

August 25, 2010

TO: Douglas Garrison

FROM: John Gonzalez

RE: Accreditation Recommendation 4 – Distance Education and Follow-up Report

As you know, the focus of Recommendation 4 is on quality assurance in MPC's Distance Education (DE) program. Quality assurance is best addressed through academic and professional matters, which is the purview of the Academic Senate, and collective bargaining between MPC and MPCTA. Please see sample questions on academic/professional matters and negotiable items at the end of this document.

Vehicle for Addressing Recommendation 4

The current Academic Senate Taskforce on Distance Education, which was formed in 2008, has done a good portion of the ground work in conducting an examination of the DE program and making related recommendations. However, recommendations that have emanated from the DE Taskforce have not been institutionalized for various reasons. Recommendation 4 from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges/Western Association of Colleges and Universities (ACCJC/WASC) provides Monterey Peninsula College the direction and impetus to move forward with enhancements to our Distance Education program.

The current Taskforce on Distance Education was formed by and represents the interests of the Academic Senate in regard to academic and professional matters. As such, no administrators, classified employees, or students participate. Addressing ACCJC quality assurance expectations will require a collaborative approach between faculty, staff, students, and administration.

Given that Recommendation 4 is an institutional mandate, the vehicle for addressing academic and professional matters associated with this recommendation should be delegated to an institutional committee. It is imperative that the committee be composed of faculty, staff and administrators who either have a demonstrated expertise or have responsibility for a Distance Education function. There is also the need to actively procure student participation. The group needs to be given a very explicit charge, prescriptive guidance, and a very strict timeline to accomplish the task of assessing the MPC Distance Education program in light of the accreditation requirements dealing with quality assurance, and making recommendations that will help the institution meet those requirements.

Therefore, I recommend that the following individuals be invited to participate on the Distance Education institutional committee:

Candidates for Institutional Committee on Distance Education

Steve	Albert	Instructor, Economics
Elizabeth	Bishop	Instructor, Mathematics
Steve	Bruemmer	Instructional Technology Specialist
Caroline	Carney	Instructor, Child Development
Sharon	Colton	Dean, Technology and Media Services
John	Gonzalez	Vice President, Academic Affairs
Kim	Panis	Network Engineer
Maribel	Quiroz	Outreach Coordinator, Student Financial Services
Stephanie	Tetter	Faculty Librarian, Division Chair, Library
Judee	Timm	Instructor, Business
Susan	Walter	Counselor
		Student

The presence of the Vice President of Academic Affairs on the Taskforce underscores to the Commission and MPC community the importance that this initiative deserves.

In addition, because of the need to evaluate the DE program from the faculty and students' perspective, it is important for the institutional researcher to play a resource role on this committee.

Charge

The charge of the institutional committee on Distance Education for 2010-2011 should be to:

- Conduct an assessment of the MPC Distance Education program vis-à-vis established ACCJC policies, which are explicitly stated in the Distance Education Manual and the policy on student authentication.
- Examine “best practices” in Distance Education adopted by higher education institutions.
- Consider the organizational structure of Distance Education, including the technical support staff, and make recommendations to ensure that the District adopts the most effective organizational structure for operational purposes.
- Determine MPC’s Distance Education needs to strengthen its policies and procedures, including the course evaluation process.
- Develop protocols and strategic goals for Distance Education learners that meet the institutional outcomes of the college and ACCJC policy on Distance Education.
- Draft institutional recommendations addressing the committee’s findings as well as the ACCJC recommendations.
- Present the recommendations to the various shared governance groups following the timeline below.
- Work with District components through the Distance Education Coordinator to develop a plan to implement the committee recommendations.
- Draft the Follow-up Report following the timeline below.

- Consider the composition of the institutional committee and determine whether it needs to be adjusted or continued to ensure quality assurance after the Follow-up Report is submitted to and accepted by ACCJC.

Faculty Coordination

It is imperative that for 2010-2011 a faculty coordinator with reassigned time be appointed to

- Oversee the pedagogical aspects of Distance Education
- Work with IT to ensure that the technical aspects are adequately supported, and
- Work with Student Services to ensure that student support is enhanced to maximize the students' experience in DE and improve student success and retention

The question and amount of reassigned time should be revisited at the end of the academic year. Also, prior to the conclusion of the academic year a determination should be made as to whether the same or a different faculty member should be appointed for subsequent years. It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of this assignment and the need for the individual assigned to stay abreast of new pedagogical and technological developments.

I recommend that the institutional committee be co-chaired by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and a faculty member with reassigned time for one year. This faculty member should be one who

- has demonstrated expertise in Distance Education by effectively teaching online courses utilizing an engaging pedagogy, one that facilitates the learning process
- has the respect of other faculty
- has a reputation for "getting things done"
- can work collaboratively with the administration
- can engender a collaborative approach

This faculty member should be given the title of "Distance Education Coordinator," which reflects the appropriate responsibilities and authority, and leadership to accomplish Distance Education goals and make significant improvements in a short amount of time. I suggest that Judee Timm meets all of these criteria.

Timeline

The Follow-up Report on Recommendation 4 must be submitted to ACCJC by **October 15, 2011**. Recognizing the urgency of this matter, the committee needs to conduct its assessment of the Monterey Peninsula College Distance Education program, research best practices, and make institutional recommendations by the end of October 2010. These recommendations would then have to be presented to shared governance groups in November 2010. The Distance Education Coordinator working with the committee would have the Early Spring and Spring of 2011 to implement the recommendations. Subsequently, the Follow-up Report should be drafted during the spring of 2011 and be ready for review by the shared governance groups and the Board by the beginning of September 2011. See calendar below.

Action Plan

Date	Action
October 10, 2011	ACCJC Receives Follow-up Report
October 7, 2011	Follow-up Report is Mailed to ACCJC
September 2011	Shared Governance Groups and Board of Trustees Review Follow-up Report
February – May 2011	Committee Implements Recommendations and Drafts Follow-up Report
November 2010	Shared Governance Groups Review Recommendations
September 7 – October 29, 2010	Committee Conducts Distance Education Assessment, Research on Best Practices, and Drafts Recommendations
September 3, 2010	Form Institutional Committee

Continuing to ensure that MPC meets the ACCJC quality assurance guidelines on Distance Education, the District needs to recognize the dynamic process of this mode of delivery. After the initial assessment, research, and recommendation stage, the institutional committee should continue to provide guidance, support, review our DE program, and ensure that quality, creativity, and effectiveness are emphasized in the delivery of distance education. Since the accreditation standards require the District to ensure that students who engage in Distance Education receive services that are comparable to those offered to students who enroll in face-to-face courses, the institutional committee should continue to ensure that the delivery method of these services do not pose obstacles to DE students. The potential for growth will continue to push the limits of fiscal constraints. Growth should not be supported by the District until such time as the Follow-up Report is accepted by the Commission. Any growth should not compromise the quality of the delivery.

Reporting Alignment

Since the reporting alignment is considered by ACCJC as an important indicator of quality assurance in programs and services regardless of the delivery mode, I am proposing the interim reporting alignment described below for the institutional committee to consider.

Recognizing the importance of Distance Education to the institution, the program should report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Therefore, the Distance Education Coordinator should also report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. In addition, the institutional committee should examine the reporting alignment of the technical staff. It is likely that the committee will recommend that technical support should report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs as well. These three individuals working in tandem will be able to work with the institution to implement the necessary improvements.

Collective Bargaining Issues

Collective bargaining issues associated with Recommendation 4 will be negotiated by the MPC/MPCTA chief negotiators through the established process of ongoing dialogue.

Planning Beyond the Follow-up Report

Subsequent to the acceptance of the Follow-up Report on Recommendation 4, the District needs to prepare and submit a Substantive Change Proposal on Distance Education programs that have surpassed the 50% threshold allowed by ACCJC and any other programs that are about to reach said threshold.

Sample academic and professional matters questions pertaining to Distance Education

- What are the characteristics of quality Distance Education programs?
- What support do faculty who wish to teach online for the first time need? How do we know that? Have we conducted faculty surveys or focus groups?
- What support do faculty and administrators need to conduct effective evaluations of faculty who teach online?
- Are student support services available to online students adequate? If they are adequate, how do we know that? Have we conducted student surveys or focus groups? If they are not adequate, how can they be enhanced?
- Currently students wishing to enroll in DE courses have the option of reviewing questions to help them determine whether they are sufficiently prepared to succeed in an online environment. Is it adequate? Is this process being used? How do we know that it is being used? Have we conducted student surveys or focus groups?
- Does the student authentication process currently used in the MPC Distance Education program meet the ACCJC authentication requirement?
- Does the MPC Distance Education program deal proactively and effectively with cheating and plagiarism? How do we know that? Have we conducted faculty surveys or focus groups? If not, how can we improve the process?
- What percentage of MPC courses should be offered online?
- Should MPC offer programs and certificates fully online? If so, how does this impact the residency requirement?

Sample negotiable questions pertaining to Distance Education

- How does a faculty evaluator conduct a “classroom visit” for an online class? What should the evaluator look for?
- What survey questions should be included in a faculty evaluation questionnaire? Are the questions that were pilot tested appropriate?
- What should be the enrollment limit for online classes? Should the enrollment limit for online classes be different from face-to-face? If so, for which disciplines?
- Should MPC require certification for faculty who wish to teach online for the first time? If so, should faculty who have experience teaching online at MPC be grandfathered? What about faculty who have taught online elsewhere, but not at MPC?
- MPC has traditionally limited enrollment in online courses when offered for the first time to 25. Should this practice continue or should it be changed? If so, what should the new practice be?
- What percentage of a faculty assignment can be online? What are the implications of an online assignment vis-à-vis the “presence on campus” obligations?
- Should the District compensate faculty for converting face-to-face courses to online? If so, what should the compensation be?