

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

**SAN JOSÉ CITY COLLEGE**  
**2100 Moorpark Avenue**  
**San José, CA 95128**

A Confidential Report Prepared for  
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited  
San José City College from October 18 through October 21, 2010.

John Morton, Chair

## **STANDARD IV**

### **Leadership and Governance**

San José City College has four major constituent groups - staff, faculty, administrators and students. The college appears to have collegial consultation structures and processes in place and documents the membership and charge of each group. Faculty, staff and administrators articulate a clear commitment for serving students. The college has a strong and consistent student association that plays an important role in the governance processes of the college. This student role in governance has been greatly strengthened over the past two years at San José City College.

The San José Evergreen Community College District also has established consultation groups that deal with planning, policy and budget and make recommendations to the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor of Administrative Services, respectively. The district budget committee has been a welcome addition to the districtwide consultation mechanism. College constituents report that communication about budget information and decisions is more readily available to them over the past two years than before.

A seven-member Board of Trustees governs the district. These individuals are elected by the community in a general election to a four-year term. The seven members represent a very diverse community including a very large immigrant population. The individuals range widely in years of service on the board from nineteen years to one and one-half years.

The Board of Trustees acts as an independent body taking actions that are reflective of the needs of the community and the college. A limited number of board policies guide the actions of the board and the institution. Most recently, in response to a public issue, board policies on ethics and travel were strengthened through a committee process that included both board members and college constituencies. Processes for regular and systematic board policy review and revision do not appear to be implemented. The board abides by laws and policies regarding advance posting of agendas, posting minutes and allowing for public comment during meetings.

The college and district have experienced an extensive change of leadership over the past six years. The college has had eight presidents over that time frame and has reorganized its vice president structure as well. At this time, an interim president is in place and is scheduled to depart at the end of the fall 2010 semester. A search is underway to identify a permanent president for San José City College and the college is hopeful that person will be in place for spring 2011. In addition, only one of the three vice president positions on campus is filled in a permanent manner and two dean positions are either vacant or filled by an interim. At the district level, the chancellor left office in November 2009 and since that time two separate interim chancellors served in the district leadership role. As of July 2010, a new chancellor, Dr. Rita Cepeda, was hired, who has been broadly met with great enthusiasm and hope for moving the institution forward.

Due to the extensive and important leadership shifts noted above, these years of leadership turnover have had a marked impact on the college and district. Changing philosophies of leadership and centralization/decentralization, communication, planning and collaboration are evident in planning, organizational structure, implementation of policies, delineation of functions, decision-making and implementation of decisions. It has been evident on several occasions that crucial conversations between district and college, college and community or between college constituencies did not occur. As a result, multiple decisions have been reversed exacerbating the effects of the leadership changes at the college and district levels. During the episodes of change, the Board of Trustees has had to step in and ensure continuity of district operational functioning out of necessity.

The board members have clearly given a great deal of time, energy and effort in trying to provide continuity in leadership to the district. This is evidenced by the large number of regularly scheduled and special board meetings. At times, the board has met weekly to ensure that district functions stay on track. While the board has worked with the new chancellor to develop expectations, boundaries and goals it will be crucial that the new chancellor is given full authority and responsibility for carrying out the leadership of the organization. Based upon the past history of the board and relationships with previous chancellors and college constituencies, the establishment of appropriate relationships and delegation is imperative.

## **Standard IVA Decision Making Roles and Processes**

### **General Comments**

San José City College has a long history of service to the city of San José and to its students. The college continues to be governed by a board of trustees and managed by a president and administration in a shared governance climate.

Through a set of standing committees and administrative leadership, the college deals with the challenges of changing demographics, an uneasy economy, and changing leadership. Throughout these challenges, the faculty, classified staff, and students continue to support the campus and keep a focus on student success.

Over the recent years, one of the largest challenges for San José City College and the district are major shifts in administrative leadership. These leadership shifts have been reported as unsettling for the campus and creating a climate of confusion and uncertainty. Most recently, this attitude has seen some change with the leadership of the interim president and a new sense of hope and understanding of the roles across campus.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The college has clear structures for leadership for all of its constituencies, including administrators, faculty, staff and students. The Academic Senate, various committees, and student government appear to be actively engaged in improving the practices, programs, and services of the college. (IVA.1) It does seem a little unclear whether these entities share

information throughout the campus and involve the broad campus in discussion and decision-making.

The board policies establish the mechanism for faculty participation in the decision-making process. (IVA.2 and IVA.2a) There is a document for standard committee structures and functions but it seems to be outdated and needing revision. In addition, it was reported and observed on many occasions that participation by committee members is not consistent. The same 20-30 faculty or staff members populate the various committees. The one exception on this issue is the engagement of the students on various committees, which appears to be very active and participatory. A manual for committee participation is being prepared and should be helpful in encouraging more faculty and staff participation.

In addition, it seems apparent through documentation and interviews that there have been several instances when decisions concerning campus activities were made solely by the district and did not include input from shared governance groups. (IVA.2b) Several examples exist for this discrepancy; the decision to place the district office in the Technology Center; the direction of the campus Basic Skills Initiative, and the various versions of baseball field placement.

San José City College does have established governance structures, processes, and practices that are used by the various constituencies on campus. (IVA.3) Even with those structures and processes in place, the campus still struggles with communication and a feeling that information is not being shared freely about decisions that are made. Recent leadership has improved this attitude on campus but it will be necessary to be vigilant in the process to follow policies and communicate decision-making.

There are various programs on campus that require external review. These appear to be happening on schedule and without major concerns. (IVA.4) The college also has been very involved with responses to ACCJC concerning recommendations from the last visit. The college responses were accepted by the Commission and are reviewed separately in another section of this document.

In an environment lacking effective, integrated planning and decision-making structures, formal tools for evaluating the integrity and effectiveness of these processes is crucial to making beneficial changes. The self study and on-campus interviews indicate the college has no formal structures or processes for this assessment. There is a planning agenda noting the need to develop this evaluation system but without proper leadership it is doubtful that a system will be put in place. The college does not meet this standard. (IVA.5)

## **Conclusion**

San José City College is a college experiencing major shifts in institutional leadership. It has over the last few years changed presidents, vice president of instruction, vice president of administrative services, and several deans and directors. Many people are serving in interim positions. These fluctuations in leadership create a climate on the college campus that is not productive and restricts the college from moving forward with initiatives. In fact, the lack of

leadership has allowed the college to support a variety of initiatives that compete for funding and programmatic focus, resulting in reduced efficiency.

Steps are already being taken to fill the vacant positions and create the effective and stable leadership and governance that is key for establishing San José City College's place in the community as a leader in education. Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization will enable the institution to focus on institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn and improve.

## **Standard IVB Board and Administrative Organization**

### **General Comments**

The previous accreditation of San José City College included several recommendations relating to board governance and the relationship of the district to the colleges. Actions were taken by the board and leadership to address these recommendations and, after a series of follow up reports and visits, the college was considered to have addressed the recommendations.

Over the past two years, leadership and oversight issues emerged that caused or required the board to become more directly involved in the operations of the college. The leadership flux also created confusion and uncertainties regarding district/college functional relationships. The result was a slowing of the progress that had been made in the early years after the last accreditation in meeting these governance standards.

With the selection of the new chancellor, the board has begun to return to its policy role and has been establishing a good and appropriate working relationship. This needs to continue.

The leadership flux is continuing as both college presidents are now being recruited. The chancellor needs to take this opportunity to work with her new leadership and the various constituency groups to establish a much clearer organizational structure and a solid leadership team.

### **Findings and Evidence**

The seven-member board of trustees is elected by area and serves four-year terms with elections being held every two years where roughly half the board is elected. Policies are in place for definition of the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure and operating procedures and are accessible in Chapter 2 of the board policy manual on the district's website. The board is an independent body that reflects the needs and interests of the community in decision-making and acts as a whole. (IVB.1)

While the board does have a policy on self-evaluation of the board's performance (Board Policy 2745), there is no evidence that this self-evaluation has occurred since May 6, 2008 nor has there been any public communication of the results of board evaluation. Based on interviews the topic of an appropriate tool for self-evaluation as well as a proposed timeframe

in spring 2011 may have been part of the agenda for the board retreat held in August 2010. The agenda and minutes for that meeting are not yet published. (IVB.1g). The college does not fully meet this standard.

While no current goal setting is evident in the self study or on the website documentation, the board and Chancellor Cepeda recently engaged in a goal setting exercise which resulted in the production of a FY 2010-2011 executive score card that will be the focus of the chancellor evaluation.

The board does have a code of ethics, however the policy does not include a mechanism or process for dealing with behavior that violates the code. Consequences of breach of the code will need to be clearly defined in either policy or in accessible administrative procedures. Interviews on campus indicate that administrative procedures are not accessible on the college campus. (IVB.1h). The college does not fully meet this standard.

The board has been engaged in accreditation in that they acted to approve the San José City College self study on July 13, 2010. Additionally, the September 28, 2010 meeting agenda includes an informational item describing a link to a four-slide presentation on the college's self study and the self study itself (Standard IVB.1i). The self study indicates that in an effort to not be seen as publicly influencing the process, the board listened but did not comment on the self study. The academic senate president asked board members about information to be used within the self study outside of these public processes.

The board of trustees recently exercised its responsibility for selecting the new chancellor of the San José Evergreen Community College District. While Board Policy 2431 concisely states that in the event of a chancellor or president vacancy, the board shall establish a process to fill the vacancies that is fair, open and complies with all relevant regulations, college constituencies are unaware of any written procedures on such selection processes. Additionally, there is no policy on evaluation of the college presidents. Given that there are two president searches soon to be underway within the district, the transparency of the selection and evaluation processes are important. (IVB.1j). The college does not fully meet this standard.

The president of San José City College is a member of the chancellor's executive team and is primarily responsible for the quality of the institution. Due to the significant number of changes in presidential leadership, it is difficult to assess any one president's role in effectively leading the organization. There is significant evidence to suggest that many crucial processes such as strategic planning, program review, Student Learning Outcome development and participation in numerous initiatives have been carried out in a halting or circuitous fashion. This has taken a toll on the morale and frustration level of the college constituent groups. This problem is compounded by leadership vacancies at the level of vice president and dean as well. While the organizational structure appears to be appropriate for the organization, the number and significance of vacancies is of concern given the institution's purpose, size, complexity and student demographic. The leadership transitions at the college level have made it extremely challenging for the college to articulate a clear set of goals and priorities or to fully integrate evaluation, planning, resource distribution and

student learning. Additionally, the void in district level institutional research has made access to consistent, reliable, high quality research difficult to obtain and analyze. (IVB.2b)

The district budget committee and the college finance committee utilize constituent group input to formalize recommendations that go to the district council or college president, respectively. There is ample evidence that the district's reserves are rapidly decreasing and that the college had an ending shortfall in the FY 2009-10 year while serving unfunded FTEs. This situation must be addressed and resolved at both the college and district level for the long-term financial health of the organization. (IVB.2d, IVB.3c, IVB.3d, IVB.1)

While the board and district exercise primary leadership in setting and communicating broad expectations, there is not a clear delineation of functions between college and district. Interviews on campus reflect that there was little or no discussion regarding the mapping document found in the self study and that it is not widely known or understood. The district/college function maps were adapted from other institutions outside the district and a comparison of the maps between San José City College and Evergreen College show significant differences in the mapping. Clearly, there was no effort to make the maps consistent nor to ensure that they did indeed represent the functional relationships within the San José Evergreen Community College District.

There is no systematic, regular process of evaluation of the district's functions and organization. As the district has moved between centralization and decentralization of functions there is no evidence to suggest this has been done using assessment or evaluation data. Given the tensions within the district, the financial pressures, and the history of confusion in decision-making, it is essential that district and college functions be clearly delineated, clearly communicated, consistently implemented, and regularly evaluated. The policies should include the delegation of authority to the college president and ensure that, wherever a function is located, at the college or district level, that appropriate staffing is provided. Documentation of procedures to guide all college and district personnel will be important in building understanding and implementation. (IVB.3a, IVB.3b, IVB.3e, IVB.3f, IVB.3g).

### **Conclusion**

San José City College partially meets this standard. Further improvements are necessary to bring the college and the district into full compliance with the standards.

San José Evergreen Community College District is governed by an independent board elected by the community. While the board has many policies in place, several of the policies are outdated, inconsistently adhered to, or lacking in other respects. Working with the new chancellor, the board has begun a review of several policy areas but additional work remains to be fully in compliance with the standards. The board and the new chancellor are also working to establish their working relationship that provides the board with the necessary information to make appropriate policy decisions for the district and the chancellor to have the authority to carry out her leadership role. This effort needs to be continued.

The operational roles of the district and the college are not clearly delineated nor broadly understood. Furthermore, there is no regular and systematic evaluation of the district's functions, governance, decision-making structure and communication. Consistent and effective leadership and governance at the board, district and college levels is crucial in the long-term health and vitality of the organization and therefore its ability to effectively provide educational services to students and the community.

### **Commendation**

San José City College has created a student-centered environment that encourages involvement in governance through an effective student government. Students are included in all major committees and in some cases provided multiple seats on committees. Student input is genuinely valued and included in decision-making.