



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
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January 16, 2002

Dr. Raghu P. Mathur
President
Irvine Valley College
5500 Irvine Valley Center
Irvine, CA 92618

Dear President Mathur:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 6-8, 2002, reviewed the Focused Midterm Report submitted by Irvine Valley College and the report of the evaluation team which visited on November 7, 2001. I am pleased to inform you that the report was accepted.

The college is commended for the thoroughness of its response to the Commission's recommendations as well as to its self-identified agenda. It is clear that the college community has made concerted effort to make significant and positive changes in the operation of the college.

Please note that the next comprehensive evaluation of Irvine Valley College will occur during academic year 2004-2005.

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

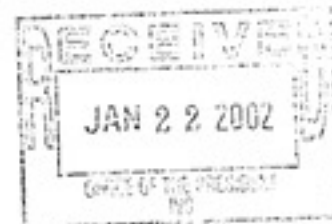
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara A. Beno".

Barbara A. Beno

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cc: Mr. Richard A. Jones, Acting Chancellor
Mr. Armando Ruiz, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Board President, South Orange Community College District
Dr. Steve Epler, Team Chair
Dr. Judith Endeman, Team Member



To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
From: Dr. Stephen M. Epler, Chair
Date: November 27, 2001
Subject: Focused Midterm Report Visit, Irvine Valley College, November 7, 2001

Introduction:

Irvine Valley College is the younger and smaller of the two colleges comprising the South Orange County Community College District. The college and district underwent a comprehensive evaluation visit on October 27-29, 1998, and a progress report visit on May 6, 1999, and a subsequent progress report visit November 16, 1999.

Earlier, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, had issued a warning and asked that the college and district correct the deficiencies noted. The Commission issued the warning because the distractions caused by district governance issues and college administrative changes had dissipated the energies of the major college constituencies resulting not only in a negative impact on the reputation of the college, but also in the lack of attention to critical college issues and the paralysis of college governance processes.

The Commission continued the warning six months later. Although progress had occurred in some areas, many initiatives required time to develop a track record of accomplishment. The third visit another six months later cited progress dealing with many of these areas and recommended that the warning status be lifted, noting that the whole accreditation issue had become a needless complication and a hindrance to college development.

The midterm visit was to focus on three general areas: 1) board of trustees operation 2) district and college fiscal matters 3) college planning and governance procedures, including curriculum development and program review.

Team Activities and Findings:

The evaluation team was comprised of the team chair, Dr. Stephen Epler and Dr. Judith Endeman. Epler had chaired all three prior visits while Endeman, a member of the commission, represented a fresh, new perspective on the college. The team received the college report submitted by Irvine Valley College President, Dr. Raghu Mathur. On November 7, 2001 the team visited the college and met Interim Chancellor Richard Jones, Board Chair Nancy Padberg, and trustees Don Wagner and Dorothy Fortune.

The team also met President Mathur, Accreditation Chair Ray Chandos, Vice Presidents Glenn Roquemore and Armando Ruiz, and Budget Manager Beth Mueller. Later, the team met with the President's Council which consists of leaders of management, faculty, classified staff, and students. Finally, the team met with approximately 45 faculty, staff, managers, trustees and students in an open forum requested by the team. The number present at this open forum was about half of the previous three open forums and was marked by a much greater unity and civility than had been expressed at the previous open forums.

College Responses to the Team's Recommendations:

1. Governance and Administration

The district and its colleges should immediately and persistently take steps to insure the board limits itself to appropriate policy-setting roles as defined by the commission and by trustee associations (ACCT, CCCT), should assess the leadership issues at Irvine Valley College and take appropriate measures, and should foster a constructive, professional, ethical dialogue among faculty groups to clarify roles and responsibilities (Standard 10)

Trustees and the interim chancellor independently report of the board's returning to normal and of functioning in a policy-setting role. This self-analysis was corroborated by management, faculty and classified staff at the college.

Further, the team noted the whole question of leadership at the college has been addressed by the board with a confirmation of support for the college president and an expressed perspective by the board of competence in the administrative team at the college. On the other hand, relations between the senate leadership and the college president remain troubled, but a modus operandi appeared to have been developed that allows normal college processes to function effectively and extremely well. Senate and management, for example, positively described curriculum processes, the development of new programs, and a working, effective program review model. Nevertheless, a phenomenon exists at Irvine Valley College that is not unique regarding different interpretations of the role and responsibility of the senate vis a vis that of management, especially that of the president.

2. Financial Resources and Allocations

The district should adopt the October 19, 1998, Budget Development Guidelines, should implement the principles set forth in the document over a significant period of time, and through the colleges should take strong measures to generate apportionment through FTES growth and enrollment management. (Standard 9)

The college and district's response to this recommendation has been extremely gratifying. The budget development guidelines have been adopted by the board and implemented over the past two years. The district is no longer on the California Chancellor's Office watch list, has built up significant general operating reserves, as well as established reserves for campus infrastructure.

It has set forth the policy that no basic aid revenue, which is volatile and could be viewed as one-time monies, would be used for district operating expenses.

Further, the college itself no longer habitually operates in the red. The past two years, it has finished the year with positive ending balances of approximately \$500,000.

Finally, the college has taken several measures to strengthen enrollment and increase FTES, including expanded outreach activities and web-based registration products, as well as through the implementation of six new additional instructional programs and the providing of additional sections for opportunities for the citizens of the district. The enrollment decline of the late 1990's apparently has reversed and modest growth has occurred in the last year and appears to be occurring this current academic year.

3. **Planning and Program Review**

The college should re-energize its planning processes, implement meaningful program review processes in both instruction and student support services, increase its institutional research capability to provide meaningful data for informing the planning process, and tie budgeting, resource allocations, and future staffing priorities to these planning processes. (Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9)

The college has made remarkable progress in responding to this recommendation. A new position of Director of Research Planning and Grants, as well as a Research Analyst, have been created and filled. The positive contribution of this office has been noted by management, faculty, and classified staff alike. In addition, the curriculum processes and the program review processes in instruction and student services are up and running and working well according to representatives of faculty, management and classified staff. Just prior to the team's visit, an educational master plan and facilities plan for the college as a part of a districtwide process had been adopted by the board. The moribund curricular processes and committee on curriculum that marked the college three years ago is a condition that no longer exists.

4. **Overall Conclusion**

Irvine Valley is a very different place than it was two and three years ago. Likewise, the South Orange County Community College District is a very different place. At the district level, the board, though admittedly an activist board, is no longer characterized as micro-managing and block/split voting. The district's fiscal condition is much improved. With the good fortune of being a basic aid district in which local revenues exceed that which would be provided by the state, the district through careful management and budgeting principles has established stronger reserves, is operating within its means, and is witnessing modest enrollment growth.

Finally, the deep malaise and animus that split the college and district into fractious segments and that essentially paralyzed the entire institution continues to recede so that normal governance operations, especially in the area of curriculum, program review and other forms of planning, appear to be functioning. Opportunities for collaboration among the various segments of the

college appear to be present as mentioned in curriculum, program review, and divisional processes. It is now incumbent on all parties – management, faculty, and classified staff – to step up to a commitment to work together collaboratively, to consciously work out the differences in interpretation of board policies and the meaning of legislation affecting these areas in order to further enhance the operation of the college and, thus, to be even more able to respond to the emerging needs of the communities and the students whom the college and the district serve.