

DEC 08 2009

**Follow-up Visit Report**

**Lassen Community College  
P.O. Box 3000  
Susanville, CA 96130**

**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**

**Lassen Community College**

**on**

**November 6, 2009**

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Stuart Wilcox, Ph.D., Team Member**

## Introduction

Lassen Community College District submitted a self study report in application for reaffirmation of accreditation, and was visited by a nine-member evaluation team from March 11 through March 13, 2008. The comprehensive evaluation team report included eight recommendations from its previous team evaluation in 2002 and twenty one recommendations from the accreditation team that visited in March 2008. At its meeting in June 2008, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges acted to continue Lassen College on **Probation**. The college was required to complete a Follow Up report by October 15, 2008. In its letter to Lassen College the Commission asked the college to respond to recommendations on the following topics:

- Recommendation 1 – Institutional Planning
- Recommendation 2 – Student Learning Outcomes
- Recommendation 3 – Institutional Research
- Recommendation 4 – Employee Evaluation
- Recommendation 5 – Administrative Positions
- Recommendation 6 – Faculty Staffing Plan
- Recommendation 7 – Financial Planning
- Recommendation 8 – Fiscal Stability

Lassen College submitted a Follow Up report dated October 15, 2008 as requested by the Commission. An update to that report was submitted to the Commission on December 4, 2008. At its January 2009 meeting the Commission acted to accept the Follow Up report, remove the college from Probation and place the college on **Warning**. The Commission also required that the college submit a Follow Up report on March 15, 2009. The March 15, 2009 report was to address the following topics:

- Recommendation 1 – Institutional Planning and Decision-Making
- Recommendation 2 – Student Learning Outcomes
- Recommendation 3 – Institutional Research

During the June 2009 meeting of the Commission, Lassen College was continued on **Warning** and required to prepare a Follow Up report by October 15, 2009. The Follow Up report was to address the following two remaining recommendations:

- Recommendation 1 – Institutional Planning and Decision-Making
- Recommendation 2 – Student Learning Outcomes

As an additional follow up item, the Commission requested that Lassen College provide an update on the status of the financial condition of the institution indicating budget, revenues and reverses.

The evaluation team conducted a site visit on November 6, 2009 to determine whether Lassen College had implemented the Commission's two remaining recommendations and to assess the financial condition of the college using the limited criteria stated by the Commission. The team members met with members of the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent/President, the Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator, members of the Facilities Planning and Institutional Technology Planning committees, members of the Curriculum/Academic Standards committee, Consultation Council and the Strategic Planning Committee. The team members also met with members of the Academic Senate,

executive administrators, and conducted an open forum where 22 members of the college community attended. The college was well prepared for the visit and arranged all evidence referenced in the Follow Up report in a logical and easy to follow sequence in the team room.

The college administration informed the team of a union expressed concern about implementation of the assessment phase of Student Learning Outcomes. Team members inquired about this issue in several conversations to determine whether the issue would significantly impair the college's ability to fully implement the assessment phase of student learning outcomes. The team concluded that the atmosphere of mutual respect and sense of community is well established at Lassen College. Team members appreciated the candid responses of college personnel during the visit and believe the demonstrated commitment to an open collegial process is a solid foundation from which the college will continue to grow to improve services to students and the community served by the college while also addressing the needs and concerns of faculty and staff.

### **Recommendation # 1.**

**The college must implement and evaluate ongoing student learning outcomes and institutional planning processes which should be based on data and research that results in a strategic plan and incorporate all other college planning documents, such as an educational master plan, a technology plan, and a facilities plan. These processes should guide future enrollment management decisions, resource allocation, and most importantly educational programs and services for the students and the community. The processes should be evaluated, using agreed upon criteria, on an annual basis to determine the effectiveness of the governance groups and leadership responsible for them as well as the success of the planned outcomes and actions stated in the plans. (Standards I.A.4, I.B.3, 4,5,6, & 7; II.A.2e,II.A.2f; IIIB.2a&2b, IIIC.1&2, IIID.1a-d, IIID.2a-g, IIID.3; IVA.3, IVA.5)”**

### **General Comments**

In reviewing actions taken by the college to address this recommendation the team decided to separate the components of the recommendation and respond to each component as a way of determining the extent of implementation activities. The key elements are:

- Implement and evaluate ongoing student learning outcomes and institutional planning processes
- Develop planning processes and use those processes to prepare a strategic plan that incorporates the elements of an educational master plan, a technology plan, and a facilities master plan.
- Evaluate the planning processes using agreed upon criteria, on an annual basis to determine effectiveness of the governance groups and leadership responsible for them as well as the success of the planned outcomes and actions stated in the plans

Lassen College continues to improve its operations and to align its activities with Commission standards regarding data-driven planning processes, resource allocation decisions based on data and in support of the college’s Strategic Plan and the evaluation of the planning processes and resource allocation decisions. The college has codified its processes into several handbooks. Processes described in the following governance related handbooks were reviewed by the team during the visit:

- Shared Governance & Collegial Consultation Process Handbook (2009-2010)
- District Strategic Plan dated October 13, 2009
- Instructional Program Review-Policy and Procedure 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. Fall 2009
- Non-Instructional Program Review – Policy and Procedure 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. September 2009
- Institutional Planning and Budget Development Process Handbook (2010-2011)
- Comprehensive Institutional Master Plan – “Keeping an Eye on the Future” 2009-2014 – Adopted by Consultation Council May 7, 2009

On the whole the college has fully documented its processes thereby allowing all constituency groups to understand how decisions are made at the college and to see how each individual employee, students and members of the Board of Trustees are provided opportunities to discuss and comment on proposed actions before decisions are made. Additional details about the contents of the documents are provided in the Findings and Evidence section described below.

## **Findings and Evidence**

### *Governance Model and Collegial Process*

The Shared Governance & Collegial Consultation Process Handbook was accepted by the Academic Senate and Consultation Council in September 2009. The handbook is a comprehensive guide of the charges (or responsibilities) of each constituency group and the roles the groups are expected to fulfill when participating in the governance processes. In general the book is an excellent orientation tool that is used to familiarize faculty, staff, students, administrators and governing board members about how processes work and what each standing committee is expected to accomplish as part of the governance process. The handbook lists the charge of the committees, the structure and composition of the committees, how many members are needed for a quorum, how a chair person is assigned and how the committee reports on the discussions occurring and the actions taken by the group.

### *Strategic Plan –Reaffirmed October 13, 2009*

Lassen College reaffirmed its Strategic Plan in October 2009. The Strategic Plan includes a vision statement, the college's mission, the strategic goals, institutional student learning outcomes and college values. Monitoring implementation of strategic plan objectives is assisted by use of the Strategic Goal Implementation and Evaluation Matrix. This matrix lists the item to be implemented, the individual or department responsible and the status of implementation efforts and the evidence used to verify implementation efforts and results of implemented action steps. The matrix is intended for use by college personnel as a way to evaluate the results of implemented action plans. A second report called the Key Performance Indicator Status Report has also been prepared. The Key Performance Indicator Report is prepared by the Office of Institutional Research. While still a new report, this document can be a valuable communication method to provide the community and other users with information on how the college has worked to provide high quality educational services to community served by Lassen College.

The Key Performance Indicator Preliminary Status Report dated November 2, 2009 includes each of the college's strategic goals, measurable objectives for each goal and a target outcome for each objective. As an example, Strategic Goal # 1 is listed as follows in the Key Performance Indicator draft report dated November 2, 2009:

“Strategic Goal # 1 (Student Success: Enable students' attainment of educational goals, including degrees and certificates, transfer, job placement and advancement, basic skills, and lifelong learning.

1. Basic Skill Student Success
  - a. Improve Basic Skills Performance as Compiled in ARCC Report

*Target: By 2011 improve the basic skills completion rate to the State average (per the ARCC report) and the basic skills course improvement rate to the State average (per the ARCC report) or better.”*

In combination the Strategic Goal Implementation and Evaluation Matrix and the Key Performance Indicator Status Report improves communication within the college and with the community served by the College. The college is commended for developing these two important methods of monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the results of actions taken to implement its strategic plan.

Lassen College follows procedures recorded in the Instructional Program Review Policy and Procedure document approved in Fall 2009. An instructional program review requires departments complete the following sections:

1. Program Objectives
2. Curriculum
3. Student Outcomes – *this section requires departments to complete Student Learning Outcome assessments, an analysis of the assessment and any changes proposed as a result of the assessment analysis.*
4. Personnel and Support Services
5. Facilities/Equipment
6. Budget
7. Summary and Prioritized Recommendations

Some of the data gathered and assessed during the program review process includes:

Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES) by Program

- FTES generated by course, by semester, by modality, and scheduled time
- College full time enrollment data to match program categories

Number of Full Time Equivalent Faculty in the program by semester and year

- Total FTEF
- FTEF for full-time only-including overloads
- FTEF for full-time faculty only without overloads
- FTES for full-time faculty - overloads only

Annual Budget Printouts that include funds expended on supplies, equipment, travel and other items requested to support the department

Enrollment data

- Total program enrollment data at census and second census
- Enrollment data at first and second census for each class, each modality and time of day courses are offered

Student Outcomes (transfers, awarded degrees and certificates, basic skills improvement and retention)

- Student completion, retention and success rates by program, class, modality, and time of day
- Persistence from course to course
- Transfer data
- Awarded degrees and certificates
- Additional data requested by faculty will be considered as priorities allow

#### Capital Outlay equipment

- List of equipment
- Age of equipment
- Replacement schedule
- Existing maintenance/service agreements

#### Semester and annual budget costs

- Full-Time Faculty
- Part-Time Faculty
- Overloads
- Contract educators

The data is provided in raw form and is also provided in a range of routine formats that allows readers to interpret the data and arrive at conclusions depending on the decision to be made.

The program review self study is prepared by the department under review. The completed self study is submitted to the supervising administrator and the Academic Senate for review. The supervising administrator and the Academic Senate representative present the program review to the Consultation Council and the Board of Trustees. For the non-instructional departments the supervising administrator will present the completed program review to Consultation Council and then the Board of Trustees.

#### *Evaluate the Planning Processes*

As previously noted the college uses an evaluation matrix as a tool to monitor implementation activities. Lassen College also created a Comprehensive Institutional Master Plan that was adopted by Consultation Council in May 2009. The Master Plan is a five year plan spanning the fiscal years 2009 through 2014. The Master Plan includes chapters on the following areas:

#### *Institutional Section – Strategic Plan*

This section includes the mission, vision and values statements along with strategic goals. The Strategic Plan section describes the data analysis work completed, the membership of the Strategic Planning Committee and the internal and external data analysis work completed. The Comprehensive Institutional Master Plan summarizes the data analysis work that was completed in order for the Strategic Planning Committee to develop strategic objectives that are supported by the data studied. In the team's opinion the data analysis was thorough and is sufficient to support the strategies developed by the Committee.

#### *Educational Master Plan*

This plan includes additional data analysis with the primary focusing being on the academic programs of the college. The Educational Master Plan establishes the academic direction of the college and incorporates other plans such as student services, administrative services, facilities and technology each lending support to accomplish the objectives of the academic programming strategies

The Educational Master Plan includes a staffing plan that anticipates changes in staff levels that would be necessary to meet the demand for additional personnel as student

enrollment increases. Appropriately this plan also includes the objectives, strategies, responsible administrators and performance indicators for academic planning. Recognizing the size of Lassen College, the Educational Master Plan is relatively short in length but includes all relevant information that is necessary for data-driven decision making.

#### *Student Services Support*

The student services section of the Educational Master Plan lists the vision of the department. The college identifies that it will use a whole-person student development and encourages support of the student both in and out of the class. Key areas of emphasis of the student services are those typically found in a community college such as: Matriculation, Counseling and Guidance/Career Center, Articulation, programs for special student populations (CalWorks, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services, etc). The Student Services section of the Educational Master Plan identifies the goals for each major objective as well as targeted measurable outcomes expected to be completed.

#### *Administrative Services Support*

This section begins with a description of each major department. The departments are fiscal services, purchasing and logistics, bookstore, facilities and the information technology department. Included within the Administrative Services section is an Institutional Technology Master Plan and a Facilities Master Plan. The Institutional Master Plan and the Facilities Master Plan include strategies and objectives to accomplish the strategies. Consistent with all of the college's other plans, the technology plan and the facilities plan include measurable goals and targeted goals that are expected to be accomplished.

Lassen College has completed a substantial amount of work in reaching the point where it now has structured processes that yield specific measurable goals and objectives. Using routinely gathered data the college has the ability to compare results to stated goals to determine whether or not the goals are being achieved.

The use of the Strategic Goal Implementation and Evaluation Matrix and the Key Performance Indicator Status Report provide all college personnel and community members (upon request) with continuous status reports on the college's progress on achievement of the strategies established using the shared governance processes in use at Lassen College.

#### **Conclusions**

Lassen College has implemented Recommendation #1. This conclusion is based on the evidence provided to the team and interviews with faculty, staff, administrators, students and members of the Board of Trustees. The area where additional emphasis will need to continue is in regards to assessment of processes on an annual basis. It is clear from the evidence reviewed that the college uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and to improve student learning. There is dialogue and active participation throughout the college as data is analyzed and discussed in support of decisions made. There is an ongoing effort to monitor performance and achievement as evidenced by the forms that have become a regular part of operating activities.



Information is widely distributed and participation appears to be broad based. It is the team's conclusion that Lassen College is operating at the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of implementation on the Commission's Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness in Planning. In future periods the college is encouraged to expand evaluation of its planning processes by conducting surveys, focus groups and other methods that will solicit input from a broad range of employees who are affected by the planning processes.

**Recommendation Two (Previous Recommendation Fourteen from 2006): Student Learning Outcomes**

The team recommends that the college achieve a sustainable level of assessing student learning outcomes, which can be used for continuous quality improvement. Administrators, faculty, and staff need to continue to identify, develop, implement, and assess student-learning outcomes at the course, instructional and non-instructional programs, and degree levels and use the results of those assessments to improve student learning, services, plans and institutional effectiveness. (Standards IB.1, IB.4, IB.7; IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.3e, IIB.4, IIC.2; III; IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

**General Comments**

The college has primarily focused on developing and assessing student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the instructional area. SLOs for 100% of its courses, degrees, and certificates have been developed. The college has also developed institutional SLOs. Assessment of course level SLOs has also been occurring. The table below summarizes the progress the college has made on the assessment of course level outcomes. The data for the table was taken from college's March 15, 2009; May 14, 2009; and October 13, 2009 reports.

**Faculty Participation in Course SLO Assessment**

	Contract Faculty					Adjunct Faculty				
	Fall 07	Spring 08	Fall 08	Spring 09	Summer 09	Fall 07	Spring 08	Fall 08	Spring 09	Summer 09
Submitted Assessment Plan	74%	71%	97%	88%	76%	15%	7%	29%	57%	46%
Submitted Assessment Results	74%	57%	57%	77%	76%	3%	7%	16%	57%	41%

From the above chart it can be seen that contract faculty are more engaged in course level SLO assessment than adjunct faculty with about three fourths of the contract faculty and about half of the adjuncts submitting assessment results in spring 2009. The percent of contract and adjunct faculty submitting assessment results seems to have leveled out during the spring and summer of 2009. The college has recognized that the level of adjunct faculty involvement in the assessment of SLOs needs to be improved. On page 3 of the May 14, 2009 follow-up report, it states that training would be provided for part-

time faculty to become more knowledgeable on SLOs, and the methods and metrics by which they can be assessed.

### *Findings and Evidence*

During the site visit, the team learned that adjunct faculty received training on SLO's during a flex day activity. This was the only reported formal training for adjunct faculty. The majority of the training for adjunct faculty occurs through one-to-one interactions with full-time faculty. While one-to-one training is effective in providing a tailored approach to providing adjunct faculty with the skills necessary to implement SLO, the team learned that only 50% of adjunct faculty come to the campus over the course of the year. These for the most part are faculty members teaching correspondence courses. Compounding the problem of SLO training for adjunct faculty is that the college's Handbook for Correspondence Instructors, approved by the Academic Senate on November 5, 2009, provides no instruction about SLOs other than a single reference to SLOs in an example of a course syllabus on page 13 of the handbook. Individuals at the college acknowledged that educating the adjunct faculty, who teach correspondence courses, about SLOs is a problem that needs to be addressed.

There is a potential concern about engaging all contract faculty in the assessment of SLOs. The faculty union contends that SLO assessment is a matter to be negotiated. Page 10 of the March 15, 2009 Follow-up Report states, "The District and faculty union have not yet reached resolution on revisions to the faculty evaluation process to include the development and assessment of student learning outcomes as one component of faculty evaluation." As of November 6, 2009, the date of the follow up visit by the evaluation team the college and the faculty union had still not resolved the concerns expressed by the union. The Academic Senate has formally encouraged faculty members to continue to participate in the development and assessment of SLO's. As an example, the Instructional Program Review Policy and Procedure handbook states on page 16,

The Senate recognizes the value of including SLO assessment results in an instructional program review, especially in terms of evaluating student learning and identifying emerging program needs. However, at the time of revision, September 2009, SLO assessment is an item being discussed and negotiated between LCCD and LCFA. Although program faculty are encouraged to complete and comment on evaluation of SLO assessments as a standard of best practice, such action will not be a mandated part of the instructional program review until such time as the matter is successfully negotiated by LCFA and LCCD.

The problem of engaging all contract faculty in SLO assessment is further noted on page 9 of the October 13, 2009 Follow-up Report that states, "the Academic Senate adopted a revision to the instructional program review process that incorporates the recommendation that faculty voluntarily collect, evaluate, and make recommendations based on SLO assessment" that about three fourths of the faculty are engaged in SLO assessment on a voluntary basis. The Academic Senate, in the opinion of the evaluation team, has taken positive steps by encouraging faculty members to continue to work on SLO assessments.

In regard to program level SLOs, page 8 of the October 15, 2009 Follow Up report states that during the spring 2009 term, six out of seventeen (instructional) programs (35%) assessed program level SLOs. The reporting of SLO assessment results has recently been incorporated into the program review process. This was confirmed through a review of the Basic Skills program review that was completed in October 2009. In regard to non-instructional programs, Student Services and the library have developed SLOs; however, no evidence of assessment was found. Generally, program level SLO development has lagged behind course SLO development.

The Administrative Services area of the college is conspicuously absent in all discussion of outcomes and the assessment of institutional effectiveness in attaining intended outcomes. Administrative Services has only recently begun to dialogue about the intended outcomes of their programs and their effect on student learning. Outcomes for Administrative Services have not yet been developed.

In terms of institutional SLO assessment, some evidence was found that the college has recently begun to work on this issue. In the program review of the Basic Skills program, submitted in October 2009, it was found that course SLOs had been mapped to program SLOs which were in turn mapped to the institutional SLOs. However, this was the only incidence of progress on institutional SLOs that was found.

### **Conclusion**

The college has made progress on recommendation #2, but it has not yet fully implemented this recommendation. There are several impediments to the college fully engaging in SLO assessment. The college is relying on face-to-face contact between contract and adjunct faculty as the methodology to teach adjuncts about SLO assessment. About half of the adjunct faculty teach correspondence courses and never come on campus. Thus, they have no face-to-face contact and no SLO training. In addition, the faculty union considers SLO assessment to be a topic of negotiation. This has led to the Academic Senate's stance that SLO assessment is voluntary and so far the effort has been successful. Of additional concern is that there has been only limited progress on program outcome assessment in student services and no progress made in the administrative services area. No progress has been made in degree outcomes assessment and almost no progress on institutional outcomes assessment. The college still has considerable work remaining to fully address this recommendation.

Because the college focused first on instructional SLOs and has only recently started on program SLOs in non-instructional areas, different areas of the college are at different points on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness -- Part III: Student Learning Outcomes. On the rubric, the instructional area of the college is transitioning from the "development" level to the "proficiency" level. In the non-instructional areas of the college, Student Services is at the "development" level and Administrative Services is at the "awareness" level of the rubric. It should be pointed out that the entire college does not have to be at the "proficiency" level on the ACCJC SLO rubric until 2012 and to fully meet recommendation #2 the college would have to be at the proficiency level or higher.

## Follow Up Comments - Financial Condition

It its letter dated June 30, 2009 the Commission directed Lassen College to submit a Follow Up report to respond to recommendations # 1 and # 2 described in this evaluation team report. In addition to responding to actions taken to implement the recommendations the college was to also provide an update on the financial condition of the college. As noted in prior reports to the Commission a state special trustee was brought to Lassen College at the direction of the Chancellor, California Community Colleges. The college and the State Chancellor entered into an agreement that defined the duties, authority and responsibilities of the special trustee. The college has made tremendous financial progress under the direction of the special trustee and the college's current superintendent/president.

The team chair discussed the college's financial condition and the financial activities with the state monitor. Financial reports show the college ended FY 07/08 with a \$2 million or 17.2% ending fund balance, in FY 08/09 that amount dropped to \$1.9 million or 16.1% and was expected to remain at \$1.9 million for the end of FY 09/10. On February 10, 2009 the Board of Trustees approved setting an ending fund balance equal to two months of payroll. Two months of payroll is equal to \$1.6 million or 12%.

The college's reported revenues of \$14,829,970 and expenditures of \$14,401,943 for FY 08/09. The ending fund balance was \$2.1 million or 15.28% of expenditures at the end of FY 08/09. For FY 09/10 the college is projecting revenues of \$14,525,708 and expenditures of \$14,526,561 resulting in a projected deficit of \$853. The fund balance is projected to remain at \$2.1 million at the end of FY 09/10. This information was obtained from a Multi-Year Recovery Plan approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2009.

The college is carefully monitoring key performance indicators as discussed in Recommendation # 1 above, it is following a structured and closely monitored multiple year financial plan and it has made important improvements in its governance processes as evidenced by the college's development of handbooks that stipulate how the various processes for governance on the college. It is the team's conclusion that Lassen College is fiscally sound and is in compliance with Standard III.D of Commission standards related to resources.