May 7, 2013

Christopher Sindt
Accreditation Liaison Officer
St. Mary’s College of California
1928 St. Mary’s Road
Moraga, CA 94556

Dear Christopher:

At its meeting by conference call on April 26, 2013, a panel of the Retention and Graduation Committee (RGC) considered the Retention, Graduation, and Time-to-Degree data templates, institutional narrative, and supporting materials submitted by St. Mary’s College of California (SMCC) on April 1, 2013. The panel and I would like to thank you, Bethani Dobkin, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Carole Wolf, Assistant Director of Institutional Research for participating in the call and giving the reviewers an opportunity to discuss your data. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand SMCC’s student success results, context, capacity, challenges and initiatives to improve and/or ensure student success.

The institution’s narrative followed the retention and graduation review framework outlined in the WASC handbook and was thoughtful and well presented. The templates were completed accurately and comprehensively. Supporting materials were professional and relevant. The panel commends SMCC for the great care and thoroughness evident in preparing your materials.

The panel discussed the institution’s selected peers, particularly that Loyola Marymount University may be more aspirational than an actual peer. The panel suggested that, in the future, SMCC might consider including California Lutheran University and/or Azusa Pacific University, faith-based institutions with similar student profiles, as peers.

The panel concluded that your first year retention rates are acceptable and, in fact, commend the College for these results. Similarly, the panel agrees that your graduation rates are acceptable in relation to most of your peers. Your narrative and conversation with the panelists during the call provided a thoughtful examination of disaggregated rates including an identification of students at risk and an explication of appropriate initiatives and interventions. Specifically, the panel noted the lower African American student rates. Your institution analyzed these data and noted that a low overall African American cohort number means any small numerical change results in a more dramatic change in percentage. Still, you indicated that the institution strives to increase faculty and staff diversity to improve campus climate for students of color including African American students.
The panel commends SMCC for:

a) including student success as a priority in the Academic Blueprint 2010, and making recent strategic resource allocations to support student success;
b) the Student Success Taskforce initiated in 2011;
c) integration of academic and student life;
d) Institutional Research's work to present data that is focused and actionable (e.g., fix seniors' completion first);
e) how summer courses support timely progress toward degree.

After extensive discussion of SMCC's retention, graduation and time to degree data, narrative and supporting documents, the panel decided to:

1. receive the Retention, Graduation, and Time-to-Degree data templates, institutional narrative, and supporting materials;
2. recommend that you continue efforts to use campus climate to improve student success and include information about this work in your institutional report;
3. recommend that you disaggregate the African American student sub-group further to see what that might reveal for student success;
4. ask that you use those data and/or other information to identify and implement viable ways to enhance academic success and graduation rates for African-American students and provide an update about your efforts at the time of your accreditation visit;
5. ask that you further refine and implement planned tasks to support student success by assigning priority, lead person, and timeline to those plans and share that at the time of your accreditation visit;
6. recommend that you reflect and potentially refine peer institutions (perhaps designate peer vs. aspirant types) so that comparisons are even more meaningful and help to identify areas that warrant improvement.

The panel uses a rubric to assess and reflect their conclusions about SMCC's capacity for monitoring and understanding retention, graduation, and time-to-degree data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developed</th>
<th>Highly Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partially completed templates or did not complete them for all groups. Narrative does not reflect an understanding and assessment of the data.</td>
<td>Completed templates properly for all groups, but narrative does not fully reflect an understanding and assessment of the data.</td>
<td>Completed templates properly and narrative provides a full albeit basic understanding and assessment of the data.</td>
<td>Completed templates properly and contextualization in narrative thoroughly reflects a deeper understanding and assessment of the data.</td>
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</tbody>
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The panel would like to affirm the hard work and important steps SMCC has taken to address these issues to this point. I wish you and SMCC every success.

Sincerely,

Maureen Maloney
Maureen A. Maloney
Vice President

cc: Heather Brown, MSMC
    Lisa E. Bortman, Pepperdine University
    Dick Osborn, WASC