

**West Los Angeles College**

**Accreditation Gap Analysis and  
Recommendations:  
Focus on Outcomes**

*October 15, 2012*

**Matthew C. Lee, Ph.D.**

## Table of Contents

Preamble.....	3
Background: Accreditation Sanctions.....	3
Review and Analysis Process .....	4
College Responses to WLAC Recommendations 3 and 4 .....	6
Observations: Progress to Date .....	7
Observations: Issues Requiring Action .....	14
Preliminary Consultant Recommendations of September 3, 2012 .....	23
Additional Consultant Recommendations.....	26

**West Los Angeles College**  
**Accreditation Gap Analysis and Recommendations: Focus on Outcomes**  
**Matthew C. Lee, Ph.D.**  
*October 15, 2012*

***Preamble***

At its June 2012 meeting, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) placed West Los Angeles College (WLAC) on Warning, and required a Follow-Up Report by March 15, 2013 to demonstrate resolution of seven College-level Recommendations and four of five District-level Recommendations. An evaluation team will visit campus again in late March or early April 2013 to verify the College's progress, and on the basis of that team's report, the Commission will take action on the sanction in June 2013.

The College (through the District) contracted with me specifically to evaluate its progress to date on Recommendations 3 and 4 on student learning and service outcomes, and in achieving the Proficiency level on the ACCJC *Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part III: Student Learning Outcomes*, as the Commission requires by Fall 2012. The primary purpose of this report is to summarize my findings and identify actions that the College can take to close the gap between where it is now and where it needs to be, in terms that are more concrete and detailed than those in the Recommendations, Standards, and Rubric. The aim is not just to help resolve the Recommendations and enhance the chances of gaining reaffirmation of accreditation—to “get out of trouble”—but more importantly, to help improve the effectiveness of West Los Angeles College permanently. The consultant recommendations listed are designed to facilitate planning and implementation of lasting, positive change.

Beneath the Recommendations, I have reproduced the ACCJC Standards to which they refer. To formulate and execute the most productive responses to the Recommendations, the College needs to understand those Standards as well as the language of the Recommendations themselves.

Finally, it is the nature of a report such as this to focus more on the specific steps that still need to be taken than on what is already in good shape or well underway. Consequently, readers will not see as much coverage of the many positive aspects of the College as might appear in, say, an outreach brochure or history of the institution. I urge readers to view the report not as a source of discouragement, but rather as a call to action, to move forward in the right direction for the benefit of the College and its students.

***Background: Accreditation Sanctions***

As noted in the Commission's *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, Warning is the first level of sanction. It indicates that the “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.” Probation is a stronger sanction than Warning. It indicates that the institution actually “deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, but not to such an extent as to

warrant a Show Cause order or the termination of accreditation.” Show Cause, the strongest sanction short of termination, is a Commission order to the institution to “show cause why its accreditation should be continued.” A college under any of these three sanctions does retain its accreditation.

The final sanction, in the absence of sufficient corrective action, is Termination of accreditation. U.S. Department of Education rules require Termination if an institution fails to correct deficiencies and come into compliance with Accreditation Standards within a two-year period, though the Commission may grant an extension of that deadline for good cause. ACCJC staff members have indicated in recent presentations that the DOE is pressing all the regional accrediting agencies to adhere more stringently to the two-year deadline.

It is important to note that the Commission’s policies do not require it to follow the sequence of steps from Warning through Probation and Show Cause to Termination. It has the ability to impose any sanction at any time, or to terminate accreditation at any time if it concludes that the institution is significantly out of compliance with the Standards or the Eligibility Requirements.

I want to be very clear about all these Commission sanctions, not to frighten anyone, but to highlight the severe consequences of inadequate action, to call attention to the fact that the clock is ticking, and to convey a sense of urgency to the College community. WLAC has made significant progress over the past year, but more work is needed before the College is back in the Commission’s good graces.

A final background note on sanctions: Predicting Commission decisions is problematic for numerous reasons, and I offer no guarantees that any particular set of College actions will result in reaffirmation of accreditation. However, based on my judgment and experience, it is possible to increase the probability of reaffirmation by taking concrete, documented, sustainable steps that demonstrate to a well-informed and reasonable observer both resolution of the applicable team Recommendations and adherence to the Standards that underlie them. The analysis and consultant recommendations in this report are designed to help the College take those steps.

### ***Review and Analysis Process***

This report is based in part on my review and analysis of numerous documents, including the following:

- 2012 Accreditation Self-Study
- 2012 Evaluation Report
- ACCJC Action Letter of July 2, 2012
- Spring 2011 and Spring 2012 ACCJC Annual Report submissions
- February 1, 2012 Commission Action Letter
- District and College foundational statements
- LACCD policies and procedures related to outcomes formulation, assessment, and improvement
- Instructions, templates, and other forms and documents currently used for outcomes formulation, assessment, and improvement
- Minutes of the SLO Committee

- Documentation of selected course outcomes and all program and institutional outcomes
- Documentation of the relationship of outcomes to program review, resource allocation, and other planning processes
- Documentation of broader planning and governance integration, including sample planning calendars and the Spring 2012 *College Participatory Governance and Planning Policy and Procedure Handbook*
- Status reports of progress on completion of the cycle for course and program outcomes, and on changes implemented as a result of outcomes assessment
- Documentation of Institutional Learning Outcomes and General Education Student Learning Outcomes formulation and assessment
- Samples of completed course and program outcomes assessments
- Samples of course outlines of record
- Program review process and product documentation, including 2010-11 completed comprehensive program reviews and annual updates
- Training materials for outcomes formulation and assessment
- Selected documentation of the work of the Planning Committee, Curriculum Committee, Budget Committee, and other groups
- Selected institutional planning documents, including the Educational, Facilities, and Technology Master Plans, and the Student Services Plan
- Research instruments and reports, including surveys and core effectiveness indicators

In addition, I conducted structured interviews with the following people on campus:

- Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh, College President
- Celena Alcalá, Associate Dean of Student Services
- Mary-Jo Apigo, Dean of Teaching and Learning (Three interviews, including one follow-up by telephone)
- Judy Chow, Curriculum Committee Chair
- Adrienne Foster, Academic Senate President
- Todd Matosic, SLO Coordinator (Three interviews, including one follow-up by telephone)
- Betsy Regalado, Vice President of Student Services
- Bob Sprague, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Ken Takeda, Vice President of Administrative Services and Budget Committee Chair
- Alice Taylor, Accreditation Steering Committee Chair
- Rebecca Tillberg, Dean of Research & Planning (Two interviews, including one follow-up by telephone)

The findings in this report thus rest on a substantial amount of evidence, and I am confident that they accurately reflect that evidence. However, I have not read every possible document, nor have I interviewed every employee and student. To the extent that the information I have analyzed is not sufficiently comprehensive, or not entirely representative of the College's structures, processes, and issues, it is possible that my findings in some particulars might be subject to revision. Of course, it is up to the President and the College to decide what weight to give those findings, and how best to respond to my recommendations.

## **College Responses to WLAC Recommendations 3 and 4**

### **WLAC Recommendation 3: Student Learning Outcomes**

*As noted by the 2006 team and in order to fully meet the Standards and facilitate the college's achievement of commission expectations of proficiency by AY 2012-13, the team recommends that the college identify student learning outcomes that are related to course objectives for all courses; evaluate all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of the relevance, appropriateness, and achievement of student learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans; and conduct authentic assessment of student achievement at the course, program, and institutional levels in order to improve student learning. (Standards II.A.1.c, 2.a, 2.e, 2.f, 2.h, 2.i; II.B.4; II.C.2, IV.A.2.b)*

### **WLAC Recommendation 4: Student Learning and Service Level Outcomes**

*In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the college review and revise as necessary its developed student learning and service level outcomes to assure that they are measured in both quantitative and qualitative terms. These measures should be adequate for evaluating whether services are meeting identified student needs so that results can be used to improve the delivery of support services. (Standards I.B.3, II.B.4, IV.A.2.b, IV.B.4)*

- I.B.3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.
- II.A.1.c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.
- II.A.2.a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.
- II.A.2.e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.
- II.A.2.f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.
- II.A.2.h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education!
- II.A.2.i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.
- II.B.4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
- II.C.2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
- IV.A.2.b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

*Note: The last Standard that the team listed parenthetically under Recommendation 4, IV.B.4, does not exist, and it is not clear from the context what Standard was intended.*

***Observations: Progress to Date***

- 1) Coordination, Training, and Documentation
  - a) The College has been actively engaged in outcomes formulation and assessment work since at least Spring 2003, when the WLAC Accreditation Steering Committee formed a Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Committee. Their first step was development of Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), nine of which were originally adopted by the Academic Senate in late 2004. That accomplishment was followed by the development of program student learning outcomes (PSLOs), beginning in 2005-06 with faculty in some 15 disciplines, under the guidance of Don Prickel, a prominent consultant from Oregon State University, and Ruth Stiehl, the Oregon-based coauthor of three primers on outcomes mapping and assessment. Course SLOs (CSLOs) developed thereafter at WLAC have most often consisted of a subset of applicable program SLOs (PSLOs).
  - b) At WLAC, the outcomes process in instruction is currently construed as falling under the Curriculum category in academic and professional matters, which is among the six categories for which the Board relies primarily on the Academic Senate, rather than under standards or policies regarding student preparation and success.
  - c) The SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the current SLO Committee (reconstituted in 2010-11 to succeed an SLO Task Force) have overall responsibility for coordinating and supporting work on outcomes, and supplying information and training on outcome formulation and assessment to the campus community.
  - d) The SLO Committee has met regularly since Summer 2011. It is a standing committee that reports to the Curriculum Committee, and through that group to the Academic Senate.
  - e) The SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the SLO Committee are to be commended for accomplishing a great deal over the last 18 months, including the following:
    - i) Developed or refined assessment templates for CSLOs and for PSLOs and service area outcomes (SAOs) in Academic Affairs and Administrative Services.
    - ii) Performed a census of active courses to identify those offered in the last two years, for which SLO formulation and assessment is most urgent.
    - iii) Developed an SLO website and began work on three *SLO Handbooks*.
    - iv) Created process diagrams and other training materials.
    - v) Developed a system for ensuring that section syllabi reflect approved CSLOs. (Responsibility for the system has since been assumed by Academic Affairs.)
    - vi) Sought to improve the integration of outcomes assessment into program review.
    - vii) Developed and coordinated implementation of two methods to assess institutional learning outcomes (ILOs).
  - f) The SLO Coordinator and the Dean of Teaching and Learning have facilitated dozens of presentations and workshops for and/or meetings with deans, division chairs, departmental faculty and staff, the Academic Senate, and other individuals and groups over the last 18 months to provide information and facilitate progress on SLO

formulation, assessment, and completing the cycle. College Flex Days have been a valuable forum for such training.

- g) Since Fall 2011, the SLO Coordinator has prepared monthly updates on the status of course and program outcomes formulation and assessment, and on course and program changes based on assessment. In September 2012 he began publication of a monthly SLO newsletter, which is available on the SLO website.
  - h) The SLO Coordinator also maintains for each instructional program a schedule for assessment of its CSLOs and then of the program as a whole. Assessment in each course is completed in phases over three semesters.
  - i) The SLO website, which is maintained by the Dean of Teaching and Learning, serves as an online repository for SLO information, including course assessment videos and other training resources, assessment templates, and samples of completed SLO assessments and templates.
  - j) A District SLO Advisory Council exists, but has reportedly been of little benefit to WLAC within the past year.
- 2) The interviewees confirmed that with some exceptions, members of the campus community recognize the urgency of resolving Recommendations 3 and 4 in the short term; are committed to doing whatever is necessary to accomplish that resolution; and share a sense of collegiality both within and across departmental boundaries that, despite the pressures of dwindling resources over the past two years, is still sufficient to facilitate that work institution-wide.
- 3) Active participation by all constituency groups in governance committees is reportedly the rule at WLAC, which gives it a substantial advantage over many colleges on sanction. However, as at many other community colleges, a relatively small proportion of people do the vast majority of committee work, often serving on multiple committees.
- 4) Progress in the Outcomes Cycle
- a) The percentage figures discussed below for courses, instructional programs, student services programs, and ILOs were submitted to the ACCJC on April 2, 2012 in the Spring 2012 Annual Report. They were based on estimates at that time by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean of Teaching and Learning.
  - b) By March 15, 2013, the College must submit the *College Status Report on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation*, which requires considerably more detail than the Annual Report, to demonstrate whether it has achieved the Proficiency level on the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric.
  - c) CSLOs
    - i) In April 2012, the College reported that 100 percent of all courses had defined SLOs and 100 percent had ongoing assessment. These figures reflected CSLOs that have since been called into question by the evaluation team, and require reformulation (see page 17 below).
    - ii) The CSLO assessment tool requires the following entries:
      - (1) Identification of ILOs that are integrated into the course
      - (2) List of the subset of PSLOs that are serving as CSLOs, and identification of at least one of those that is to be assessed
      - (3) Identification of one assessment instrument to be used in the assessment

- (4) A brief report of the distribution of assessment scores and a description of the criteria assigned to each level of the applicable assessment rubric, using a scale of A-B-C-D-F
  - (5) Attached examples of student work to illustrate performance at each level of the rubric
  - (6) The faculty member's reflections on the question, "What did I learn?"
  - (7) Plan of action, comprised of answers to two questions:
    - (a) What do I want to change?
    - (b) What changes do you propose to improve student learning for the SLOs assessed?
  - (8) Changes already implemented based on the previous CSLO assessment cycle
  - (9) Plans for sharing the results of assessment
- d) Program Outcomes
- i) All programs are reportedly expected to complete their PSLO, SAO, and Service Level Outcomes assessments during Fall 2012.
  - ii) Faculty in some divisions (e.g., Computer Science) reportedly could serve as campus models of knowledge about and engagement in the outcomes process.
  - iii) Instructional Programs
    - (1) In April 2012, the College reported that 100 percent of all instructional programs had defined SLOs, and 66 percent had ongoing assessment. In June 2012, the SLO Coordinator reported that the latter figure had risen to 72 percent. These figures reflect only programs that lead to a state-approved certificate or a degree.
    - (2) Based on my evaluation of 43 sets of instructional PSLOs posted on the SLO website, all the PSLOs for 36 programs (84 percent) are appropriately formulated with respect to language, content, and scope, though in a few of those cases they appear to be more numerous and detailed than best practice might prescribe. In light of my findings at other institutions for which outcomes work was a serious challenge, that proportion is very good, but does not rise to the level one would expect from an institution at the Proficiency level of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric.
    - (3) The instructional degree and certificate PSLO assessment tool requires the following entries:
      - (a) List of all PSLOs
      - (b) Mapping of every course to each PSLO and each ILO to which it contributes, along with the type of assessment instrument used in each course, and the changes or actions planned in each course based on assessment. No instructions accompany this section.
      - (c) A section entitled "Methods Used to Assess the Program," with no instructions
      - (d) A section entitled "Data Analysis," with no instructions
      - (e) A section entitled "Indirect Assessment Indicators," with some examples listed and one instruction to "describe all that apply"
      - (f) A section entitled "Student Project Used to Assess Program Outcomes," with some examples listed and one instruction to "describe all that apply"

- (g) A section entitled “Actions Planned Based on Program Assessment,” with headers for course changes, curriculum changes, PSLO changes, and other changes, but no instructions
  - (h) A list of participants in assessment
- iv) Administrative Services Programs
- (1) ACCJC staff members now place less emphasis on outcomes in Administrative Services units than they used to, but in my judgment, sound institutional practice in the long term calls for implementation of outcomes assessment in all units across the entire institution.
  - (2) Each of the nine Administrative Services units has formulated one SAO, each of which is explicitly linked to one to three ILOs.
  - (3) The SAO assessment tool for Administrative Services units, which mirrors the CSLO tool, requires the following entries:
    - (a) Identification of ILOs that are integrated into the unit’s work
    - (b) List of all SAOs, with identification of at least one that is to be assessed
    - (c) A list of Service Area Indicators, including Surveys, Work Orders, and Site Visits, with no instructions
    - (d) Description of the criteria assigned to each level of the applicable assessment rubric or rating system
    - (e) Attached supporting documentation
    - (f) A section entitled “Report of Data,” which calls only for a description of “the sample size and range of data collected”
    - (g) At least one participant’s reflections on the question, “What are the most important findings from the data and analysis?”
    - (h) Plan of action, comprised of answers to two questions:
      - (i) What changes can be made to address these implications (e.g., changes to the unit, workflow, communication and facility)?
      - (ii) What resources are needed to address these changes?
    - (i) Identification of any changes that should be implemented for the next cycle of SAO assessment
- v) Student Services Programs
- (1) In April 2012, the College reported that 100 percent of all student and learning support activities had defined SLOs and 100 percent had ongoing assessment.
  - (2) Although the SAO assessment tool could presumably be used for student services as well as administrative services, Student Services chose different tools. Each unit completed two matrices, one for Student Learning Outcomes and one for Service Level Outcomes.
    - (a) The Student Learning Outcomes forms vary somewhat in their contents, depending on the unit. In most cases, they list one or more ILOs, and beside each ILO an “outcome of communication,” a “method/source of communication,” a method of assessment, and an “Analysis of Assessment and Change for Improvement.”
    - (b) The Service Level Outcomes are conceptually equivalent to the SAOs used in Administrative Services. Each unit’s form listed when each Outcome was assessed, the method used for each, and the results. The form also included a brief analysis and an action plan for improvement, if warranted. Since the

form is relatively simple, it is reasonably self-explanatory, even without instructions.

- (3) All Student Services units have formulated at least one Service Level Outcome. All have identified assessment terms and methods for their Service Level Outcomes, and all but three have reported actual assessment results.
  - e) Degree/Institutional SLOs (ILOs):
    - i) In April 2012, the College reported that it had identified its nine ILOs, 100 percent of which had ongoing assessment.
    - ii) Two authentic assessment methods for the ILOs were developed and implemented in Spring 2012, as follows:
      - (1) Evaluation of some 130 posters at the Poster Project Showcase representing capstone-level work, based on a common ILO rubric applied by about a dozen faculty members. Each faculty member evaluated about 10 posters.
      - (2) A survey of some 60 Spring 2012 graduates asking how their abilities in ILO-related tasks had changed because of their coursework or experiences at WLAC.
  - f) General Education SLOs (GESLOs)
    - i) The College has identified 11 GESLOs, each of which is explicitly linked to one or more ILOs.
    - ii) The SLO Committee reportedly hopes to assess the GESLOs by assessing the CSLOs in all the General Education courses.
  - g) The visiting team evidently found the College in compliance with Standard III.A.1.c, which requires that “faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving student learning outcomes...have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.” At many other community colleges on sanction, meeting this Standard has caused consternation, so the team’s finding is very good news.
  - h) On the basis of all this work and in good faith, most members of the College community reportedly regarded institutional progress on outcomes as strong, and expected the evaluation team to see that progress the same way. Consequently they were profoundly disappointed when the team issued its Recommendations on outcomes.
- 5) Identification and Implementation of Improvements
- a) According to the SLO Report prepared in March 2012 by the SLO Coordinator, faculty in every instructional division had already made numerous changes based on CSLO and/or PSLO assessment, in areas including curriculum, class schedules, teaching strategies, modes of delivery, articulation practices, assessment instruments, in-class evaluation methods, and use of technology.
  - b) According to the same report, staff in four Student Services units and three Administrative Services units had already made numerous changes based on PSLO assessment, in areas including event planning, workshop presentations, websites, telephone procedures, communication practices, and training.
- 6) Integration with Planning and Resource Allocation
- a) Program Review
    - i) The program review process is the most logical location for addressing and resolving the second component of Recommendation 3: “...evaluate all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of the relevance, appropriateness, and achievement of student learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.”

- (The outcomes assessment process, of course, provides information on “achievement of student learning outcomes,” but does not address the relevance, appropriateness, or currency of courses and programs, and addresses future needs and plans only with respect to the improvements warranted by the outcomes assessment findings.)
- ii) Outcomes assessment plays a role in four sections of the comprehensive program review template. In Part 1, Module 8 on Student Learning Outcomes requires a description of assessment plans for course and program outcomes (which, under the current system, are largely equivalent), a list of changes made or planned, and an indication of whether those changes will necessitate a request for additional resources. For instructional programs, that module also requires a list of course assessments conducted over the past two years. The Continuous Quality Improvement module requires the program to report the effects on student achievement and learning (presumably based in part on student learning outcomes) of any improvements it made as a result of program review. The CTE Programs module for instructional programs requires description and brief assessment of completion and employment outcomes. Finally, for each planning goal listed in Part 2, the program must indicate what SLO assessment or reflection it addresses.
  - iii) The College is revising its program review structure in Fall 2012 to assign responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the process to a new Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Committee (PIEC), which is to absorb the former Planning Committee and Program Review Committee.
  - iv) The Fall 2012 cycle will employ a more rigorous validation process than the one used in 2010-11, with a pair of Deans reviewing each submission for completeness, and formal documentation of their approval.
  - v) The College is implementing on a pilot basis in Fall 2012 a newly developed online tool—the program review module of the District Institutional Effectiveness System (IES)—which has the potential for improving the tracking and reporting of outcomes across the institution. All programs are to participate.
    - (1) The fields in the system closely resemble those of the 2010-11 program review template, including those related to outcomes described immediately above, with some useful additions and relatively minor modifications.
    - (2) The system includes two new questions for the current cycle related to CSLOs:
      - (a) “Describe the SLO assessment methods and outcomes in the prior year.” Responding to this question requires entry of discipline, course number, SLOs assessed, term of assessment, assessment method, summary of results, actions planned, and whether resources will be needed. It does not require entry of actions actually taken.
      - (b) “How has faculty dialogue regarding assessment results and improvement plans been conducted and documented?”
    - (3) An IES outcomes module is reportedly scheduled for development in a future phase of the IES project.
- b) Other Planning Processes
- i) Educational Master Plan 2011-14
    - (1) Plan Objective 1c is “Evaluate the effectiveness of all college courses and programs using assessment of student learning outcomes.”

- (2) Four measures of progress on this objective are specified, but evidently only two—number of courses whose SLOs have been assessed and changes made as a result of assessment—have been applied.
- ii) The WLAC Strategic Plan
  - (1) The “Strategic Plan” is essentially an amalgam of goals and objectives from the Educational Master Plan, Technology Master Plan, and Student Services Plan.
  - (2) It includes “Expand SLO assessment” as an objective under its Goal 2, Student Learning.
- iii) 2009-16 Technology Master Plan
  - (1) The “central principles” of the Plan explicitly emphasize how “technology [will] serve the achievement of our SLOs.”
  - (2) The recommendation for Strategy 5.6 includes a faculty portal to provide access to SLOs and other course information and resources.
  - (3) The concept of improving student learning suffuses the rest of the Plan, though there is no further mention of outcomes per se.
- iv) Student Services Plan 2011-16 (Draft 1/18/12)
  - (1) The Plan was developed in part based on examination of Service Level Outcome assessment results.
  - (2) The Plan asserts that work on its six Goals “will have a significant impact on student outcomes.” Progress reports on the Goals are to be included in Student Services program reviews.
- v) Facilities Master Plan
  - (1) Curiously, the College reportedly regards the March 2010 Supplemental Environmental Impact Report on the 2009 Facilities Master Plan as its current Facilities Master Plan.
  - (2) A scan of that document revealed no mention of outcomes, or even of student learning.
- vi) As indicated in the Spring 2012 *College Participatory Governance and Planning Policy and Procedure Handbook*, learning outcomes (and presumably outcomes assessment results) are to be considered in the viability review of an at-risk program.
- c) Unlike some institutions, WLAC enjoys the services of an on-campus Office of Research and Planning (ORP), which provides institutional enrollment, demographic, student performance, and staffing data for program review, among other tasks. However, the office consists entirely of one Dean at present, and as is usually the case in California Community Colleges, demand for research far outstrips the resources available. Augmenting this department with the recently approved additional position should permit a higher level of support for outcomes assessment as well as other tasks dependent on research, and should help the College move toward the pervasive culture of evidence that accreditation standards, accountability requirements, and sound practice now require.
- 7) Communication and Dialogue
  - a) Flex Days provide the main opportunities for widespread dialogue on student learning and outcomes assessment.
  - b) Campus committees and divisional meetings are the primary venues for more detailed and focused dialogue in this area. In addition, faculty inquiry groups reportedly have been established in some divisions.

- c) The Academic Senate periodically hosts a division showcase at its meetings to promote cross-divisional communication.
- d) Answers to the new question on dialogue in the Fall 2012 program review template might represent at least a start in systematic documentation of dialogue. In addition, the College is considering implementation of a new website content management system that would facilitate posting minutes and other meeting and committee documentation, which would in turn support institution-wide dialogue.

***Observations: Issues Requiring Action***

- 1) Accreditation Requirements: To resolve the Recommendations, the College must demonstrate that it has now reached the Proficiency level on the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric. The Proficiency level has the following characteristics:
  - a) Student learning outcomes and authentic assessments are in place for courses, programs, support services, certificates and degrees.
  - b) There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results of assessment and identification of gaps.
  - c) Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward aligning institution-wide practices to support and improve student learning.
  - d) Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned.
  - e) Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed and updated on a regular basis.
  - f) Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes.
  - g) Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.
- 2) The Accrediting Commission requires far more from every college than an immediate “fix” in response to its Recommendations. It requires sustainable practices to resolve all the Recommendations and meet all the Standards permanently. Based on the interview results, administrative and committee leaders at West recognize this requirement, and engage in constructive dialogue and actions that will move the institution in the right direction, both now and in the long term. Moreover, the rest of the campus community as a whole are reportedly committed to resolution of Recommendations 3 and 4. However, the degree to which the rest of the campus community share recognition of the need for, and are committed to, sustained action over the long term is unclear.
- 3) Coordination, Training, and Documentation
  - a) The SLO Coordinator is currently only a .50-FTEF faculty position, but in my judgment the demands for coordination, training, and continuing support during the drive to Proficiency and then to Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement suggest the need for the College to devote significantly more resources to that function.
  - b) Coordination and training historically have focused primarily on Academic Affairs, with too little support for Student Services and Administrative Services, and continue to do so. Student Services and Administrative Services have had to rely largely on their own devices in the development and assessment of outcomes.
  - c) The SLO Committee is a relatively small group at present. It does have members from Academic Affairs and Student Services, but still has none from Administrative Services.

Membership appears to reflect the interests of the members, rather than a formal system of representation.

- d) SLO Website
  - i) The SLO website does not present any model outcomes at the course or program level, although it does contain some sample completed assessment tools.
  - ii) Access to the SLO website is somewhat cumbersome, which makes it more difficult than it needs to be for the campus community to access outcomes information. There is no direct link on the WLAC home page, on the Faculty & Staff page, on the West Committees page, nor on the Curriculum Committee page. One must find the link on the ORP pages, the shortest route to which is itself not transparent.
- e) While the SLO Coordinator's monthly reports on the status of outcomes assessment have been useful, the College has implemented no centralized repository or set of tools for systematically recording, monitoring, and reporting the status of the outcomes cycle at the course, program, and institutional levels. For example, all instructional PSLOs are maintained by the SLO Coordinator in Word documents, and the status of such outcomes for State-approved degree and certificate programs is recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, but other instructional program outcomes and noninstructional program outcomes are not included. The WLAC course outlines of record in the District curriculum system do include CSLOs and a list of SLO assessment methods, but no assessment status information. The lack of a centralized repository makes it very difficult to determine with confidence the completion of outcomes cycles at any level, and the College's overall progress toward Proficiency.
- f) A systematic, centralized map of linkages among all outcome levels does not exist, although mapping of courses (not CSLOs) to ILOs is required in the CSLO assessment tool; mapping of courses to both PSLOs and ILOs is required in the degree and certificate PSLO assessment tools; and mapping of some programs' sets of PSLOs to subsets of ILOs appears in the PSLO documentation. The CSLO revision process using the *SLO Addendum* form will produce for each course a map of each of its CSLOs to the applicable PLSO(s) and ILO(s), but plans for compiling all those maps are unclear.
- g) At present, reportedly the SLO Committee and others involved in outcomes formulation and assessment rarely request or receive any support from ORP.
- h) The existing schedule for assessment of the CSLOs in each instructional program, and of the program as a whole, clearly presents the three-semester cycle for each course. However, it suffers from several problems that require attention:
  - i) The overall design of the schedule is predicated on a subset of PSLOs functioning as the CSLOs for each course, such that assessment of the CSLOs will roll up into an assessment of all PSLOs after CSLOs in all courses have been assessed. The PSLO-as-CSLO approach will no longer apply after resolution of Recommendation 3, so a new schedule of PSLO assessment will be required.
  - ii) The CSLO Assessment Tool does not require assessment of all CSLOs at once. A faculty member may choose to assess only one or two CLSOs, leaving any others for a future cycle. That means that it might take many years to paint a comprehensive picture of learning in a course based on assessment of all its CSLOs, and thus that some needed improvements might not be identified for years. It also means that assessment of the program as a whole, in the current design, is based on an incomplete picture of learning in the courses that comprise it.

- iii) The schedule does not provide for reassessment soon after improvements have been implemented. It is exceedingly unlikely that every improvement will work perfectly as intended, so reassessment as soon as practicable and adjustment as needed are crucial steps in the outcomes cycle.
    - iv) The timeframe for completion of assessments in all courses appears to depend on the number of courses offered in a program. A program with 50 courses might take more than three years to assess at least one CSLO in all its courses, while one with 15 courses might take as little as a year and a half. The former program would be at a comparative disadvantage in the program review and resource allocation process, since the results of program outcomes assessment are supposed to be a crucial part of that process.
  - i) Document Errors
    - i) In the *SLO Impact: Course Changes and Program Review* diagram, the first box under Assessment reads, “Did students meet learning objectives?” It should read, “Did students meet learning outcomes?”
    - ii) The *Course Assessment Calendar Detailed* contains typos in column headers and Phase entries.
- 4) Ensuring Quality
  - a) Evidently there has been no formal quality control system in place for outcomes formulation and assessment, although the SLO Coordinator, Dean of Teaching and Learning, and division chairs have often served as resources to assist faculty, staff, and managers in the outcomes process. The Curriculum Committee, for instance, monitors only whether CSLOs are in place for a given course, not the quality of those CSLOs. For the Fall 2012 CSLO intensive revision and assessment cycle, division chairs are expected to review and provide feedback on the *SLO Addendum* forms, but that has not yet occurred. However, the SLO Committee does reportedly recognize the desirability of some quality monitoring system going forward.
  - b) The *SLO Handbooks*, which are intended to document and provide guidance on the outcomes process, are in development by the SLO Coordinator and the Dean of Teaching and Learning. The first *Handbook*, on the CSLO formulation process, was published in September. The second, on CSLO assessment, is scheduled for publication in November, and the third, on other outcomes processes, will follow shortly thereafter.
  - c) No formal, documented evaluation and revision process exists for the outcomes cycle, and the SLO Committee has not performed any formal evaluation of the outcomes process, nor of its own effectiveness in facilitating and supporting that process. However, it did review its work at the end of last academic year.
- 5) Progress in the Outcomes Cycle
  - a) Observations on Completion of the Cycle
    - i) In my judgment, the minimum progress needed to claim completion of an outcomes cycle includes the following documented steps:
      - (1) Formulation of outcomes
      - (2) Identification of sound measurement methods, preferably with criteria for gauging whether the level of achievement of each outcome is satisfactory
      - (3) Assessment using those methods
      - (4) Analysis of the results of assessment

- (5) Based on the analysis, identification of any improvements needed to facilitate achievement of outcomes, whether those improvements are in pedagogy, curriculum, service, or other practices; in the assessment methods or criterion levels; and/or in the outcomes themselves
- (6) Actual implementation of needed improvements, with a firm schedule for repeating the full cycle
- ii) The most conservative approach to documenting cycle completion would also require reassessment of outcomes after a reasonable period of implementation of improvements, followed by further improvements as needed. However, fulfilling that criterion in most cases would require more time than the College has available before its next evaluation team visit.
- b) CSLOs
  - i) In the vast majority of cases since the 2005-06 identification of PSLOs, the CSLOs that faculty have identified for a given course essentially comprise a subset of the PSLOs for the applicable program, rather than a set of learning outcomes based on the course content per se that are aligned with PSLOs as applicable. The evaluation team found fault with this approach, which appeared to make alignment more important than course-specific learning, and issued Recommendation 3 to prompt corrective action.
  - ii) The most pressing problem confronting the College related to outcomes is reformulation and assessment of CSLOs in accord with Recommendation 3 as quickly as possible, consistent with high quality and sustainability, to enable it to demonstrate achievement of Proficiency upon submission of an accurate, complete, and thoroughly checked *College Status Report*.
  - iii) The SLO Coordinator and Dean of Teaching and Learning are in the process of reviewing all CSLOs shown in the Course Outlines of Record in preparation for their Fall workshops (see page 26 below). As of October 12, they had found only 19 that clearly qualified as true CSLOs based on course content, as opposed to PSLOs. However, they are also checking about 100 courses for which the PSLOs listed in the outlines do not match previously documented PSLOs, and might possibly be intended as true CSLOs.
  - iv) The CSLO Assessment Tool
    - (1) The CSLO assessment tool is actually applied at the section level when multiple faculty members teach the course. Each faculty member conducts his or her own assessment. (Indeed, reportedly some faculty members were told in the past that they could formulate CSLOs for their own sections, independent of those in other sections of the same course—a faulty practice that would undercut the integrity of CSLO assessment and that I have not seen at other institutions.) No formal mechanism has been established to merge section-level assessments into one course-level assessment, though conversations among applicable faculty members regarding the assessments reportedly do occur, and some of those discussions might have resulted in consolidated course-level assessments.
    - (2) The CSLO assessment tool has naturally built in the assumption that each CSLO is actually selected from among the PSLOs, and thus will require reworking when the faculty have completed the CSLO revision process.

- (3) Using the A-B-C-D-F scale for the rubric in the assessment tool increases the risk of confusing the assessment of CSLO performance with the assignment of letter grades on tests, essays, other work, or the course as a whole. It is inappropriate to use such grades for CSLO assessment unless the relationship between each grade and each level of CSLO performance has been rigorously mapped.
  - (4) The intended distinction between the two prompts in the plan of action section is not at all clear, though faculty reportedly like the question “What do I want to change?” as an opportunity for personal reflection. Moreover, if both prompts are retained, the use of both first-person and second-person prompts is confusing; in those prompts and the faculty reflection prompt, only one “voice” should be used.
  - (5) The tool does not include provision for review, feedback, and documented approval by anyone.
  - v) The visiting team was unable to “substantiate the requirement [Standard II.A.2.h] that course credit is awarded based on student achievement of the course’s stated learning outcomes,” given the existing CSLOs, nor that the “institution awards degrees and certificates based on achievement of stated course level learning [II.A.2.h].” They made no recommendation in this area, possibly because they saw other outcomes-related needs that took precedence. Nevertheless, the College would be wise to document its compliance with these two Standards.
- c) Instructional Program Outcomes
- i) Since the initial work on PSLOs in 2005-06, the definition of “program” has evolved to focus primarily on outcomes development and assessment in the 47 degree and state-approved certificate programs offered at WLAC. Nine other disciplines that by themselves do not lead to a state-approved certificate or a degree reportedly each have at least one PSLO. Some 20 others have none; faculty reportedly do evaluate student learning within those disciplines through CSLOs, but whether and how they evaluate student learning in each discipline as a whole is unclear.
  - ii) The review of 43 sets of instructional PSLOs posted on the SLO website did reveal some issues:
    - (1) In about one in six programs, the formulation of PSLOs appeared to require improvement.
    - (2) In a few cases, the listed PSLOs read like objectives in their level of detail, even though they were stated as outcomes.
    - (3) Nearly six in ten PSLO sets lacked any explicit linkage to ILOs.
    - (4) Nearly six in ten sets failed to show any assessment methods.
    - (5) Even in cases where assessment methods were listed, they were too often presented as mere shopping lists of potential instruments with no indication of how they would be applied to the PSLOs, or vague descriptions whose relationship to the PSLOs was unclear at best.
    - (6) Virtually none included criterion levels indicating satisfactory performance.
  - iii) Degree and Certificate PSLO Assessment Tools
    - (1) Page 2 of the tool is confusing, in that each course (not each CSLO) is mapped potentially to multiple PSLOs and ILOs, each of which might require a different assessment instrument, yet the assessment instrument is identified at the course level.

- (2) Instructions for page 3 of the tool are virtually nonexistent (unless they exist in some other document that was not provided to me), and the form is not well-designed to guide users in completing it. Samples of completed forms provided support for this observation. For example:
  - (a) The listed methods ostensibly used to assess programs do not appear to be assessment methods at all: Faculty meetings, Frequency, and Follow-up and Timelines. Users varied in how and whether they responded to each method.
  - (b) The data analysis section has three lines—headed Retention, Success Rate, and Analysis of Data—and with no instructions, one user just checked Retention and Success, while another left all three lines blank, and a third entered figures on the first two lines and a one-sentence analysis on the third: “The program continues to be successful and trends are stable over the past 5 years.”.
- (3) The samples of completed forms from the SLO website indicate that overall, assessment of PSLOs is less consistent and less systematic than best practices would require.
- (4) The tool does not include provision for review, feedback, and documented approval by anyone.
- d) Service Area Outcomes
  - i) In seven of the nine Administrative Services units, the SAO is stated as an objective rather than as a true outcome.
  - ii) Two of the nine Administrative Services units have evidently not assessed their SAOs.
  - iii) Among the seven completed assessments, only two directly addressed the unit’s stated SAO; two addressed it partially or indirectly; and three did not address it at all.
  - iv) The listed links between Administrative Services SAOs and the ILOs are tenuous at best.
  - v) SAO Assessment Tool
    - (1) Instructions for completing the form are inadequate (unless they exist in some other document that was not provided to me), and design of the form itself does not provide sufficient guidance, so that the meaning and application of many fields on the form are unclear.
    - (2) The purposes of the Service Area Indicators and Report of Data sections in particular require clarification.
    - (3) The tool, unlike the instructional PSLO tool, apparently includes no section for reporting assessment scores or other results (other than as attachments); reflection on the most important findings is not the same as a report of results. Nor does it contain any direction to include samples illustrating the application of rubrics or ratings, any section on changes already implemented, nor any section on plans for sharing the results of assessment.
    - (4) The Plan of Action question about resources appears to duplicate unnecessarily questions asked in program review.
    - (5) The tool does not include provision for review, feedback, and documented approval by anyone.

e) Student Services Outcomes

i) Student Learning Outcomes

Several problems became evident in a review of the completed Student Services SLO assessment matrices:

- (1) The sheer number of outcomes in some units makes regular assessment a daunting task.
- (2) In many cases, conforming to the SLO construct was an unreasonable stretch, and assessment of the stated SLO appeared unlikely to produce any useful information about the effectiveness of the applicable service.
- (3) Confusion about what was supposed to be entered on the form was common (e.g., filling in the analysis and change section before any assessment has taken place).
- (4) The application of the listed methods of assessment to the SLOs was too often unclear.
- (5) In some cases, the description of a method of assessment gave no indication of just how measurement was to take place, or what form the results might take.
- (6) In some cases, outcomes and assessment methods were poorly linked (e.g., persistence and retention rates to measure Counseling SLOs were conceptually removed from those SLOs).
- (7) In some cases, the listed PSLOs were not true PSLOs (e.g., in the EOPS Literacy section), or were just borrowed from other units (e.g., International Students and Financial Aid).
- (8) Surveys were often listed as assessment methods, but their application to the associated SLOs was often unclear, as the visiting team pointed out.

ii) Service Level Outcomes

Review of the completed Service Level Outcomes assessment matrices, which are more straightforward than the SLO matrices, nevertheless also revealed some issues requiring attention, such as the following:

- (1) Some Service Level Outcomes were merely statements of activity.
- (2) The distinction between Service Level Outcomes and SLOs was evidently not well understood in all units; some strove to force Service Level Outcomes into an SLO mold.
- (3) In some cases, the relationship between the Service Level Outcome and its assessment method was not at all clear.
- (4) Some qualitative assessment findings were merely anecdotal rather than systematic, some were simply descriptions of departmental or prospective data collection activities, and some were nonexistent.
- (5) In some cases, the Analysis and Plan of Action appeared unrelated to the Service Level Outcomes, failed to address the reported findings, or just reported but drew no conclusions from the assessment results.

iii) Assessment Matrices

- (1) The use of the term “communication” in two headers of the SLO matrix appears to obscure unnecessarily the nature of the outcomes listed.
- (2) No instructions for completing the matrices were provided (unless they exist in some other document that was not provided to me). Particularly in the case of the Student Learning Outcomes form, the lack of guidance produced inconsistent reports that too often were difficult to interpret.

- (3) The matrices do not include provision for review, feedback, and documented approval by anyone.
- iv) The unevenness of outcomes assessment and its documentation likely contributed to the visiting team's concerns about the lack of systematic, ongoing, consistent, evidence-based assessment and planning in Student Services.
- f) GESLOs
  - i) Reportedly, no GESLOs have been assessed to date, nor is there any formal tool for assessing the GESLOs. In my judgment, assessing the GESLOs by assessing the CSLOs in all GE courses, as the SLO Committee's hopes to do, would require a rigorous mapping of each of those CSLOs to the appropriate GESLO(s), which has not occurred.
- g) ILOs
  - i) The two *ILO Assessment—A Two-Tiered Approach* documents appear to confuse the mapping or alignment specified in Tier 1 with assessment of the ILOs. Mapping does not constitute assessment, though rigorous mapping can be very useful, for example, in assessing PSLOs based on CSLO assessment results, or ILOs based on PSLO assessment results.
  - ii) The two ILO assessment methods applied in Spring 2012 covered a very small sample of institutional learning, involving only an estimated 130 students. An additional, more comprehensive assessment approach would help the College analyze and improve its overall performance in achieving the ILOs in a more systematic and useful way.
- h) Identification and Implementation of Improvements
  - i) Interview results indicate that on a substantial proportion of completed CSLO assessment tools, no changes are proposed. If the CSLO assessment indicates that the students are achieving at a previously identified satisfactory level, and if no changes in the assessment method or the CSLO itself are indicated, then, of course, no changes are necessary and none need be listed. However, "NA" or the equivalent is a temptingly easy response to questions about planned changes, particularly if (as is most often the case at WLAC) no criteria for satisfactory student performance have been specified. A similar concern applies to PSLOs and SAOs, in Student Services and Administrative Services as well as Academic Affairs. So it is important to take steps to ensure that all participants in every assessment process take it seriously, and seriously consider any changes that might be warranted by assessment results.
  - ii) The March 2012 SLO Report is the only centralized compilation of improvements implemented as a result of outcomes assessment at the course and program levels, and no update has been published to date. Consequently it is difficult to gauge the nature and extent of improvements made as a result of such assessment, especially on an ongoing basis.
  - iii) No conclusions about institutional-level learning have been drawn to date based on the results of the two Spring 2012 ILO assessments, and consequently no improvements have been implemented.
- 6) Integration with Planning and Resource Allocation: Program Review
  - a) The program review process already includes coverage of future needs and plans, and does address outcomes, though it requires some improvement in that respect (see below).

- However, it does not evaluate explicitly the relevance, appropriateness, or currency of courses and programs as required in Recommendation 3 and Standard II.A.2.e.
- b) Review of the 2010-11 comprehensive program reviews indicates that programs varied considerably in the nature and extent of their consideration of outcomes assessment in the analysis of their own effectiveness and the establishment of program goals.
    - i) That variation is probably due in part to the phrasing of the SLO questions. For example, only one question in Part 1 asked for a report on actual implementation of changes based on the results of outcomes assessment. The other questions in Parts 1 and 2 directly related to outcomes required only a description of assessment plans; a list of course outcomes assessed, but not the results of those assessments; an indication of whether planned changes will require additional resources; and identification of the “SLO assessment/reflection” addressed by each program goal, which respondents typically interpreted as a list of the SLOs they regarded as related. In the latter case, the relationship between the stated goal and the chosen SLO(s) was often not clear. In Student Services, coverage of outcomes in the 2010-11 program reviews dealt almost exclusively with planning and improving assessments, and with few exceptions, those programs did not draw any conclusions about their effectiveness, goals, or needed resources from the results of outcome assessments.
    - ii) Judging from the completed 2010-11 reviews, the outcomes-related questions, taken on the whole, did not sufficiently convey the crucial point that outcomes assessment should play a central role in program review.
    - iii) Reportedly, the validation process for 2010-11 program reviews was itself somewhat variable, and the deans who performed validation received insufficient training in that function.
    - iv) On the other hand, the dearth of meaningful results of outcomes assessment in the 2010-11 program reviews might simply reflect the fact that relatively little course or program assessment had taken place by the due date for those reviews. In contrast, the SLO Coordinator’s March 2012 SLO Report showed a great many changes made as a result of outcomes assessment.
  - c) Under the coordination of the new PIEC, the new IES program review system represents an opportunity to build outcomes assessment results much more thoroughly into programs’ self-analysis and goal-setting. At present, however, the SLO module does not require entry of actions actually taken (as distinct from planned) as a result of SLO assessment. Nor does it require entry of program outcomes per se, most of which will likely remain in place after revision of the CSLOs takes place this Fall. Given that revision process, in my judgment, it makes sense to shift the emphasis in program review to program-level outcomes now, particularly since such reviews are supposed to address program-level issues.
  - d) Written guidance for participants in the 2010-11 program review process, beyond the templates themselves, consisted of the *College Participatory Governance and Planning Policy and Procedure Handbook*, one PowerPoint presentation, and two six-page Guides (one for academic divisions and one for Student Services and Administrative Services), all of which are on the Program Review website. None of these documents placed much emphasis on outcomes assessment as an important component of program review.
  - e) Summary reports of the results of the 2010-11 process available on the program review website do show, for the whole institution, linkages of reported goals, planning actions,

and resource requests to SLOs; collected Student Services outcomes (along with survey results, and improvements based on past program reviews); and collected Module 8 SLO responses for instructional programs. However, I do not know the extent to which these reports were used in institutional decision-making or planning.

- f) The Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric, which represents the final step in outcomes process development, requires that “Learning outcomes are specifically linked to program reviews.” The College will have to reach that level sooner rather than later (though the ACCJC has established no deadline as yet), and should attend to this specific requirement.
  - g) Although most of the major College plans do pay some attention to outcomes, more systematic consideration of outcomes would strengthen those plans, and would help assign to outcomes assessment a more central role in institutional planning overall.
- 7) Communication and Dialogue
- a) The Proficiency level of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric requires that “there is widespread institutional dialogue about the results” of outcomes assessment, and that “decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward aligning institution-wide practices to support and improve student learning.” In my judgment, the available documentation fails to demonstrate that the College has met these requirements.
    - i) Such dialogue reportedly does occur within division meetings (some more than others), and within the Divisional Council, but evidently little documentation of even that dialogue exists at present.
    - ii) Even Flex Day discussions of assessment results reportedly occur only within divisions or other relatively small groups, not in an institution-wide forum, and other opportunities for institution-wide discussion do not appear to exist.
    - iii) Reportedly, opportunities for wider input, conversation, or debate within the various assessment and planning processes themselves are not built in, and when they are offered, most members of the campus community take insufficient advantage of them.
    - iv) It is clear that the “ongoing, pervasive and robust” dialogue required in the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric, has not been reached.
  - b) To my knowledge, there is no evidence of the extent to which students “demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled,” another of the requirements for Proficiency.
  - c) The ILOs are published in the General Information of the 2011-12 online Catalog, but PSLOs are not included in the Catalog major descriptions.

### ***Preliminary Consultant Recommendations of September 3, 2012***

Based on a preliminary analysis of the College’s status and needs, and in the interests of expediting progress as early in the academic year as possible, I sent the following set of informal, preliminary notes and recommendations to the Dean of Teaching and Learning on September 3, 2012:

## Notes

- *The process described here reflects a streamlined, simplified version of the CSLO formulation, assessment, and improvement cycle, designed specifically to expedite the resolution of WLAC Recommendation 3 and the achievement of the Proficiency level on the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric. It is important to recognize, however, that resolution of the Recommendation is not enough in the long run. The College must develop and implement structures and processes that will help it achieve the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level as soon as possible. Moreover, there is much more to SLOs than is presented here; your SLO Coordinator is an invaluable resource in this area.*
- *Where feasible, guidance to WLAC faculty and instructional administrators should reflect the language, methods, and approaches with which they are already familiar. (The glaring exceptions, of course, are those that gave rise to the evaluation team's concerns about CSLOs.) So feel free to edit the steps below to ensure that participants in the process understand them thoroughly.*
- *Please note that these recommendations on the CSLOs process of necessity are based on a preliminary analysis of the College's status and needs. As we have discussed before with the President, the Gap Analysis Report will contain my final recommendations, which might well include significant additions and/or enhancements.*

### *For each course:*

- *Review all course objectives in the Course Outline of Record, and focus on those that are still applicable. (Make a note of any that are no longer applicable for later deletion; it might or might not be feasible to make such corrections in this cycle.)*
- *Based on applicable objectives:*
  - *Derive a small number of overarching SLOs (three to six works well), each of which demonstrates the following essential characteristics:*
    - *Finishes the sentence, "At the end of this course, the successful student will be able to...."*
    - *Begins with an active verb, preferably reflecting a higher-order function, skill, ability, behavior, or attitude from established taxonomies of learning (e.g., in Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, Evaluation, Synthesis, and Analysis are preferable to Application, Comprehension, and Knowledge in SLOs).*
    - *The student who achieves this outcome has mastered a significant level or portion of the course content.*
    - *The degree of achievement of this outcome is measurable using the assessment method specified.*
- *For each SLO:*
  - *Identify one or two assessment methods that all instructors can readily apply by the end of this semester. For each assessment method in this cycle:*
    - *A summative approach is preferable to a formative one.*
    - *Direct measurement is preferable to indirect.*
  - *It is best to use both quantitative and qualitative data in SLO assessment. However, if time in this initial cycle does not permit using both, faculty may use either, as long as the method is rigorously applied. It is generally easier to analyze quantitative data, and to identify patterns and trends using quantitative data.*

- *If time permits, identify the program and institutional SLO(s) to which this CSLO contributes, if any. This mapping step will have to be done later if it is not done now.*
- *For each assessment method:*
  - *Establish a criterion level that in the faculty's judgment reflects satisfactory performance on the SLO. For example:*
    - *"At least X percent of students achieve this SLO."*
    - *"All students achieve at least the Y level on this SLO."*
    - *"At least X percent of students achieve at least the Y level on this SLO."*
  - *Failure to reach this criterion level suggests that faculty should consider whether changes in class characteristics (e.g., content coverage or sequencing, pedagogical methods), the SLO itself, and/or the assessment method(s) are necessary.*
- *Faculty should submit new or revised SLOs, assessment methods, and criteria to the division chair and/or dean by mid-October, for review and feedback within about a week. The division chair and/or dean, having received appropriate training, should function as the primary quality control monitors.*
- *Having incorporated feedback as appropriate, faculty should submit new or revised SLOs to the Curriculum Committee by November 1, 2012 for expedited final review and approval by late November 2012. The Committee should function as the final quality control monitor.*
- *After approval, in late November and December 2012, faculty should:*
  - *Assess each set of SLOs. Ideally, all CSLOs that have not been assessed recently should be assessed in this cycle. If time does not permit assessment of all SLOs in all courses, then faculty should assess as many SLOs for each course as they can manage, consistent with rigorous application of the assessment methods. In any case, at least one SLO in every, or nearly every, active course should be assessed in this cycle. To the extent that the College falls short in that task, it is more likely that the evaluation team will regard WLAC Recommendation 3 as unresolved and Proficiency as unreachd, and therefore less likely that the Commission will reaffirm accreditation.*
  - *Analyze the results.*
  - *Identify needed improvements in class characteristics, the SLOs, and/or assessment methods.*
- *In time for the Spring 2013 offerings, faculty should:*
  - *Implement improvements in class characteristics, the SLOs, and/or assessment methods.*
  - *Ensure that Spring 2013 class syllabi reflect the new or revised SLOs.*
- *Note that these last steps represent a somewhat liberal interpretation of completing the cycle; some practitioners would argue that reassessment must occur before one can truly have completed the cycle.*
- *Document all actions thoroughly, and include the documentation in the evidence files for the Follow-Up Report and Status Report on SLO Implementation (see Status Report for examples).*

In accord with these preliminary recommendations, the SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the SLO Committee developed, and the Curriculum Committee and Academic Senate approved, an *SLO Addendum* form to be used in an intensive revision of CSLOs across the curriculum. For each course, it is pre-populated with Course Objectives from the official Course Outline of Record, along with any course outcomes shown in that Outline that already qualify as true CSLOs based on course content, rather than PSLOs. Faculty members use the information supplied to formulate appropriate CLSOs, along with assessment methods and criterion levels indicating satisfactory performance for each. They also map each CSLO individually to the applicable PSLO(s) and ILO(s). Approvals, or at least acknowledgments, for the revised CSLO set are required from the Division Chair, SLO Coordinator, Dean, Curriculum Committee Chair, Academic Senate President, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the College President.

The Coordinator and the Dean have scheduled numerous workshops this Fall with the other instructional deans and division chairs, as well as with divisional faculty. Using a training aid they prepared, *Back to the Basics: Course SLOs*, they have walked participants through the *Addendum*, helping them reformulate CSLOs, identify suitable assessment methods and performance criteria, and map CSLOs to PSLOs and ILOs.

The Coordinator and the Dean are scheduled to carry all the revised CLSO sets to the Curriculum Committee for expedited review and approval by November 1, 2012.

### ***Additional Consultant Recommendations***

- 1) The President and all other College leadership should create regular, engaging opportunities to broaden and deepen the understanding of the campus community that resolving the Commission's Recommendations involves sustaining applicable improvements in structures and processes over the long term.
- 2) Coordination, Training, and Documentation
  - a) In part to fulfill the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric Proficiency-level requirement that "appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned," the College should allocate more resources to coordination and training immediately. One option is to increase the SLO Coordinator position substantially, through at least Fall 2013, both to facilitate substantive progress toward Proficiency and beyond, and to signal to the evaluation team and the Commission that the College is serious about making and sustaining progress in this area. Another is to provide more clerical support, if too much of the time of the SLO Coordinator and Dean of Teaching and Learning is taken up with essentially clerical tasks. A third might be to provide some reassigned time for "divisional SLO experts," who with appropriate training could serve as front-line responders to faculty and staff in need of guidance in outcomes formulation, assessment, and related tasks, and thus leverage the expertise of the SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the SLO Committee.
  - b) The College should formalize representation in the structure of the SLO Committee, to include one or more representatives from Administrative Services as well as from Academic Affairs and Student Services. It should also consider increasing the size of the

- Committee and/or converting it to a College-wide participatory-governance committee, if such changes would strengthen its utility and performance.
- c) The SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the SLO Committee should continue to provide (either directly or indirectly through divisional SLO experts or the equivalent) all information and other support needed for participants to meet their assessment, improvement, and reporting deadlines.
    - i) In particular, in consultation with the applicable vice presidents, the Coordinator and Dean should increase their assistance to Student Services and Administrative Services in their review and revision of appropriate SLOs, SAOs, Service Level Outcomes, and assessment methods, especially in Fall 2012 and early Spring 2013 (see page 30 below).
    - ii) The SLO Coordinator should request that a link to the SLO webpage be added to the Faculty and Staff homepage.
    - iii) On the SLO website, the Dean of Teaching and Learning should post sets of excellent CSLOs and PSLOs, complete with assessment methods and criteria for satisfactory performance, from a variety of WLAC programs, to provide models that will help other programs continue their own progress toward excellence in the outcomes process.
  - d) The College should request expedited development and implementation of the IES outcomes module that is currently planned for an indefinite future time, and participate actively in the design and testing of that module. If that request proves fruitless, the SLO Committee, in consultation with applicable groups and individuals, should coordinate an evaluation of available third-party computerized systems (e.g., TracDat) for tracking and reporting on the outcomes cycle at all levels and in all areas of the College, with the goal of implementing such a system (and making all the outcomes information it contains available to the campus community) as soon as practicable. The College should be aware that evaluating, selecting, purchasing, installing, and thoroughly testing even a well-designed and mature system takes a substantial amount of time, as does training all personnel in its use and then entering all the requisite outcomes information for the first time.
  - e) In the meantime, to document and report on progress in the whole outcomes cycle (i.e., formulation, identification of assessment methods, assessment, analysis, identification of improvements, and implementation of improvements. along with outcomes mapping) reliably prior to submission of the Follow-Up Report, the SLO Committee should focus on the following efforts:
    - i) Consolidate the CSLO cycle information from all the completed *SLO Addendum* forms into a single easily accessible database or other repository that will accommodate outcomes information at all levels.
    - ii) Add to the repository the instructional PSLO cycle information, as updated during Fall 2012.
    - iii) With the help of the Vice Presidents of Student Services and Administrative Services, collect updated noninstructional program outcome cycle information, and add it to the repository.
    - iv) Add to the repository the ILO cycle information (including the results of the comprehensive method if it is implemented in time; see page 31 below), along with whatever GESLO cycle information becomes available in time.

- v) Include in the repository information on actual implementation of improvements based on analysis of assessment results, at all levels.
  - vi) Generate a complete, authoritative set of reports on the outcomes cycle at all levels and across all areas of the College.
  - vii) Incorporate into the repository whatever useful outcomes cycle information, if any, becomes available from the IES program review module.
  - f) At the same time, the SLO Committee should establish a systematic process to monitor on a regular basis the consistency among CSLOs as reported in IES, CSLOs as recorded in the course outlines of record in the ECD system, and CSLOs as shown in section syllabi, and initiate corrective action as needed.
  - g) In consultation with ORP, the SLO Committee should assess and document the extent to which additional research and/or training support from ORP would contribute to improvement of the outcomes process across the institution. If the Committee identifies unmet needs, it should formally request ORP assistance in those specific areas, and ORP should respond in timely fashion with an indication of if and when it can provide such assistance (particularly after the addition of the new staff position).
  - h) In Spring 2013, the SLO Coordinator and SLO Committee should carefully evaluate the published schedules for outcomes assessment in all courses and programs in light of the problems identified beginning on page 15 of this report, and develop new schedules that address those problems.
  - i) The SLO Committee should review periodically all outcomes process documentation, and correct or improve them as needed. At its first opportunity, it should correct the errors in the *SLO Impact: Course Changes and Program Review* and *Course Assessment Calendar Detailed* identified on page 16 of this report.
- 3) Ensuring Quality
- a) Before the Spring 2013 evaluation team visit, the SLO Committee, in consultation with appropriate individuals and groups, should develop, thoroughly document, and obtain all necessary approvals for an outcomes process and products quality monitoring and control system that is sustainable in the long term. Implementation of that system should be firmly scheduled to occur no later than Fall 2013. Options for such a system include (but are certainly not limited to) a brief peer review process or an efficient review-and-feedback cycle by divisional SLO experts (see page 26 above), division chairs, deans, the SLO Coordinator, the SLO Committee, or some combination thereof.
  - b) As an initial step in the development of that quality control system, and to help resolve Recommendations 3 and 4, Academic Senate leadership; the three vice presidents; the applicable faculty, division chairs, and deans in Academic Affairs; the applicable managers, faculty, and staff in Student Services and Administrative Services; the SLO Coordinator; the Dean of Teaching and Learning; and the SLO Committee should take special pains during Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 to ensure that:
    - i) The assessment process for all outcomes is taken seriously by all participants.
    - ii) The assessment methods applied to outcomes this Fall (and in the future) are sound.
    - iii) The analysis and reflection applied to assessment results are rigorous.
    - iv) Changes that are warranted by the assessment results are identified, implemented, and firmly scheduled for reassessment at the appropriate time.
  - c) At least until the College reaches Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement on the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric, the College should continue to devote a substantial portion of

- every Flex Day to presentations and workshops on completion of the cycle for course, program, GE, and institutional outcomes.
- d) After the College has demonstrated its achievement of Proficiency, and as it works toward Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement, the SLO Committee should identify any remaining quality control issues in the outcomes process, and initiate corrective action as needed.
  - e) The SLO Coordinator, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and the SLO Committee should complete development and publication of the *SLO Handbooks* no later than mid-November, to document the whole cycle of outcomes formulation, assessment, and improvement at all levels, and to guide both instructional and noninstructional areas in completing and repeating the cycle. The *Handbooks* should include provisions for review and revision of the outcomes cycle process and of the *Handbooks* themselves.
  - f) The SLO Committee should perform a formal evaluation of both its own effectiveness and that of the outcomes process by the end of Fall 2012. In Spring 2013, it should implement any improvements it regards as crucial, establish a firm schedule for further evaluations to begin in 2013-14, and publish that schedule in the *Handbooks*.
- 4) Progress in the Outcomes Cycle
- a) The College should complete the process of revising the CSLOs, assessing them, and implementing improvements in time for the Spring 2013 semester as described in the Preliminary Recommendations above. The SLO Committee should ensure that documentation of the process and its results is sufficient to demonstrate, at the course level, the Proficiency requirements of authentic assessment, comprehensive reporting, and alignment with degree/institutional outcomes.
  - b) Concomitant with the CSLO revision process and in consultation with appropriate groups on campus, the SLO Committee should establish a procedure for applicable faculty to discuss any set of section-level CSLO assessment reports for a given course and merge them into a single, authoritative CSLO assessment report for that course. The procedure should facilitate dialogue among the faculty members as well as improvement of the course as a whole.
  - c) The SLO Committee should review and revise the CSLO assessment tool to address the issues identified beginning on page 17 of this report. (See also Identification and Implementation of Improvements below.)
  - d) Upon completion of the CSLO revision and assessment process as described in the Preliminary Recommendations, Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate should work together to articulate and document compliance with Standards II.A.2.h and II.A.2.i, which require that the College award credit “based on student achievement of the course’s stated learning outcomes” and “degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program’s stated learning outcomes.”
  - e) The College should adopt and adhere to a formal set of definitions of “program” for purposes of program-level outcomes assessment (which should be the same as that used for reporting program outcomes to ACCJC) and outcomes coverage in program review, in part to ensure that all programs so defined are properly and regularly assessed.
  - f) Instructional Program Outcomes
    - i) During the Fall 2012 PSLO assessment cycle, the SLO Coordinator, Dean of Teaching and Learning, and SLO Committee should review all instructional PSLO sets, identify those that are most in need of improvements (see page 18 for examples

of PSLO issues), and provide guidance to the applicable faculty in making those improvements. If limitations on time and resources prevent corrective action during Fall 2012, it should be firmly scheduled for Spring 2013 or as soon thereafter as possible.

- ii) The SLO Committee should review and revise the instructional PSLO assessment tools to address the issues identified beginning on page 18 of this report.

g) Student Services and Administrative Services Outcomes

With respect to the program outcomes cycle, Student Services and Administrative Services programs need more guidance and improvement than the instructional programs. Consequently, the recommendations in this section are more specific than those on page 28 above related to the quality control system, which apply to all areas of the College. They also assume that the SLO Coordinator, Dean of Teaching and Learning, and SLO Committee (and perhaps others as well) will provide the training and other support recommended on page 27 of this report.

- i) By the end of Fall 2012, Student Services should systematically and critically review each of its SLOs and Service Level Outcomes and associated assessment methods, and Administrative Services should do the same for each of its SAOs. Both should make changes as needed to ensure that all outcomes are formulated properly with respect to type, language, content, and scope; clearly measurable by carefully specified quantitative and/or qualitative assessment methods as appropriate; and designed in such a way that assessing them will provide information useful in gauging whether each service is meeting identified student and institutional needs and in improving each service accordingly. Each assessment method, whether qualitative or quantitative, should be clearly tied to and suitable for the outcome it is supposed to measure, and links to ILOs, if any, should be clear and unambiguous.
- ii) Both Student Services and Administrative Services should develop and implement a systematic, consistent, ongoing process, including a firm schedule, for assessing all such outcomes, with at least some in each unit to be assessed by the end of Fall 2012.
- iii) The SLO Committee should review and revise the SAO assessment tool to address the issues identified beginning on page 19 of this report.
- iv) Student Services, in consultation with the SLO Coordinator and the SLO Committee, should review and revise its SLO and Service Level Outcome assessment tools to address the issues identified beginning on page 20 of this report.
- v) In timely fashion, the participants should analyze all assessment results, identify service improvements clearly warranted by the results and clearly related to the outcomes, implement those improvements as resources permit, and firmly schedule reassessment of the outcomes at a reasonable time. The conceptual line from outcome to assessment method to results to analysis to improvements to reassessment should be very clear.
- vi) The participants should also thoroughly document all outcome changes, assessments, results, analyses, identification of service improvements, and implementation of those improvements.
- vii) Any learning support service unit outside the Student Services umbrella, if it does not already enjoy the benefits of a rigorous outcomes formulation, assessment, and improvement process, should take steps similar to those listed here, in order to meet the requirements of Standard II.C.2 under Recommendation 3.

- h) The SLO Committee should develop, document, and implement a plan for assessing the GESLOs and recommending implementation of improvements as analysis of the results warrants.
  - i) In consultation with ORP and others as appropriate, the SLO Committee should develop, document, and implement a more comprehensive ILO assessment method by early Spring 2013. For example, the College could map each PSLO individually to the appropriate ILO(s) and then assess progress on all the ILOs based on assessment results for the PSLOs.
  - j) The College, through the appropriate administrative and governance structures and processes, should set a specific, reasonable, regular schedule for the assessment and mapping of every CSLO, program-level outcome, GESLO, and ILO. The SLO Committee should document and disseminate the schedule, and monitor the work to ensure that such assessment occurs in timely fashion. As new outcomes are formulated, a deadline should be set for assessment and mapping of each.
- 5) Identification and Implementation of Improvements
- a) The SLO Committee should add a field to each assessment template and IES section, and to the repository recommended on page 27 above, to document actual implementation of improvements based on outcomes assessment (i.e., completion of the cycle at the most basic level). In early Spring 2013, it should create a report of actual improvements from the data in the repository, for institution-wide discussion and examination by the visiting team.
- 6) Integration with Planning and Resource Allocation
- a) The PIEC should add coverage of course and program relevance, appropriateness, and currency to the program review process. For instructional programs, that addition might be as simple as incorporating a reference to the most recent sexennial curriculum review, assuming that review includes those characteristics.
  - b) The College should make use of every opportunity to strengthen the linkage between program review and outcomes, to accelerate its progress toward the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric. Appropriate steps might include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - i) Further improvements in the outcome-related program review modules, in part to emphasize program-level outcomes
    - ii) Stressing the importance of outcomes assessment in the *College Participatory Governance and Planning Policy and Procedure Handbook* and other documentation of the program review process
    - iii) Regular training and refreshers for faculty and staff about to undertake their comprehensive program reviews
    - iv) Further improvements in the validation process
    - v) Documentation of the use of outcomes-based program review results in institutional decision-making
  - c) The review and revision of major WLAC plans and associated planning processes should take into consideration the extent to which they are shaped by, support, contribute to, or otherwise relate to the achievement of student learning and other outcomes at all levels, and should document that consideration.

7) Communication and Dialogue

- a) In accord with the Proficiency-level dialogue requirements of the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric, the President, the rest of campus and constituency leadership, and the SLO Committee should immediately explore options for facilitating “widespread dialogue about the results of [outcomes] assessment and identification of gaps,” student learning improvement, and institutional effectiveness in the Flex Days, the Leadership Retreat, and multiple additional venues every year. The College should implement those options that promise to be most effective as soon as possible.
- b) Also in accord with those requirements, under the President’s leadership, all campus committees and administrative and constituency groups involved in decision-making regarding institution-wide practices should build into their deliberations on a regular basis, and thoroughly document, the following elements:
  - i) Dialogue on assessment results
  - ii) Facilitation of the alignment of institutional structures and processes to support and improve student learning
- c) Those committees and other groups should post that documentation in electronic form, in timely fashion, in a location readily accessible to the entire campus community.
- d) To demonstrate compliance with the student awareness requirement of the Proficiency level on the ACCJC Outcomes Rubric, the SLO Committee, in consultation with the ORP and other groups and departments as needed, should develop and implement a process for gauging students’ awareness of the “goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled” on a regular basis, analyzing the results, and making recommendations for improving such awareness. The Committee should also thoroughly document the process and effectively disseminate its findings.
- e) In the interests of demonstrating further its adherence to Standard II.A.6 (“The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes.”), the College should publish degree and certificate PSLOs in the Catalog’s curriculum descriptions.