

# FOLLOW-UP VISIT REPORT

Porterville College  
Kern Community College District  
100 E College Avenue  
Porterville, CA 93257

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that electronically visited, via Zoom connection,

Porterville College on September 24, 2019.

Submitted to:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Submitted by:

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**DATE:** September 24, 2019

**TO:** Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

**FROM:** Ed Knudson, Team Chair

**SUBJECT:** Report of Follow-Up Visit to Porterville College  
September 24, 2019

**Introduction:**

A comprehensive evaluation team visit was conducted at Porterville College October 1-4, 2018. At its meeting of January 9-11, 2019, the Accrediting Commission took action to reaffirm accreditation for 18 months, with a requirement that the College submit a Follow-Up Report followed by a site visit.

The follow-up visit, at the direction of ACCJC, was facilitated by video conference call via Zoom technology. The organizer of the meeting was the team chair. The visiting team was comprised of Ed Knudson, Superintendent/President of Antelope Valley College, Rebecca Bocchicchio, Vice-President of Instruction at Sierra College, and Dr. Michelle Lewellen, Professor of Psychology, at Cerritos College. Further, Gohar Momjian, Vice-President of ACCJC joined the meeting as a resource. The purpose of the team visit was to verify that the institution has addressed the specified recommendation and Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education, has resolved the deficiency, and now meets Accreditation Standards.

The team found that the College had prepared well for the visit and provided access to the online courses needed for review of regular and substantive interaction in advance. The team conducted a single interview session via Zoom technology and met with the Superintendent/President; Vice President, Academic Affairs; Vice-President of Student Services/Accreditation Liaison Officer; Vice-President of Administrative Services; Academic Senate President; the Coordinator of Distance Education; and a faculty member of the Distance Education and Curriculum Committees. In advance of the meeting, the team also reviewed twenty distance education courses in the online environment per the Commission's distance education protocol.

The Follow-Up Report and Visit were expected to document resolution of the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 2 (Compliance): In order to meet the Standard and Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education, the team recommends the college review and revise its existing processes to ensure that faculty teaching online courses consistently provide regular and substantive interaction with students.**

### **Team Analysis of College Response to the 2018 Evaluation Team Recommendation Observations**

The College's Follow-Up Report describes an immediate and robust response to the Commission's Recommendation for Compliance. As soon as the recommendation was received, the information was shared widely with the College community. After an initial meeting with the President, Vice-President, and Academic Senate leadership, the Academic Senate president sent a letter to all faculty informing them of the action, providing copies of board policy and procedure on regular and effective contact, and offering additional guidance on expectations for student-faculty contact. Subsequently, the Distance Learning Committee, the Academic Senate, the Curriculum Committee, College Council, and the Accreditation Committee participated in further discussion and planning. The College decided to accelerate the timeline for responding to the recommendation and submitted its Follow-Up Report in June 2019. This process was verified in the interview of September 24, 2019.

### **Evidence and Findings**

As evidenced in the Follow Up Report and confirmed during the interview, the College responded to the Commission's recommendation by revising its policy on regular and effective contact, instituting weekly checks in online classes to verify compliance, and instituting a requirement that faculty have online training before being assigned to an online section. Additionally, the College is providing activities and training during flex week and is intentionally communicating information about online policies and resources on a regular basis.

AP 4B3 states that faculty should initiate contact with students at least twice a week. The Regular and Effective Contact Policy, updated in February 2019, includes this requirement and offers additional guidance about various ways that this might be accomplished. To ensure a record of compliance, faculty who initiate contact outside of the Canvas LMS are required to document that contact through another method. The Policy also includes guidelines for facilitating regular and effective contact between students.

To ensure the College policies are being followed, the Academic Senate, faculty union, and administrative leadership agreed to weekly "checks" of faculty-student contact in online courses. These checks are conducted by the educational media design specialist (a classified staff member). If a faculty member is not meeting the policy, the specialist sends an email reminding them of the policy and offering assistance. The evidence provided indicates that these checks were very successful in helping faculty meet the requirements: although the first check showed 37% of classes were not in compliance, within a month only 1 course out of 78 failed to meet the requirement. Although the College does not have a formal process to respond to courses that do not meet the policy, they have informally agreed that if the reminders and support from the instructional designer are not effective, the Distance Learning Committee will be notified and will work with the instructor. If after that a course is still not in compliance, it will be referred to

the appropriate dean for further action. The Vice President of Instruction is also kept informed of the results of the checks.

The College is providing training and other professional development for online faculty. Before being assigned to an online or hybrid class, a faculty member must complete a training course such as @One's "Introduction to Teaching with Canvas" or similar. A resource page that includes the distance education standards, Canvas resources, and professional development opportunities is provided through the Center for Instructional Technology on Canvas.

To ensure that that faculty are aware of distance education policies and resources, the College communicates them through the Canvas resource page, through emails and division visits from the media design specialist, and through various relevant committees.

The curriculum approval process for online classes has been updated; it now requires an addendum that addresses how the online instruction will meet regular and effective contact between instructors and students and among students. As part of its participation in the Online Education Initiative, the College is developing a Peer Online Course Review process that uses the OEI rubric.

As discussed in the Follow Up Report and confirmed during the virtual visit, the College responded to the ACCJC recommendation with a thoughtful and robust plan that has proven successful in its early implementation. The evidence provided, as well as the review of 20 online classes from Spring 2019 per the Commission's distance education protocol, demonstrates that the majority of classes are in compliance with both the Standard and Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education. In addition, the College has a clear plan to ensure continued compliance and further integration of the new standards into the distance education program.

**Conclusion:** The College has addressed the recommendation and meets the Standard and Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education.