



COLLEGE  
OF THE  
REDWOODS

April 9, 2009

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204  
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Dr. Smith and Dr. Barr,

College of the Redwoods faculty continues to embrace accreditation standards as the framework that guides the district's work. We are pleased that the Commission recognized the district's progress towards meeting the standards, as shown by CR's removal from warning status this spring. However, since that change in status, the Academic Senate believes that actions by district leadership have significantly marginalized faculty participation in CR's compliance process.

A general lack of collaborative and broad-based discussion is our main concern. More specifically, faculty are now informed of decisions rather than asked for input on the front end. Faculty have raised these concerns with administrators and the Board on numerous occasions, yet these concerns remain unresolved. Attached you will find a partial list of those concerns in our April 2009 Senate Brief that was presented to the Board for their April 6 meeting. We believe that many of the administrative actions cited are violations of AB1725, CR's policies, and are not consistent with the work the ACCJC has asked us to do. These deviations from the ACCJC standards will impair the district's ability to show that we are meeting standards in our regular 2011 report.

During previous Commission team visits, it was made clear to faculty that it is our responsibility to inform administrators, the Board, and if necessary, the Commission of our concerns. Therefore, we bring faculty concerns directly to your attention.

We were pleased to be informed that the Commission's visiting team will meet with the Academic Senate on April 17 during our regular Senate meeting, and we are eager to adjust the agenda as needed to suit your schedule. Additionally, or as an option should your schedule require

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adjustment we are able to convene a smaller group consisting of the Senate Executive Committee, the Senate copresidents, the Senate's Ad Hoc Accreditation Standards Committee, and several key faculty (BSI Coordinator, Program Review Committee member, and Assessment Coordinator).

We look forward to meeting with you.

Respectfully,

Two handwritten signatures in cursive script. The first signature is 'Tony Sartori' and the second is 'Allen Keppner'.

Academic Senate Copresidents: Allen Keppner  
Tony Sartori

AK:TS/sf

Enclosure

Cc: Dr. Marsee

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# The Senate Brief

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**Meeting Dates:**

**April 3**

- Academic Senate
- Multicultural and Diversity Committee

**April 10**

- Curriculum Committee
- Academic Standards and Policies Committee

**April 17**

- Curriculum Committee
- Academic Standards and Policies Committee

**April 24**

- Curriculum Committee
- Academic Standards and Policies Committee

**Academic Senate Copresidents:**

Tony Sartori  
Allen Keppner

Assistant:  
Sally Frazier

Faculty bring three items to the Board's attention concerning academic and professional matters. The first item is a letter conveying our dissatisfaction with the processes that were used to develop the Education Master Plan draft. The second item focuses on approved policy where there have been administrative decisions that are not compliant with regulations and that disrupt procedures that are currently in place. The last item centers on learning communities.

## I. ACADEMIC SENATE EDUCATION MASTER PLAN STATEMENT

While the Senate recognizes that it was necessary to present an Education Master Plan (EMP) draft to the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in January, the compressed time line and the fact that the draft was not written by the Education Master Plan Committee (EMPC) resulted in a seriously flawed EMP draft that has not been widely discussed and does not have broad-based support. In support of this claim, we offer the following observations and concerns:

- The ACCJC recommends collaborative decision-making and planning, but the EMP as presented to the ACCJC in January does not satisfy that recommendation.
- The Plan was not reviewed by the EMPC before it was submitted in January to the ACCJC.
- The EMP was not widely discussed by district constituents.
- While the plan contains numerical targets and goals, these lack data-informed rationale.
- Because the EMP was not written by the EMPC, the committee's revisions are absent in the draft.
- Although faculty in areas such as assessment and basic skills were consulted, conclusions were added without faculty input.
- Vehicles for feedback (wiki and email) do not promote discussion.
- Originally the February 27, 2009 special Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting was designated to discuss EMP feedback. However, feedback was not discussed but was summarily presented.
- The special BOT meeting was scheduled at a time that many faculty could not attend due to classes or other regular district responsibilities.
- Until the Senate raised the concern, there was no mechanism for the discussion of wiki and email feedback or revision of the EMP.
- Although the EMPC has now been given an opportunity to revise the draft, this time line is also significantly compressed.

Without broad-based discussion and communication, the Education Master Plan draft will continue to lack faculty support. In order for a document of this significance to have integrity, it must be the result of collaborative efforts, not only so that it has broad-based support, but so that it also meets the ACCJC standards.

## II. FACULTY CONCERNS RELATED TO POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Concerns are presenting in two categories: administrative breach of policy and administrative delay of approval and implementation of policy.

### **Administrative Breach of Board of Trustees Policy (BP), Administrative Regulations (AR), and Administrative Procedures (AP)**

- BP305/AR305.01 Contract Faculty Appointment Procedures: The President asked for a non-prioritized list while the procedure requires a prioritized list. The President has been selecting final candidates while the policy requires the Vice President to make the selection. Recommendation: Follow the procedure as approved until mutual agreement has been achieved on a different procedure.
- BP305/AR 305.01 Contract Faculty Appointment Procedures: The President did not meet with the screening committee to discuss options for continuing or reopening after an unsuccessful search. Recommendation: Automatically reopen the position unless there are mitigating circumstances.
- BP305/AR305.03 Priorities for Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty: According to the Education Master Plan draft this policy does not exist. Recommendation: At an April faculty meeting, the administration will present their goals and needs for faculty appointments, with consideration given to the Strategic Plan, the budget, and community input, as approved in the administrative regulation.
- BP305/AR305.03 Priorities for Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty: Mutual Agreement on a Provisional Faculty Prioritization decision tree was not reached. Recommendation: Follow the approved regulation for Fall 2010 hires.
- BP305/AR305.03 Priorities for Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty: Math and English department hires are subject to teaching CR classes in those disciplines at HSU. Recommendation: Do not subject disciplines to hiring outside of the process.
- BP5055/AP5055 Enrollment Priorities: Fall 2008, enrollment priorities were changed by the President for Spring 2009 enrollment. Request: Update AP5055 immediately and notify College Council.

### **Administrative Delay in Approval and Implementation of Policy**

- Proposed BP4020/AP4020 Program and Curriculum Development: Passed by Senate in Spring 2008. Delayed in cabinet. Postponed by College Council in February 2009 until June 2009. This postponement effectively delays a decision until next fall. Recommendation: Bring policy back to College Council in April 2009 and approve, respecting Senate's primacy in this area.
- Proposed AP4021 Course Grade Challenge: Passed by Senate in Fall 2008. Delayed in cabinet. Currently in College Council. Recommendation: Bring policy back to College Council in April 2009 and approve, respecting Senate's primacy in this area.
- Proposed Program Revitalization or Discontinuation Policy: Passed by Senate in Spring 2008, brought to College Council and returned to Senate to incorporate input. Passed by Senate Spring 2009. Postponed by College Council in February 2009 until June 2009. This postponement effectively delays a decision until next fall. Recommendation: Bring policy back to College Council in April 2009 for further discussion.

### III. LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The decision to construct learning communities was announced by the President at the March Board of Trustees meeting. What was not shared was that learning communities are not new to CR. The district has had ongoing learning communities since the Spring 2003 publication of *The Underprepared* by Barbara Morrison, Professor of English, Sandy Vrem, Professor of Math, and Pam Kessler, Professor of English. Faculty and student service professionals who are knowledgeable about developmental education and basic skills students recognize that effective programs require careful planning and collaboration. What follows are characteristics of effective learning communities and caveats for their development.

#### Characteristics of Effective Learning Communities/Linked Courses/First-Year Experience

- Curriculum:
  - Content of one course supports that of the other
  - Courses share a theme
  - Courses have integrated curriculum and assignments
- Faculty:
  - Instructors meet regularly with each other to plan and to confer about students
  - Instructors meet regularly with advisors to confer about students
- Advising:
  - Students meet regularly with counselors/advisors to confer about classes
  - Early alert system in place
  - Embedded counseling
- Instructional
  - Support: Math and English labs
  - Supplemental instruction
  - Course-specific tutoring
  - Embedded tutors
- Enrichment Activities:
  - University Tours
  - Cultural events
  - Motivational speakers
- Financial Assistance:
  - Textbooks and course packets provided before first day of classes
  - Intensive orientation or bridge program before semester begins

#### Caveats for Developing Learning Communities and Linked Courses

- Learning communities are not for everyone. Advisors must carefully assess which students are most apt to benefit.
- Effective learning communities require that faculty involved spend a great deal of time coordinating their efforts and activities with one another. At least one hour per week should be allocated for meeting with learning community colleagues.
- Development and implementation of effective learning communities requires training. Flex activities should be provided for faculty and staff. In addition,

developmental students are unlikely to know how to participate in and profit from learning communities without some training and preparation.

- Scheduling of linked courses is both complicated and restrictive as students must work around their employment schedules, college schedules, and family schedules. In addition, linked courses must be appropriate for the students' skill levels and declared majors. Without careful planning, excessive offerings of linked courses may have a negative impact on enrollment, retention, and success. It should be noted that De Anza College, a leader in developmental education, offers fewer than ten learning communities each session for its 25,000 students.
- Focusing exclusively on linked courses, while ignoring or minimizing the importance of other effective practices in development education, may be counter-productive.

*The Senate Brief is prepared in the interest of supporting communication between the Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees.*