January 31, 2008

Dr. Leo Chavez  
Superintendent/President  
Sierra College  
5000 Rocklin Road  
Rocklin, CA 95677

Dear President Chavez:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 9-11, 2008, reviewed the institutional self study report and the report of the evaluation team which visited Sierra College on Monday, October 15-Thursday, October 18, 2007. The Commission acted to issue a **Warning** and to ask that Sierra College correct the deficiencies noted. The college is required to complete a Progress Report by **October 15, 2008**. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

A warning is issued when the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course of action which deviates from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards of accreditation, or policy to an extent that raises a concern regarding the ability of the institution to meet accreditation standards. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period. However, the institution’s accreditation will not be reaffirmed until the conditions which warranted the warning are removed.

This action constitutes a public sanction as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions in the Commission’s *Accreditation Reference Handbook*. As such, the action will be noted on the Commission’s website.

I also wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. Sierra College must correct the deficiencies noted by **January 2010**. While one of the recommendations identified as a deficiency was also identified by the 2001 evaluation team, the Commission has extended Sierra College’s time to correct this deficiency for good cause. Sierra College has developed the capacity to conduct appropriate program review, and simply needs to exercise it.

The Progress Report of October 15, 2008 should focus on the institution’s resolution of the recommendations noted below:
Recommendation # 1 (2007)
Mission Statement
To ensure services and programs offered by Sierra College are meeting its stated purpose, the team recommends that the college amend the mission statement to specifically identify its intended student population and its commitment to achieving student learning. (Standard I.A.1, IV.B.1.b)

Recommendation # 2 (2007)
Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision Making
In order for the college to ensure an ongoing, systematic, and cyclical process that includes evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the team recommends the following plan development, implementation, evaluation and improvement steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive, integrated, long-range Strategic Plan including goals that can be used to influence resource allocation decisions. The Strategic Plan should incorporate the priorities established in all of the college’s major plans to include its:
   a. Technology Plan
   b. Facilities Master Plan
   c. Educational Master Plan
   d. Human Resources Staffing Plan
   (I.A.4, I.B.2, I.B.3, 4, III.A.2, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.C.1.d)

2. Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, I.c.)

3. Develop and work to implement as appropriate a Human Resources Staffing Plan that will satisfy the college’s long standing expression of need for additional full-time faculty and support personnel to improve student learning. (III.A.2, II.C.1, II.C.1 a., II.C.1.d)

4. Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5).

This issue was identified by the 2001 evaluation team in Recommendation 7.
Recommendation # 3 (2007)  
Student Learning Outcomes  
The team recommends that the college identify assessment methods and establish dates for completing student learning outcomes assessments at the institutional level and for all of its courses, programs and services. This process should also include the development of performance measures to assess and improve institutional effectiveness of all programs and services. The college should disseminate the outcomes widely and use these results in the strategic planning and resource allocation process. It is further recommended that the college include effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as part of its faculty evaluation process. (II.A.1.a, c, II.A.2.a, h, II.B.4; II.C.2 III.A.1.c)

Recommendation # 6 (2007)  
Governing Board Evaluation  
The team recommends that the Board complete an annual board self-evaluation to ensure that its policies promote quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services. (IV.B.1.)

All colleges are required to file a Midterm Report in the third year after each comprehensive evaluation. Sierra College should submit the Midterm Report by October 15, 2010. Midterm Reports demonstrate resolution of any team recommendations made for improvement (Recommendations 4 and 5), include a summary of progress on college-identified plans for improvement as expressed in the self study report and forecast where the college expects to be by the time of the next comprehensive evaluation.

I have previously sent you a copy of the evaluation team report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires you to give the team report and this letter dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college self study report. This group should include the campus leadership and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that the team report and the self study report be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the college library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your web site or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.

The recommendations contained in the evaluation team report represent the observations of the evaluation team at the time of the visit. The Commission reminds you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the team report, the college is expected to use the report to improve the educational programs and services of the institution.
The college conducted a comprehensive self study as part of its evaluation. The Commission suggests that the plans for improvement of the institution included in that document be taken into account in the continuing development of Sierra College. The next comprehensive evaluation of the college will occur during Fall 2013.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to remind you that federal legislation affecting accrediting agencies requires that accredited colleges conduct systematic assessment of educational outcomes (see especially Standards One and Two). A further requirement is that accrediting agencies pay close attention to student loan default rates.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution’s educational programs and services. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness and quality.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Ms. Rachel Rosenthal, Accreditation Liaison Officer
   Board President, Sierra College
   Dr. Steven M. Kinsella, Team Chair
   Evaluation Team Members
   Ms. Linda Henderson, U.S. DOE