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FOCUSED MIDTERM VISIT REPORT

SADDLEBACK COLLEGE
28000 Marguerite Parkway
Mission Viejo, California

A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited

Saddleback College

on

November 29, 2007

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Introduction and Overview

An evaluation team conducted a comprehensive visit to Saddleback College in October 2004. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges reaffirmed the accreditation of the college, but required the college to submit a progress report by October 15, 2005, which would then require a visit to the college. In January of 2006, the Commission accepted the report of the college with the requirement that the college complete a progress report by October 15, 2006. The submittal of that report also required a visit by Commission representatives.

At its meeting on January 10-12, 2007, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges accepted the Progress Report submitted by Saddleback College in October 2006 with the proviso that the college submit a Focused Midterm Report on issues of special concern by October 15, 2007. Upon submission of the report to the Commission, a team would be assigned to visit the college and to evaluate the progress made on the special issues of concern. This report contains the findings of the evaluation team that visited Saddleback College on November 29, 2007. The evaluation team consisted of Dr. Raúl Rodríguez and Dr. Frederick Trapp.

In preparing for an accreditation visit, even a one-day midterm report visit, there are many tasks that need to be completed and a significant amount of logistical coordination that must be done in a short amount of time. In this case, all of the preparations for the visit were impeccably arranged by the Executive Assistant to the President of Saddleback College. The team also appreciates the willingness of all of the individuals who the team interviewed to accommodate the schedule of the visiting team. The documents of evidence were either on display in the team room or easily accessed via the college website.

Over the course of the one-day visit, the team met with the Saddleback College President, the Vice President of Instruction, the Vice President of Student Services, the College Research Analyst, the District Chancellor, the Deputy Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor of Technology and Learning Services, and the SOCCCD Board of Trustees (i.e., five out of seven Trustees). Additionally, the team met with representatives of the following committees and groups: the Academic Senate, the Classified Senate, the Institutional Effectiveness/SLO Committee, and the Planning and Budget Council.

The Focused Midterm Report and visit were expected to document improvement in the following areas:

College Recommendation 2. The College fully develop, implement, and coordinate an integrated college planning and evaluation structure by:

- A. Updating the educational master plan annually at the college and department levels and using the master plan for decision making and resource allocation (Standards I.A.4, I.A.6, I.B.4, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f);
- B. Refining the focus of institutional research so that research and information are used and integrated systematically in planning, decision making, and program review structures for ongoing institutional improvement (Standards I.A.4, I.A.5, I.A.6, I.A.7, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, II.A.1, and II.A.2);
- C. Identifying intended institutional and student learning outcomes, coordinated with the college mission statement, and measuring progress towards accomplishment (Standards I.A.1, I.B.1, I.B.2, IB.3, II.A.1);

- D. Coordinating program review more thoroughly with the educational master plan, department plans, and decision-making processes (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4,);
- E. Requiring and implementing program review for all departments, including instructional, student services, and administrative departments (Standards II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.3, II.B.4);
- F. Linking facilities, technology, and human resources plans into the overall comprehensive planning and evaluation structure of the college (Standards I.B, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, and III.D.1.d); and,
- G. Publishing and widely disseminating the completed planning and evaluation process (Standards I.A.4, I.B).

District Recommendation 4. The Board of Trustees review and revise the "Employment Procedures for Executive Positions" so that it conforms to accepted best practices. Specifically, this process should be fair, equitable, and provide for meaningful constituency input. Once revised, the implementation of these procedures should be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer and the direct involvement of the Board should be limited to the appointment of the Chancellor (Standards III.A.1, III.A.3).

District Recommendation 5. The Board of Trustees cease their involvement in college and district operations and delegate all non-policy issues, including policy implementation, at the district level to the chancellor and at the college level to the president. To achieve this end, the Board of Trustees, district leadership, and college leadership are encouraged to:

- A. Define their respective roles in decision making and clearly delineate the areas and scope of responsibility for each constituent group (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2);
- B. Identify the roles and scope of authority of district and college committees in the decision-making process (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2);
- C. Involve all constituent groups in a meaningful and collaborative manner in the decision-making process (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2); and,
- D. Publicize the roles and responsibilities of each group through college publications and procedures (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2).

District Recommendation 6. Representatives of all formally recognized constituent groups (trustees, chancellor, presidents, other administrators and managers, faculty senates and unions, classified senates and unions, and students) come together and take measures to reduce the hostility, cynicism, despair, and fear that continue to plague the college by:

- A. Developing a positive and in-depth dialogue on essential issues (e.g., evaluation, planning and research, student learning outcomes, decision making roles and responsibilities, etc.) that will ultimately lead to strengthening student learning and success at the college (Standards I.A.3, I.B.1,);
- B. Creating an environment which ensures greater administrative stability and empowerment at the college (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3); and,
- C. Enhancing the college and district communication structure so that it is clear to everyone who the responsible party is for making decisions and how those decisions are or will be made (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3).

The 2007 Midterm Report submitted by the college addressed all four of these recommendations as well as the college progress on the other two recommendations (College Recommendations 1 & 3) contained in the 2004 Evaluation Report.

College Responses to the Team Recommendations

College Recommendation 1. The College create a formal process for the regular review of the mission statement. This process should:

- A. Use college governance and decision-making structures (Standards I.A.3, I.A.4);
- B. Be institutionalized through college publications and practices (Standards I.A.2, I.A.4);
- C. Ensure that the mission guide college planning and decision making (Standard I.A.4); and
- D. Allow for the implementation of revisions as appropriate to assure continuous improvement of college efforts to accomplish the mission (Standards I.A.6, I.A.7).

The visiting team has again confirmed that the college uses the college-planning infrastructure to review and update its mission statement. The Planning and Budget Council (PBC) has as its charge "to provide leadership in college wide planning so that Saddleback College will have a defined mission that will drive the budget augmentation to committees and service areas." Having the college mission embedded in the charge of the PBC ensures that the mission statement is systematically reviewed and evaluated within the governance and decision-making structure of the college.

In addition to the college mission statement, the college has also developed a vision statement, goals, and core values. These are displayed on the college web site and incorporated into planning committee documents the team inspected. The visiting team again confirmed that the mission and goals are widely publicized.

The visiting team observed that all college programs and administrative units use the mission statement as the basis for developing and implementing their own mission statements and goals as they work on the assessment of learning outcomes. Additionally, the program review process includes an analysis and evaluation of how programs and administrative units support the college's mission.

Conclusion:

The college has fully addressed this recommendation. It continues to review its mission statement through its governance structure. A review of the evidence confirms that the mission statement is embedded in and guides its planning and decision-making processes.

Recommendation 2. The College fully develop, implement, and coordinate an integrated college planning and evaluation structure by:

- A. Updating the educational master plan annually at the college and department levels and using the master plan for decision making and resource allocation (Standards I.A.4, I.A.6, I.B.4, II.A.2.e, and II.A.2.f);
- B. Refining the focus of institutional research so that research and information are used and integrated systematically in planning, decision making, and program review structures for ongoing institutional improvement (Standards I.A.4, I.A.5, I.A.6, I.A.7, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, II.A.1, and II.A.2);
- C. Identifying intended institutional and student learning outcomes, coordinated with the college mission statement, and measuring progress towards accomplishment (Standards I.A.1, I.B.1, I.B.2, IB.3, II.A.1);

- D. Coordinating program review more thoroughly with the educational master plan, department plans, and decision-making processes (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4,);
- E. Requiring and implementing program review for all departments, including instructional, student services, and administrative departments (Standards II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.3, II.B.4);
- F. Linking facilities, technology, and human resources plans into the overall comprehensive planning and evaluation structure of the college (Standards I.B, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, and III.D.1.d); and,
- G. Publishing and widely disseminating the completed planning and evaluation process (Standards I.A.4, I.B).

The previous visiting teams acknowledged three noteworthy changes in institutional planning at the college: the creation of the Planning and Budget Council (PBC) to coordinate integrated planning and evaluation; the development, adoption, and implementation of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs) tied to program review; and the creation of the four governance committees to help implement the strategic plan as noted below. The 2007 visiting team confirmed that the college continues to make progress in these areas.

Since the last visit the college established a Strategic Plan for 2007-2010. This plan was developed and is being implemented with a focus on these strategic directions for 2007-2010:

Institutional Effectiveness Strategic Direction and Goals

- To create a culture of institutional effectiveness based on the ongoing assessment of outcomes as a means of facilitating systematic review and planning.
- To increase the visibility and completion of SLO assessment, AUO assessment, and Program Review on campus.
- To provide regular institutional effectiveness training and support to instructional programs and administrative/student support units.
- To ensure that information garnered through the institutional effectiveness process is used to facilitate college-wide planning and resource allocation.

Enrollment Management Strategic Direction and Goals

- To develop strategies for increasing enrollment.
- Facilitate achievement of the goal of 7,943 semester FTES by 2010.
- Encourage the College academic divisions to work more closely with faculty and administration from its feeder high school districts to increase the number of students who are eligible to enter Saddleback College as freshman with eligibility for college level Math and English by 10% by the end of 2010.
- Establish a process to review external data reports, the 5-year Master Plan, and Program Review data to make recommendations for program establishment, expansion, and discontinuance, and tie the recommendations to the budget development process.
- Increase the amount of support and training given to instructors of distance education classes.
- Increase student enrollment and retention in distance education classes at Saddleback College.
- Enhance and Support Existing Transfer Program

Campus Environment Strategic Direction and Goals

- To have safe and well maintained facilities and grounds to support present and future institutional and community needs.
- Establish standard operating procedures for major facilities improvements and renovations.
- Accelerate Completion of Scheduled Maintenance Projects and Formalize Emergency Repair Procedures.
- Improve Campus Signage.
- Utilize the Five-Year Master Plan as a Resource to Guide Campus Construction and Expansion.
- Secure staffing and materials to improve cleanliness, safety and maintenance of facilities and grounds.

Student Success Strategic Direction and Goals

- To increase student retention and persistence.
- Select Career Technical programs for: viability, enhancement and development.
- Promote and enhance Health Science Programs.
- Increase overall Saddleback College FTES growth.
- Enhance Distance Education offerings.
- Increase & sustain professional development for faculty & staff.
- Increase & sustain efficient use of technology campus wide.
- Provide and maintain state of the art facilities.
- Enhance Basic Skills
- Increase transfer ready rates.
- Increase and improve Student Retention and Success.

The college completed a five-year Educational and Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) in March 2006. This EFMP is being used by the PBC as it implements the interim strategic plan. It was also used to develop the 2007-2010 Strategic Plan. The PBC, college divisions, and the four college planning groups, Enrollment Management, Student Success, Institutional Effectiveness, and Campus Environment, review the EFMP on an annual basis.

The college has demonstrated its commitment to continued institutional improvement based on data that is fully integrated to the decision-process by the hiring of a Research Specialist in June 2006. The Research Specialist is dedicated to program review and the assessment of SLOs and AUOs. This position complements that of Research Analyst who supports college wide research with valid and current data with the assistance of the district Director of Research and Planning (who had resigned by the time of the November 2007 visit) and the newly hired Vice Chancellor for Technology and Learning Services. In addition, an investment has been made to secure sophisticated Par Systems testing software and to license the use of Campus Climate software from the Scantron Corporation to support program review and leaning assessment work. This focus on research has resulted in the four planning groups and two of the governance groups, Deans' Cabinet and Student Services Leaders Council, developing research agendas in support of the Strategic Plan and the college mission. The Student Services area completed a very good and comprehensive student survey to support their program evaluations and planning activities.

The college has continued to make progress in the development, implementation, institutionalization, and assessment of SLOs. This has been made possible through the efforts of the SLO Implementation Team that includes the Institutional Effectiveness Coordinator, Program Review Chair, Curriculum Committee Chair, and the Research Specialist. A review of the documents provided confirms that program SLOs are linked to the college mission statement, a program or unit's intended outcomes, and assessment or evaluation. Even so, the college has only a small portion of SLOs completed at the course level. Along the same lines, there is much development still to be done in the area of assessing the course-level SLOs.

The Vice Chancellor for Technology and Learning Services led an effort to produce the first Institutional Effectiveness report for each college in the District. That individual and the Chancellor are contemplating program review/administrative effectiveness evaluations and reports for the District-level offices.

A new integrated program review process for instructional programs was implemented in August 2005, and a similar process for administrative and service units was approved in September 2005. The Saddleback Program Review Handbook for Instructional Programs 2006-2007 and Saddleback Program Review Handbook for Student Services and Administrative Units 2006-2007 provide the necessary information to assist in the preparation of the program reviews. Facilitators who work with programs and/or units preparing their program reviews enhance the information in the handbooks. However, at the time of the November 2007 visit no faculty members were serving as facilitators and a newly appointed coordinator for assessment work was just starting in that role.

The college has defined instructional programs and administrative units for the purpose of accomplishing the assessment of student learning and service outcomes. The progress report indicated that 94% of the programs and units had completed their reviews. At the time of the 2007 team visit, it was reported and confirmed that 100% of the reviews have been completed up to column three in their five-column model with 52% of the instructional programs completing the entire five columns. Fifty-three percent of the 32 administrative and student support services units have completed their AUOs up to column three of their five-column model and 22% of these units have completed all five columns. These are posted on the web at <http://www.saddleback.edu/gov/senate/ie/>.

As noted in the 2007 visiting team report, communication at the college has improved. There are several venues by which progress in the planning process are communicated to the campus community: its web site, <http://www.saddleback.edu/pbc/>, a Leadership Forum, President's Chats, The Gaucho Gazette, and regular email communications from the President's Office.

The college appears to now be linking facilities, technology, and human resources plans into the overall planning and evaluation process. The college described processes that were used to recommend resource allocation for facilities, equipment, human resources, and technology during academic year 2006-2007.

The college is making considerable progress toward fully addressing this recommendation.

Conclusion:

Saddleback College is to be commended for the commitment to and progress made in addressing this recommendation. It has updated its EFMP, hired a new Research Specialist dedicated to program review and assessment, made admirable progress in institutionalizing and measuring student learning outcomes, fully implemented a program review process that is linked to planning, provided software support to enhance the review process and increased the means by which it communicates progress made in strategic planning and the work of the PBC to the campus community.

Through interviews with faculty, staff, and administration, it is evident that there is a commitment to a planning and decision-making process that is inclusive of all constituent groups. Overall, there is a sense from the faculty, staff and administrators interviewed that they have the opportunity to participate and that they receive information on a regular basis regarding the progress being made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The college is encouraged to continue developing and implementing the process by which facilities, technology, and human resources planning is integrated into the overall strategic planning process.

The Vice Chancellor for Technology and Learning Services and the Chancellor are encouraged to develop a process for program review/administrative effectiveness evaluations and reports for the District-level offices.

College Recommendation 3. The team recommends that the college develop and implement student learning outcomes across the college by:

- A. Developing measurable learning outcomes for all courses, degrees, certificates, programs, and services (Standards I.B.1, I.B.2, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, and II.A.2.b);
- B. Defining and instituting research procedures for measuring, assessing, and tracking learning outcomes (Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, and II.A.2.b); and
- C. Creating a staff development program to educate and train all pertinent faculty and staff members in the identification, assessment, and evaluation of student learning outcomes. (Standards IB.4, II.A.2.d, III.A.5).

The previous visiting team recognized the significant progress that had been made by the college in addressing SLOs. The 2007 visiting team confirms that the college continues to make progress in this area although there are some recent challenges that have slowed progress to a certain extent. Specifically, the college has had a difficult time filling key reassign time faculty positions that were designed to provide greater faculty guidance to implementing SLOs and assessment of the SLOs.

The SLO Implementation Plan created the Institutional Effectiveness Office and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in spring 2006. Meetings with the faculty and staff involved in the Institutional Effectiveness/SLO Task Force confirm that the college has in general embraced outcomes assessment. The college has also developed several resource documents to assist programs and administrative and service units as they define their SLO and AUO methods of assessment. These resources are easily accessed through the Academic Senate website, <http://www.saddleback.edu/gov/senate/ie>. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee has fully integrated outcomes in its mission statement, “[.] to promote institutional quality through a comprehensive process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation in alignment

with the college's mission and goals." Also listed on the web site is a strategic direction statement for institutional effectiveness and a list of goals for 2007-2010 Strategic Plan as noted above.

As part of the program review process, data for programs and units include an organizational chart, a five-year staffing profile, SLO and AUO assessment forms, and data sets on enrollment and success indicators for the previous three to five years. The college has already benefited by the hiring of a Research Specialist dedicated to program review and outcomes assessment in that standardized data is becoming more readily available. A meeting with the Institutional Effectiveness Committee validated the statements made in the progress report regarding data gathering. At that meeting the visiting team was advised that the purchase of Curricunet with its related modules on student learning outcomes and program review are going to lead the way to approaching the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course level. The Committee acknowledged that the college has not yet determined how to approach assessment of student learning at the institutional level.

The college is focusing its efforts on outcomes at the program level, including degrees, certificates, and services. Those programs and administrative/service units that have completed their program reviews are assessing those outcomes identified in their program reviews. This is a strong and commendable start.

Saddleback College continues to provide staff development activities that focus on outcomes assessment, data collection, and the use of outcomes analysis in assessing its planning efforts. As noted earlier in this report, the college has purchased new assessment hardware and software to facilitate the institutionalization of its efforts in outcomes assessment.

Conclusion:

The college is to be commended for the progress it has made in outcomes assessment. One of the challenges that the college faces is addressing course level and institutional level outcomes and their related assessment. A review of the evidence and interviews with individuals in leadership roles in outcomes assessment confirm that the college is steadily working toward fully meeting the expectations of this recommendation. The challenge will be in continuing to sustain the very high level of commitment that the college community has demonstrated in establishing a systematic approach to measuring course and institutional-level outcomes and fully integrating outcomes in its planning and decision-making processes.

District Recommendation 4. The Board of Trustees review and revise the "Employment Procedures for Executive Positions" so that it conforms to accepted best practices. Specifically, this process should be fair, equitable, and provide for meaningful constituency input. Once revised, the implementation of these procedures should be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer and the direct involvement of the Board should be limited to the appointment of the Chancellor (Standards III.A.1, III.A.3).

In response to the issue of hiring process and policy, the Chancellor convened the Board Policy and Administrative Regulation Advisory Council (BPARAC). From all reports, this group, which is chaired by the Deputy Chancellor, has sparked considerable dialog and progress, not only in revising the policies in regard to hiring, but also policies in other areas. As a result of the

work of this group in recommending policy revisions to the Chancellor and subsequently to the Board of Trustees, action has been completed on several hiring processes. The Board of Trustees took action in July of 2006 to adopt Board Policy 4011.6, *Employment Procedures for Chancellor*. In November of 2006, the SOCCCD Board approved Board Policy 4011, *Employment Procedures for Administrators and Managers*. Additionally, the Board approved Board Policy 4011.3, *Hiring Policy for Classified Staff* in June 2007. Staff testimony confirms that the new processes defined by 4011 and 4011.3 are working well and that the Board of Trustees have properly delegated authority in this area.

Conclusion:

The team has verified that the Board Policy related to hiring practices has been revised through a systematic review process. The SOCCCD Board of Trustees and the Chancellor have responded to this issue in a positive and productive manner. Working in tandem, the district and the college have continued to make progress on an issue that had been cited as a problem through the last two comprehensive accreditation visits. The team believes that the college and district have complied with this recommendation.

District Recommendation 5. The Board of Trustees cease their involvement in college and district operations and delegate all non-policy issues, including policy implementation, at the district level to the chancellor and at the college level to the president. To achieve this end, the Board of Trustees, district leadership, and college leadership are encouraged to:

- A. Define their respective roles in decision making and clearly delineate the areas and scope of responsibility for each constituent group (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2);
- B. Identify the roles and scope of authority of district and college committees in the decision-making process (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2);
- C. Involve all constituent groups in a meaningful and collaborative manner in the decision-making process (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2); and,
- D. Publicize the roles and responsibilities of each group through college publications and procedures (Standards I.B.1, IV.A.1, and IV.A.2).

The college and the district have made commendable progress on the issue of defining roles in decision making and clearly delineating the areas and scope of responsibility for each constituent group. As noted in the report of the last visiting team, the SOCCCD Board Policy (BP) 102, which did not allow the constituent groups to participate in the development and revision of board policies, has been eliminated. That board policy was replaced by BP 107 in April of 2006. This new policy details the process for the development and revision of board policies. As a companion piece, the Chancellor approved Administrative Regulation (AR) 107, which defines the role of each constituent group in developing and revising both board policies and administrative regulations. The college continues to be in compliance with Accreditation Standard IV.A.2, which requires educational institutions to allow constituent group participation in decision-making processes.

The Board of Trustees and the Chancellor arranged for two technical assistance visits to the district. These meetings appear to have helped considerably in defining the roles and responsibilities of all of the constituent groups. Likewise, the Board adopted several documents that were helpful in setting boundaries on roles and responsibilities. One item was a resolution

titled, "Implementation of Accreditation Recommendations by the District and the Board of Trustees" and the other was a document called, "Strategies for Enhancement of Effectiveness of Board Agendas and Meetings."

As previously noted, another positive step was the creation of the Board Policy and Administrative Regulation Advisory Council (BPARAC) by Chancellor Mathur. This council, which is comprised of membership from the various constituent groups, has been working on revising a number of important district policies. Among these is Board Policy 2100.2, *Role and Scope of Authority of the Academic Senates* and Board Policy 4056, *Classified Employees Participation in Decision Making*. The adoption of these and other policies have also contributed to defining the roles and responsibilities of these key constituent groups.

The most encouraging sign of progress witnessed by the visiting team were the testimonials from all of the constituent groups acknowledging that the Board of Trustees are making special efforts to monitor their own behavior and to discourage individual board members from engaging in micromanagement. The Board of Trustees deserves praise for their efforts and the team encourages them to continue to be vigilant on these issues.

One of the issues that the constituent groups at the college brought before the team was the insertion of responses into the Focused Midterm Report by the Board of Trustees. The responses inserted by the Board concerned two of the three district recommendations. According to the constituent groups, there was a shared governance process that had been agreed upon to review information that went into the Focused Midterm Report. Allegedly, the Board did not follow this process and inserted their items into the report without any collegial review. Of course, when people perceive that the Board is using their authority to circumvent the process, then they get upset.

In this particular case, there appears to have been extenuating circumstances. The Board of Trustees had been working directly with the Commission on submitting a response to the report of the team that visited the college in 2006. Submission of comments to the Commission is a right of the Board of Trustees and the district and they wanted to do it in the proper manner. It appears that the process of working with the Commission took longer than expected and by the time the Board received a reply, there was not sufficient time to go through the normal process with vetting the Board comments through the college process. In any event, the Board comments were clearly designated as such and, again, it was certainly within the right of the Board of Trustees to insert a response particularly since many of the observations in the 2006 team report (and previous reports) were concerned with the behavior of the Board.

Conclusion:

The college and the district have made clear progress in defining roles and responsibilities. There has been tangible and considerable progress made on defining the roles and responsibilities of each constituent group. More importantly, based on discussions with the full range of constituent groups, the common perception is that Board of Trustees is not interfering with operational activities at the college or the district and is respecting the boundaries of their proper role and responsibilities. The SOCCCD Board of Trustees has made significant strides in addressing this recommendation. The team did not become aware of any incidents where the Board of Trustees displayed inappropriate involvement in college affairs.

District Recommendation 6. Representatives of all formally recognized constituent groups (trustees, chancellor, presidents, other administrators and managers, faculty senates and unions, classified senates and unions, and students) come together and take measures to reduce the hostility, cynicism, despair, and fear that continue to plague the college by:

- D. Developing a positive and in-depth dialogue on essential issues (e.g., evaluation, planning and research, student learning outcomes, decision making roles and responsibilities, etc.) that will ultimately lead to strengthening student learning and success at the college (Standards I.A.3, I.B.1,);
- E. Creating an environment which ensures greater administrative stability and empowerment at the college (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3); and,
- F. Enhancing the college and district communication structure so that it is clear to everyone who the responsible party is for making decisions and how those decisions are or will be made (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3).

When the team asked every constituent group whether they felt the college was better off today than it was three years ago, people overwhelmingly responded that the college was better off today. That perception is not a coincidence. There have been and there are many positive actions occurring at both the college and district levels. Unfortunately, a climate of mistrust still lingers like a shadow above many interactions and processes. In the view of the team, it is more important than ever that all constituent groups work together to develop a greater sense of trust so as not to lose the momentum that has been achieved.

The issue discussed above about the insertion of trustee commentary into the Saddleback Focused Midterm Report is a telling example. When the Board of Trustees moved to insert their commentary into the Saddleback report, it was seen by the constituent groups as another example of the Board being willful and circumventing an established process. It is clear from a discussion with the Board that it was never their intention to circumvent the process and that they were up against a time crunch. Nonetheless, it is certainly appropriate for the Trustees to respond to accreditation recommendations that concern them in whatever fashion they deem appropriate. However, to assume that there was some ulterior motive behind this action is making a leap that is not plausible. As noted above, the commentary inserted into the Focused Midterm Report was clearly marked as being the commentary of the Board of Trustees and not the thoughts or observations of the college.

In the 2006 report, it was noted that a point of contention with the faculty was the issue of reassigned time. The Academic Senate believed that the SOCCCD provided a significantly lower level of reassigned time compared to other districts. This issue was presented as an ongoing barrier to effective participation and engagement by the faculty. In the intervening year, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees have authorized additional reassigned time for faculty at the college, primarily for work on institutional effectiveness, SLOs, and program review. Ironically, it has been difficult to find faculty to fill these reassigned time positions although one was just filled prior to the arrival of the team.

There continues to be considerable dialogue at Saddleback College and at the district concerning the issues listed in this recommendation (e.g., evaluation, planning, and research, student learning outcomes, and decision making roles and responsibilities; greater administrative

stability; and, improving the communication structure). As noted in the 2006 report, the college decision making process is working well and progress is being made on all fronts.

Conclusion:

In the last three years, the college and the district have made great strides in responding to the recommendations of the visiting teams. A comment was made by a faculty leader that "Saddleback College is a different college than it was three years ago." This statement was made in the context of discussing many of the positive changes that have taken place at the college. The team agrees with that assessment and commends the college for the evident progress that has occurred, including a palpable change for the better in climate.

At the same time, the team is concerned that a fairly high degree of mistrust and finger pointing still exists on all sides, but especially in the faculty ranks when it concerns relations with the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor. It is not fair to blame the Board of Trustees and/or the Chancellor for everything that goes wrong or for every perceived procedural transgression. In the view of the team, the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor are making considerable efforts to communicate better, to follow process, and to respect the boundaries of constituent roles and responsibilities.

Overall, the team is gratified with the improvement that has been made by the college and the district over the last three years in regard to this recommendation. The team acknowledges that all of the formally recognized constituent groups listed in this recommendation are responsible for this improvement. The team fully expects that efforts to create greater trust and cooperation will continue and lead to even greater improvement.