EVALUATION REPORT

Rio Hondo College

3600 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

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

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
Rio Hondo College on October 13-16, 2008

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RIO HONDO COLLEGE

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October 13-16, 2008

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: Rio Hondo College

DATE OF VISIT: October 13-16, 2008

TEAM CHAIR: Mr. Jerry Patton
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A nine member accreditation team visited Rio Hondo College October 13 – 16, 2008, for the purposes of determining whether the institution continues to meet accreditation standards, evaluating how well the college is achieving its stated purposes, analyzing how the college is meeting the commission standards, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the accreditation status of the college.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all day team training session on September 3, 2008, conducted by ACCJC, studied the Commission Handbook for Evaluators, and were divided into four sub-groups according to the accreditation standards. Team members carefully read and studied the college's self study (including the recommendations from the 2001 accreditation team, the 2003 Progress Report site visit team and the 2004 Focused Mid-term Site visit team) and related evidentiary documents provided by the college.

Each team member prepared written responses to the Rio Hondo College self study during the month of September and submitted their draft responses two weeks prior to the site visit. During the two weeks prior to arriving on campus, the team liaison coordinated appointments with college employees with the RHC ALO. On October 13, the team met for two hours to review and discuss their written responses to the self study and prepare questions and issues to be reviewed during their visit.

During the site visit, the team met with over 90 college employees and governing board members, spent over 300 hours collectively reviewing documents and in interviews. In addition, the team members held three widely publicized sessions, one especially for students. The comments and responses in the open sessions were positive, indicating the changes occurring at the college.

The college staff prepared well for the visit. Team members were greeted warmly, evidentiary documents were available, both electronically and hard copy. The self study report contained the information within the structure required by the Commission. The report was well organized and the format was easy to follow. The team was challenged throughout the report by the lack of evidence, declarative sentences that simply restate the standards, mixed references, incomplete responses and inadequate planning agendas to address their own findings. However, the site visit revealed a wealth of evidence and effort, but insufficient use of evidence and assessment for improvement. The visiting team heard several comments that the self study was out of date.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2008 Team

After carefully reading the self study, examining evidence, interviewing college personnel and students, and discussing the findings in light of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges 2002 Standards, the team offers the following recommendations to Rio Hondo College. The recommendations are based on specific standards cited in parentheses following each component of the recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Institutional Effectiveness

Develop and implement an institutional planning process that includes: measurable institutional goals and objectives with a timeline for the implementation and achievement of these goals and a schedule for when the achievement of these will be assessed; more clearly defined links between the college's program review, unit planning, and resource allocation processes as parts of an integrated process for continuous improvement; communication more broadly across the campus of the purposes and intended outcomes of each component of the planning process as well as the integrated planning process as a whole; an examination of institutional effectiveness through a broad-based dialogue that centers around clearly defined measures of effectiveness and the assessment of the effective use of resources; the opportunity for members from all constituency groups to fully participate in the process at all levels; a staff development program that permeates the institution to promote the effective use of data, including identification of where data are available; and clearly defined processes for assessing the effectiveness of the planning process as a whole, as well as each of the components, that includes timelines for evaluation, assigned responsibilities, and expected outcomes (Standards IB.1, IB.2, IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7, IIA.2, IIIA.6, IIID.1.a, IIID.3).

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

The college is at the developmental level on the ACCJC rubric for student learning outcomes and has established an initial framework and assessment strategy at the course level. In order to meet the ACCJC standard of proficiency of student learning outcomes by 2012, the college needs to: create an implementation timeline; regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the SLO assessment process; facilitate college wide discussions; develop and implement training for all constituencies integrating college wide efforts between Instruction and Student Services; create a special emphasis on identifying valid and reliable data and use of authentic assessment; and implement a system of quality control to ensure meaningful and accurate assessment of student learning throughout the college. (Standards II.A.1, 2, 3)

Recommendation 3: Student Support Services

The team recommends that the catalogue include the college's official web site address, the current academic calendar, the program length for the academic year the catalog covers, and a clear communication of the educational cost for non-resident students. (Standard II.B.2.b)

Recommendation 4: Human Resources

The team recommends the college develop and approve a code of ethics for all employees. (Standard III.A.1.d)

Recommendation 5: Leadership

The college should employ methods to assess campus climate across all constituencies, leading to the continual improvement of communications and programs that promote empowerment, trust, and innovation. (Standard IV.A.3)

Recommendation 6: Governance

The team recommends the college develop a formal and cyclical review of governance committees and processes to ensure integrity and effectiveness, and communicate the results as a basis for improvement of campus decision-making; the college administration develop a plan to clarify the reporting pathways for the various governance bodies exemplifying the linkages between the unit plans, program review, and the resource allocation process. (I.B.6, IV.A.5); the Board of Trustees participate immediately in professional development that introduces Board members to best practices regarding board/campus relations, ethics, trusteeship, accreditation process, and strategic planning; the Board review and, if necessary, revise the Presidential hiring process established in 2002 to prevent potential disagreements with future Presidential search committees (Standards IV.B.1, IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.i, IV.B.1.j); and the college and the Board of Trustees immediately reach agreement on policies and practices that govern the development of accreditation materials. (Standards IV.A.4, IV.B.1.i)

ACREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR
RIO HONDO COLLEGE

Comprehensive Evaluation Visit
October 13-16, 2008

INTRODUCTION

Rio Hondo College (RHC) is a comprehensive California community college district encompassing 65.5 square miles, including the cities of Whittier, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, and portions of Norwalk , La Mirada, Downey, La Puente and Industry, some unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, and the portion of the City of El Monte south and east of the Rio Hondo River.

School districts within the college boundaries are the Whittier Union High School District, El Rancho Unified School District, and the El Monte Union High School District. The Rio Hondo College District was established by election in October 1960. Since the district's boundaries at that time were identical to those of the Whittier Union High School District, administration of the district was by the high school district Board of Trustees.

Creation of the El Rancho Unified School District in 1962 required that Rio Hondo College establish its own Board of Trustees, and an election for that purpose was held in April 1962.
The new Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Phil Putnam as the founding Superintendent/President in February 1963. In May 1963, the Board chose Rio Hondo as the name for the college. The name, long associated with the area surrounding the Rio Hondo River, means "deep river."

College classes were offered for the first time in the late afternoons and evenings in September 1963 at Sierra and El Rancho High Schools. Following selection of the present campus site, a $12 million bond issue to build the college was approved by 80.1 percent of the district voters in October 1963. During 1964 and 1965, Rio Hondo College conducted classes for a limited enrollment at the former Little Lake School in Santa Fe Springs.

The present campus opened in the fall 1966 with an enrollment of 3,363 day and 2,682 evening students. Since the first college classes were offered in 1963, more than 750,000 students have enrolled for at least one class at the college. Today, Rio Hondo enrolls approximately 22,000 students per semester.

The 2008 Rio Hondo College accreditation self study process began in the fall of 2006, and continued into 2007 with much of the work completed spring 2007. The study sat dormant until the new self study steering committee started updating in the spring 2008. The visiting team concurred the report was an attempt at updating an out-of-date study. The evidence and status discovered during the site visit was much more prevalent and current.

RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION TEAM

Responses to the Previous Team's Recommendations

The comprehensive evaluation visit to Rio Hondo College in October of 2001 resulted in eight recommendations. An Interim Visiting Team conducted a site visit in November of 2003 and asked that the college place special emphasis on recommendations #3 and #4. The Accrediting Commission accepted the report of the Interim Visiting Team and required the college to submit a Focused Midterm Report in October of 2004. In November of 2004, an evaluation team of two persons conducted an evaluation visit of the college: this evaluation team concluded that all recommendations had been met and that recommendations 5, 6, 7, and 8 were "complete". The October 2008 visiting team has looked at these same recommendations and concludes as follows.

Recommendation #1: A review of the Mission Statement should be undertaken.

A review of the mission statement took place in 2005, which resulted in a revised statement that was approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2005. This action appears to satisfy this recommendation. Interviews with college faculty, students and staff validated claims in the 2008 accreditation self-study that stated that the new program review, educational master plan and facilities master plan processes were initiated based upon the newly developed mission, vision and goals.

Recommendation #2: It is recommended that the college review the information provided to the public, students, and staff for inconsistencies and that a plan be developed to keep all publications up-to-date, accurate, and consistent, clearly delineating the procedures for granting fee waivers for the college service fee to students utilizing the telephone registration process.

As concluded in the focused midterm visit, this recommendation has been met.

Focused Midterm Visit Recommendation #3: That the college should develop and implement a comprehensive Educational and Facilities Master Plan integrating research data that quantifies both short-term and long-term needs. The comprehensive plan should integrate the mission statement of the college and the recommendations of the program review process.

Since the last self study, the college has developed both an Educational Master Plan and a Resource and Facilities Plan that integrate the mission statement and are based on research data. However, after extensive interviews with faculty and staff and a review of both documents, the team determined that these plans were not developed based on the recommendations of the program review process. The reason for this absence is that the previous program review process that was in place when these documents were developed did not result in recommendations. As described by several staff members, the previous program review process resulted in each program making a 10-15 minute presentation to the Planning/Fiscal Council (PFC), but no recommendations followed. What is worth noting is that the current program review process

implemented in February 2008 does result in recommendations that are made by the newly formed Program Review Committee. These recommendations are at programmatic and institutional levels, both of which can and are intended to play a significant role in the college's future institutional plans. If the college continues with the current program review process, it will result in recommendations that can serve as a basis for the next iterations of these master plans.

The 2003 visiting team indicated that, although the plans did not appear to be based on program review recommendations, the college had probably satisfied the recommendation. However, it is the position of the 2008 accreditation team that since these plans were not developed based on the recommendations of the program review process, the college has not yet fully met all the requirements of this recommendation.

The prior team found that the college has a comprehensive technology planning process and that the five year Technology Plan is responding to items identified in the Educational Plan. This response includes the purchase of a new student system and a new Voice over IP telephone system.

The current team's review and evaluation is that the college has developed an Education Plan and a Facilities Master Plan and that there is a relationship between the two. While the Education Plan does not contain a lot of data, the Facilities Master Plan and the Resource and Facilities Plan do contain a great deal of data used to justify new facilities.

However, there appears to be no clear linkage between financial planning and the strategic goals of the institution. While the budget request form provides for a tie-in with the college's goals, these goals are so broad as to be of little value in determining resource allocations. The college has developed a new strategic planning program that will establish goals and objectives with Key Performance Indicators. This process should allow for future financial planning to be linked directly to the institution's goals and objectives.

Recommendation #4: That the process for program review, inclusive of academic and student services, be implemented which links resource allocation and quantifies learner outcomes as well as institutional effectiveness.

The college has made progress in the development of a program review process for academic and student services that incorporates student learning outcomes as well as quantitative data and links to resource allocation through the prioritization of resource requests. However, how program review is used to determine institutional effectiveness is not yet fully developed or understood throughout the college. Although the 2003 visiting team indicated that this recommendation was unclear, but probably met, it is evident to the 2008 accreditation team, after extensive interviews with faculty and staff that the linkage of institutional effectiveness still needs to be refined.

Due to the relative newness of this process (February 2008), it is understandable that the college has yet to address and define all the linkages and adequately communicate how the process works widely throughout the college. For those college faculty and staff that have been involved

in the new process, it appears relatively clear how program review recommendations serve as a basis for resource requests, but those who have yet to be involved are unable to articulate these connections. In regards to the data, while a significant amount of data are now being provided to instructional departments, there is some inconsistency in how these data are being used in the report to determine effectiveness and identify areas in need of improvement across the different reports. The Program Review Committee is aware of this inconsistency and, in an attempt to address it, is implementing a software program that will require programs to respond directly to the data. Finally in regards to student learning outcomes, the new process does require programs to report on their progress in terms of having developed and assessed SLOs. While the SLO Committee was able to articulate examples of how SLO assessment data could be used to identify areas for improvement, the college is still in early stages of assessing the SLO data and has yet to fully incorporate these data into the process.

Focused Midterm Recommendation #5: The staff and professional development program needs to be reviewed in order to ensure opportunity for continuing education.

The 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 Staff Development Committee reports demonstrate a sustained and robust response to the recommendation.

Focused Midterm Recommendation #6: The hiring process and procedure for faculty and administrators should be reviewed with the goal of integrating human resources allocations with the program review process.

The current program review process is aligned to resource allocation for new faculty positions. Efforts are underway to implement non-instructional program reviews. This will also address the recommendation. Finally, eight institutional goals have been developed that guide the appointment of all new faculty and staff.

Focused Midterm Recommendation #7: The college should review employment practices to ensure objectivity and consistency of administrative review.

The sustained implementation of Board Policy 7255 addresses this recommendation in a thorough and intentional manner.

Recommendation #8: That the Board complete a formal evaluation process to evaluate its policies and practices.

While the 2008 team found evidence that Board policies have been changed since 2001, there is no evidence of a formal assessment process that drives periodic review of policies. The recommendation has not been fully addressed.

The self study provides three statements in response to the recommendation. First, the self study identifies that an agreement was reached in 2008 with the Community College League of California for their Board policy services. That subscription for assistance services does not represent the Board's creation of a formal evaluation process within the timeline established to respond to this recommendation. Second, the self-study states that Board policies are updated on an on-going basis, a statement that also does not meet the intended requirements of a formal

evaluation process. This section concludes with a statement that the Board approved two year Board Goals on October 17, 2007. The Board is to be commended for the creation and publishing of its two year goals, but this is not what was being addressed in the recommendation. The evidence indicates that policy changes were made throughout the 2001-2008 time period, but it does not demonstrate that these changes came from a formal policy review process.

Eligibility Requirements

1. AUTHORITY

The visiting team confirmed that Rio Hondo College is authorized and operates under the California Constitution, the California Education Code and the California Title 5 Regulations. The college is authorized as an institution of higher education to offer undergraduate degrees. Rio Hondo College is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

2. MISSION

The visiting team confirmed that Rio Hondo College has a clearly defined mission statement that was revised in 2005-06 and that it was adopted by the governing board. The visiting team confirmed that the mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning. The mission statement is included in the catalog and is prominent on the college's website. The statement is appropriate to a higher education institution and to the college's constituencies.

3. GOVERNING BOARD

The visiting team confirmed that the college has a functioning, independent policy-making governing board of five elected members and one student member that exercises responsibility for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the college and for ensuring that the mission is being carried out. The board is cognizant of its constituents and public interest in board activities and decisions. Board members adhere to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The visiting team confirmed that Rio Hondo College has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

The visiting team confirmed that the institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience, to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

6. OPERATIONAL STATUS

The visiting team confirmed that the institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

7. DEGREES

According to admissions information, a majority of students enter Rio Hondo College with the intent of completing a degree, certificate or preparing to transfer to a baccalaureate institution. The visiting team confirmed that a substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The visiting team confirmed that institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and culminate in identified student outcomes.

9. ACADEMIC CREDIT

The visiting team confirmed that Rio Hondo College awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education, and provides appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit in its publications.

10. STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The visiting team confirms Rio Hondo College defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Course outlines and syllabi contain student learning and achievement outcomes.

11. GENERAL EDUCATION

The visiting team confirms that Rio Hondo College defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. The general education component has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it.

12. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The team confirms the college's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. The college maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist.

13. FACULTY

The visiting team confirms that Rio Hondo College employs a core of full-time qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution and sufficient in size and experience to support all of the college's educational programs. Faculty responsibilities include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

14. STUDENT SERVICES

The team reviewed the student services provided and determined the college provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the its mission.

15. ADMISSIONS

The visiting team confirms the college has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

16. INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The visiting team confirms Rio Hondo College provides specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs.

17. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The visiting team confirms that Rio Hondo 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 examined the external financial audits for the last five years and reviewed the college's financial and accounting records. The team also verified the audits were conducted under the generally accepted auditing procedures for public colleges and universities as prescribed by system, state and federal regulations. The 06-07 "unqualified" audit report reports no material findings of significance.

19. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The team confirmed the college provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The college assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. However, what appear to be missing are solid linkages between resource allocation and institutional effectiveness and a broad understanding on the campus of these processes. The new strategic planning process is still being refined, clarified and solidified. The current institutional goals include measurable objectives and key performance indicators for each goal that will be assessed annually to determine progress being met, but the college has only recently defined measures of institutional effectiveness (i.e., key performance indicators) and has not yet implemented the measurement and evaluation of these measures. The college has not yet implemented fully-integrated evaluation, planning and resource allocation. The president clearly has a vision for how to achieve integrated planning, but this vision, while well supported, is not yet broadly understood nor has it been fully implemented.

20. PUBLIC INFORMATION

The team confirmed that the college publishes in its catalog, class schedule, and other publications information concerning the college's purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations affecting students, degrees offered, degree requirements, financial aid, fees and all other requisite information. Information on course and program student learning outcomes is not published in the current catalog.

21. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

The team confirmed that the institution provides assurance that it adheres to the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and discloses information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

Accreditation Themes

Dialogue: The team found that Rio Hondo has, in the last two years, gradually increased the level, depth, and breath of dialogue about the accreditation standards. This increase in dialogue appears to have been promoted and supported by the new leadership, particularly at the president's level and in various areas of the college that have benefited from an infusion of new members of the leadership team. However, dialogue needs to increase campus wide on topics such as learning styles, effective pedagogies to meet the needs of students, determining institutional effectiveness, and effective uses of data. The college needs to make a concerted effort to implement professional development that links learning styles to best practices that promote student success, retention and persistence. In addition, dialogue appears to be somewhat sparse regarding collaboration between Instruction and Student Services to better meet the educational needs of students.

Institutional Integrity: The team found that Rio Hondo College values institutional and academic honesty, personal integrity, and intellectual freedom. Committed to quality teaching and learning, student access and success, and fiscal responsibility, the college encourages the spirit of honest self-reflection and institutional self scrutiny. The college provides an environment of culturally diverse activities throughout the academic year by featuring campus speakers, free speech demonstrations, and musical entertainment. Art shows, theatrical presentations, and guest speaker forums that are designed to enhance student and employee awareness of the various and diverse communities are scheduled. The Dia De La Familia day and the development of the Chicano Studies Program also support the institution's efforts to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Student Learning Outcomes: Rio Hondo College has been developing student learning outcomes and assessments for the last few years. A process has been established and faculty and administrators seem to know about the expectations and processes for SLO assessment. Last year, dedicated Flex time was used to provide training for faculty and to set expectations. Presently most courses have at least one SLO and an assessment rubric. SLO assessment has occurred in a majority of the courses and some of other programs. The SLO committee has representatives from all divisions and one from student services. The documentation of the SLO assessment remains in the division office and becomes part of the program review data. This process is not organized for overall institutional review of the process, thus resulting in varied interpretations of what an SLO is, the role of data, and the analysis and improvement occurring subsequent to assessment.

The college is at the developmental level on the ACCJC rubric for student learning outcomes and has established an initial framework for SLOs. Assessment strategies are being developed, but should be reviewed to assure collection of reliable and valid data. Existing organizational structures such as curriculum committee and the Planning/Fiscal Council (PFC) are linked into and supporting the SLO process.

Resources have been dedicated to SLO assessment in the instructional area through the support of an SLO coordinator, but linkage and sharing needs to be made with the student services area. Resources have not been dedicated to a storehouse for SLO data; these are presently housed in binders and will be difficult to collect for the annual report and to review for quality.

The college needs to plan for the future in order to meet the ACCJC standard of proficiency by 2012; their present timeline and process will not meet this deadline. Training and expertise needs to be developed in all constituencies at all levels particularly in identifying valid and reliable data and authentic assessment.

Evaluation, Planning and Improvement: It is evident from the team's many interviews with faculty and staff that the president has wide support for his vision for planning at the college and from the review of many planning-related documents that the college has all the pieces required for integrated planning, evaluation and resource allocation. However, what appear to be missing are solid linkages between resource allocation and institutional effectiveness and a broad understanding on the campus of these processes. The new strategic planning process is still being refined, clarified and solidified.

The current institutional goals include measurable objectives and key performance indicators for each goal that will be assessed annually to determine progress being met, but the college has only recently defined measures of institutional effectiveness (i.e., key performance indicators) and has not yet implemented the measurement and evaluation of these measures.

Based on the information provided in the self-study, a review of program reviews, unit plans, and budget requests, and discussions with several people involved in these processes, it appears that the college has not yet implemented fully-integrated evaluation, planning and resource allocation. The president clearly has a vision for how to achieve integrated planning, but this vision, while well supported, is not yet broadly understood nor has it been fully implemented.

Organization: The college has a wide variety of programs that support student learning and it has developed SLOs for courses and programs throughout the institution. While institutional SLOs are in the early stages of being developed, the college has organized its planning and resource allocation processes to tie SLO and program review outcomes to strategic planning and budget processes. Given the recent orientation to integrate planning, program review, and budget administration, the college has yet to demonstrate how well it supports student learning. Once the college establishes key performance indicators, it will be better able to demonstrate that strategic resource allocations have made a positive impact on student learning.

Institutional Commitments: An important expression of an institution's commitment to providing high quality education is the statement of commitment incorporated in its mission statement. Rio Hondo College last developed its mission statement during 2005-06. It consists of one sentence which is not complete as to the nature of the college's commitment. However, this one sentence is augmented by an extensive statement of values with sub-statements concerning quality teaching and learning, student access and success, diversity, equity, and fiscal responsibility. There is also a goals statement and an institutional philosophy statement. Taken together, this entire elaboration of the one-sentence mission statement represents a comprehensive expression of the college's institutional commitment. The team found within the staff an earnest dedication to achieving these institutional commitments. One challenge of Rio Hondo College is to take the commitment found throughout the college among individual staff members and achieve more effective commitment on an organizational level.

Reports of the four standards and related recommendations are as follows:

STANDARD I
Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

General Observations

The mission statement of Rio Hondo College expresses the college's commitment to lifelong learning and serving its diverse community. The accompanying values, goals, and institutional philosophy statements further expand on the institution's educational purposes. The college appears to define its intended student population as the "diverse students" who attend the college. Rio Hondo emphasizes its open access and how it "recognizes the individual worth and potential of every human being." From visiting the college and speaking with several people at the college, it is clear that there is college-wide commitment to the mission. Students, staff and faculty were able to indicate the important linkage between the mission and program review.

Findings and Evidence

From reviewing planning-related documents and in interviews with faculty and staff, it is clear that the mission statement is discussed often and is central to the college's planning efforts. The student learning programs and services are aligned with the mission statement, purpose and the student population through the new program review and unit plan process. However, the college has to date not assessed whether it has been adequately addressing the needs of its student population. Specifically, the college had not defined specific measures of institutional effectiveness. However, it is worth noting that the college has now developed key performance indicators that will serve as the college's measures of institutional effectiveness that will be assessed on an annual basis. The baseline data for these measures are being prepared at this time along with targets and timelines. (IA.1)

The college's current mission statement and accompanying values, goals and institutional philosophy statements were approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2005 and are published in the catalog, class schedule and website. In addition, these statements are posted at various locations throughout the campus. These locations appear to be satisfactory in relation to meeting this standard. (IA.2)

The process used for the most recent review of the mission statement appears to have been effective in providing the opportunity for involvement among the various constituencies at the college in the development, approval, and communication of the mission statement college-wide. The only concern is that no specific information is provided as to what would prompt changes to the mission statement, only that revisions would be made "as necessary." (IA.3)

The college's mission statement is prominent in the Educational Master Plan and Resource and Facilities Plan and is a central component of program review and strategic planning as a whole. (IA.4)

Conclusions

The college's current mission statement appears to meet most of Standard IA. The college's work and adoption of the current mission statement meets the standard. The college is to be commended on the process and outcomes of this work and the linkage to institutional functions, planning and resource allocation. However, the college is not fully meeting Standard IA.1, in relation to how the college's efforts in the areas of SLOs, planning, evaluation or resource allocation have impacted students or improved institutional effectiveness. Due to the newness of the strategic planning and program review processes, little to no evidence is available yet of these impacts.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 2.

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations

The self-study report generally lacks meaningful analysis in the self evaluations of its performance in meeting the standards. Most evaluation sections simply contain the statement "This standard is met" with very little, if any, actual analysis of why this statement is being made. In concert with this absence of analysis, the self-study is wholly lacking in the use of evidence to support claims made about meeting the standards or prior recommendations. The report draws few direct connections between these claims and the evidence that supports them, and simply presents a list of reference items at the end of each substandard. In reading the entire self-study, several inconsistencies were found among the different standards. The report reads as though it was written by several different authors who did not collaborate to ensure consistency. For example, different information is found in Standard IV about planning than in Standard I. Finally, it was very disappointing that the evidence documents were not made available to the team well before the visit as is now the norm for most visits.

The college has made significant strides in the past year in the areas of strategic planning, integration of data in planning and evaluation, attempting to link program review to resource allocation, and SLO development and assessment. It is evident from the team's many interviews with faculty and staff that the president has wide support for his vision for planning at the college and from the review of many planning-related documents that the college has all the pieces required for integrated planning, evaluation and resource allocation. However, what appear to be missing are solid linkages between resource allocation and institutional effectiveness and a broad understanding amongst the campus constituencies of these processes. The new strategic planning process is still being refined, clarified and solidified.

Findings and Evidence

The self-study report details the dialogue that has occurred in relation to student learning outcomes (SLOs) and this effort appears to be comprehensive and inclusive, with dialogue occurring at various levels of the institution. The institution has demonstrated an effort to produce at least one student learning outcome in most areas and programs. The college has

begun discussion concerning institutional outcomes. Assessment rubrics for most student learning outcomes are in place. The program review process links the assessment of those outcomes to planning and resources, but the value of that data is unclear because these data are only now becoming available and have not yet been used to determine resource needs. (IB)

However, the team was unable to find evidence of dialogue that has occurred in relation to institutional effectiveness, which extends well beyond SLOs. In interviews with staff and faculty, they pointed to program review as determining program effectiveness and that these reviews cumulatively indicate institutional effectiveness. While dialogue occurs at the programmatic level, the college has yet to implement measures of institutional effectiveness. (IB.1)

The current institutional goals include measurable objectives and key performance indicators for each goal that will be assessed annually to determine progress being met. The intent is to use these goals as the foundation for the development of a five-year strategic plan during the 2009-10 academic year, which will begin with a comprehensive environmental scan. The annual leadership retreat, attended by a broad campus representation, sets goals and focuses attention on improving the institution. Attention to these goals was broadly evidenced through interviews with faculty, staff and administrators. However, the only data provided for how well the college is meeting its goals are the results from two different student surveys and how certain measures in these surveys have improved over time. The concern here is that these surveys provide no information regarding the goals that do not directly involve students such as the goals related to professional growth, fiscal resources, community leadership and shared governance. (IB.2)

Budget requests identified in the program reviews and unit plans are prioritized each year within each division, and then within each vice president's area. The different lists of priorities are then prioritized for the institution. The President's Cabinet reviews these priorities to identify the costs of the individual items and what resources are available to fund these requests. The president submits the proposed budget to the Board of Trustees.

Based on the self-study, a review of program reviews, unit plans, and budget requests, and discussions with several people involved in these processes, it appears that the college has not yet implemented fully-integrated evaluation, planning and resource allocation. As stated earlier, the president clearly has a vision for how to achieve integrated planning, but this vision, while well supported, is not yet broadly understood nor is it occurring. The team determines that there is a current lack of expertise on the campus with regard to assessment and data collection. (IB.3)

In reviewing the college's recent efforts in planning, it is clear that the president has the ultimate responsibility for overseeing planning. Prior to her departure, the former Dean of Institutional Research and Planning played a key role in the revamping of the program review process. Prior to the current president's arrival, it was unclear what exact role the office and its dean played in planning and evaluation. However, the role of this office is now being clarified as one, in working with the president, of leadership and support in the college's planning effort. (IB.3)

The Planning/Fiscal Council (PFC) has representatives from the various constituency groups at the college and evidence shows broad-based input from constituencies and comprehensive strategies for all campus components. (IB.4)

As a result of the newness of the program review and unit planning process, the college could provide little evidence of how the college's evaluation, planning and resource allocation processes have led to institutional improvements being made. (IB.4)

The college relies heavily on two student surveys to provide information on student experience. Other data found on the college's website include a Factbook, the Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC), and an enrollment report. The Factbook presents a variety of data about the demographics of the college's service area, the student population, and the college employees, and student achievement and outcome measures. In addition, programs are provided with student performance and program productivity data as part of the program review process. The college also publishes reports to the external and internal college community such as the President's Update, Annual Report, President's Vision Plan, and the State of the College Report 2008.

While the college has made an effort to make a large amount of information available, what appear to be missing are analyses of these data and how all these available data have been used for improvement. The Factbook provides many charts and tables, but little analysis and no evidence of the college having assessed whether the above efforts to communicate data on institutional quality are effective and sufficient. (IB.5)

The Planning/Fiscal Council (PFC) is responsible for reviewing the college's planning process, however, no timeline was found for when or how often this review has occurred or will occur. Again, little to no evidence is provided on how the college's planning process has led to any specific improvements. (IB.6)

Although the program review and student learning outcomes assessment processes are new, there are no current plans in place to evaluate the processes in order to assess and improve the newly instigated plans. Again, little evidence is available thus far on how the current program review process has led to specific improvements. (IB.7)

Conclusions

A laudable effort to develop dialogue about the implementation of SLO assessment has occurred with several areas completing assessment cycles within the last two years. While dialogue has occurred at the college regarding student learning outcomes (SLOs), no evidence was found of such a dialogue centered on the broader issue of institutional effectiveness. As a result, the team determines that the college is not fully meeting Standard IB.1.

The college has not provided any evidence of having measured its progress towards achieving its goals. Measurable objectives and performance indicators have only recently been developed that will be assessed on an annual basis, but as of the time of the visit, this assessment has not yet occurred. In addition, a broad based understanding of the new strategic planning process has yet to be developed. As a result, the team determines that the college is only partially meeting Standard IB.2.

The college appears to have the different components for evaluation, planning, and resource allocation, but how these processes fit together into an integrated system is not clear. Of particular concern is how the program review process effectively links to the unit plans and annual budget cycle. The team determines that the college is not fully meeting Standard IB.3.

Due to the newness of the strategic planning and program review processes, little to no evidence is available yet of how the college's efforts in the relation to SLOs, planning, evaluation or resource allocation have impacted students or improved institutional effectiveness, therefore the team determines that the college is not meeting Standard IB.4.

The college's recent efforts to more fully incorporate data and research into the evaluation and planning processes are to be recognized, but the interpretation and use of these data are lacking. The data collected from the SLO assessment process needs to be meaningful and integrated with quantitative data from the institutional resources on retention, success, etc. These findings reflect a lack of expertise in dealing with data and data analysis and indicate that the college is only partially meeting Standard IB.5.

The college's methods for assessing the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation processes are not well defined, having no detailed process, no specified timeline for when these assessments are to occur, and no evidence of whether these assessments have occurred and if they have, how these assessments have led to improvements being made to these processes. Therefore, the team determines that the college is not meeting Standards IB.6 or IB.7.

The evidence found in the self study, in documents provided by the college, and from interviewing a wide representation of people from different college constituencies indicates that the college is presently at the developmental level on the ACCJC rubric in both program review and planning, with some elements of proficiency in progress. In addition, when asked most staff placed the college somewhere between developmental and proficiency in these two areas.

The Planning/Fiscal Council and Program Review Committee have accepted their respective responsibilities within the planning process, and a framework is being developed to link program review to planning and resource allocation. The college's planning efforts have been assigned to the Planning/Fiscal Council, are linked to the college mission and goals, and reflect the participation of a broad constituent base.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Institutional Effectiveness

Develop and implement an institutional planning process that includes: measurable institutional goals and objectives with a timeline for the implementation and achievement of these goals, and a schedule for when the achievement of these will be assessed; more clearly defined links between the college's program review, unit planning and resource allocation processes as parts of an integrated process for continuous improvement; communication more broadly across the campus of the purposes and intended outcomes of each component of the planning process as well as the integrated planning process as a whole; an examination of institutional effectiveness through a broad-based dialogue that centers around clearly defined measures of effectiveness and the assessment of the effective use of resources; the opportunity for members from all constituency groups to fully participate in the process at all levels; a staff development program that permeates the institution to promote the effective use of data, including identification of where data are available; and clearly defined processes for assessing the effectiveness of the planning process as a whole, as well as each of the components, that includes timelines for evaluation, assigned responsibilities, and expected outcomes (Standards IB.1, IB.2, IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7, IIA.2, IIIA.6, IIID.1.a, IIID.3).

Standard II
Student Learning Programs and Services

General Observations

Overall the information in Standard II addresses the standards, but often shows weaknesses in: 1) programmatic descriptions, 2) over-reliance on anecdotal data without supportive evidence, 3) self-evaluative sections lacking data or at times failing to identify problems, 4) absence of adequate planning agendas and 5) inadequate participation by knowledgeable college authors.

The self study is not comprehensive or inclusive of many of the accomplishments of the college. In many cases, the team had to make the case for the college by requesting and reviewing information and data. For instance, the impression in Standard II of the work done on SLOs is incomplete and not up-to-date even in the program reviews conducted in spring 2008. The self study indicates that SLOs have been written and some rubrics have been developed, but indicates no closing of the quality improvement loop. Interviews and division evidence revealed that the process was much further along with several assessment loops closed during the last 18 months. In addition, no mention was made of student learning outcomes and discussion was limited to student satisfaction surveys without any integration on how those data informed the planning and budgeting processes.

A. Instructional Programs

General Observations

The institution does a good job of describing the student population in an attempt to identify the varied educational needs of its students. There is an abundance of data in the "Factbook" and in the information shared at the leadership retreat. Unfortunately the data is not referenced in plans or previous program review documents and does not seem to be integrated into evidence-based decisions. A new program review process shows evidence of linkage and integration of data and should provide better decision-making evidence in the future to enhance the instructional programs.

Findings and Evidence

The instructional programs are systematically assessed although this was not clear in the self study. The team found that the college embraces a newly adopted program review process, which includes student and program achievement, as well as the assessment of their student learning outcomes in both Student Services and Instruction. It appears that the program reviews available online accurately reflect the actual programs that underwent program review in 2007-2008.

The team found evidence of several high-quality instructional programs: the Virtual College, Career Technical Education, particularly the Public Safety programs, and the Honors program. The Public Safety program has clearly defined curriculum, student learning outcomes and program outcomes that include integrated data and could act as a model for other college constituencies (II A 1.a).

The college recognizes the important role of faculty in establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs. The college appears to have a seamless process for curriculum review and

approval. Distance education and hybrid course outlines undergo a similarly rigorous curriculum review and approval process as those aimed for traditional delivery mode. Furthermore, the SLOs for online and hybrid courses are the same as those offered in traditional on-campus courses. Through campus interviews, the committee ascertained that career and technical education programs rely on advisory committees to help establish competency levels and learning outcomes. (II.A.2.b)

Student achievement, learning outcomes and assessment information and data are included in the new program review process. However, of concern is the lack of analysis at the institutional level for issues such as student success and retention, progress in basic skills and student success in general education courses. The self study reported that 80% of all students assess into a basic skills course and that "by the end of the second term seven of ten students were no longer enrolled in classes." The self study indicates that "a broad range of basic skills courses in reading, English, ESL and mathematics" is offered (page 104). However, there are no data to support the statement, e.g. breadth and levels of courses. Rio Hondo general education courses have no pre-requisites, only advisories which are one level below the college level courses. A look at student success rates in common general education courses for fall 2007 reveal a disquieting pattern: many of the courses' success rates are lower than the state average within the disciplines and lower than basic skills success. (II.A.2.c)

The information and self evaluations in Standard II.A.2 are lacking in depth and rationale and possibly expertise by the people really involved in the processes. The college has implemented a new program review process but does not appear to have plans in place to assess the effectiveness of the process. The same exists in the development of SLOs. A college wide effort to address SLOs and to implement an assessment cycle is clearly evident, but there is no apparent plan to evaluate the process, guarantee college-wide discussion among the broad range of constituencies, or provide quality control efforts over the SLO, assessment technique, or quality of the data being generated. Interviews indicate that it is unclear to the college constituencies how the data from program review and SLO assessment actually link to planning and resource allocation. In addition to collaborating within instructional departments and reaching out to student service programs, the acquisition of essential student data from an institutional perspective is essential, but apparently not yet part of the culture of the college. (IIA.2.c)

There is a feeling that the campus is missing the rich collaboration across disciplines and fields that provides a seamless pathway for students. In order to meet this standard the team encourages the college to have college wide, cross-disciplinary dialogue and training in collaboration with student services, to develop an effective strategy of student success, retention and persistence. (II.A.2.c)

The SLO committee and college wide efforts to create and assess SLOs in instructional areas have been extensive. The SLO committee has an excellent understanding of the process and has worked to educate and organize the campus. However, the evidence on the SLO work at the division level needs to be reviewed and evaluated. Some of the rubrics used to collect data were lacking in clarity as an instrument for student assessment. Faculty need to be clear on the difference between grades and assessment through training in assessment methods and documentation of evidence. The template used for reporting assessment data had an built in formula which can produce errors if faculty did not follow template guidelines. This error was not identified by most departments using the template, leading the team to conclude that the

college is not analyzing nor using the data seriously. (II.A.2.c)

The college has implemented the assessment cycle at the course level, with all courses having assessed student performance in at least one SLO during 2007-2008 and made action plans for improvement. The assessment of student performance on course SLOs is being conducted in the classroom at the section level through assignments that are part of the students' grades. The team did find an abundance of evidence of the implementation of course SLOs in programs across the college. (II.A.2.c)

The college required that all programs develop SLOs by the end of the spring 2008 semester and many programs are currently in the process of collecting student performance data this semester, again, in the individual classrooms. The college has drafted institutional SLOs and, while close to a final version, they have not yet been finalized. The SLO Committee is currently considering the process the college will use for assessment of these institutional SLOs and expects to have a formal assessment plan by the end of this academic year. (II.A.2.c)

Each division at the college has an appointed SLO coordinator who reports to both the division dean and the SLO committee on the progress of their division with SLOs. These coordinators are also charged with ensuring that the programs in their division are going through the steps of the assessment cycle for all their courses, programs and at the institutional level. All SLO information is currently kept in each division office, including the SLO statement, rubric with performance standards, student performance data, and action plans for improvement. (II.A.2.c)

In meeting with members of the SLO committee, the team found the members to have a firm grasp of the SLO assessment cycle, how SLOs lead to improvement, and the dialogue that is necessary for their success. When asked if they were indeed representative of the faculty at large in terms of their understanding of SLOs, they indicated that, yes, this type of understanding would be found among their colleagues across the college. However, after reviewing SLO evidence, the team found the quality of the student performance data collected and the plans for improvement to be very inconsistent, which indicates that the understanding of the SLO committee is not as widespread as they perceived. (II.A.2.c)

In regard to the student performance data, while faculty are required to develop three to five performance standards for each course SLO, in reviewing the data for several programs, the scores are identical on each performance standard, with no variation in students' achievement on the different performance standards. In regard to the action plans, while some programs understand how SLOs are used to improve student success and have suggested innovative solutions, others make suggested improvements such as getting students to drop earlier to improve their numbers or lowering the standards of the SLOs so more students can achieve them. Also at issue is the de facto 70 percent threshold, held by many programs as evidence of success with no further need for analysis and improvement. Most programs that had SLO achievement rates above 70% indicated that no further action was needed because they had met this threshold. Given these above findings, the team concludes that there is a quality control issue that is not being adequately addressed through the current structure of division SLO coordinators. (II.A.2.c)

Of a more serious nature was the problem with analysis of the data. In several cases the data was not what the faculty intended and the decision for improvement was to *change the SLO* in order

to get 70% student success rather than to review any contributing factors to the present low success. This type of approach to the achievement of SLOs, in the opinion of the team, compromises the rigor that the faculty initially established for courses. In another area when disappointing results were found through the assessment, the faculty concluded in the section on changes to improve learning outcomes, that, "*Although the percentage of students with success is significant we would like to see an increase in success at the lower end of the assessment level. Early withdrawals or drops would help improve the numbers and in future semesters an effort to correct this will be done.*" The team views both of these comments as an indication of a misguided approach to artificially enhancing student success, retention, and persistence, as well as an evasion of a thorough evaluation of the delivery mode to determine course and program effectiveness. (II.A.2.c., d)

The team found no evidence that the college has engaged the faculty in dialogue pertaining to the different learning modalities to meet the diverse needs of students. Furthermore, the team found no evidence that the college has performed assessment of the learning styles of its students. Even though there are some very effective programs in place that promote student success as well as social and academic integration, such as TRIO and Puente, the college does not appear to have engaged in sharing best practices that already exist on the campus.(IIA.2.d)

The SLO Committee has focused primarily on SLOs in the instructional programs and was unable to offer any concrete information on the progress made in the student services areas. However, the team was able to find on its own evidence of SLOs having been identified, assessment data collected and action plans developed in most if not all student services areas. In reviewing this SLO evidence in more detail, the team found that the student service programs relied heavily upon indirect measures of student learning (i.e., surveys), and need to consider including more direct measures of student learning. Overall, there was a disconnect between the SLO efforts in Instruction and Student Services that the college needs to address in order to ensure a truly comprehensive and inclusive SLO process throughout the college.(IIA.2.f)

The institution has a general education philosophy, as stated in the self study, that the institution is in the developmental stage of identifying outcomes that would serve to define inclusion of courses in the general education program. The draft general education outcomes and philosophy include all the areas in the accreditation standards. (II.A.3)

All degree programs include a focused study in at least one area. The curriculum committee has worked hard to review and create compliant degrees in the interdisciplinary areas. (IIA.4 and 5)

The program SLOs are not published in the 2008-2009 catalog, but the college is now aware of this requirement and will plan to publish them in the 2009-2010 catalog. The intention is that these program SLOs will align with the program review process to inform program's needs assessment, and identify the resources needed to improve student learning. (II. A.6)

The team believes that the institution supports and encourages academic freedom, honesty and responsibility with clear commitment to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge based upon a review of the college evidence and materials provided. (II.A.7)

Rio Hondo has no curricula in foreign locations (overseas programs). (II.A.8)

Conclusions

The college has made some progress in the last year toward implementing student learning outcomes for courses and student services. Some work has been done at the program level and discussion has begun with draft institutional SLOs. The college is clearly at the development stage of the ACCJC rubric on student learning outcomes and further training for faculty on quality SLOs and assessment needs to occur. Institutionally, discussions on research questions and inquiry about student success as a college are essential. The college needs to establish what quality outcomes and measures determine that student learning is occurring. Oversight of the SLO assessment process and mentoring of faculty are essential at this stage of development.

The institution has a great deal of work ahead in the area of evaluation and linking planning and program review to the resource allocation process. The college lacks expertise in data analysis and integration. Training in this area, including direct and indirect data, valid and reliable assessment and the appropriate use of data for improvement are crucial. Continue to develop and assess the new planning model and particularly the program review process.

Recommendations

The team urges the college administration to develop a plan to clarify the reporting pathways of the various governance bodies; that plan should exemplify the linkages between the unit plans, program review, and the planning and resource allocation process (see Recommendation 1.)

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

The college is at the developmental level on the ACCJC rubric for student learning outcomes and has established an initial framework and assessment strategy at the course level. In order to meet the ACCJC standard of proficiency of student learning outcomes by 2012, the visiting team recommends the college create an implementation timeline; regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the SLO assessment process; facilitate college wide discussions; develop and implement training for all constituencies integrating college wide efforts between Instruction and Student Services; create a special emphasis on identifying valid and reliable data and use of authentic assessment; and implement a system of quality control to ensure meaningful and accurate assessment of student learning throughout the college. (II.A.1, 2, 3)

B. Student Support Services

General Observations

Rio Hondo College offers comprehensive student services and activities to support the instructional programs. These include: academic advisement, assessment, orientation, counseling, transfer assistance, career counseling, CalWorks programs, Disabled Students and Programs and Services, Extended Opportunity Program and Services, GEAR UP, PUENTE Program, financial aid, health and psychological services, registration, tutoring, student activities and athletics.

Findings and Evidence

The Student Services Programs participate in reviewing their quality and effectiveness in delivering services to students on a systematic regular basis through local student satisfaction surveys, the use of the Noel Levitz Student Survey, and the program review process. The data are used to measure the developed student learning outcomes and program effectiveness for the specific Student Services departments.

The comprehensive services are delivered from the main campus, with matriculation services provided at local feeder high schools that assist in providing a smooth transition to Rio Hondo. Those students attending programs that are held at other sites access student services either via the web, the use of fax, or mail.

Online student support services are available to students in support of the Virtual College. The online counseling component is very comprehensive, there is an online admissions form for first time students, and various departments are positioning themselves to increase online services, while others continue to have the conversation as to the appropriateness of extending those services to students in the online environment. (II.B.1)

The catalog provides the institution's official name, address, and telephone number on the first page, but neglects to list the college's official web site address. This is listed on the back cover of the catalog which is quite obscure. The catalog also does not list its academic calendar and program length; however the other policies and services available to the students are accounted for. (II.B.2.a)

Information is found to be current, but in some cases not clear. It is not clear in the catalog that the out-of-state student is responsible for the in-state fees and the out-of-state tuition, or just the out-of-state tuition. However, it is made clear in the schedule of classes. There are two other questions needing to be resolved that are listed in the catalog. One under Admissions (pg. 11), requires a student who has been dismissed from another institution to seek approval from the Director of Admissions and Records, and the other, under Student Financial Obligation (pg. 17), which lists the withholding of sending transcripts due to any outstanding financial obligation to the college. (II.B.2.b)

All major policies affecting students listed under Standard II.B.2.c are found to be precise, accurate, and current. The student grievance process and files provide evidence that students are provided due process and all grievances are resolved in a timely manner. (2.B.2.c)

The college catalog makes appropriate references in terms of offices, phone numbers and other publications where other policies may be found. The student handbook, the faculty handbook, and various other brochures publish policies that concern students. (2.B.2.d)

The college has institutionalized an Academic Assistance System (AAS) that provides communication between the counseling department and the instructional faculty on students who need intervention and referral to learning resources. This process has been stopped in order to gain input to make this a more effective one. Plans are in place to collaborate with instructional faculty to create a better product that will enhance its effectiveness and increase faculty usage.

Counselors also make presentations in classrooms to provide information on college resources that are available to them. (II.B.3)

Previously the college participated in the Equity for All Projects conducted by the University of Southern California (USC) which provided them with data representing that 80% of all students assess into a basic skills course and that *"by the end of the second term seven of ten students were no longer enrolled in student classes,"* that prompted the institution to conclude that *"a deeper college analysis needs to be made regarding student utilization of college resources and their impact on student retention, persistence, and classroom success."* More recently the college participated in the Benchmark Project to lay a more current foundation on how students were progressing. Both projects alerted the college of the need to align services that would significantly improve and support the academic programs. From this, a college wide initiative was embarked upon through an Enrollment Strategies Team made up of academic and student services faculty leaders and managers. Other initiatives that will soon be implemented to develop a seamless relationship between Instruction and Student Services are the Basic Skills Initiative, the Early College Academy, and a college wide buy-in to a Student Success Model. Evidence indicates the institution is researching and identifying the learning support needs of their students and the services and programs that they offer, and it demonstrates an awareness of a need for a strong relationship between Instruction and Student Services. (II.B.3)

The college is consistent in offering services to students on the Rio Hondo Campus. The Admissions and Records office provides assessment testing and college orientation in high school campuses and in community sites where college instruction takes place. The college is in the process of developing an online orientation program and is developing a computerized assessment process. In many off-campus sites where classes are offered, registration takes place on site. Information is clearly published and provided to off-campus students that full services are not available online and that for students to fully matriculate they must seek those services on the Rio Hondo Campus. For those students attending courses held in locations other than on the main campus, the college has extended evening and Saturday hours to provide access to the services needed. (II.B.3.a)

The institution provides co-curricular activities that have taken place in the areas of the arts and cultural programs with the creation of the Arts@ Rio DVD. Other learning opportunities offered students was the Geographical Informational Systems (GIS) Day, and the Environmental Symposium held to seek input for the revision of the Environmental Technology Program. There is evidence that various cultural, educational, and social events sponsored through the Student Activities Office, the Associated Students of Rio Hondo (ASB), and the Inter-Club Council, enhance the college environment for all of its students. (II.B.3.b)

The ASB is the official student voice and is responsible for selecting students to serve on appropriate college committees and task forces. Evidence supports that students are provided the opportunity to serve on several governance committees, hiring committees, and on the Student Grievance Board. The Student Activities Department has implemented the assessment of student learning outcomes to measure the student learning of the civic and personal skills that are presented at several student leadership conferences and workshops, and then used in running the business of the ASB. This supports the development of civic and personal responsibilities. (II.B.3.b)

The recent increase of two full time counselors demonstrates the college acknowledges the value that counseling services provide to the retention, persistence and success of their students. To facilitate the flow of current information, the counselors meet regularly as a Counseling Department. More recently, a Counselor Consortium was formed for counselors to meet regardless of what program they are hired to serve. They will all receive the most current information to lay a solid foundation so that students will receive consistent information. (II.B.3.c)

The college provides an environment of culturally diverse activities throughout the academic year by featuring campus speakers, free speech demonstrations, and musical entertainment. Art shows, theatrical presentations and guest speaker forums that are designed to enhance student and employee awareness of the various and diverse communities are scheduled. The Dia De La Familia day and the development of the Chicano Studies Program also support the institution's efforts to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of diversity. (II.B.3.d)

According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office website, the assessment tools used for placement purposes are current and have been appropriately reviewed and validated to ensure their effectiveness while minimizing biases. They also use a local survey as a multiple measures assessment, which provides additional information to use when counseling students in reviewing their scores for placement. (II.B.3.e)

Established policies for release of student records are published under College Policies and Procedures in the college's catalog, in the schedule under General Information, and in the student handbook. Admissions and Records follows the policies and established educational code to provide secure backup of all files. (II.B.3.f)

The evidence reviewed strongly supports that student support services are being evaluated to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. This was accomplished through the use of local student surveys and the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey. The data collected was used to assess student learning outcomes, which is analyzed and used to improve the various services. A timeline has been established for ongoing assessment and program reviews. (II.B.4)

Conclusions

The Student Services division is commended for fully adopting and engaging in the program review process as well as a continuous improvement model. The student services department understands the relationship of the annual Unit Plans, the Program Review Cycle, and how they relate to resource allocation, the mission of the institution and program effectiveness, but there is not understanding how their programs support institutional effectiveness overall.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3: Student Support Services

The team recommends that the catalogue include the college's official web site address, the current academic calendar, the program length for the academic year the catalog covers, and a clear communication of the educational cost for non-resident students. (II.B.2.b)

C. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations

The library facility is currently located on the second, third and fourth floors of the Library building. The Library has 36 computer workstations, providing access to the library's catalog, databases, subject guides, and other resources via the library Webpage. In addition to Internet access, the workstations include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software to help students complete their assignments. Two of the workstations have specialized software to assist disabled students. The Library was the first wireless location on campus. The library also has 24 laptop computers that the librarians use for hands-on library instruction.

The library is moving into a new "state-of-the-art" Learning Resource Center (LRC) that is currently under construction. The Learning Resource Center will have dedicated space for reading and writing program facilities, distance learning assistance facilities, a multimedia production studio, and teleconferencing capabilities.

The library collection includes 110,832 book volumes, 202 current periodical subscriptions, 1,215 videos, 1,373 compact discs, and 15 full-text databases containing articles from thousands of newspapers, magazines, and journals. The Library reserve collection of approximately 500 items provides short-term access to textbooks and other course materials for 180 courses.

Findings and Evidence

The evidence supports the data reported in Standard II.C of the self study. The Rio Hondo library and Learning Support Services provide quality support for instructional programs and rely on the expertise of faculty, including librarians. The librarians are active on campus committees in student service activities and communicate regularly with instructional faculty.

The library relies heavily upon the librarians who maintain a regular ongoing assessment of the depth and breadth of their collection, the monthly usage rate, and currency of the collection. This regular assessment coupled with monthly statistics, are used to improve the library resources on a regular basis as budget allows. (II.C.1).

The college provides learning support in a variety of locations and venues; these include the Math and Science Center, the Learning Assistance Center, and the Technical Training Centers. In the Math and Science Center, students may select from self-paced courses that include assessment and tutoring. Students who are taking regularly scheduled courses are also eligible for tutoring and full use of the lab facilities. In the Learning Assistance Center, a writing lab assists students in developing and improving their writing and language skills through individual conferences with composition instructors and tutors. (II.C.1.b)

The college provides ongoing instruction for library users and helps to develop information competency skills through courses both on-ground and online. The self study indicates a concern with under-enrollment in the library course. However at the time of the visit the courses had doubled and plans were to increase again the next semester (spring 2008). The library has created a variety of online training on the library website in order to meet the needs of the students and provide access for distance education students. The library webpage on information competency is thorough and educational although the self study states there is not an institutional wide plan to teach information competency skills to all students. (II.C.1.b) The library assessment of student needs resulted in extended library hours. In addition, the library provides 24-hour access through numerous databases via the website. (II.C.1.c.)

The library has completed an extensive program review process with data analysis and processes for improvement. In addition, the library has embraced student learning outcomes and is actively involved in assessing the outcomes and using the data to improve services. (Standard II.C.2.)

Conclusions

The college meets this standard.

Recommendations

None.

STANDARD III
RESOURCES

A. Human Resources

General Observations

The college enjoys an efficient and effective human resources program. Major human resource programs are well-run and provide employees with a positive work environment. Recruitment and hiring programs operate according to policy although the college is engaged in a review of the policy on academic hiring (Board Policy 5025). The college does not have a formal process for evaluating the effective use of human resources. Faculty, staff, and management evaluations are completed, but, in the case of non-faculty, not always on time. Professional development programs for classified staff have been implemented since the last team visit and appear to be thriving. The college needs to address the establishment of a Code of Ethics, SLOs as an evaluation component for everyone responsible for producing student learning outcomes, the development of policy regarding students' rights and grievance procedures, and the development of a human resources plan.

Findings and Evidence

The team found effective recruitment and selection processes. Board policies (7120, 5025, and 5070) assure the fair and equitable recruitment and employment of personnel. At the request of the faculty, the college is reviewing policy 5025 for possible revision. A review of selected job descriptions indicates that they provide a clear description of position duties, responsibilities and authority. Discussions with faculty leadership indicate that the faculty members play a significant role in selection of new faculty. (III.A.1.a)

The college adheres to evaluation policies pertinent to each employee group, including CSEA.CBA – Article, 9, CSEA.CBA – Article 6.13, Board Policy 7255, and College Procedure 5550. While evaluations for faculty are conducted in a timely manner, it reports that evaluations for classified staff and management often miss deadline. (III.A.1.b)

Faculty evaluations for tenured faculty and others do not include student learning outcomes as a distinct component. Peer reviews may include information on SLOs but it is not required. Faculty evaluations for non-tenured faculty do include a specific component addressing SLOs. (III.A.1.c)

While the Board of Trustees has a Code of Ethics (BP 2715) the college does not have a written code of ethics for employees. The Self Study indicated that a needs analysis by the college "...suggests that current procedures and policies that ensure professionalism and high ethical standards are in place." Nonetheless the standard is clear that a college must "uphold a written code of ethics for all its personnel." The college does not meet this standard. (III.A.1.d)

The college has as ratio fulltime to part-time faculty of 75%. This commitment to full-time

faculty allows the faculty to play a continuous and effective role on shared governance committees. The Self Study reports that the college has sufficient administrative and classified staff although discussions with classified leadership would indicate that the college is in need of additional classified support. Based on the evidence in the Self Study, the college's faculty, administration and classified staff are qualified educationally and professionally for their positions. (III.A.2)

A review of the Human Resource Policies that are online indicates the college has established written policies to ensure fairness in hiring. The team determined, through discussion with faculty and classified leadership, a general satisfaction that these policies are used. The college uses the Community College League of California templates to remain current in these policies. (III.A.3.a) Personnel records are secured in Human Resources in locked files. Employees wishing to review their files must do so with a confidential Human Resources employee present and must sign a document indicating the date of the review. (III.A.3.b)

The team found that the college is committed to and has policies and practices in place to support a commitment to equity and diversity. The college meets this standard through an array of programs, practices, and policies that support a diverse group of personnel. These activities are well publicized to all employees. The college has appropriate policies and practices in place that demonstrate a concern for issues of equity and diversity. The latest equity and diversity plan has not yet been reviewed or approved by the Board. Data provided by the Chancellor's Office is being challenged statewide. While current data indicates that the college's faculty and administration are not as diverse as its student body, a review of recent hires indicates that significant efforts are being made in the area of diversity. Each February the Director of Human Resources assesses its employee pool. While the policies regarding integrity related to faculty and staff are clear, those for students are not. The college is aware of this and is working to address this in the next iteration of the Student Handbook. The team determined that this standard is partially met. (III.A.4.a.b. &c)

Professional development activities at the college are planned, implemented and evaluated by the Staff Development/Flex shared governance committee. The evidence in the Self Study was validated by the 2006-07 and 2007-08 Staff Development/Flex Reports. Particularly notable is the commitment in 2007-08 of $15,000 for specific classified programs and to expand Flex day activities to include activities of interest to administrators and classified staff. The Staff Development/Flex reports indicate that the college engages in an evaluation of their programs and that these evaluations lead to program improvement. This Self Study contains a Planning Agenda to: 1) annually have managers identify and evaluate their Professional Development plans with their supervisors and conduct similar reviews with their staffs; and 2) support training for professional growth and on-going training for staff and faculty who require regular upgrading of their skills in order to better perform their jobs. (III.A.5.a&b)

The team found no evidence of a formal process for human resource planning. Nonetheless, the team did find that decisions related to human resources are driven by the program review process, unit and departmental planning, governance committees dealing with faculty and classified hiring, and the budget process. The Self Study acknowledges that there is "no mechanism in place to gauge whether the current evaluation process is an effective tool to assess

the effective use of human resources or as the basis for improvement...." A question remains concerning the linkage of human resource planning to institutional planning, and the assessment of how effectively human resources are used. The new strategic planning process instituted this year by the college president shows potential for accomplishing such linkages and assessments. (III.A.6)

Conclusions

The college nominally meets this standard. While much progress has been made in strengthening the human resources program, and in particular the Professional Development program, the college needs to address the establishment of a Code of Ethics, SLOs as an evaluation component for everyone responsible for producing student learning outcomes, the development of policy regarding students' rights and grievance procedures, and the development of a human resources plan.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1 (III.A.6)

Recommendation 4: Human Resources

The team recommends the college develop and approve a code of ethics for all employees. (III.A.1.d)

B. Physical Resources

General Observations

The college has made significant progress in improving and upgrading its physical plant since the last accreditation visit. In the past few years, the college has completed a pedestrian bridge, a seismic retrofit, the remodel of the M&O facility, and Phases I and II of the Santa Fe Springs facility. The college is currently engaged in a large number of construction and renovation projections. During the visit, the team observed a major renovation of the Applied Technology building, and construction of a new Learning Resource Center, infrastructure, and central plant. The college appears to have put in place a successful plan to manage this construction with a minimum impact on student learning and provides weekly e-mail updates and student material at the start of each semester. In the immediate future, the college will begin work on the Physical Education facility, Administration of Justice building, the Student Services building and the El Monte/Whittier center. The college presented a clean and well maintained campus.

Findings and Evidence

Rio Hondo College sits on 188 acres of hillside property and has two off-site properties. The college has a comprehensive facility of approximately 500,000 gross square feet. In 2004 the college passed a local bond measure of $250 million. The college has developed a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan, approved in 2006, driven by an Educational Master Plan, completed in 2002. It should be noted that this is a significant improvement from the last self

study. The Facilities Master Plan addresses the learning environment, safety and access. Equipment replacement is addressed through annual budget appropriations. The college uses the State Schedule Maintenance process and the Schedule 25 planning tool to evaluate facilities and infrastructure. The college relies on its Educational Master Plan and Facilities Master Plan to determine and evaluate facility needs. This is evidenced in the decision to acquire two off-site properties for future facility growth. The 2002 Educational Master Plan identified this need based on existing leased facilities and the 2006 Facilities Master Plan reflects this recommendation. Planning for the renovation of the existing LRC is tied to space utilization requirements for Communications and Social Studies. User groups assist the outside planners with the design and layout of classrooms and offices. While program review documents are used to identify facility requirements, users must submit a facilities request to get their needs considered by the Facilities Committee or identify their needs through unit plans to get consideration for funding through the budget process. Equipment needs are identified through unit plan requests or the annual requests for one-time funds. The Facilities Director has a plan for the replacement of his equipment and college vehicles and a budget for this purpose. The college has a comprehensive inventory of technology equipment and a plan for replacement. (III.B.1.a)

The college acknowledges that access on this hillside property is an issue and has made accessibility a priority in its Facility Master Plan. The college has invested heavily in a tram service that circulates through the campus throughout the day and has instituted the "GO RIO" bus transportation program whereby students receive a free bus pass. Safety and security were issues for students, as were parking and lighting in the parking lots. Safety on campus is addressed through security operations and the Emergency Response Plan. In the past few years, the college has upgraded its lighting in the parking lots and upgraded its security plan which in turn led to the hiring of a new contract security company and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department. Additional lighting and parking are elements of the current Facilities Master Plan. The college has recently completed an ADA Master Plan and is updating its environmental hazard program. A new pedestrian bridge from the primary student parking lot and drop off site to the upper quad addressed both safety and access issues. The college has developed a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan and is implementing the training necessary to be in compliance with the State Emergency Management System and the National Incident Management System. (III.B.1.b)

The college appears to be doing an effective job of planning and evaluating its facilities on a regular basis and is taking utilization and data into account. The passage of the local bond measure and the college's success in obtaining state funding for projects is evidence that the college is effectively planning for its facility needs. The Facility Master Plan is data driven for classroom and laboratory space. The college has produced two Resource and Facilities Master Plans, in 2005 and 2008. These plans contain data on facility inventory, divisional data on Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH) and assigned square footage for programs, capacity load ratios and projections and describe a plan for Total Cost of Ownership. However, the college has not yet implemented a Total Cost of Ownership program for new facilities. The Interim Director of Facilities Services has developed a Maintenance Plan that identifies staffing and operating cost requirements as new buildings come on line but these do not appear part of the formal facilities planning process. (III.B.2.a)

There is a strong sense at the college that physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. Evidence indicates that to a large extent this is true. The 2006 Facilities Master Plan has a number of linkages to the 2002 Educational Master Plan. The 2005 and 2008 Resource and Facilities Master Plans combine data on educational and student services programs and space requirements with future building needs. The 2008 Five-Year Construction Plan for the 2010-14 fiscal years is linked to the 2008 Resource and Facilities Master Plans. The college reports that the Technology Plan is designed to implement elements of the Resource and Facilities Master Plan and Educational Master Plan. (III.B.2.b)

Conclusions

The college meets this standard. The college has made significant improvement in its facilities planning and, as a result of its local capital bond and state funds, has begun to renovate and construct new facilities, improve its infrastructure and address technology needs. The campus was clean and well maintained. Safety and security are a concern for students and the college has taken and is taking steps to address these issues.

Recommendations
None

C. Technology Resources

General Observations

The college has a successful information technology program as evidenced by general campus support for the ITS department. The college has a long history of technology planning and regularly produces a five-year Technology Plan. The plan is comprehensive and has produced the resources necessary to maintain and improve the technology infrastructure and equipment of the college.

Findings and Evidence

The college has a history of producing five year technology plans which address the various technology needs of the college. The current technology plan addresses integrated administrative systems, electronic learning infrastructure, technology enabled teaching and learning, information literacy and electronic resources. The plan includes performance measurements, a review of annual accomplishments and ITS staffing requirements. This plan allows the college to provide the hardware, software and training necessary to support student learning and administrative needs. The college has in place a disaster recovery program and insures privacy and security. The college has a large distance education program which is adequately supported by the ITS department. (III.C.1.a)

The Technology Plan addresses the issue of training and one staff person is assigned to provide training on all new software. The Plan calls for ongoing training activities and requires all vendors to provide training as part of the implementation of all new software. The Virtual College provides training to faculty on the use of all new products and in using the various online programs. Training for the Virtual College is handled by faculty and two classified

employees assigned to the Learning Resource Center. Training on the new Banner software is a priority for the coming year. (Standard III.C.1.b) The college has developed a database for all technology equipment which allows it to evaluate and replace computers, servers, and printers as necessary. The Technology Plan addresses the issue of a three-year replacement plan which has been put in place. With the passage of the bond measure the college has made significant progress in upgrading its network and IT infrastructure, improved classroom computing and has established a $500,000 ongoing budget line item to implement the equipment replacement program. (III.C.1.c)

The distribution of technology is driven by two independent efforts. The first is an annual assessment by the Director of Information and Technology Services (ITS), who meets with each unit manager to discuss the current status of their technology and their technology issues. The second is technology issues that are developed through the budget process. These issues are taken to the Technology Committee for consideration and eventually to the Planning/Fiscal Committee for possible funding. If funded, these issues are included in the Technology Plan. The college has made a significant effort to upgrade its technology infrastructure including the purchase of a new Voice over IP telephone system and the installation of the new Berbee communication system that allows for emergency communication throughout the college. The college has recently upgraded its network and has installed new cabling in the Computer Center and is planning to install a wireless network campus-wide. The college has hired a consultant to assist in developing a long-term plan for the maintenance and upgrade of its technology infrastructure. The current bond program is funding much of this infrastructure upgrade. (III.C.1.d)

The college has a history of effective technology planning and has committed the resources necessary to implement many of its technology initiatives. The current Facilities Master Plan addresses technology needs in all new facilities. The program review process is used to assess the effectiveness of technology and to identify new technology needs which must be included in the annual budget request process for consideration. Technology planning appears to be comprehensive and is driven by planning activities at the program and department levels. (III.C.2)

Conclusions

The college meets this standard. The college has a history of strong technology planning and implementation. The team commends the college for its commitment to planning and the allocation of resources to support its technology infrastructure and equipment.

Recommendations
None

D. Financial Resources

General Observations

The college is a financially sound institution with strong and stable fiscal management. The college has successfully managed the current state fiscal crisis without impact to its operations or

reserves. The college is addressing its Post Retirement Benefits obligation and is successfully managing a $250 million capital bond. The college relies on the Planning/Fiscal Council and several governance committees to develop resource requirements and coordinate the budget with the institution's planning processes.

Findings and Evidence

A review of the annual budget documents, the annual audits and an analysis of key indicators (FTES, reserves and the percentage of budget committed to personnel) indicate that the college has adequate resources to meet its needs. While its enrollments are fluctuating they do not seem to be producing a negative fiscal impact.

The college has a budget and financial planning process that relies on data and the program review process. While financial planning takes into account the planning activities for technology and facilities there does not appear to be a linkage to the college's strategic planning efforts except through the college's Planning/Fiscal Committee that oversees both planning and budgeting. Evidence was found that links budgeting to program review. This is particularly evident in budgeting for faculty and classified positions. The team successfully tracked the funding of three faculty and three classified positions back to the appropriate program review document. Additional evidence was found in the One-Time Budget Requests for 2006-07. The college has implemented a new process of Unit Plans that do tie to the new institutional goals and objectives and which state resource requirements. The successful implementation of this new process should be evaluated by future accrediting teams. (III.D.1.a)

The college has demonstrated a realistic and conservative approach to financial resource planning, and its expenditure plans reflect this approach. The college relies on fiscal projections provided by the State and prior year actual revenues. The college does not budget growth dollars in the year earned, but rather includes such funds in the subsequent year budgeting. The college has successfully outsourced its bookstore and food services operations which generate additional revenues for the institution. While grants are not sought or applied for to directly meet a college goal, all grant applications are reviewed by the President's Council to determine the benefit and potential cost to the institution. According to the Grants Officer the new strategic plan will be used to help guide future grant application. According to the college president, the Foundation provides minor financial assistance to the operating budget of the college. The president has asked the Foundation to develop its endowment rather than allocate resources to the college. The Foundation Board has identified a number of fund raising initiatives. The team was not able to validate that these projects were developed as a result of the college's planning activities or in support of a specific strategic goal. (III.D.1.b)

The college's Planning/Fiscal Council makes recommendations regarding the development, planning and budgeting of revenues and has addressed its long term liabilities. This is demonstrated by the college's decision to address the GASB 43 and 45 obligations regarding Post Retirement Benefits. The college has conducted an actuarial study on its post retirement benefit obligations and has begun to reserve funds to meet that obligation. The college currently budgets its pay-as-you-go obligation and the accrued liability obligation in its annual budget. The college appropriately accounts for vacation and illness balances and has partially funded these liabilities. (III.D.1.c)

The college does not have written guidelines or procedures for financial planning and budget development other than those contained on the budget request forms. However, all constituencies have appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of the budget through various governance committees and the Planning/Fiscal Council. The college communicates planning and budgeting decisions back to the college community through the Planning/Fiscal Council and the Administrative Council comprised of all administrators. (III.D.1.d)

The college relies on the financial management system of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools and a separate system for purchasing and contracts. Unit managers receive hard copy monthly reports that are adequate for controls on expenditures. There are no plans for an online ability to check account budgets and balances. A review of past audit reports indicates that the administration promptly responds to all audit findings with one exception. This exception was repeated twice and correction of this exception is tied to the implementation of a new student system. The college is currently in the process of installing the Banner System which should resolve this problem. (III.D.2.a and b)

The college maintains sufficient cash flow and reserves to meet its operating needs and unanticipated expenditures. The Fiscal Services staff regularly completes cash flow projections. The college was able to meet its cash flow needs for 2008-09 despite a three-month delay in the release of apportionments due to the delay in the passage of the state budget. The college belongs to two risk management pools, one for Worker's Compensation and one for property and liability insurance. A review of audits indicates that both pools are financially sound. (III.D.2.c)

A review of annual audits and discussion with staff indicate that the college provides reasonable and effective oversight of finances including auxiliary operations, categorical programs and grants, and that these programs are operated in a manner consistent with the goals and mission of the college. (Standard III.D.2.d and e) A review of the contracts process and discussion with the Director of Contracts indicates that the college maintains appropriate provisions to protect the integrity of the institution and that contracts are consistent with the mission of the college. The college's contracts have been either prepared or reviewed by legal counsel and the college usually requires vendors to use the college contract document. (III.D.2.f)

The Vice President of Finance and Business is charged with the responsibility for regularly evaluating the college's financial management processes and improving the financial management systems. The Vice President indicates that this is done annually, but there was no written evidence. The team recommends that the college consider conducting an external management audit on a recurring basis to satisfy this standard. (III.D.2.g)

While the self study indicated that there is a systematic assessment of the effective use of resources, no evidence was found that such a process exists. Rather, according to the Vice President of Finance and Business, resource assessments are accomplished as part of program review, at the department level and during the budget development process. The Grants Officer who is working on the strategic plan process indicated that assessment is a key component of the four year strategic planning process. (III.D.3)

Conclusions

The college partially meets this standard. The college has strong, effective fiscal leadership. The Vice President of Finance and Business is well respected and trusted by the college community. The college is strong financially and is conservative in its fiscal management. A question remains concerning the linkage of financial planning to institutional planning, and the assessment of how effectively financial resources are used, although evidence was found that the technology and facilities plans are used for budgeting purposes. The new strategic planning process instituted this year by the college president shows potential for accomplishing such linkages and assessments.

Recommendation:

See Recommendation 1 (III.D.1.a & D.3)

STANDARD IV
Leadership and Governance

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Comments

The college is in the midst of great change, reflection, and transformation. A construction program, an accreditation self-study, and the implementation of a new management information system present leaders with the challenge of developing many programs and processes at a very quick pace.

Since the arrival of the current President, the college has been involved in decision-making, strategic planning, governance, and the continual improvement of programs across the institution. These include: campus-wide development of program reviews, the integration of program review findings into the resource allocation process, development of college goals, implementation of a data-based strategic planning program and development of an organizational structure and governance manual.

Together, these initiatives promote clarity about institutional goals, departmental responsibilities, and the leadership roles of staff, faculty, and Board members in planning and policymaking. Furthermore, the President is working hard to have the campus develop measures of institutional effectiveness. Since many of these initiatives and processes are new, some staff and faculty report that there appears to be some lag time between the development of change processes and the dissemination of this material to the greater campus community.

The President appears aware of this challenge, however, and has developed processes and communication programs that reach out to the community for feedback on change. These include campus leadership and Board retreats on strategic planning and governance.

Findings and Evidence

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve. (IV.A)

Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation. (IV.A.1)

Given the emphasis on program review as a driving element of planning, the college has emphasized the responsibility of faculty and staff in improving the institution. Feedback from members of the Planning and Fiscal Council indicates, however, that there may be a need for

senior leadership to be more intentional in inviting feedback from their divisions as program reviews are developed and implemented.

Two complicating themes arose out of our campus interviews. The first relates to the lack of confidence that many faculty and staff have in the judgment of the Board of Trustees. Tension and concern that grew out of the 2007 presidential search process has contributed to a general sense of mistrust of the Board. This manifested itself in no-confidence votes by every constituency group on campus in 2007. In one campus meeting during the visit, a community member referred to the votes as "recognizing the arrogance" of the Board. This situation has been compounded by the Standard IV committee's assertion that the Board rewrote section IV.B of the self-study without committee feedback.

The second theme has to do with the pace of change at this institution. The President clearly has gained the respect and admiration of many on campus, and his dedication to developing a thoughtful strategic planning program has not gone unnoticed. Still, the residue distrust that was generated by the presidential search process appears to have had some impact on some faculty and staff perceptions about empowerment and communication.

This distrust appears to hinder the progress of the current President in developing productive channels of communication and innovation. There is no doubt that campus faculty and staff want the same thing that the President and the Board want – the advancement of the college, but there is some conflict regarding how they are all "going to get there."

Again, the President appears to be cognizant of these challenges and has worked at all levels of the institution, including the Board, to address the continual improvement of the institution as well as the tensions that developed as a result of the most recent series of events involving the Board.

A draft governance manual has been developed that addresses the roles and responsibilities of all involved in planning and budgeting. The document will require greater review and comment as the college finalizes its governance program. (IV.2.a)

The aforementioned draft governance manual clearly indicates the role of faculty in recommending change to learning programs and services. There still appears to be some confusion on the advisory roles that standing and ad-hoc committees of the Faculty Senate have in decision-making processes. (IV.2.b)

The newly developed strategic planning process and governance manual, combined with the President's State of the college address, provides direction about how the college's constituencies work together to advance the institution. This momentum is being underserved by the campus' belief that the Board does not always have the college's best interests at heart. (IV.A.3)

The college worked to address the 2001 recommendations and received a positive report from the follow-up team in 2004. Its communications to the public about its qualities appear to have great integrity and its relations with the US Department of Education through the administration of grant programs appear to be positive.

The team has some concern regarding what appears to be a "re-write" of the self-study's section IVB (Standard IV Committee Meeting Minutes 9/20/08). Given the testament of the college in the certification of preparation of the self-study, ACCJC may have some concern regarding the impact of the Board's involvement in changes to the self-study in the late stages of the editing process and without feedback from the self-study team. (IV.4)

There is no evidence of a regular review of governance. (IV.5)

Conclusions

The college partially meets the standard.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 6.

B. Board and Administrative Organization

General Comments

Tensions arising from poor campus-Board relations are undermining much of the work of the President. The college's advancement is dependent on the Board and the campus creating a more trusting and empowering environment.

Findings and Evidence

The process for hiring the current President was a significantly divisive series of events for the college community, so divisive that it led to votes of no-confidence from the Academic Senate, RHCFA, CSEA, and ASB. In the self-study, the Board pledges to review the best practices and the process for selection of the Superintendent/President. The Board also pledges that this review will included participation from all campus constituencies and the community, and that a draft process will be created in September 2008. No record of that draft process or discussions on the topic involving campus constituencies and the community could be found although it does appear as an agenda item for an October 2008 Board retreat. (IV.B.1)

Evidence suggests that the Board seeks the opinions of the community and does its best to resolve its internal differences through the use of Board retreats. The campus President has been assigned the task of representing Board decisions to the media. The Board claims to be working to create the public impression of a united Board, but experiences over the last three years are troubling in this regard. (IV.B.1.a)

Evidence suggests consistency of Board policies with the published mission, vision, and values statements of Rio Hondo College. It is especially significant that Rio Hondo College, a designated Hispanic serving institution, makes strong statements about student equity and appreciation for diversity as core values of the institution. (IV.B.1.b)

At Rio Hondo College the Board exercises independent and final authority on all educational, legal, and financial matters. The financial health of Rio Hondo College is a strong indicator of strong campus fiscal management and sound financial oversight by the Board. (IV.B.1.c)

All Board policies are clearly organized and articulated on the college website. The self-study identifies problems with access and accuracy in the source/reference sections of the Board Policies. The Board pledges in the self-study to review and cross-reference all materials on the website. It is unclear at this time whether that study has been started or completed. (IV.B.1.d)

The minutes from Board meetings are available and demonstrate consistency with its policies and bylaws. It remains unclear whether there is a formal process for evaluating its policies and practices. (IV.B.1.e)

The self-study acknowledges that the orientation and training process for new Board members is informal and pledges to develop a New Board Member Orientation Procedure. (IV.B.1.f)

The self-study cites Board Policy 2745, which outlines the methods by which the Board evaluates its performance. Each board member completes and submits an evaluation instrument to the President's Office, which compiles the report which is discussed during the Board's annual retreat. The self-study includes a pledge from the Board to schedule a summer study session to work on a new evaluation instrument. The record of that self-study could not be found. (IV.B.1.g)

At the Board meeting of May 14, 2008 a Code of Ethics was approved. The Board is to be commended for the standards of ethical conduct and the guiding principle of the code, which is "to promote a healthy working relationship among its members and the President/ Superintendent, based on mutual trust and support." (IV.B.1.h)

The manner in which the Board became involved in the final editing of the 2008 self-study was very troubling to the Standard IV committee. The review of meeting minutes and campus-based interviews suggest that the college's governance program approved the Standard IV.B section of the self-study in May. During the summer of 2008, an informal subcommittee of the Board was impaneled to revise this section. The faculty editors of the self-study were given the new draft in a July 2008 meeting with members of the Board and administration and informed that the new version was necessary to ensure Board approval of the self-study.

The decision at that meeting was not to confer with the members of the Standard IV committee, citing the reasons that the staff members of that committee were on summer vacation and that the timing of the rewrite and approval were critical to the accreditation timeline. When school resumed in fall 2008, members of the Standard IV Committee were alarmed by these changes and this unrest led to a statement entered into the minutes of the Standard IV committee of September 24: "The Standard IV Committee agrees that Part A is an accurate reflection of the collaborative work of the committee. They also agree that part B was written by the Board and is NOT an accurate reflection of the committee standards."

The visiting team is not concerned with the question of whether substantive changes were made in the new draft created by the ad-hoc Board committee; rather, the committee is troubled by the

failure of the President and Board to consult with the Standard IV committee, no matter the difficulty of the timing of the completion of the report. An unusual action in the accreditation process requires emergency consultation more than an explanation for failure to include key players in the creation of Standard IV. (IV.B.1.i)

The governing Board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/system chief administrator. The governing Board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer Board policies without Board interference and hold him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college. The selection process for the current President was contentious and unpopular enough that several votes of no confidence from groups representing nearly every aspect of the college were delivered to the Board.

At this time the Board reports that it is continuing research and discussion on the topic between the Board and the President/Superintendent. The Board indicates that it remains its intention to confer with campus constituencies before a policy is adopted. The accreditation committee stresses the importance of a timely completion of this process. The research, discussion, and publication of this policy will help reduce mistrust, miscommunications and misinterpretations in future hirings of the college President/Superintendent. (IV.B.1.j)

In the draft copy of the RHC Organization and Governance Structures, dated October 3, 2008, the President with the help of participating faculty and staff has published a comprehensive study of organizational structures, committee responsibilities, and a set of governance principles that will clarify the leadership structure and shared governance models under which program review, curriculum development, planning and budgeting will be conducted at Rio Hondo College. All those who collaborated with the President should be commended for the fine work represented in that draft report. (IV.B.2.a)

The President should be commended for his leadership in working with classified staff, faculty, administrators, and students (1) to craft mission, vision, and values statements, (2) encourage the implementation of student learning outcomes and assessments, (3) invigorate the program review and planning processes, and (4) encourage participation by all constituent groups in these initiatives. In turn, all the constituent groups and their leaders should be commended for supporting the president in giving substance and meaning to these important initiatives. Since many of the elements of the planning, program review, and student learning outcomes programs are relatively new in their development, the assessment models and cycle of continuous improvement are yet to be fully developed and employed. (IV.B.2.b)

In all the recently published plans for Rio Hondo College, the President places continuing and consistent emphasis on the college's mission, vision, and value statements. The President has worked closely with the Board of Trustees, his administrators, faculty leaders, classified staff, and student leaders to produce consistency and institutional integrity in their collaborations during his tenure as president. (IV.B.c)

Conclusions

Until recently, the college did not attempt to integrate program review, planning, and resource allocation. With the arrival of the current president that has all changed. As the college moves

forward, it will need to fully develop governance and communication programs that engender trust and empower all members of the community. The college does not meet the standard.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 5: Leadership

The college should employ methods to the assess campus climate across all constituencies, leading to the continual improvement of communications and programs that promote empowerment, trust, and innovation. (IV.A.3)

Recommendation 6: Governance

The team recommends: the college develop a formal and cyclical review of governance committees and processes to ensure integrity and effectiveness, and communicate the results as a basis for improvement of campus decision-making; the college administration develop a plan to clarify the reporting pathways for the various governance bodies exemplifying the linkages between the unit plans, program review, and the resource allocation process. (I.B.6, IV.A.5); the Board of Trustee members participate in professional development that introduces Board members to best practices regarding board/campus relations, ethics, trusteeship, accreditation process, and strategic planning; the Board review and, if necessary, revise the Presidential hiring process established in 2002 to prevent potential disagreements with future Presidential search committees (IV.B.1, IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.i,IV.B.1.j); and the college and the Board of Trustees reach agreement on policies and practices that govern the development of accreditation materials. (IV.A.4, IV.B.1.i)

Summary

The visiting team observed a college that has a dedicated cadre of faculty, staff and students who believe strongly in their mission and in the value of student learning. Those beliefs were evident to the team as they observed the daily operations of the college and listened to the comments and discussions with employees and students. The team noted the following commendations:

Commendations

Rio Hondo College staff is commended for implementing extensive program offerings in the Career and Technical Education area.

Rio Hondo is to be commended for their Public Safety Academy's performance, success and community connections.

The Student Services division is commended for adopting and engaging in the program review process as well as a continuous improvement model.

Rio Hondo College staff is commended for the quality of their Virtual College.

The college is to be commended for their movement toward implementing initiatives that are inclusive of Student Services and Instruction that will assist in developing strategies to support student persistence, retention, and success.

Over the past year, the President and all constituent groups have done much toward institutional effectiveness by crafting mission and vision statements, implementing student learning outcomes and assessment, strengthening the program review and planning processes, and increasing participation of all faculty, staff and students in these initiatives. The visiting team recommendations emphasize creating a culture of evidence and use of evidence in measurement, assessment and improvement to bolster the already developing strategic planning processes. The team recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: Institutional Effectiveness

Develop and implement an institutional planning process that includes: measurable institutional goals and objectives with a timeline for the implementation and achievement of these goals, and a schedule for when the achievement of these will be assessed; more clearly defined links between the college's program review, unit planning and resource allocation processes as parts of an integrated process for continuous improvement; communication more broadly across the campus of the purposes and intended outcomes of each component of the planning process as well as the integrated planning process as a whole; an examination of institutional effectiveness through a broad-based dialogue that centers around clearly defined measures of effectiveness and the assessment of the effective use of resources; the opportunity for members from all constituency groups to fully participate in the process at all levels; a staff development program that permeates the institution to promote the effective use of data, including identification of where data are available; and clearly defined processes for assessing the effectiveness of the

planning process as a whole, as well as each of the components, that includes timelines for evaluation, assigned responsibilities, and expected outcomes (Standards IB.1, IB.2, IB.3, IB.4, IB.5, IB.6, IB.7, IIA.2, IIIA.6, IIID.1.a, IIID.3).

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

The college is at the developmental level on the ACCJC rubric for student learning outcomes and has established an initial framework and assessment strategy at the course level. In order to meet the ACCJC standard of proficiency of student learning outcomes by 2012, the college needs to: create an implementation timeline; regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the SLO assessment process; facilitate college wide discussions; develop and implement training for all constituencies integrating college wide efforts between Instruction and Student Services; create a special emphasis on identifying valid and reliable data and use of authentic assessment; and implement a system of quality control to ensure meaningful and accurate assessment of student learning throughout the college. (Standards II.A.1, 2, 3)

Recommendation 3: Student Support Services

The team recommends that the catalogue include the college's official web site address, the current academic calendar, the program length for the academic year the catalog covers, and a clear communication of the educational cost for non-resident students. (Standard II.B.2.b)

Recommendation 4: Human Resources

The team recommends the college develop and approve a code of ethics for all employees. (Standard III.A.1.d)

Recommendation 5: Leadership

The college should employ methods to assess campus climate across all constituencies, leading to the continual improvement of communications and programs that promote empowerment, trust, and innovation. (Standard IV.A.3)

Recommendation 6: Governance

The team recommends: the college develop a formal and cyclical review of governance committees and processes to ensure integrity and effectiveness, and communicate the results as a basis for improvement of campus decision-making; the college administration develop a plan to clarify the reporting pathways for the various governance bodies exemplifying the linkages between the unit plans, program review, and the resource allocation process. (I.B.6, IV.A.5); the Board of Trustees participate in professional development that introduces Board members to best practices regarding board/campus relations, ethics, trusteeship, accreditation process, and strategic planning; the Board review and, if necessary, revise the Presidential hiring process established in 2002 to prevent potential disagreements with future presidential search committees (Standards IV.B.1, IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.i,IV.B.1.j); and the college and the Board of Trustees reach agreement on policies and practices that govern the development of accreditation materials. (Standards IV.A.4, IV.B.1.i)