



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 7, 2014

Mr. William Duncan, President
Sierra College
5000 Rocklin Road
Rocklin, CA 95677

Dear President Duncan:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 8-10, 2014, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Evaluation Team that visited Sierra College October 21-24, 2013, and the presentation by College representatives.

The Commission took action to **issue Warning** with the requirement that the College complete a **Follow-Up Report** that must be submitted by **October 15, 2014**.¹ The Report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. Warning is issued when the Commission finds an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission. The institution is expected to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If warning is issued as a result of the institution's educational quality and institutional effectiveness review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of warning. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period. The Report should demonstrate, and the visiting team will verify, that the institution has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

Need to Correct Deficiencies:

The Accreditation Standards, as an integrated whole, represent indicators of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Deficiencies in any Standard will impact quality at an institution, and ultimately the educational environment and experiences of students. The Commission found the College deficient in meeting the following Accreditation Standards: II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a; II.A.2.b; II.A.2.e; II.A.2.f; II.A.2.i; II.A.6; and Standard IVA.5.

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Please note that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when an institution is out of compliance with any Standards, the Commission “must immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the agency’s standards within a time period that must not exceed...two years.” Sierra College is expected to fully resolve the deficiencies noted in Recommendation 1 below by **October 2014**. The time to resolve this deficiency has been extended for cause.

Recommendation 1: In order to meet the standard, Recommendation 3 from the 2007 *Evaluation Report*, and the Proficiency Level of Implementation of the *Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness - Part III: Student Learning Outcomes*, the College should:

1. Complete SLOs for all active courses and programs.
2. Accelerate the process for completing and institutionalizing student learning outcomes assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels.
3. Systematically integrate the results of student learning assessments into the institutional planning and resource allocation processes in order to improve student learning.
4. Ensure that student learning outcomes for courses are included in the course syllabus and that program-level outcomes are intentionally provided to current and prospective students.

(Standard II.A.1.a; II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a; II.A.2.b; II.A.2.e; II.A.2.f; II.A.2.i; II.A.6)

Recommendation 4: In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College develop a process for the regular evaluation of its governance and decision-making structures to ensure their effectiveness. Specific focus should be on key governance and decision-making councils and committees. (Standard IV.A.5)

Improvement of Institutional Effectiveness:

Recommendations have been made for Sierra College to improve institutional effectiveness. Recommendations for improvement may be made to highlight areas for continuing or expanding excellent practices. Recommendations for improvement may also be made when an institution is currently in compliance with Standards, but additional levels of effort should be demonstrated in the future. In the Commission’s experience, these recommendations may provide indicators of possible future noncompliance if left unattended by the institution. The College should plan to fully address all improvement recommendations in the Midterm Report.

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Recommendation 2: In order to improve, the team recommends that the College leverage the success experienced with special programs for underrepresented student populations and scale these efforts in order to replicate success rates with an increased number of eligible students. (Standard II.B.3.a; II.B.3.d)

Recommendation 3: In order to improve, the team recommends the College complete the updating and approval of the Facilities Master Plan that is currently in progress, as noted in the College's Actionable Improvement Plan for Standard IIIB.2. (Standard IIIB.1.a; IIIB.2.a; IIIB.2.b)

Recommendation 5: In order to improve, the team recommends that the College institutionalize a systematic approach to regularly review, update, and revise Board policies. (Standard IV.B.1e)

Sierra College conducted an educational quality and institutional effectiveness review as part of its self evaluation. The Commission suggests that the plans for improvement of the institution included in its self evaluation efforts be taken into account in the continuing improvement of the College.

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.

The 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 to come into compliance. Institutions are expected to take all action necessary to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the Report, Sierra College is expected to use the External Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission.

I have previously sent you a copy of the External Evaluation Team Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. 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 campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Team 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.*

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If you would like an electronic copy of the External Evaluation Team Report, please contact Commission staff.

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 educational quality.

Sincerely,

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

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

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