

REPORT OF THE WASC SPECIAL VISIT TEAM

To: American Samoa Community College

March 18, 2013

Team Roster

- Richard R. Rush, President California State University, Channel Islands (Chair)
- Aubyn S. Fulton, Professor of Psychology Pacific Union College; (Vice-Chair)
- Jonathan V. McKee, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs University of Hawaii Maui College

The team evaluated the institution under the WASC Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities. The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WASC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

American Samoa Community College (ASCC) was founded in 1970 as part of the American Samoa Department of Education to provide post-secondary education in the liberal arts, teacher training, vocational and general education to the residents of American Samoa. ASCC currently offers Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, as well as certificate programs in a variety of academic and technical areas. The campus is located on the island of Tutuila in the village of Mapusaga, nine miles west of Pago Pago. Approximately 90% of the 60,000 residents of American Samoa live on Tutuila. The permanent campus was established on the site of the former Mapusaga High School in 1974. In 1979 ASCC built five buildings specifically for the college, providing space for instruction, a student cafeteria and a gymnasium. A new library was dedicated in 2003.

On July 26, 2007 ASCC was granted eligibility to apply for candidacy with the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) for a single Bachelor's degree in Education, while retaining its primary associate-level accreditation with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). This eligibility expired in December 2010 before a candidacy application was submitted. In August 2011 ASCC submitted a new application for eligibility, and eligibility was granted for a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree, to be accredited by ACSCU, while retaining their primary accreditation by ACCJC. A single candidacy visit was completed April 6-7, 2012. In a letter dated July 11, 2012 the Commission granted candidacy to the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree program and scheduled the current visit, a review for initial accreditation for the B.Ed. for spring 2013. Thus the current visit had a narrow and well-defined focus on the B.Ed.

ASCC is the only post-secondary institution in the Territory of American Samoa. They have offered a two-year degree in Elementary Education, but the only option for a four-year degree in education prior to their B.Ed. was through the University of Hawaii's extension program, which does not include instruction in important elements of Samoan language and culture, and requires at least one semester in Hawaii, 2,500 miles away. ASCC reports that the lack of a local accredited teacher education program in the Territory is a major reason that more than 50% of teachers do not have a bachelor's degree.

The B.Ed. consists of 70 semester hours of general education (G.E.) credits, education credits taken from their existing menu of lower division courses, and 58 new upper division semester credits (ten 300-level courses and five 400-level courses).

To date ASCC has had five graduates complete the B.Ed., and they expect two more to graduate in spring 2013. They report that their numbers have been small so far primarily due to the fact that Title IV financial aid is not available to students until the program is granted candidacy from WASC.

No off-campus or distance education programs were part of this visit. No special follow-up visits related to substantive change were conducted in connection with this visit.

Since ASCC will remain under the jurisdiction of ACCJC as its primary accreditor, the institution was asked to prepare a self-study that addressed the unique issues presented by the B.Ed. degree program, primarily with reference to the recommendations of the July 2012 Commission Action Letter, the recommendations of the last visiting team, and the elements of the WASC standards that have specific relevance to a four-year degree. In particular, the areas of primary focus for the current review are:

1. **Commission Recommendation #1: Culminating Assessments** (CFR 2.2A, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.7). The Commission asked for evidence that ASCC is continuing to develop summative assessment of program learning outcomes. They expected to see evidence of achievement of the small number of graduates projected to have completed the B. Ed. by the current review, and development of assessment strategies for lower division (L.D.) and upper division (U.D.) G.E. competencies as part of culminating assessments. As part of this focus the team also inquired about the current status of program review at ASCC, particularly focusing on the upper division components of the B.Ed.
2. **Commission Recommendation #2: Faculty Workload** (CFR 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2). The Commission was eager to see evidence that heavy teaching and advising loads were not compromising the substantial contribution and investment of time and energy by faculty to the B.Ed. program. The Commission recommended that attention be given to finding resources to provide for additional faculty hires, faculty release time, and ways of honoring and preserving the remarkable commitment made by the faculty.
3. **Financial Update** (CFR 3.5, 4.2)

B. Quality of the Special Visit Report and Supporting Evidence

The Special Visit report prepared by ASCC, (titled the “Self Study of Educational Effectiveness in Support of the Bachelor of Education Degree Program, January 20, 2013” and referred to henceforth as the “Self Study”), clearly is built on the February 2012 Self Study prepared by the April 2012 visit, and describes itself accurately as an update of the 2012 Report (p. 5). This updated Self Study was prepared by the Director of Teacher Education, the Teacher Education faculty, and the Vice-President for Academic and Student Affairs (who also serves as

the Accreditation Liaison Officer, i.e. ALO). Drafts were electronically distributed campus-wide, reviewed by the President and approved by the Board.

There were only six months between the July 2012 Commission Action Letter and submission of the Self Study on January 20, 2013. This may explain in part why the Self Study is somewhat limited on new, specific evidence presented to support institutional actions made in response to the action letter. The report does reference a number of rubrics and procedures for assessment. ASCC was extremely cooperative throughout the visit, and provided substantial additional information and evidence upon request, in advance of and during the visit.

C. Description of the Team Review Process

The Special Visit team reviewed the Self Study prior to the team conference call, during which plans were made for the visit. The team, in conjunction with WASC staff, decided to conduct the current visit electronically. This decision was based on three factors: 1) the distant location of ASCC (and resulting expense of travel), 2) the fact that the same team spent a very productive two full days in Samoa less than a year ago inspecting the physical resources of the institution and getting to know faculty, students, administrators and community stake-holders well and 3) the relatively narrow, focused nature of this visit. The visit was conducted between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm (Pacific Time), with the first two hours dedicated to a team meeting, via “Go To Meeting” and telephone interviews between personnel in Samoa and the team members, two of whom were located at the WASC offices in Alameda, with a third in Maui, Hawaii. During the visit the team interviewed a broad range of administrators, faculty, staff and students. An Exit Interview was conducted at the end of the day, at which the team chair provided first the president and then a larger audience of administrators, faculty and board members with the team’s commendations and recommendations.

SECTION II – TEAM ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES

A. Commission Recommendation #1: Culminating Assessments (CFR 2.2A, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.7).

The Commission asked for evidence relating to the continuing development of summative assessment of program learning outcomes, and assessment of the achievement of B.Ed. graduates, and development of assessment strategies for G.E. competencies. Since the team's visit last year ASCC has had five students graduate with the B.Ed. (two in spring 2012 and three in fall 2012), and they currently have more than 20 students in the upper division of the B.Ed. The Director of the Teacher Education Department (TED) provided the team with a document clearly summarizing in which course each upper division general education and lower and upper division program level student learning outcomes (SLOs) were being assessed. Most of this assessment is integrated with course assignments. They do require both the PRAXIS I and II tests, and are already using the results from the early administrations of PRAXIS I to evaluate their program and are making changes as the data become available. Results from PRAXIS II will be used in the future as it becomes available.

Four of their five B.Ed. graduates are already employed as teachers in public schools in Samoa. Two of the five are working on a master's degree in education. The Academic Dean informed the team that they have strong evidence that demand for graduates of their program will continue to be strong well into the future, and an employment rate at or above 80% rate is likely to be sustained. More than 50% of current public school teachers in Samoa do not have a bachelor's degree, and ASCC has gotten feedback from the public schools that their graduates are highly desired because their advanced education has equipped them to prepare lesson plans, use technology in the classroom, and deal with students, parents and the community in a professional manner. Their graduates are also in high demand because of their focus on Samoan

cultural and language competency; Samoan is the first language for 80% of public school students on the island, and classroom teachers who speak Samoan and understand the importance of cultural traditions are crucial for effective communication and relationships with students and their families.

The team met with a group of upper division students during the visit. As noted during a similar visit with students last year, they were all deeply supportive and appreciative of the B.Ed. Several singled out the Samoan language classes and emphasis on Samoan culture as a highlight of the program, as they recognized how important it was for them to be able to communicate with students and their families in their first language, even though instruction is in English. The upper division students were also grateful they did not have to leave their home island to pursue their education, so that they could continue to take care of their families. The students also spoke to the team with pride and affection about the quality of the B.Ed. faculty, and their time and commitment to working personally with students, and modeling professionalism.

Program review processes have been in place for some time at ASCC; the first scheduled Program review for the new B.Ed. is in 2014. The TED faculty have already begun preparing for this review, and provided the team with a document detailing specific goals, targets and assessments for the B.Ed. in the years leading up to the program review. For example, one of their intermediate goals was to have all assessment data for all TED courses submitted via their assessment report template to the Assessment Coordinator by the end of the spring semester 2013, which they are on track to accomplish.

The team learned from the Director of Teacher Education that since our last visit ASCC has purchased a truck that allows her to get out more frequently to the local schools. She is now able to regularly meet with the supervisors of B.Ed. student practicums and assesses both the quality

of student teaching and the quality of the supervision they are receiving. She reported to the team that these observations have demonstrated that the B.Ed. student teachers are very involved in the community culture of their schools, wearing the school uniforms, attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and taking personal ownership of their classrooms. These are some of the qualities that have led to so many school principals wanting to hire the B.Ed. students when they graduate.

The Director of Teacher Education and the Academic Dean were able to give several concrete examples of changes they have made in response to evidence they have gathered about the success of their program in just over the last year. Based on a recent student survey: ASCC learned that faculty advisor contacts were not as frequent as they wanted them to be. The administration instituted changes, and were able to see significant increases in reported advisor contacts. Similarly, ASCC learned from their tracking of library utilization that certain educational resources were not being used as much as they wanted; after making some changes in the design of some courses, this increased. They refurbished three classrooms since last year, (the team was able to review photographic evidence confirming the upgrades, compared to what the team observed first hand on their visit to Samoa), in response to feedback from student satisfaction surveys that students needed more access to both equipment and teacher time to work on writing skills. ASCC is now also able to provide laptop computers to all students who need one during their time in school.

B. Commission Recommendation #2: Faculty Workload (CFR 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2).

The Commission was eager to see evidence that heavy teaching and advising loads were not compromising the substantial contribution and investment of time and energy by faculty to the B.Ed. program. The Commission recommended that attention be given to finding resources to

provide for additional faculty hires, faculty release time, and ways of honoring and preserving the remarkable commitment made by the faculty.

The team was pleased to discover that since the last visit ASCC has made significant progress addressing this recommendation. The workload for B.Ed. faculty has already been adjusted and ASCC is in the process of hiring additional faculty members to support the B.Ed. program.

Beginning in January 2013, the beginning of ASCC's spring semester, the teaching load for B.Ed. faculty was reduced from 15 to 12 credits per semester. The intent of this teaching load reduction is to allow each B.Ed. faculty member three credits of non-teaching assigned time each semester. The team was pleased to note during the visit that faculty members were able to provide examples of how this release time has allowed them to pursue scholarly and professional development activities. Since the workload change, B.Ed. faculty members have begun providing pedagogically oriented workshops for American Samoa Department of Education teachers. Furthermore, this coming summer B.Ed. faculty members will be presenting on the B.Ed. program at the Pacific Island Education Conference in Saipan. Finally, faculty now have the time for weekly program meetings to address assessment, student support, planning and other program related opportunities and concerns. The team's concern after last year's visit about possible burnout in this highly committed faculty was substantially reduced by this workload reduction, illustrated by the report from faculty during the visit that they no longer have to meet on Saturdays to complete all of their administrative and planning responsibilities to the program.

ASCC is now in the process of recruiting two additional B.Ed. faculty members to be hired in summer 2013. This recruitment is focusing on finding a faculty member who can strengthen the faculty team. Toward this end, ASCC is searching for candidates with the background and ability

to contribute to the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics education emphasis of the B.Ed. degree program. Furthermore, orientation activities are planned to help the newest faculty transition to ASCC and the B.Ed. program.

C. Financial Update

A new governor of Samoa has been elected since the team's visit last year. The ASCC President informed the team that he met with the new governor in January 2013 and was able to confirm full, continued support for the TED. ASCC has entered into new contracts to provide in-service trainings for K-12 teachers on the island. They have also completed a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) that will pay them \$500,000 per year to help prepare currently non-credentialed K-12 teachers to eventually obtain either an Associate of Science (A.S.) or B.Ed. degree, and full scholarships for high school graduates that enter ASCC as education majors. The team also learned from the Academic Dean that the B.Ed. will be getting additional grant funds to buy iPads for use by students in their 300-level teacher education courses. The team was pleased to learn from the President that he is confident in a sustainable funding stream for the B.Ed. into the foreseeable future.

D. Student Complaint Policy

The President informed the team during the visit that ASCC does have a student complaint policy, and they do follow it.

SECTION III – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations:

The Team commends American Samoa Community College for the following achievements:

1. Developing funding stability and increasing resources to enrich the program.
2. Reducing instructional workload, enabling faculty to engage in professional development activities.
3. Adding two faculty with intentionality, focusing on balance with the current faculty while satisfying disciplinary needs.
4. Achieving consensus through innovative use of meeting schedules, resulting from reduced faculty workload.
5. Successfully reaching out to the community through oversight of students and recruitment in high schools.
6. Responding quickly to the team's recommendations in partnership with WASC.

Recommendations:

The Team recommends the following actions:

1. Continued attention to assessment and program review to accomplish thoughtful, reflective development of a maturing program.
2. Further attention to linking general education outcomes to the Bachelor of Education outcomes to ensure an integrated experience for students.