Open Letter to the District on Accreditation  
01/17/11

College of the Redwoods is approaching the final months of its six-year accreditation cycle. To reaffirm accreditation, we must have a successful self-study by July and site visit from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in October. Recent visits by Scott Lay of the Community College League of California, Jane Patton of the State Academic Senate, John Nixon and Norv Wellsfry of the ACCJC, and most recently, self-study consultants Fran White, Ed Buckley, and Yolanda Bellisimo have provided important institutional feedback as we move into these final six months.

Unfortunately, a common theme in their reports suggests that the District faces formidable challenges in the months ahead. Integrated planning is not yet fully functional. Critical leadership gaps exist in administrative services, human resources, institutional research, and student learning and program assessment. Difficulties with shared governance and employee morale continue. And the self-study process has been off to a slow start.

It is apparent that unless we make significant progress both in meeting the accreditation standards and in conducting a successful self-study, sanctions by ACCJC are likely. Moreover, as the College has had six years of accreditation problems, further sanctions could be quite serious including show cause. If the ACCJC were to take such a step, the College would have to provide the ACCJC a plan to meet the accreditation standards while simultaneously planning to close the College should the College lose its accreditation. There is little margin for error and a clear sense of urgency.

Fortunately, there are many assets available to the District as we address these critical issues. The Board of Trustees, President Marsee, and the Academic Senate together agree on the severity and urgency of our accreditation problems and have pledged together to address these issues. Institutional leadership is committed to providing resources and support. There is an integrated planning model which continues to improve. We have a well-developed system of program review necessary for proficient integrated planning. The President has given his support to the Interest Based Problem Solving Steering Committee to move forward. And finally, we have a highly dedicated staff and faculty committed to the success of our institution and the students we serve.

The institutional focus for the next six months will be on meeting the accreditation standards and a creating a successful self-study. Toward these ends:

The **Board of Trustees** will

- support the administration’s staffing needs in administrative services, human resources, institutional research, and student/program assessment.
- provide fiscal resources to support accreditation.
- discuss accreditation progress at each Board meeting.
- meet regularly with the College President, Vice President Goswami, and the Academic Senate to discuss accreditation progress.

The **College President** will
• support the accreditation steering committee with writers/editors and the hiring of the self-study consultant Ed Buckley.
• restore the staffing for institutional research, human resources, and student learning and programs assessment.
• increase the reassigned time and provide necessary support for an assessment coordinator.
• facilitate integrated planning through participative governance and transparent decision-making.
• promote interest-based approaches to solving problems.
• meet regularly with the Board of Trustees, Vice President Goswami, and the Academic Senate to discuss accreditation progress.

The Academic Senate Leadership will
• increase faculty participation to meet accreditation standards and complete the self-study.
• support faculty in meeting their responsibilities for integrated planning.
• facilitate accreditation discussions at each meeting of the Academic Senate.
• meet regularly with the Board of Trustees, College President, and Vice President Goswami to discuss accreditation progress.

In closing, the District leadership calls for an Institutional Commitment to meet the challenges of accreditation. While this is not the first crisis to face CR employees, it is the crisis of our time. We have to meet this challenge. Our students, community, and colleagues require no less.

___________________________________   Date: ________________
Jeff Marsee, Ph.D. President/Superintendent

___________________________________   Date: ________________
Bruce Emad, Trustee-President of the Board

___________________________________   Date: ________________
Dr. Colleen Mullery, Trustee-Vice President of the Board

___________________________________   Date: ________________
David Holper, Academic Senate Co-President

___________________________________   Date: ________________
Mark Winter, Academic Senate Co-President