

PRAC

College of Marin

February 14, 2011

TO: David Wain Coon, Superintendent/President College of Marin
FROM: Planning and Resource Allocation Committee
REGARDING: Decision-Making Process for 50% Summer School Cuts

The Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, as the participatory governance body responsible for budget recommendations, would like to review the circumstances that led to the decision to cut summer school by 50% and point out the negative effects that circumventing our governance process has on the college.

In the spring of 2010 the administration determined that lower than expected revenue required a cut to 2010/2011 expenditures. This was apparently discovered after the conclusion of spring semester and, rather than reconvene PRAC, the decision was made by management to engage Cabinet in the decision to determine where the cuts should be made and to make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. Once it was agreed to cut summer school by 50%, it was further decided at the management level, and without input from PRAC, to cut 50% across divisions.

Nothing about this process suggests an understanding or a respect for our governance procedures. In fact, the agreed-upon procedure was so easily abandoned as to suggest to the college community that we do not have a culture of data-driven, participatory decision making or a budget allocation process that is embedded in the institution.

WASC expects that: *The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.* (Self-Study Standard III)

The decision to cut summer school did not meet the WASC directive. Further, it was not tied to research about the populations we serve; it did not consider our mission and priorities, nor did it include in any representative manner consideration of other options.

The decision to cut 50% across the board ignored all the work we have done to prioritize courses according to pathways and our college-wide blueprints and master schedule. Making cuts across the board is the exact opposite of planning and this practice has resulted in placing many community colleges on warning and probation, including our own.

Of great concern is the fact that this disregard for our process is not an isolated instance. In planning for spring 2011, deans were asked to cut 20 units each. This was done in August and early September as we were scheduling for spring and was not reviewed or recommended by PRAC. And again, it was an across the board cut. Total units for spring 2011 are down roughly 60 units from spring 2010 with no sense of whether these units have been temporarily removed or are lost forever.

It appears as if we go through the motions of data driven, mission-guided decision making and only then when it is convenient to the college leadership. Internally, this leads to suspicion and mistrust as it does not honor or follow our agreed upon process.

If we are to live up to the expectations of the college community and to WASC directives, we must be assured that this will not happen again. We are asking for a written response to our concerns and specific plans for insuring that budget recommendations will follow the agreed-upon procedures.

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