


**AMERICAN SAMOA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE**

17th June 2009

ASCC BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MEMORANDUM

TO HTC Uta Dr. Laloulu Tagoilelagi, Chairman
HC Tauiliili Pemerika, Vice Chairman
Rev. Dr. Leanavaotaua Sekuini Sevaaetasi, Member
HC Tauiliili Lauifi, Member
Mr. Sapini U. Siatuu, Member
Mrs. Mine S. Pase, Member
Dr. Claire Poumele, Member

FROM 
Dr. Seth P. Galea'i
President

SUBJECT BOARD DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Provided for your review and preparation for the June 23rd, 2009 Board of Higher Education meeting is the Board Development Workshop Report from Workshop Consultant, Dr. Wilson Hess. This document is a follow-up report from the Board Retreat held this past February. This report and proposed actions provides a viable structured approach for the College and the Board to collaboratively address specific recommendations identified from the recent accreditation visit. Also, the report serves as an excellent preface to the presentation by the American Samoa Community College Institution Planning Committee.

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(Feb. 11-12, 2009)**

Introduction

At the request of the Board Chair and the President, a workshop was offered in the context of a recent regional accreditation comprehensive visit. The outcomes developed in preparation for the workshop were to:

- forge a definition of board roles and responsibilities that is consistent with U.S. accreditation expectations and respectful of the unique circumstances of Pacific societies and the mission of the American Samoa Community College.
- create the framework of a draft action plan for board development
- delineate a process for establishing an institution-wide planning process and a board strategic thinking.

I. The American System of Higher Education Accreditation

The American Samoa Community College is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

- Accreditation in the United States is a voluntary, non-governmental self-regulatory review process *rather than* control through a centralized ministry of education or other governmental bureaucracy.
 - Colleges are “owned” by the people, not the government
 - Control of academic institutions is entrusted to citizen boards. These lay trustees are surrogates of the general public (Ingram, 3) – as “institutional stewards”
- Accreditation is a peer review process that uses best practices to pursue and measure that a college is meeting specific standards of excellence in the context of its mission. (Middaugh, 1-2)
- Only the board and the chief executive have a total institutional perspective and they are charged with thinking and acting strategically to ensure that the enterprise serves public purposes (academic quality and institutional integrity) effectively. (Ingram, 2)
- The American public (and thus accreditation) expectations are that boards will delegate their authority, but not their responsibility, and exercise general supervision by being at the center of a system of checks and balances. (Ingram, 4)

The ACCJC, along with the Pacific Post-secondary Education Council (PPEC), authored a white paper in 2006 entitled *Enhancing and Sustaining Quality Education in the Pacific: Challenges Facing Institutions Seeking to Acquire and Maintain WASC Accreditation* which outlined eight areas of concern. They are:

- Geography as a barrier;
- Evolving definitions of good practice that raise requirements for accreditation;
- Inappropriate local government control or influence;
- Institutional governance issues;
- Inadequate development for institutional leaders and potential leaders;
- Inadequate levels of public support;
- Under-prepared entering students;
- Insufficient scale to permit effective and efficient operations.

Given the importance of the accreditation recommendations in this dialog, this “white paper” was an important context for Board discussions.

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Specific Issues and Needs Arising from the Accreditation Comprehensive Review

During the fall 2008 semester the College was underwent a comprehensive peer review for regional reaccreditation. The ACCJC evaluation team's exit interview and subsequent report made recommendations that the College:

- 1) better define and delineate board roles and responsibilities relative to the administration and faculty, and
- 2) redefine its planning model to include greater broad-based participation and alignment to resource allocation.

The College has received a formal Action Letter from the Commission and wishes to use its Spring 2009 retreat to proactively plan its response strategy.

II. Board Roles and Responsibilities

ACCJC Visiting Team Recommendation: "that the Board should, in consultation with the President, define and delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Board in College operations and policy making and develop an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the delineation."

The "Institutional Governance Issues" cited by the joint accrediting commission (ACCJC)/Pacific Post-secondary Education Council (PPEC) white paper entitled *Enhancing and Sustaining Higher Education Quality in the Pacific: Challenges Facing Institutions Seeking to Acquire and Maintain WASC-Accreditation* provides a valuable guide. It focuses on several major themes with which to test the specific language of the Team and the Commission. They highlight issues such as:

- "governing board member's lack of access to *regular board training and development opportunities*" and "*regular exchanges* with board members from other institutions [emphasis added].
- a lack of board "appropriate strategies that will allow them to fulfill their *basic responsibility*, to ensure the *fiduciary integrity* of the institution, and to ensure *educational quality and effectiveness*."
- a tendency to "become *inappropriately involved* in administrative and management tasks,"
- a difficulty distinguishing the board role from that of the president, and *recognizing the distinctive roles of board members versus president and administrative staff*.
- a tendency of *government interference* in both board and administrative matters.

The Retreat produced a series of Workshop Observations on Governance (WOG) issues facing the American Samoa Community College.

- the accrediting commission (ACCJC) sees ongoing board development, not single trainings, as the preferred solution.
- the accrediting commission wishes board members in the region to understand and practice certain aspects of governance that are unique to governing boards of American educational institutions. These governance standards have essential differences from corporate and governmental boards or committees. Mainland board members often have significant adjustments to make coming into this special governance setting, so it should not be unusual to find similar adjustments necessary in Pacific contexts.
- the American concept of "shared governance" has essential elements that are distinctly different from governance practices throughout most of the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands. Special attention needs to

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be focused on these differences as well. They do, however, relate to international best practices for continuous quality improvement.

- special attention needs to be focused on governance practices throughout most of the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands.
- The accrediting commission (ACCJC) asks all member institutions to develop evaluation processes to determine the effectiveness of their efforts.

A. Two-Year Action Agenda

Action steps to implement a formal two-year Board Development Plan to address the Workshop Observations on Governance (WOG):

1. **Establish a standing Committee on Board Development**
2. **Make a commitment to an ongoing program of board education and development** for all board members versus an episodic "training" regime (see Appendix A).
 - Using the workshop's principles, have the Board Development Committee recommend "**Best Practices**" on which to focus (see Appendix B).
 - Use services such as those of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) or Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to provide a **series of facilitated workshops and board development literature**.
 - Join one of the major U.S. national board associations (AGB or ACCT). Send members on a rotating basis to **trustee development programs** sponsored by them as well as Pacific Post-secondary Education Council (PPEC) sponsored events.
 - Attend the annual **AGB National Conference on Trusteeship** (next meeting April 2009), its focused pre-conference sessions, and network opportunities to also associate with other board members. Sending a team would be strong message to the accrediting commission (ACCJC). (see Appendix C)
3. **Assess the Board against U.S. national standards**
 - Conduct a formal **self-assessment of the Board** to identify priority areas.
 - Implement a **Board Development Program** focusing on the primary areas identified by the assessment.
 - Conduct another formal board **post assessment** at the end of the two-year action agenda to measure changes in board performance.

III. The Board's Role in Strategic Planning

The ACCJC has identified specific concerns throughout its member institutions regarding integrated planning. They focus most directly on linking Mission, Vision, and resources to a planning process that engages all segments of the institution. They also place very great emphasis on two additional elements of planning: Student Learning Outcomes (and their assessment) and Program Reviews (which incorporate assessment and measurements of institutional effectiveness). They have published rubrics for guiding these activities.

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ACCJC Visiting Team Recommendations: that the College redefine its planning model to include greater broad-based participation by “designate[ing] a group of college constituents to oversee planning activities and to design a process to promote broader participation, provide more coordination, ensure greater integration of functional plans, and establish a clearer link to resource allocations.”

- Further that the College develop a document that fully describes the relationship between planning, program review, and assessment of SLOs which is widely shared throughout the campus community
- That the College develop a staffing plan and budget development processes that are integrated with institutional planning, including an educational master plan and a facilities master plan
- That a funding plan for capital investments be developed and integrated with program reviews as part of the integrated planning effort.

At the level of the board, the Commission’s focus on planning expects that the Board will insist that planning be done at all levels of the institution, not just (or even primarily) at the board level. Additionally, the board is to monitor plans that are developed, see that they are appropriately funded (or not funded), and assessed on their performance.

A. Accrediting Commission Rubrics and Self-Assessment of Planning Effectiveness

The Board conducted a planning self-assessment using the accrediting commission’s “Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness.” There are integrated rubrics for planning, program review, and student learning outcomes. The rubrics establish four (4) ordinal levels of progress: Awareness, Development, Proficiency, and Continuous Quality Improvement. The accrediting commission currently expects that institutions should be at the following levels:

- Planning – Continuous Quality Improvement level
- Program Review of academic programs (including all educational services) – Continuous Quality Improvement level
- Program Review of administrative services – Development level
- Student Learning Outcomes -- Development level
(the accrediting commission recently announced it will expect institutions to be at the Proficiency level in the identification, assessment and use for improvements of student learning outcomes by Fall 2012.)

Based upon a **self-assessment of planning**, the Board rated itself at the Development level, but not yet at the level of Proficiency or Continuous Quality Improvement – consistent with the Visiting Team observations and below the very high standard expected by the ACCJC.

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**Table I
Board Self Assessment of Institutional Planning
Using ACCJC Rubric**

Level	Average Percentage Compliance Score (APCS)
Awareness	71%
Development	78%
Proficiency	43%
Continuous Quality Improvement	50%

*ASCC has
moved forward*

Board self-assessment indicated effectiveness below the 50% threshold in the following rubric areas:

**Table II
Board Self Assessment Areas Below 50% Effectiveness Threshold
for Institutional Planning Using ACCJC Rubric**

o The institution's component plans are integrated into a comprehensive plan to achieve broad educational purposes, and improve institutional effectiveness.	48%
o The institution plans and effectively incorporates results of program review in all areas of educational services: instruction, support services, library and learning resources.	47%
o There is ongoing review and adaptation of evaluation and planning processes.	43%
o Program review processes are ongoing, systematic and used to assess and improve student learning and achievement.	38%
o Planning found in all areas of college operations.	33%

It must be stressed that independent verification of these assessments should be sought from careful review of institutional practice and surveys of other campus stakeholders. However, the results are illustrative of how the rubrics can be used as one measure for institutional self-assessment and as a guide for improvement if properly applied as part of a broader institutional self-assessment.

B. The Board's Role in Strategic Planning

The workshop explored the Strategic Dimension of the Board -- the importance of:

- 1) identifying and *staying focused on strategic priorities* -- not operational matters
- 2) empowering the institution to *design a process* and *craft a vision* to guide strategic thinking
- 3) *structuring the board* through committees and members to pursue strategic work

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- 4) *acquiring information* through established key indicators and benchmarks that will inform strategic decision-making of the Board and the President
- 5) using board meetings intentionally to *monitor progress* on the strategic agenda

A strategic mindset requires that the habits of strategic thinking be implanted throughout the daily life of the organization. Every member of the institutional family should understand and be able to act upon a few simple concepts to assure success. When it comes to strategic planning, many contend that heavy board involvement runs the risk of turning trustees into surrogate managers. The literature of board development is replete with warnings against micromanaging.

An effective way to keep the Board properly focused at the strategic level and facilitate institution-wide engagement in planning is to charge the President with developing an institutional planning process. By empowering such a process and stipulating that it have features identified in the accrediting commission rubrics, the Board appropriately delegates its strategic planning authority. By setting timelines for review and implementation and requiring period reports on elements of the plan, the Board effectively monitors institutional progress in planning. It is often desirable to establish a Board Planning Committee to be an advisory resource and an active agent in monitoring institutional planning efforts. However, the full Board should receive regular reports on key indicators and benchmarks that the process has established. *

C. Crafting a Vision

Formulating strategy is the process by which an organization wrestles a vision of the future into the realm of reality. It is about creating the future you want . . . setting and realizing a vision that fulfills the institution's mission in the face of uncertainty, complexity, and competitive forces. An institutional vision is a collective picture of the future that it seeks to create . . . a statement of where it wants to go. A well-crafted vision gives shape to the institution's future, uplifts people's aspirations, and is exhilarating.

The workshop engaged in a sample exercise to explore the capacity of institutional visioning to empower strategic thinking and collaborative planning. Following the exercise, the Board agreed that -- if pursued purposefully and skillfully across the institution -- visioning could have a powerful influence on planning and institutional effectiveness, achieving shared goals, and meeting accreditation expectations.

D. Action Agenda

1. Empower the Planning Process

- Charge the President to develop a broad-based campus planning effort by a specific date and appropriately delegate the responsibility to:
 - Develop a document that fully describes the planning process and the relationship between planning, program reviews, and assessment of student learning outcomes.
 - Develop staffing plans and a budget process that are integrated with institutional planning, including the educational master plan and facilities master plan.

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- Develop a funding plan for capital investments integrated with institutional program reviews.
 - Use the ACCJC rubrics for planning, program review, and student learning outcomes as assessment tools with faculty, staff, administrators, and institutional leaders to strengthen awareness and assess current status relative to those measures.
- 2. Designate a Board Committee to provide oversight and serve as an advisory resource**
- Organize the Board work to reflect initiatives of the strategic plan. *
 - Recognize that planning is a recurring cycle and a process that must become part of institutional life.
- 3. Craft and Monitor a Vision**
- Use the visioning process as a way to have strategic thinking permeate the life of the institution and engage stakeholders.
 - Engage an external consultant to assist in crafting a Vision, aggressively pursue Program Reviews, and review (and possibly develop new) planning processes & their linkages to decision making and resource allocation.

Summary

The American Samoa Community College Board of Trustees is to be commended for its initiative to ensure, protect, and improve the effectiveness of the institution. It has used its Annual Retreat to reflect upon ways to respond proactively to important issues raised by the Accrediting Commission on Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). More importantly, it learned that it can *use the issues of board development and strategic planning as a springboard to creative positive institutional change and increase institutional effectiveness*. By creating and actively promoting a board development process, the Board of Trustees can better define its role, focus on the strategic issues facing the institution, and become a more highly effective board for the constituencies it serves. By creating a broad-based, participatory planning process, the Board can harness the knowledge and creativity of the campus community in forging a stronger, more effective institution dedicated to student success.

Respectfully submitted,



Wilson G. Hess
AGB Facilitator

March 2009

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WORKSHOP LITERATURE

Board Roles and Responsibilities

Richard T. Ingram, *Effective Trusteeship: A Guide for Board Members of Public Colleges and Universities*. This AGB classic booklet answers trustees' basic questions and features sample statements of board responsibilities, a list of resources, and detailed appendices.

Terrence J. MacTaggart, *PolicyMaking and Administrative Oversight*. This booklet clarifies the often vague separation between policy setting and administration, taking into account an institution's culture and mission. It addresses active versus "activist" trustees, policy making in a fishbowl, matching policy to institution, and monitoring the policy process. It offers guidance for trustees of independent and public institutions, including systems.

Michael Middaugh, *The Board's Role in Accreditation*. A fresh look at accreditation issues facing institutions today and at the increasing importance of strategic planning in the accreditation process.

Association of Governing Boards, *AGB Statement on Institutional Governance and Governing in the Public Trust*

Board's Role in Strategic Planning

Lawrence Butler, *The Board's Role in Strategic Planning*. An updated guide to successful strategic planning for independent and public institutions.

Michael Middaugh, *The Board's Role in Accreditation*. A fresh look at accreditation issues facing institutions today and at the increasing importance of strategic planning in the accreditation process.

Related reading available from AGB

Kent John Chabotar, *Strategic Budgeting*. Solid financial thinking and highly useful advice for committees, board chairs, presidents, and CFOs is framed against a background that links budgetary processes and the strategic planning processes.

Kent John Chabotar, *Strategic Finance: Planning and Budgeting for Boards, Chief Executives, and Finance Officers*. Engages strategic planning and budgeting topics and marries them to actionable steps that boards, presidents, and CFOs can take to navigate a course of institutional financial stability.

David Hollowell, Michael F. Middaugh, and Elizabeth Sibols, *Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: A Practical Guide*. This timely volume focuses on three basic planning categories while emphasizing that the academic planning engine drives all other planning types. (@\$60)

Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland, and Barbara E. Taylor, *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards*. This book describes how to evaluate board performance, transform trustees into a cohesive board, focus strategically, and maximize board meetings. Charts, quotes, and sample documents. (@\$45)