



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

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June 29, 2015

Mr. Robert Deegan  
Superintendent/President  
Palomar College  
1140 W. Mission Road  
San Marcos, CA 92069

Dear President Deegan:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on June 3-5, 2015, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Palomar College March 2-5, 2015.

**College Accreditation Reaffirmed:**

The Commission took action to **reaffirm accreditation** and require the College to submit a Follow-Up Report in October 2016. The Report will be followed by a visit of an external evaluation team. Reaffirmation is granted when the institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. Reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report is required when there are deficiencies leading to noncompliance which do not create an immediate risk to the institution's quality and effectiveness. However, if they are not addressed and fully resolved in a short time, they may threaten educational quality and institutional effectiveness, and lead to increased noncompliance.

Palomar College should submit the Follow-Up Report by **October 1, 2016**.<sup>1</sup> The Follow-Up Report should demonstrate that the College has resolved the deficiencies which led to noncompliance and that it meets the Standards. The Report should address the recommendations and Commission concern noted below.

**Need to Resolve Deficiencies:**

The Accreditation Standards represent practices that lead to academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in institutional policies, procedures, practices, and outcomes which lead to noncompliance with any Standards will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students.

The Commission found Palomar College out of compliance with the following Accreditation Standards: Standards II.C.1.c, III.C.1.a, IV.A.1, and IV.A.3.

Mr. Robert Deegan  
Palomar College  
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The External Evaluation Report that was sent to the institution provides details of the team's findings with regard to each Eligibility Requirement and Accreditation Standard and should be read carefully and used to understand the team's findings. Recommendations 1 and 2 provide guidance for coming into compliance.

**Recommendation 1:** To meet the standards, the Team recommends the College ensure adequate tutorial support for distance education students. In addition, the Team recommends that the College provide students at Camp Pendleton accessible student services commensurate with the offerings at the San Marcos and Escondido sites. (II.C.1.c, III.C.1.a)

**Recommendation 2:** To meet the standards, the Team recommends the College create an environment that includes the participation of all employees in participatory governance and appropriate councils, committees, subcommittees, task forces, and workgroups. (IV.A.1, IV.A.3)

**Increasing Institutional Effectiveness:**

In its report, the team noted Recommendations 3 through 8 for increasing institutional effectiveness. These recommendations do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice, but highlight areas of practice for which College attention is needed. The Commission requires that institutions address recommendations for increasing institutional effectiveness as an aspect of maintaining compliance with Standards and continuous quality improvement. The College should plan to fully address all improvement recommendations in the Midterm Report.

**Additional Information:**

**Commission Concern:** The Commission's Financial Review Task Force noted that the student loan default rate has been above 30% for the last two years. While the team noted the College meets the federal regulations on Title IV, the Commission is concerned that if the College does not take immediate action to reduce this rate, it will no longer satisfy federal regulations and student financial aid may be at risk.

Under U.S. Department of Education enforcement regulations, the Commission is required to take immediate action to terminate the accreditation of an institution which is out of compliance with any Standard. In the alternative, the Commission can provide the institution with additional notice and a deadline for coming into compliance that is no later than two years from when the institution was first informed of the noncompliance. With this letter, Palomar College is being provided with notice of the Standards for which it is out of compliance and is being provided time to meet the Standards.

In its self evaluation process, Palomar College also identified improvement plans it intends to undertake. These improvement plans should be linked to Palomar College's ongoing evaluation and improvement work.

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The guidance and recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report represent the best advice of the peer evaluation team at the time of the visit but may not describe all that is necessary for the College to come into compliance. While an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, Palomar College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services. In addition, the College has the responsibility to accept the Commission's action and to uphold the integrity of the accreditation process by accurately portraying it and helping institutional constituencies to understand the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies pertinent to the Commission action.

I have previously sent you a copy of the External Evaluation Report. The Commission requires that the College give the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team Report, and this letter appropriate dissemination to College staff and to those who were signatories of the College Self Evaluation Report. This group should include the campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that these documents 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 more than one click from the institution's home page.*

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to encourage your continued work to ensure Palomar College's educational quality and to support students' success. Professional self-regulation is the responsibility of an accredited college and the accreditor. Thank you for sharing in that responsibility.

If you should have any questions concerning this letter or the Commission action, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

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<sup>1</sup> 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* found on the ACCJC website at: (<http://www.accjc.org/college-reports-accjc>).