

June 23, 2017

Mr. Chris Vitelli  
Superintendent/President  
Merced College  
3600 M Street  
Merced, CA 95348

Dear President Vitelli:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting June 7-9, 2017, reviewed the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and evidentiary documents submitted by Merced College and the External Evaluation Team Report (Team Report) prepared by the evaluation team that visited March 6-9, 2017. College leadership, including the president of the governing board and the College president, certified the College's report, which was submitted in application for reaffirmation of accreditation. The purpose of the Commission's review was to determine whether the College continues to meet Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (hereafter called Standards).

After considering the material noted above, the Commission acted to **reaffirm accreditation for 18 months and to require a Follow-Up Report** on the issues identified in the team's findings of non-compliance. Merced College is required to submit its Follow-Up report by **October 1, 2018**.<sup>1</sup> The Report should demonstrate that the College has resolved all deficiencies and meets standards. The Report will be followed by a visit by Commission representatives.

The Commission finds the College out of compliance with Standards: I.B.3, 8, 9, and I.C (Recommendation 1); I.A.1, II.A.3, II.A.16, II.C.1, and the Policy on Distance Education and related federal regulations (Recommendation 2); II.A.3 (Recommendation 3 without reference to Community Service courses); III.D.1 (Recommendation 7); IV.C.10 (Recommendation 8); and IV.B.5, IV.C.7, and IV.C.12 (Recommendation 9).

#### **Recommendation #1 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College engage in robust data analysis including data disaggregation to identify the underlying causes that impede student success, develop interventions to improve student performance, assess the effectiveness of interventions upon implementation, and communicate the results to the campus community. (I.B.3, 8, 9, I.C)

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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://accjc.org/college-reports-to-accjc/>.

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**Recommendation #2 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College engage in processes that ensure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its distance education program, including:

- a. A framework that identifies the rationale for which courses are delivered in the DE format (I.A.1)
- b. Mechanisms for determining selection of faculty for teaching in distance education and the training of those faculty (II.A.16)
- c. The development and evaluation of DE courses to ensure faculty initiated regular and substantive contact. (Commission Policy on DE and federal regulation)
- d. The disaggregation and review of data SLO data by mode of delivery and an evaluation of the implications for the DE program (II.A.3)
- e. The development of equitable and accessible student support services and processes for evaluating for quality, demand and sufficiency.(II.C.1)

**Recommendation #3 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College assess all course, including program, and institutional level outcomes and use the results to improve student learning. (II.A.3)

**Recommendation #7 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College plan and manage its financial resources in a manner that ensures sustainable financial stability. (III.D.1).

**Recommendation #8 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policy on performing and conducting the bi-annual Board self-evaluation. (IV.C.10)

**Recommendation #9 (Compliance)**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policies regarding delegation of authority related to the Superintendent/President and ensure the Superintendent/President is able to implement and administer Board policies without Board interference in college operations. (IV.B.5, IV.C.7, IV.C.12)

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### Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The Team Report noted Recommendation 10 for improving institutional effectiveness (improvement recommendations). The Commission acted to change Recommendations 4, 5, and 6 to recommendations to increase institutional effectiveness. These recommendations do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice but highlight areas of practice for which College attention may be needed. Consistent with its policy to foster continuous improvement through the peer-review process, the Commission expects institutions to consider the advice for improvement offered. In the Midterm Report, the College will include any actions taken in response to the evaluation team's improvement recommendations.

### Next Steps

The Team Report provides details of the team's findings with regard to the College's work to meet the Standards. The guidance and recommendations contained in the Team Report represent the best advice of the 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).

All colleges are required to file a Midterm Report in the fourth year after each comprehensive evaluation. Merced College will submit the Midterm Report by **March 15, 2021**. The Midterm Report describes resolution of any team recommendations made for improvement, includes a summary of progress on College-identified plans for improvement as expressed in the ISER, and forecasts where the College will be at the time of the next comprehensive evaluation.

A **final copy** of the Team Report is attached. Commission changes to the Team Report are noted on a separate page for inclusion with the Team Report. The College may now duplicate and post copies of the enclosed Team Report with this added page.

The Commission requires that the College give the ISER, the 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 posting them 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.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express appreciation for the collaborative work that Merced College undertook to prepare for institutional self-evaluation, and to support the work of the external evaluation team. Thank you for sharing the values and the work of accreditation 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 focus on student outcomes and continuous quality improvement in higher education.

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If you should have any questions concerning this letter or the Commission action, please contact me or one of the ACCJC Vice Presidents. We would be glad to help you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Winn", written over a horizontal line.

Richard Winn, Ed.D.  
Interim President

RW/tl

Attachment