

## Accreditation Site Visit Scheduled for April 1

All of us in the college community can enjoy the feeling of success and measure of completion that comes with the college's March 10 submission of *Follow-Up Report 2011*. In this report the college describes to the accrediting commission our fulfillment of the recommendation that has been keeping us on Warning. Actually, in the July 2009 "Action Letter" that placed the college on sanction, the commission made eleven recommendations for our improvement. Of those eleven, the commission cited four areas in particular where it wanted to see us make immediate progress.

The commission directed us (1) to create a lock-tight planning, evaluation, resource allocation, implementation process; (2) to engage and track student learning outcome and service area outcome assessment cycles; (3) to develop best practices for on-line instruction, and (4) to put in place a policy to ensure due process in all employee evaluations. The commission called on the college to submit in March 2010 a follow-up report addressing these four areas and scheduled an April 2010 site visit of commission evaluators.

Last June, after studying the college's *Follow-Up Report 2010* and hearing from the site visit evaluators, the commission commended us for our fine work in more than satisfying three of the four recommendations – the ones concerning learning and service area outcomes, online instruction, and employee evaluations.

Regarding the fourth recommendation – the one about planning, evaluation, and resource allocation – the commission said we had made substantial and impressive progress but still had some work remaining to do. Specifically, we needed to implement and evaluate the comprehensive model we had created.

This implementation and evaluation is what our Planning Councils have been concentrating on throughout the school year. The Strategic Planning Council is guiding the implementation of the *Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision-Making Model* – better (and thankfully) known as the *IPM* – and the *Resource Allocation Model*—the *RAM*.

One vital feature of these new models that distinguishes them from the college's earlier institutional models is that they specify a percentage of monies right off the top of the budget to fund our main priorities. Note that this Strategic Plan Priority Funding – a.k.a. "SPPF" (which has to be said aloud to be appreciated) – is non-discretionary funding. The college is committed to realizing the goals and objectives described by these priorities. In addition, the four divisional planning councils – the Finance and Administrative Services Planning Council, the Human Resource Services Planning Council, the Instructional Planning Council, and the Student Services Planning Council – are guiding the Program Review and Planning processes across departments and units and are allocating monies to fund council priorities.



All of this activity ensures that planning precedes budgeting and allocation and that the entire process is monitored by extensive evaluation, which allows for adjustments along the way and makes sure that college-wide and council-wide planning processes are always feeding and supporting each other. This is the work that the college describes in *Follow-Up Report 2011*, which we sent to the commission earlier this month.

Next week, on April 1, the commission again will send a visiting team here to confirm the account of the college we give in our report. The team will consist of two evaluators who will spend a day on campus. After the visit, this team will report back to the commission. Then the commission will meet in early June to discuss the actions it will take on Palomar and other colleges in the midst of accreditation cycles. President Deegan and Vice President Cuaron will attend that meeting to represent Palomar.

By the way, sometimes people use the term “fully accredited,” but it’s actually a misnomer because there’s no such thing as “partially accredited.” A school remains accredited while it’s on sanction – and in California a number of community colleges are on some level of sanction at any one time. When the commission lifts the sanction, the school is “reaffirmed.”

For all of us at Palomar, this accreditation process has been extremely demanding, but it also has been incredibly productive. The college is improved in ways that are absolutely necessary, especially now that the town we’ve known is becoming a city – with over thirty thousand students, a skyline on the San Marcos campus, and new centers coming in the north and south. But reaffirmation won’t be the end of our work to improve the college. And it won’t even be the end of this accreditation cycle.

In fact, next spring, in March 2012, the college must send the commission an extensive Midterm Report in which we discuss all eleven recommendations listed in the commission’s 2009 Action Letter as well as the ten Planning Agendas that we developed for the college in our *Self-Study 2009*. (In some cases the commission’s recommendations and the college’s plans overlap. Fortunately there aren’t twenty-one separate items that we have to report on!) So even though *Follow-Up Report 2011* is on the commission’s desk and the commission won’t send a new Action Letter to the college until this June, the writing and research teams are back at work on this Midterm Report.

This fall look for the next edition of this newsletter with updates on our Midterm Report progress. In the meantime, for all things accreditation – including all reports referred to in this column – go to the college’s accreditation website: [www.palomar.edu/accreditation](http://www.palomar.edu/accreditation).