Modesto Junior College

2017 Accreditation Follow-up Report

In Support of Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Submitted by:

Modesto Junior College
435 College Avenue
Modesto, CA 95350

Submitted to:

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

[DATE]

CERTIFICATION PAGE - DRAFT

Date:

To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
        Western Association of Schools and Colleges

From: (President)
        Modesto Junior College
        435 College Avenue
        Modesto, CA 95350

We certify there was broad participation/review by the campus community, and we believe this report accurately reflects the nature and substance of this institution.

Signed:

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NAME
President, Modesto Junior College

_____

Curtis Martin
President, Academic Senate

_____

NAME
Board Chair, Yosemite Community
College District

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NAME
President, Associated Students of Modesto

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Henry Chiong Vui Yong
Chancellor, Yosemite Community College District

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Sherri Suarez
President, Classified School Employees
Association

_____

James E. Todd, Ph.D.
Vice President of Student Services/ALO

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Chad Redwing, Ph.D.
Faculty Accreditation Co-Chair

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James Sahlman, Ph.D.
President, Yosemite Faculty Association

Statement on the Process and Participation in the Follow-Up Report

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), acted at its January 10-12, 2018 meeting to reaffirm Modesto Junior College's (MJC) accreditation for eighteen months and to require a Follow-Up Report. MJC was notified of this action in the Commission's letter dated January 26, 2018. President Jill Stearns shared the action letter with the Chancellor, college leadership, and the Board of Trustees. In the months since the receipt of the Commission letter, college and district stakeholders undertook a process of self-reflection and analysis of areas addressed by the team. The Commission action letter and Public Disclosure Notice, as well as the Follow-Up Report were made available to students and the public on the college website.

Three compliance requirements were included in the Commission action letter, providing specific direction for the College to meet fully the Standards. MJC administrators, faculty, and classified professionals took immediate action for deep review and revision of the policies and practices that shape distance learning for MJC students, with specific focus on regular, effective communication between faculty and students in online courses. College stakeholders have worked in earnest to ensure faculty teaching online courses consistently provide regular and substantive interaction with students. MJC constituents joined with YCCD leaders and stakeholders to support the district in addressing the two recommendations related to the total cost of ownership for physical and technological resources and the board delegation of operational authority to the Chancellor and the College Presidents. Preparation for the Follow-Up Report was focused on documenting evidence of the policies, practices, and evaluation of progress toward continuous quality improvement in each of the three recommended areas.

The following institutional groups, whose members come from the College's various constituencies, were consulted in the review and analysis of the Commission's recommendations and concerns as the College developed this Follow-Up Report. The list illustrates broad participation by the College community and helps assure the accuracy and thoroughness of this report.

    Online Education Committee
    Accreditation Council
    Academic Senate
    Deans' Cabinet
    Curriculum Committee
    Facilities Council
    College Technology Committee
    District Technology Workgroup
    College Council
    Yosemite Faculty Association

The MJC Accreditation Liaison Officer, Dr. James Todd, worked with the Accreditation Council to outline steps needed to address the recommendations. The Online Education Committee (formerly Distance Education Committee), Academic Senate, College Council, Deans' Cabinet and other campus groups have worked together to address identified deficiencies. The Accreditation Council assured that progress steps were broadly communicated to the campus.

[SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP DEVELOPMENT FOR DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS]

A preliminary draft of the Report was presented to the Accreditation Council on October 25, 2018. The writing workgroup made additional revisions, based on feedback from the Council and shared a revised draft . . . (Public forum of process and findings; posted for review and public comment on . . . reviewed by the Board of Trustees on . . .)

The MJC 2018 Follow-Up Report describes the activities the college community engaged in to meet fully the recommendations of the Commission and includes evidence in support of the efforts described in the document. The report includes plans for next steps to ensure continuous improvement toward meeting the Standards.

Respectfully,

President

Response to the Commission Action Letter

Modesto Junior College Recommendation One

In order to ensure compliance with accreditation Standards, Commission Policies, and USDE Regulations regarding Distance Education and Correspondence Education, the college must review and revise its existing processes to ensure that faculty teaching online courses consistently provide regular and substantive interaction with students. (Standard II.A.7).

The mission of Modesto Junior College (MJC) drives the priorities, initiatives, and decisions of the College, including the Online Education program:

MJC is committed to transforming lives through programs and services informed by the latest scholarship of teaching and learning. We provide a dynamic, innovative, undergraduate educational environment for the ever-changing populations and workforce needs of our regional community. We facilitate lifelong learning through the development of intellect, creativity, character, and abilities that shape students into thoughtful, culturally aware, engaged citizens.

The role of the MJC Online Education program is to meet the mission of the College by providing students with a dynamic, innovative educational environment they can access anytime, anywhere:

High-quality, online instruction that narrows achievement gaps of ever-changing student populations, values the needs of students with disabilities, and enables students to overcome transportation and child care challenges that impact students in a wide geographic service area.

Research, training, and implementation of effective practices that prepare online faculty to transform lives through instruction informed by the latest scholarship of teaching and learning.

Specific training about cultural differences and accommodation needs for a diverse student population that provides faculty with a toolbox of approaches, interventions, and communication methods to reach the ever-changing population of MJC students.

To meet fully the Commission Recommendation, MJC engaged in further review of the policies and practices related to regular, effective contact (REC) with students in online courses. College constituents participated in deep discussion and developed solutions in multiple areas to improve substantive interaction with students in online courses. The College implemented changes in policies and practices in four key areas, including:

- Policy revisions
- Regular effective guidelines and models for faculty
- Changes in curriculum approval processes
- Evidence of practice from online faculty with students in online courses

Policies

The Online Education Committee (OEC) met within weeks of the receipt of the Commission Letter to review the Recommendation and discuss ways to strengthen policies and practices. The committee forwarded a draft policy regarding regular effective contact with unanimous agreement to the Academic Senate for review and adoption (DEC Minutes 2.14.2018; (DRAFT POLICY?). The resolution was reviewed, revised, and approved by the Academic Senate on March 15, 2018 (AS Minutes 3.15.2018; Resolution S18-B. Included in the adoption of the resolution was a set of guidelines and effective practices for Regular Effective Contact in Online Courses (REC for Online Courses). The resolution and guidelines define Regular Effective Contact for online courses at Modesto Junior College. They formalize the Academic Senate's commitment to regular and substantive interaction in online courses as outlined in the USDE Regulations regarding Distance Education and Correspondence Education. The resolution included three specific priorities that combine to meet the MJC definition of REC. These three elements are now the standard for online faculty/student interaction (EVIDENCE?).

1. Initiated by the instructor
2. Regular and frequent
3. Meaningful or of an academic nature

On October 18, 2018, the Academic Senate approved a resolution requesting the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) Board of Trustees revise its board policy related to course syllabi to include a commitment to regular effective contact (Resolution F18-B). [NEED TO DISCUSS AND DOCUMENT ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE BOARD RELATED TO THE RESOLUTION]

Regular Effective Guidelines and Models for Online Faculty

The Online Education Committee identified a need to provide faculty with Regular Effective Contact tools and practices they could incorporate into online courses. With the Senate-approved REC guidelines as the foundation, the OEC continued to develop ways to strengthen regular effective contact over several months through a variety of approaches, including professional development, template models, video presentations of model REC, and discussions between deans and faculty related to evaluation.

The Coordinator of Distance Education revised the "Start Here" template module for online courses to highlight the Senate-approved guidelines for regular effective contact (https://yosemite.instructure.com/courses/22470o; video tour?). This template is available to online faculty and can be used as developed or customized by individual faculty for their courses.

In addition to tools and training offered directly to faculty, the College underscored the importance of regular effective contact through communication from the Academic Senate to all faculty, and the supervisory relationship of deans to faculty. In early fall 2018, The Academic Senate President sent an email to all MJC faculty and deans outlining the work that had been undertaken during the spring and summer to improve REC, including the

Senate Resolution, recommendations for addressing REC in course syllabi and in evaluations, and professional development opportunities (Email re REC to All Faculty).

MJC Deans discussed ways to talk about regular effective contact with online faculty in weekly Deans' Cabinet meetings. The Dean of Instruction shared initial suggestions in spring 2018 about how to effectively use Announcements (Email to Deans 3.13.2018). In early fall 2018 he shared a model email with deans that highlighted recommended areas of review for deans to discuss with online faculty when preparing for evaluations (REC Deans Memo 9.18.2018). The deans also identified sections of the Yosemite Faculty Association (YFA) contract that support evaluation of online faculty related to REC (DEANS CAB MINUTES?)

The Dean of Instruction and Coordinator of Distance Education drafted models, developed training, and met with faculty and administrators to ensure a consistent approach to providing regular and substantive interaction with students. A professional development series on Regular Effective Contact and Accessibility was offered on Fridays during spring 2018 (Email invitation to REC Fridays 2.20.2018; Invitation to Spring 2018 Canvas Training; Canvas Training Spring 2018) (need static documentation instead of links to websites). The series presented local and visiting faculty who discussed effective practices for REC. The Online Education Committee also sponsored webinars from the Chancellor's Office and Online Education Initiative that all faculty were invited to attend (Links to webinars, 1.24.2018, 1.25.2018). A short video of the importance of REC along with effective practices by MJC faculty was produced and shared with faculty at the Fall Institute Day (Video: Maintaining Regular & Effective Contact in Online Classes). The DE Coordinator also created and posted a video for faculty on the MJC Canvas Dashboard during the week before the fall semester, emphasizing the importance of REC in all online courses (Video: MJC Regular Effective Contact)

Changes in Curriculum Approval Process

In addition to the highly visible campus discussions around regular effective contact, the College ensured the importance of online faculty/student interaction by embedding the guidelines and model practices into the curriculum approval process. The Online Education Committee drafted a revised distance education addendum to submit to the Curriculum Committee that reinforced the MJC definition of REC as (a) initiated by the instructor, (b) regular and frequent, and (c) meaningful or of an academic nature and required faculty to identify examples of regular effective contact to be used in online courses (Online Education Committee Minutes 9.12.2018; Proposed Distance Education Addendum). With the new addendum, faculty submitting new or revised curriculum would be asked to select the method(s) of instruction, describe how selected methods enable students to meet course learning outcomes, and identify methods of regular effective contact that will be used in the course. A list of methods provides model practices for faculty and enables individual instructors to select the methods most likely to be used. The Curriculum Committee adopted the revised addendum on October 23, 2018 (NEED CC MINUTES – AVAILABLE ON 11.14.2018).

Evidence of Practice from Online Faculty with Students in Online Courses

With enhanced policies, focused professional development, and revisions in curricular processes, the remaining task was to ensure that faculty were incorporating REC practices into their online courses. The College invited online faculty to participate in an online cohort that documented and shared effective practices of regular effective interaction with students (JT email 9.16.2018). A cohort of 88 faculty (more than two-thirds of online instructors) met regularly throughout the fall 2018 semester to document, share, and discuss ways to communicate effectively with online students. This experience provided meaningful opportunity for faculty from diverse disciplines to learn from each other and develop individual methods of REC. (FACULTY EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE? LETTER TO DEANS FROM M.S. DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCE?) From the documentation of examples from faculty in the cohort, the Distance Education Coordinator organized a repository of effective examples that will be used for training and reference for online instructors going forward (Canvas REC Repository).

The MJC Online Instruction Cohort Training consists of 120 hours required of faculty before they teach online. A specific assignment during the last week of training was designed to emphasize the importance of REC in all online courses as well as ask faculty to document their knowledge and plan for maintaining REC in their courses (REC Assignment in Online Instruction Training Course).

Summary of Evidence

MJC faculty and administrators recognize and value the importance of regular and substantive interaction with students in online courses. The ACCJC Recommendation provided impetus to solidify how the College defines regular effective contact and to ensure the most impactful communication methods are incorporated into online courses. The review and revision of existing processes has been a meaningful opportunity to engage with peers and experts, resulting in enhanced policies, focused training, changes in curricular processes, and evidence of newly focused faculty practices related to regular effective contact. The momentum of the last year in highlighting the importance of authentic communication with students has moved the College toward effective processes that will continue to ensure faculty teaching online courses consistently provide regular and substantive interaction with students.

In the two semesters since receiving the recommendation, the College has responded in multiple ways to ensure regular effective contact is occurring in online courses:

- Ongoing and multiple forms of professional development, including guest speakers and training courses
- An ongoing REC Awareness campaign in the form of email and video announcements
- REC Guidelines created by the Online Education Committee and approved by the Senate

- Senate resolution that Board Policy be changed so that REC become a mandatory section of all online course syllabi
- Changes to the DE Addendum in the Curriculum Committee so that all new and renewed online courses the DE modality section coincides with the new REC Guidelines
- Awareness among the deans and faculty that REC can be part of the evaluation process in online courses in that it is part of the Course Outline of Record and is a state requirement as part of Title 5 and Education Code.

The college is seeing evidence that these approaches are having an impact in terms of the emphasis placed on REC. It is worth noting as well that not only is this effort paying dividends already, it has taken place during an unprecedented period of strife at the college at a time when the faculty union finds itself on the verge of a strike over wages and class size. Despite this enormous distraction, the faculty have embraced the recommendations on regular effective contact in their online courses. The college expects that as union issues subside, the process of continuous improvement will accelerate.