



March 14, 2016

Dear Colleagues, One and All,

This is the 14th of March, and our evaluation team from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) briefed the college of their findings last Thursday before leaving us to return to their own colleges—as it had been planned. They met with dozens of you, reported preliminary findings, called for additional information, and asked new, challenging, and more thoughtful questions than the ones that started their inquiries. We had a very successful visit. Congratulations to everyone at West for your hard work and clear understanding of what we are about. You will see some preliminary remarks from me, the Chancellor's letter from last week that sets our accreditation into its proper context, and some comments connected to the major commendations West received—encomiums to all!

I am in Washington, DC, at the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities conference to engage in enhancing educational opportunity for Latino and all underserved students, to learn about new federal funding programs, and tomorrow to meet with Congressional staff who represent our service areas. And I do not want another day to go by without sending you some idea of West's accomplishments and my deep appreciation.

West's preliminary report included 10 commendations, 1 recommendation for improvement, 0 recommendations to meet a standard, and 4 "encouragements." The commendations were the highest number in our district to give us clear insight into West's successful evaluation. The "encouragements" are likely to evolve into recommendations for improvement. Finally, between the time of the visit last week and the final commission-approved report in June, these preliminary findings are completely subject to change.

West's excellent achievements are validated on this visit by a team of our peers and colleagues, here to assess and validate our work as it meets (or does not meet) the standards of our accrediting body. This team saw our vision, aspirations, and at the same time they remained dutiful and exhaustive in their work. To paraphrase the team leader, Dr. Murillo noted West's cooperation, collegiality, with a passionate commitment to our students, which is essential for innovation. It was a moving tribute to the college.

On that note of tribute, congratulations to Kimberly Manner, our Steering Committee Chair and primary author of the Self Evaluation Report, for her wisdom and endless attention to every detail large and small. Congratulations and thanks to Alice Taylor who led the accreditation process through our past success before stepping down this fall. They follow the fine work done by Fran Leonard just before them. Congratulations to Aracely Aguiar as our finest Accreditation Liaison Officer who made our team stronger than its separate individuals. Rebecca Tillberg was essential. Mary-Jo Apigo did the final writing of our Quality Focus Essay, and with Rebecca added hundreds of solutions. Ken Lin was a masterful citation editor and Michelle Long-Coffee was the great graphic designer and art editor. Vicky

Nesia was the consummate professional before, during, and after the process to date. Congratulations to our leadership: Adrienne Foster, Jo-Ann Haywood, Fran Leonard, and Olga Shewfelt; our program directors and division chairs; our Academic Senate, Classified AFT, Faculty AFT, our managers and deans. A special note of thanks to our vice presidents: Aracely Aguiar, Michael Goltermann, and Iris Ingram. Did you notice how clean and well-tended the campus was? Many thanks to Plant Facilities staff and leadership.

I am proud to be a part of West's success.

Robert L. Sprague
Interim President

West Los Angeles College **PRELIMINARY COMMENDATIONS**

Broadly publishing the college mission through showcasing of successful students in programs

The West Student Project, supported by the Digital Design Studio, is an example of showcasing our students. The West Student story archive preserves, recognizes, and honors the diversity of the West student experience. The project provides the opportunity for West students to record and share their stories. At the same time, it creates an archive for future generations.

The commitment of the faculty, staff, and administration to institutionalization of building a culture of student learning outcomes assessment

Through the leadership of SLO Coordinator Luis Cordova and the Dean of Teaching and Learning Mary-Jo Apigo, who co-chair the SLO Committee, and the essential support from the Senate President, Adrienne Foster, West has continued to engage in a systematic, focused approach for student learning outcome (SLO) assessment in order to improve student learning. The team highlighted the expanded SLO resources such as the SLO Facilitators and the collaboration between the SLO Committee, Academic Senate, and AFT Leadership.

Attaining Achieving the Dream Leader College status

Under the leadership of Clare Norris, Walter Jones, and Mary-Jo Apigo through the Student Success Committee/Achieving the Dream Core Team, West was recently recognized as an Achieving the Dream Leader College, which is a national designation awarded to community colleges that commit to improving student success and closing achievement gaps. As a Leader College, West has an ongoing commitment to review student achievement, identify gaps, and base systematic planning on the analysis of relevant data to improve student success.

Accelerated transfer pathways to California State University, Dominguez Hills

Through a Title V HSI grant managed by Mary-Jo Apigo, West has partnered with CSU Dominguez Hills to create pathways for transfer in business, computer science, criminal justice administration, digital media arts, STEM, or teacher preparation. Through Buck Stapleton's coordination, the pathways have been integrated into the ACT majors in order to improve transfer rates and to increase full-time students at West.

West Expressway as another example of West Los Angeles College's commitment to student learning and achievement

Our Accreditation Team Chair noted that the West Expressway is another example of West's commitment to student learning and achievement. The team believes that this is an exceptional and innovative program that offers a seamless transition. Expressway, under the leadership of Patty Banday, with consistent support from Vice President Michael Goltermann, provides online orientation, career inventory exploration and test preparation workshops.

The College's commitment to innovate as evidenced in technology for teaching and learning, through the Tech Fair

Tech Fair, is managed by Dean of Teaching and Learning Mary-Jo Apigo, and an important part of West's commitment to professional learning. Tech Fair offers over 160 workshops and classes each year covering various aspects of technology, specifically to enhance teaching, delivery of services, and provide training on the use of instructional technology to improve student success. Tech Fair is made possible in part by a Title V HSI grant.

The West Los Angeles College Participatory Governance and Planning Policy and Procedure Handbook

The Team Chair highlighted that the Handbook stands out as a noteworthy document produced by your college and coveted by other team members. The Handbook was developed by the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Committee under the leadership of Rebecca Tillberg and Carmen Dones, who co-chair the committee. My own comment would add great appreciation for the Educational Master Plan.

The college's sincere and ongoing dialogue about achieving the mission of the college and its commitment to equity

Our Team Chair said that West is setting a destiny for the college for student equity, cooperation, and collegiality.

The college has built a foundation for innovation with a true focus on students. The commitment to the spirit of collegiality and mutual respect is notable. This spirit of collaboration and respect allows the campus the ability to take risk and innovate.

Our Team Chair noted that these areas were something that they felt is part of the spirit and the heart of West Los Angeles College. Notable here has been the Office of Sponsored Programs' integration of innovation with faculty and staff for globalizing the college, STEM, creativity, service learning, Spanish immersion, computer science, aviation, and allied health.

Partnerships with the community

Our Team Chair highlighted that what they have observed at West were incredible partnerships with the community, supporting and reaching out to ensure this college is the center of everything. Innovation and leadership to this end includes among others Michelle Long-Coffee, Vicky Nesia, Larry Packham, Mark Pracher, Jack Ruebensaal, and Kathy Walton.