From the SACS Liaison

January of 2009 represented the official kickoff for Del Mar College’s reaffirmation of accreditation project. On the 25th and 26th, five representatives from the College—President Mark Escamilla, Vice President Steve Megregian, Institutional Effectiveness Director Vickie Natale, Quality Enhancement Plan Director Patty Walter, and I—traveled to SACS headquarters in Atlanta for an orientation that got the process officially underway.

But the College has already been at work on reaffirmation for some time.

Thanks to the early efforts of many members of the Del Mar community more than three years ago, the College began to plan for reaffirmation and for the development of its Quality Enhancement Plan, a new element of the reaffirmation process.

In December of 2008, more than twenty representatives from Del Mar attended the annual meeting of the Commission on Colleges in San Antonio. One thing that we discovered at the meeting is that, compared with many other institutions, Del Mar College is on a comfortable timeline for the successful completion of our reaffirmation project.

Nevertheless, the time has come to kick our efforts into second gear.

The Quality Enhancement Plan is being capably guided by Patty Walter—see the reverse side of this newsletter for an update.

Also, we are currently conducting a “quick and dirty” compliance audit, an initial estimation of the College’s compliance—or non-compliance—with SACS standards.

The writing of the compliance certification document has already begun, but the great balance of it will take place this spring. The kickoff for that effort occurred at a writing workshop on January 30, and a set of deadlines is being established that should result in a complete rough draft by the end of the spring.

So, we have a lot to do, but the process is off to a good start. Keep an eye on this monthly newsletter for updates.

Marjorie Villani
Interim Vice President of Instruction
SACS Liaison
QEP Update

What’s a QEP?
Since 2004, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has required all member institutions coming up for reaffirmation of accreditation to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan—a QEP—that focuses on a well-defined issue closely related to student learning.

Del Mar College’s Journey to its QEP
During the Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 convocations, Del Mar College faculty were informed about the QEP and invited to provide topics that would improve student learning. Twelve topics emerged, and the faculty was given an opportunity to write a white paper on any of the twelve topics. Three white papers were submitted. Focus groups comprised of students, faculty, staff, and alumni/community members explored the merits of the proposed QEP projects. Comments on one of the white papers, “Integrating Math in Technical Programs,” led to an exploration of math as a topic for Del Mar College’s QEP. Institutional empirical data confirmed that the focus on math should be explored further.

In Fall 2008, a research and design committee was formed from faculty members across the disciplines. Their continued investigation of the empirical data revealed that students are not succeeding or persisting through the developmental education math courses. Also, a math department workshop explored the barriers to student learning in mathematics, including economic issues, psychological issues (i.e. math anxiety, math phobia, etc.), proper placement, and weak mathematical backgrounds and study habits. Other issues surfaced, as well: inadequate math learning center resources, inadequate learning environment for some math classes, and improper advising.

What’s Next?
During Spring 2009, the research and design committee will continue to investigate data and focus on goals and objectives for the QEP. The goal is a five-year plan based on input from the math survey, from institutional empirical data, and from current research. Also, student focus groups will be developed, and/or student surveys will be administered to present and past developmental math students to provide for student input regarding their math needs.

In Summer 2009, a rough draft of the QEP will be ready for faculty input during Fall 2009.

Dr. Patty Walter
QEP Faculty Coordinator
Communications/Languages/Reading

On-Site Visiting Committee

Mark Your Calendars:
The On-Site Visiting Committee from SACS will be on-campus October 12-14, 2010.

For more information about SACS: www.sacs.org