

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 23, 2017

Contact: Jennifer Perez, Director, Campus Communications
Office: 714-808-4671 * jperez@sce.edu

WASC Accreditation Visiting Team Commends North Orange County Community College District's School of Continuing Education as "Model Noncredit Program"

The Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) four-member accreditation visiting team spent four productive days, March 19-22, 2017, visiting **North Orange County Community College District's (NOCCCD) School of Continuing Education (SCE)** classrooms and meeting with faculty, staff, and students. The WASC team's visit marked SCE's second self-study visit. The WASC ACS team granted SCE a full, six-year accreditation cycle, with no mid-cycle review, and no warnings during the institution's initial self-study visit in March 2011. The WASC visiting team was quoted as saying, "SCE is a model school" in both 2011 and 2017.

The WASC team presented their self-study visit findings, which included SCE strengths and areas of future focus, to SCE Provost **Valentina Purtell** and over 100 SCE staff, faculty, students, and District administrators at a meeting held at the Anaheim Campus on Wednesday, March 22, 2017. The WASC visiting team shared how impressed they were by the ways in which SCE celebrates diversity, cultivates a boundless and growing presence in the community, and implements innovative practices in curriculum and student services. SCE was deemed a ***courageous leader*** in the field of noncredit.

SCE was given commendations in many areas, but most notably in the following five major areas:

- SCE employees across all constituency groups are passionate about serving students and have created an institutional culture which embraces diversity.
- The multi-faceted delivery of services to students is a model for adult education.
- Innovative use of braided funding allows SCE to offer robust programs to serve their diverse student body.
- A school-wide trust in leadership creates a climate of collaboration and risk-taking which makes SCE a courageous leader in innovative curriculum design.
- Through a dynamic synergy with its community partners, SCE is a vital and vibrant institution which provides all students that it serves with pathways to success.

In addition, the WASC Visiting Team provided SCE with two major key issues (also known as goals):

- Goal 1: Repackage existing learning options in the form of educational pathways and create new educational pathways to increase the likelihood of completion and transition to credit programs and beyond.
- Goal 2: Align student services from various funding streams to improve student performance as measures by common indicators.

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The Visiting Team recommended that SCE strengthen its Institutional Effectiveness Goal by developing a school-wide program improvement model based on data analysis and discussion, and by engaging all faculty, managers, and designated staff in integrated planning efforts.

SCE's WASC accreditation chair **Lianne Greenlee** summed up the visit by emphasizing SCE's characteristics, saying: "SCE is a model adult education institution – celebrate it! [SCE] is successful, critical to the field, and can rightfully be called courageous leaders." She also gave a commendation for providing a welcoming environment for the diverse student body. "Students said to us 'at SCE, we are proud to go to school with students who have disabilities as well as students of all ages and backgrounds. We feel safe and welcome here; this is our home.'"

Provost **Purtell** gave credit and thanks to the over 120 faculty and staff members who contributed to the self-study report and prepared for the visit. A special note of gratitude was given to SCE's WASC accreditation co-chairs, **Adam S. U. Gottdank, Ph.D.** and **Julie Schoepf**.

During the visit, the team's goal was to validate SCE's self-study and identify school-wide strengths and key focus issues. Based on the self-study, the Visiting Team submits their report to the WASC Commission with recommendations on accreditation status. SCE will revise the Action Plan by incorporating the Major Key Issues identified by the visiting team. Once approved, the Action Plan will be sent to WASC by June 1, 2017. The WASC Commission will determine and release SCE's accreditation status for either full or partial accreditation as well as the accreditation cycle term, which if granted full accreditation, could be up to a maximum of six years. This final official notification from WASC will be sent to the SCE Provost's Office in June 2017; upon receipt, **Provost Purtell** will then communicate SCE's standing with students, staff, and faculty.

SCE Background

A member of NOCCCD, which also includes Cypress College and Fullerton College, SCE has been cultivating change for over 80 years with educational programs and services from high school completion, English-language acquisition, career technical education training, and self-development courses. SCE serves 30,000 students annually, ranging from preschoolers to seniors, at three Center locations in Anaheim, Cypress, and Wilshire (Fullerton) as well as approximately 150 off-campus locations. Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and part of the California Community College System, all SCE courses are approved by the State of California. NOCCCD's School of Continuing Education – **Change. Cultivated.**

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