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September 11, 2023

Dr. Dolores Duran-Cerda
Chancellor
Pima County Community College District
4905C E. Broadway Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85709-1005

Dear Chancellor Duran-Cerda:

Pima County Community College District's interim report has been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission, staff received the report on aspects of Core Component 2.C.

No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 12/9/2024.

For more information on the interim report process, contact HLC at interimreports@hlcommission.org.
Your HLC staff liaison is Linnea Stenson.

Thank you,
Higher Learning Commission

cc: Wendy Weeks, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Linnea Stenson, HLC Staff Liaison

STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: 9/11/2023

STAFF LIAISON: Linnea Stenson

REVIEWED BY: Lee Bash

INSTITUTION: Pima County Community College District, Tucson, AZ**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Dolores Duran-Cerda, Chancellor**PREVIOUS HLC ACTION AND SOURCES:**

An Interim Report on aspects of Core Component 2.C. The report should provide evidence demonstrating the institution has addressed the following:

Board Effectiveness

Continued work on processes to improve adherence to appropriate Board and State policies with a focus on the role of shared governance by the Board of Governors and Senior Administrators.

This includes, for example:

- Board members using resources provided by the institution in preparation of the meeting.
- Processes to ensure transparency of decision making at the Board and Senior leadership levels.
- Continue to use board training to help all members of the Board understand their role, responsibilities, and governance.
- Executive Leadership focus on engaging the community and the Board of Governors in meaningful dialogue to address ongoing challenges and communication strategies.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Pima County Community College District interim report is presented in a seven-page narrative that is further supported by eight appendices, each with a series of sub-headings that total 66, that are fully contained in 280 total pages that constitute the interim report. Although the narrative identifies eight areas of focus, these do not directly correspond, nor correlate, with the four bulleted items under “Board Effectiveness” that were included in the October 6, 2022 letter from HLC, under “Action with Interim Monitoring,” based on a directive from the Institutional Action Committee, as revealed in the above “Previous HLC Action and Sources.” On the other hand, the institution appears to have taken steps towards “Board Effectiveness” that may exceed what was requested. Therefore, this case analysis will take this interim report as presented and after a careful review of the submitted material, will determine whether this report is sufficient. The interim report is well-organized, and detailed. The eight appendix citations directly relate to the eight sections presented in the narrative, which support and provide evidence to each of the narrative sections.

REPORT SUMMARY: The Pima County Community College District interim report begins by identifying eight sections under the heading, “Table of Contents.” These will be enumerated with their title under each of the sections reviewed below. Prior to these sections being presented, the

narrative opens with an “Introductory Section” that provides background information and “the Governing Board’s focus on training and actions to adhere to standards of effective Board work.

The first notated section is titled, “The Board Has Developed a Plan to Comply With Core Component 2.C.” Much of the content of this section explains the details relating to Board member selection before describing a public study session on October 17, 2022, where the Board began a draft of an Evidence Plan to demonstrate compliance prior to a November 9, 2022 meeting where the Board approved the plan. On February 1, 2023, a new Board, with three new members, unanimously approved and updated the Evidence Plan to demonstrate compliance with 2.C. As in each of the eight headings, a series of appendix citations provide fuller evidence as well as support for the narrative.

The next section, “The Board Substantially Revised Its Bylaws to Improve Conformity with 2.C.,” describes how the institution sought to improve their operation by conducting a comprehensive review of its bylaws. The content enumerates how the Board took a number of steps that ultimately led to changes in the new bylaws being approved September 2022. The Code of Ethics section is highlighted with the following changes:

- New Subsection 1.3 addresses concerns about Board autonomy by specifying that “Board members must demonstrate unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the entire community of Pima County. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to family members, the College’s employees, advocacy or interest groups, membership on other boards or staffs, or an personal interests as a consumer of the College’s services.
- New Subsection 3.5 concerns maintaining confidentiality of privileged information, including items discussed in Executive Session.
- New Section 6, Procedures for Violation of Board Bylaws or Policies, details protocols for rectifying violations of Board Policies and Bylaws.

The third section, “The Board and College Are Committed to Effective Shared Governance” outlines new steps and documents that relate to shared governance to provide insights and information to all College stakeholders. The section also notes that, “representatives of student, staff, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and administrator groups act as advisors to the Board through reports at Board meetings on accomplishments and opportunities.”

The next section is titled, “The Board Has Engaged in Comprehensive Training and Professional Development.” It starts by noting that several sources had emphasized the importance of professional development. After some initial events, the Board members underwent a training retreat in January 2023 that covered: a) characteristics of effective Boards, b) Chancellor’s goals/Board priorities and c) accreditation. Shortly after, during a New Board Member orientation, featured topics included mission-critical topics, such as the College budget, Chancellor-Board Chair relationship and Arizona’s Open Meetings Law. Furthermore, the Chancellor’s Office established a set of professional development expectations for each Board member that included attending at least once national conference to ensure they had a more realistic understanding of best practices.

The next section title is: “Executive Leadership and the Board Are Establishing an Effective Relationship.” This statement is reinforced by many examples of new practices that reflect the significance of new Board members and leadership via the new interim Chancellor that are

interacting more proactively and differently than previous occasions. In this regard, a new era will be initiated September 13, 2023, with a new cast of characters that are expected to interact and behave significantly differently than in the past.

The next section, “The Board and Executive Leadership Inform and Engage the Community in Multiple Ways,” contains multiple sections that clarify and define roles and interactions. The subsections include, Governing Board, Governing Board Committees, Public Comment, Governing Board Involvement in the Community, Executive Leadership Team, and Executive Leadership Involvement in the Community. Each of these sections reflect the ongoing discussions and decisions made among the stakeholders to help bring their roles and interactions into better focus and functions. Each of the subsections contain anticipated outcomes and/or organizational benefits.

The final two sections, “Board Commits to Assessment and Improvement,” and “The Board Commits to an Inclusive, Transparent Chancellor Search,” represent commitment from the Board members towards how they expect to perform and their priorities as they move forward. Each cites specific examples and objectives that suggest new ways of operation that help address previous challenges.

Finally, although this notion has been suggested in other sections, there are rich examples of evidence provided and sections supported through the extensive use of appendices content and citations.

REPORT ANALYSIS: The Pima County Community College District interim basically tells a story of transformation from the status and interaction of the Board and Chancellor shortly after the letter from HLC was delivered to the present day that is defined by change of personnel, attitude, and commitment. It portrays a work that is still in progress. It reflects serious introspection and willingness on the part of major stakeholders to modify anything that will help the institution to become what is suggested by the visiting team. It also conveys that the stakeholders appear to be mindful that the work is not complete but there is a willingness to do what it takes. At the beginning of this analysis, the institution did not necessarily follow the precise four-bullet expectations articulated by the Institutional Actions Committee (IAC), but this narrative does present a rather compelling case that the institution has found its own way to describe the overarching objective of “Board Effectiveness.” On the other hand, since the four bulleted expectations articulated by IAC are not necessarily addressed by the institution with its eight-point design, this report analysis will recommend that the team associated with the upcoming reaffirmation visit in December 2024, confirm that these issues are being addressed by the institution.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: The Pima County Community College District interim report is sufficient to demonstrate adequate progress in the areas of focus. The narrative conveys the complexities and unique aspects of this case. The historical elements, especially, make this case perhaps more challenging than what is normally encountered in interim reports, but it appears that the institution has made a serious commitment to recognizing the previous problems with the objective of addressing and remedying them.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 2.C.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on aspects of Core Component 2.C.

No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 12/9/2024.