2014 Accreditation Site Visit Guide

WHAT YOU’LL NEED TO KNOW

OCTOBER 6TH – 9TH
Accreditation is a voluntary system of self-regulation developed to evaluate overall educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accreditation process provides assurance to the public that the accredited member colleges meet the Accreditation Standards; the education earned at the institutions is of value to the student who earned it; and employers, trade or profession-related licensing agencies, and other colleges and universities can accept a student’s credential as legitimate. The granting of accreditation by any regional accrediting commission enables an institution to qualify for federal grants, contracts, and to distribute federal financial aid to its students.

An evaluation team, made up of professional peers from other colleges who volunteer their services, offers independent insights based on careful analysis of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and on an on-site evaluation. The team uses the Accreditation Standards to prepare a report for the institution’s use which analyzes the adequacy of its resources, the effectiveness of its procedures, the quality of its performance in pursuit of its stated goals, and its evidence of student achievement and student learning. The team seeks to verify quality and integrity and to inspire continuous improvement of institutional performance. The team:

- Evaluates the institution using the Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and Accreditation Standards;
- Confirms and finds evidence that verifies the assertions in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that Accreditation Standards are met;
- Calls attention to problem areas inadequately recognized by the college itself;
- Assures the Commission that the institution continues to meet Eligibility Requirements;
- Assures the Commission that the institution has addressed recommendations of previous visiting teams, resolved the deficiencies and now complies with the Standards;
- Assures the Commission that the institution has developed and adheres to sound evaluation and planning procedures to foster improvement of student achievement and student learning;
- Reinforces and extends the college’s commitment to its continuing pursuit of excellence; and
- Assures the Commission that the institution merits reaffirmation of accreditation or advises the Commission that the team cannot recommend such action.

Team members have a special responsibility to maintain the integrity of the accreditation process and outcomes. Quality assurance to the public and institutional improvement for institutions can only be achieved through the commitment of all who participate.

The Commission selects team chairs of external evaluation teams for their expertise and accreditation experience. The typical Team Chair has experience as a chief executive officer of an institution.

Commission staff develops the peer evaluation team from a roster of experienced educators who have exhibited leadership and balanced judgment. Typically a team has several faculty members, academic and student services administrators, a chief executive officer, a trustee, a business officer, and individuals with expertise and/or experience in learning resources, distance education, planning, research, and evaluation.

2014 External Evaluation Visiting Team Leadership

Mr. Henry Yong  
(Chair)  
President  
Evergreen Valley College

Dr. Keiko Kimura  
(Assistant to the Chair)  
Dean of Language Arts  
San Jose City College
2014 External Evaluation Visiting Team

Ms. Kristina Allende
Professor of English and Literature
Mt. San Antonio College

Ms. Leticia Barajas
Vice President Academic Affairs and Workforce Development
Los Angeles Trade-Tech College

Dr. Renee DeLong Chomiak
Dean of Counseling Services
Cerritos College

Mr. Erik Cooper
Dean of Planning, Research and Resource Development
Sierra College

Dr. Markus Geissler
Professor, Computer Information Science
Cosumnes River College

Mr. Robert Isomoto
Vice President Business and Administration
Santa Monica College

Dr. Lisa Lawrenson
Associate Vice President of Instruction, Curriculum and Basic Skills
American River College

Dr. Ron Oxford
Librarian
West Hills College Lemoore

Dr. Stephen Payne
Command Historian
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center

Mr. Rick Rants
Dean, The Extended Campus
Allan Hancock College

Dr. Patrick Schmitt
Chancellor
West Valley-Mission Community College District

Mr. Michael Tuitasi
Vice President of Student Affairs
Santa Monica College
What to Expect During the Visit

Early in the visit the team meets with administrators, the Accreditation Steering Committee, and other members of college staff most involved in the preparation of the Self Evaluation Report. At the meeting, the general plan of the visit is discussed with institutional staff. Team members can clarify questions they have about the institutional self evaluation and schedule meetings with individuals or groups such as the governing board, faculty, administrators, collegial governance committee chairs, classified staff, students, and others.

Team members will arrange conferences, make classroom and distance education visits, hold individual interviews, make office hours visits, attend team meetings scheduled by the Team Chair, and review documents provided in the team room. All of these activities will be carried out so that the team can collect evidence that Santiago Canyon College can support the assertions made within its Self Evaluation Report. A schedule of meetings and interviews will be set up in advance; however, this may change throughout the team visit.

The team will hold a final open meeting with members of the college community where the Team Chair will articulate the team’s major findings and offer the college recommendations and commendations from the team. The team will depart immediately after this exit meeting.

After the Visit

Following the visit and prior to the submission of the final report to the Commission, the Team Chair submits a draft of the team report to team members for comment and to the college president for correction of any factual errors. At this time the actual evaluation cannot be changed.

Within three to four weeks, the team chair will submit the final team evaluation report to ACCJC along with the team’s confidential recommendation.

The ACCJC meets in closed session in January 2015 and will discuss the evaluation report and the team recommendation regarding the accreditation status of Santiago Canyon College. The ACCJC may choose to apply a different status than that recommended by the team based on a number of factors. The ACCJC will send to the College President (the Chancellor and the Board President receive a copy as well) a letter informing the college about the decision the Commission has made at its January 2015 meeting regarding the accreditation status of the college. The letter is sent at the end of January or in early February 2015. Once received, this information will be posted publicly.

Visit Preparation

Santiago Canyon College is excited to welcome the visiting team and eager to receive the team’s feedback regarding quality of instruction, delivery of services, and institutional effectiveness. In order to ensure you are prepared for a scheduled or impromptu interview with members of the visiting team, we ask that you review the following information on institutional structure and processes. While much of this material will be a review of familiar information, there may be some information that you might not be aware of. The expectation is not to have this material memorized (though memorization is not discouraged), but to be aware of the structure and processes in place that guide and direct the activities of the college in its pursuit to deliver a quality education to the community it serves while upholding the Standards set forth by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.
What to Know

Mission Statement
Santiago Canyon College is an innovative learning community dedicated to intellectual and personal growth. Our purpose is to foster student success and to help students achieve these core outcomes: to learn, to act, to communicate and to think critically. We are committed to maintaining standards of excellence and providing accessible, transferable, and engaging education to a diverse community.
(Approved by RSUCCD Board of Trustees, 9-23-13)

SCC Goals identified in the SCC 2012-2016 Educational Master Plan
1. Strengthen outreach and recruitment
2. Align the college curriculum to focus on student completion of pathways
3. Promote an integrated approach to supporting student success
4. Promote a college identity of high quality, academic excellence, and personalized education
5. Support faculty in offering high quality instruction to students in the classroom and online
6. Maintain and enhance the college's technological infrastructure
7. Maintain the facilities infrastructure
8. Support and encourage focused green practices on campus
9. Develop and support an infrastructure related to web and social media
10. Support faculty development in the areas of innovative pedagogies and curriculum design
11. Increase educational goal completion for university transfer, degrees, and certificates
12. Increase student learning and achievement through a culture of continuous quality improvement
13. Strengthen and develop relationships with key partners and stakeholders
14. Develop sustainable, alternative revenue streams utilizing existing resources
15. Strengthen capacity to seek and acquire grant funding for the purpose of developing innovative programs and services that align with the college mission and vision

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

Learn
1. Take responsibility for one’s own learning and well-being
2. Learn about one’s chosen academic major
3. Learn about professional conduct and workplace ethics

Communicate
1. Communicate ideas in a clear and articulate manner
2. Communicate accurately to diverse audiences
3. Communicate in various formats using diverse technology

Act
1. Act to maintain one’s dignity and self-respect
2. Be a responsible community member by treating others with respect, civility and dignity
3. Maintain cultural literacy, lifelong learning, and the environment

Think
1. Critically analyze, evaluate, organize and use quantitative and qualitative data to solve problems
2. Creatively use concepts to make learning relevant
3. Reflectively assess one’s values, assumptions, and attitudes
Santiago Canyon College (SCC) encourages ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes in its varied collegial governance committees and councils, in individual departments and service areas, and at College wide events and activities.

In order to facilitate this dialogue, the College utilizes the structural lines of communication detailed within the “Collegial Governance Framework” that are contained within the Santiago Canyon College Collegial Governance Handbook. As a result, all members of the College community have an opportunity to engage in dialogue at various department, division, and collegial governance committee meetings, and this discourse informs College wide planning and decision-making processes.

Collectively, all of the College’s primary functions and responsibilities have a dedicated collegial governance entity so that planning decisions being made are not top-down directives; rather, planning decisions being made at the College are the result of the collaborative work of college constituencies that follow the “Collegial Governance Framework” and allow for varied College community perspectives.

The Academic Senate of Santiago Canyon College has a substantial role in the College’s decision-making processes in that each collegial governance entity has an Academic Senate of Santiago Canyon College faculty co-chair. In addition, the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) Board of Trustees relies on the Academic Senate of Santiago Canyon College to make recommendations with respect to academic and professional matters.
The preceding diagram demonstrates the continuous cycle of assessment that is carried out by academic areas, student service areas, and administrative units. Outcomes assessment results are incorporated into Program Reviews and Department Planning Portfolios (DPPs), which, in turn, inform the College’s planning and resource allocation processes.

For academic areas, all student learning outcomes must be measured within a three-year period with assessment activity occurring annually. Service areas and administrative units measure outcomes on an annual basis.

As documented in the College’s October 2012 College Status Report on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation, one hundred percent of the College’s courses have student learning outcomes, and these outcomes are included in all Course Outlines of Record and in course syllabi. Additionally, College programs and support services have defined outcomes and participate in ongoing assessment of outcomes. Moreover, all student services programs have defined expected student learning outcomes for their areas, identified appropriate assessment methodologies for their expected student learning outcomes, and have completed five full cycles of student learning outcomes assessment. In addition, all institutional student learning outcomes undergo ongoing assessment through the annual Santiago Canyon College “Student Satisfaction Survey.”

More information on outcomes assessment: Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment webpage.
The Rancho Santiago Community College District developed and implemented a revised budget allocation model that was patterned after the SB 361 community college funding formula in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. This revised Budget Allocation Model (BAM) is designed to provide greater operational discretion and flexibility over both fixed and discretionary costs to Santiago Canyon College and Santa Ana College and facilitates the linkage of college planning priorities to budgetary allocations and performance.

Santiago Canyon College strives to maintain an open and transparent budgetary process, and as such, the College has clearly defined guidelines and processes for financial planning. Furthermore, Santiago Canyon College's governance structure enables the entire College community the opportunity to participate in financial planning. In addition, budget discussions take place in open committees where the College and surrounding community members are invited to participate, such as the Budget Committee and the College Council. Moreover, the Rancho Santiago Community College District Board of Trustees meetings are also open to the entire District and surrounding communities for attendance and participation in budget-related discussions.

The preceding diagram represents a simplified version of the Rancho Santiago Community College District budget allocation process, which is based on the state’s allocation formula that funds community college districts according to the number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) served. Revenue generation targets for each college are established based on prior year FTES achievement. The colleges work toward achieving their respective FTES targets throughout the year by offering comprehensive and balanced course schedules. At the end of each fiscal year, the proportion of the District’s total FTES that was generated by each college is calculated. This proportion is then used to determine the share of the cost to operate District Wide Services and maintain District Operations that is billed to both Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College. This proportion is also used to establish the subsequent year’s FTES targets for both colleges. The process is then repeated for each fiscal year.
Resource allocation is designed around the College's collegial governance and administrative structure, and the College uses the results of Program Reviews and Department Planning Portfolios, which are supported by student learning outcome and student achievement data, as the basis for prioritization of requests for additional resources. Evaluation of the effectiveness of carried out unit plans occurs through the cyclical nature of the College's outcomes assessment process, and evaluation of the planning process occurs formally and informally through the College's established communication structure identified in its “Collegial Governance Framework.”

Santiago Canyon College (SCC) is committed to the responsible use of its financial resources to assure its financial integrity. Moreover, the College's internal control structure disseminates dependable and timely information so that the Santiago Canyon College community can make sound decisions regarding fiscal matters. With the prospect of receiving additional funds as well as to ensure that its funds are allocated to those areas that contribute to the College's mission, Santiago Canyon College has developed a comprehensive control structure.

As a part of the College's collegial governance process, a number of committees review resource requests before a resource request moves forward as a recommendation of approval to the College president. Resource requests begin at the department, unit, and governance committee levels. Then resource requests move through the planning and prioritization process that is facilitated by the Planning & Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) Committee in consultation with the Budget Committee. Therefore, before a request is funded, it must go through the College's planning, prioritizing, and budgeting process that includes a review at the Planning & Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Budget Committee, and the College Council. The College Council submits a final recommendation to the College president who contemplates the request.
Actionable Improvement Plans

Continuous quality improvement is a hallmark of institutional Effectiveness. As an institution evaluates its programs and services with reference to each Standard, it identifies areas in need of change. The ACCJC expects institutions to identify goals related to the areas that require change and decide on the action required to meet these goals. Santiago Canyon College, through the self evaluation process, has identified the following actionable improvement plans:

1. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment will incorporate planning and resource allocation documents and forms into the Taskstream user interface so that the College community will have a “one-stop-shop” for institutional effectiveness related activities (I.B.3.).

2. Santiago Canyon College will refine the planning documents and processes to improve the efficacy of the annual planning process and reinforce the use of outcomes assessment, student achievement, and other sources of data to support resource requests (I.B.6.).

3. Santiago Canyon College will develop a program review process that will evaluate both the instructional and service oriented components of units across the College that serve both functions, such as with Counseling, Library Science and Information Studies, and the Academic Success Center (I.B.7.).

4. Santiago Canyon College will engage in discussions regarding student success and retention rates and will develop strategies to improve success and retention in face-to-face, online, and hybrid instruction (II.A.1.b.).

5. Santiago Canyon College will refine all interdisciplinary degrees and certificates assessment techniques and share the assessments with all College constituencies (II.A.2.i.).

6. Santiago Canyon College will examine the feasibility of creating a centralized Student Success Center that may include the Academic Success Center, Math Study Hall (MaSH), Science Teaching and Resource (STAR) Center, Supplemental Instruction (SI), Writing Center (WC), and Tutoring Center (II.C.1.a. and II.C.2.).

7. In conjunction with the Rancho Santiago Community College District Human Resources Department, Santiago Canyon College will review and evaluate the effectiveness of the process for updating job descriptions to ensure that they are reviewed and updated on a more frequent basis (III.A.1.a.).

8. Santiago Canyon College will review the facilities maintenance process to assure the most effective use of human and financial resources (III.B.1.b.).

9. Santiago Canyon College needs to pursue ways of increasing revenues through seeking modifications to the budget allocation model and/or through exploring alternative revenue sources (III.B.2., III.B.2.a., III.D.1.b., III.D.1.c., and IV.B.3.c.).

10. Santiago Canyon College will refine its evaluation processes as related to governance and decision making to ensure for a more defined and systematic annual process that includes both committee self evaluations and annual College wide surveys. The College should more widely disseminate committee self evaluations and campus surveys and use them more systematically to improve the College’s governance and decision-making processes (IV.A.5.).

11. The District Fiscal Resources Committee (FRC) ought to conduct an annual review of District budgets and expenses as outlined in the SB 361 Budget Allocation Model, and the District Office should provide Santiago Canyon College and Santa Ana College with evidence that District Operations and District Wide Services expenses are necessary and justified (IV.B.3.d.).

The ACCJC expects these actionable improvement plans to be integrated into the institution’s continuous evaluation and planning processes. Subsequently, the institution is required to report in the institutional Midterm Report to the Commission how the improvement activities have been integrated into the institutional planning processes and to what extent the intended outcomes have been met.