

Tuesday, August 5, 2008

LASC Faculty, Staff and Students:

The Los Angeles Times and local ABC Evening News reported yesterday on the probationary status of Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC).

The article in the Los Angeles Times indicated that the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges placed the College on probation at its June 4-5 meeting. This was a result of a scheduled progress visit that was made by two members of the College's visiting accreditation team that came in 2006. In 2006, Los Angeles Southwest College received full accreditation without any sanctions. In addition to receiving six commendations, there were seven recommendations that were made that the college had to address prior to its next accreditation visit in 2012. The College has made significant progress toward those recommendations over the past two years.

The visiting team of 2008 felt that the college had not addressed, to their understanding, four recommendations. Those recommendations included: 1) implementing a non-instructional program review process; 2) addressing retention and student success issues; 3) closing the gap between plans and actions through having coordinated plans in the areas of staff development, technology, enrollment management, distance learning and occupational education; and 4) serving the needs of the diverse community LASC serves. Substantial progress was evidenced in each one of those recommendations as indicated below:

1. As clearly stated in the "Progress Report," LASC has "implemented" (designed, planned, and put into action) a comprehensive program review process for non-instructional programs. This is completely consistent with the direction given by the visiting team in 2006 which directed it to "prioritize the implementation of the processes described in the Planning Handbook for planning, evaluation and review by creating a realistic timeline and monitoring success." These reviews have been completed and we are beginning our second cycle of reviews.
2. The college reported taking the following steps -- all of them documented as "best practices" in the statewide Basic Skills Initiative effort:
 - a) Hired a designated Dean of Student Success to oversee all future SS efforts and coordinate SS activities and support programs
 - b) Held an entire series of workshops for faculty and staff dedicated to enhancing student success
 - c) Created a new "Learning Assistance Department" to integrate all basic skills and student success support efforts
 - d) Established a number of standing committees devoted to student success and basic skills.
 - e) Participated in and completed the pilot of the statewide Basic Skills Self Assessment -- resulting in the completion of a well-developed matrix of activities that was sent to the State Chancellor's Office by April 30.
3. The 2008 visiting team credited the college with "making some progress in addressing this recommendation" by creating concrete plans for action in all

of the areas outlined above. But then they went on to note that these efforts “have not been assessed for effectiveness or incorporated into the Integrated College Operational Plan.” There can be no doubt that LASC has been making a good-faith effort to comply with this recommendation and will continue to do so.

4. The college presented an impressive list of activities in response to this recommendation, including the hiring of a full-time outreach and recruitment coordinator; the creation of a “Bridges to Success” “one-stop” student information center; the production of bilingual outreach and marketing materials; the creation of the “Brothers Beyond the Colors” program to bring African American and Latino men together; and the offering of classes at various locations in Latino communities. All of these efforts resulted in double digit increases in Latino student enrollments in the past year and greater engagement with Latino communities within LASC’s service area.

As I review the policies of the Commission, it is my understanding that probation is imposed on a college when it “deviates significantly from the Commission’s eligibility requirements, standards, or policies. . . or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning. . . .” I strongly believe that we have not deviated from the Commission’s eligibility requirements, standards or policies, and have not failed to conditions imposed by the Commission including a warning. In fact, we have not been put on warning status at any time subsequent to our 2006 visit.

The sanction of probation issued by the Commission DOES NOT affect LASC’s accreditation, the courses that are offered nor the certificates and degrees LASC grants. As the Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District indicated in the Los Angeles Times article yesterday, he thought that the action by the Commission was an overreaction. He believes, as I do, that LASC is a strong institution.

I will be visiting with the President of the Commission on August 18th to further discuss the issues and recommendations of the visiting team. I will report back to the College community following my visit. If any questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Jack E. Daniels III, Ph.D.](#)

President