



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 6, 2015

**Corrected Letter**

Ms. Teresa Dreyfuss  
Superintendent/President  
Rio Hondo College  
3600 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier CA 90601

Dear President Dreyfuss:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 7-9, 2015, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Rio Hondo College September 29-October 2, 2014.

**College Accreditation Reaffirmed:**

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** and require the College to submit a Follow-Up Report in October, 2015. The report will be followed by a visit by Commission representatives.

Reaffirmation is granted when the institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is required when there are deficiencies leading to noncompliance which do not create an immediate risk to the institution's quality and effectiveness. However, if they are not addressed and fully resolved in a short time, they may threaten quality and effectiveness, and lead to increased noncompliance.

Rio Hondo College should submit its **Follow-Up Report by October 15, 2015.**<sup>1</sup> The Report should demonstrate that the College has resolved the deficiencies which led to noncompliance and that it meets the Standards. The Report should address the recommendations noted below.

**Need to Resolve Deficiencies:**

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in institutional policies, procedures, practices and outcomes which lead to noncompliance with any Standards will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students.

Ms. Teresa Dreyfuss  
Rio Hondo College  
February 6, 2015

The Commission found Rio Hondo College deficient in meeting the following Accreditation Standards: I.B, II.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.A.2; II.A.2.a; II.A.2.e; II.A.3.a; II.A.6; II.A.6.b; III.A.1.c Rio Hondo College also fails to meet the following U.S.D.E Regulations: 602.17 (f); 602.17(g).

### **Recommendation 1**

In order to meet standards, and to meet USDE regulations, the team recommends that the College set standards of satisfactory performance for student achievement, and evaluate itself against those standards, at the programmatic level (not just at the institutional level). (I.B, USDE Regulation 602.17 (f))

### **Recommendation 3**

In order to meet standards and comply with USDE regulations, the team recommends that the College develop a process to ensure faculty initiate regular and substantive interaction with students in Distance Education courses. (Standards II.A.1; II.A.2; USDE Regulation 602.17(g))

### **Recommendation 4**

In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that the College develop procedures that outline how students will complete a program of study (other than CTE) when the program is discontinued. (II.A.6.b)

### **Recommendation 5**

In order to meet Standards, the team recommends the College:

- a. continue its work to fully connect program SLOs to the courses where SLOs are achieved, including for General Education. This should be made fully transparent in SLOolutions or future software to manage College SLOs.
- b. continue to track and monitor the assessment of course SLOs to ensure that a course SLO is assessed one semester each academic year (per the College's own plans and recently negotiated Collective Bargaining Agreement) and that all SLOs are assessed within a six-year program review cycle.
- c. develop a process for ensuring that course SLOs are included in the syllabi provided to students for every class section offered.
- d. implement SLOs for non-credit and community education courses. (II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e; II.A.3.a; II.A.6)

### **Recommendation 7**

In order to meet standards, the team recommends all evaluations for faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes. (III.A.1.c)

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Rio Hondo College  
February 6, 2015

The team report notes that not all faculty and “others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes” have SLOs as a component of their evaluation. The tenured faculty evaluation process does not include SLOs as a component of the process and participation by part time faculty is optional.

The Standard requires that it be a component for all evaluations, including the evaluations of part time and tenured faculty. Additionally it is noted that the current process utilized by the College does not address the effectiveness of those being evaluated in producing those learning outcomes. The College’s current requirement of participation only in the SLO assessment process is insufficient to meet the requirements of the Standard.

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

The Commission noted the absence of actionable improvement plans in many areas of the Self Evaluation Report. The purpose of institutional self evaluation is to develop analyses of strengths and weaknesses of educational quality and institutional effectiveness based on the institution’s continuous evaluation and quality improvement activities. Thus, it is the expectation of the Commission that when an institution evaluates itself during the self evaluation process, it should be honest in its findings of need for actionable improvement plans and include the plans in the Self Evaluation Report.

**Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness:**

In its report, the team noted recommendations 2, 6, and 8 for increasing institutional effectiveness. These recommendations do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice, but do highlight areas of practice for which College attention is needed. The Commission requires that institutions address recommendations for increasing institutional effectiveness as an aspect of maintaining compliance with standards and continuous quality improvement.

Rio Hondo College conducted an educational quality and institutional effectiveness review as part of its self evaluation. College-identified improvement plans are another important outcome of the comprehensive self-evaluation process.

Ms. Teresa Dreyfuss  
Rio Hondo College  
February 6, 2015

These plans provide a way for the institution to link its self-evaluation to the regular ongoing evaluation of institutional plans and processes, and to integrate accreditation self-evaluation into the ongoing planning and improvement efforts at the institution. The college will want to track and document changes coming out of its self-identified improvement plans for reporting during the accreditation cycle.

The Commission requires that the College give the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to College staff and to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this Commission action letter be made available to students and the public by placing a copy on the College website. *Please note that in response to public interest in disclosure, the Commission now requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no more than one click from the institution's home page.*

The guidance and recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit, but may not describe all that is necessary for the College to come into compliance. The College's own self evaluation and responsive action is a vital part of a successful voluntary peer evaluation process. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to continuously comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, Rio Hondo College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve its programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness, and educational quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

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<sup>1</sup>Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission*. It contains the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. It is available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).