

Del Mar College's

Self-Study 2000:

6, June 30, 1999

A newsletter devoted to the successful reaffirmation of Del Mar's accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in December of 2000.

From the Self-Study Director:

On June 24, the last two principal committees presented their draft reports in open forum. While several committees still have final changes to make, their part in the self-study process is largely finished. Each committee tried to look at the College through the eyes of an outsider, taking the same perspective that the visiting team will when it evaluates us next February.

This rigorous self-evaluation has uncovered a sizeable list of problems. At this point, the committee reports describe over two hundred areas in which the College does not meet SACS standards or could benefit from better practices. (You can find the current list on the Self-Study website: www.delmar.edu/sacs/recs_sgs/index)

Some of these problems may be the result of a misunderstanding. The findings in one section of a committee's report, for example, may be based on incomplete information. There may also be instances of reasonable differences in interpretation of SACS rules. In general, the principal committees took a very conservative position on the College's performance on each standard, a position which some departments may argue is too strict.

Other problems may have resulted from changes in the rules. The College may have followed a SACS rule appropriately for years; but the Southern Association, like Congress, makes new laws every year, all of which every school must keep up with. Still other problems have developed gradually. Let's say, for example, that someone suggests a change to the *Catalog* without checking to see whether the new policy follows SACS criteria. Four or five years later, that

***--James A. Pierce,
English***

Countdown:

The Reaffirmation Visiting Committee from SACS will arrive on Del Mar's campus in:

229 days

Are you ready?

The Visiting Team's First Day On Campus Will Be February 14, 2000.

change has become standard procedure in several Del Mar departments. So it's a real shock when the self-study points out that the office is not in compliance with a SACS rule.

A thorough self-evaluation gets the house ready for the arrival of the visiting team. We sweep out the dustballs, pull the stray sock from under the bed, and fix the holes in the screens that have been there for a long time. It's not always fun, but it has to be done.

For More Information about

SACS: www.sacs.org

The Document Index

One of the chief challenges for the Self-Study Steering Committee will be providing efficiently all of the documents that the SACS visiting team members will want to review before and during their visit. The SACS *Handbook* says that they will be interested in everything from the *Catalog* to the minutes of departmental meetings.

Ordinarily institutions undergoing self-studies produce two huge collections of documents--12 to 20 boxes' worth--and place one in the visiting team's campus workroom and the other at their hotel. Del Mar's Steering Committee and the principal committees have already begun the process of identifying and collecting these documents.

But they've also produced an electronic "Document Index," which is linked at the bottom of the *Self-Study 2000* homepage. From the "Document Index" the visitors can reach all of the Del Mar documents that are currently online, as well as the ones that will be put online by the time the team arrives.

The main advantage of this approach is accessibility and efficiency. If they wish, the visiting team will be able to review many of Del Mar's institutional and self-study documents before they arrive. And when the team is on campus, many documents will be mouse-clicks away, rather than buried in a filing cabinet.

The "Document Index" will undergo extensive development and revision before Valentine's Day, 2000, when the visiting team arrives. In the meantime, it provides an opportunity for everyone at Del Mar to be involved in the provision of documents for the visiting team.

For example, SACS says clearly that the visiting team will want to review the minutes of institutional meetings, from the Board of Regents to departmental committees. Generally, if the visiting team wants to see the minutes of, say, departmental meetings, they will expect to find them in departmental offices. The "Document Index," however, has a link available for the minutes of departmental meetings. Departments that have posted minutes on the server, or that are able to do so, can have their

(See Next Column)

(Continued from Previous Column)

minutes linked to the Document Index by providing the address to Jim Pierce (1446) or John M. Crisp (1449).

The Document Index has its problems: for example, while even the largest institutional documents will download quickly on campus or through fast off-campus connections, they are excruciatingly slow through some conventional modems.

But these are bandwidth problems that will gradually disappear. In the meantime, the Document Index will provide for the visiting team fast and efficient access to many Del Mar documents, as well as demonstrate Del Mar's commitment to sensible use of current technology in all of its operations.

--John M. Crisp, Self-Study Editor

"The task of accreditation is related to the traditional public philosophy of the United States--that a free people can and ought to govern themselves and that they best do so through a representative, flexible and responsive system. Accordingly, the purpose of accreditation can best be accomplished through a voluntary association of educational institutions." --SACS 1998 Criteria for Accreditation

To review the self-study calendar, meeting minutes, and drafts of the principal committee reports, please see the self-study webpages. Link through Del Mar's homepage, www.delmar.edu; then look under Instructional Programs or Administrative Resources.

If you are accessing the self-study webpages from off campus, call Jim Pierce, John M. Crisp, or any Steering Committee member for the *username* and *password*.