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**Corrected Letter**

June 30, 2008

Dr. James Hottois  
Superintendent/President  
Palo Verde College  
One College Drive  
Blythe, CA 92225

Dear President Hottois:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on June 4-6, 2008, reviewed the institutional self study report and the report of the evaluation team which visited Palo Verde College on Monday March 17 - Thursday, March 20, 2008. The Commission acted to issue a **Warning** and to ask that Palo Verde College correct the deficiencies noted. The College is required to complete a Report by **October 15, 2008**. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

A **warning** is issued when the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course of action which deviates from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards of accreditation, or policy to an extent that raises a concern regarding the ability of the institution to meet accreditation standards. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period. However, the institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed until the conditions, which warranted the warning, are removed.

This sanction constitutes a public sanction as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions in the Commission's *Accreditation Reference Handbook*. As such, the action will be noted on the Commission's website.

I also wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. Palo Verde College must correct the deficiencies noted by the Commission meeting in **January 2009**.

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While the recommendations identified as deficiencies were also noted by the year 2002 evaluation team (1 and 3), the Commission noted that the College's Focused Midterm report demonstrated progress addressing the previously-noted recommendation on the institutional planning process (2002 Recommendation 1), and the Commission encouraged continued progress. However, the current visiting team report notes that the institution has failed to sustain progress toward meeting Commission standards and is out of compliance. Similarly, the College addressed the recommendation on the catalog (Recommendation 3) to the satisfaction of the Commission at the time of the 2005 Midterm Report; however, the 2008 evaluation observed that the catalog failed to maintain clear and complete course information, to list student learning outcomes, or to be consistent with the listing of course hours (sometimes by week, sometimes by the total for the semester). Therefore, this recommendation is repeated by the 2008 visiting team.

The Report of October 15, 2008 should focus on the institution's resolution of the recommendations noted below:

**Recommendation #1:** The team recommends that the College engage in systematic educational program planning guided by strategic dialogue and data. This planning should include the following:

- Planning course offerings so students can complete a program in a timely manner (II.A.2);
- Educational program planning based on data about community and student needs (II.A.2);
- Clearly disseminating information about procedures to approve and evaluate courses and programs (II.A.2.a, II.A.2.e).

With regard to Recommendation #1, the Commission is concerned that institutional planning is not anticipating the fiscal vulnerability of the College given the reliance on enrollment from correctional facilities and an Instructional Services Agreement (ISA) for in-service training provided in another college district. If that agreement were to be rescinded, a large portion of the College enrollment would be lost. The October 2008 Report should demonstrate that the College has developed an enrollment management plan that includes contingencies to address over-reliance on ISA enrollments. Therefore the Commission makes the following recommendation:

**Commission Recommendation #1:** The college should analyze and discuss the impact of current enrollment patterns, specifically the overreliance on a single ISA, on the fiscal stability of the college and develop a contingency plan for fiscal stability should the ISA be reduced or lost.

**Recommendation #2:** The team recommends that the College more systematically evaluate its processes using both quantitative and qualitative data. The following processes are especially in need of systematic assessment:

- Professional Development Programs (III.A.5.b);
- Effective use of human resources – allocation of human resources (III.A.6);
- Strategic Planning and Budgeting processes (I.B.6, III.D.2);
- Financial Management practices (III.D.2.g).

**Commission Recommendation #2:** The College should provide evidence that faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes (III.A.1.c).

**Recommendation #3:** As noted by the 2002 team, the College should ensure that the College catalog provides clear and precise program and course description information about their degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected SLOs (II.A.6, II.B.2, ER 20).

**Commission Recommendation #3:** The College should ensure its compliance with standards relating to the evaluation of administrators (III.A.1.b, III.A.5, IV.B.1.j).

**Commission Recommendation #4:** The College should demonstrate that its Program Review processes are fully integrated with the budget and planning processes and at the proficiency level as described in the Commission's Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness Parts I and II (I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, III.A.6, III.B.2.a-b, III.C.2, III.D.3).

The recommendations contained in the evaluation team report represent the observations of the evaluation team at the time of the visit. The Commission reminds you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the team report, the College is expected to use the report to improve the educational programs and services of the institution.

A revised copy of the evaluation team report is attached. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires you to give the team report and this letter appropriate dissemination to your College staff and to those who were signatories of your College self study report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that the team report and the self study report be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the College library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your web site or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.

All colleges are required to file a Midterm Report in the third year after each comprehensive evaluation. Palo Verde College should submit the Midterm Report by **March 15, 2011**. Midterm Reports indicate continued resolution toward meeting the evaluation team's recommendations and forecast where the College expects to be by the time of the next comprehensive evaluation. The Report also includes a summary of progress on College-identified plans for improvement as expressed in the self study.

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The College conducted a comprehensive self study as part of its evaluation. The Commission suggests that the plans for improvement of the institution included in that document be taken into account in the continuing development of Palo Verde College. The next comprehensive evaluation of the College will occur during Spring 2014.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to remind you that federal legislation affecting accrediting agencies requires that accredited Colleges conduct systematic assessment of educational outcomes (see especially Standards One and Two). A further requirement is that accrediting agencies pay close attention to student loan default rates.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness and quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/tl

cc: Mr. Brian Thieboux, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Board President, Palo Verde CCD  
Dr. W. David Pelham, Team Chair  
Evaluation Team Members  
Ms. Linda Henderson, U.S. DOE