard I.B.5). The Office of Institutional Research did complete a study of the effect the counseling courses and student support programs have on student achievement and persistence measures. Santa Monica College faculty members believe that all student learning outcomes should be mapped to at least one of the college's institutional learning outcomes. A great deal of energy has been and is being expended to ensure that this link is in place. This is an important strategy to ensure that the institutional outcomes are assessed.

The self study stated that 100% of all courses have SLOs and that the outcomes are currently being assessed. Although these outcomes are in the process of being assessed, this effort is still in an early stage of development. Some individuals interviewed questioned the quality of the SLOs in place. For that reason or for the fact that thinking on this issue has evolved to a more sophisticated level, it appears that some departments are revisiting their initial outcomes and assessments and making changes to them. This is



a natural process and speaks to the strong commitment by Santa Monica faculty to improve this process.

At the time of the visit, the team found no examples of course level SLOs posted on the college website. Additionally, program level outcomes are not in the catalog. The college needs to address the dissemination of these items and make a decision as to where the SLOs will be permanently displayed and available for review by the college community.

Some areas of the college naturally lend themselves to quantitative measurement more than others. For example, the Office of the Vice President of Business and Administration uses the following assessment metrics: balanced budget reports, work request-to-completion timelines, claims against the college, complaints from unpaid vendors, and specific transaction reports from auxiliary services. However, there is little evidence that the college uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate or external constituencies (Standard I.B.5). There is evidence that the college primarily uses anecdotal and other qualitative evidence when interfacing with the public and that the college enjoys an outstanding reputation in the community.

The college planning process has gone through several iterations. The strategic planning process was conducted by an ad hoc DPAC task force that led the rewriting of the college's mission, vision, core values and goals statements and developed four strategic initiatives and action plans to implement them. These have been incorporated into the Master Plan for Education. This task force was not charged with establishing a more permanent planning structure to continue the cyclic elements of the planning process. The DPAC has taken on the task of overseeing the planning process and for implementing an evaluation cycle (Standard I.B.6). In spite of these efforts, much of the planning is still compartmentalized and is lacking in systematic review and evaluation (Standard I.B.7).

### **Conclusions**

Santa Monica College has been making diligent efforts to implement student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes are in place at the institutional, program, and course level. The assessment or measurement of learning and then the use of that information to improve instructional practice and student learning is not occurring on a widespread or systematic basis. Similarly, a considerable amount of effort has been devoted to the improvement of the college planning process. The planning process works well in meeting the needs of the college constituents and they tend to express satisfaction with the college planning process. Much of this satisfaction is derived from the participatory aspects of the process and the productive dialogue that is generated during the DPAC meetings and subcommittee meetings.

The major problem with the planning process as it has been implemented at Santa Monica College is that it does not contain a viable component of ongoing and systematic evaluation. The institutional research function at the college has been inconsistent over time and has not been able to support the development of systematic evaluation processes beyond the program review process. The college has implemented institutional learning

outcomes and does not appear to have formulated a way to measure them. As previously noted, Santa Monica College has a much improved planning process over what existed in the past. To improve this process to meet the requirements of this standard, Santa Monica College will need to develop and implement a systematic evaluation process as noted in the planning agenda for this standard.

### **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

#### Recommendation 2.

To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college formalize the annual process of reporting student learning outcomes assessment and evaluation and develop a plan for codifying this process to ensure continuous improvement, to achieve assessment data, and to make the results of assessment available to the public (Standards I.A, I.B, I.B.2, II.A., II.A.1, and II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f).

#### Recommendation 3.

To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college evaluate the efficacy of the current staffing model for the institutional research function with a goal of providing timely, in-depth analysis of effectiveness measures and other key institutional metrics to move the college toward the goal of becoming a culture of evidence (Standards I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A.2.g, and II.B.3).

## **STANDARD II**

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

#### **A. Instructional Programs**

##### **General Observations**

Santa Monica College serves a diverse student population by offering courses and programs that reflects its stated mission. In addition to offering classes in a variety of formats, days and times, the institution has a wide variety of for-credit, noncredit, and not-for-credit courses and programs. Additionally, courses, programs and support services are designed to meet the needs of the student population and are provided at a variety of educational sites within the college's service area including the main campus located on Pico Boulevard, the Bundy Campus, the Academy of Entertainment and Technology Campus, the Performing Arts Center and the Airport Arts Campus. Notable examples of the institution's attempts to meet the needs of its diverse student population include the Black Collegians program, Latino Center, the new student Welcome Center, and the Veterans' Resource Center. In addition to these support programs, the college offers coursework in basic skills, general education transfer, and career and technical education (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, and II.A.2.d).

The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs through a rigorous curriculum approval process and a comprehensive program review process. The Curriculum Committee reviews all instructional course and program proposals that meet degree completion requirements for Associate in Arts degrees, general education transfer requirements and career and technical education. Additionally, all Curriculum Committee members undergo training for stand-alone courses that may meet an identified student need, but may not be a component of an existing degree or general education pattern for transfer. New curriculum committee members receive training via a Curriculum Handbook and mentoring from senior committee members.

The curriculum approval process includes multiple levels of review, beginning with a full department vote. Once the department has approved the course outline of record, the proposal is forwarded to the curriculum committee review team who check the proposal for adherence to college policies and required elements, including the identification of student learning outcomes. The full Curriculum Committee then reviews the proposal for specific course components, including course description, objectives, methods of presentation and evaluation, content, and sample assignments. The full committee also reviews the ways in which the course supports program learning outcomes and related institutional learning outcomes. Proposals are also reviewed by the college articulation officer to ensure transferability. Moreover, the entire committee reviews the proposal to determine appropriate placement within the general education patterns established by the college and listed in the college catalog (Standards II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.3.a, and II.A.4).

Proposals for new programs are initiated in a variety of forums and may emerge from a college process, such as the review and revision of the college mission and program review, or as a response to external factors, such as changes in work force development. The former resulted in the inclusion of “global community” to the college’s credo, the development of two institutional learning outcomes involving global citizenship and environmental sustainability, and the adoption of the Global Citizenship Associate in Arts degree requirement. The latter began with an idea originating from the college’s not-for-credit contract education program and evolved into the beginning of a for-credit career and technical program in Photovoltaic Systems.

To ensure the continued high quality of its programs and services, the college has implemented a rigorous program review process. The program review cycle for most programs is six years, while career and technical programs undergo a “mini” program review every two years. The findings from the process are submitted to the Program Review Committee, which then communicates the results back to the department or program through an Executive Summary including commendations and recommendations. The Program Review Committee then compiles a college-wide Executive Summary which includes the collective results of all completed reviews including identified requests for resources; the Program Review Committee then presents broad based recommendations to the District Planning Advisory Council (DPAC) for consideration of possible inclusion in the Master Plan for Education update; the DPAC approves the request, denies the request, or refers the request to appropriate campus committee (Standards II.A.2.c., II.A.2.e., II.A.2.f, and II.A.5) .

The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the needs of its students. In addition to the main campus, the college maintains a variety of satellite sites each with unique instructional programs as well as a limited offering of GE courses. In addition, the institution has experienced a rapid growth in distance education offerings. As a means of recovering from its enrollment decline, Santa Monica College increased its distance education offerings. As of spring 2010, the online class enrollment represents almost 12.5% of the college’s total FTES. The number of sections taught online has quintupled and the distance education department is now serving over 160 faculty. To prepare faculty to transition to an online learning environment, the Distance Education Committee has developed two resources: a faculty readiness tool and a best practices document (Standards II.A.1.b and II.A.2.d).

The college has engaged in a widespread dialogue about student learning outcomes for courses, programs, departments and support services. Beginning with the creation of the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force in 2005, the college engaged in a grassroots effort to establish learning outcomes and assessments. From 2005 to 2008, the task force recruited and worked with identified representatives from each discipline to facilitate the development of two outcomes for a minimum of two courses. According to the final report of the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force, the college community received training on the development of course and program student learning outcomes through a series of activities intended to create a grassroots acceptance of the change. In addition to

sponsoring various events to spark the dialogue, the task force developed a series of handbooks to facilitate the development of outcomes and assessment methodologies for the course level as well as department, degree, certificate and program level.

As the college was engaged in the dialogue about course and program learning outcomes, the task force, in collaboration with the Professional Development Committee, planned and implemented a college-wide process that was used to write the college's institutional learning outcomes. Though the initial effort had just over 400 participants, the subsequent college review was widespread and included all stakeholders and led to adoption of the institutional learning outcomes by the Board of Trustees in May 2007. In 2008, with the transition of the task force to the Academic Senate Joint Student and Institutional Learning Outcomes Committee, the college institutionalized the efforts to design learning outcomes and create authentic assessments for those outcomes to promote continuous improvement of courses, programs, and services. Currently, several disciplines, including Chemistry, Mathematics, and English, have developed and implemented common assessment tools, such as normed writing exams, common lab assignments, and departmental exams or exam questions (Standards II.A.1.c and II.A.2.a).

### **Findings and Evidence**

After examining completed documents for instructional, student services and operational support programs, the team recognizes that the program review process encourages both reflection on past efforts and projection of future needs. The team also noted that the process included a focused analysis of student achievement outcomes in determining changes to a variety of department planning elements, including scheduling and course revisions. The process requires each instructional program to review and update all active courses. Additionally, interviews with Curriculum Committee Co-Chairs provided examples of departments that had used program review to identify and implement changes to curriculum, demonstrating that the process promotes a cycle of continuous improvement. Three cited examples were Kinesiology, Photography and English as a Second Language (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f).

The program review process requires thoughtful analysis of program strengths and weaknesses, allowing departments and programs to identify resources needed for improvement. The length of the program review cycle for general education/transfer programs is six years, which seems like a long time when considering that there are no required periodic updates to the program review during the five years when the program review is not being done. Further, the relationship between the program review and other college planning processes, including resource allocation, is not evident. For example, documentation on the program review process does not explain how requests for additional resources, such as new classified or faculty positions or instructional equipment, move from the Program Review Committee to the appropriate governance structure for prioritization and approval. Consequently, the relationship between planning and budget or resource allocation is not transparent (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f).

Based on interviews with committee members, a review of course outlines of record and addendums, as well as the review of minutes from committee members, the team affirms that the college has a rigorous curriculum process. Multiple levels of review, from department members, to the articulation officer, to a technical review subcommittee, to the committee as a whole, and finally to the Academic Senate, ensure high quality courses and programs. The additional review and guidance from the Academic Senate Joint Student and Institutional Learning Outcomes Committee for course and program proposals promotes the alignment between course objectives, student learning outcomes, and institutional learning outcomes. The team noted that the college continues to rely on a paper-based, or Word document, curriculum approval and management process that works against the college's stated commitment to sustainability. The current process also prevents the college from making the Course Outline of Record accessible to the public, which means the identified student learning outcomes are not published other than in the course syllabus (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a., II.A.2.b., II.A.3.a, and II.A.4).

The college submitted a Substantive Change Proposal on distance education to the Commission in September 2009. The college, through its courseware provider eCollege, provides training and instructional tools to faculty who teach in the distance education program. During the visit, the District Planning and Advisory Council met and voted to extend the college's contract with eCollege. The primary reasons given for extending this \$800,000 contract in a challenging fiscal climate had to do with the valuable training to faculty provided by eCollege and the exceptional support service with a 24/7 help desk. To enhance the quality of online teaching, the college also created a mentoring program where faculty who are veterans at online teaching assist faculty members who are inexperienced in online teaching to make a successful transition to the online environment. All faculty members are evaluated for both their face-to-face classroom teaching and their online teaching.

The distance education program has experienced rapid growth in its educational offerings over the last several years. The distance education support staff has not expanded proportionately. However, the college did create a management position dedicated to this program at the Associate Dean level. While the college does provide cyber-counseling dedicated to students enrolled in online courses, the team also noted the absence of a viable tutoring option to support online students. The retention and success rates in online classes are lower in comparison to their on-ground counterparts. A recent study undertaken by the college indicates that the gap performance gap between traditional classes and online classes in narrowing (Standards II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.2.c, and II.A.2.e).

### **Conclusion**

The college partially meets this standard.

The institution provides high quality instructional courses and programs which it assures through a rigorous curriculum approval and a comprehensive program review process. The program review process requires thoughtful analysis of program strengths and weaknesses, allowing departments and programs to identify resources needed for

improvement; however, the relationship between the program review and other college planning processes, including resource allocation, is not evident.

The current paper-based curriculum management system prevents the college from making the Course Outline of Record accessible to the public. Since instructors' syllabi are not routinely available on the web, the Course Outline of Record remains the only repository of student learning outcomes. Greater transparency of these documents to all college constituencies and the public should be an institutional priority.

### **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

#### Recommendation 4:

To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college act in accordance with its recently adopted Institutional Learning Outcome supporting sustainability by adopting a curriculum management system that allows the curriculum approval and management functions to move from a paper-based to a web-based process (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.3, and II.A.4).

## **B. Student Support Services**

### **General Observations**

Student Support Services at Santa Monica College are comprehensive, diverse, and targeted at student access, inclusion, and success. The student-centered focus of the institution is clear in its commitment and support for 20 different programs which address the learning and social needs of its student body. Students are the central focus and programs are developed to adapt to the changing needs of the student body. One such example is the recently established Honor Council. Santa Monica College has a long-standing Ombud Office, which addresses, in a confidential manner, student complaints. However, to address the rise in incidents of academic dishonesty, an Honor Code and Honor Council were established. Students who believe that they have been falsely accused of academic dishonesty may have their case heard by the Honor Board (Standards II.B.3.b and II.B.3.c).

Santa Monica College has long been admired for its high transfer rates, but the recent influx of underprepared students has required a shift in their thinking and in the delivery of services. In Student Services there is clearly a culture and practice that supports continuous improvement. Support services have continued to respond to the needs of students by developing the Welcome Center, Back-to-Success program for probation students, expanding the Student Success Seminar, and improving financial aid disbursements. The college's efforts to address the success and retention needs of first year students resulted in a reduction in the number of students on probation from 33% in 2002 to 9% in 2008. In financial aid, program improvements resulted in more than 3,100 checks dispersed on or before the first day of instruction in Fall 2008 as compared to only 431 checks in Fall 2003 (Standards II.B.1 and II.B.3d).

It is not clear, however, that the cyclical planning process is clearly defined or that modifications to programs and services are the result of an integrated comprehensive planning structure. The six-year program review cycle is long, and there is no evidence of any required intervening reports, assessments, or evaluations. Although there seem to be many instances of evaluation and program modification, there is no formal process to capture information and bring it forward for consideration in planning and budget.

### **Findings and Evidence**

In spring 2006 all student services areas began developing student learning outcomes (SLOs). An impressive 90% of Student Affairs and Enrollment Development programs have identified student learning outcomes, and 68% have assessed them. In reviewing the student services SLOs, the team found that most of the documents outlined clear and measurable student learning outcomes. The reports all go on to discuss the results of assessments or student surveys, and the improvements to the programs as a result of analyzing the data. Overall, the student support services at Santa Monica College are constantly innovating in response to student needs. This willingness to adapt to the changing needs of the student population coupled with an innovative spirit is commendable (Standard II.B).



Since the last accreditation report, student services at Santa Monica College have made many changes to improve student retention and success. These improvements include the BSI Counseling Classroom Visitation Project, the Welcome Center, Student Success Seminar, Back-to-Success program, Online counseling services, and improvements to financial aid delivery to students (both on-time checks and BOG Mobile). Studies conducted by the Office of Institutional Research indicate that many of these student support services have a significant impact on student persistence, GPA and social integration. However, more routine data analysis is desired and the Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Development plan to work more closely with the Office of Institutional Research to begin implementation of outcomes assessment to make improvements to student support services (Standard II.B).

Counseling services are available at all satellite locations. However, matriculation services are provided to all new students at the main campus. Regardless of location, new students are invited to participate in VIP New Student Welcome Day and are referred to the Welcome Center for academic planning for their first semester. All students have access to online services and an impressive number of students use online counseling and online orientation. The self study cites 4,736 online counseling contacts in 2008-2009. Online orientation has tripled over the last eight years from 7,227 students oriented online in 2002-2003 to 24,654 students since 2008-2009. Clearly this service is meeting the needs of Santa Monica College students. Students enrolled in online courses have access to two designated “cyber-counselors” through the eCollege shell used for online course delivery. All students can access online counseling through the counseling webpage. The webpage outlines what kinds of issues are appropriate for online advising and what should be handled in-person. According to the Dean of Counseling, the department researched best practices around the state before deciding on a process where students, after verifying their identification, can email their questions to two assigned counselors who in turn send them along to other counselors with the appropriate knowledge to respond. Within 48 hours, students will receive a response to their questions including advice about making face-to-face appointments (Standards I.B.1, II.B.3, and II.B.3.a).

The college catalog is complete, accurate, and current. The team that works on updating and refining the catalog is an ad hoc committee overseen by one dean who consults with the college’s Articulation Officer and Associate Dean, Enrollment Services and representatives from the Counseling Department. This process is working well; however, a standing committee with a clearly defined charge would assure that changes to the catalog are timely and that all members share the responsibilities of providing students with complete and accurate information (Standard II.B.2.a).

In response to changes that cannot be included in the College Catalog, the district maintains websites to assist student in getting the most current information. The Transfer Center website has links to ASSIST and the Counseling Department articulation website. The searchable online class schedule and the online Student Planning Guide are very user friendly. The online Student Self-Service System provides students with links to the full array of resources at the college making it very easy to enroll and to access useful

information about the college and its services. Policies affecting students are found in the catalog and on the web (Standards II.B.2.a, II.B.2.b, II.B.2.c, and II.B.2.d).

The students at Santa Monica College have opportunities for development of personal and civic responsibility, including many activities for intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development. There are over 70 clubs at Santa Monica College, which provide many ways for students to be connected to the college and to each other. The students actively participate in college-wide committees and participatory governance bodies and are paid a stipend from the collected Associate Student Body fees. The college schedules a “College Hour”, 11:15AM to 12:35 PM on Tuesday and Thursdays, so that students can attend lectures, meetings, and other events. The Associated Students play an important role in creating a positive environment for students at Santa Monica College. The “Any Line, Any Time” free bus service to all Santa Monica College students and staff was an initiative spear-headed by students. The student leadership also requested the restoration of a student leadership class in order to receive structured instruction on leadership development (Standard II.B.3.b).

The Student Guide to Counseling Services is a comprehensive document designed to assist students in accessing a wide array of services. Santa Monica College counselors have also developed their own California Community College Counselor Training Program which is open to full-time and part-time counselors. Unfortunately, this has been temporarily suspended because of the state budget crisis (Standard II.B.3.c).

Santa Monica College has a very diverse student population, so it is not surprising that the college celebrates diversity in the classroom and creates events outside the classroom that reinforce the commitment to appreciating diversity. Santa Monica College has many programs that support its diverse students including the Latino Center, Black Collegians program, International Student Program and Veterans Resource Center. The college has taken its commitment to global awareness and global citizenship by incorporating it as an Institutional Learning Outcome. The college’s Global Council is an innovative way to reinforce the idea of promoting strength through inclusion of diversity (Standard II.B.3.d).

The college complies with all state and federal regulations and the California Education Code with regard to admissions and other policies related to educational access. Assessment at the open access institution is crucial to the retention and persistence of its students. The college enforces mandatory placement by using and validating the Compass College Algebra & Geometry Test, the California Chemistry Diagnostic Challenge Exam, the ACT Compass Trigonometry Math Proficiency Exam, and Accuplacer for Reading, Writing, and ESL. The English and ESL tests can be taken remotely by applying to the Assessment Office for approval. Providing remote testing for students is one way of ensuring access for students who cannot necessarily come to campus to take the test. The Math Placement test, the Math Proficiency Test, and the Chemistry Challenge Exam are not yet available online for students who might need other kinds of accommodations. The college is to be commended for continually evaluating and validating assessment placement data. Providing more on-line assessment

opportunities would better assist those students who cannot come to the college for face-to-face assessment (Standard II.B.3.e).

Santa Monica College maintains student records in full compliance with the California Code of Regulations, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the guidelines outlined in the Education Code. Admissions and Records, under the direction of the Associate Dean, Enrollment Services, maintains these records on computing systems with sophisticated security provisions (Standard II.B.3.f).

Data collection is provided through program directors who are guided by fulfillment of state and/or federal reporting requirements and implementation of student learning outcomes. Surveys of student satisfaction are also created and collected programmatically. Annual reports regarding student learning outcomes show an impressive amount of data collection, analysis, and recommendations for program improvement and implementation. These annual reports are intrinsic to Student Services, but would serve as an outstanding model for the rest of the program review and planning process as they are detailed, data driven, and timely. Although departmental student satisfaction surveys are informative, an institutional student satisfaction/campus climate survey would provide a broader perspective from which to make decisions (Standard II.B.4).

Santa Monica College is understandably proud of its programs and services, its transfer rates, and the success of the students after they transfer. They are also to be commended for their work in Basic Skills and in the “Back-to-Success” Program that works with probationary students to aid them in retention and persistence. The addition of the Welcome Center has contributed greatly to student access and success. With the completion of the new Student Services Center in three years, the college will see all these outstanding programs housed in one beautifully functional space (Standard II.B.4).

### **Conclusions**

The college meets this standard.

Overall, Santa Monica College is actively engaged in providing excellent student learning programs and services for its students. The programs and services are clearly linked to the mission statement and to the institutional learning outcomes. The faculty and staff promote a culture of collaboration that serves its students well. The team, however, is concerned that there is a lack of integration of planning at the college and programs levels, and a lack of a clear linkage between planning and resource allocation. Although program directors and deans prepare annual reports about student services programs in relation to student learning outcomes, this is an informal process that could be formalized as part of a more integrated program review and planning process.

## **C. Library and Learning Support Services**

### **General Comments**

The Santa Monica College Library has a wide range of print and electronic media, academic lab facilities, support and reference staff, and provides instruction and drop-in computer lab support as well as tutoring and learning resource center services. Adaptive services and faculty training are continually offered. Ten tutoring and learning support centers are available at the main campus and at some of the satellite sites. In addition to general tutoring, the college offers tutoring to special programs on campus that provide directed learning activities and support services based on student need (Standard II.C.1).

A number of computer labs are available and offer both scheduled and drop-in services at several campus locations. Computer and technical support are also provided to students accessing alternative modes of instructional delivery including online classes, hybrid classes, and supplemental instruction for traditional classes.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The library is the hub for centralized meeting activity and the labs and reference areas are heavily used throughout the academic year. The level of student activity and usage was fully evident to the team during the course of their on-site meetings. The library was remodeled in 2003 and provides 70 hours per week access, over 200 personal computers, a number of drop-in computer labs, and applicable equipment to support student learning, including wireless connectivity. The library has nearly 50 electronic databases and a comprehensive website that allows students to search the card catalog, download articles, conduct refined and advanced searches, and to ask for electronic reference assistance. Many of the library resources are available 24/7 and provide step-by-step processes for accessing reference materials. Reference librarians hold a number of library orientations and are in the midst of developing an online orientation. Once this is achieved, distance education instructors will be able to provide a link from their courses to the online orientation (Standards II.C.1.a and II.C.1.b).

The library, learning centers and computer labs go through the college's regular program review cycle every six years. The library has developed student learning outcomes and assessments for its courses and one-hour bibliographic instructional sessions. Program level outcomes and assessments have been formed as well. The summary from the program review is forwarded to the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC) to aid in institutional planning. User surveys are completed to gauge satisfaction. State and national surveys are used to assist in partnership efforts as well as overall learning resources improvement. Academic Computing works with all areas on campus to ensure accessibility and to provide specialized software as needed (Standards II.C.1.e and II.C.2).

The tutorial and learning centers located on campus and through the satellite system aim to "enable students to acquire the self-confidence and self-discipline to pursue their intellectual curiosities with integrity in both their personal and professional lives" and further to "obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to access, evaluate, and interpret

ideas, images, and information critically in order to communicate effectively, reach conclusions, and solve problems.” This mission is apparent through the access to free tutoring services, at open and scheduled times, with qualified professionals as tutorial staff. However, the availability of tutorial services at the off-site locations is limited (Standard II.C.1.c).

The college has provided the on-going funding needed to support the library databases and annual collection updates. In fact, \$240,000 was allocated for library resources in 2007-08. Although the administration is clearly accessible and a current communication pathway to achieve operational objectives was expressed by the Dean, Learning Resources, no formalized method for prioritizing funding requests is evident in the planning process (Standards II.C.1.a and II.C.2).

Library services are available to all students through the online “Ask a Librarian” function as well as access to online databases. What varies by location are the special collections based on discipline which, at satellite locations, are meager at best. With limited library resources and staffing, online databases are the primary vehicle by which students access resources at the off-site locations. There is a need to develop a staffing rotation of reference librarians to conduct orientations for the growing student populations who take courses exclusively at one of the satellite centers. The online orientation, which is in the developmental stages and should be completed within the next year, will provide students with needed library research skills from any location (Standards II.C.1.b and II.C.1.c).

A priority for the library and learning centers is standardization and evaluation. Because of its decentralized nature, data collection varies greatly from one tutoring center to another. In the ESL center, tutors utilize the ISIS screen to record tutoring contacts and subject matter. By analyzing the data, the ESL faculty realized that most ESL students were asking for vocabulary assistance. Armed with the data, the faculty were able to develop a new ESL vocabulary course and defend it to the Curriculum Committee. All of the tutoring centers need to standardize their data collection to evaluate the services that they offer to support the teaching and learning function (Standard II.C.2).

### **Conclusions**

The institution partially meets this standard. Although the library on the main campus supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety, there is a need for additional orientation and tutorial services at the satellite locations. In addition, tutorial data and evaluation are not standard across the ten tutorial centers (Standard II.C.1).

The college is encouraged to review the decentralized approach to tutorial coverage and to develop a method by which uniform data is collected and shared with the appropriate department. Concerns expressed during the interviews included:

- difficulty students have navigating the tutorial system;
- inability to refer students to tutoring in a centralized manner;

- hours of tutorial services vary widely; and,
- lack of an integrated timekeeper system.

The faculty early alert process does not include a tutorial referral because of the difficulty in tracking such a referral (Standard II.C.2).

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 5:**

To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that a comprehensive evaluation and analysis be conducted of the decentralized tutorial programs and computing services on campus to assure the quality and scope of services delivered and to ensure student satisfaction and student learning (Standards II.C.1 and II.C.2).

## **STANDARD III Resources**

### **A. Human Resources**

#### **General Observations**

Santa Monica College has had great success in finding and employing personnel with a high level of qualifications. The personnel at Santa Monica generally appear to be dedicated to the college and positive about the working environment. The hiring procedures are well established and enforced at the college. The college has prescribed evaluation procedures in place. Ethics statements are in policy for some personnel, but not for all employee groups. There is not a global ethics statement in place that applies to all college personnel.

The institution provides all personnel with opportunities for continued professional development although those opportunities appear to be limited. The college has a Professional Development Committee, whose membership includes representatives from the faculty, administration, and classified staff. Efforts and activities are not all coordinated by the Professional Development Committee, but rather sponsored by a wide variety of campus groups and programs. For example, the distance education program offers training opportunities to support faculty teaching in an online environment, the Basic Skills Initiative Committee conducts college wide workshops, Human Resources offers both traditional and online training opportunities on a variety of workplace topics.

The Professional Development Committee is charged with supporting special projects designed to increase effectiveness of faculty, staff, and administration. It receives its funding through designated state funds. In spite of the broad general mission of the committee, its current efforts focus on the design and implementation of the two annual college flex days. Unfortunately, the previously identified funding source has been eliminated as a result of state budget cuts.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

Criteria, qualifications and procedures for selection of all personnel are clearly documented in the self study. This documentation was further verified through a review of college administrative regulations. Criteria for faculty are established in alignment with the minimum qualifications established by the California Community College Chancellor's Office. Academic programs which require or do not require a Masters degree are clearly identified. Candidates who are applying for positions are directed to a form, which can be downloaded and used to establish equivalency. Procedures for application, establishing equivalency and procedures for hiring are clearly established in administrative regulations (3200 series) (Standard III.A.1.a).

While there is a great deal of planning involving Human Resources institution-wide, the planning is isolated and not coordinated or integrated. Requests for new positions or replacement positions emerge through various avenues, depending upon the nature of the position. For example, faculty positions emerge through an Academic Senate ranking

process and classified and administrative positions travel through the chain of command. There was little evidence that competing requests from the separate processes arrive at a transparent central decision-making body which evaluates these requests in terms of the mission, vision, values and goals of the college (Standard III.A.1 and III.A.1.a).

The human resources function is split between a Human Resources Department for faculty and administrative positions and a Personnel Commission for classified positions. The Personnel Commission is responsible for classification issues, administration of the merit system and recruitment of classified personnel. Human Resources is responsible for new employee orientation and the administration of benefits. Evidence suggests that communications between Human Resources and the Personnel Commission have improved since the last visit. However, it appears that neither organization has a strong customer-service orientation. Despite an extensive study contracted for and completed in 2008 (the Hay Group Study), there are still issues that need to be resolved regarding classification. Moreover, evidence suggests that requests for reclassification may take undue time, affecting the college's ability to recruit and retain the best qualified personnel (Standard III.A.1.b).

The composition of selection committees varies according the category of the position (i.e., classified, faculty, manager). For example, faculty search committees are predominantly composed of faculty members. One faculty member is designated to serve as a member whose principal role is ensuring that issues of diversity are acknowledged and handled properly (Standard III.A.1.a).

A review of current full-time faculty indicates that all faculty members have been awarded degrees from accredited colleges or universities. In cases where degrees have not been verified, appropriate equivalency has been established (Standard III.A.1.a).

All personnel undergo evaluation on a regular basis (Standard III.A.1.b). The evaluation process is well-documented in administrative regulations. Evaluations of faculty members are conducted by peers; classified employees are evaluated by managers of related units; and administrative and management personnel conduct a self-evaluation as well as an evaluation by the supervisor of record. Faculty evaluations are performed at specific intervals both before and after the tenure decision. Administrators and classified personnel are evaluated annually after the initial probationary period.

Faculty and classified staff evaluations are driven by a rating form combined with evaluative narrative. Administrative and management personnel evaluations are narrative evaluations. Part of the evaluation of administrative and management personnel involves the setting of individual/unit objectives for the coming year (Standard III.A.1.b).

Reviews for classified personnel are 99% complete for the current year. Reviews for these employees are conducted within a three month window according to the contract. Reviews of administrators are roughly 70% complete for the current year. Human Resources employees have follow-up procedures with administrators and their supervisors to prompt the completion of their reviews (Standard III.A.1.b).



Faculty reviews are conducted either by a single peer or by a panel of peers depending upon the faculty member's progress along the tenure track. Reviews of faculty assess their level of participation in department efforts to develop and assess student learning outcomes (SLOs). Faculty evaluations include a single question (under "professionalism") which evaluates the faculty members' participation in the "creations, assessment and/or discussion of SLOs." Discussions with faculty members who recently participated in the review process were positive. Faculty felt the process was very constructive (Standard III.A.1.c).

A concern expressed as a result of the previous evaluation visit in 2004 was that the "process for full-time faculty evaluations is flawed due to the lack of timely information for use in the evaluation and problems of compliance with the stated procedures." (2004 Evaluation Report, p. 33). As of 2010, the problems noted in 2004 are still problematic. Lists of faculty requiring evaluation are often inaccurate and they are sometimes delivered late. As a consequence, large academic departments are forced to maintain shadow or duplicate lists.

In discussing this issue with Human Resources, the faculty evaluation issue is being addressed as an on-going process by HR staff partnering with department chairs. More importantly, this issue is symptomatic of a larger issue of data entry and data maintenance across campus. Human resources functions are split between two systems: the ISIS system which includes faculty assignment information and the HRS system, located at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) which maintains payroll and benefits. Discussions with Human Resources staff indicate that there are on-going problems with erroneous data entry and maintenance with the split system. Specific issues include:

- Transcription errors within the Human Resources Department when putting data into the two systems.
- Errors in data entry of codes. For example, incorrect coding of faculty evaluation processes, panel reviews v. peer reviews, are erroneously entered. This leads to increased error rates going forward.
- Incorrect coding in departments outside of Human Resources. Codes to designate payroll schedules, for example are numeric in one system and alphabetic in the other system. There is no validation of data entry performed by either system. This results in incorrect payroll.

The college acknowledges the seriousness of this issue in objective nine of the Master Plan for Education update (Standard III.A.1.b).

Another issue of concern is the on-going redesign of student evaluations. The 2004 evaluation report, as well as discussions with various parties, indicates that there is a continuing issue with administering, collecting and analyzing student course evaluations. The redesigned form contains both Likert-scaled items and narrative evaluations. Issues appear to be related to both the administration of the evaluation (in-class vs. on-line) and how to efficiently compile narrative evaluations in an electronic format. This issue, which involves Human Resources, Management Information Systems, the Academic

Senate, the faculty union, and the offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, needs to be resolved quickly in order to reinvigorate this critical assessment tool. The team was able to review fall 2009 student evaluation information in a summary format (greenbar report). This report provides a summary mean score for each instructor for each class taught. However, the quantitative portion of the student survey asks students to evaluate faculty on four distinct criteria. Faculty might be better served if they could receive reports that provide scoring on the individual indicators rather than an overall mean score (Standard III.A.1.b).

The college lacks written codes of professional ethics for all personnel (Standard III.A.1.d). Board Policy 1230 applies specifically to members of the Board of Trustees. Faculty members, through the Academic Senate, have their own code, last revised in 2002. Administrative managers also have their own code, last updated in spring 2009. No code of ethics is in current policy that outlines professional ethics for classified staff. While each constituent group may face their own unique ethical questions, a single unified statement of ethics and expectations of ethical behaviors would have a powerful influence on members of the college community (Standard III.A.1.d).

According to a recent (fall 2009) report on faculty diversity, the college employs 48 administrators, 39 classified managers, 473 classified support personnel, 310 full-time faculty, and 1,008 part-time faculty. In discussing adequacy of resources, Human Resources representatives believe that to some extent, the number of full-time faculty is low. The college has expressed a commitment to increasing the number of full-time faculty to move toward a goal of 75% of credit instruction being conducted by full-time faculty (Standard III.A.2).

All regulations, documents and forms are easily available to the college community via a revised website. However, many of the academic regulations were last updated in 2003, prior to the last visit. Given that Human Resources is such a critical component of any organization, it is incumbent upon the college that these regulations be as accurate and up-to-date as possible and reflect changes in federal and state regulations as well as changes in the college structure. There were a few cases where regulations have been updated (e.g. AR3230 regarding part-time faculty). Nevertheless, it was noted in the self study that updating these regulations and establishing an ongoing, systematic process is a planning objective (Standard III.A.3).

The college demonstrates a good understanding and concern for issues of equity and diversity and has implemented appropriate practices. The fall 2009 Employee Diversity Report indicates that the institution is actively concerned with equity in diversity and reflecting the diversity of their student body. Regulations specify the collection and analysis of confidential data from applicants. Search committees for faculty and staff designate one member devoted to addressing and monitoring diversity issues. Should issues arise, the college has a transparent process for applicants to document and file their grievance and an established due process to evaluate and address the grievance (Standard III.A.3.a).

Personnel records are kept secure in a locked room with limited access. Locks have been changed which further restrict access when the office is closed. Although the records room door is often left open during working hours to facilitate business processes, electronic data related to personnel is securely housed within the ISIS system (administered by Information Technology). Payroll information is housed at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the vendor for payroll and other financial services. All data is password protected (Standard III.A.3.b).

Professional development efforts at the college, while ongoing, are not coordinated by any single committee structure. The existing Professional Development committee is a committee of the Academic Senate. The co-chairs of this committee, a faculty member and an administrator, were not familiar with the specific charge or mission of the committee. They conveyed that the scope of the committee is limited to planning efforts for the mandatory flex day activities. The flex day planning involves representatives from all constituent groups, and workshops are designed for a variety of employee groups. However, the scheduling of the flex day activities largely limits participation to faculty. College wide communication about the events planned for the flex days clearly state that full-time faculty are required to attend, and classified employees and managers are “encouraged” to attend. Managers are asked to schedule times off for classified to attend, but the decision rests with the particular manager. Consequently, classified employees feel excluded from flex day activities, thus, to a certain extent, perpetuating a sense of inequity (Standard III.A.5). To mitigate this perception, the college might want to explain the history of flex days and how they are a holdover from the ties that most community college districts had with K-12 districts. At the K-12 level, in-service days are allocated for teacher training and development. Flex days at the community college level derive from these in-service days, which were created for teachers.

In spite of the restrictions that some members of the college community may face, the flex day activities are thoughtfully and thematically designed to promote college wide initiatives. Two recent examples include the college’s efforts to promote sustainability and the state directive to focus on general education transfer, basic skills programs, and career and technical education. Though responsive to emergent needs, the planning processes for professional development are reactive rather than proactive. Decisions are typically not data driven; rather they are the result of member initiative, shared creative vision, and general committee consensus. The committee does, however, conduct assessment of the flex day activities through a participant satisfaction survey that is sent electronically to all members of the college community. Moreover, the committee reviews and considers the results when planning begins for the next flex day (Standard III.A.5.a).

Due to the fluctuations in state funding, the identified funding source for professional development activities has been inconsistent and is currently non-existent. As a result, committee activities rely on a variety of funding sources to support their activities, including contributions from the Associated Students and discretionary funds allocated by the college president.

Both the faculty and classified employee contracts identify funding for professional growth. The faculty contract ensures an annual allocation of \$20,000 to be administered by the Professional Development Committee, and the classified employee contract allows for an annual amount of \$500.00 for professional growth activities per employee. Interviews with classified leadership, however, revealed a concern about the inconsistent access to college funding.

The team uncovered a myriad of professional development efforts presented by groups such as Human Resources, the Distance Education program, and the Basic Skills Initiative. While these efforts represent multiple opportunities for employees to develop their skills and knowledge base on a wide variety of subjects, the team also encountered several programs that identified the need for training, yet no regular efforts were ongoing. In spite of all of the activity around planning, the team did not find a coordinated or systematic approach to professional development planning (Standard III.A.5.a).

The relationship between human resource planning and institutional planning was a concern expressed during the previous visit:

With the exception of full-time faculty hires, there was limited evidence to conclude that human resource planning is formally integrated with institutional planning and resource allocation. Further, it was not apparent that the college has in place a process for systematically assessing human resources and using this assessment as part of the foundation for institutional improvement. (2004 Evaluation Report, p. 34)

Evidence suggests that little progress has been made on this concern (Standard III.A.5.b and III.A.6). Faculty positions go through a ranking process conducted by a joint committee of the Academic Senate. Other position requests are ranked by the Executive Vice President and the Vice President of Human Resources (Santa Monica College, Self Study, p. 393). However, there is no evidence to suggest that a college-wide body evaluates these requests or that competing resource allocation requests are evaluated based on their applicability to the college's mission vision, values and goals. While funding decisions on competing requests are debated within the DPAC Budget Advisory Subcommittee, the decisions are based upon available funds.

The Human Resources Department is renewing efforts for the assessment and reorganization of its operations. The office recently (2009) contracted with an outside consultant to perform an off-cycle, comprehensive program review. Contained within the consultant's report is a proposed reorganization plan for Human Resources. In discussions with Human Resources' staff during the visit, the reorganization plan, with minor changes, has received the support of the President and the Board of Trustees. The department has begun to implement this reorganization. The Santa Monica College Diversity Report is an example of data used for analysis, evaluation, plans for improvement, and implementation. In interviews with HR staff, plans are underway for a comprehensive survey of the college regarding the efficacy of the office. Additionally, Human Resources is in the process of developing standard operating policies and procedures to guide work within the department (Standard III.A.6).

## **Conclusions**

The college partially meets this standard.

The ongoing issues with the software systems that support the college, particularly the interface between the ISIS and HRS systems, are a threat to the integrity of the information contained in those systems and to the credibility of the college (Standards III.A.1.b and III.A.3.b). The ultimate solution to this problem is to develop a workable interface or to adopt different systems. In the short-term, staff need additional training to provide them with assistance in reducing the error-rate.

The current format and process for student course evaluations does not meet the needs of faculty due to problems in capturing the qualitative data in an electronic form. Although this problem is recognized and has been discussed at the college, the solution has not yet been implemented. As this is potentially a highly useful and valuable assessment tool for faculty, this issue needs to be revisited and resolved by all of the concerned parties (Standard II.A.1.b).

Given the serious statewide financial conditions that are impacting community colleges across the state, Santa Monica College is to be commended for the decision to continue working toward achieving the goal of 75% of instructional activity being performed by full-time faculty.

## **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

### Recommendation 6:

To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that Human Resources institute a training program for college personnel engaged in data entry involving either of the two human resources personnel systems (ISIS and HRS) to reduce the error rate and to ensure that data integrity is maintained (Standard III.A.1.b).

### Recommendation 7:

To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that Human Resources, the Academic Senate, Institutional Research, Academic Affairs, and Management Information Systems redouble efforts to resolve issues with student course evaluations and deliver a meaningful assessment document to individual faculty in a timely manner (Standard III.A.1.b).

### Recommendation 8:

To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college develop a district-wide professional code of ethics that is aligned with the stated mission and values, and reflective of activity to support continuous improvement in all instructional, operational, and service areas (Standard III.A.1.d).

### Recommendation 9:

To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college produce a professional development plan consistent with the institutional mission, including a teaching and learning needs assessment and an evaluation process that recognizes and serves all members of the college community and that leads to the improvement of teaching and learning (Standards III.A.5.a and III.A.5.b).

## **B. Physical Resources**

### **General Observations**

Discussions with facilities staff indicate a commitment to provide a “world-class” campus for the students, faculty and staff. Inspection of the main campus suggests that their efforts are clearly approaching this standard. Physical resources are maintained at a very high level despite the restrictions of working within a web of city and county regulations (e.g. noise, waste water, etc.); the limitations of contractual restrictions; and the particular challenges of an urban campus. Building projects, renovations, and land acquisition have expanded the ability of the college to serve students and to provide a stellar learning environment for them.

Facilities management has particularly embraced the colleges’ goal of sustainability. Reclaimed run-off water is used to supply both irrigation and various campus water features that enhance the physical beauty of the campus in a sustainable manner. As cooling equipment is serviced or replaced, CFC-free refrigerants are used. All janitorial cleaning processes reflect “green” thinking and use environmentally friendly cleaning solutions. In fact, the Facilities Maintenance and Operations Department partners with the Center for Environmental Studies to provide community training in sustainable operations and maintenance. They also partner with student organizations and services, such as the cafeteria, on the application and use of green technology in operations and maintenance. In many respects, this college is an exemplary model of sustainable operational practices.

New construction and renovation are the purview of Facilities Planning. Under their direction, the college has successfully passed three bond issues in the past 8 years. These bond issues have allowed the college to renovate, where possible, and replace, where necessary, multiple structures on the main campus and the satellite campuses. The college engages the community in considerable discussion during the building planning process. Internally, faculty members participate in the design and outfitting of new buildings. For example, Math and Physical Science faculty participated in early design decisions for the Math and Science building, as documented in the Physical Sciences program review. Facilities Planning also engages Facilities Management in planning for on-going maintenance needs for new and renovated buildings (e.g. staffing needs, technical expertise of staff, etc.).

As with Facilities Maintenance, Facilities Planning also embraces the college’s goal of sustainability. New buildings are planned with the goal of LEED certification.

## **Findings and Evidence**

The college has been very successful and enjoys considerable community support as evidenced by the passing of three major bond measures (Bond Measures U, S, and AA) within the past decade. These bond issues have been instrumental in terms of modernization and expansion efforts. New and replacement structures contain sustainability features which reflect the influence of the college mission, vision, values and goals. The college was also able to leverage funding from FEMA, following the Northridge earthquake, to update and replace buildings with more modern, safer structures. The current project, the Student Services Building, will bring various student service offices into a single, easy to access venue, which will also serve as the public's entry to the campus (Standard III.B.1).

Due to the overcrowding at the main campus and the difficulty with providing sufficient parking space for students and staff due to the small size of the campus, the college has expanded its physical resources with the acquisition and expansion to other satellite locations (Standard III.B.1). The Emeritus College is a beautiful building in downtown Santa Monica that houses educational programs and services for seniors. The Madison Campus is a performing arts center that consists of the recently constructed Broad Stage, which is a 500 seat state-of-the-art theater, and an older classroom building that houses an art gallery, music classrooms, and other classrooms. The Bundy Campus is an attractive remodeled facility that contains the Nursing and Child Development programs and provides classrooms for general education courses. The Airport Arts Campus is a facility that is used for the art program. The Academy of Entertainment and Technology is preparing to undergo a major addition and modernization project that will vastly improve the aesthetic appeal of this facility and provide much needed operational enhancements. The college also owns an office building where some of the administration is housed and a parking lot that is used for remote parking to the main campus.

Facilities Planning is guided by a Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan originally authored in 1998. The plan was last updated by a consultant who provided a "facilities assessment" in 2003. The plan was updated again in 2007 with a separate master plan for the Bundy site. The college maintains a Five Year Construction Plan, which lists projected building plans and use of planned facilities. There is operational planning taking place and considerable dialogue with both on-campus and community groups about facilities issues. Nonetheless, there is no explicit linkage of project selection in the 12 year-old Facilities Master Plan with the current Master Plan for Education. Contained within the annual updates to the Master Plan for Education are annual objectives for Facilities Planning and Facilities Maintenance. However, much of the planned new construction appears to be driven by evaluations of the usable life of buildings rather than by conscious planning to meet specific educational needs identified in the Master Plan for Education (Standard III.B.2.a).

Facilities Management engages in planning as well. Updates to the Master Plan for Education identify objectives to be met by Facilities Management and the college goals to which they are linked. Internally, the work order system is a database-driven software

program that tracks all work activities of personnel. However, Facilities Management needs assistance in accessing and analyzing this data. This data is not being used to determine areas and objectives for improvement and for guiding the implementation of those objectives (Standard III.B.2.b).

Likewise, the team found little evidence of measurement, evaluation, planning, or implementation regarding the use and effectiveness of equipment in support of programs and services that typically are not considered in the technology plan (i.e. facilities equipment, vehicles, office equipment, instructional equipment, etc.). Additionally, there was no evidence of measurement, evaluation, planning, or implementation regarding the use and effectiveness of a facility after it was constructed (Standard III.B.2.b).

The custodial and grounds areas have had some difficulty in implementing program and service improvements in their respective areas, in part, due to absenteeism and a lack of support in administering accountability measures. Facilities Management and Facilities Planning intend to expand their scope of measurement to include the development and implementation of facilities-related satisfaction surveys for the college, which would be useful information.

Campus safety is reflected in a professional College Police Department. The department is staffed by 20 (of an approved compliment of 25) sworn police officers who have been Academy trained. Sworn officers also undergo a 32-hour additional training session specific to the academic environment. The Department has established MOUs with other law enforcement agencies in the Los Angeles area for emergency situations. The police department is augmented by various technical means such as:

- Over 200 closed circuit surveillance cameras centrally monitored by trained paraprofessionals;
- A recently upgraded mass communication system to notify offices and classrooms in case of emergency;
- A computer-aided dispatch system;
- Newer buildings have been designed to include emergency phones in all classrooms, keyless entry systems and security systems; and,
- An information rich website geared to provide practical information regarding campus safety, campus crime, and health.

The police department publishes annual crime statistics and complies with Cleary Act reporting requirements. The department, by law, maintains a file of citizen complaints which are tracked, investigated and resolved.

Assessment and evaluation of the campus police department is underway. The department has installed RIMS, a law enforcement-specific database system, which will allow them to track and measure progress on many key indicators. According to interviews, 2009-10 is being used as the “base year” for collection of data against which future years will be benchmarked (Standard III.B.2.b).



## **Conclusions**

The college possesses outstanding facilities and continues to improve them primarily due to funds accrued from general obligation bond measures. Given that the main campus is land-locked and there is scant opportunity for expansion, the college has aggressively pursued the acquisition of buildings and properties. There are plans in place for renovations of existing facilities as well as new construction.

Santa Monica College has adopted sustainability as a college value and goal. The college is a leader among community colleges in incorporating sustainable practices into the fabric of the college. The main campus quad was designed to capture water into an underground reservoir, the new buildings are being designed according to LEED standards, and recycling and other sustainable practices are in place.

In spite of these successes, the college only partially meets this standard because of planning deficiencies. There is a lack of congruence between the Master Plan for Education and the Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan, which indicates that these planning efforts are not integrated. Even though the college is providing physical resources that apparently are more than adequately meeting the needs of the student learning programs and services, the link between the stated needs of the student learning programs and services and the facilities projects is not evident. The Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan should reflect the needs identified in the Master Plan for Education.

The Facilities Management and Facilities Planning departments are not currently conducting systematic evaluations of facilities and equipment such that the results of the evaluations are used as a basis for improvement. Fortunately, much of the data that is necessary to implement a systematic evaluation is captured within the current data base system. Analyzing this data and developing specific objectives that would improve practice seem like the logical next steps to improve practice.

The efforts of the college to implement sustainable principles into everyday practice impressed the team. Nowhere in the college is this integration more evident than in the Facilities Planning, Facilities Maintenance, and Campus Safety areas of the college. These areas of the college deserve accolades for their efforts.

## **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

## **C. Technology Resources**

### **General Observations**

The college is supported by a substantial information technology effort. This effort encompasses a student information system developed and maintained by college staff; over 3,000 workstation nodes on campus for student, faculty and staff use; and the technological network infrastructure that enables the flow of communication. The self study details the restructuring of the Information Technology (IT) department into four

components (i.e. network services, telecommunications, management information services, and academic computing) that serve more specific needs of the college. The heart of the enterprise and reporting system is the Integrated School Information System (ISIS), a locally developed student information system based upon the Oracle platform. This system provides data management services for many aspects of the academic experience. It is the central repository for student records as well as a transaction system recording student enrollment, attendance and grades. The ISIS system also integrates a scheduling and activities module designed to serve the needs of counselors.

A locally-developed, Oracle-based program provides the functionality to the current student portal to their self-serve system. In discussing the centrality of the ISIS system, there was evident pride in the ability of the IT department to modify and reprogram ISIS as user demands and requirements change. Information Technology staff stated that ISIS gives them the “agility” to respond to a “we want to try this” end-user philosophy. It is felt that a third party enterprise reporting and planning system would not afford them the level of customization enjoyed with ISIS.

Payroll and general ledger functions are outsourced to the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Financial Aid is in the process of transitioning to a third party-proprietary system named “Regent,” which will also host the application and data. The IT department is also responsible for the development and maintenance of campus telephony, specifically the recently installed VOIP system. Information Technology also supports a document imaging system used extensively in several student services areas.

Finally, the college web site is in a process of transition. They are currently transitioning from a “page-based” system, where content and design existed as HTML files to a custom Content Management System (CMS) where design, look and feel are separate from page content. End-users become responsible for content creation which is stored in a database. Design requirements for the new site were the result of considerable dialogue engaging students, faculty and staff. Information Technology sees this as an important intermediate step to the adoption of a true, enterprise ready CMS system. Similarly, IT has planned to ultimately replace the current locally-developed portal to an industry standard solution using Microsoft SharePoint. Information Technology staff are currently engaged in training on this software.

In terms of staffing, Information Technology currently has six full-time programmers soon to be joined by a seventh. Desktop support and telecommunications is supported by five staff and one supervisor. Network support is staffed by two systems analysts. The largest number of staff (12) is dedicated to computer lab support for the college. Support is also extended to systems in the library and the Academy of Entertainment Technology.

Discussions with faculty and IT staff indicate that the high level of standardization of hardware and software eases the burden of support. Information Technology has implemented solutions that allow for seamless upgrades through the network. The self study details the use of a “cascade” policy regarding equipment replacement and

reallocation to maximize the lifespan of personal computers. The self study also details projects which have increased both the efficiency and the sustainability of resources consistent with the colleges' mission, vision, values and goals. Foremost is the transition to virtual servers which have yielded considerable energy savings.

Ample training opportunities for both faculty and staff are well documented in the report and exceed what one might expect to find in the community college environment. However, much of the training is ad hoc, peer-to-peer training among faculty. Policies and procedures are documented which insure data integrity, back-up and catastrophe recovery.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The self study provides considerable detail regarding the technology planning and acquisition process and the amount of dialogue which takes place regarding these decisions. Decisions regarding the distribution of technology resources, which originate in the program review process, emerge after engagement in a dialogue that includes the Academic Senate Joint Information Services Committee and the DPAC Technology Planning Subcommittee as well as other committees where appropriate. The process also indicates that the Master Plan for Education is an integral component to this process. Clear, established guidelines are used by these committees for the evaluation and ranking of requests (Standard III.C.2).

Technology requests, which would be funded through General Fund or Instructional Block Grant funds, are solicited annually by the Academic Senate Information Services Committee each fall. These requests are reviewed in committee and prioritized according to a published list of criteria. Priority is given to requests that are vital to continue existing programs. Replacing and upgrading existing facilities have a higher priority. Prioritized lists are forwarded to DPAC with funding recommendations. Final recommendations are forwarded to the President and the Board (Standard III.C.1.c).

Requests that would be funded by grants are vetted by the Information Technology Department to ensure the use of college standard equipment prior to submission of the grant request.

Information Technology follows a "cascade" policy where more sophisticated computers are reallocated for use in less technologically demanding environments as they are replaced. This cascade allows Information Technology to meet user needs while maximizing the life span of personal computers. While there is a life cycle plan for cascading computers, planning also takes into account data from Remedy, the college's "Help Desk" tracking system which allows IT to identify chronically malfunctioning systems.

The college does well maintaining and providing support for instructional needs of faculty and students.

In response to changing technology trends, IT has been progressively rolling out wireless access to the campus. Presently much of the basic infrastructure to serve the main campus has been developed and approximately 40% of the main campus now has wireless coverage. The next planned roll-out will provide wireless coverage to the main quad which will extend coverage to 50% of the main campus.

Discussions with staff and management yielded comments that suggested less than complete satisfaction with the ability of the ISIS system to produce reports to assist planning and budgeting. Similarly, when programs and departments need data to assess trends in student enrollment, student success or student equity, they typically access college data through CalPASS rather than directly from the ISIS system.

Information Technology does produce The Instructional Management System (TIMS) report which is “available electronically” (the team was provided with a paper copy). However, this is a preformatted summary report which is not amenable for use as a basis for more sophisticated analysis. Progress, however, is being made. The Office of Institutional Research, in cooperation with Information Technology, has worked to make TIMS available through the self-service portal and end-users are able to query specific portions of the data set and download the information for further analysis.

When data needs go beyond the parameters of the standard reports, there is a wait time while new programming is developed, tested, run and the report produced. This limited ability to readily access the data stored in ISIS was another concern for the team. This limitation hampers the growth of a culture of inquiry at the college. Ready access to usable data is especially important going forward into an era where decisions will need to be made on the allocation of limited resources. The team strongly urges Information Technology to partner with the Office of Institutional Research and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of a data mart to serve the assessment and planning needs of the college (Standard III.C.1.d).

The institution provides ample training opportunities for faculty and staff in terms of expanding their technological skill sets. These opportunities range from participation in regular credit and non-credit technology courses, to self-paced training systems provided by the college to on-line modules. Information Technology staff who provide desktop and lab support serve as an informal source of training and assistance and, in discussions with faculty and staff, it was evident that there is a great deal of informal, peer-to-peer training which fits with the culture of the college (Standard III.C.1.b).

The college has a well-accepted, transparent planning process for the acquisition, maintenance and upgrade of desktop systems throughout the college. Requests are solicited by the Academic Senate Information Services Committee. Requests are evaluated and prioritized by the committee in a transparent process with known ranking criteria. These requests are then coupled with a budget request to DPAC (Standard III.C.2).

For non-academic needs and infrastructure needs, Information Technology staff annually plan for upgrades and infrastructure growth through annual updates to the Technology Master Plan. In terms of on-going support for technology rich new buildings, there is less planning. Information Technology feels that technology support for new buildings is often assumed to exist rather than planned for (Standard III.C.2).

Overall, Information Technology performs considerable planning and ranking of its objectives. These are published annually in the updates to the Technology Master Plan. These objectives indicate specific tasks scheduled to be performed in the coming year as well as on-going planning. Objectives carried over from prior years are assessed in terms of level of completion and what is needed to complete them. Planning beyond these objectives in terms of assessing alternative ways of better serving the needs of the college are identified and are taking place. For example, Information Technology staff assess the pros and cons of using external vendors, such as Gmail, for servicing student and faculty email needs. They are also investigating the implementation of virtual storage and “cloud computing” as more cost efficient and more effective ways to serve the computing needs of faculty and students (Standard III.C.2).

### **Conclusions**

The college mostly meets this standard.

Information Technology through standardization of hardware and software as well as implementation of Microsoft System Management Server is successfully meeting the challenges of supporting a large installed base of desktop systems and computer labs. Over and above desktop and lab support, IT has developed and maintained a locally-developed student information system within ISIS. The college takes great pride in ISIS and its ability to meet the needs of clients. However, ISIS has little or no integration with the three other mission-critical systems: general ledger, payroll, and human resources, which are contracted for and housed off-site. As a result, there is considerable duplication of effort in moving data from one system to another as well as an increased margin of error, especially when the transfer of data is manual entry rather than batch loaded data. More importantly for the college, the lack of integration of these systems presents difficulties in providing reliable and timely information for planning and budgeting. This will become more evident as Information Technology partners with Institutional Research in the development of a planned data mart (Standard III.C.1.c).

The team was particularly concerned with the implications of the low level of systems integration with ISIS. While this issue has been addressed in the past, it appeared evident in discussions with IT staff that the issues were viewed as being insurmountable. Because of that perception, the staff has not attempted to revisit them recently. It was also apparent that since the decision was made to implement the locally-developed and maintained ISIS software, little or no effort had been made to revisit newer versions of integrated software that could bring payroll, general ledger and financial aid “in house” into an integrated system with student information. Given the centrality of this system to so many aspects of college operation, planning and budgeting it would seem incumbent

for departmental planning efforts to either formally or informally explore alternatives periodically.

### **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

## **D. Financial Resources**

### **General Observations**

The college's financial situation and committee participation and involvement have improved dramatically since the last accreditation visit. Over the last six years, there has been a significant positive change in the bottom line of the college and in the confidence level of college personnel in Fiscal Services. In statements by different college constituencies made to the team, there was a consensus that the college administration is "a lot more transparent" than it used to be and that this statement also extended to the Fiscal Services Department.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The college reviews its mission and goals by way of the Master Plan for Education as part of the annual fiscal planning process (Standard III.D.1). The college identifies goals for achievement and they are articulated in the Master Plan for Education. Significant improvement has occurred in the financial area, especially when compared to the 2004 evaluation report (p. 43) statement that,

"there is limited evidence that the college has an effective process that links budget development to institutions-wide strategic planning (particularly long-range academic planning). While the Master Plan for Education appears to be used as a short-range guide for fiscal planning, the document lacks important long-range perspective that is essential for effective financial management and planning."

The current Master Plan for Education incorporates action items with estimated costs and funding sources (existing and/or potential). There are limited links for budget development as tied to institution-wide planning for initiatives, such as hiring full-time faculty, developing a distance education noncredit course, and planning for categorical programs. However, the Master Plan for Education does not address items like the specific budget plan for service levels of institution-wide programs and services the college plans to offer, including the reduction, maintenance, or growth of academic or student services programs. The plan contains generic strategic initiatives, like the initiative to grow FTES, but it does not indicate what areas are targeted for growth and what resources will be allocated. As a result, when it comes to budget planning and development and the initiatives of the college, it is unclear which programs will be impacted by these strategic decisions or developments because these issues are not addressed in the Master Plan for Education and integrated institution-wide planning (Standard III.D. and III.D.1.a, III.D.1.b, and III.D.1.c).

The college establishes priorities for faculty positions through the Academic Senate Joint New Contract Faculty Ranking Committee. Fiscal Services and the college have been diligent at maintaining adequate reserves, monitoring the budget, and developing accurate reports that are easy to understand (Standard III.D.1.a).

Many of the past concerns regarding accuracy and reliability have been mitigated by appropriate staffing in Fiscal Services. Since the last accreditation visit, the department has doubled their staff and has improved their policies and procedures. As a result, the department has been able to generate reports, monitor information, and provide timely and accurate information for the college (Standard III.D.1.b).

Fiscal Services has developed two-year projections that include different scenarios (Scenario A and Scenario B) with different sets of assumptions for financial planning. The assumptions are developed and vetted through the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC) Budget Subcommittee. This exercise allows the college to plan for both short-range and long-range financial priorities (Standard III.D.1.c). Further evidence of long-range financial planning is exemplified by the passage of three general obligation bond measures in a span of six years (2002 to 2008) (Standard III.D.1.c). The total amount of funding approved in these three bond measures is \$590 million.

The college has made efforts to allocate funds to respond to the requirements of GASB 45. The DPAC conducted an information gathering process and formed a task force to educate the college community about this issue. These efforts resulted in a five year plan approved by the board to put away \$1.4 million the first year and \$500,000 for the next four years. Although it is admirable that the college community recognized the importance of responding to the college's Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability, the amount the college allocated to this effort is a start, but a minimal one. It is important that the college revisit this issue after the current economic crisis has been surmounted (Standard III.D.1.c).

The DPAC and the DPAC Budget Subcommittee set the stage for a broad-based review of budget-related items at the college (Standard III.D.1.d). Through the DPAC Budget Subcommittee, the college shares a variety of budget information including annual budgets, -two-year projections, and budget assumptions throughout the year (Standard III.D.2.c). This information supports institutional planning and financial management. The college regularly assesses its use of financial resources. The college uses the DPAC and the DPAC Budget Subcommittee to evaluate the financial performance of the college and uses the expense reports as a basis for improvement.

Further evidence that issues have improved since the last accreditation visit is demonstrated by the college's financial audit for 2008-09. The Independent Auditor's Report listed zero audit findings, an outstanding accomplishment. The audit statements demonstrate the college's ability to manage their finances responsible, timely, accurately, and with integrity. All audit exceptions previously noted by the auditors were implemented with no exceptions carried over into the most recent audit report (Standard III.D.2.a).

The college audit report is annually submitted to the Board of Trustees for their review and acceptance. The audit report is widely distributed on campus to managers and to the constituent group leaders. Other financial information, particularly quarterly budget reports and other financial documents, are also distributed across the college (Standard III.D.2.b).

The college has sufficient cash flows and reserves to maintain stability, scenario planning for appropriate risk management, and realistic plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences (Standard III.D.2.c). As of June 30, 2009, the district fund balance surpassed \$19 million (14.47% of expenditures). This hefty fund sum allowed the college to accommodate state-mandated budget cuts in categorical programs and still end the fiscal year 2009 with a positive balance. In spite of that impressive fact, the college has developed a structural budget deficit budget that, if left unchecked, would wipe out the surplus fund balance in as little as three years. However, the college is managing vacancies and developing cost savings strategies through DPAC and the DPAC Budget Subcommittee to mitigate the deficit (Standards III.D.1.c and III.D.2.g).

The college has put considerable effort into pursuing external funding. They have had success and have accrued more than \$6 million in grants and partnership funding over the last several years. The college has also been successful in expanding its financial aid disbursements, which is reflective of the financial need of the changing student population (III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e, and III.D.2.f).

The college monitors auxiliary funds and ensures that these funds are audited with the same level of scrutiny as the annual college audit (Standard III.D.2.e). The college goes a step further in implementing what they term a “tri-level” review process, which involves three levels of administrative oversight.

Fiscal Services conducts a program review to determine its effectiveness. However, there was no other evidence to indicate that the department has in place any documented measurements that contribute toward the continuous improvement cycle and process. The process in place the department uses in gathering feedback includes verbal solicitation by way of meetings, committee meetings, phone discussions, and other verbal means (Standard III.D.3).

### **Conclusions**

The college mostly meets this standard. It has made outstanding progress in building confidence in its financial information, turning a negative budget situation into a positive one, and in shoring up some of the weaknesses that had developed in its institutional processes and practices. Specifically, the college has performed remarkably well with respect to the results of their external audit, budget training for new administrators, and building up the unrestricted fund balances. The college has also made tangible progress in budget planning and in making the budget planning process transparent and accessible to the college community. The major planning issue that still remains concerns the relation of financial planning to the Master Plan for Education and to other elements of



the planning and budget process. As with other areas, there is no systematic and integrated cycle that links evaluation to improvement processes.

As noted in the 2004 accreditation report, the college financial systems have appropriate control mechanisms. Unlike the previous report, timely and accurate information is being provided as a result of appropriate staffing.

The Fiscal Services Department has made substantial improvements. However, the only ongoing and formal evaluation mechanism in place occurs every six years through the program review process. Other than the program review process, which is an excellent process, there is no evidence of regular measurement, ongoing evaluation, and continuous improvement for the Fiscal Services Department in supporting the programs and services of the college. In essence, the department is not aware of its effectiveness through any documented means other than through a program review every six years and through anecdotal feedback.

**Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

## **STANDARD IV**

### **Leadership and Governance**

#### **A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes**

##### **General Observations**

Since the 2004 visit, a number of changes have occurred in the way the college approaches shared decision making and planning. The college has made a substantial effort to establish a structure that clearly defines the leadership and organizational structure overall and is reflective of the community.

At the center of this effort has been the establishment of the District Planning and Advisory Committee (DPAC). From the self study, it is apparent that this committee has become the anchor of the shared governance process and has allowed the college to move forward from the difficulties expressed in the 2004 evaluation report. The DPAC has been responsive to the requests made through the shared governance system as evidenced by the many accomplishments outlined in the annual report submitted to the president and the board.

##### **Findings and Evidence**

Since the last self study report and visit, Santa Monica College has taken a number of steps to realign the shared governance structure and create an improved environment for collegial communication and comprehensive decision making. It was evident at the conclusion of the last visit that the college was fragmented in its approach to participatory governance and planning processes. In trying to repair those fragments, it became critical that the campus community develop a new decision making process that was transparent, representative of all groups, and communicated widely across campus. It is evident that the college has been successful in accomplishing this task. Additionally, this process has taken place without diminishing the creativity and innovation that has been a hallmark of Santa Monica College. More importantly, all components of governance and planning appear to conscientiously filter their self-reflective examination through the lens of student needs.

This rebuilding process began with the discontinuance of the Collegewide Coordinating Council and the establishment of the District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC). Board Policy 2210 set the parameters for the group and the constituent participation. It took a year's discussion with all stakeholder groups to set the charter. As previously noted, the DPAC has become the "anchor" committee that makes recommendations to the Superintendent/President on matters that are not the purview of the Academic Senate, Associated Students or the Management Association. These items include areas of the district budget, facilities, human resources, college services, and technology planning (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, and IV.A.3).

The DPAC is subject to the Brown Act and their minutes are posted on the college's web site. The Board of Trustees respects the concept of participatory governance in all areas

defined by state laws and regulation as policy of the Santa Monica Community College District while retaining its own rights and responsibilities as the ultimate authority. In discussions with the DPAC leadership, it was evident that the role of the Academic Senate was paramount in the formation of the DPAC. There were difficult compromises at times, but there was mutual agreement to form the committee. Once the year-long planning process was completed, the campus community had a decision making process, a planning process, and a committee structure that would aid the college in working toward improvement of communication and completing major institutional tasks.

The initial charge of the DPAC was to structure a process for recommendations to the president of the college and communicate those decisions college-wide. The faculty interviewed by the evaluation team expressed confidence in the evolution of DPAC and voiced a steadfast commitment to the success of the committee in navigating difficult economic times ahead. Members of the evaluation team observed a DPAC meeting, which provided insight into how the group functioned. The agenda and materials were excellent and the context of the meeting, although at times controversial, resulted in collegial decision making (Standard IV.A.3).

It is clear in the self study that the college and board respect the opinion of the Academic Senate in the collegial governance structure on relevant academic and professional matters. The “joint” Academic Senate committee structure is thorough and in several cases includes administration and staff members. The Academic Senate also has a number of committees that are comprised of faculty only, including the adjunct faculty and department chair committee. The work from these committees has been tracked by the mutually-agreed development of a routing form with signatures that documents the revision and adoption of all policies and regulations related to academic and professional matters (Standard IV.A.3).

Two other committees in this section are worthy of note: the Global Citizenship Task Force and the Strategic Planning Task Force. The Global Citizenship Task Force began in 2007 with the goal to “define global citizenship for Santa Monica College and to recommend strategies to encourage the development of global citizenship in the college community.” The outcome of this committee was so successful that it has developed into the Global Council and is co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. During the team’s interviews with members of the Global Council and the Dean, International Education, it was evident that the college’s global citizenship institutional outcome is infused both in curriculum and in activities on campus designed to celebrate diversity and promote awareness and appreciation of other cultures (Standard IV.A.3).

The Strategic Planning Task Force has had a critical role in the convergence of long range academic planning, student and institutional learning outcomes, and improvement of the culture of the college. The task force had representation from all constituent groups. (Standard IV.A.3).

In the self study, the college identified the following planning agenda for Standard IV.A:

The College will better document its planning processes, formalize the evaluation of planning outcomes and institutionalize planning and evaluation by emphasizing outcomes as well as outputs.

In reading this section, it appears that although a number of planning processes and improved committee structures are in place, clarification is needed as to how decisions lead to the improvement of educational programs, the achievement of student outcomes and distribution of resources. For example, what resource documents are used throughout the year beyond program review and institutional/course learning outcomes within the annual Master Plan update process? While the college clearly engages in review and self-evaluation, it has not established a comprehensive measure by which to evaluate the effectiveness of these processes. Currently no universal, objective measure exists to evaluate the college's overall effectiveness. The self-study readily acknowledges and candidly describes this deficiency. There is a clear need for a systematic and recursive evaluation, planning, and implementation sequence (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.3, IV.A.4, and IV.A.5).

### **Conclusions**

The college mostly meets this standard.

There is no doubt that the constituent groups at the college are well represented and involved in the decision-making processes. There is an environment of openness, of optimism, and of excitement in spite of a gloomy budget situation external to the college. The policy development process is well established and participatory. There is an extraordinary level of dialogue that takes place at the District Planning and Advisory Council and at other college committees and venues. The college has made an honest effort to comply with Commission guidelines and standards. The only reason that the college does not meet this standard has to do with the finding of the visiting team that the college does not have a systematic and integrated method for evaluating its processes and their effectiveness. The section on Standard I in this report contains a recommendation on this subject.

### **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.

## **B. Board and Administrative Organization**

### **General Observations**

The college has undergone drastic changes on many fronts since the last accreditation visit. One of these changes was the election of three new trustees to the board. Another was the retirement of the previous Superintendent/President and the hiring of a new leader. These changes seem to have served the college well.

The Board of Trustees is performing the assigned task of overseeing board policy, making policy-level decisions, and ensuring the fiduciary viability of the college. The board and the Superintendent/President annually set goals. The Board of Trustees has a fully developed code of ethics, which includes clearly stated provisions for behavior that

violates the code. The board is active in the accreditation process, regularly evaluates the Superintendent/President, and appropriately delegates district operations to the Superintendent/President.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The team found members of the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees to be knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities as trustees. The board takes seriously its role in developing policies to assure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and that those programs and services are aligned with the district mission and vision (Standard IV.B.1.a). The Board of Trustees also understands and carries out its authority in regard to educational, legal, financial, and student matters (Standard IV.B.1.c).

Significant leadership changes have occurred since the last accreditation team visit six years ago. Three trustees have been elected and a new president was appointed. The three newest trustees are all activists in the community and avid supporters of the college. They are dedicated to enhancing and forging new linkages to surrounding agencies and feeder school districts. One of these new trustees, a retired judge, teaches a class without remuneration as part of his commitment to the college. He and another trustee led a campus-wide effort to study and make recommendations about an outsourcing policy that became a win-win model for serving the constituencies.

Santa Monica College has a well developed process for establishing policies and for updating those policies (Standard IV.B.1.b). The college has developed a process review chart that delineates the relationship between the board and the participatory and administrative review processes. The board policies and administrative regulations are published and are also accessible through the college website (Standard IV.B.1.d).

Trustees elected since the last accreditation team visit participated in a comprehensive board orientation, "Santa Monica College 101," as well as an all day workshop with an ACCT consultant to promote team building, enhance their effectiveness and clarify their role. The board annually holds two all-day study sessions, one in the fall and one in the spring. The spring session is used to explore the results of their self-evaluation as well as to evaluate the college president (Standards IV.B.1.f and IV.B.1.j). The board has scheduled elections for trustees such that the terms of office are staggered and so that there is continuity of leadership (Standard IV.B.1.f).

The Board of Trustees has a self evaluation policy in place and this policy requires that the board undertake a self evaluation every year (Standard IV.B.1.g). The evidence files for the accreditation evaluation team contained only one self evaluation for the board. When the other evaluation summaries were requested, the team only received a summary for one additional year. This oversight does not appear to be intentional and is the result of miscommunication rather than the result of missing evaluations. The team reviewed the board self evaluations for 2008 and 2009.

The visiting team observed an open accessibility of each trustee to meet with faculty and classified unions on a scheduled basis. Faculty senate representatives as well as the faculty union leadership describe complete accessibility to individual trustees. Both the Academic Senate leadership and Faculty Association leaders depict this approach as a problem solving venue for information sharing and as a way to maintain “labor peace.”

As required by the accreditation standards, the board has a thorough code of ethics in place that includes the steps to be followed in dealing with behavior that violates the code of ethics (Standard IV.B.1.h). The board minutes demonstrate that the board received regular presentations and updates on the accreditation process and activities during the time that Santa Monica College prepared their mid-term report and their self study (Standard IV.B.1.i).

The Board of Trustees adequately and appropriately delegates authority to the Superintendent/President (Standard IV.B.1.j). The president is responsible for planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. He has played an important role in establishing positive relations with college constituency groups and in setting values, goals and priorities for the college. To a certain extent, educational planning is integrated with resource planning. However, the quality and breadth of the research produced at the college has suffered from inconsistent staffing and limited resources. The gaps in research support have hampered the college’s ability to implement an overarching process that incorporates meaningful and systematic assessments and evaluations into an annual and multi-year planning and evaluation cycle (Standard IV.2.b). This observation is not meant to imply that the president is responsible for this situation as many of these issues were pre-existing conditions at the college.

The president is a respected academic and a seasoned community college leader. Some measure of the credit for the financial turnaround of the college must go to the president. The college has been able to build an admirable fund base of reserves during the last four years under his tenure. In addition, although the president was not involved in the passage of all three of Santa Monica’s general obligation bond measures, he was involved in the passage of Measure AA in 2008 for \$295 million (Standard IV.B.2.d).

The college personnel interviewed by the team indicated that the efforts put forth by the president when he came to Santa Monica College contributed significantly to changing the long-term problem of collegiality and communication at the college (Standard IV.B.2.e). Those interviewed on campus agreed that the shift of culture on campus since his arrival had been dramatic. One faculty member commented that the, “The president has brought a casual and inclusive style. He can bring people together and then send them off with a clear direction to complete the necessary work of the college.” The president not only works well with the internal college community, he also works well with the external community (Standard IV.B.2.e). He is a member of several community organizations and he also enjoys positive working relationships with elected officials, local governmental officials, and civic leaders.

## **Conclusions**

The college mostly meets this standard.

The team found that the Board of Trustees carry out their duties appropriately and maintain policies that govern all of the areas of the college. The Board of Trustees ensured that new trustees went through a complete orientation process and demonstrated familiarity with the accreditation process.

Similarly, the Superintendent/President is a capable leader who oversees the administrative structure and appropriately delegates authority to other administrators. The president helped to forge the current participatory governance/planning process and has maintained clear and consistent communication with the constituent groups. The college is in a strong financial position. There was no evidence of a process in place to regularly evaluate institutional effectiveness Standard IV.B.2.b).

**Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1.