

REPORT OF THE WASC SPECIAL VISIT TEAM

To American Samoa Community College

Date of visit: April 6 – April 7, 2012

Team Roster

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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 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 ACSCU for a single BA in Education, while retaining its primary associate-level accreditation with ACCJC. This eligibility expired in December of 2010 before a candidacy application was submitted. In August of 2011 ASCC received 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 scheduled for April of 2012. Thus this special visit will have its relatively narrow focus on issues related to the one bachelor's level degree being considered. Their B.Ed. program consists of 73 semester hours of GE 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).

ASCC is the only post-secondary institution in the Territory of American Samoa. They offer a

two-year degree in Elementary Education, but the only option for a four-year degree is 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, which is 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.

ASCC is anticipating graduating two students with the B.Ed. in the Spring of 2012, six more in the Fall of 2012, and two more in the Spring of 2013. They report that the small numbers so far are primarily due to the fact that Title IV financial aid is not available to students until the program is granted candidacy from WASC. A large pool of education majors in the associate degree program suggests that when this aid is available the program will grow significantly.

Since ASCC will remain under the jurisdiction of ACCJC as its primary accreditor, the institution was asked to prepare a self-study that addressed its preparation for, and implementation of, the B.Ed. degree program, primarily with reference to the recommendations of the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC). For this reason, this report is not a comprehensive analysis of the institution's compliance with all ACSCU Standards and CFRs, and focuses instead on the eligibility criteria identified by the ERC as key issues in their December 14, 2011 letter. These are:

1. Criterion 4 (CFRs 3.8, 3.9): Seek more Board members with BA degrees or above
2. Criterion 10 (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.7): Refine and align SLOs
3. Criterion 11: Continued compliance with WASC Policy on Award of Academic Credit
4. Criterion 13 (CFT 2.2a, and Guideline, 2.6): Assessment of core competencies
5. Criterion 17 (CFR 3.6): Ensure competencies in digital information
6. Criterion 18 (CFR 3.5): Work to ensure institution-level financial support

7. Criterion 19 (CFR 3.5): Sufficient internal financial detail to support judgments about B.Ed. program.
8. Criterion 20 (CFR 4.3): Link institutional research with planning for the B.Ed.
9. Criterion 21 (CFR 4.7): Expand the assessment-related database to support program review

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” and referred to henceforth as the “Bachelor of Education Self Study”, or “BED SS”) including substantial supporting materials provided in an electronic appendix, was clear and well written, and provided the Special Visit Team with a great deal of information and insight into the institution and the B.Ed. It is clear that the report is a result of the hard work and careful reflections from the ASCC Teacher Education faculty, Administrators and Board. The B.Ed. Working Group, comprised of the Director of Teacher Education, the Teacher Education faculty, and the Vice-President for Academic and Student Affairs, prepared the drafts of the report. Drafts were circulated to the President, the Board, and the President’s Advisory Council, as well as to the ASCC faculty, staff, and other deans and administrators. The ASCC Board approved the final draft. The drafts were informed both by the longer-term work of two active planning and governance bodies – the Assessment Planning Core Committee and the Curriculum Committee (comprised of academic department chairs), and is informed too by the Institutional Strategic Plan (2009-2014). Faculty in particular appears to have been deeply involved in the student learning outcomes assessment project and the GE outcomes project.

There were less than two months between the letter from the WASC Eligibility Review Committee on 12/14/11 and the submission of the Special Visit Report on 2/10/12. Given this short interval it is perhaps not surprising that there was not a lot of new, specific evidence presented to support institutional actions or decisions made in response to the ERC's letter. The Report does reference quite a bit of data predating the ERC letter, though it does not analyze or engage and reflect on this data as specifically and systematically as might have been helpful. The conclusions of the Report do align with the presented evidence.

C. Description of the Team Review Process

The Special Visit team reviewed the BED SS prior to the visit, both individually and together at a team conference call, during which plans were made for the visit. During the two-day visit the team met with a broad range of administrators, faculty, staff and students, as well as with the Board, toured and inspected the facilities, and reviewed further documentation provided on site. The team met to discuss its findings prior to the Exit Interview, 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.

One unusual aspect of the team's visit that provided uniquely relevant and powerful evidence of the need for a local and culturally informed teacher education program in the territory was a traditional Ava Welcoming Ceremony provided by ASCC students and local village elders and Chiefs. The ceremony, performed in Samoan, made clear to the team how important it is for this territory to be able to provide itself with elementary and secondary teachers who both value and understand Samoan culture and language, but are also trained to teach their students competencies in the language and academic skills needed to succeed in the larger world community as well.

SECTION II – TEAM ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES

Key Eligibility Criterion Issues

The focus of this Special Visit was the new B.Ed. degree. The team analyzed the nine-eligibility criteria identified by the WASC ERC as key issues in their letter of 12/14/11. Each of these issues is discussed below.

Criterion 4 (CFRs 3.8, 3.9): Seek more Board members with BA degrees or above

ASCC is a semi-autonomous agency of the American Samoa Government, governed by a Board of Higher Education that, while appointed by the governor according to territorial law, is charged with the autonomous governance of the college (CFR 1.6), including the selection of the President and oversight of the annual budget (BED Self Study, p. 16). The terms of the Board members are staggered, assuring that no governor can appoint more than half the Board during a term of office.

The ERC recommended that ASCC seek to add members to its Board with more extensive educational experience in light of the anticipated addition of a bachelor's degree with upper division courses. The Board consists of seven professional members plus one student. Currently six of the seven professional slots are filled, three with persons holding a doctoral degree, one with a master's degree, one with a bachelor's degree and one with an associate's degree. The Board member with the associate's degree is currently working on his bachelor's degree (BED SS, p. 46-48). The team asked the college President and the Academic Dean about plans to enhance the educational experience represented on its Board during the visit. While pointing out that currently two-thirds of the filled Board slots were occupied with members with a master's degree or higher (rather impressive given the relatively small proportion of the

territorial population with advanced degrees), they also affirmed their commitment to enhancing this further. They have informed the Governor's Office of the importance of filling the open slot with someone with an advanced degree.

Criterion 10 (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.7): Refine and align SLOs

The ERC advised ASCC to continue to attend to expressing SLOs in ways that would facilitate assessment, and to integrate SLOs at the lower and upper division levels in ways that would clearly identify where each outcome is addressed in the curriculum. The ERC further urged ASCC to continue involving the faculty in the curriculum development and assessment process.

As noted in the BED SS (p. 18), ASCC has developed standardized SLOs, and courses are named and described according to competencies and levels of outcome attainment (CFR 2.1). Faculty has been hired for each course based on appropriate expertise. The Special Visit Team spent considerable time interviewing the entire Teacher Education Department (TED) faculty about these issues during the visit. The Team was profoundly impressed by the extensive and deep level of engagement by every member of the faculty in the intentional and systematic process of developing a state of the art curriculum for their Education program. This process included the development of carefully crafted SLOs at each level, with specified, appropriate assessments, and systematic curricular maps indicating how SLOs were addressed and assessed throughout the curriculum. The Team reviewed these materials, including curricular maps, during the interview with the faculty.

Criterion 11: Continued compliance with WASC Policy on Award of Academic Credit

The ERC noted that the materials ASCC had submitted to them demonstrated good practice in terms of policies guiding the assignment of course credit, but also noted that these academic credit policies would continue to be closely monitored throughout all accreditation stages. The BED SS clearly reaffirms their commitment to and compliance with the WASC policy on the awarding of academic credit, and provides their specific policies, which require at least one hour of classroom instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work each week, for 15 weeks, for each one hour of credit (p. 49).

Criterion 13 (CFT 2.2a, and Guideline, 2.6): Assessment of core competencies

The ERC urged ASCC to bring the work of fully defining the SLOs associated with bachelor's level General Education to a high level by the time of the next review. This specifically was to include development of lower and upper division GE competencies, the designation of core faculty responsible for implementation, assessment and periodic review of the GE curriculum, with an eye to the eventual demonstration of achievement of the five core competencies listed in CFR 2.2a (college-level written and oral communication, quantitative skills, information literacy and critical analysis of data and argument). The Team's review of the material related to Criterion 13 in the BED SS (see p. 49, for example) and the appendices (see the often cited "Closing the Loop" presentation on proposed curriculum changes for the 2010-12 course catalogue prepared by the TED in the spring of 2010), suggested that ASCC has yet to bring its work in this area up to the high level of development urged by the ERC. This conclusion was further confirmed by the Team's interview with faculty and key administrators during the visit. For example, when asked about progress on developing and assessing upper

division GE SLOs, the Team was repeatedly referred to the “Closing the Loop” presentation, developed two years previously and which focuses on program SLO development, implementation and assessment.

The Special Visit Team is aware of the unique aspects of the ASCC context. Administrators, faculty and board members have immersed themselves in the development of a rigorous, well-designed teacher education program that follows the currently accepted best practices in terms of curriculum development, integration, assessment and review. It is clear that the TED staff is deeply committed to this program, and to their students, and has invested considerable time and energy well above and beyond what is typically expected of even the most engaged faculty. ASCC has developed a curriculum for a four-year teacher education degree that is robust and appears to exceed the standards that would be applied to any established four-year institution, an impressive accomplishment for two-year institution that is developing its first baccalaureate degree. However, while ASCC has an excellent sense of what is required for lower-division GE and for both lower and upper division courses in its new baccalaureate degree, it has not yet demonstrated an equivalent implementation of what is expected for the development of upper-division GE SLOs and their assessment and review. This may be further complicated by the substantial overlap between the competencies associated with upper-division GE and the competencies associated with a Teacher Education program. Nevertheless, while students training to be elementary and secondary teachers are expected to be able to read and write, and have well developed quantitative and critical thinking skills, there is a distinction between these skills as developed in the context of the specific domain of teacher education, and these skills as developed in the broader context of upper-division general education. The Special Visit Team strongly recommends that ASCC make bringing their assessment of and

demonstration of student competency in GE SLOs (particularly at the upper division) to a highly developed level a top priority for their next review.

Criterion 17 (CFR 3.6): Ensure competencies in digital information

The ERC encouraged ASCC to pursue initiatives to ensure campus-wide competency in the use of digital resources, and to recognize the role of faculty in determining and assessing academic assignments using these resources.

During the visit the team was able to directly inspect the digital resources described in the BED SS (see. p. 50 and related appendices). In particular, the Team toured the two Mac Labs, each with more than twenty beautiful new I-Macs in comfortable, user-friendly rooms. ASCC makes ample use of MOODLE as its course management system. The Team also inspected new “smart boards” in many of the classrooms dedicated to the bachelor program in education. It was clear to the team that the faculty was competent in the use of these digital technologies, and that some of the TED faculty were campus leaders in the educational use of such technology. The team also toured the library and interviewed the librarian, and noted the appropriate availability of digital resources for bachelor’s level Education students, including access to ERIC/PsycINFO and support for student learning and use of APA style.

Criterion 18 (CFR 3.5): Work to ensure institution-level financial support

The ERC expressed concern about reported operating losses in recent years, and the possibility that the financial needs of the new B.Ed. might threaten financial support for the AA programs in education on which the B.Ed. will continue to rely.

The team interviewed the president, academic dean and board chair and vice-chair about these and other financial issues at some length during the visit. It was clear to the team from these interviews that ASCC is well aware of these issues, and has a plausible plan in place for managing them. They have a transition to teaching grant that will cover the financial needs of the B.Ed. for the first five years. The funds needed to be self-sustaining without the grant will come from tuition increases that will be possible once the program is granted eligibility by the WASC Senior Commission, which will make students eligible for Pell grants. The president and board chair reported that the Governor has assured them that the B.Ed. is a core part of his vision for the territory, and that he is committed to finding the remaining funding for a sustainable budget. The Acting Director of Education for American Samoa, appointed by the Governor, who also serves on the ASCC Board and was present for several of the team's interviews, confirmed this. The president noted that ASCC has secured separate grant funding for the associate degree programs, so the financial needs of the B.Ed. have not been draining support from the A.A. degrees.

Criterion 19 (CFR 3.5): Sufficient internal financial detail to support judgments about B.Ed. program.

The ERC noted the importance for future accreditation reviews that ASCC be able to provide financial information specific to the new B.Ed. so that informed judgments about its viability and effectiveness could be made.

The team found, both in the BED SS (see p. 50) and in interviews with relevant administrators, that ASCC understands both the importance of dedicated financial tracking of the new B.Ed. program, and how to do it. They will be tracking course and degree completion rates

to monitor how actual growth in the program compares with their expectations, and will adjust and coordinate program planning as necessary. This data will be available to future accreditation review teams.

Criterion 20 (CFR 4.3): Link institutional research with planning for the B.Ed.

The ERC advised ASCC to link its institutional research functions with key data related to the new B.Ed. so that its effectiveness could be adequately monitored.

The team found during its visit that ASCC has invested considerable thought and planning into the elements of its IR processes with regard to the B.Ed. They have developed numerous specific rubrics (reviewed by the team during the visit) used to assess student academic work, and work in the full semester of student teaching completed by students in their final year. They have developed policies and processes that will ensure that this data is used systematically for program planning and development. They have a full-time IR Director, who is also one of the adjunct faculty members in the B.Ed. program, and so well aware of its needs and intricacies.

Criterion 21 (CFR 4.7): Expand the assessment-related database to support program

review

The ERC urged ASCC to continue working on summative learning strategies for its B.Ed. in support of eventual program review, including the creation of an appropriate assessment database that could be used to produce meaningful trend data.

The team was able to inquire about these issues during several of its interviews in the course of the visit. The team learned that ASCC is now using the “Compliance Assist” software

package that allows it to gather relevant data on student learning and competency for each SLO, and then use it later to evaluate both students and the program. They have a revised Program Review template, that all faculty participated in developing, which includes assessment data.

Additional Issues

In addition to the key eligibility criterion issues identified by the ERC, the Special Visit Team found three other issues worthy of review and analysis.

Faculty Commitment: The Teacher Education Department at ASCC currently employs five full-time faculty and more than thirty adjunct faculty (who teach selected courses; only some of these teach each semester). It was clear from the team's interviews during the visit that the faculty are unusually committed to, and passionate about, a Samoan-based B.Ed. program. The Academic Dean reported that almost all faculty had been off-island at least once in recent years for specialized professional development and training in some area related to the new B.Ed. The commitment and competence of these teachers is responsible for the impressive foundation that has already been laid for this program, and for the energy and vitality that the team sensed surrounded it on campus and the entire island. The team was concerned though about the workload being shouldered by the core TED faculty in particular, whether this level of work was sustainable over the long term, and the potential for burnout (CFR 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). The team recommends that ASCC include increased funding in future budget planning to increase the core TED faculty so as to more reasonably spread out the work load for the new B.Ed.

Student Commitment: The team was deeply impressed with the passionate commitment to the B.Ed. displayed by current students at ASCC. During the group interview with the students (in the absence of faculty or administrators) the students consistently expressed their appreciation

and admiration for their faculty, in many cases movingly testifying to the life-changing effects of the program. Some of them have important family, community and cultural obligations that keep them tied to the island, which would have prevented them from pursuing any educational opportunities beyond an associate degree if it were not for the new B.Ed. Other students would have pursued higher educational opportunities, but would have left the island, in many cases probably developing relationships that would have interfered with their returning to the island. All of them were particularly proud of the emphasis on Samoan culture and language in the ASCC B.Ed. program.

Community and Government Commitment: During the visit the team noted in particular the close working relationship between the Teacher Education program at ASCC and the Territorial Department of Education. In such an intimate context as American Samoa there are multiple cross-relationships between these two entities, with many current ASCC TED faculty and administrators have worked for the Department of Education as elementary and secondary teachers, and some Department of Education personnel having served as faculty at ASCC. The Acting Director of the Department of Education serves on the ASCC Board. They all live and often worship close to each other. As a result there is a very close working relationship, and the Territory clearly supports the new B.Ed. and is making it a priority in its short and long term planning. The team also could not help but notice the strong support ASCC and the B.Ed. enjoys from the community at large. During the visit a photograph of the welcoming ceremony provided for the team on the first day of the visit appeared in the local newspaper. Team members were recognized while touring the island by many locals, who spontaneously expressed their pride and joy in the program.

SECTION III – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations:

1. The team applauds ASCC's identification of a significant educational need in the region that will greatly affect the future for Samoan culture and its people and the College's commitment to ameliorating it.
2. The team acknowledges ASCC's cooperative spirit and its insight into the advantages of the collective effort necessary for quality program development.
3. The team is edified by ASCC's close relationship with the region and the values which they mutually share.
4. The team is pleased to recognize the financial support that ASCC enjoys from the government and the confidence displayed by the Governor.
5. The team is singularly impressed by the thoroughness of ASCC's preparation for the visit and the quality of the B.Ed. that is being established.
6. The team affirms ASCC's significant commitment to Samoan cultural heritage while participating in the global community through technology and applying its capacity to assess their progress locally.

Recommendations:

1. The team recommends that ASCC continue its thorough, exemplary B.Ed. development process, including the careful attention paid to development of appropriate SLOs at all levels and curriculum mapping (CFR 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6)
2. The team recommends that ASCC bring to full maturity its current planning for a summative assessment strategy and processes for program review designed to ensure the achievement of cumulative learning outcomes of graduates, including especially for the

core domains of general education at the lower and upper division (CFR 2.2, 2.2a and Guideline, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6).

3. The team recommends that ASCC seek additional funding to allow for reassigned time for faculty so as to reduce the possibility of unnecessary burnout (CFR 3.3).
4. The team recommends that ASCC seek funding for additional faculty positions in order to support anticipated program growth effectively (CFR 3.1, 3.2).