

# **Accreditation Progress Report**

**Ohlone College**  
**43600 Mission Boulevard**  
**Fremont, CA 94539-0390**

**October 15, 2008**

# **Table of Contents**

**Statement on Report Preparation**

**Recommendation 5**

**Recommendation 6**

**Recommendation 7**

**Recommendation 8**

**Evidence list**

## Statement on Report Preparation

The recommendations listed in the Accrediting Commission action letter dated June 30, 2008, were largely directed at the Ohlone College Board of Trustees' actions, documents, and processes. Initial action taken to address the recommendations was noted only through an agenda of a March 2008 workshop. Preparation of the Progress Report began in earnest in July with the documentation of the outcomes of the second workshop. The College President and the Board Chair worked throughout the summer to catalog discussions, improvements, and plans in preparation for writing this report. At each Board meeting, progress on the accreditation recommendations was reported. Meetings and dialog with the College Council, the Faculty Senate, and leaders of the campus community regarding the recommendations and needed improvements were noted.

In early September, the College President and the Accreditation Liaison Officer prepared a draft of the report for presentation and discussion at the September 24 Board meeting. Progress on the recommendations was presented at the College Council meeting just prior to the Board meeting. The target date of October 8 was identified for final Board approval of the report.

Prior to the October 8 Board meeting, the Progress Report was circulated to the College Council again for final feedback. All comments were considered carefully, and changes were made as appropriate. A final discussion of the report occurred at the College Council meeting on October 6.

At the October 8 Board meeting, progress on the accreditation recommendations was reported and the final report was discussed. The Board voted to approve the Progress Report with allowance for minor editing prior to submission.

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President/Superintendent, Ohlone College

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Date

**OHLONE COLLEGE**  
**Progress Report**  
**Due October 15, 2008**

**Recommendation 5: 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 (IV.B.1.e.j).**

**Description of Progress**

The Board of Trustees of the Ohlone Community College District acted to respond swiftly to the recommendations from the visiting accreditation team. Immediately following the team visit, on March 12, 2008, the Board of Trustees scheduled a workshop 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. Central to the workshop, a mini self-assessment was completed with the intention of careful analysis and future improvement planning. The workshop also included preparation for a smooth transition for the new president, who joined Ohlone College on July 1, 2008.

There were several important outcomes of the March workshop. First, the Board heard from a neutral and external source what their roles should be with respect to college policy and operations. They were provided articles and other written references for their review. They performed a self-assessment to identify specific areas in need of improvement regarding their role. Finally, 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 workshop discussion was focused and candid with many suggestions for improvement resulting, including changes 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.

The results of the self-assessment conducted at the March session were reviewed. The following three items, those with the lowest score (below 3.29 on a 5-point scale), were identified for initial attention.

- *Individual board members follow appropriate guidelines when visiting the College.*  
(2.57)

- *Board members are given adequate information on the issues they are requested to make decisions on. (2.86)*
- *Board members appropriately represent the College when speaking with the media. (3.14)*

During the discussion it became apparent that the Board did not have written guidelines for many of the topics identified by the Accrediting Commission as problems. Plans to articulate appropriate trustee and college behavior in each area were identified. Ideas for improving communication and policing trustee comments during Board meetings were listed.

Since the Board's July 19 workshop, ideas expressed have been codified in the form of a Board Improvement Plan (previously referred to as the "Get Well Plan"). 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 and to provide information for this report. Progress on meeting recommendations is reviewed at each Board meeting.

Several changes designed to clarify the role of the Board and to improve Board meetings have been made to meeting structure and agenda. 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 new College President observed that there were several College structures and practices in place that seemed to invite the Board of Trustees to discuss and question college operations. Perhaps the most obvious was the "extended board," which included representatives from two unions, the Faculty Senate President, the College Council Co-chair, and the senior administrative staff seated at the table with the elected trustees. The original concept was to enhance trustee understanding of, and participation in, shared governance. However, the issue at hand in the context of the Commission findings was the scope of such a body. The Board's domain is

policy, the unions' domain is work conditions, the Faculty Senate's is academic issues as spelled out in the collegial consultation model, and the College Council's is as the shared governance body advising the President. In other words, all of these groups have necessary, but separate and distinct functions. As such, putting them in a single group meant they would be discussing each other's areas. Exchanges turned naturally to the operations of the college, thus undermining the role of the President as the sole employee of the Board. Having members of the "extended board" sitting at the Board table also invited the Board chair to ask each individual what each thought about issues.

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 and agenda.

The structure of Board agendas seemed to contribute to micromanagement, as well. 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. These changes were implemented at the August 13 meeting.

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.

### **Analysis of Results**

Since the changes described above were implemented, the campus community has reported greater ease and satisfaction with the tenor of the Board meetings and with their role in them. Trustees have agreed to all of the changes, and there is a general sense that they are comfortable with them so far. Meetings since the changes are more civil, focused, and shorter.

### **Evidence**

March 2008 Board Workshop Agenda (file)  
Board Self Assessment form (file)  
Board Meeting Video, April 2008 (link)  
Board Self Assessment Summary Analysis (file)  
Board Workshop Agenda and Notes, July 19 (file)  
Board Improvement Plan (link)  
Board Member Guide (link)  
Initial Review of Team Report (link)

Board Meeting and Agenda Changes memo (link)  
College Council Agendas and Minutes, August-October (link)  
Sample Board Agendas (before and after August) (link)  
Board Agenda and Minutes, September 24 (link)  
Notes for Handbook on CEO Board Relations and Responsibilities, Chapters 1-3 (file)  
Sample Comment Card (file)  
List of Reminders (file)  
Board meeting videos, July-October (link)  
Board planning timeline (file)

### **Additional Plans**

Going forward, the following Board actions have been scheduled:

October 23, 2008—Regular Board Meeting (Workshop Format)

- The Board will assess how it has been doing on the three issues addressed in the workshop and presented to the Board on August 13, 2008.
- The Board will review/address three additional areas for improvement from the ACCT sponsored Board Self-Assessment.
- The President will conduct a session on a topic from *Handbook on CEO-Board Relations and Responsibilities*.

November 12, 2008—Regular Board Meeting (Business Meeting Format)

- The Board will adopt a New Board Member Orientation process.
- If the Accreditation Team follow-up visit occurs prior to this meeting, there will be a debriefing on the visit with the Board.

November 2008—; CCLC Conference attendance by college President, newly elected trustee(s), and continuing Board members

December 1, 2008—Regular Board Meeting (Business Meeting Format)

- The Board will receive a College Council document codifying Shared Governance structures and processes.

December 8 or 9, 2008--New Trustee Orientation

January 28, 2000—Regular Board Meeting (Workshop Format).

- The new Board will participate in StrengthsQuest assessment to promote team building.

February 11, 2009—Regular Board Meeting.

- The Board will review the Commission Action Letter, if available.

April 22, 2009—Regular Board Meeting.

- The Board will complete its Annual Board Self-Assessment Survey (ACCT).

**Recommendation 6:**

**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 of college and district constituent groups and governance committees in meaningful, collegial decision-making processes. (Standard IV.A.1, 2, 3, 5)**

**Description of Progress**

The new College President informally assessed 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.” These assessments were carried out through a series of discussions and examination of college documents.

The President also reviewed the Board Policies, Chapter 2, Board of Trustees, to determine whether clarification of Board roles was needed. At the September 24<sup>th</sup> workshop, the Board agreed to review its policies on a four-year cycle, beginning with Chapter 2 this academic year.

In addition to the President’s discussions with campus groups regarding changes to the Board meeting 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 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 President has provided the trustees with four written monthly updates so far, each including information for action items, potential action items, and other points of interest and college efforts and progress. Guidance has been provided to the trustees regarding follow-up questions on this update in order to distinguish policy items or potential policy items from those that are purely informational.

Board discussion of its role has occurred 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.

### **Analysis of Results**

Discussions in College Council meetings and other College meetings suggest that understanding of leadership roles is improving. Trustees thus far have called or emailed their questions about the agenda prior to the meeting, avoiding confusion, lack of preparation, and inappropriate exchanges during the meeting. At the August meeting, one item was pulled from the agenda to allow better preparation and appropriate changes to occur prior to public discussion. Trustees have stated publically that they have a better understanding of their role.

### **Evidence**

Two-part list of Faculty Senate and College Council responsibilities (file)

College Council By-laws (before and after) (link)

Board Policies, Chapter 2 (link)

Board Minutes, September 24 (link)

Sample President's Updates (file)

Shared Governance Draft Document (file)

College Council minutes (link)

Planning Task Force meeting notes (file)

Board Agenda, October 8 (link)

### **Additional Plans**

In the future, the President's monthly updates to the Board will continue. The Board has begun to hear a series of reports from deans about their areas and a new item has been added to the agenda to allow the Board to hear recent good news about the College. The intention is that the trustees will have this information to share with the community and enhance their ability to support the College.

**Recommendation 7:**

**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. (Standards I.A.3, I.B1)**

**Description of Progress**

The response to Recommendation 5 above indicates that substantive, positive, and in-depth dialog has taken place since the site visit in March. The initial reaction by the Board was immediate and drew upon facilitation 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. It is clear from the Additional Plans described above in Recommendation 5 that subsequent Board Meetings and Workshops over the coming year will include frequently planned dialog sessions to further address and clarify decision-making roles and responsibilities.

**B. Creating an environment which ensures greater administrative stability and empowerment at the college. (Standards 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)**

**Description of Progress**

Interpreting the intent of the phrase “greater administrative stability” has been somewhat difficult. It would seem, at first glance, to imply that there have been turnover issues in administrative staff. However, there has been little turnover in administrative staff at the college, and the Team Report did not suggest this was an issue. The fact that the phrase is linked to concept of “administrative empowerment” indicates the visiting team was concerned about administrative instability that can result from micromanagement at the Board level. Micromanagement can create an atmosphere of role confusion and, thus instability.

Within this context the 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. Subsequent assessment of administrative stability, as defined here, will be ongoing.

**Evidence**

College Council agendas and minutes, August-October ([link](#))

Board agendas, minutes, and meeting videos, July-October ([link](#))  
Board Guide ([link](#))

**Recommendation 8:**

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

**Description of Progress**

The evaluation report from the visiting team acknowledged that the Board of Trustees had made good progress in developing a formal evaluation instrument, which was based on the accreditation standards for good Board practice. The instrument has been used for the past three years, including input from constituent groups, providing a rich source of longitudinal data. However, the visiting team found that little had been done to turn the evaluations results into formal improvement plans with measurable outcomes.

As described in the response to Recommendation 5 above, 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, have been codified in the form of a Board Improvement Plan. The ACCT facilitator will be invited back in January for February of 2009 for an assessment of the Board's progress on meeting Recommendation 8.

As mentioned in the response to Recommendation 5 above, the Board has also scrutinized the accreditation team report carefully. 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 document progress on meeting recommendations that have been, and will be, reviewed at each Board meeting.

**Evidence**

Extended Board Evaluation Results (file)

Board Self-Assessment Summary Analysis (file)

Board Improvement Plan (link)

Board Guide (link)

Initial Review of Team Report (link)

**Conclusion**

Ohlone College has taken the Commission recommendations and Warning status seriously. We have focused considerable effort on meeting the Standards within the timeline specified in the action letter. Immediately after the Team Visit in March, 2008, the Board of Trustees began working on improvement and has sustained its efforts. The College President, administrative staff, the Faculty Senate, College Council, the three unions, and the Associated Students of Ohlone College have cooperated in making changes to support improvement. Our efforts have been documented and public. All members of the College community have kept the best interest of our students in mind as we address the recommendations. This report accurately and fully reflects our progress to date.