Introduction and Overview

On April 13, 2009, a team representing the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, visited Copper Mountain College (CMC) in Joshua Tree, California. The team visit was a follow up to the April 2008 visit and Progress Report which culminated in the college's placement on warning June 2008. The team consisted of Dr. Fran White, team chair and Mr. Mark Clair, team member.

During the visit, the team met with the College President, the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services, the Vice President of Student Services and Datatel Implementation Manager, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Director of Information Services (IT), the Faculty Senate President, the Institutional Research Committee, the SLO Coordinator, the President and Vice President for the Board of Trustees.

The team held interviews and examined documents which were supplied in hard copy as well as on the college web site. The team was impressed with the amount of progress accomplished since the April 2008 visit. The college appears to be working together to accomplish all recommendations and improve CMC.

The Commission identified four recommendations in its June 2008 letter to the previous Interim College President. The following represents the visiting team findings for each of the recommendations.

Recommendation 7:

The team strongly recommends that the college President take decisive measures to improve the campus climate by building trust and fostering mutual respect and communication with all campus constituencies. (IB.1; IB.2; IB.4; IB.5; IIA.2a; IVA.1; IVA.2; IVA.2b; IVA.3; IVA.5).

Recommendation #7 was a major recommendation by the previous team and Commission. The visiting team found substantial progress and evidence to demonstrate improvement. The new president was appointed in July 2008 and has increased campus cooperation and improved the campus climate.

Based on a campus climate survey conducted in December 2008, the morale of the college staff was improved. Also, the president established new program initiatives, such as the "212" staff recognition program, and the plan to offer cash-back rebates to anyone who has a store embroider the CMC logo on his/her shirt. The president also has a leadership style that fosters mutual respect and trust and he uses a town council format for all campus meetings. This recommendation is fully met.

Recommendation 1:

The team recommends that the College provide evidence that its newly approved Strategic Plan and forthcoming Educational Master Plan are implemented through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, and resource allocation. The planning should be research based, collegially developed, and directly supportive of the College's decision-making processes. (IB.3; IB.4; IIA.2e; IIA.2f; IIIA.5; IIIA.6; IIIB; IIIB.2b; IIIC.2; IIID.1a; IIID.1d; IVA.1; IVA.2; IVA.2a).

Copper Mountain College has a resource allocation process that entails scrutiny of data-driven program reviews. However, through interviews and examination of documents in the team room, the team found no evidence that the Strategic Plan is integrated with program reviews, college planning, and resource allocation. In fact, the college admits that the current Strategic Plan and Education Master Plan were not data driven, and contained no community input. The new president wants to update both plans to include more research data and community input. Moreover, the college admits that it has not gone through a complete cycle of integrated planning, assessment and resource allocation. In several interviews with college staff, it was noted that the full implementation of an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning and resource allocation will not occur until spring 2010, particularly since the program reviews were just completed in February 2009 and the institution must update its Strategic Plan and Educational Master Plan. Consequently, this recommendation is not fully met.

Recommendation 2:

The team recommends that the plan to acquire a new Enterprise Reporting System be expedited and that appropriate staffing for institutional research, ERS training, and system operations and servicing be provided to support the use of information technology required to improve institutional effectiveness and reliable data-based decision-making. (IB.3; IB.6; IB.7; IIA.1; IIA.2; IIIC.1; IIIC.1a).

The Enterprise Reporting System (Datatel) is being implemented. There is significant focus on training staff college-wide. Due to financial constraints and prioritization of faculty hires to meet the 50% law, a full time institutional researcher has not been hired. The college continues to rely on a research committee composed of faculty and staff. Members of this committee have expertise in research methodology and have been responsible for data retrieval for program reviews, the evaluation of the Superintendent/President and conducting a variety climate surveys.

The team was concerned that there is not a plan in place to provide appropriate staffing support for institutional research and ERS system operations. There is a need to support the use of information technology required to improve institutional effectiveness and

reliable data-based decision-making. The college has access to ERS servicing by way of the Datatel contract, and the college plans to implement Datatel's Data Orchestra (ODS) product which is a reporting tool. However, this system requires expertise in data warehousing to map the old and new systems. Implementation of the ODS will also require extensive training for IT staff as well as end users. While the team was impressed with the college's progress in completing this recommendation, the recommendation is only partially met at this time.

Recommendation 3:

The team recommends that the College establish, through a fully participatory process, a College-wide structure for ongoing systematic review of all programs for relevance, achievement of learning outcomes, currency and future program needs and plans. The recent consultant-driven review of programs may serve as a guide. The program reviews should be integrated with the College's budget, educational and strategic planning processes. (IB.5; IB.7; IIA.1a; IIA.1b; IIA.4; IIA.2a; IIA.2c; IIA.2e; IIB.4; IIB.3c; IIC.2; IIIB.2; IVA.1; IVA.2b).

All program reviews were completed as of December 2008. The team confirmed 43 program reviews completed. Although the program reviews are now completed, it is too early to validate the complete integration of program reviews, planning and resource allocation with ongoing assessment and evaluation. In addition, the new President expressed the need to update the current Strategic Plan and Educational Master Plan to make these documents more data driven and inclusive, bringing in more voices from the internal and external college community. The process had not yet commenced at the time of the visit.

According to interviews and documents reviewed, ongoing systematic review and assessment of programs, planning and resource allocation won't be fully achieved until spring 2010.

In the spring of 2008, a faculty member became the SLO coordinator. Through a collaborative process, SLOs have been defined in most instructional programs. In addition, the program review process has encouraged program areas to focus on SLOs and indicators of program effectiveness. However, a clarification between course objectives, SLOs, and the methods of assessing these SLOs need to be determined. In addition, there is an ongoing need to integrate course and service level SLOs with program level SLOs and with CMC's adopted core competencies. This recommendation is not fully met.

Commission Recommendation:

The College must complete all program reviews and documented in the March 1, 2009 report.

While the college did not address this recommendation as a separate item in its report, it did indicate in its response to Recommendation 3 that "every program in every department of the college has completed its program review and will use these as benchmarks for annual reviews." Thirty-seven of these program reviews were completed for the first time. The college also pointed to several examples of improvements that were made as a result of the completion of the program review cycles, such as the development of program-level objectives and student learning outcomes being developed for the library; the assessment of SLOs in library workshops; a revised library technology plan and revised library mission statement. The Business Administration Department created a standard exit exam for all sections of an introductory course. Additionally, improved enrollment management (fewer lower-enrolled and cancelled courses) was reported as a result of the analysis of program review data. The Commission's recommendation has been met.