



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

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February 11, 2013

CORRECTED LETTER

Dr. Melinda Nish
Superintendent/President
Southwestern College
900 Otay Lakes Road
Chula Vista, CA 91910

Dear President Nish:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 9-11, 2013, considered the Midterm Report submitted by Southwestern College. The purpose of this review was to assure that the recommendations made by the evaluation team had been addressed by the institution and that the College had also provided an update on the self-identified planning agendas which were included in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. The Commission also took action to require that Southwestern College submit a Special Report by April 15, 2013.

Special Report

The Commission requires that Southwestern College submit a **Special Report¹** by **April 15, 2013**. The Report should describe the findings of the Grand Jury investigation of construction bonds and demonstrate how the College verifies the integrity of internal controls on construction funds. The Commission has taken this action as a result of the recent indictment of College personnel.

Midterm Report

In its consideration of the Midterm Report, the Commission noted that Southwestern College responded to all ten recommendations from the comprehensive review and reviewed progress on self-identified plans for improvement.

The College report noted that its policy on mission and values was reviewed and revised and that two full cycles of the integrated planning process were completed, and following an evaluation, the processes were clarified and streamlined. Program review processes and forms were revised to ensure data-driven processes and linkage to institutional planning and quality improvement. Data dashboards were created to make information readily available for analysis and an annual program review snapshot report was implemented for programs in the off-years.

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All areas of the college complete program reviews and snapshot reports, including administration and student services. Training, staff time, plans, data systems, and inclusion in program review have supported the institutionalization of SLOs and assessment, which now cover all courses, programs, service areas, and non-instructional units on campus. The process has been used for improvements in student achievement and in allocation of resources to support student learning.

A standing committee and college-wide technology plan were created, which feed into budget planning and allocation, and campus decision-making. Permanent staff development coordinators were put into place, along with a five-year staff development plan, a budget, and program evaluation system.

Written processes and ground rules have been established and are followed for constituent participation in decision-making processes. There has been a clarification of roles and responsibilities between board and CEO, and a regular schedule of board training was implemented on the roles and responsibilities of governing boards. Recent governing board actions have been in alignment with board roles and responsibilities. A formal procedure for conflict of interest and ethics policy violations of governing board members was established and implemented.

Institutions are expected to meet Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies at all times during the six-year review cycle and to provide evidence that they have addressed and resolved all recommendations made by the previous comprehensive evaluation team. At the time of the next regularly scheduled visit, the evaluation team will examine evidence and confirm that these College changes and improvements have been sustained.

The Midterm Report will become part of the accreditation history of the College and should be used in preparing for the next comprehensive evaluation. The Commission requires that you give the report and this 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 Midterm Report and this Commission 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.*

Dr. Melinda Nish
Southwestern College
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Please note that the next comprehensive evaluation of Southwestern College will occur in **Fall 2015**.

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

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Dr. Mink Stavenga, Accreditation Liaison Officer
President, Board of Trustees, Southwestern Community College District

¹ 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*. The *Guidelines* contain the background, requirements, and format for each type of report and presents sample cover pages and certification pages. The *Guidelines* are available on the ACCJC website under College Reports to ACCJC at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).