

Del Mar College's

Self-Study 2000:

9, September 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:

The SACS reaccreditation team will arrive in mid-February. To me, that's just around the corner. Based on a note sent to me recently, some of you are a little anxious, too, wondering if you and your office should be doing more to get ready.

First, remember that we've done what SACS encourages colleges to do: get a lot of people involved. Over 120 Del Mar employees worked on the various committees. Deans, directors, and chairs helped them find the documents and statistics they needed to write their reports. A week ago, we asked the Student Government Association to study the draft *Report*. And since January, the committee reports have been available online for everyone with access to a computer on campus.

Finding solutions is the next important step in getting ready. How? Here's one good example: For several weeks, the Division of Student Development has been working to create written goals for itself, the lack of which was revealed in the *Report*. Nearly every Del Mar office has one or more problems to fix. In the next few weeks, supervisors should involve everyone on their staffs in the search for solutions. That way, everyone is aware of problems and the plans for correcting them.

The last step is anticipating the questions of the visiting team. Team members, wearing identifying badges, will walk around both campuses. In most cases, they will meet with supervisors, but some of them will talk, by themselves, to students, secretaries, custodians, and teachers. They'll want a feeling for the

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Countdown:

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

136 days

Are you ready?

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

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College from the point of view of "the average Joe." If you know what your office's goals are and can point to the policies that guide your daily work, you'll probably be ready for any question.

Nervousness is normal. Getting ready for reaffirmation of accreditation, although certainly less frightening, is a bit like preparing for a hurricane. If you've bought the batteries and boarded up the windows, you've helped yourself and your neighbors as well as you can.



Accreditation *in the news*

The April issue of this newsletter referred to a March 19 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the recent accreditation of Jones International University, an entirely virtual university with no student center and no library--in fact, with no campus, at all. In its April 2 issue, the *Chronicle* reported on the ensuing controversy: The American Association of University Professors objected to what it considered to be the lack of quality at Jones University, arguing that "...this virtual institution presents a very weak case for accreditation. Indeed it embodies most of our major worries about the denigration of quality that could follow this apparently inexorable march toward on-line education."

The controversy continues: In its August 6 issue, the *Chronicle* reports on the debate that has developed over the accreditation of online learning, pointing out that more questions are being raised than are being answered. David Longanecker, the executive director of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education says, "It's leading us to a very different concept of quality assurance than we've traditionally had--but I'm not sure what that is." He continues, "Our concern is that the old forms of accreditation really aren't appropriate for the new delivery mechanisms."

Steven D. Crow, executive director of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the association that accredited Jones University, disagrees, saying that he believes that Jones is an exception and that most virtual universities will be merely extensions of traditional colleges and universities, rather than independent, accredited institutions in their own right.

The only thing different about the Jones accreditation, he says, is the process used to review the curriculum and to interview officers at the university: Most of the interviews were

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conducted online.

The *Chronicle* article reports that the Jones accreditation controversy has focused attention on the role of online learning. Lawrence Gold, higher education director for the American Federation of Teachers says that members of his organization are re-examining all aspects of higher education, adding that they are going to be thinking about what a student really needs from a college education, "and whether e-mail is as effective as personal interchange. Or, if it isn't as effective, it is okay enough?"

The American Association of University Professors wrote to the North Central Association protesting the Jones accreditation, arguing that on-line institutions will "destroy the tradition of higher education as a community of scholars defining 'what and who we are.'"

Defenders of the accreditation decision argue that professional faculty bodies are merely defending their turf. Michael Lambert, executive director of the Distance Education and Training Council says that opposition to online learning stems from a fear in the professoriate of "an erosion of faculty freedoms."

At this point, accreditation of online learning is a controversy that is far from resolved.

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*.

For More Information
about SACS:
www.sacs.org