

Follow-Up Team Report

Riverside City College

4800 Magnolia Avenue
Riverside, California 92506

A confidential report prepared for
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
Riverside City College from November 5 – 6, 2015

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November 5–November 6, 2015

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Introduction

Riverside City College had its accreditation reaffirmed on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation that occurred in 2014. The Commission requested a Follow-Up Report from the College by October 15, 2015. A team consisting of five Commission representatives visited the College for the purpose of verifying evidence and determining whether actions taken to implement the reported recommendations and correct deficiencies had occurred. The team found that the College has fully addressed all recommendations—three College Recommendations and two District Recommendations, and now meets the standards.

A follow-up report team visited Riverside City College on November 5th and 6th 2015. During this visit, the team reviewed additional documents and interviewed a Trustee, the Chancellor, the President, and several administrators, faculty, and classified staff. In addition, some members of the Riverside Team, along with others from Moreno Valley and Norco Colleges, came together to interview district personnel to determine the status of the two district recommendations.

In preparation for the site visit, the team members reviewed the previous comprehensive evaluation report based on the team visit in March 2014. Team members also reviewed the College's Follow-Up Report dated October 15, 2015. The college included links to the source of evidence in the electronic version of the report. Team members were able to review written evidence prior to the team visit.

The site visit interviews and reviews of various forms of evidence are the basis for the conclusions regarding the College's status on implementation of the previous recommendations and its compliance with Accreditation Standards. Based on the team's review all the recommendations have been addressed. Specific details are included under each recommendation of this report.

Riverside City College and the Riverside Community College District Office personnel were very well prepared for the team's visit and were well organized and available to all team members as needed. The college community expressed a sense of ownership, excitement, and pride in the work the college had accomplished in such a short period of time. Student success and equity appear to be at the core of all planning efforts. The redesign efforts related to planning and evaluation have been bold and have created a positive culture shift at the college.

The follow-up team experienced a campus on the move as it celebrated its centennial year.

Riverside City College (RCC) first opened in 1916, sharing facilities with Riverside Polytechnic High School. In 1924, the College built its first two buildings – the historical Quadrangle, which today remains a fixture on the campus. In 1965, Poly High School relocated, leaving the College a blank slate for future growth and planning. As the state's seventh oldest community college in California, RCC initial enrollment totaled 114 students.

Today, RCC operates as a comprehensive liberal arts and sciences college, and is known for program emphasis in nursing, performing arts and career and applied technologies.

Source: Centennial website

Commendations

College Commendation 1 Culture Shift

The evaluators commend Riverside City College for the remarkable restructuring of its planning process that has involved a wide cross section of college personnel actively and enthusiastically engaged in moving a significant amount of work. The resulting cultural shift has firmly placed student success and learning at the heart of all planning and subsequent resource allocation.

College Commendation 2 Leadership

The evaluators commend Riverside City College for the leadership and engagement of faculty, staff, and administrators resulting in the seamless interaction between the strategic, and the operational. The evaluators commend the President for having brought great clarity to the direction of the work and creating the necessary space for the distributed leadership model to be effective.

College Recommendation #1 Evaluate processes including evaluation processes regularly.

In order to meet the standards the College should systematically assess and use assessment results for improvement in the following areas:

- a. Assessing its evaluation mechanisms; (I.B.6, I.B.7)*
- b. All resource areas including human, physical, technology, and financial; (III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3.h)*
- c. Role delineation, decision-making structures and resources. (IV.A.5, IV.B.3.g)*

Recommendation #1 appears to have served as a stimulus for the College and its leadership to rethink the structure and process of planning and evaluation. The new system places student success, student equity, and student completion at the core, with all other plans (human, physical, technology and financial) becoming implementation plans to support and advance the strategic plan. Integrated planning also extends to resource allocation.

Riverside City College (RCC) has identified five-year goals with annual targets that flow to the different area plans and workgroups. RCC has adopted the framework “monitor evaluate assess” as an embedded principle and practice within each council for oversight and accountability of these efforts. The follow-up report team encourages the college to continue with its implementation of this new cycle of planning and evaluation.

Findings and Evidence

a. Assessing its evaluation mechanisms

RCC has recently reviewed its mission and vision¹, and is in the midst of its approval process: Academic Senate approval expected in November, and Board approval anticipated in December.

RCC evaluated the status of its previous strategic plan prior to working on its new plan. As a result, the College is improving measures and targets to be more meaningful indicators of student success. Goals are aligned with the District’s strategic themes. The institutional effectiveness initiative has influenced RCC’s KPIs and metrics. Since the new Strategic Plan² is still in the process of being adopted and implemented, the follow-up report team encourages continual assessment of the process with modification as appropriate pertaining to improvement of all parts of the cycle of integrated planning, resource allocation, and effectiveness of related structures/activities.

RCC is in the process of revising its program review process and content, which also generates a 5-year plan for the program area. Annual updates then adjust the plans. RCC’s Program Review and Plan (PRaP) is linked to the College’s Strategic Plan and mission. Student learning outcomes assessment and plans for improvement are core. Data is being collected and analyzed for any differences by delivery methods, time of day offered, etc.

¹ draft dated April 29, 2015

² draft, October 2015

Student persistence and completion results are also compared for special program participants (i.e., student type). The proposed PRaP includes thoughtful and insightful prompts for response including justification for resource requests.

b. All resource areas including human, physical , technology, and financial

Based on committee meetings and evidence it appears that the college has systematically assessed and used the assessment results for improving all of the service areas. On October 7, 2014 the College conducted a Resource Development and Administrative Services (RDAS) Council special meeting to assess the structure and membership of the council and advisory groups. The four advisory groups³ created a charge in collaboration with RDAS Council and have successfully completed a plan for their area.

Human Resources

The Human Resource Advisory Group (HRAG) created a comprehensive *Human Resource and Staffing Plan* that incorporates both short term and long term planning strategies for all employee groups. Nine principles guide human resource and staffing. These principles embody the overarching theme of student success embedded throughout the college’s planning processes. These principles include alignment with strategic and educational planning, projection of 5-year goals, attainment of diversity, and maintenance of industry standards. Identification of these principles is commendable.

HRAG combines all staffing requests: faculty, staff and administrative, and ranks them according to the set of Human Resource Principles. The *Human Resource and Staffing Plan* is based on data obtained through program review cycle including an annual assessment of the process. The Program Review and Plan (PRaP) incorporates requests for staffing.

Physical Resources

The Physical Resource Advisory Group is in the process of updating the *Facilities Master Plan*. They have intensively worked on creating a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) template and used the template for three new buildings: Student Services/Administration, the Coil School of the Arts and the Culinary Arts Academy and one existing building: Math/Science & Nursing. The TCO template includes alignment with the long-range educational plan, Facilities Master Plan, and sustainability. FTES and cap/load ratio considerations are also contained in the template.

Technology Resources

The Technology Resource Advisory Group adopted the *Riverside City College Technology Plan 2014-2018* referencing the district technology plan. The advisory group provides ongoing analysis of the technology plan.

- Technology Guidelines:
- Provide global access to information
 - Meeting educational and training needs
 - Fostering innovation, communication and collaboration
 - Improving the effectiveness of their respective tasks
 - Providing adequate funding for the maintenance of existing technology and for the purchase of emerging technologies.

³ human resources, physical, technology, and financial

Financial Resources

The Financial Resources Advisory Group has completed a draft financial plan. The principles will be continually assessed in order to adhere to these principles and to provide the necessary adjustments.

Financial Principles: The model must

- be perceived as fair
- be easily understood
- provide proper performance incentives
- work in years of growth and contraction

c. Role delineation, decision-making structures and resources

Since the accreditation visit in March 2014, RCC has collaborated in a thorough evaluation of planning processes culminating in the *Riverside City College Strategic Plan 2015-2020*. The process establishes student success, equity, and completion as the foundational planning goals and the tasks of various committees.

The planning process began on October 17, 2014 during an annual Planning Retreat with 70 campus members in attendance⁴. This group analyzed results from external and internal scans then broke into four groups each assigned to develop criteria for rubrics in the areas of Allocation Prioritization, Resource Request, Faculty Hiring and Administration. The Strategic Planning Executive Council and the Leadership Councils collaborated on subsequent planning efforts which included a presentation by the President outlining strategic priorities February 6, 2015, and a second Planning Retreat May 22, 2015⁵. The Strategic Planning Executive Council (SPEC) is charged to “monitor institutional progress toward achieving the college goals and to provide recommendations to the College President.” As evidenced in SPEC’s minutes, this committee coordinates ongoing strategic planning priorities across the campus.

Assessment of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan focused on Key Performance Indicators and various surveys. One weakness revealed was the “lack of measurable targets of student success and completion to gauge whether or not the strategies and activities in the plan yielded improvement.” At the time of the follow-up report team visit, RCC had not fully completed all components of their planning objectives. The college recognized that additional efforts were needed to close the loop.

The team noticed widespread enthusiasm and buy-in by the campus community. The Strategic Plan includes an alignment of Strategic Planning Goals with District Themes and a Chart of the RCC Strategic Planning Integrated Committee Structure. Horizontal and vertical planning and evaluation across the college and with the district is evident.

During the interviews the evaluators noted a sense of understanding of the roles, responsibility and level of authority within the decision making structure at the College. However, it appears that there is still ongoing discussion between the college and the district office to adjust roles and responsibilities, centralized versus decentralized, in order to maximize effectiveness.

⁴ Evidence found in Minutes of Retreat, Strategic Plan

⁵ Evidence found on the Strategic Planning website

Several examples demonstrate collaborative efforts between the district and the college. In areas of technology and finance, requests from the college bubbled up to the district. At the district level representation from all three campuses conversed to integrate and prioritize the college needs across the district. It appears within the 18 months since the 2014 accreditation team visit, the district office has migrated toward a service-oriented approach which has had a positive impact on the decision making. Interviews at the District Office, including the Chancellor, indicated that this shift has been an intentional approach adopted in order to place the focus on services to the colleges and the students.

Conclusion

RCC's Strategic Plan and other related plans appear to incorporate assessing its evaluation mechanisms in a comprehensive manner. RCC has progressed in crafting an integrated human resource, physical, technology, fiscal planning process that includes data analysis, the creation of advisory groups to oversee the process, and annual evaluation. Inclusion of a timeline should systematize the planning process. Ideally the timeline would include evaluation of the process as one of its components.

RCC has embarked on a major cultural change that has altered the manner in which the college plans and evaluates its processes. This shift realigned committee structures, launched a strategic planning website to communicate efforts, and collaborated with the district to integrate planning focused on student success, equity and completion. This restructuring has involved a wide cross section of college personnel actively engaged in a significant amount of work. RCC's approach to planning and operations has both vertical and horizontal integration. Information is shared across the college and many items are available for review and discussion, even as drafts. All constituency groups are represented and involved: classified, faculty, administrators, and students. The result firmly places student success at the heart of all planning and subsequent resource allocation.

The college has fully addressed this recommendation and meets the requirements of Standards I.B.6, I.B.7, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3.h, IV.A.5, and IV.B.3.g.

College Recommendation #2 Evaluate all SLOs in a timely manner.

In order to meet the standard, the College should evaluate all courses and programs in a manner that ensures a comprehensive and timely assessment of course and program SLOs is completed in all disciplines, so that the assessment of all SLOs can be included in curriculum review for maintaining relevant, current and responsive courses and programs, especially those that experience rapid changes in workforce competencies. (II.A.2.e)

Riverside City College (RCC) has advanced its assessment of student learning outcomes since the comprehensive accreditation visit in March 2014. It has updated its Assessment Plan, is implementing TracDat as a tool to assist in assessment tracking and documentation, and is in the process of adopting a revised program review and plan. The faculty who were interviewed demonstrated an excitement and belief in the value of methodical assessment

as a tool to improve and document student learning. RCC has progressed beyond SLO assessment being an exercise of compliance and has adopted ownership where assessment is part of a whole focus to advance support for student success.

Findings and Evidence

In September 2015 the College updated its Assessment Plan which defines course, program, and general education levels of assessment. Classroom assessment is mapped to program and general education assessment (i.e., embedded assessment). Assessment results identify activities to improve student learning and improve curriculum (e.g., approximate 1/3 of RCC's courses were modified in 2014-2015 due to assessment findings). The Riverside Assessment Committee (RAC) suggests potential questions for conversations.

RCC is implementing TracDat to record and document assessment results. Faculty, in meetings with the evaluators, articulated how they are finding TracDat of value in tracking efforts, scheduling intended activities (e.g., when to assess individual SLOs), and providing a centralized documentation system, and plans are to extend the use of TracDat to the program review process.

Riverside Community College District (RCCD) has a centralized curriculum. Course SLOs are approved by the Curriculum Committee and appear on the Course Outline of Record (COR). Program Learning Outcomes are often informed by licensure or certification requirements. Student Services units may also develop SLOs, if appropriate. Administrative and student services departments develop and assess Service Area Outcomes. Assessment results inform decisions at the discipline, department, institutional, and district levels.

The evaluators noted the apparent transition from compliance to authentic engagement. Findings are used to help improve teaching and learning, to articulate the need for resource requests, and in aligning proposed plans with the College's strategic plan and mission (Cf. Program Review and Plan). The College should remain diligent in its efforts to ensure that all course and program SLOs are assessed and evaluated in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Conclusion

The College has established and is meeting expectations for regular SLO assessment (Assessment Plan dated September 21, 2015) and has integrated this review into program review. The evaluators found evidence that the college's approach to assessing SLO's is benefiting the college and is consistent in its focus on improving student success.

The college has fully addressed this recommendation and meets Standard II.A.2.e.

College Recommendation #3 Total Cost of Ownership

In order to meet standards, the College should develop and implement a total cost of ownership methodology that can be included in the long-range capital plans. (III.B.2.a)

Findings and Evidence

In the previous 2014 self-evaluation report RCC identified a need to update the Facilities Master Plan and the Five-Year Capital Construction Plan. Also, the visiting team noted that “the college should use its program review assessments of facilities to develop improvement plans and develop funding requests.”

The evaluators found that the college has embedded the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) within the larger framework of long-range capital planning. The long range planning reflects the new approach to planning adopted by RCC (see recommendation #1) that builds upon results of intermediary evaluation processes.

The meeting minutes of the Resource Development and Administrative Leadership Council and the Physical Resources Advisory Group, under the leadership of the Vice President of Business Services, reflect that the College successfully upgraded the TCO template. The comprehensive template included the initial cost and life cycle analysis of various buildings. Not only was a template created but the college was able to create a complete TCO cycle from planning and preconstruction to decommissioning of a building, resulting in integrating facilities planning with resource allocation. The buildings that completed the TCO analysis were the Student Services/Administration building, Coil School of the Arts building, Math/Science & Nursing and the Culinary Arts Academy.

The evaluators noted that the College revised the comprehensive program review and plan template for instruction, student services, and administration to include a facilities request component. This unit level need is captured within the whole facilities planning structure. Evidence showed that the Physical Resource Advisory Group is working to complete the Facilities Master Plan and has completed the college’s Five-Year Capital Construction Plan to provide more up-to-date capacity/load ratios and to plan scheduled maintenance projects for existing facilities. Also, the College has completed various TCO analyses and will continue to further add additional analysis of other buildings.

Conclusion

The college has fully addressed this recommendation and meets the requirements of Standard III.B.2.a.

District Recommendation #1 Technology Planning

In order to meet standards, compile the various completed elements of technology planning into an integrated, comprehensive district technology plan that is accessible and transparent, including a disaster recovery plan and a plan to refresh aging and outdated technologies. Insure that the district technology plan is based on input from the colleges and is in alignment with college planning processes. (Standards I.B.6 and III.C.2)

Findings and Evidence: At the time of the current visit, the College provided the *Riverside Community College District Strategic Technology Plan*, which contains eight district technology goals and describes how they align with district strategic themes, Accreditation Standard III.C, Moreno Valley College technology goals, Norco College technology goals, and Riverside City College technology goals. The plan incorporates the action items from the *2010 Information Technology Audit* not previously completed. Further, the plan contains strategies for each of the eight goals, measurable objectives, activities, participants, timelines, and estimated costs for each of the strategies. This provides evidence of an integrated, comprehensive plan that is in alignment with college planning processes. The plan is posted on the district website ensuring that it is accessible and transparent. Through interviews, the follow-up teams verified that there is broad understanding and acceptance of and enthusiasm for the plan, and that it is used by both the District and the colleges during technology decision-making processes.

The *Riverside Community College District Strategic Technology Plan* also contains *Appendix 2: District Technology Continuity Plan*, which lists types of disruptions and areas of concern during a disaster. Additionally, the appendix contains the technology areas that need to be addressed for business continuity and disaster recovery, including facilities, data, applications, safety, and communications. The top three priorities identified in the plan are safety, data protection and communications. Detailed work plans to address these three priority areas are also presented in the document. The District has made significant progress in all three areas, including assessing safety systems, replicating data across all sites and nearly completing implementation of the communications system upgrades across the District. The follow-up teams also received a list of approved projects to be completed in 2015-2016 to implement the continuity plan. Interviews with staff from all three colleges and the district confirmed the progress that has been made on implementation of these aspects of the disaster recovery plan. This evidence confirms that the district technology plan is developed and being executed as planned.

Appendix 3: District Technology Refresh Plan documents that district wide equipment is identified and the associated replacement cycles listed. At the time of the visit, an additional piece of evidence titled *District Technology Refresh Grid 2014/15 – 2019/20* was presented. This document identifies the various categories of technology, the frequency of replacement and next replacement year for each category. There are four grids, one for the district and one for each of the three colleges. The grid identified equipment that was replaced in 2014-2015, equipment replacement in progress for 2015-2016 and equipment replacement plans for each year through 2019-2020 for the district and the three colleges. Additionally, the follow-up teams received a list of approved projects to be completed in 2015-2016 to implement the

refresh plan. Interviews with district and college technology staff members confirmed that this document was developed with input from across the District to guide decision-making regarding equipment replacement. The *District Technology Refresh Grid 2014/15 – 2019/20* is on the agenda for discussion at the next Information Technology Strategy Council. Cost estimates for the proposed replacement cycle are being developed and are projected to be completed in February 2016, which will further aid in financial planning for technology replacement. This evidence confirms that the District and colleges have a plan to refresh aging and outdated technology.

Evidence demonstrates that each college technology advisory group reviewed the *Riverside Community College District Strategic Technology Plan*. In addition, the Information Technology Strategy Council, a group that includes district level representation from all three campuses conversed to integrate and prioritize the needs across the district as shown in the minutes of their meetings. Evidence confirms that the district technology plan is based on collaborative input from the colleges and is in alignment with college planning processes.

Conclusion: Based on the findings of the follow-up teams, the District has fully addressed the recommendation, corrected the deficiencies, and now meets the Commission’s Standards. While the teams determined that the recommendation has been fully addressed, the District is still in the process of developing the refresh plan for District employees. It is suggested that this refresh plan be completed.

District Recommendation #2 OPEB Obligation

In order to meet the standard, implement a plan to fund contributions to the District’s other post-employment benefits (OPEB) obligation. (Standard III.D.3.c)

Findings and Evidence

The district submitted evidence documenting the resolution of this recommendation. Based on the Board minutes, in April, 2015 the RCCD Board of Trustees approved the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Obligation Funding Plan.

The district has historically maintained a “pay-as-you-go” methodology and since the inception of GASB 45, has not funded the future cost of the annual required contribution (ARC).

- OPEB Obligation Funding Plan elements:
1. Establish a new irrevocable trust to pay current retiree health costs and to accumulate funds for future costs to offset the OPEB liability.
 2. Develop a rate to apply to every dollar of payroll, to cover the annual current cost plus a minimum of \$250K annually to begin providing for future retiree health costs.
 3. Investment earnings over time will contribute to the reduction of the outstanding OPEB liability.
 4. Transfer all funds provided by the retiree healthcare rate to the irrevocable trust annually.
 5. Pay all retiree healthcare costs out of the irrevocable trust.

The implementation of the current OPEB plan was approved by the Board at their

November 17, 2015 meeting. It sufficiently addresses the potential liability for the district and closes that gap significantly.

The evaluators confirmed that the district had completed a GASB 45 actuarial valuation conducted by an external auditor for the period from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. From further review of evidence and interviews, the irrevocable trust is in the process of being established with CalPERS and will be initially funded by \$89,880.58 set aside in the district service account. The district has set up an OPEB rate of 0.3% and put into a new holding account line to set up to receive OPEB revenue. Investment earnings are being incorporated with the irrevocable trust with CalPERS.

Meeting minutes reflect extensive discussions, across the district and colleges that led to the OPEB plan being recommended by the Chancellor to the Board of Trustees. Further, the plan includes the creation of an investment committee as an oversight to the CalPERS account. Finally, the evaluators noted that the creation of the irrevocable trust account was fully supported by the college and the unions. The district will fully implement the entire OPEB obligation funding plan prior to the end of FY 15/16.

The teams were impressed by the full engagement of constituent groups across the District in developing and implementing the OPEB funding plan. In addition, the RCCD Board of Trustees is fully engaged in the oversight and long-term accountability of this plan.

Conclusion

The district has fully addressed this recommendation and meets the requirements of Standard III.D.3.c.