



**ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES**  
*Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

Barbara A. Beno, President  
Steven M. Kinsella, Chair

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February 5, 2016

Dr. Thomas Greene  
President  
American River College  
4700 College Oak Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95841

Dear President Greene:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 6-8, 2016, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) submitted by American River College, evidentiary materials also submitted, and the report prepared by the External Evaluation Team that visited on October 5-8, 2015. College leadership, including the governing board and the college president, certified the ISER which was submitted in application for reaffirmation of accreditation. The purpose of the Commission's review is to determine whether the College continues to meet Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies (hereafter called standards).

After considering all of the written materials noted above, the Commission acted to **reaffirm accreditation for eighteen months** and to require a Follow-Up Report in eighteen months.<sup>1</sup> Reaffirmation of accreditation for eighteen months indicates that the institution is in substantial compliance with the Commission's standards. American River College is required to submit its Follow-Up Report by **March 15, 2017**. The Report should demonstrate that the College has resolved all deficiencies and meets standards. The Commission finds the College out of compliance with the following: Eligibility Requirements 10 and 19 and Standards I.B.3-5 (College Recommendation 1); III.C.2 (District Recommendation 1); IV.B.1.j (District Recommendation 2); IV.B.2, and IV.B.3.e (District Recommendation 3).

**Need to Resolve Deficiencies:**

Accreditation Standards represent practices that lead to academic quality and institutional effectiveness and sustainability. Deficiencies in institutional policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes which lead to non-compliance with any standard will impact institutional quality and ultimately, the educational environment and experience of students. The evaluation team has provided recommendations that provide guidance for how the institutions may come into compliance with standards.

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**College Recommendation 1:** In order to meet the Standards, the evaluation team recommends that the College re-visit its institution-set standards within the participatory governance structure and ensure that accurate institutional data informs the establishment of those standards. The evaluation team further recommends that a College wide dialogue take place to ensure a clear understanding of the meaning, role, and importance of institution-set standards. Once institution-set standards are established, the evaluation team recommends that they be communicated to appropriate constituencies. Finally, the evaluation team recommends that institution-set standards be integrated into the College's ongoing cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation to ensure the improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Standards I.B.3. 5, ER 10 and 19)

**District Recommendation 1:** In order to meet the Standard, the Evaluation Team recommends that the LRCCD develop a comprehensive Technology Plan for the district. The plan should be integrated with the program review process and with the on-going and routine technology assessments done by District Information Technology. The Technology Plan should align with and directly support the District Strategic Plan and the colleges' strategic plans. (Standard III.C.2)

**District Recommendation 2:** In order to meet the Standard, the Evaluation Team recommends that the LRCCD develop a clearly-defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges. (Standard IV.B.1.j)

**District Recommendation 3:** In order to meet the Standards as well as to improve institutional effectiveness and align policy with practice, the Evaluation Team recommends that the District modify the existing Board Policy 4111 to more clearly define that the chancellor delegates full responsibility, authority, and accountability to the presidents for the operations of the colleges. The Evaluation Team further recommends that Section 1.2 of Board 2411, which establishes the role of the president as the chief college administrator, be added to the policy section 4000 – Administration. (Standards IV.B.2 and IV.B.3.e)

The External Evaluation Report provides details of the team's findings with regard to the College's work to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. I advise you to read the report carefully to understand the team's findings and recommendations. While your institution may concur or disagree with any part of the External Evaluation Report, the accreditation process intends that an institution will use the Report and its own Institutional Self Evaluation Report to assess its practices, assure compliance with standards, and to improve its institutional effectiveness and to excel.

### **Improving Institutional Effectiveness:**

The team report noted College Recommendations 2, 3, and 4 for improving institutional effectiveness (improvement recommendations). These recommendations do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice, but highlight areas of practice for which college attention is needed.

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Consistent with its policy to foster continuous improvement through the peer accreditation process, the Commission expects that institutions will consider the advice for improvement offered during the peer evaluation process and report on actions taken in response to the team's recommendations, if any. Failure of an institution to act on these recommendations will not itself constitute a deficiency in meeting standards or requirements of the Commission. However, in the Commission's experience, failure to take note of areas of practice pointed out in improvement recommendations may lead to future conditions which limit the college's ability to meet standards. As such, we highly recommend the team's improvement recommendations for your attention.

**Additional Information:**

Under U.S. Department of Education enforcement regulations, the Commission is required to take immediate action to terminate the accreditation of an institution which is out of compliance with any standards, or, alternatively, may provide an institution with additional notice and a deadline for coming into compliance that is no later than two years from when the institution was first informed of the non-compliance. With this letter, American River College is being provided with notice of the standards for which it is out of compliance, and is being provided time to meet the standards.

In its self evaluation process, American River College also identified improvement plans it intends to undertake. These improvement plans should be linked to the College's ongoing evaluation and improvement work.

The guidance and recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit but may not describe all that is necessary for the college to come into compliance (or to improve). Whether or not an institution agrees or disagrees with any part of the Report, American River College is expected to use the Report to improve educational programs and services. In addition, the College has the responsibility to accept the Commission's action and to uphold the integrity of the accreditation process by accurately portraying it and helping institutional constituencies to understand the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies pertinent to the Commission action.

A **final** copy of the External Evaluation Team Report is attached. Commission changes to the Report are noted on a separate page for inclusion with the Report. The College may now duplicate and post copies of the Report, with this added page. The Commission requires that you give the ISER, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to those who were signatories of the ISER, and to make these documents available to all campus constituencies and the public by placing copies on the college website.

Please note that in response to public interest in accreditation, the Commission requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no more than one click from the institution's home page.

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On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express appreciation for the work that American River College undertook to prepare for institutional self evaluation, and to support the work of the external evaluation team. The Commission encourages the College's continued work to ensure educational quality and to support student success. Accreditation and peer review are most effective when the college and the ACCJC work together to encourage continuous quality improvement in higher education. Thank you for sharing the values and the work of accreditation.

If you should have any questions concerning this letter or the Commission action, please don't hesitate to contact me or one of the ACCJC Vice Presidents. We'd be glad to help you.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/tl

Attachment

CC: Dr. Brian King, Chancellor, Los Rios Community College District

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<sup>1</sup> Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission* found on the ACCJC website at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).