

# **Follow-Up Visit Team Report**

**Los Angeles Mission College  
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**A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting  
Commission for Community and Junior Colleges**

**This report represents the findings of the Follow-Up visit team to Los Angeles  
Mission College and the Los Angeles Community College District Office on April  
20, 2009**

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**LOS ANGELES MISSION COLLEGE  
FOLLOW-UP VISIT TEAM  
MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2009**

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## **Introduction**

On April 20, 2009, Dr. Kathleen Hodge and Dr. Fred Trapp conducted a Follow-Up Visit to Los Angeles Mission College and the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Office. The Follow-Up Visit was preceded by a Progress Visit in April of 2008 and a Comprehensive visit to the college and the District Office, along with two other LACCD colleges in March of 2007. The primary purpose of the Follow-Up Visit was to verify the contents of the Follow-Up Report prepared by the college and the District Office documenting the progress toward resolving recommendations made by the April 2008 visiting team. It is worth noting that Dr. Trapp participated in all three site visits.

The visit was a successful one. The team chair and her staff communicated via electronic mail with representatives of the college in preparation for the visit. Team members received the "Accreditation Follow-Up Report" in advance of the visit and had the opportunity to interact with college personnel and visit the college website for information prior to arrival on campus. The college was well prepared for the visit. A well-written, documented and organized report was submitted to the visiting team in advance of the visit. The team room was efficiently organized and contained appropriate supporting documents required for the team to complete its work. The college and district provided evidence requested by the visiting team in an accommodating and timely manner and ensured requested appointments were made.

During the one-day visit, team members spent six hours at the college. In addition the team chair met with the Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District on April 24, 2009. The team met either individually or in groups with the following: college faculty, including the Academic Senate president, the curriculum committee chair; the SLO coordinator; classified staff; college administrators, including the college president, and the vice presidents for academic services, administrative services, and student support; and district administrators, via telephone or e-mail, including the deputy chancellor for operations.

Team members were impressed with the improvements in campus climate and the facilities since the comprehensive visit in March of 2007. The campus climate was quite negative in 2007. Many faculty members had withdrawn from any involvement outside their classroom instruction. The administrative team had been in a state of flux with vacancies and frequent turnover in top positions including the president, vice presidents and deans. There had been some financial deficits, from which the college was trying to recover, exacerbated by a downturn in enrollment. A seasoned veteran administrator had been assigned by the district as college president, and an experienced, hand-selected team had been appointed to key positions from another college in the district. Their work was just beginning to make a difference when the Comprehensive visiting team arrived in March 2007. The April 2009 Follow-Up Visit team was impressed with current campus climate and can validate the observations and report by the March 2008 Progress Visit team. In fact, the April 2009 Progress Visit team can attest to the fact that the College initiatives have rooted and provide strong frameworks for: effective College governance,

strengthened campus vitality cultivated by a strong sense of community and empowered individuals to participate in the decision making process. The Follow-Up Visit team noted the current campus relations are strong, and the new President is providing strong and clear leadership and has the support of the college community. Enrollment at the college continues to grow at a greater rate than the other colleges in the district. The results of the bond initiative are clearly evident as the parking structure is now complete, and an early childhood building and a physical education and wellness center are completed. Plans for other facilities are proceeding. Planning and shared governance structures/committees are meeting and functioning appropriately. The College cleared the internal "debt" to the District and is operating with the budget allocation. With the balanced budget and the debt settled with the district, there is a renewed and energized focus on students and student learning, and the business of the college appears to be focused on planning and the future of the College.

Upon receiving the report of the March 2007 comprehensive visiting team, the college leadership immediately began to develop a plan for addressing the recommendations delineated in the report. They took the recommendations very seriously and were determined to focus their collective energy on creating an environment in which students could achieve their educational goals and employees could use their time at work productively. Three well-planned activities laid the groundwork for achieving their goals: (1) an administrative and faculty leadership retreat in July of 2007 that focused on educational planning, understanding and addressing the accreditation recommendations, the fiscal outlook for the college, and student services; (2) an Academic Senate accreditation steering committee meeting in September; and (3) a campus-wide accreditation retreat in October.

Recommendations made by the comprehensive visiting team in March 2007 and the findings of the Progress Visit team for April 2008 follow.

### **Recommendation 2: College Governance**

**It is commendable that the college crafted and approved a new governance model. However, the model is untested and will require a commitment to the tenets of participatory governance to make it successful and useful to the college decision-making process. The team recommends that the areas of responsibility be defined to clarify the outcomes of any given governance process (Standard IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3).**

**Findings:** The Follow-Up Visit team can verify that the governance model in place in March 2007 is embraced by the College community and credited with creating predictable and transparent budget and governance processes. The College is to be commended for its commitment to the tenets of the governance model. Special College Council minutes from May 2007 indicate the College Council created the Shared Governance Task Force as its sub-committee responsible for ensuring that the then newly created shared governance committees fulfilled the requirements established for them. The six governance committees have been meeting regularly, some more often than

others. The Task Force guided, monitored, and evaluated the work of each of the committees in 2008-09. All committees have a statement of purpose, membership, resources, co-chairs, goals/objectives and reporting products, working relationships with one another, and fixed meeting days and times that are well advertised. The minutes of the committees as well as the agendas are posted to the college web page. A standard format for reporting committee discussion items vs. action items to the College Council has been created and used. Minutes from the committee meetings indicate that the committees are active and well into their work. From the minutes of the College Council, and interviews during the special team visit, it is evident that the campus has successfully built relationships among the governance committees as well as the relationship between budget allocations and the work of the standing committees.

The ten-page document issued by the Budget and Planning Committee to outline “Program Review, Planning and Resource Allocation Linkages” at Los Angeles Mission College is an exemplary illustration of clear delineation of functional responsibilities within the campus community. It is also a cogent explanation of the linkages among shared governance committees engaged in planning work and the bridges from their work and recommendations to resource allocation processes. The college is to be commended on this work.

The Educational Planning Committee (EPC), in collaboration with the Dean for Institutional Research and Technology, crafted a web-based unit assessment (program review) template that all instructional programs used in 2007-08 then updated in 2008-09. The template was adjusted based on user feedback and then recast to meet the needs of Student Services and Administrative Units at the college. The core product and the related unit planning documents are elegant and thoughtfully done. It has become the “system of record” on the campus as program review work moves to the center of many planning, evaluation and decision-making activities. Campus interviews revealed that the EPC worked tirelessly to assist instructional units in the use of the unit analysis and unit planning tools. They then honed the validation and action recommendation processes for the Budget & Planning Committee and College Council to use. The college is to be commended on this work.

**Conclusion:** The Follow-Up Visit team believes that the college has more than adequately defined the areas of responsibility of its governance process and has, therefore, addressed this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 3: Evaluation and Effectiveness of Governance Committees**

**The team recommends that the College Council implement the regular and systematic evaluation of the effectiveness and integrity of its collaborative governance committees by fall 2008 (Standard IV.A.5).**

**Findings:** The Follow-Up Visit team believes the college has thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness and integrity of its governance and integrated planning committee

structures. The Special Visit team reviewed the initial evaluation process that included broad participation. Subsequent to the team visit in March 2007, the college reinvented its shared governance committee structure. Several of the committees were not able to recruit membership or select leadership until late in the fall 2007 term. However, the Shared Governance Task Force has formulated a short self-evaluation instrument, which was administered early in spring 2008 and was discussed at the May College Council meeting. From campus interviews, the visiting team ascertained that there was broad scale participation in completing the self-evaluation form and general positive experiences were expressed about the shared governance processes. These efforts constitute a beginning of formative evaluation for that governance structure.

In fall 2008 several two-person teams of external evaluators inspected the minutes of the committees using a 10-question list. They crosschecked action items with minutes of the College Council and the Strategic Master Plan (SMP) for Los Angeles Mission College to evaluate the effectiveness of the committee work. In February 2009, the Shared Governance Task Force, composed of the co-chairs of each committee, made summary recommendations to the College Council.

The recommendations created some adjustments in the ways in which the committees were working. For example, the Facilities Committee found that it could not function well without some continuity of personnel with expertise in the issues addressed by that group. Also, the Facilities Committee began to turn its attention to the reuse of campus spaces being vacated when a new major building was opening up. The March 2009 Accreditation Follow-Up Report contains numerous examples of how the work of the planning committees unfolded and where adjustments were made to the operation of the committees based on the self-evaluations or the two-person external evaluation teams.

**Conclusion:** The Follow-Up Visit team believes the College has evaluated the effectiveness and integrity of its collaborative governance committees and therefore, this recommendation has been addressed.

#### **Recommendation 7: District Progress on SLOs and Faculty Evaluation**

**The team recommends that the district should provide leadership in supporting the progress toward incorporating achievement of stated student learning outcomes as a component of faculty evaluation (Standard III.A.1.c.).**

**Findings:** The Follow-Up Visit team applauds the leadership of the District in assuring incorporation of SLO's as a component of faculty evaluation. The team verified the formal agreement between the Los Angeles Community College District and the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild (July 1, 2008) which includes in Appendix C , Evaluation Forms and the formal Contract Interpretation "Clarification of the Meaning of 'Participates in the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle' on the Faculty Evaluation Form" These documents validate the requirement that "all instructors shall conduct SLO assessments in their assigned classes and use the results to make appropriate changes..." In spring 2006, the AFT and District Academic Senate formed a

Faculty Evaluation Task Force to provide guidance in this area. Among the recommendations is one that incorporates SLOs in the faculty evaluation by linking them to long-term professional development goals. Based on the principle that faculty enhance student learning through their personal professional development activities, it is intended that faculty will link plans for professional goals to those areas at both the college and departmental levels that relate to SLOs. Thus, a model was developed for use in the comprehensive evaluation process that links professional development goals to “assessed institution-wide and departmental student learning outcome needs...” as indicated in the report of the task force.

The model is still relatively new, and the comprehensive evaluation process for tenured faculty takes place once every six years; a basic evaluation process cycles once every three years. In practice at LA Mission College, the peer evaluation committee for faculty suggests the scope of the review. This scope typically includes a self-evaluation component which provides for the development of professional goals. In order to address this component the faculty member undergoing review discusses his/her personal participation in the development, implementation, and assessment of SLOs. The process for probationary (untentured faculty) cycles annually for three years.

**Conclusion:** The team believes that the formal agreement with the bargaining units is a profound demonstration that the District and the faculty have a commitment to the SLO cycle and have incorporated that commitment in the negotiated faculty evaluation form. Therefore the College has addressed this recommendation. The Follow-Up Visit team commends the District and the AFT for this agreement.

**Recommendation 8: District Plan for Retiree Health Benefit Liability.** The team recommends that the college should closely monitor in future years the success of the district’s plan for addressing retiree health benefit liability to assure that out-year obligations are met without significant impact on the financial health of the institution (Standard III.D.1.c).

**Findings:** The Follow-Up Visit team coordinated findings with the Follow-Up Visit team for LA Southwest College. The teams reviewed sufficient evidence that a plan was developed and approved by the Board of Trustees and negotiated with the Districts six labor unions in 2006. The plan authorized the District to hold an amount equal to 1.92% of the total full-time salary expenditures of the previous fiscal year to be placed in an irrevocable trust. This deposit would occur on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each subsequent year. In addition, the District agreed to direct into the trust fund an amount equivalent to the entire Federal Medicare Part D subsidy returned to the District each year ~~into the trust fund~~.

In February 2008 the District completed a second actuarial study in accordance with CalPERS guidelines. The minutes from the Board of Trustees meeting of April 23, 2008 verify the adoption of a resolution to establish (CalPERS) Prefund Retiree Health Benefit Costs.

The District then proceeded to transfer its accumulated funds from the Los Angeles County Treasures to the newly established CalPERS managed irrevocable trust. According to the June, 30, 2008 audit report completed by KPMG, the LACCD had set aside \$12.3 million in an external trust fund. The fair value of the trust fund as of June 30, 2008 was approximately 11.5 million. In addition, the District changed to a 20-year employment criteria for employee vesting to the life time employee benefit plan.

Based on its review of budget documentation and audit reports for the years 06-07, 07-08 and 08-09 as well as the audit reports for those same years, the team concluded that the District is adhering to the plan and that the college has made its required contributions to the plan. In the audit report completed in June of 2008 the notes [page 30] indicate that:

“Before the implementation of GASB 45, the District’s expenses for postretirement health benefits were recognized only when paid. The District’s annual OPEB cost (expense) is now calculated based on the annual required contribution of the employer (ARC), an amount actuarially determined in accordance with the GASB45. The ARC represents a level of funding that, if paid on an ongoing basis, is projected to cover normal costs each year and amortize any unfunded actuarial accrued liabilities (UAAL) over a period of 30 years.”

**Conclusion:** The Follow-Up Visit team validated that the district has developed, implemented and is adhering to multi-level plan to address unfunded retiree health benefit liability. The aggressive plan is commendable and appropriately addresses the recommendation.

### **Commission Concern 2**

**The Commission requires that the college demonstrate in the Progress Report that it is in compliance with Eligibility Requirement 19 which requires “The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.”**

**Findings:** During the July 2007 leadership retreat, the college community attempted to match its college goals (access, success, fiscal stability, effective governance, community responsiveness and quality programs and services) to the five district goals (access, student success, excellence, accountability and collaboration) as a technique to clarify their purposes. The participants also crafted a unit planning and assessment framework for academic units consisting of three activities: (1) effectiveness review (using core measures related to the college strategic goals); (2) curriculum review to keep

documentation up-to-date, including statements of intended student learning outcomes; and (3) student learning outcome review (assessment of intended student learning). Student services and administrative services units only completed the first activity, as the other two activities do not apply to their work. For all units the initial cycle of planning and assessment work has been completed.

An update to the college Educational Master Plan (EMP), which shows progress made in accomplishing goals and purposes, was completed in May 2008. That document has been posted to the college web site and was reported to the District Planning Council. An inventory of progress by the college in meeting the district strategic goals was completed in August 2008. Campus interviews revealed that the college leadership appreciated that much of the work toward an institutional assessment of progress was also accomplished with the unit assessment (program review) and planning work and the inventory of progress requested by the District. Further, the college created a process of self-reflection and reporting to the campus and public it serves through updates to the college SMP and summer leadership retreats (2007 and 2008). An inspection of minutes and campus interviews affirmed that action plans to carry out goals and objectives were posted to the college web page, shared in the governance committees and with the Academic Senate in fall 2008. The College Council adopted the implementation plan in January 2009. The Educational Master Planning Committee in particular, has closely monitored progress by instructional units to implement the EMP and their portions of the SMP.

Past discussion on the campus about strategies and objectives and accomplishment of college goals is available in the minutes of the shared governance committees and the annual unit plans. Extensive information is available on the college web page and in the evidence provided to the Follow-Up team regarding the articulation and assessment of student learning outcomes.

The minutes of meetings, the March 2009 Accreditation Up-Date Report to the Commission, and the interviews conducted by the Follow-Up team all point to a robust effort to plan for improvements in institutional structures and processes, student achievement outcomes and student learning. Periodic progress “pulse taking” and decision making regarding improvements through an on-going cycle of evaluation is evident in the work of the Educational Planning Committee, College Council, Budget & Planning Committee, and Technology Committee minutes and campus interviews conducted by the Follow-Up visiting team.

Considerable energy and resources have been devoted to fostering the articulation of student learning outcomes and the assessment of student learning at the campus. Extensive semi-annual reports on the status of implementation were made available to the special visiting team and posted for the public on the college web page. The strength and extent of faculty cooperation and engagement in this effort is directly related the talent and energy of the Student Learning Outcomes coordinator. The college is to be commended for this work.

**Conclusion:** The team believes that the college appropriately has systematically evaluated and made public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes and has, therefore, addressed this recommendation.