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**SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION TEAM REPORT**

**Solano Community College  
4000 Suisun Valley Road  
Fairfield, CA 94534-3197**

**A Report Prepared for the  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
of the  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

**This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited  
Solano Community College on November 4, 2013**

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## **SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION TEAM REPORT**

### **Introduction**

Solano Community College underwent a comprehensive accreditation review in the Fall of 2011. In January 2012, the Commission took action to place the College on Warning status and instructed the College to take action to “completely resolve the deficiencies noted in Recommendations 2, 3, and 8 [of the 2011 Team Report], which were originally noted by the 2005 evaluation team, by October 2012.”

As required by the Commission, Solano Community College submitted a Follow-Up Report on October 15, 2012, addressing the nine recommendations contained in the Commission’s action letter. Subsequent to the Follow-Up Report submitted by the College, a team visit was completed on November 13, 2012 by the evaluation team of James Hottois, Thomas Jones (a member of the November 2011 team) and Brian Thieboux.

In January 2013, the Commission took action to continue the College on Warning status and instructed the College to take action to completely resolve the deficiencies noted in Recommendations 5, 6, 7, and 9 of the 2011 Team Report and to submit a Follow-Up Report by October 15, 2013. The report was followed by a visit on November 4, 2013 by the present evaluation team of Kathryn Smith, Thomas Jones and Toni Dubois-Walker, all members of the original November 2011 visiting team.

Prior to its visit, the evaluation team studied the 2011 Team Report, the Commission’s action letters from February 2012 and February 2013, the College’s October 2012 and October 2013 Follow-Up Reports and the evidence which the College supplied as background to the reports. During its visit, the team interviewed or met with approximately 130 members of the college community, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, and members of the Board of Trustees. During its visit, the team also reviewed additional evidence provided by the College.

Solano Community College was very accommodating and did an exceptional job preparing for our visit. The physical facilities for our visit were excellent. Any request we made was met quickly and completely. We were made to feel at home by everyone we met.

This report addresses Recommendations 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the 2011 Team Report, which the Commission instructed the College to “completely resolve” by October 2013.

## **Recommendation 5**

*In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College expand its data collection, analysis and planning related to meeting the needs and fostering the success of an increasingly diverse student population. Student and staff equity and diversity plans should be fully integrated with the College's planning processes and should include strategies geared toward attracting a diverse pool of qualified applicants able to contribute to the success of the College's student population. (Standard II.A.1.a, II.A.2.d, II.B.3.d, III.A.4.a-c)*

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

The 2013 visiting team verified the Solano College Follow-Up Report assertion that the institution has developed a Staff Diversity Plan in support of attracting a diverse pool of qualified applicants. The 2013-2016 Staff Diversity Plan includes all the required elements of an Equal Employment Opportunity Plan and was approved by the Solano Board of Trustees on September 18, 2013.

Interviews with members of the Solano College Equity Inclusion Advisory Council revealed that completion of the Staff Diversity Plan was delayed due to staff changes in Human Resources and a lack of clarity as to the need for both an EEO Plan and a Staff Diversity Plan.

The team also verified the assertion that a Student Equity Plan had been completed. The Student Equity Plan is a five-year plan covering 2013-2018. The College's previous Student Equity Plan was from 2005. The Plan includes goals, programs providing specialized support and services to students, and demographic data about the student population. Since work on the current plan began in the Spring of 2011, the data used in the report are from 2010-2011. Additional data are incorporated from the *Student Success Scorecard*. The Student Equity Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on September 13, 2013.

Interviews with the Solano College Student Equity Committee found that completion of the Student Equity Plan was delayed when the Dean of Counseling, who was chairing the Student Equity Committee, left the college. Committee members also said they stopped working on the Plan at one point because of the passage of SB 1456, which will require all California community colleges to develop a Student Equity Plan tied to student success.

While the Committee members spoke passionately about programs, workshops, and activities focused on cultural diversity, they did not appear to differentiate between equity and diversity. The Student Equity Committee does not have a standard meeting time and interviews with Committee members made it difficult to ascertain the genuine focus of the Committee.

Data in the Student Equity Plan describe a disproportionate number of White and Hispanic students attending the College in comparison to the Solano County census data. Strategies are identified in the Student Equity Plan to address this disparity.

There is Committee recognition that the Student Equity Plan required by the California Community College Chancellor's Office by October 2014 will require a more thorough examination of disproportionate impact and issues of equity not addressed in the current Plan. The intention of the Student Equity Committee is to incorporate the State's requirements into their recently completed Plan.

Since both the Staff Diversity Plan and the Student Equity Plan were completed in September 2013, there is no evidence that the plans have been fully integrated with the College's planning processes as required by Recommendation 5 of the October 2011 Team Report and listed in the Commission's February 2012 action letter to Solano College.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on documented analysis and focused dialogues, the team concluded that the College demonstrates partial success in resolving Recommendation 5 from the 2011 Team Report and partially meets the associated Accreditation Standards. The team advises the College to observe all due haste and diligence in integrating its newly developed Staff Diversity Plan and its newly developed Student Equity Plan into the integrated planning process of the College.

### **Recommendation 6**

*In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College develop mechanisms and learning support systems to ensure that students enrolled in distance education courses are achieving stated learning outcomes at a level comparable with students enrolled in onsite programs and courses. (Standard II.A.1.b-c)*

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

The team was able to verify that the College has developed a number of mechanisms and learning support systems aimed at ensuring that students enrolled in distance education courses are achieving stated learning outcomes at a level comparable with students enrolled in onsite programs and courses. An interview with the Distance Education Coordinator, who is a faculty member assigned as DE Coordinator for the past two years, revealed that a component of the College's program review process now includes a requirement that on-line course completion and success be compared to on-site course completion and success. This comparative analysis of data is expected to lead to improvements of both on-line and on-site courses and any achievement differentials will be addressed by the Distance Education Committee through an action plan.

The College is using embedded tutors in its on-line classes. An embedded tutor is someone who has already successfully completed the course and is enrolled again in the class to enable access to the email addresses for the students and to the discussion groups. With the use of the *Canvas* system for distance education, the College is moving away from just emailing to live conferencing, and will have access to evidence of instructor initiated contact with the students.

The team found that the College has developed processes to address the Recommendation; however, the processes have just begun. Additionally, there was no evidence presented indicating that the faculty are consistently using the strategies outlined or the data provided to improve the on-line learning experience.

No evidence was available indicating uniform implementation of the mechanisms and learning support systems devised to ensure that students taking distance education courses are receiving the same support and are as successful as on-site students. The College's strategy may be a solid model for improvement; however, no evaluation has been completed to validate the strategy.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on documented analysis and on-site interviews, the team concluded that the College has partially resolved Recommendation 6 from the 2011 Team Report and partially meets the associated Accreditation Standards. The team advises the College to complete a full cycle of the model established for the purpose of ensuring that students enrolled in distance education courses are achieving stated learning outcomes at a level comparable with students enrolled in on-site courses and programs; to evaluate the model; and to modify the model as indicated in the evaluation to achieve continuous quality improvement.

### **Recommendation 7**

*In order to meet the standards and increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the College develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures that incorporate effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes into the evaluation process of faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving student learning outcomes. (Standards, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, III.A.1.c)*

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

The District negotiating team began working with the various employee bargaining units in March 2013 to incorporate the development and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes into the various employee job evaluations. In the October 15, 2013 Follow-Up Report submitted to the Commission, the College maintains that the SCFA (faculty union) suspended negotiations, effectively stopping progress in resolving this recommendation for a period of time. With the assistance of State CTA (California Teachers Association) representatives, negotiations were resumed in late Spring 2013.

After extensive dialogue between the College Faculty Association and the District, on October 4, 2013, a tentative agreement was signed by the District's and the bargaining unit's negotiation teams. The proposed language to be added to the evaluation process includes faculty contributions to Student Learning Outcomes, specifically, development and assessment of course and program SLOs. Additionally, the evaluation form will include evaluation of each faculty's contribution to the "production of written reports on SLO and SAO assessment results..." This tentative agreement had not yet been approved by the general membership of SCFA as of the

date of the team visit. However, the team was subsequently notified by the Superintendent/President that the tentative agreement was ratified by the faculty union on November 12, 2013 and approved by the Board of Trustees on November 20, 2013.

In order to broadly inform students and faculty of the expectations of all courses, each course syllabus is required to have as a component the published SLOs, which are reviewed in class by the Instructor of Record on the first day of each term.

Over the Summer of 2013, the Administrative Leadership Group contract was amended to include language as to each leadership employee's contributions towards planning, implementation and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, Area Outcomes and Institutional Outcomes.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on documented analysis and on-site interviews, the team concluded that the College has fully resolved Recommendation 7 and meets the associated Accreditation Standards.

### **Recommendation 9**

*In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College develop a clear, written code of ethics for all its personnel. (Standard III.A.1.d)*

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

An ad hoc committee was formed in February 2012 to begin work on formulating a draft Code of Ethics for all College constituents. The committee completed its work with the production of a draft document. The Superintendent/President and his cabinet of advisors moved to form a "reconstituted Code of Ethics Committee" which expanded on the initial committee's document, essentially producing a second draft document.

In January 2013, the Superintendent/President appointed two members of the Shared Governance Council to combine the two documents into one functional Code of Ethics. This committee completed its work in February 2013 with a Draft Code of Ethics that applies to all constituents college-wide.

This document was widely circulated to all college constituents to solicit input and final comments. On March 4, 2013, the College's Academic Senate approved the draft Code of Ethics without revision and on March 6, 2013, the Board of Trustees approved the final version of the Code of Ethics.

Prior to arriving at the College for the November 4, 2013 visit, the team reviewed the College's website and easily found the newly approved Code of Ethics (Board Policy 4100) available for the public to review. During the site visit, the team viewed the document posted in various

public locations throughout the College, visible to college employees, students, and the general public.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on documented analysis, the team concluded that the College has fully resolved Recommendation 9 and meets the associated Accreditation Standards.

### **General Observations and Conclusions**

The visiting team commends the College for the large volume of work that has been completed since the comprehensive visit in November 2011. Team members found that there is productive dialogue taking place that involves all constituents at the College. In general, the constituents of Solano Community College are confident about the College's future while also being mindful of its past. As with previous teams, this evaluation team found that Solano Community College continues to be committed to meeting the Commission's Standards, Eligibility Requirements and Policies in support of a culture of student learning and success.

Many procedural and cultural improvements were noted by the team. The Dean of Institutional Research and Planning has made a very positive contribution to the College by documenting the portion of the planning process that involves accessing data. The Dean has also made available to the College data that was previously inaccessible. A culture of data-driven decision-making and a culture of evidence appear to be in place.

The Board of Trustees works well together and acts as a unified, cohesive governing body. The Board fully supports the Superintendent/President and commends him for being trustworthy, dedicated, passionate about student success, and well-respected in the community.

The visiting team does have some concern about the length of time it is taking Solano Community College to come into full compliance with all of the Standards. That is partially due to the rate of turnover in upper-level and mid-level management. This turnover affects continuity in planning, execution of plans or strategies, and evaluation. The significant number of interim or vacant leadership positions continues to cause delays in developing and implementing processes pertaining to resolution of the outstanding recommendations from the 2011 Team Report.

Interviews with faculty and staff members indicate that as a key player leaves the College, often the plans that person was developing leave with him or her and the people left behind start over. The terms "born again," "moving toward becoming," "getting there," and "it's still a new process" were used repeatedly by various members of the college community to describe various plans and procedures.

It is perhaps because of this leadership turnover and the resulting stops and starts of various initiatives that many of the plans and processes required by the 2011 recommendations have only recently been finalized. The Staff Diversity Plan and Student Equity Plan were just approved by

the Board of Trustees in September 2013. The new platform for DE classes is just being rolled out for Spring 2014 semester. The embedded tutors in DE classes have just been included in a pilot program and not yet fully implemented. A tentative agreement to include SLO's in faculty evaluations was just agreed upon in October 2013 and was ratified by union members and approved by the Board after our team visit. This rush to get things completed prior to the October 15, 2013 deadline might make it appear that the work has been done solely to comply with Accreditation Standards rather than to develop processes for the purpose of strengthening student learning and success. The team acknowledges that the recent administrative commitment to an ongoing position of accreditation coordinator will contribute to a college culture of continuous compliance with Accreditation Standards.