

Accreditation Follow-Up Visit Report

Feather River College
570 Golden Eagle Avenue
Quincy, CA 95971

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
For Community and Junior Colleges
This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Feather River College
On

November 2, 2010

Dr. Thom M. Armstrong, President/Superintendent, Barstow Community College
Ms Geri Butler, Vice President of Administrative Services, Palo Verde College

FEATHER RIVER COLLEGE

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The team that conducted the Follow-Up Report Visit to Feather River College was comprised of Ms Geri Butler, Vice President of Administrative Services at Palo Verde College, and Dr. Thom M. Armstrong, President/Superintendent of Barstow Community College, who served in the capacity of team chair. The team arrived in Quincy in the late afternoon of November 1, 2010 to beautiful weather and spectacular scenery. Accommodations arranged by FRC were at the same location where previous teams had been housed, and were pleasant and comfortable. Prior to its arrival, each team member had received a copy of the FRC Follow-Up Report of October 2010 that had been written at the request of the Commission in response to the Commission's Action Letter dated January 29, 2010. Team members also received in advance of the visit a CD containing evidence used in compiling the Follow-Up Report, and team members were directed to the college website for access to additional documentary evidence. Prior to its arrival, the team was in regular communication with the Superintendent/President, the Vice President of Instruction and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), and the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/President. Everyone at Feather River College was responsive to the requests and needs of the team.

The team arrived at Feather River College at 8:00 a.m., on November 2, 2010, and commenced with a meeting with the college President and the ALO. This was followed by a series of four half-hour meetings with significant college committees, as well as with constituent leaders. The team greatly appreciated the willingness of FRC staff to compress the meetings in such a way that made the interview process more efficient and effective, and accommodated the time constraints of the team. A half-hour block of time was also allocated for the team to review hard copies of documents in the evidence room, which was extremely well organized. The visit to Feather River College concluded with an exit interview with the college president. All interviews were cordial, and the team was left with the impression that college constituents had worked extremely hard to continue to build upon the progress that had been made in addressing the recommendations in the Commission's Action Letter of June 30, 2009, and more recently Recommendations 1, 2, and 4 contained in the Commission's Action Letter of January 29, 2010.

Recommendation 1: Integrated Budget and Planning

The team recommends that the college should integrate the planning and budget processes at various levels of the District so that the budget applications are directly linked to the planning process, and clearly communicate and delineate the process as well as who is responsible. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.2, III.D, IV.A.2, IV.A.3)

Findings and Evidence:

Since the team's last visit to Feather River College in November 2009, the college has made concrete progress in fulfilling the expectations of the Standards in this area. The "Year One" process confirmed to college constituents the need to revise and update its Strategic Plan (2010-2013), as well as to make necessary changes to the master plan, mission statement, and vision statement. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) oversaw implementation of the planning system that was adopted by the college in early Fall 2009, and which appears in BP/AP 3250. The SPC took the lead in ensuring that all forms and processes were followed and used as described, reviewed all input from constituent groups, focused on reviewing all annual program reviews submitted by all programs and departments, and created a rubric and template to help committee members make notes about emerging institutional needs and trends, and questions about the budget or available data. This information and the "Decision Making Rubric" were used to guide the Budget Committee in evaluating and scoring cost savings proposals suggested by the campus constituent groups. Both committees worked together to produce a balanced Tentative Budget for the superintendent/president, who then submitted it to the board of trustees in June 2010. The Final Budget proposal, reflecting only minor adjustments, had been reviewed by the Budget Committee prior to being submitted to the president, and was approved by the board of trustees on September 16, 2010.

As part of the Strategic Plan, 2010-13, the college now has a clearly defined process and time frame for program reviews, with a section that applies specifically to planning and budgeting. The SPC's review of all annual program reviews served to guide the Budget Committee in its development of the 2010 budget, with input on institutional needs.

Administrators are now required to review all annual program reviews for their areas of responsibility. Reviews include trends, institutional priorities for budget development consideration, and whether budget requests meet institutional goals and objectives.

The team was greatly impressed with the level of communication and knowledge involving the planning and budgeting processes. Communication on campus is promoted by committee assignments and reports, the website, paper communiqués, face-to-face interaction, student

participation, and with community involvement and feedback. There is a sense on campus among the various constituent groups that the budget process has become more transparent.

Conclusion:

The team finds that the college has successfully met this recommendation and is at the sustainable continuous quality improvement level of the ACCJC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness—Part II: Planning, and has met the standards.

Recommendation 2: Program Review

The instructional program review process should be expanded and the non-instructional program review process implemented, to include student services, library and learning support services; where each incorporates good practices, ongoing and timely reviews, data analysis and assessment to support student learning achievement; and is fully integrated into institutional planning and budget processes. (Standards I.B, I.B.1, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.2.A.f, II.B.1, II.B.3.c, II.C, II.C.1.a, III.A.1, III.A.4, III.B.3, III.C.3, IV.A.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.2, IV.B.2.b)

Findings and Evidence:

The team was impressed with the progress that Feather River College has made, since the last follow-up visit in November 2009, in implementing a fully integrated planning process that relies upon data from program reviews for both instructional and non-instructional programs.

Comprehensive program reviews are completed every four years for instruction and administrative services, and every three years for student services. Assessment and data analysis have been expanded in the improved program review process, and the program reviews have become the basis for budgetary allocations and the establishing of institutional priorities. Nine comprehensive program reviews were completed in 2009-10, including administrative services, office of instruction, student services, and financial aid. All program reviews are available on the college's website. The implementation of this fully integrated planning process during the 2009-2010 academic year resulted in a new, board-approved 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. SPC members were assigned to read and analyze the comprehensive program reviews in order to provide guidance and evidence for modifications to the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan.

A template/rubric form has been developed for comprehensive program reviews. The current process includes more detailed data trends, analysis, and evidence to support recommendations for program improvement and expansion, which include student learning outcomes. Timelines have been established for all comprehensive and annual program reviews. Although constituent

group committee members reported that the process was at times cumbersome, and required a lot of input, overall the full cycle of planning through program review went well.

While the emphasis to date in establishing student learning outcomes and assessment has been on instruction, student services is rapidly moving to put in place outcomes and assessment. The Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (SLOAC) has been extremely valuable in this process. Efforts are underway at establishing an assessment cycle. One challenge confronting the college is to involve a greater number of adjunct faculty in the process. The college is to be commended for hiring a full-time institutional researcher, which will help ensure that data is being properly used for program review and institutional effectiveness purposes.

Conclusion:

The team finds that the college has met the recommendation and now meets the associated standards.

Recommendation 4: Research Planning (Systems)

The team recommends that the college refine its process for the incorporation of data from its various service areas that assist in planning activities, ensuring that all necessary information is entered into the system so the widest range of research and planning can be extracted. (Standards I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7)

Findings and Evidence:

With the loss of a Title III-funded institutional researcher, the college had sought to “fill the gap” by establishing the Institutional Research Oversight Group (IROG) to facilitate institutional research by coordinating the formation of ad hoc teams to conduct individual research projects. In order to move forward with the necessary data collection and analysis, the SPC had recommended to the college president that the search for a dedicated institutional researcher be resumed. The visiting team was pleased to learn that FRC had hired an institutional researcher in May 2010. Shortly after the hiring of the institutional researcher, the Research and Planning Leadership Group (RPLG) was formed. Collectively, these two groups have worked together to develop data for use in planning, decision making, and assessment. Further, the institutional researcher has also established a consultation network to identify college data needs.

The college has completed the integration of Banner 7, thus enabling FRC to eliminate the shadowing of data systems, and allowing the college to better communicate, compare and share data across various work groups. The college is now working with an outside consulting firm to help prepare the college for an upgrade to Banner 8 by spring 2011. Among other things, the

upgrade will improve the business processes of the college. Also, a data warehouse has been created to allow for the storing and effective utilization of the widest range of research and planning information that can be more easily extracted from the Banner system and other data bases that can be shared with the college community. In interviews, the team learned that there was a greater “shared confidence” in the institutional data that was being collected, and a greater reduction in the “manipulation of data.” More and more the consensus appears to be that decisions are more data-based, communication has improved, transparency is evident, a concrete system for decision-making is in place, and there is a “clear correlation with budgeting and decision making.”

Conclusion:

The team finds that the college has met this recommendation and now meets the standards.

After having visited FRC on three separate follow-up visits since the comprehensive evaluation in 2006, the team is impressed with the remarkable strides that have been made by FRC since then.

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