DATE: November 25, 2008

TO: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

FROM: Glenn R. Roquemore, Ph.D.
President, Irvine Valley College
Team Chair

SUBJECT: Report on Progress Report Visit
Ohlone College, November 12, 2008

Introduction:

A comprehensive visit was conducted to Ohlone College in March of 2008. At its meeting of June 4-6, 2008, the Commission acted to issue a warning and a Progress Report and Visit. The visiting team, Dr. Glenn R. Roquemore and Barbara Vineyard, conducted the site visit to Ohlone College on November 12, 2008. The purpose of the team visit was to validate the Progress report prepared by the college and to determine if sustained, continuous, and positive movement toward institutional good practice had occurred.

In general, the team found that the college had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with the individual and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair and by assembling appropriate documents in the meeting room used by the team. Over the course of the day, the team met with the President of the college, 4 Vice Presidents, 5 members of the Board of Trustees, and the Academic Senate President.

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

1. The team recommends that the Board of Trustees ceases involvement in College operations and delegate all non-policy issues and policy implementation at the college level to the president. (Standard IV.B1.e.j)

2. The Board of Trustees, District leadership and College leadership define, publish, adhere to, regularly evaluate, and continuously improve the respective leadership roles and scopes of authority for college and district constituent groups and governance committees in meaningful, collegial decision-making processes. (Standard IV.A.1, 2, 3, 5)
3. The Board of Trustees take measures to bring all constituent groups together to enable the campus toward:

   a. Developing a positive and in-depth dialog on decision making roles and responsibilities that will ultimately lead to strengthening student learning and success at the college. (I.A.3, 1.B1)

   b. Creating an environment which ensures greater adminstrative stability and empowerment at the college. (IV.A.1, IV.A.2, A.2.a, A.2.b, A.3, A.5, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3)

4. The Board of Trustees develops a process to implement improvements derived from regular self-evaluations. (IV.B.1.g)

College Responses to the Team Recommendations:

1. The team recommends that the Board of Trustees ceases involvement in College operations and delegate all non-policy issues and policy implementation at the college level to the president. (Standard IV.B1.e.j)

Immediately following the team visit on March 3-6, 2008, the Board of Trustees scheduled a workshop (on March 12, 2008) with an Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) expert on community college boards. The Commission recommendations and Standard IVB were reviewed, and a variety of materials directed at improving trustee understanding and execution of the Board's role were discussed. They performed a self-assessment to identify specific areas in need of improvement regarding their role. In addition, the Board issued a statement committing to address the accreditation recommendations.

A second workshop with the ACCT consultant occurred on July 19 with the new president in attendance. The following comprised the session goals:

- Plan for how to practice trusteeship appropriately
- Expectations of trustee behavior in and outside of meetings
- Actions trustees are willing to perform to self-monitor
- Expectations regarding the kind and parameters of information from the College President
- Plan for what happens regarding the accreditation recommendations in the next 90 days

The visiting team believes that the July 19 workshop has led to substantial improvements to the Board meeting structure, participants, and agenda; and development of communication protocols between trustees and the campus community, the president's staff, the press, and the president. Evolving ideas for continued improvement have been included in a Board Improvement Plan. In addition, the Board Chair, with input from other trustees and the President, has created a Board Member Guide that describes appropriate action in all areas identified in the workshop. The Board
has also scrutinized the accreditation team report carefully to understand the context of the recommendations. Progress on meeting recommendations is reviewed at each Board meeting.

The College implemented several changes to the Board meeting structure and agenda that are designed to clarify the role of the Board and to improve Board meetings. They include the following:

- Board members receive supporting documentation for each agenda item with the agenda. Trustees forward questions to the college President prior to the meeting to ensure that needed information is presented at the meeting. The Board meeting agenda does not contain place holders.
- Each agenda item subject to Board action references a board policy number.
- Members of the audience complete a form if they wish to address the Board. The form can be completed at any time during the meeting.
- The Presidents of the Faculty Senate and the Associated Students of Ohlone College (ASOC) make standing reports to the Board and have designated items on the agenda to do so.
- The elected trustees, the student trustee, the college President/Superintendent, and the President’s support staff member comprise those seated at the Board table.
- The student trustee is asked for an advisory vote on each action item prior to the elected trustees’ vote.
- Communication between the Board and the President’s staff is directed through the President.
- Trustees have the opportunity to make announcements and report briefly on events in which they have participated since the last meeting during “Reports & Announcements.”

The team found that significant improvements have been made in the following areas:

- The College’s “extended board” that seemed to invite the Board of Trustees to discuss and question college operations have been eliminated. The “extended board,” included representatives from two unions, the Faculty Senate President, the College Council Co-chair, and the senior administrative staff all seated at the table with the elected trustees. To eliminate this body while elevating the College Council to its full function and facilitating the role of the Faculty Senate and Associated Student of Ohlone College, the President met with leaders of each group represented on the “extended board” to articulate her rationale for the change. The President also discussed it with the College Council as a whole. All groups expressed their comprehension of the concept and support for the proposed changes to the Board meeting structure and agenda.

- The structure of Board agendas also contributed to micromanagement. They did not contain specific agenda items for the Faculty Senate or the ASOC to make reports to the Board. Instead, reports were solicited from all members of the extended board under “Reports and Announcements.” Some trustees chose to use that time to discuss their views on various topics, which often led to discussion of topics not appearing on the agenda. The agenda item was enhanced to read, “Reports and Announcements: This is an opportunity for the Trustees to report on activities attended or to announce upcoming events,” and the language was strictly enforced. In addition, all Board agenda items include a reference to the applicable Board Policy and has the effect of keeping the focus on Policy level decision making.

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Finally, the frequency of Board meetings was discussed, and it was determined that in months where a second meeting occurred (September, October, January, February, March, April, and May), the Board’s time would be better used in a workshop format. The workshop time is currently used to review and discuss Board improvement as indicated in the Accreditation Recommendations.

Conclusion: The College has made a good faith effort in successfully addressing this recommendation. The new college President and the President of the Board of Trustees have taken the warning very seriously and have implemented major changes that will be sustainable and effective. The Team met with 5 Board members who all expressed a dedication to following the guidance of the new President and the recommendations of the ACCT facilitator. The team believes that the college has met the expectations of the Commission. The most troublesome Board member was not re-elected, primarily due to his negative behavior and his contribution to the College being placed on warning.

2. The Board of Trustees, District leadership and College leadership define, publish, adhere to, regularly evaluate, and continuously improve the respective leadership roles and scopes of authority for college and district constituent groups and governance committees in meaningful, collegial decision-making processes. (Standard IV.A.1, 2, 3, 5)

The team found that the new College President, recognizing the problems that she inherited, began to assess the routine actions and involvement of College Council in college governance, the history of the Classified Senate, and the role and participation of the Faculty Senate in college governance. She also reviewed the written description of the roles of the College Council and the Faculty Senate and the College Council by-laws and examined the history of the “extended board.”

The President also reviewed the Board Policies to determine whether clarification of Board roles was needed. At the September 24th workshop, the Board agreed to review its policies on a four-year cycle starting with policies related to the role of the Board. In addition to the President’s discussions with campus groups regarding changes to the Board meetings and the publication of those changes, there have been a number of other discussions relevant to leadership roles and scopes of authority. Discussion with the Board and review of meeting agendas revealed that the trustees had not received regular informational updates, and placeholders often appeared on the Board agendas. The review of previous self-assessments and discussion with trustees suggested that there were instances when supporting materials for action items were not supplied in a timely fashion.

The visiting team found that significant progress has been made through the following efforts:

• The President instituted the requirement that all materials for the agenda be provided to her prior to their posting on the college website. This timeline enables her to assure their completeness and accuracy.
The Board has discussed its role at four workshops to date and at Board business meetings through the Board improvement plan, the Board Guide, Accreditation progress updates, the review of the Team Report, and informally through a series of email, phone, and in-person exchanges between individual trustees and the Board Chair and College President.

A Shared Governance document describing college committees and decision-making roles is in draft form and has been reviewed by the College Council. The role of College Council as the college planning and budgeting committee has been discussed and a task force has been meeting to address and define this role more fully. The College Council By-laws have been revised to articulate its role more clearly. To implement its function as the shared governance body for the campus, the College Council is developing methods of obtaining feedback from all campus groups on potential decisions and key topics.

**Conclusion:** The College has taken steps to clarify decision making and leadership roles. There is evidence of effective dialog among all constituent groups to accomplish this goal. The Academic Senate is pleased with the changes that have been made to clarify appropriate roles. The Progress Report asserts evidence of a “Governance and Decision Making Draft Document.” The team was disappointed to find only a rough compilation of committees and constituent groups, a one page flow chart titled “Decision Making Pathways”, and a very simple narrative to accompany the “Pathways” chart. The team concludes that this recommendation has not fully met the expectation of the Commission. The team recommends that the college review several available models for decision making including College of the Canyons, Coastline College and Irvine Valley College. The decision making model should be developed by representatives from all constituent groups, administration, and the Board of Trustees.

3. **The Board of Trustees takes measures to bring all constituent groups together to enable the campus toward:**

   a. **Developing a positive and in-depth dialog on decision making roles and responsibilities that will ultimately lead to strengthening student learning and success at the college.** (I.A.3, I.B1)

   b. **Creating an environment which ensures greater administrative stability and empowerment at the college.** (IV.A.1, IV.A.2, A.2.a, A.2.b, A.3, A.5, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and IV.B.3)

On March 12, 2008, the Board immediately sought services from the ACCT. The resulting actions taken by the President, college constituency groups, and the Board to restructure Board meetings required significant, focused, and ongoing dialog about shared governance processes and roles.

At each of the Board meetings since the Commission recommendations were received, the Board Chair and College President have reported on progress. Initial feedback from constituent groups, including the Board, indicates good and positive progress is being made.
Changes being pursued by the College President and the Board are designed to provide clarity about administrative communication flow and decision making processes. The changes include the seating arrangement for administrative staff at Board meetings, directing trustee-administrator interaction through the President, not requiring administrators to attend Board the workshops occurring in place of the second Board meeting of the month, and reviewing Board agendas with supporting information prior to the meetings. Although anecdotal at this point, top administrators indicate a lessening of tension and better understanding of the relationship of the Administration, the College President, and the Board.

**Conclusion:** The team found that the college is now a different place. The Board of Trustees has taken extensive, and rather expedient, measures to bring all constituent groups together. The college has engaged in a positive and in-depth dialog on decision making roles and responsibilities. The team believes that the college has met the expectations of the Commission.

4. **The Board of Trustees develops a process to implement improvements derived from regular self-evaluations. (IV.B.1.g)**

The March 3-6, 2008, visiting team found that little had been done to implement the Board evaluation results into formal improvement plans with measurable outcomes. To respond to this matter, the Board has conducted several workshops since the visiting team recommendations were received. The workshop in March included a formal Board self-assessment using an instrument developed by ACCT. The results of this assessment, along with the historical longitudinal self-evaluation data, are now a part of a Board Improvement Plan. The ACCT facilitator will be invited back in January or February of 2009 for an assessment of the Board’s progress on meeting Recommendation 8. The Board is committed to fully understanding the context of the team recommendations, to providing detailed and accurate information for this Progress Report, and to documenting progress on meeting recommendations that have been, and will be, reviewed at each Board meeting.

**Conclusion:** Through the leadership of the College President and the Board President, the Trustees have developed a robust self-evaluation process that includes monthly workshops to review how recommendations for improvement have been implemented. The team found that the evaluation process could be enhanced by including routine discussion on the Accreditation Standards that pertain to the Board of Trustees. The team believes that the college has met the expectations of the Commission.