

MERCED COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

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October 13, 2015

Krista Johns, J.D.

Vice President for Policy and Research

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

10 Commerce Boulevard, Suite 204

Burlingame CA 94949

Dear Dr. Johns:

Please accept this as Merced College's response to the ACCJC letter of August 13, 2015, requesting additional information and notifying Merced College of notice of enhanced monitoring. We appreciate the high level of concern expressed by ACCJC in regard to issues raised by Merced College's 2015 annual report. Your letter encouraged the faculty administration, and staff of the college to actively work to improve assessment. We developed sustainable strategies and processes to improve participation in student learning outcome assessment and support sustainable quality improvement.

Institution Set Standards / Fire Academy:

Provide the ISS and explain how the definition and level of performance for the standard determined. Provide the number of students who completed the program in 2013-14 and 2012-13.

The Fire Academy through Merced College is designed to meet the requirements for eventual certification as California State Fire Marshal Firefighter I. The State Fire Marshal's Office determines the didactic and manipulative tasks the prospective candidate must be able to pass and demonstrate, and the amount of time each of those components will take to accomplish or to demonstrate proficiency. Each of these tasks are taught by an instructor who is qualified by the State Fire

Marshal's Office. As these tasks and lessons are accomplished, students are "signed off" and eventually complete a "task book". By California regulations, the student must receive a request for certification to the State Fire Marshal's Office from a Fire Chief. The person seeking the Firefighter I certificate can only receive the Fire Chief's signature and request when he or she has completed six months as a full time professional firefighter, or, one year as a volunteer firefighter.

Merced College does not give them a certification - we cannot. We provide them the means to receive all the training for completing their task book; they must receive time "on the job" prior to requesting certification from their employing agency.

Year	# Students		Completion
	Enrolled	Finished	
2011-12	22	19	86%
2012-13	24	19	79%
2013-14	18	10	56%
2014-15	20	16	80%
Average			75%

Table 1

Based on these completion rates, if an Institutional set standard for completion of the Firefighter Academy at Merced College is needed, 75% completion would be appropriate.

Student Learning Outcomes Practice

Recommended evaluation related to SLO assessment.

As to the courses reported in the 2015 Annual Report without ongoing assessment, we recommend you consider and evaluate:

- **The list of courses sorted by discipline or program.**

Professor Julie Clark, the chair of Merced College's Curriculum Committee, working with Curriculum Committee representatives of college cohorts, developed and evaluated a list of all Merced College

courses, sorted by program. Courses were then identified and evaluated relative to their status as a currently offered / active course in the curriculum. Based on this review and collaborative evaluation, the Chancellor’s Office inventory of Merced College courses was reviewed, and revised to more closely identify current courses offered. This update resulted in 1,058 fewer courses, a reduction of 44.7%. We will continue to update the inventory through the 2015-16 academic year.

	8/26/2015	9/28/2015	Change
Total Number of Active Courses	2366	1308	-44.7%

Table 2

- **A list for programs for which 40% or more of the included courses are without ongoing assessment.**

Professor Edward Modafferi, chair of the Merced College Assessment Review Committee (ARC), working collaboratively with the Instructional Program Review and Student Learning Outcome Assessment Committee (IPRSLOAC), reviewed and cross-walked all courses included in instructional program reviews. There are no programs for which 40% or more of the included courses are without ongoing assessment. (See Appendix A)

- **Information about whether the disciplines / programs that have classes without ongoing assessment participate in program review, how the college evaluated the discipline’s program’s participation in ongoing assessment, and what impact the level of ongoing assessment had on resource e allocation.**

Merced College has an ongoing assessment process that is fulfilled by IPRSLOAC, faculty Cohort Assessment Trainers (CATs), and ARC. All SLO assessments and program reviews are reviewed by faculty members through this established process.

We can report that instructional disciplines and programs not completing program review are not considered for resource allocation.

We can also report that a more robust system of review has been developed as a result of district-wide collaborations. These changes will be discussed in more detail in the section of this letter devoted to strategies for continuous sustainable quality improvement.

- **Any other information the institution has found pertinent concerning its own evaluation of the courses and programs for which there is no ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes.**

In the past Merced College has measured the degree of SLO compliance by calculating the proportion of courses assessed. This calculation involved dividing the total number of SLO assessment reports submitted annually by the number of annual course offerings: **Previous formula for % of courses assessed**

$$\text{total \# of SLO assessment reports} \div \text{\# of annual course offerings}$$

It is important to note that course name changes, in-activations, cancelations, zero-capped courses, and in some cases unoffered courses were included in the data. This resulted in an inflated denominator which consistently yielded annual SLO assessment rates ranging from 60% to 64%, a gross underestimate of the actual assessment rate.

With the turnover of the Merced College SLO assessment leadership this underestimate was recognized and a new method of calculating SLO compliance has been put into place. Using this new method we have determined that 95% of courses offered within the 2010-2015 timeframe have been assessed at least one time. Additionally, 30% of courses have demonstrated ongoing continuous assessment as measured by two or more SLO reports being submitted within the same timeframe (Table 3). These new data reflect a 33% increase in SLO submission and compliance.

Merced College	
% of courses that have been assessed in the last 5 years	95%
% of courses with ongoing assessment (2X)	30%

Table 3

The dramatic increase observed in SLO compliance is the result modifying four factors used in previous analyses of SLO reporting. These changes are summarized in Table 4 below.

Changes in SLO Compliance Calculations and Reporting	
Time frame	The period from 2010-2015 was defined as our survey period. In any given year only a fraction of Merced College courses are offered and as a result only a fraction of courses are available for assessment during that year. With this in mind it is necessary to observe a larger span of time to allow all courses to be offered and submit an assessment.
Variable definition	<p><u>Total assessable courses</u> = the total number of courses offered – (the number of canceled courses + the number of zero-capped courses + and the number of courses on pending status).</p> <p><u>% Courses assessed</u> = Total number of assessments turned in/Total assessable courses</p>
Refined our SLO submission process	<p>- Reinforced that each offered course must submit two SLO assessments within a five-year time frame.</p> <p>-All new courses must be assessed the first time they are taught.</p>
Recording and storing SLO assessments	-CurricUNET is no longer used for assessment. Merced College faculty developed new forms that utilize the software Infopath and Sharepoint to report and house all assessments on our new assessment web site. All forms are web based and assessments will be available for all faculty to view following their submission.

Table 4.

Ongoing Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Merced College has taken steps to address potential concerns indicated in the letter.

- Course outlines of record are current and all contain student learning outcomes.

- Syllabi for every course are provided to the program secretary every semester. Deans checked and verified that every syllabi this semester contained SLOs consistent with those in the current course outline of record.
- Course sequencing and scheduling decisions are made to provide the best support to students for retention and success. Instructional deans will provide sequencing information for every program by March 15, 2016 for the 2016-17 catalog.
- The Merced College Catalog program information was reviewed to verify accuracy and changes in curriculum this year will be included in next year's catalog.
- Resource allocations are made through the planning and budgeting process at Merced College. Requests for resource allocations must come from program reviews and are considered and placed in priority order every year, not rolled over year to year.
- Merced College uses data when presenting information about the quality of every program at Merced College.

Strategies for enhancing student learning outcomes assessment and program review practices.

The efforts to investigate and understand the student learning outcome assessment and program review practices at Merced College revealed places where change in strategies and practices would improve participation rates of faculty, increase dialogue among and across disciplines, and enhance evaluation of SLOs and program reviews. Fueled by a real determination to make a difference in the assessment culture at Merced College, and inspired by the efforts of key faculty leaders, the following strategies were implemented by shared governance and operation committees and by administrators:

- The student learning outcome assessment process was made more accessible.
- The program review process was evaluated and significant changes were approved by the Academic Senate.
- The responsibilities of the CATs were reviewed and updated through collaboration between the Academic Senate and the faculty union and were subsequently approval by the Academic Senate.
- A rubric by which faculty could self-assess their SLO assessments was developed and implemented.

- A rubric by which the CATs could assess student learning outcome assessments was developed and implemented.
- A rubric by which CATs could assess program reviews was developed and will be implemented in the next round of program review submission in 2016.
- A rubric by which instructional deans and directors could assess program reviews was developed and will be implemented in the next round of program review submission in 2016.
- Changes to the program review cycle more closely aligning submission and evaluation of the reviews to the resource allocation process has been proposed.
- Web accessible forms were developed for student learning outcome assessment and program review and made available on the Merced College Assessment web site.
- Current student learning outcomes were validated in every syllabi for Fall 2015 and will be validated on an ongoing basis beginning with this semester.
- Faculty training for assessment has been prioritized.
 - A mandatory General Education Learning Outcome Assessment Training Day was held May 8, 2015. GELO assessment strategies were developed that day.
 - Drop-in sessions with SLO coordinators was held every Friday afternoon in the Library Instruction Room.
 - The IPRSLOAC newsletter, *the SLOdown*, is published bi-annually updating instructional faculty on changes in the SLO assessment process, updates on the GE program assessment from ARC, and highlighting assessment success stories on campus.
 - A mandatory Outcome Assessment Training was held October 2, 2015. The new student learning outcome assessment process was presented and the proposed new program review process was discussed.
 - The administrative policy concerning the use of Flex Days is in the process of being revised to include a second mandatory Flex Day dedicated to training in assessment practices.
 - Consequences for failure to do student learning outcome assessment and program review have been implemented in the resource allocation and travel policies of the college.

In Summary

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the attention of Merced College. They helped fuel the passion as well as direct the energy of the faculty, staff, and administration who have been committed to fostering a positive change in the student learning outcome assessment and program review culture of the college. Review of practices and dialogue at all levels helped inform the institution about the serious gaps in assessment at Merced College,

Great efforts were made to train faculty on student learning outcome assessment using a more accessible process. Great efforts were made to perform student learning outcome assessment. Great efforts were made to research and document the real state of courses, programs, and assessment. Dialogue and cross-discipline collaboration occurred. Practices were changed. Consequences were developed and implemented. Merced College's overall institutional effectiveness has been improved as a result.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald C. Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "T".

Ronald C. Taylor, Ph.D.

Superintendent/President

Appendix A: Summary of Course Assessment in Instructional Programs for 2014-15

Area (cohort)	Integrated Program Review Title	# unique courses in program	# courses not offered	# offered program courses assessed	% offered program courses assessed	% NOT assessed
1A	Engineering	18	0	18	100%	0%
	Mathematics	15	0	15	100%	0%
1B	Biological Sciences	22	0	22	100%	0%
	Biotechnology	13	0	13	100%	0%
	Chemistry	11	0	11	100%	0%
	Geology	6	0	6	100%	0%
	Physics	6	0	6	100%	0%
	Wastewater Technology	5	0	5	100%	0%
2A	Child Dev	20	4	16	100%	0%
	Liberal Studies	46	1	45	100%	0%
2B	English	35	0	35	100%	0%
	Coop Education	4	0	4	100%	0%
	Student Success	1	0	1	100%	0%
3	Agriculture	29	1	28	100%	0%
	Agriculture Business	22	0	21	95%	5%
	Animal Science	20	1	18	95%	5%
	Landscape Horticulture	18	0	18	100%	0%
	Mechanized Agriculture	15	0	15	100%	0%
	Plant Science	14	0	14	100%	0%
3B	Automotive	21	0	21	100%	0%
	Drafting	19	2	16	94%	6%
	Electrical Technology Program	33	0	31	94%	6%
	HVAC Program	14	0	14	100%	0%
	Industrial Maintenance Tech	14	1	13	100%	0%
	Welding Technology	7	0	7	100%	0%
3C	Life Fitness	23	0	22	96%	4%

Area (cohort)	Program Title	# unique courses in program	# courses not offered	# offered program courses assessed	% offered program courses assessed	% NOT assessed
4A	Nursing, Registered	5	0	5	100%	0%
	Nursing, Vocational	12	0	12	100%	0%
	Nursing Assistant	1	0	1	100%	0%
	Radiologic Technology	19	0	19	100%	0%
	Sonography	12	3	9	100%	0%
4B	Accounting	15	0	14	93%	7%
	Admin Office Management	12	0	12	100%	0%
	Business and Entrepreneurship	35	1	34	100%	0%
	Computer Studies	17	0	16	94%	6%
	Nutrition	15	1	14	100%	0%
	Management	27	1	26	100%	0%
	Marketing	19	0	18	95%	5%
	Real Estate^^	16	0	10	63%	38%
	Virtual Office	7	0	7	100%	0%
4C	Corrections^^	12	0	12	100%	0%
	Criminal Justice	16	0	16	100%	0%
	Emergency Services	17	8	9	100%	0%
5A	Addiction Studies^^	22	0	22	100%	0%
	Anthropology	16	0	14	88%	13%
	History	39	1	37	97%	3%
	Human Services	24	6	15	83%	17%
	International Studies	58	2	55	98%	2%
	Psychology	16	0	16	100%	0%
	Social and Behavioral Sciences	37	1	35	97%	3%
5B	Arts & Humanities^^					
	Art	25	5	19	95%	5%
	Drama	10	2	8	100%	0%
	Music	25	5	15	75%	25%
	Photography	13	1	11	92%	8%
5C	Communication Studies	10	0	10	100%	0%
	Foreign Language	27	0	27	100%	0%
	Honors	13	3	10	100%	0%
	Humanities	36	0	33	92%	8%
	Philosophy	11	0	10	91%	9%

NOTE: ^^ = Program Investigated and Inactivated

Area (cohort)	Program Title	# unique courses in program	# courses not offered	# offered program courses assessed	% offered program courses assessed	% NOT assessed
6	ETC Medical Assistant	3	0	3	100%	0%
	Technical Office Occupations	2	0	2	100%	0%
	Court Interpreter, ESL & Basic Skills	18	7	11	100%	0%
LRC	LNRN courses	1	0	1	100%	0%
	General Education Program					
	GELO1	105	2	97	94%	6%
	GELO2	65	1	62	97%	3%
	GELO3	145	3	127	89%	11%
	GELO4	27	2	22	88%	12%
	GELO5	76	5	64	90%	10%