

DEC 08 2006

**PROGRESS REPORT VISIT**

**ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE**



**3041 West Avenue K  
Lancaster, CA 93536-5426**

**A Confidential report Prepared for the Accrediting  
Commission for Community and Junior Colleges**

**This report represents the finding of the evaluation team  
that visited**

**ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE**

**on**

**November 6, 2006**

**Team Co-Chairs;**

**Rose Marie Joyce, Ph.D., President, Rio Hondo College**

**Randal Lawson, Vice President, Academic Affairs,  
Santa Monica College**

## **Introduction:**

A comprehensive visit was conducted at Antelope Valley Community College in October 19-21, 2004. At its meeting of January 12, 2005, the commission acted to require of the Antelope Valley Community College a progress report and visit. The visiting team, Dr. Rose Marie Joyce and Randal Lawson, conducted the site visit at Antelope Valley Community College on November 6, 2006. The purpose of the team visit was to validate the progress report prepared by the College and determine if there were improvements of all the recommendations of the 2004 Comprehensive Visiting team.

The Progress Report Team found that the College had prepared well for the visit by arranging for the meetings with individuals and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair. The College assembled the appropriate documents in the meeting room used by the team. Over the course of the day, the team met with President Fisher, three members of the Board of Trustees, the Accreditation Report co-chairs, Chairs of the various participatory committees on campus, the Academic Senate President; the classified services representatives, administrators, faculty and staff. An open meeting was also conducted.

The progress report was clear, concise and comprehensive. The development of the document was participatory and included every subset of the recommendations as well as an additional planning component. The areas of focus for the progress report visit were student learning outcomes, organizational structures, diversity and communication in the form of purposeful dialogue. The report accurately reflects the progress made toward acting on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Visit Report. The College is to be commended for the significant progress made.

The Progress Report and visit were expected to document improvement in the following areas:

*RECOMMENDATION #1* – The College must develop a complete blueprint for planning that includes a review of the mission statement, and the research, planning, and evaluation processes and ensure clear communication of these processes to faculty, staff and the community.

*RECOMMENDATION #2* – The College must improve communication by engaging in dialogue that is inclusive, informed, and intentional about institutional quality and improvement. The dialogue should purposefully guide institutional change. This dialogue must include formal pathways for effective communication links so that the information and recommendations are disseminated to all constituent groups.

*RECOMMENDATION #3* - The College must develop and implement student learning outcomes for all of its courses, programs, services, and for the institution as a whole while linking the outcomes to planning and the budgeting process. Equally important, the College must develop mechanisms for measuring those outcomes and commit to using the findings to improve student learning for its diverse students.

*RECOMMENDATION #4* – The College must provide and sustain an environment in which all persons in the College community can interact on a basis of accepting differences, respecting each individual, and valuing diversity. It is imperative to identify and implement the processes that actively promote diversity in the everyday environment and the academic programs of the College.

*RECOMMENDATION #5* – The College must provide the following organizational structures that are congruent with institutional effectiveness: (1) a fully functional human resource division, and (2) adequate research capacity to gather and analyze the College’s data as the basis for dialogue and informed decision making.

*RECOMMENDATION #6* - The Board must review and develop (1) personnel policies and procedures, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, labor relations, classification, compensation, benefits, and staff development and training; (2) participatory governance policies (Board Policy 2051) with an eye to incorporate a directive to include data, both qualitative and quantitative, in participatory governance planning and decision making; and (3) program review (Board Policy 5041) to incorporate data-driven analysis. Furthermore, program review reports must be prepared on a regular cycle, and the report findings and recommendations must be disseminated campus-wide. Report

recommendations must be actively incorporated into campus planning and decision making to enhance student learning.

### **COLLEGE RESPONSES TO THE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:**

***RECOMMENDATION #1*** – **The College must develop a complete blueprint for planning that includes a review of the mission statement, and the research, planning, and evaluation processes and ensure clear communication of these processes to faculty, staff and the community.**

The Strategic Planning and Budget Council (SPBC), a shared governance council did develop a new budgeting process driven by the College mission statement that incorporates research, planning and evaluation. The new process does consider the College's vision and values, embedding communication within and across the campus. While the new process is just being piloted this year, it has the promise of meeting the standard's objectives. There is an improved clarity and alignment of research planning and evaluation processes as evidenced by examples provided of data-driven decision-making. Additional plans were also outlined by the Director of Institutional Research and the co-chairs of the SPBC. The flow of work and decision making processes within the College is clear and includes representation of all interest groups on campus. Interviewees and minutes of meetings validated that this is facilitated by a plethora of committees that flow out of the SPBC with a clear scope of responsibilities and a reporting mechanism. Appropriately, the Educational Master Plan is being revised to include planning for the Palmdale campus. Dialogues with the President have been thematic and well received. Major institutional issues are discussed as well as progress reports given.

While progress toward meeting this recommendation is well underway, we concur with the College that the functions of institutional research are at the developmental stage and will become a greater asset in planning and data-based decision making with time.

**RECOMMENDATION #2 – The College must improve communication by engaging in dialogue that is inclusive, informed, and intentional about institutional quality and improvement. The dialogue should purposefully guide institutional change. This dialogue must include formal pathways for effective communication links so that the information and recommendations are disseminated to all constituent groups.**

The College has addressed this recommendation by developing and implementing several communication initiatives. The team was able to validate excellent progress toward establishing an inclusive, informed, and intentional dialogue about institutional quality and improvement. The Communication Subgroup of the Strategic Planning and Budget Council is charged with facilitating dialogue regarding institutional research, planning, decision-making, and evaluation between and among College constituencies and with disseminating information on budget decisions to the College community. This was in marked contrast to team observations during the 2004 accreditation visit.

Particularly impressive is the evolution of the "Dialogue with the President" meeting series—informal discussion sessions with the Superintendent/President about important College issues—over the last two years. Agendas for these sessions (topics, questions to consider, guest speakers, etc.) are announced via e-mail messages, and summaries of each session are posted to the College website, providing the opportunity for continued discussion. The Superintendent/President solicits feedback on the value of each dialogue through an evaluation survey, which also facilitates the identification of future topics. Recent dialogue topics have included the following: the Strategic Planning and Budget Council planning process, Distance Education, the Palmdale Campus, and the Accreditation Progress Report.

The College has recently developed *myAVC*, a new web-based tool that shows great promise in enhancing the sharing of important information across the College community. Through this web portal, members of all College constituencies can participate in collaborative groups and access agendas, minutes, working documents, and announcements from the various College committees and workgroups.

The College is to be commended for adopting a multi-pronged approach to address the challenges presented by the multitude of individual communication preferences within a complex institutional structure. As noted in the planning section for this recommendation, the College must carefully evaluate the communication efforts of the Strategic Planning and Budget Council Communication subgroup during the piloting of the new budget planning process and make adjustments as necessary. The team concurs that the College will need to carefully consider currency of content to ensure that *myAVC* fulfills its promise as a dialogue and communication tool.

***RECOMMENDATION #3 - The College must develop and implement student learning outcomes for all of its courses, programs, services, and for the institution as a whole while linking the outcomes to planning and the budgeting process. Equally important, the College must develop mechanisms for measuring those outcomes and commit to using the findings to improve student learning for its diverse students.***

The College has clearly established a meaningful institutional dialogue about student learning outcomes and linking those outcomes to its planning and budgeting process, and progress has been made toward their development and implementation. The Strategic Planning and Budget Council has developed institutional learning outcomes to be used in evaluating and prioritizing annual budget requests through a revised budget planning process that is currently being piloted. The team found evidence that these institutional learning outcomes have been communicated effectively across the College community and that there are efforts underway to link these to learning outcomes for courses, programs, and services.

At the time of the 2004 accreditation visit, the College had just begun to incorporate measurable learning objectives into its course outlines of record and to integrate assignments and methods of evaluation with the objectives. Further progress has been made since that time; however, approximately 600 courses still need to be updated and/or revised. The team was able to observe through interviews and documentation that there

is now a much better understanding that the establishment of the objectives is just an important first step toward development of student learning outcomes and establishing means of assessing them. The Student Learning Outcomes Task Force has now become a standing committee of the Academic Senate and is working with the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee to create a standard form to be used by faculty in developing and documenting student learning outcomes at the course level. This group has already developed such a form for student learning outcomes at the program level and is implementing a training plan.

The College's student and instructional services areas have provided impressive leadership in the development and implementation of learning outcomes for services. These areas have already developed student learning outcomes and linked them to the newly established institutional learning outcomes. The momentum generated by these service areas has clearly served as a driving force in moving other areas of the College forward.

At the program level, Technical Education faculty have developed and implemented student learning outcomes for each of their programs, and two newly developed occupational programs established student learning outcomes during their development and approval processes. English faculty have begun the process of developing learning outcomes for various categories of courses—composition, creative writing, reading, literature, and developmental.

While both the progress report and the visit revealed the establishment of a meaningful dialogue about student learning outcomes and significant progress toward development and implementation, the team concurs with the recommendations in the planning section of the report that further training is needed and that there is still much work ahead. It appears that the College now has a structure in place to accomplish this.

The College also acknowledges that the absence of a permanent institutional research function had created a significant obstacle in that an assessment and evaluation component was largely missing during initial efforts to develop and implement student learning outcomes. The Director

of Institutional Research and Planning position has been filled, so the College now has the capacity to proceed in a data-driven mode.

***RECOMMENDATION #4*** – The College must provide and sustain an environment in which all persons in the College community can interact on a basis of accepting differences, respecting each individuals, and valuing diversity. It is imperative to identify and implement the processes that actively promote diversity in the everyday environment and the academic programs of the College.

The College has taken deliberate and varied steps to increase an acceptance of differences and an awareness of the values of diversity on the campus. This is evidenced by the following activities: several workshops at the Museum of Tolerance, a data driven Student Equity Plan and special training on EEO guidelines for hiring committees. The visits to the Museum included all interest groups and were followed up with on site activities. The Student Equity Plan has already had an impact in creating a continuous and intentional dialogue regarding curriculum and hiring. The contemplated merger of the Student Success Committee and the Student Equity Committee is evidence of a more collegial climate and more effective communication.

While the College has gone out three times and has not been able to fill the Director of EEO position, they recognize the need to still perform those functions. They reported that there is a blueprint from the State for an EEO plan, which they plan to develop this year. Development of the plan and strategies for implementation are essential to meet the objectives of this recommendation.

***RECOMMENDATION #5*** – The College must provide the following organizational structures that are congruent with institutional effectiveness: (1) a fully functional human resource division, and (2) adequate research capacity to gather and analyze the College's data as the basis for dialogue and informed decision making.



The new Vice President of Human Resources and Employee Relations began July 2005. Organizational structures in line with the standards have been implemented. Employees now have primary and support responsibilities with the appropriate cross training. The Board policies for personnel were recently approved by the board; administrative procedures are still being developed. The SPBC developed a Human Resources subgroup to create a long-range Human Resource Plan that will interface with the Educational Master Plan and the budget plan. The new organizational structures for Academic Affairs and Student Services have been completed, and the College is in the process of filling the new dean positions. These activities were conducted with a significant campus dialogue that considered the Educational Master Plan.

The need for an Institutional Researcher was cited in many parts of the comprehensive visit report. The college has hired the researcher who has initiated the dialogue that leads to data-driven decision making.

***RECOMMENDATION #6 - The Board must review and develop (1) personnel policies and procedures, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, labor relations, classification, compensation, benefits, and staff development and training; (2) participatory governance policies (Board Policy 2051) with an eye to incorporate a directive to include data, both qualitative and quantitative, in participatory governance planning and decision making; and (3) program review (Board Policy 5041) to incorporate data-driven analysis. Furthermore, program review reports must be prepared on a regular cycle, and the report findings and recommendations must be disseminated campus-wide. Report recommendations must be actively incorporated into campus planning and decision making to enhance student learning.***

Almost immediately after the 2004 accreditation visit, the Board of Trustees approved an agreement with the Community College League of California for a policy and procedures service that provides model policies and updates to ensure compliance with changing regulations. A faculty member was provided with reassigned time for three semesters and a summer intersession in order to coordinate a college-wide effort to revise

Board policies and administrative procedures. The team was able to validate the report's assertion that most Board policies and many administrative procedures have been updated/revised through this major effort that encompassed Board policies and administrative procedures for the District, Board of Trustees, General Institution, Academic Affairs, Student Services, Business and Fiscal Affairs, and Human Resources. A revision of Board Policy 2051 *Participation in Local Decision Making* occurred during this process, as did the development of an *Institutional Code of Ethics* (Administrative Procedure 3050). During the visit, members of the Board of Trustees and the various constituent groups expressed satisfaction with both the process and the results.

The first AVC Classified Employee Relations Committee was established in Spring 2005 to enable the classified union president, the classified union grievance officer, and the Vice President of Human Resources and Employee Relations to meet regularly to discuss non-negotiable issues and concerns of classified employees in an effort to enhance the employer-employee relationship. The establishment of orientations for classified employees each semester was a direct result of the communication that occurred within this committee. The District has also completed a classification study of all classified positions, and implementation of the results of this two-year process is now scheduled to begin.

In Fall 2005, the College's program review process was reinstated, and a schedule was established to ensure that all divisions of the College maintain a six-year cycle for self-study. The process is to be linked to resource allocation through review of its recommendations by the Strategic Planning and Budget Council. Although the process is intended to make use of both qualitative and quantitative data, so far data is limited to relatively few existing documents—the Student Equity Plan, Accreditation Surveys, Assessment Committee data reports, Transfer Rates, and Vocational Program Advisory Task Force materials. Six areas have completed their self-studies, and two peer team reviews have occurred. The College now has all divisions and areas on a six-year cycle for program review that includes both self-study and peer review components. The College should ensure that for vocational programs, the required two-year reviews are conducted and cited in the divisional program review documents, validating that these programs remain current.

The College is to be commended for its quick response to the recommendation for review of Board policies and administrative procedures and the near completion of this enormous task. In particular, the procedure for full-time faculty hiring merits immediate attention, since the lack of clarity in the current procedure appears to result in differing practices among hiring committees. The re-establishment of the program review process on a six-year cycle, with a plan to link this process directly to resource allocation, is likewise commendable, and the team encourages the College to proceed with its plan to incorporate its recently established institutional research function in this process to facilitate movement toward truly data-driven planning and decision-making.