

Responding to Challenges:

Accreditation, Accountability, and Aspirations



Accreditation

- **SMC has chosen to participate in accreditation through WASC, the regional arm of the Department of Education**
- **WASC accreditation signifies achievement of performance and determines our also eligibility for federal aid.**
- **WASC emphasizes accountability and the achievement of student learning outcomes.**



SMC and WASC Visits

- **Comprehensive visit - 1985**
- **Interim visit - 1989**
- **Comprehensive visit - 1992-1993**
- **Interim visit - 1997**
- **Comprehensive visit - 2004**
- **Special visits in 2005, 2007.**
- **“Notice of Concern” - 2008.**
- **Special visit, Fall 2009**



Hierarchy of WASC Decisions

- 1. Reaffirm accreditation**
- 2. Reaffirm conditionally, with special visit**
- 3. Issue “Notice of Concern” (private)**
- 4. Issue a Public Warning**
- 5. Impose Probation**
- 6. Issue an Order to Show Cause**
- 7. Terminate Accreditation**



“Notice of Concern”

Requires:

- campus distribution and discussion
- distribution and consultation with Board of Trustees
- immediate action plan and visit



The Hierarchy of Concerns

“The Commission recognizes that in the past several years the College has faced a number of challenges. Nonetheless, **when diversity concerns are combined with those discussed earlier...**(library, adult education, the EdD), the Commission finds that there is a need for clearer, more sustained leadership at all levels of the institution....”



Persistent Concerns Raised by WASC

1. Library Resources

“Since 1980, five WASC reviews have expressed concern about Saint Mary’s support for library resources, particularly for collections, staffing, and building space.”



Accountability: Library

WASC letter: “further progress is needed to move the library to a more central position within the culture of the College.”

- Hours of access
- Study space per student
- 1/3 books housed off-site
- Current library initiatives (new or expanded library) must be actualized



Building on Strengths Plan

2.2 “By July 1, 2007, the president, in consultation with the dean for academic resources, will begin to allocate funds for additional library resources, including support staff, funds for collections, and facilities enhancement.”



Next Steps: Library

- Rethink urgency of planning and fundraising for library
- Opportunity to leap forward in collaborative learning
- Move beyond wishful thinking and commit to a re-visioned design concept and timeline (integration of collaborative learning and study space, technology, bound collections, etc.)



Persistent Concerns Raised by WASC : Adult and Graduate Education

“There remains no consensus regarding the role and priority for adult and graduate education on campus”

“Leadership is needed to bring the discussions to resolution well before the next site visit to support resource allocation decisions and establish future directions for the College”



Next Steps: Graduate Programs

- **Articulate role of graduate programs within the identity and values of the College**
- **Assign administrative duties including :**
 - Chair of Graduate Council
 - Liaison to National Council of Graduate Schools
 - Coordinate Graduate Program Reviews
 - Oversee WASC Substantive Change Proposals/Updates
 - Perform workflow analysis and recommendations
 - Review and advance Graduate Strategic Plan recommendations



Persistent Concerns Raised by WASC: EdD Program

“Several key recommendations from previous Commission letters were not addressed”

- Align student learning outcomes with professional expectations**
- Monitor student progress in first 2 years**
- Integrate qualified faculty**
- Recruit a more diverse faculty**
- Enhance faculty retention**



Accountability: The EdD

WASC Letter:

- The EdD program “must be assigned its own leadership”
- Move beyond “emerging” stage of development
- Produce evidence of completed work



Next Steps: The EdD

Hire Interim/Director of the EdD to:

- **Oversee alignment of learning outcomes and professional expectations**
- **Monitor student success in the first two years of the program**
- **Integrate qualified disciplinary faculty to teach and serve as dissertation chairs**
- **Recruit a more diverse EdD faculty**
- **Enhance EdD faculty retention**



Persistent Concerns Raised by WASC: Diversity

“As far back as the 1980s, WASC teams have been speaking directly about the gap between the institution’s espoused values and the actual climate and behaviors found at the institution.”

Our intentions and commitment have not been challenged, but we have not “risen above the level of brainstorming” with “actionable initiatives, complete with budgets, deadlines, and designated accountable parties.”



Diversity Evidence Cited

- climate surveys
- interviews of over 100 students, faculty, and staff,
- attendance records at workshops
- email messages about pervasive disrespect, the “tapping” of faculty of color “more than ‘faculty of the dominant culture...how many faculty of color felt marginalized and excluded from the decision-making processes, and how the lack of attention to these concerns from the administration strengthened these feelings”
- November 2004 team spoke of “witnessing rude and disrespectful behavior to staff, faculty, and students of color”
- “the College took no responsibility for orienting its faculty to its role in carrying out the College’s mission in this regard”



Building on Strengths

2.3 By July 1, 2007, the president will charge the vice president for mission with developing, by May 1, 2008, a strategic plan for diversity at the College. This plan will be developed in consultation with the Celebrating Diversity Committee and will be consonant with the College's 2007 report to WASC.



SMC Responses

- Cultural competency workshop for campus leaders
- Mandatory sexual harassment workshops that include attention to civility
- Articulate commitment at highest levels
- Revamp advising system
- Adopt “best practices” in recruiting
- Draw on expertise of consultants.



WASC Letter:

“After some two decades of discussion and planning at SMCC, the Commission is deeply concerned that there is so little evidence of tangible results in terms of a change in actual behaviors and attitudes on campus”

“The Commission concludes that SMC’s leadership at all levels, including the Board, has yet to demonstrate the attention, commitment and attention to results that will lead to a culture of respect, civility, and cultural competency”





Possible Next Steps: Diversity & Inclusion

- Institute best practices in recruiting students, staff, and faculty
- Hire consultant to recommend organizational change strategies, audit specific College units, and recommend inclusive policies and procedures.
- Increase accountability through development and training of executive leadership
- Increase accountability through review of conduct policies, performance management, and rewards/sanctions
- Review student advising and support to improve retention
- Advance Campus Diversity Committee strategic plan and present to Board of Trustees in May
- Develop and implement communication plan to increase awareness of efforts and results

“Given the longstanding nature of these issues, the Commission will need to see that these efforts, and new leadership, will make a real difference. If not, it is prepared to issue a sanction.”



Aspirations

The challenges posed by WASC are a mandate for accountability, but for those things which are already important to us.

In satisfying these concerns, we will be closer to becoming a model of inclusive excellence, with students who have learned how to change the world based on a curriculum of shared inquiry and the knowledge and practice of social justice.

