



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 11, 2013

Ms. Denise Whittaker  
Interim Superintendent/President  
Palo Verde College  
One College Drive  
Blythe, CA 92225

Dear President Whittaker:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 9-11, 2013, reviewed the Follow-Up Report submitted by Palo Verde College and the Special Visit Report of the evaluation team which visited the College on November 20, 2012. The purpose of this review was assess whether the institution meets Accreditation Standards, and has resolved deficiencies described in a previous Special Visit Team Report and Commission action letters.

The Commission acted to **remove Probation** and require the College to submit a **Follow-Up Report**.<sup>1</sup> The report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. The Commission asks that the Follow-Up Report be submitted by **October 15, 2013**. The Follow-Up Report should demonstrate that the institution fully meets Eligibility Requirement 5, Eligibility Requirement 17 and Standard IIID, and Standard III A.

The Commission found that Palo Verde College has resolved its short term fiscal instability (Eligibility Requirement 17) through actions taken to reduce expenditures in the current fiscal year, has a minimum reserve and that its enrollments may be on track to restore its prior levels of state funding. The institution has developed a fiscal plan to cover its annual debt service until 2016. However, the institution's October 2012 report to the Commission did not include a multi-year budget projection and therefore the Commission cannot determine whether the institution's new fiscal stability will last longer than the current fiscal year.

The institution is assessing course and program learning outcomes but has not yet redesigned program review to assure that results of assessment are included in institutional quality improvement processes and the resource allocation process of the college. The institution has not developed a human resources plan, nor has it defined what its final administrative structure and staffing will be.

The Commission urges Palo Verde to carefully read the Special Visit Report of November 20, 2012 and to be responsive to all of the team report's suggestions for actions that will improve the institution.

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Ms. Denise Whittaker  
Palo Verde College  
February 11, 2013

At the time of the November 2012 evaluation team visit, Palo Verde College was still considering how to address its administrative staffing needs, and was engaged in a process of governance review of a future administrative structure. It was employing a consultant to assist its chief financial officer, who was new to the position and its attendant responsibilities. The College had also identified “hot spot” areas where needs for additional administrative or support staffing might arise. The Commission was therefore unable to determine at this time that Palo Verde College has demonstrated it has sufficient administrative capacity to support its mission and purpose. The October 2013 report should provide an update on the decisions finally made about administrative structure and staffing – i.e., administrators and support staffing.

### **Standard III.A – Human Resources**

*The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness.*

With regard to Standard III.A, the Commission is concerned with recent and significant staffing reductions. While stabilized at the present time, the College does not have a long-range staffing plan that would identify critical institutional needs, identify positions needed to support these needs, and prioritize the needs. A more comprehensive staffing plan is essential to ensure the continued stability and viability of the College.

### **Standard III.D – Financial Resources**

*Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.*

In the last year, the College leadership, with the assistance of all constituencies, has taken significant steps to stabilize the fiscal condition of Palo Verde College for the current academic year, and is making changes to planning processes that should help the institution maintain its fiscal stability in future years. These prompt and effective actions are commended.

With regard to Standard III.D, the Commission is concerned that the new budget planning process has not yet been fully implemented, and that the institution was using a newly drafted integrated planning process that was designed to incorporate participation by constituencies and the various planning processes of the institution.

The College has identified new populations of students and is anticipating that it will be able to regain enrollments sufficient to retain its state funding base. However, this work is not yet completed. The College Follow Up Report of 2013 should provide evidence that the new models have been deployed and the College now fully complies with Standard III.D.

Ms. Denise Whittaker  
Palo Verde College  
February 11, 2013

I 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 should resolve the deficiencies noted by **October 2013** or the Commission will be compelled to act.

I have previously sent you a copy of the evaluation team's Special Visit Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that you give the College report, the evaluation team report and this action letter appropriate dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college report. This group should include the campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the Follow Up Report, the Special Visit Team Report, and this action letter be made available to students and the public by placing a copy on the college website. *Please note that in response to public interest in disclosure, the Commission now requires institutions to post accreditation information on a page no farther than one click from the institution's home page.* If you would like an electronic copy of the Special Visit Team Report, please contact Commission staff.

The Follow-Up Report and Special Visit Team Report will become part of the accreditation history of the College and should be used in preparing for the next comprehensive evaluation.

Finally, ACCJC staff is available to assist the College with consultation and advice on the recommendations identified above.

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

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/cms

cc: Mr. Brian Thieboux, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Board President, Palo Verde CCD  
Mr. W. Andrew Dunn, Vice Chancellor, Coast Community College District, Team Chair  
Ms. Martina Fernandez-Rosario, U.S.D.E.

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<sup>1</sup> Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-Up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports to the Commission*. It contains the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. It is available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).