

EVALUATION REPORT

Columbia College
11600 Columbia College Drive
Sonora, California 95370

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
Columbia College on October 25, 2005 through October 27, 2005

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Summary of the Report

In advance of the site visit, the team read the self-study, the catalog, and other supporting documents, as well as the report of the previous team visit. Each member was asked to write a preliminary review of the standard to which he or she was assigned. The team met at the hotel on Monday to review our evaluations of the self-study and to organize the site visit. For two and a half days, the team held on-campus meetings with individuals and groups, conducted interviews of administrators, faculty, support staff, and students, examined files, reports and documents, observed classes and facilities, attended on-campus meetings and met a great number of individuals at Columbia College. In fact, among the 10 of us we had 252 faculty and staff contacts, visited 27 classrooms, attended 8 campus wide meetings and met with district personnel including board members. In addition, we held two open sessions to avail ourselves to any member of the college community for any reason.

The team found that Columbia College should be commended in several areas.

- The college is to be commended for the excellent job that was done in preparing faculty, staff, and students for the visit of the accreditation team.
- The college is to be commended on the dedication and enthusiasm of its faculty and staff toward the teaching and learning process, the students, and the institution.
- The college is to be commended on the quality, accuracy, and thoroughness of its publications (the schedule of classes, the catalog, the student handbook) as they present honest and complete information that guide students through application, assessment, and enrollment in support of reaching their goals.
- The college is to be commended for providing a physical facility that supports student learning in a natural environment that maintains the spirit and history of the area. The college is to be commended for the planning of the new library facility – it is beautiful, functional, and the hub of learning and student life.
- The college is to be commended on the development of its budget handbook for faculty and staff that provides a clear description of the college's budget process.
- The college is to be commended for being committed to a learning environment that fosters positive student attitude and opportunities for personal growth. During the site visit the student population expressed positive feedback on the quality of the instruction, the dedication of the faculty and staff, and the physical environment of the campus.

While the self-study is an important document to this process, the team found that the structure, content, and format of the study did not serve the college well. Despite this shortcoming the team was able to complete their task and observed the following conditions that require attention and are recommendations for improvement:

1. Communication

The team recommends that the college and district develop a concrete and systematic process to improve collaboration, communication, and cooperation. The process should include, but not be limited to, an examination of whether any current functions provided by the district office should be centralized or decentralized to better serve student needs (I.B.1; I.A.4; III.B IV.A; IV.B).

2. Planning

The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas (I.A.4; I.B.2; I.B.5; II.A.2; II.C; III.B):

- Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible
- Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services
- Development of a strategic plan that will guide the college in integrating its planning processes that result in the college meeting its goals set forth and in line with its mission

3. Resource Allocation

The team recommends that in order to best serve the needs of students, the district and the college engage in a collaborative process to ensure a transparent and equitable allocation of financial resources and that the district and the college implement a process to communicate budget issues with each other on an ongoing basis (IIIC.1a; IIIC.1d; IIIC.2; IIID.1a,b,c; IIID.2a; IIID.2b; IIID.2d; IIID.2e; IIID.2g; IIID.3; IVB.2d; IVB.3d; IVB.3g).

4. Research

The team recommends that the institution adopt a culture of evidence by developing and implementing, with timelines, responsibilities, and evaluations, a research process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis that assesses institutional effectiveness and documents the need for resources, technology, staffing, programs, and facilities which best serve the students needs (I.A.; I.B; II.B.1,3,4; II.C).

5. Student Learning Outcomes

The team recommends that the college adopt an aggressive approach with specific timelines and responsibilities for developing student learning outcomes including documentation and assessments at the course, the program, and the institutional level and demonstrate that evidence is being used for institutional improvement. All employees of the college must assume responsibility to improve student learning outcomes (II.A.1, II.A.2; II.B; II.C).

In conclusion, during the visit and the review of the self-study some of these same issues were highlighted as well as a number of other issues that also need to be addressed. The team hopes that these recommendations will provide emphasis and support the college's efforts to address them. We also noted a number of other observations and suggestions which will be included in our final written report.

Introduction

Columbia College is a comprehensive community college serving 1084 full-time equivalent students as of fall 2003. The college resides on 280 acres of gently rolling hills, on the outskirts of Sonora, adjacent to Columbia State Park. The college campus opened in 1967 enrolling 127 students in seven college courses and has grown to 1084 full-time equivalent students who can choose from over 200 degrees and/or transferable courses, more than 55 degree majors, and 34 certificates in 12 vocational programs. Along with the growth, the college has also increased its prominence in the community.

Since the last accreditation visit in March 2000, Columbia College has changed considerably. A new library that is twice the size of the former facility, providing four times more computer/internet stations, has become the hub of activity and a true showpiece for the college. The college has also passed a bond to renovate current college buildings and add new facilities. A small \$175 land purchase has developed into a multi-million dollar educational resource.

On October 24-27, 2005, a 10-member evaluation team visited Columbia College to validate the college's 2005 Institutional Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation resulting in a recommendation to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The team arrived on the afternoon of October 24, 2005 for a team orientation meeting and began the in-depth review of the college's self-study report.

A careful review of the document reveals that the format of the self-study goes into great detail in the introduction for each standard followed by an analysis of each item in the standard. Included in the description was some evaluation of how the college was performing with regard to meeting that standard. The sections of the standard dealing with self-evaluation and the planning agenda were extremely brief. Some of the self-evaluation sections are limited to one to two sentences and are not an assessment. Much of what is found in the descriptive area could have been shifted to the self-evaluation section. Many things are stated as having been done but the visiting team has found few examples to support these assertions. The self-study as a whole could have benefited from concrete examples given to support statements.

The team found that all previous recommendations of the 2000 visiting team were reviewed and reported in the self-study as having been met; however, upon exploration, the prior recommendations had not been fully met by the time of the visit. During the visit, the 2005 the team also developed several of its own recommendations and noted a number of commendations. None of these recommendations are classified in the "non-compliance" category, despite the seriousness with which the team believes these issues are to the future of the college.

The team highlighted a few of excellent programs and services at the college worthy of special notice.

1. The college is to be commended for the excellent job that was done in preparing faculty, staff, and students for the visit of the accreditation team.
2. The college is to be commended on the dedication and enthusiasm of its faculty and staff toward the teaching and learning process, the students, and the institution.
3. The college is to be commended on the quality, accuracy, and thoroughness of its publications (the schedule of classes, the catalog, the student handbook) as they present honest and complete information that guide students through application, assessment, and enrollment in support of reaching their goals.
4. The college is to be commended for providing a physical facility that supports student learning in a natural environment that maintains the spirit and history of the area. The college is to be commended for the planning of the new library facility – it is beautiful, functional, and the hub of learning and student life.
5. The college is to be commended on the development of its budget handbook for faculty and staff that provides a clear description of the college's budget process.
6. The college is to be commended for being committed to a learning environment that fosters positive student attitudes and opportunities for personal growth. During the site visit the student population expressed positive feedback on the quality of the instruction, the dedication of the faculty and staff, and the physical environment of the campus.

THEMES

DIALOGUE: The College has been engaged in some initial dialogue; however, there is not evidence of meaningful dialogue related to any system or complete review of governance, institutional research, planning, and building a culture of evidence. Significant dialogue is needed to enhance compliance with the Commission's standards. It will be necessary for all of the individuals to cooperatively explore and exchange ideas. Communication is central to the current challenges facing the college and the district. The lack of effective communication between the college and the district is such that it is interfering with the college's ability to make strides for improvement. While informal communication is an important component, it does not provide the record and collective memory and conscious building necessary to make plans, assign responsibility across departments, and effect change.

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY: The visiting team experienced difficulty in obtaining adequate documentation/evidence to support the self-study. The lack of critical and pertinent information was prevalent in areas such as Program Review, student learning outcomes (SLOs), research, organizational structure, and planning. It was very difficult for the visiting team to make an accurate assessment of the college's current state of progress in addressing this theme due to the apparent lack of documentation and the untimely and incomplete manner in which the existing documentation was prepared and provided. For the most part,

however, the college publications were complete, accurate, and honest. (See Recommendation 4.)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: The visiting team noted that the college is attempting to develop and implement student learning outcomes on the institutional level. The college appears to have made a good start; however, the efforts need to be coordinated in extending SLOs to the course and the program level throughout the college. The degree of engagement is imbalanced. The college will have to develop a plan to engage all appropriate individuals, establish a timeline, and implement an assessment and improvement process. (See Recommendation 5.)

PLANNING, EVALUATION, AND IMPROVEMENT: The visiting team noted that the college needs to be more vigilant in addressing this theme. This cycle of planning, evaluation, and improvement is at the heart of the college and leads to ensuring that an institute continues to address and meet the needs of the community which it serves. The college's reliance on surveys as the form of documentation for change is short-sighted, as is the advocacy for more funds and staff based primarily on anecdotal comments. The team saw little planning and, where planning efforts existed, there did not appear to be identified leadership of the efforts. (See Recommendation 2.)

ORGANIZATION: The college is experiencing serious organizational difficulties that are reinforcing and exacerbating the current communication problems. The combined effects of these organizational and communication problems have created a confused and inefficient environment both at the college and the district level. As a result, it is difficult to undertake the important work that lies ahead for the college. The current campus climate reveals a lack of confidence and trust with the district office, which appear to have resulted in struggles between the college and the district. (See Recommendation 1.)

INSITUTIONAL COMMITMENT: The visiting team found that the college provides high quality education congruent with the college's mission statement. The college has stated that it is committed to supporting student learning and student success. This commitment was evident from conversations with satisfied students throughout the campus. The stream of pride by college employees and students was noted and the environment seems enjoyable for learning.

Responses to Recommendations of the Previous Evaluation Team

Recommendation 1.A.

The College, with the assistance from the District, completed a study of comparable colleges to determine an appropriate and adequate level of administrative staffing (Standard 7.A.1).

The mid-term response of the college indicates that a review of administrative staffing at five other small community colleges located in California had been conducted; however, this was not mentioned in the self-study. During the visit, the team was told that a study of five colleges had been conducted, but the efforts were not documented. The self-study described its reorganized administrative structure which included a vice president and other staffing changes that were designed to better meet institutional needs. The team found no staffing plan that was based on institutional research and it was not evident that there was any depth of understanding about how to best meet institutional needs.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 1.B.

The College develops fully and implements a staffing plan to fund support staff in key areas (Standard 7.A.1.).

The mid-term response of the college describes the staffing changes that occurred at the college. However, during the visit, the team could not find any evidence of a college staffing plan. While the college seemed prepared to move forward after 2000 and even after the 2002 mid-term report, it appears that intervening factors, attributed to Datatel implementation, changes in district leadership, and key college administrative restructure, along with a perception of a lack of resources, have affected the ability of the college to complete effective planning. The recommendation of developing and implementing a staffing plan was not addressed. Statements about what will be done in the future seem well-intentioned but there is a lack of evidence that the college has the true foresight on how to proceed. The team found no staffing plan that was based on institutional research and it was not evident that there was any depth of understanding about how to best meet institutional needs.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.A.

The College develops more effective mechanisms to communicate the outcomes of planning more clearly (Standards 3.B.1., 3.C.2., and 7.C.1.).

The mid-term response of the college listed key initiatives the college undertook to effectively communicate to the campus. During the visit, the team noted that while there has

been involvement in the planning process, it seems that information has not been effectively communicated to faculty and staff. A lack of instructional leadership at the vice presidential level only exacerbated this problem. However, since a Vice President for Student Learning was hired in January 2005, there has been a communication link which has flowed from and between members on planning committees. Several individuals indicated they feel that a communication breakdown exists because information does not get from these committee representatives back to their various constituencies.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.B.

The College takes the seven planning themes listed in the planning summary at the end of the self-study document and provides time lines, responsibilities, funding sources, and measures of progress and completion for the specific activities that will be undertaken to accomplish these goals (Standards 3.B.2., 3C.1.).

The mid-term response of the college outlines the planning processes that have been established at the college. During the visit, the team observed that the planning themes from the previous self-study were developed in a format that includes the subject, recommendation, activities/actions, outcomes, completion target dates, and evidence. This same format was also used for the 2005 self-study. Although the college is attempting to perform planning that incorporate some of the recommendations from the 2000 report, there is an apparent lack of comprehensive understanding of effective planning, particularly with regard to responsibilities, funding sources, and assessment of plans.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.C.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by:

Recommendation 2.C.1.

Consolidating and expanding learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness measures and clearly communicating the results (Standards 3.C.1., 3.C.2., 3.C.3.).

The mid-term response of the college indicates that the college anticipates developing learning outcomes and review curriculum. During the visit, the team found that reported limited resources and the YCCD elimination of a researcher position were cited as the reason the college indicated that they have not moved forward with instructional research. The mid-term report indicates the college had not yet decided whether outcomes would be developed by program or course-by-course. The team found that the college continues to grapple with where to begin in developing SLOs – the institution, the program, or the course. The team also noted the college needs to develop and implement a comprehensive institutional agenda that consolidates and expands learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness, ensures that

the results lead to institutional improvement, and clearly communicates the results and then related improvements to the employee community.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.C.2.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by: Establishing a comprehensive institutional research agenda, with the assistance of the District Research Office, that strengthens the assessment of institutional effectiveness (Standard 3.A.3.).

The mid-term response of the college indicates that there was a comprehensive research agenda that was developed in conjunction with the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD). During the visit, the team found no evidence that research had been implemented nor any plans of a research agenda developed. While the college has had the opportunity to use a variety of alternatives to meet its research needs, there has been no leadership in the area of research for the last few years until two weeks before the accreditation site visit of 2005. These issues have interfered with the ability of the college to move forward to improve institutional effectiveness by ensuring that results lead to improvement and these results are effectively communicated to employees at Columbia College.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.C.3.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by: Instituting processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to improvements of College programs and services (Standard 3.A.4.).

The mid-term response of the college indicates that the current Educational Master Plan (EMP) considers effectiveness changes as a by-product of Program Review. During the visit, the team found no evidence to verify that the EMP process allows the campus to evaluate and improve programs. The team noted that the EMP was essentially not as traditional as most plans for educational programs but in fact it was a list of requests. Although the college has made strides in the area of learning outcomes through their work on SLOs, the college is fractured in its ability to perform Program Review and measure institutional effectiveness. Although there are departments within the college that are further along in this process than others, the college has been lax in its assessment of programs for improvement.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 2.C.4.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by: Completing a current technology plan, including desired acquisitions, time lines, and

activities in concert with the College Mission and Vision Statements and relating to a cohesive education plan (Standards 4.A.4., 6.2., 6.7.).

The mid-term response of the college cites the services of a consulting firm and the development of a Technology Master Plan. During the visit, the team verified the creation of a Technology Master Plan in fall 2004 that is in concert with the college mission and relates to a cohesive education plan. The Technology Master Plan articulates the desired actions, equipment acquisitions, et cetera, but the plan does not include timelines and resource requirements for the items listed. There is, however, a process to ensure that college-wide technology needs are guided by the Columbia College Technology Master Plan.

The recommendation was met.

Recommendation 2.C.5.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by: Completing a facilities review and developing a facilities plan to address the short-term and long-term space needs for Student services and other non-instructional programs (Standards 3.B.3., 8.1., 8.5., and 9.A.3.).

The mid-term response of the college lists the steps to be taken to increase the space needs for Student Services and other non-instructional programs. During the visit, the team confirmed that the college completed the acquisition and construction of new space, furniture, and equipment for the indicated areas. In addition, a Facilities Master Plan was adopted in 2004. This is a comprehensive plan that is regularly reviewed and will address both short- and long-term facilities needs of the college. A bond was passed so the college will have the resources to build out their Facilities Master Plan.

The recommendation was met.

Recommendation 2.C.6.

The College seeks improvements in research effectiveness and quality assurance by: Developing and equipment maintenance and replacement program plan (Standards 6.2., and 8.4.)

The mid-term response of the college relies on the Technology Master Plan as the vehicle for ensuring that equipment is maintained and/or replaced. During the visit, the team confirmed that the Technology Plan lays out desired actions, equipment acquisitions, et cetera. However, the self-study reflects that the college is unable to fund upgrades and replacements due to the district funding model, and the college budgeters only make funds available for upgrades from unexpended funds left at the end of the funding year. The district Central Services provides the list of items for scheduled maintenance and provides the funding for these projects. The college relies on the Educational Master Plan (EMP) as the driving plan of equipment purchase, repair, and maintenance needs. In fact, again the team found the EMP to be a listing of equipment needs and it appears to be an unreliable source to determine

campus needs. The team found no operationalized commitment to regular replacement of outdated equipment.

The recommendation was not met.

Recommendation 3.A (Standard Six)

The College expands its technology enhanced presentation capability in classrooms (Standards 4.D.5., 6.2.).

The mid-term response of the college indicates that there were two “smart” classrooms implemented, as well as a new learning resource center with state-of-the-art multi-media equipment. During the visit, the team verified that the institution has a well-equipped classroom designed for videoconferencing for distance education, as well as WebCT as its online education software platform. The new multimedia Instructional Technology Center provides up-to-date resources and support for faculty and staff as well as students.

The recommendation was met.

Recommendation 4.A (Standard Seven)

The College devotes particular attention to and develops a plan for recruiting and hiring diverse staff and faculty (Standard 7.D.2.).

The mid-term response of the college states that, in conjunction with the YCCD, recruiting efforts will be expanded to deepen the pool of diversified applicants. During the visit, the team found that efforts to diversify the staff continue to be addressed with recruitment efforts such as national advertisements and web-based postings. There does not appear to be any effort beyond this standard approach. College equity and diversity concerns have been and continue to be addressed through staff development activities that develop an appreciation of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

The recommendation was not met.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **Authority:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College receives State approval of its programs/services and is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges. The college is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to offer undergraduate education.
2. **Mission:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College mission statement is clearly defined and consistent with the mission of the California Community Colleges. The most recent version of the mission was last approved in April 2005. The mission is publicized in the college catalog and class schedule. The mission is displayed on many of the walls throughout the campus.
3. **Governing Board:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College has a functioning Governing Board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution. The Governing Board consists of seven members, elected from five trustee areas comprising the district. The Governing Board is an independent policy-making body and has and adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that a board member does not have a financial interest in actions taken by the board.
4. **Chief Executive Officer:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose primary responsibility is to the institution.
5. **Administrative Capacity:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College has an administrative staff that supports the necessary services for an institution of its size, mission, and purpose.
6. **Operating Status:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College is operating with students actively pursuing its degree programs.
7. **Degree:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College offers Associate in Arts degree in six areas, Associate in Science in eighteen areas. These degrees are in addition to the transfer options.
8. **Educational Programs:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College's principle degrees are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education fields of study and are sufficient in content and length.
9. **Academic Credit:** The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree granting institutions of higher education.

10. Student Learning and Achievement: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College defines and publishes the programs of study leading to an associate degree, certificate, and program of study leading to transfer. Program expected learning and achievement outcomes, however, have yet to be developed or published.
11. General Education: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College defines and publishes specific requirements for incorporating into its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry.
12. Academic Freedom: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College faculty and students are free to examine and test knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general.
13. Faculty: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College employs full-time faculty that is sufficient in size and experience to support the college's educational programs. Faculty members are qualified to conduct the institution's programs and meet State mandated minimum requirements.
14. Student Services: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College provides appropriate student services and develops programs consistent with supporting student learning and development within the context of a California community college, the mission of the college, and the nature of the student population.
15. Admissions: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College's admissions policies are consistent with its mission.
16. Information and Learning Resources: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College provides specific, long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs regardless of where they are or in what format.
17. Financial Resources: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services to improve institutional effectiveness and to assure financial stability.
18. Financial Accountability: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College's financial management is evaluated through an annual audit conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm.
19. Instructional Planning and Evaluation: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College has a documented Educational Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan and Technology Master Plan. Planning processes and outcomes, however, need to be integrated, consistent, and evaluated.

20. Public Information: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College publishes in its catalog, class schedule, and other publications information concerning the college's mission, objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations affecting students, degrees requirements, et cetera.
21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission: The visiting team confirmed that Columbia College adheres to the eligibility requirements, standards, and policies and complies with the Accreditation Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies.

Evaluation by Standard of the College Using ACCJC Standards and Making Team Recommendations

Standard I

Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

General Observations

The self-study provides a description of the college's activities related its vision and mission statements. The Columbia College mission statement has been reviewed frequently resulting in several revisions since the last self-study.

In the area of improving institutional effectiveness, the college has been undergoing a great deal of change brought on by an administrative reorganization and a perceived lack of funding for needed positions. This has led to problems in effectively communicating planning information to all groups at the college. The college has stated that it will be revising its Program Review and planning process to better integrate program evaluation and planning. While there appears to be broad-based support for these initiatives, it is too early in the process to determine if the changes have improved the institution's effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence

Standard IA: Institutional Mission

The college mission statement indicates a commitment to student learning. The mission addresses a wide array of transfer, vocational, cultural, and community education. The college also offers area-specific programs such as Forestry and Natural Resources. In fact, the Wildlife/Urban Interface Fire Management Program is the only one of its kind in the state. The heart of the mission "is a desire to develop a zest for lifelong learning throughout the community." The college is capitalizing on this opportunity by beginning to offer some community education courses to meet the area needs of a growing retirement population.

The latest mission statement was adopted by the College Council in March 2005 and approved by the Yosemite Community College District Board of Trustees in April 2005. The college mission statement is reviewed every two years by the College Council. A subcommittee of the College Council comprised of students, faculty, and staff is formed to evaluate the mission statement to determine if revisions are warranted. This evaluation process is entirely under the direction of the subcommittee. Once the evaluation is complete, the revised statement is returned to the College Council and President for review before submission to the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees.

The mission statement was revised in 1999, 2002, and 2005. The most recent revision incorporates the concept of transformational learning in the statement. The mission is widely

distributed to students and the community in the college catalog, on the college website, in various documents such as the student handbook, and displayed throughout the campus.

In linking the mission to decision-making and planning, the college has worked to address this relationship. While the process is not complete, the college has stated it intends to develop a connection between the mission and the Educational Master Planning process. The campus makes decisions based on the college mission and the College Council attempts to use the mission statement as the primary basis for action. However, the college's progress cannot be effectively evaluated since the planning process remains incomplete.

Standard IB: Institutional Effectiveness

Columbia College takes pride in its sense of community. Dialogue about student learning and institutional processes is both formal and informal. Formal dialogue includes forums such as the College Council, Academic Senate, Curriculum Committee, Student Learning Outcomes Committee, Transformational Learning Task Force, Instructional Technology Committee, Brown Bag Lunches, and Flex days. Dialogue also takes place in various planned and unplanned encounters.

Institutional goals are included with the college mission statement located in the college catalog. These goals are shaped by the College Council's Special Priorities, state, and district budget decisions, as well as the Program Review process. The goals influence the Educational Master Plan (EMP). Once student learning outcomes are approved, the plan is to integrate these into instructional goals and the student learning contained in the mission and the EMP. However, the college does not have a specific strategic plan in place to serve as the vehicle for implementing and determining that these goals are accomplished.

While making progress towards improving institutional effectiveness through planning, the college admits that it needs significant improvement with regard to Program Review. There has been a tremendous amount of changes with the Program Review process, and the process continues to be fragmented with areas such as vocational education making positive attempts, while the instructional, student services, and administrative services areas lag behind. The self-study states that Program Review will be revised by fall 2005; the college contends that a full cycle of Program Review for all areas will not be complete by fall 2006. The Vice President of Student Learning and the Chief Operations Officer are making a good faith effort to lead a participatory process to develop a strategic planning process and direct integration of the EMP, resource allocation, and Program Review. However, this process remains incomplete and difficult to evaluate in terms of effectiveness.

The district and college planning processes are under major revision. However, the district and the college have not worked collaboratively in the area of planning for the last few years. Planning at the college has the potential to be broad-based because anyone who wants to be involved in the planning process has the opportunity to participate. While participation may be strong, awareness of the relationship between the EMP and resource allocation is not. Only 61 percent of full-time staff strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with this linkage. Recently, a lack of funds is cited as inhibiting the college from making improvements in the

planning process. However, the college states that the planning process does result in improvements that do not require additional funding. The administrative reorganization since the last self-study is cited as an example.

The college readily admits that it does not do an effective job of using documented assessment results, nor does it do a good job of communicating matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies. The communication regarding research at the college and district level has not been evident due to changes at both the college and the district in the last few years. After budget cuts in 2002, the college did not fund a research position until Fall 2005 to conduct research and to use the results to make improvements. Two weeks before the accreditation site visit, a 50 percent faculty research and 50 percent articulation officer position was filled to primarily support SLOs. The college is in the early stages of the revised institutional planning process and developing SLOs. There is great enthusiasm at the college about the new researcher, but it is too soon to determine the impact on institutional effectiveness and whether information is being communicated about institutional quality to those who need to know.

The college is in the initial stages of designing a revised planning process to integrate the EMP, resource allocation, and Program Review. Currently, the entire process is incomplete and therefore difficult to ascertain whether the process is effective in accomplishing its goal.

The college also admits that “it is difficult, if not impossible to conduct the evaluation, planning and improvement desired to support ongoing improvements at the college.” The college feels the new strategic planning process and EMP web application will use measurable outcomes to evaluate program planning. This process is not finished and is therefore difficult to evaluate. Though research expertise at the college has been lacking, a 50 percent faculty person will focus on SLOs, general planning, and institutional effectiveness. Therefore, the college does not effectively improve instructional programs, student services, and other support services because they have been unable to develop and assess their evaluation mechanisms.

Conclusions

Columbia College meets the standard with regard to establishing programs and services aligned to meet the needs of its student population and the standard concerning governing board approval and institutional review. The college does not meet the standard that the mission is central to planning and decision making because the planning process remains incomplete. While the intent certainly exists, the actual linkage between planning, budget, and resource allocation has not been fully developed.

The college does not meet the standard related to institutional effectiveness. While the college is attempting to incorporate research, planning, and evaluation into assessing institutional quality, it is in the early stages of this process. Recommendations related to research and planning set forth by the previous team have not been fully addressed. The college indicated several items it will be implementing in the future related to planning, this is unfortunate when the need was cited in 2000 by the previous team. Work in the areas of

research and planning has been done, but after six years, it remains incomplete to non-existent. The college must fully complete the planning process with research and evaluation components to address previous recommendations.

Recommendations

2. The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas (I.A.4; I.B.2; I.B.5).

- Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible
- Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services
- Development of a strategic plan that will guide the college in integrating its planning processes that result in the college meeting its goals set forth and in line with its mission

4. The team recommends that the institution adopt a culture of evidence by developing and implementing, with timelines, responsibilities, and evaluations, a research process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis that assesses institutional effectiveness and documents the need for resources, technology, staffing, programs, and facilities which best serve the students needs (I.A.; I.B).

Standard II Student Learning Programs and Services

Standard II.A Instructional Programs

General Observations

The Columbia College instructional programs include college preparation, transfer, and vocational education. The college has degree programs with focused study in a particular major and a general education philosophy. The information necessary for students to be aware of transfer requirements is in the catalog and is available through Counseling and the Transfer Center. The catalogue and schedule of classes is clear in delineating the programs and course offerings.

There is no evidence that the institution has assessed the varied educational needs of its students. The college is unable to rely upon research and analysis to assess student needs since only recently has a .50 FTE Researcher been hired. The college has a few mechanisms designed to assure quality instructional programs including the Curriculum Committee and the advisory committees (who meet annually). However, the team saw little progress toward the identification of student learning outcomes (SLOs). A college-wide committee was created in 2003 to address SLOs (to date the committee has only developed a draft set of broad college-wide SLOs). The overall process is unclear as to how the college will meet the

accreditation standards in relation to SLOs. Program Review is an evolving process that was suspended for at least one year as a new software system, Datatel, was implemented.

The college has a board policy addressing academic freedom and expresses its expectations concerning student academic honesty in both the catalog and student handbook.

Findings and Evidence

As stated in their mission, Columbia College offers a comprehensive range of transfer, vocational, cultural, and community education opportunities. However, the team found that the College has not used research or analysis to identify student learning needs nor have they assessed progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes. The first reason is that there has not been a Columbia College on-site researcher for the past three years. A part-time college researcher was hired two weeks before the site visit. The second reason the college has been unable to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes is that no learning outcomes have been instigated. The Dean of Instructional Services (Arts and Sciences) reports that there have been no needs assessment conducted to determine student or community needs. The self-study described a process that had been used by Columbia College resulting in the formation of a Transformational Learning Task Force. As the self-study identifies, the purpose of this task force was to motivate, share, and coordinate transformational learning across the college curriculum. During the time of the site visit, it was noted that the Transformational Learning Task Force had been combined with the SLO Committee and together they are leading the institution's identification of student learning outcomes.

According to the college staff, Columbia College has been working on student learning outcomes (SLOs) for four years; however, the self-study indicates the college is in the beginning stages of identifying SLOs for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees. The Vice President indicated that up to six different committees or groups have been working independently on the process. He stated that at one time the Transformational Learning Task Force was working toward this effort as was the Self-study Theme Committee. The Transformational Learning Task Force and an SLO Committee (SLO&T), which were both created in 2003 and later joined into one committee, drafted a set of college-wide SLOs that were scheduled to be adopted by the college in the fall 2005. A discussion at an SLO&T meeting held during the visit demonstrated ambivalence about the next steps. Interviews of faculty confirmed a disjointed, disconnected attempt at delineating SLOs for the institution. Specifically, it was indicated that the identification of SLOs has been conducted individually with no evidence of departmental discussion on the subject. At a meeting held during the visit, both a unit of Student Services (Financial Aid) and Instruction (Child Development) presented at the meeting and it was evident that grass roots efforts were taking place at the college. In conclusion, SLO identification at the institution, program, and course level has been occurring; however, the efforts by a number of college constituencies are not consistent.

The self-study indicates that "the Curriculum Committee monitors the courses to ensure that they meet the students' learning needs. Student learning needs in vocational courses are determined using labor market information, VTEA Core Measures, advisory boards, and

employer feedback.” The Curriculum Committee is a pivotal body that oversees the quality of the college curriculum at the course and program levels, monitors program quality, and designs new programs. The Curriculum Committee meets every two weeks to evaluate and establish curriculum within the parameters of the Education Code and YCCD/Columbia College policy. Committee members described their discussions as a means of assuring breadth, depth, and rigor to the approved curriculum. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty in establishing quality education and improving instructional courses and programs. The Curriculum Committee has seven voting faculty members serving staggered terms, with one being appointed as chair of the committee. Nonvoting members include the Vice President for Student Learning, the Articulation Officer and a faculty intern. Additional resources/liaisons include a secretary, the Dean of Learning Support Services, the Dean of Vocational Education, the Instruction Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Director of Student Success/Matriculation and a student representative who has completed a minimum of 24 units.

The Curriculum Committee guides the development of course descriptions, course objectives, content, methods of instruction, methods of evaluating student progress, and the syllabus as submitted by the faculty author. In addition, they review new course proposals and modified course proposals. The self-study states that “the compatibility of delivery systems and modes of instruction with curriculum objectives is assessed by the instructor with the approval of the Curriculum Committee.” The team was unable to confirm this during the visit. It was noted that the review process occurs on a five-year schedule.

The use of appropriate modes of instructional delivery is varied at the college and included in the criteria used in faculty evaluation. There is face-to-face instruction, hybrid, and completely online instruction, as well as synchronous video conferencing. Courses intended for distance delivery undergo the same curriculum review process as other courses with an additional Technology Mediated Instruction form submitted to Curriculum Committee. Web-based delivery is via the WebCT course management system. Instruction observed during the visit was active and engaging. Some courses offer a combination of delivery styles. Students report that they have been taught with a variety of instructional modes and speak enthusiastically about their participation in lively classroom discussions.

The self-study states that the vocational programs have functioning advisory committees comprised of employers, industry representatives, and alumni. The minutes reflect the attendance of program faculty and advisory committees as well. The documents reveal discussions on curriculum content, skill competencies needed for employment, and student learning outcomes. External agency program approval has also been awarded to the Child Care Center, Auto Technology Program, and the Culinary Arts Program. However, there is no evidence that assessment of student progress toward achieving the outcomes has been conducted by the college, nor are any departmental course and/or program examinations employed at the college. There is, however, an external measure of competency of program completers in some programs. The self-study reports that several occupational and vocational programs prepare students to pass licensing examinations mandated by an accrediting professional association or by a state or federal agency. These include the Auto Technology program that prepare students for the National Automotive Technicians Education

Foundation (NATEF) certifications; the welding students are prepared for American Welding Society (AWS) certifications; the culinary students are certified by the American Culinary Federation; CISCO and Microsoft certifications are available for Computer Science students; and the Fire Technology curriculum prepares students to take the State Fire Marshal's certification test. Programs that do not have external testing are monitored by advisory committees who meet annually.

The team found no evidence of ongoing systematic review of programs. It appears that courses are reviewed every five years by the faculty. One of the administrators reported that Program Review had "been broken and separate" from college processes in the past. It was stated that it had been, as reported in the self-study, suspended during the past year while Datatel was activated as the computer-based system that would allow systematic data retrieval and contribute to the Program Review process. It was indicated that Program Review would, in the future, occur annually and would contribute to the Educational Master Plan. It was reported that the review would be based on program identification of projects being undertaken or to be done with measurable outcomes. The indication is that projects would need to be tied to the annual special projects of the college. It was stated the Program Review process would be completed for all programs beginning in fall 2006.

Credit is awarded to students at the conclusion of courses based on the instructor's individual grading process. Grading criteria are based on course objectives rather than SLOs. There are no norming exercises that have been initiated by the college to ensure consistent awarding of grades.

The college catalog explicitly states the courses that are required for degree and certificate completion. These degrees and certificates are awarded based on program/certificate design approved by the Curriculum Committee rather than on program SLOs. A review of the catalog provides evidence that all degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core. The programs reflect from 18-45 units of required coursework in the major field of study.

Transfer requirements are found in the 2005-06 catalog for both the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). The adequacy of these courses has been determined by the CSU and UC systems. The quality of any course outside of the General Education Requirements involved in transfer is assessed by the faculty of the receiving institution as a part of the articulation process. When a student plans to transfer to other universities, transfer information is available in Counseling and the Transfer Center. Among students surveyed in 2004, 86 percent strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they were knowledgeable about the requirements for achieving their educational goal. This was confirmed during interviews with students on campus. The Dean of Instructional Services (Arts and Sciences) expressed concern over the large number of students (1800) who have cited transfer as their goal, while the actual number of students who transfer is low and has been decreasing in the last few years. No research has been conducted to identify the reason for this phenomenon.

The Yosemite Community College Board of Trustees (BP 6025) adopted a general education philosophy that is “designed to introduce students to the variety of means through which people comprehend the modern world.” General education course completion would enable students to analyze, evaluate, and appreciate the natural, cultural, and social environments in which they live. The General Education breadth requirements were found in the 2005-06 college catalog. The courses include communication and critical thinking, the physical universe its life forms and mathematical concepts; arts, literature, philosophy, and foreign language; social, political and economic institutions and behavior; and lifelong understanding and self-development. There is not a specific requirement for information competency or computer literacy in the Columbia College General Education Breadth requirements. The specific Columbia College general education requirements have been identified by the Curriculum Committee. As courses are presented to the committee, faculty may request the committee to consider the course as meeting a general education requirement. The Curriculum Committee Chair indicates that when a motion is made to approve a course for meeting a general education requirement, it is forwarded to California State University (CSU) first for such approval and, when CSU approves the Columbia College course for their general education pattern, it automatically is inserted into the general education option for the college.

The Paramedic program is one instance of program elimination since the last accreditation visit. Existing students were allowed to finish their program and new students were redirected to other institutions where the program would be available. Interviews during the site visit rendered differing opinions as to whether there was a process or procedure to follow when those tough discussions of program closure may need to occur. There were different views as one administrator indicated that the Yosemite Faculty Association had drafted such a plan while another was unaware of such a document or plan. In a document reviewed entitled Columbia College Program/Services Reduction Process it was written that when “needs change, the content and organization of educational programs and services must undergo annual review for appropriateness and efficiency.” Quantitative and qualitative criteria are listed and the process is specified.

In reference to assuring academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, Board Policy 6030 states that while faculty have the right to present ideas and conclusions, which they believe to be in accord with available evidence, they also have the responsibility to acknowledge the existence of different opinions and to respect the right of others to hold those views. In the 2004 Student Survey 81 percent of the responding students strongly agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement, “Instructors distinguish between their personal opinions and professionally accepted views in the field.”

Catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic format, are reviewed and revised annually. Expectations concerning student academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty are explained in the catalog and in the 2005-06 Student Handbook.

Conclusions

The team was able to validate that Columbia College offers high quality instructional programs leading to degrees, certificates, employment or transfer to other higher education institutions. While Advisory Committees contribute to the existing programs there is no evidence that “emerging programs” of need are sought nor recognized. There is disjointed effort at identifying SLOs despite the self-study’s reported effort spanning four years toward this end. The team verified that instructional programs are not systematically assessed, there has not been a consistent process for Program Review to be conducted, and such review is not clearly linked to institutional planning and resource allocations.

Recommendations

2. The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas:

- Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible
- Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services (II.A.2).

5. The team recommends that the college adopt an aggressive approach with specific timelines and responsibilities for developing student learning outcomes including documentation and assessments at the course, the program, and the institutional level and demonstrate that evidence is being used for institutional improvement (II.A.1, II.A.2).

Standard II.B Student Support Services

General Observations

The college and the district office appear to have undergone an upheaval in administrative personnel including the chancellor and several interim positions in a variety of key administrative areas at the district level. The college appears to be groping with the needed change at the institution, in the wake of staff downsizing and an apparent lack of leadership on several issues (which were the reasons given to the team as causing the delay in meeting the previous team recommendations), a decrease in college financial resources (the outcome of a Golden Handshake offered to employees), and a loss of an institutional historical perspective that occurred with key retirements. This instability is frequently referenced as having caused the delay in the college making progress on the recommendations for improvement.

The overall responses to the standard showed that many aspects were addressed but there was a lack of evidence to support statements. Some responses elicited concerns from the team

regarding the interpretation of the standard, particularly in matters of diversity, access, and record maintenance. The apparent lack of planning was a major concern for the team.

Findings and Evidence

For the most part, evidence/documentation in support of this section of the self-study was found to be lacking, incomplete, or missing, although statements were made in the self-study that the college student services have improved. There is a lack of evidence to support that there was improvement of services to students with the recent administrative reorganization. The 2004 Student Survey, as referenced in the college self-study report, was the only research data cited, and it does not assess the current organizational effects on services to students. Further, the team could not locate the summary results and analysis of the Student Survey, and only a blank sample of the survey instrument was provided to the team on request of the survey results. Interviews with a variety of student support services personnel presented a picture of an attempt to recover and cope with the fragmentation of traditional student services into two areas under a new Vice President of Student Learning and the Chief Operations Officer. Communications between and among traditional student services is an effort, both informally and formally, as they are physically and organizationally disconnected. It was not possible to discern in this visit the depth or frequency of these communications. However, several of those in leadership positions stated that they are planning for better partnering.

Student Services appears to be in a holding pattern anticipating that new leadership will activate the plans they desire for improvement. The college produces a clear and well organized Schedule of Classes, Student Handbook, and Catalog. Printed and on-line materials are clear and user-friendly and the publications accurately reflect the institution.

The team found many gaps in the self-study as it was not clear how the institution interprets the standard related to access to support services. The lack of extension of library services to the Calaveras off-site center is redundantly mentioned as if it were the only issue of access. In interviews with personnel and new leadership, the question of access appears now to be recognized more broadly to include physical access and services access, with planning in the future to address the off-campus concerns of service delivery. This singularity of focus was noted with regard to diversity as Student Activities was the only focus on diversity in the college response to Standard II.B.3.d.

In interviews with relevant staff, it was discovered that very few Student Services Program Reviews have been completed and it is not anticipated that the process will be completed until fall 2006. Although student learning outcomes (SLOs) in Student Services is mentioned in discussions referencing a Program Review conducted in 2003-04, the team found that the unit responded with future tense in response to the development of student learning outcomes in Student Services as part of several Program Reviews to be conducted in 2005.

Datatel implementation issues are cited as problematic in reaching some of the Student Services goals, such as follow up with students on an early alert program and conducting Student Services Program Review.

Conclusions

It is not clear if this standard is fully met as the information the team was able to observe and read was not of sufficient magnitude to validate an appropriate status. Further investigation at the institution to clarify the notions and progress in areas of access, diversity, and student learning outcomes is needed in order to meet this standard. The institution cites and the team found that the reason given was a perception of a lack of the necessary resources for research, access, support, and tools for advancing pursuit of Program Review, SLOs, and overall improvement.

The institution is to be commended for its clear and informative Schedule of Classes, Catalog, and Student Handbook, and its desire to improve student services and the articulation of those areas. The Student Survey conducted in 2004 provides evidence upon which to build improvement and validate successes.

Recommendations

4. The team recommends that the institution adopt a culture of evidence by developing and implementing, with timelines, responsibilities, and evaluations, a research process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis that assesses institutional effectiveness and documents the need for resources, technology, staffing, programs, and facilities which best serve the students needs (II.B.1, 3, 4).

Standard II.C Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations

This standard is problematic because the self-study only addresses library services and collections. The self-study made no mention of any of the tutoring services, learning centers, computer labs, or technology training available on campus. In visiting the campus website and physically touring the campus, it became apparent that these services exist at the college. Tutoring services are available through the Academic Achievement Center, disabled students are served through the DSPS High Tech Center, there is a Math Resource Center available, and the library has become a true learning hub since moving into its new facility in Tamarack Hall.

In addition to providing access to print and electronic resource materials in a comfortable and inviting setting, the library provides students with access to computer stations that contain Internet access and numerous software programs. In observing the library facility at various times during the day, it was apparent to the visiting team that the library is a vital, well-used support service on the campus.

Findings and Evidence

With regard to the library, the institution meets accreditation standards for this section overall. However, the self-study did not highlight any of the other learning support services on campus. In addition, much of the evidence that is offered in support of this standard consists of the student surveys and staff surveys that were prepared for accreditation. The visiting team did investigate other learning support services available on campus and the degree to which they are being utilized.

Faculty appear to be actively involved in the selection of materials for the library. The self-study states that the librarian receives an average of 25 suggestions per week from faculty for materials for the collection. These suggestions are actively solicited and the librarian provides faculty with review materials to aid in the selection of library materials. During the site visit, the librarian verified the number of suggestions received per week and showed several examples of recent suggestions he had received, which come in a variety of formats, such as emails, pages clipped out of publishers catalogs, and items marked on the review form circulated by the library. Most of the suggestions received from faculty are purchased and added to the library collection. Relocation into the new library facility in the Tamarack building has significantly increased the physical space and equipment available to students. According to the faculty librarian, the volume of students making use of the facility has more than doubled since moving into the new facility.

A large number of students (1,234 in 2003-04 as cited in the self-study) are reached through class-oriented library presentations. These sessions are planned in collaboration with the instructor and focus primarily on the assignment for the class, which helps to ensure the relevance of the information being presented to the students. The librarian is proactive in scheduling classes into the library for assistance. If students approach the reference desk with difficult class assignments, the librarian will determine who the instructor is and contact him/her to suggest that the class meet in the library for an instruction session tailored to that assignment. A one-unit Library and Information Resources course is offered each semester, although no statistics or support materials about this course were offered as evidence in the self-study. During the site visit, it was determined to be a short-term class that is offered in the middle of the semester, as confirmed by a conversation with the instructor for this course.

A significant number of students are supported via the Academic Achievement Center, which coordinates tutoring on campus. According to information obtained during the site visit, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students making use of these services since moving into their new location in the Manzanita building. Students are required to log in upon entering the center for tutoring or if they want to use the computers available in the center. During the fall of 2004, 2947 hours were logged in by 293 students who used the center. In the spring of 2005, 3475 hours were logged in by 300 students. Tutoring appears to be effectively utilized through the Academic Achievement Center. In the fall of 2004, there were 244 total tutoring appointments during the semester. That number increased in the spring to 567 appointments. Appointments are scheduled for one-half hour per session. Tutoring is available in the core subjects, such as English and mathematics, but availability for specialty subjects varies from semester to semester depending on the tutors available.

The Academic Achievement Center is currently open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Requests for tutoring appointments and information on students using the center were used to determine that Friday hours were not cost effective to maintain due to the extremely low number of students in the facility at that time and hours were adjusted accordingly.

Disabled students are capably served in the DSPS High Tech Center. At the beginning of fall 2005, 75 disabled students attended an orientation to become familiar with what DSPS services there are available on campus. The High Tech Center provides students with access to 8 computers, all of which were upgraded in the summer of 2005, with programs such as JAWS, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil 3000, and ZoomText, among others. DSPS staff is available to work with students in learning how to use the programs and technology that will be most beneficial, based on the student's disability. Students also have access to forms and information about services available through the DSPS website, which is updated frequently to provide current information to students. The DSPS High Tech Center is officially open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. although students have some access outside of those hours when staff is available.

The library and learning support services appear to be open sufficient hours for the needs of the campus and student population. While only one library staff member is on duty during evening hours, the faculty librarian does come in to do any necessary instruction sessions during that time period. It was apparent during the visit that the library and learning support services are used consistently by students throughout the day. Several students were observed in the library in the evening hours during the visit, making use of the different resources available to them in the facility. The library makes numerous research materials available to the campus community from off-campus via the library website, including online databases, email reference service, internet resources, et cetera. The use of passwords for proprietary subscription databases, typically with license agreements and fees based on FTES, was discussed with the faculty librarian. He clarified that the vendors in question are all aware of the fact that the passwords are available in this manner. One database vendor was unwilling to accept that and that database is now available on-campus only. The YCCD technology staff are working on implementing the EZProxy system for authenticating students who use remote access. Once that has been established, remote access to all databases should be possible for students.

The self-study states that maintenance of the new library building is inadequate; however, there was no evidence presented in support of this claim. The facility appears to be clean and well kept. There is a visible presence of security staff on campus. Currently, security assists in closing the library Monday through Thursday as there is only one library staff member on duty each evening. Whenever possible, the learning support services hire student workers to assist in the evening, although it appears that there is no funding provided to the learning support services specifically for student workers. The visiting team did not receive any reports of maintenance or security issues pertaining to the Academic Achievement Center or the DSPS High Tech Center.

The library is a member of the 49-99 Cooperative Library System/Central Association of Libraries, which also includes public, academic, and some special libraries. This appears to be the means by which the library provides students with interlibrary loan (ILL) services. These services have also increased dramatically since moving into the new facility. During the 2001-2002 academic year, the library processed 182 ILL requests. That jumped to 560 during the 2002-2003 academic year and dropped to 446 during 2003-2004. The library is also a member in the Higher Education Consortium of Central California (HECCC). This service gives Columbia College students borrowing privileges at other consortium libraries; however, most of these facilities are located quite a distance from the college and the librarian did not feel that this service is heavily utilized by students. The self-study states that these services are evaluated annually where measures exist or reviewed by library staff, but the relevant measures or criteria for review are not given or listed as evidence.

Historically, there has been no evaluation of library and learning support services other than student and staff surveys conducted in conjunction with an accreditation self-study. Neither the library nor learning support services has participated in the Program Review process in the past. When questioned about this issue, the faculty stated that in the past, Program Review was tied directly to data reports from the district on enrollment. As the library has no recorded enrollment, they were not able to participate in the process. The self-study states that the library and learning support services will take part in Program Review beginning in the 2005-06 academic year and use that process to begin to address how the library's contributions to SLOs college wide will be measured. The faculty librarian appears to be eager to participate in this process. There was no mention of the evaluation process for the Academic Achievement Center or the DSPS High Tech Center.

In addition to serving students at the main campus, the library appears to be offering sufficient support to off-site locations, such as the Calaveras Center. While there is no formal means of delivery of library materials to the center, students may request materials from the campus library and these are either mailed to them or delivered by faculty to students at the center. Some reserve materials are also accessible to students at the Calaveras Center. The librarian is available, on request, to present to classes at the off-site locations, thereby ensuring that the off-site students have the same access to instruction as students on the main campus. The fact that library services are expanding and growing, with more students availing themselves of the resources, the library administrator's follow through with the staffing study and resultant staffing plan should prove helpful.

Conclusions

The college appears to be doing well in terms of supporting student learning programs and services. In reviewing the services and the materials available from those services, the campus appears to be meeting the needs of its students regarding learning support services. The planning agenda for this standard needs to be appropriately targeted, particularly concerning the library and learning support services contribution to SLOs college-wide and staffing issues.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas (II.C):

- Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible
- Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services
- Development of a strategic plan that will guide the college in integrating its planning processes that result in the college meeting its goals set forth and in line with its mission

The team recommends that the institution adopt a culture of evidence by developing and implementing, with timelines, responsibilities, and evaluations, a research process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis that assesses institutional effectiveness and documents the need for resources, technology, staffing, programs, and facilities which best serve the students needs (II.C).

The team recommends that the college adopt an aggressive approach with specific timelines and responsibilities for developing student learning outcomes including documentation and assessments at the course, the program, and the institutional level and demonstrate that evidence is being used for institutional improvement. All employees of the college must assume responsibility to improve student learning outcomes (II.C).

Standard III Resources

Standard III. A Human Resources

General Observations

While the self-study addressed all the major categories in this standard, the separation of the description section from the evaluation and planning section made it more difficult to follow the issues through the document.

In general, it appears the college started out on the path of planning and development then lost its footing as many key personnel resigned or retired, a new district database was purchased, and the reorganization distracted the college from its planning agenda. Unfortunately, the complaints regarding lack of funds are difficult to substantiate when there is no data or analysis to show what the goals are and how the college will achieve its plans.

Some factions of the college seem to understand the concept of student learning outcomes and this grass roots effort will need to ensure that each employee contributes to this effort.

The current culture of practice demonstrates the focus on continuous improvement is in its infancy and will only continue with the commitment from a growing number of staff and faculty. It appears the college is pursuing this direction.

Findings and Evidence

The college seemed to be making progress on key issues in the human resources area at the time of their mid-term report. However, recent changes in the college and district leadership seems to have interrupted the progress and a major reorganization of personnel to address these issues is underway.

Through college and district hiring methods, the college meets the necessary hiring standards with regard to minimum qualifications and good hiring practices. Efforts to diversify the staff continues to be addressed with recruitment efforts such as national advertisements and web-based postings. There does not appear to be any effort beyond this standard approach. There is no evidence that hiring prioritization is based on a comprehensive staffing plan since there is no staffing plan in existence. Classified positions are filled by the district for the college location. The concerns regarding hiring classified staff reflect the need for unambiguous communication between the district and the college. The new YCCD Vice Chancellor for Human Resources has made the commitment to visit the college twice a month to answer questions and address concerns regarding district human resource issues.

The college carries out its staff evaluation processes as described in its board and district policies and collective bargaining agreements. The academic senate is developing definitions to guide faculty in this process with regard to the faculty performance standards. The college has indicated that while the faculty evaluation process seems to work well, supervisors need training on how to conduct evaluations before the goal of effectively evaluating staff can be met.

While the college had considered incorporating student learning outcomes into its evaluation processes, this concept has been abandoned at this time. The role of the collective bargaining process has led the college to realize that this might not be feasible. A different method to assure that all faculty and staff address the issue of student learning outcomes will need to be developed.

A code of ethics for all employees exists in the handbooks for faculty, staff, and managers. The Board has also adopted a Code of Ethics. While the statement on the Role of Professionalism is referred to as the document that demonstrates the college has met this requirement, this statement is not an ethics statement. However, the reference to ethics as described above is sufficient to meet this standard.

With regard to faculty hiring, the college must meet its full-time faculty obligation as part of the district's obligation. The college determines the specific positions it will fill among the faculty and the staff. Annual faculty hiring requests are submitted via a defined process and the prioritization of this request list, emanating from a review committee comprised of the

president, vice president, area deans and academic senate president, is then shared with the faculty. The district selection process and timelines are then used to complete the process.

Budget constraints were used to explain the absence of a staffing plan. However, the impact of no staffing plan further impedes the college's ability to determine its real needs and to address staffing concerns. Recent efforts to assess work load and organize the support staff in a manner that better meets the newly configured administrative structure should be continued. Seeking ways to inform the staff of the college about timelines and processes for classified selection seem to be missing. As a result, it does not appear this meets the standard and a comprehensive staffing plan is needed to effectively address this issue.

The district provides the college with its overall personnel and employment policies and procedures. Board rules, procedures, and labor agreements appear to clearly address working conditions and related areas. Documents are available on the website as well as in hard copy. The college follows the district's procedure with regard to employee access to personnel files. This indicates that this part of the standard has been met.

College equity and diversity concerns have been and continue to be addressed through staff development activities that appreciated diverse cultures and backgrounds. The lack of a staffing plan and research on student trends, which should be combined to create a comprehensive strategic plan, would be a source of more information to assist the college in expanding its efforts in this area. District reports show progress with regard to equity, and diversity tends to fluctuate as a result of recent retirement and hiring decisions.

The college appears to be a collegial work environment where faculty, staff, and students are treated with respect and integrity. However, the college has no quantitative data to verify that this perception is the reality. The statement of themes for the year shows the intent of the college leadership to strive for an atmosphere of integrity.

The newly hired Vice President of Student Learning has been assigned the role of coordinating staff development. Preliminary planning efforts show the college is attuned to the importance of continued staff development. Workshop flyers evidence the college's efforts to focus staff development opportunities to meet the professional growth obligations in student learning outcomes. While the impression given to the team is that programs are effective, no formal evaluations exist and evaluation of these activities would be helpful to future efforts. In spite of this, this standard has been met.

The college self-study evaluation states that Program Review leads to recommendations for more staff but does not address "excess" staff. If this is the case, then the Program Review process should be expanded to encompass a full review of program viability. The finger is pointed at the administration to do the innovative planning, which seems to miss the point of the review process. The college needs to add a planning agenda item to address this issue.

Conclusions

The college lacks the understanding with regard to planning and connecting the mission and

goals of the college to its staffing needs. The district is blamed for controlling the college's destiny, yet college requests are not based on data and analysis, and sound planning to increase the likelihood that requests for additional funds will be genuinely considered. The college discusses a lack of funds on one hand, yet the college controls the hiring decisions. The district's classified service poses difficulties for a small college like Columbia. Often the college needs a position that can cover a multitude of tasks but the district's classified structure does not provide for such broad generic positions. The district's human resources operations function at a distance which further complicates the desire of all parties to have a classified service that meets the college's work needs.

The following are suggestions to help the college improve human resources:

- Develop a staffing plan so that requests can be appropriately evaluated and prioritized. Use Program Review and other methods to assure viable planning.
- Expand the efforts to diversify the staff with recruitment activities that go beyond the current advertisement and web-based approach. Assure that, as indicated by the college, supervisors receive training on how to conduct evaluations, with a methodology to include student learning outcomes.
- Develop a means to address the measures of leadership integrity without reliance on anecdotal information.
- Plan and evaluate staff development activities that respond to institutional mission and planning.

Recommendations

The team has no recommendations.

Standard III.B Physical Resources

General Observations

The structure of the self-study report on physical resources was confusing. The self-evaluation appears to indicate that the college meets the standard; however, the evaluation of the description found that there are problems with meeting this standard. The physical resource agenda does not contain any planning, rather a description of how planning is performed at the college and requests made of the Yosemite Community College District Office with regard to the physical resources of the college.

Findings and Evidence

The college is mindful of the importance of maintaining a safe and clean campus environment. The campus Facilities Committee and the campus Safety Committee are committed to solving issues related to ensuring that the educational programs and services

can be delivered in a clean, safe facility, as evidenced in the minutes of both committees and discussions with campus personnel. Classrooms are equipped with telephones and flashlights and there is information on emergency procedures located in offices and classrooms throughout the campus. A survey of the students indicates a good deal of satisfaction with the campus facility with over 80 percent reporting agreement that the campus is clean and safe. The number one complaint of the students is parking.

The self-study indicated that the college is dissatisfied with the reporting structure of the facilities staff of the college as the direct report is to the YCCD Director of Facilities and Operations. The president of the college strongly believes that a change in reporting structure would improve the efficiency of the facilities staff; however, in discussions with the YCCD Director of Facilities and Operations, there is equally strong opposition to any change in reporting structure. The facilities staff indicated that they would like the reporting structure to remain the same, as they feel the campus personnel lack the experience and knowledge in the operations of the facilities, as well as the fact that the facilities staff believe there is a lack of communication from the Columbia College administration. The college president believes this is creating a great deal of strain on college operations due to delays that occur because of this disjointed operation. However, there was no evidence that maintenance is delayed due to this current process, but it is a challenge for college administration to have staff that are not supervised directly by the campus. The college president indicated that there are not enough resources to meet staffing needs, but there is no evidence of a staffing plan to confirm this concern.

The self-study reflects that the college is unable to fund upgrades and replacements due to the district funding model. The college indicates the only funds available for upgrades are those left at the end of the funding year. The district Central Services provides the list of items for scheduled maintenance and provides the funding for these projects. The college relies on the Educational Master Plan (EMP) as the driving plan of equipment purchase, repair, and maintenance needs. In fact, the team found the EMP to be a listing of equipment needs and it appears to be an unreliable resource to determine campus needs.

The college formed a Facilities Planning Committee in October 2002. The Facilities Planning Committee meets once a month. The YCCD Director of Facilities and Operations is a member of this committee, attends the meetings of the committee, and assists in the preparation of the agenda for the meetings, even though there is an obvious level of non-cooperation between the president and the Director of Facilities and Operations. The Facilities Master Plan (FMP) was developed in spring 2003, with a latest revision of the plan in January 2004. The FMP is the college's version of a long-range plan and delineates a 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year grid. It is curious that the YCCD Director of Facilities and Operations indicated that she was not involved in the development of the Columbia College FMP.

There is no evidence that planning is integrated at the college. The planning agenda contained in the self-study is a description of how planning occurs at the college rather than a concrete plan of action. Referenced in the planning agenda is that the Fiscal Review Task Force is charged with completing regarding physical resources; however, there is no

evidence that this task force is doing anything about planning, implementing, or evaluating college physical resources.

Conclusions

The college grounds are attractive, clean, safe, and well maintained. The college has challenges regarding funding and direct supervision. The college has little to no influence on the district with regard to Central Services such as Facilities.

The problem the college administration conveys regarding funding shortfalls for facilities and equipment upgrades and purchases could be more a product of not planning than from the district allocation model as stated in the self-study. The lack of updates of planning documents is evidence that there is no evaluation occurring and therefore no formal planning for improvement. The Fiscal Review Task Force does not seem to be the appropriate body to perform the planning and implementation of physical facilities. The planning documents of the college are elementary at best. There are no objectives and therefore no measurable outcomes with which to evaluate to improve. A great deal of assistance is needed in order for the college to bring their planning up to the level required to meet the standard.

Recommendations

1. The team recommends that the college and district develop a concrete and systematic process to improve collaboration, communication, and cooperation. The process should include, but not be limited to, an examination of whether any current functions provided by the district office should be centralized or decentralized to better serve student needs. (III.B)

2. The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas (III.B)

- Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible
- Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services
- Development of a strategic plan that will guide the college in integrating its planning processes that result in the college meeting its goals set forth and in line with its mission

III.C Technology Resources

General Observations

The visiting team's general observation is that the self-study report shows that the institution recognizes its shortcomings in technology resources and is making an effort to meet the

standard. However, the self-study provides insufficient and possibly conflicting information, particularly with regard to the successes and/or failure of Datatel implementation.

Findings and Evidence

The team found that there are two recent major changes related to technology resources. First, the district has become a client of Datatel, which is a proprietary information management system serving higher education. All hopes appear hinge on Datatel for organizing campus data systems and maximizing their efficiency. Implementation began in 2003 and is to continue through late fall 2005, which means at this point it should be practically complete. However, the report hints at problems with end-user training in use of the system, and problems with the two campuses sharing one administrative system. Given all of this, the statement, “Nevertheless, the implementation processes have proceeded as planned,” seems disingenuous. The second major change in the area of technology resources is the creation of an Instructional Technology Center. This facility exists to provide technology resources and training to faculty, students, and staff for classroom use. On inspection, it was determined that this is primarily a multimedia facility. Although the facility is well equipped, it is staffed only about 20 hours per week.

To ensure that the college’s various types of technology needs are identified, the institution relies on the Technology Committee. The Technology Committee created a Technology Master Plan which is to be reviewed every other year. To evaluate the effectiveness of its technology in meeting the range of needs, the institution relies on staff surveys and the oversight of the Technology Committee. The Technology Committee plans appropriately, but goals for staffing and equipment replacement are not fulfilled. For example, the new Instructional Technology Center has limited hours available for training, and computers are not being replaced at the rate necessary for currency, even though it provides access to multimedia hardware and software for faculty, students, and staff. Students also receive training as part of class activity in student computer labs. The technology specialist is a 60 percent reassigned faculty member in computer science who provides training to faculty, staff, and students.

The institution uses the Technology Committee, the Technology Master Plan, and the judgment of staff in Technology Services to make decisions about technology services, facilities, hardware, and software. The institution has a well-equipped classroom designed for videoconferencing for distance education, and licenses WebCT as its online education software platform.

The institution has three full-time IT support staff to maintain technology infrastructure and equipment. Technology users do not consider this an adequate staffing level. However, a new classified technology manager position has been created and is expected to be filled soon.

There are many seriously obsolete faculty computers, some that are six years old. Cascading replacement of computers to maintain currency is not yet being accomplished; however, the need for it is addressed in the Technology Master Plan, and the Technology Committee has

recently made specific recommendations, including budget figures, to the College Council. There is no commitment in the college's budget to "total cost of ownership" of technology, with no operationalized commitment to regular replacement of outdated hardware.

The Technology Committee and Technology Services staff makes recommendations to the College Council and the president regarding use and distribution of technology resources. The provisions included a robust and secure technical infrastructure, which prompted an outside consultant, CampusWorks, Inc., to perform a security assessment in 2002. It appears action was taken to address the security vulnerabilities that were found in 2002 even though there is a lack of dedicated budget funds for technology replacement. The institution uses whatever ad hoc funding is available from year to year to purchase new hardware for student computer labs. The older machines are passed on to staff. Equipment selected for distance programs has focused on video broadcast and videoconferencing. To date, two courses have been offered, two are scheduled, and one is in development using videoconferencing technology. There is room for expanded utilization of this distance learning modality. The other distance learning modality in use, online instruction, has not required significant additional technology resources, other than training at the campus level; instead, the software platform in use is licensed at the district level and hosted on a district-maintained server.

The Technology Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and Educational Master Plan are intended to ensure that facilities decisions emanate from institutional needs and plans for improvement. Although the Technology Plan is generally well-conceived and executed, it would benefit the plan if timelines were included. More importantly, it is difficult to assess whether technology planning is integrated with institutional planning, because the Facilities and Educational plans are vague to the point of inadequacy and do not appear to be based on substantial evidence.

The same individuals responsible for evaluating program and service technology needs, the members of the Technology Committee, are the same individuals guiding technology decisions. As these individuals are the primary technology users and maintainers on the campus, they are in a position to evaluate needs. Thus, technology decisions are based on evaluation of needs. Whether these needs are being met effectively is another question. The institution prioritizes currency in student computer labs when making decisions about technology purchases. Other technology needs have a lower priority. However, the new multimedia Instructional Technology Center provides up-to-date resources and support for faculty and staff as well as students.

Conclusions

The institution recognizes that it lags in technology and is attempting to catch up. There is evidence of a recent commitment to providing needed resources, to wit, the funding of a technology manager position and the acquisition of multimedia and videoconferencing equipment via a federal grant. The institution is attempting to plan for technology needs. In particular, the Technology Committee has made progress in producing a Technology Master Plan; however, there is a need for more specificity in planning, particularly in the area of

timelines. The transition to Datatel has been disruptive and discouraging for many and has taken the focus away from instructional technology needs.

The team suggests that the college make a commitment to “total cost of ownership” of technology by including ongoing systematic hardware replacement costs as a regular budget item. The team also suggests that the Technology Master Plan be updated to include desired timelines for accomplishment of stated goals.

Recommendations

The team has no recommendations.

III.D Financial Resources

General Observations

The self-study report adequately describes the college and district budget process and the allocation of financial resources. The report is less clear on the extent to which the institution engages in effective financial planning.

The college recently reorganized and established a Chief Operating Officer (COO). The COO has primary responsibility for financial planning and management although the development of a budget and the allocation of resources are under the guidance of the college president and the College Council.

The college’s annual budget for 2005-06 is \$11,089,039 of which \$1,163,489 is for college operations. The balance of the college’s budget primarily supports salaries and benefits for permanent staff and adjunct faculty.

The college’s enrollment declined in 2004-05 and no growth funds have been allocated for 2005-06. The visiting team observed that many classes appear to have low enrollment which may contribute to the college’s recent decline in enrollment and its concerns with inadequate funding. The decline in enrollment has further strained the college’s budget and exacerbated its relationship and dialog with the district.

The district and college have recently implemented a new financial management system, Datatel, which has provided enhanced tools for financial management. Although the conversion to the new financial management system was not without problems, it appears to have now stabilized. Both college and district staff expended considerable time and effort in ensuring a successful conversion which resulted in the college deferring planning and evaluation activities during the conversion period.

The college is audited annually by an independent auditor. The results of these audits along with internal reviews are used to assess the effective use of resources. The district has an internal auditor who provides assessments of operations, with the most recent review being conducted on the bookstore.

Findings and Evidence

The college links financial planning to its mission and goals with the College Council serving as both the college budget and planning committee. According to the process outlined, resource needs are identified through Program Review which is analyzed by the deans and the College Council. These needs then form the Education Master Plan (EMP). The link between resource allocation and the EMP is not transparent to the college community. Furthermore, there is confusion as to whether Program Reviews are being conducted systematically. The college has stated it is developing a Strategic Planning Process that will more clearly demonstrate the link between planning and resource allocation.

As part of a multi-college district, the college believes its share of resources is insufficient given the needs of a small, rural institution. This perception flavors the self-study and preempts discussion of the planning efforts in which the college is engaged. The college's annual budget allocation is determined by the district's Central Services. There is widespread perception among college staff that the process used in determining the college's allocation does not reflect the needs of the college nor does it represent a fair share of available resources. The district does not have a district budget committee that oversees the allocation of resources nor is it apparent that the district seeks meaningful college input in determining allocations. Not surprisingly the district believes that it has been sensitive to the college's needs and that the college has received an appropriate level of budget resources as compared to its sister college, Modesto Junior College (MJC). The college, however, is convinced that the district assumes the cost of many of the services provided at MJC through the Central Services budget and that district comparisons are therefore misleading in that they are not measuring allocations for comparable services.

The college has formed a Fiscal Review Task Force to better define a baseline level of resources needed to adequately fulfill its mission as a comprehensive college. The college hopes to build a case supporting its need for additional resources and that the reports of the task force will result in a meaningful dialog among district and college stakeholders on the allocation of resources.

The self-study provides little evidence that the college considers long-range financial priorities in making short-range financial plans. However, there is evidence obtained through both documents and interviews that the college does consider long-range financial priorities. Examples provided are the college's reluctance to open new outreach centers given their concern with being able to support their operational costs over time and their reluctance to chase enrollment growth due to the level of financial support provided by the district for growth FTES. The college annually reserves approximately one percent of its budget as a contingency to cover unforeseen events. Additionally, as noted above the college has deferred implementing some new activities due to its concern over having sufficient resources to sustain the activity over time.

The college is to be commended for its development of a Budget Handbook. The handbook describes the college's budget development process which provides the opportunity for all

constituencies to participate. Both the handbook and the new Strategic Planning Process and Document should provide clearer linkages between planning and resource allocation. The college should continue its efforts to disseminate these documents and to engage the college in meaningful dialog on the connection between planning and resource allocation.

The visiting team found that the college has control mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate and effective use of its resources. Audit reports reflect no material weaknesses in internal controls. The college has been responsive to past recommendations of the external financial auditors to ensure appropriate separation of duties. The college has stated in its self-study report that evidence of the effective use of resources in supporting student learning programs and services is that 83 percent of its budget is allocated for these programs. However, the visiting team was unable to validate whether this evidence supports the college's assertion of effectively supporting student learning programs and services.

Information is disseminated throughout the college. Minutes of the College Council, which serves as the college's budget committee, are distributed to the entire college. The president holds an annual forum on the college budget during which any staff member may raise issues or questions. Additionally, the Chief Operating Officer provides budget management training for staff.

The district maintains an uncommitted reserve of five percent and the college maintains a reserve of approximately one percent, both of which are adequate. Sufficient cash flow is appropriately managed by the district through the use of Tax and Revenue Anticipation Notes as needed.

Management of external resources, including financial aid and categorical programs and grants, is both appropriate and effective. No audit exceptions have been reported in recent years. The bookstore and food service operations are effectively managed and support the college's mission. Bookstore and food service funds are included within the college and district external financial audit and no findings have been reported in recent years.

The college foundation operates as a separate 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. The foundation is organized in support of the college's mission. A review of past audits reveals no material findings.

The college's contractual agreements with external entities are administered by the district. Appropriate controls exist to ensure that contractual agreements are not entered into without appropriate district review and approval.

The district and college implemented a new financial management system, Datatel, in 2003. While the implementation of the new system presented a challenge to the college, it has improved access to financial information and has allowed for improved management of resources. A budget check function is part of the financial management system and it prevents purchase requisitions and orders from being executed if there are insufficient appropriated funds. The college reports that the new financial management system since its implementation in 2003 has undergone continuous review and revision as appropriate.

During the team's visit, the example provided in support of this review process was an issue encountered with the budget check function. The system does not compute and include sales tax when verifying that sufficient resources are available to support a purchase. This omission is in process of being corrected. Program Review has not been conducted for business services functions. Financial Aid and Health Services are undergoing Program Review in fall 2005. Although not yet part of a regular cycle of Program Review, the college intends for Program Review to be conducted on the remainder of the financial services areas in 2006-07.

The independent audit is the primary tool used by the college to assess its use of financial resources. There have been no material findings or weaknesses during the prior three fiscal years. Additionally, the college informally evaluates its use of resources and uses the findings from these reviews to improve its processes.

Conclusions

The dissatisfaction heard and observed by the visiting team with the district's process for resource allocation has impeded and may limit the college's ability to effectively plan. The level of dialog between the college and district over financial resource allocation has deteriorated over the last several years and the level of trust between the two has declined. There appears to be a lack of effective collaboration between the district and the college on resource allocation which has resulted in the widely held belief among college staff of unfair or disparate treatment.

The college would be served well through implementing a more formal and systematic review of its use of financial resources to provide an on-going cycle of evaluation and improvement.

Recommendations

3. The team recommends that the district and the college engage in a collaborative process involving all stakeholders to review and revise processes used for resource allocation to ensure that financial resources are allocated in a manner that is transparent and equitable and best serve the needs of students (III.D.1).

Standard IV Leadership and Governance

General Observations

With respect to basic decision-making roles and processes on the Columbia College campus, the college continues to demonstrate a commitment to collegial participatory practices. In addition, the policy oversight by the governing board and the formal governance structures appears sound. However, a significant concern is indication of what appears to be an increasingly tense relationship between Columbia College and the YCCD district office in Modesto that impacts leadership and governance. Apparently in part because of a perception by Columbia College that previous attempts to address concerns with the district office over

a period of years have been unsuccessful, the college chose to include in Section IV of the self-study some rather pointed assertions critical of the district with respect to allocation of resources and “the effectiveness of the relationship between Central Services and the colleges.” Representatives of the district expressed surprise to the findings in the self-study concerning the relationship between the college and the district. It is unfortunate that the college and the district were not able to develop a structure to collaborate and cooperate on the issues before completion of the self-study process.

Findings and Evidence

The district has undergone substantial changes in personnel at every level of the organization in the past couple of years, and retirements and other administrative changes have had a significant impact on the Columbia College campus as well. The Columbia College president has served for nine years, and has provided continuity of leadership for the college. With a new chancellor for the district and numerous new administrators both at the district level and on the Columbia College campus, decision-making roles and processes have been evolving over the past couple of years.

The self-study asserts a stark perceived contrast between the leadership at the campus level and at the district level. While indicating significant support on campus for the leadership of the president, based on survey data and on outcomes including effective budget management and a recent college administrative reorganization, Columbia College concludes that at the district level there is “a lack of clarity regarding the authority and responsibility among the college presidents, vice chancellors, and the chancellor on day to day matters.” Further, the Columbia College self-study asserts that the college is unable to assess “the effectiveness with which the district controls expenditures” because the college is not provided sufficient information concerning the budget. The senior administration of Columbia College, as well as several members of the faculty and staff, echoed these criticisms of the district in interviews during the site visit. Representatives of the district office expressed surprise bordering on shock about the depth of concerns expressed by Columbia College in the self-study about the district in Standard IV.

The college does acknowledge the adequacy of a governance structures in place at the district level. The district completed a comprehensive revision of its Board Policies in 2004 resulting in clear, concise policies. The district has not yet completed the development of administrative procedures to accompany the revised policies. The district chancellor is drafting a process for selection and evaluation of college presidents. The Columbia College president indicated he has only been evaluated about three times during his nine-year tenure, so a regular timetable for evaluations of the president has been lacking.

With respect to the relationship between Columbia College and the district office, the college indicates a fundamental distrust of the district office. The college has established a Fiscal Review Task Force to examine whether the resource allocation practices of the district are “providing adequate and fair resources and support to the college.” The Task Force does not include any representatives from the district office, but does include a member of the board who represents the Columbia College service area. The college also questions the centralized

district control of grounds, facilities and maintenance services that the college believes could be provided more efficiently “if the college president had some authority over these positions.”

Conclusions

It is not clear from a review of the self-study or the site visit which of the criticisms of the district office are a valid and appropriate analysis of legitimate problems and which might be an exercise in finger-pointing in lieu of taking proactive responsibility for activities on the Columbia College campus. What is clear is that the strained relationship between the college and the district is counterproductive for both the college and the district. Although the fundamental structures for leadership and governance are in place at Columbia College and at the district level, the corrosive effect of the current relationship between the college and district is a significant barrier to effective leadership and governance at Columbia College.

Recommendations

- 1.** The team recommends that the college and district develop a concrete and systematic process to improve collaboration, communication, and cooperation. The process should include, but not be limited to, an examination of whether any current functions provided by the district office should be centralized or decentralized to better serve student needs (IV.A; IV.B).