* College of the Redwoods*

*7351 Tompkins Hill Road*

*Eureka, CA 95501*

**CLOSURE PLAN**

*Submitted to*

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**October 15, 2012**

**To:** Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

 Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**From:** Kathryn G. Lehner, President/Superintendent

College of the Redwoods

7351 Tompkins Hill Road

Eureka, CA 95501

**Date:**  October 15, 2012

This Closure Plan is submitted to accompany the Show Cause Report for College of the Redwoods. We certify that there was broad participation by representatives of the College community in the preparation of this Closure Plan.



Dr. Colleen Mullery, President, Board of Trustees



Kathryn G. Lehner, President/Superintendent



Dr. Utpal K. Goswami, Vice President of Instruction/Accreditation Liaison Officer



Steven Bevier, President, Associated Students, College of the Redwoods



Michael Richards, Co-President, Academic Senate



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Kerry Mayer, President, College of the Redwoods Faculty Organization



Thomas Olivares, President, California School Employees’ Assc., Local #509



MaryGrace McGovern, President, Managers’ Council

# College of the Redwoods Closure Plan

**Background**

On January 10-11, 2012, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) via the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) notified in writing that College of the Redwoods (CR) had been placed on Show Cause. At its meeting on January 10-11, 2012, ACCJC reviewed the institutional CR Self Study Report and the report of the evaluation team which visited College of the Redwoods Monday, October 17, - Thursday, October 20, 2011. The Commission also heard testimony at their January 10-11, 2012 meeting presented by then Interim President/Superintendent Utpal K. Goswami.

The Commission acted to place CR on Show Causeand to require that the College submit a Show Cause Report by October 15, 2012.This report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

Show Causeis issued when the Commission finds an institution in substantial non-compliance with the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or policies, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission. The Commission is requiring CR to Show Cause as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. CR must demonstrate through evidence that it has corrected the deficiencies noted by the Commission and is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies. The burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. During the Show Cause period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission’s Policy on Closing an Institution. The Commission also requires CR to submit this Closure Planwith itsShow Cause Reporton October 15, 2012.

According to the ACCJC Constitution, under the status of Show Cause, the College must demonstrate that it has corrected the deficiencies noted by the Commission and is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. Additionally, the Commission’s 2011 external evaluation team recommendations incorporate recommendations from past evaluation teams that the College has not resolved, including recommendations made by the 2005 comprehensive evaluation team and one recommendation on planning made by the 1999 comprehensive evaluation team.

ACCJC has directed the Redwoods Community College District to make preparations for closure according to the Commission’s Policy on Closing an Institution. A revocation by ACCJC/WASC of the CR’s accreditation would likely result in a loss of State and federal funds, including all general fund and categorical apportionment revenues, financial aid, and maintenance funds. The magnitude of this in effect would cause all functions of the College to cease. Although, the District could technically remain as a legal entity, removal of funding could have the same effect as closing the institution. CR is taking every step and precaution to address all ACCJC recommendations so that the institution can demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. However, due to the parallel requirement to address the Commission’s policy on closing an institution, this Closure Report is being taken seriously, includes thoughtful planning, and is being submitted to ACCJC on October 15, 2012. College of the Redwoods will follow ACCJC’s by-laws and Policy on Closing an Institution to develop a closure plan to ensure students’ interests are protected. Therefore, we have worked to develop a closure plan that would provide services to students and the community with the least disruption while CR satisfactorily addresses all of the ACCJC recommendations, Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

The ACCJC Policy on Closing an Institution stipulates that “Before closing, the Board of Trustees should consider carefully such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive institutional sharing and cooperation.” As a result, the State-appointed Special Trustee and the College President/Superintendent have worked diligently to ensure that the interests of the students are being protected.

In the event the Closure Plan needed to be activated by the beginning of Fall semester in July 2013, CR would, in advance using a consultative process, implement the following:

* Each constituency group will be identified and engaged (Planning and Consultation);
* A review of State and/or National Law Relative to Legal Responsibilities (Title to Real Property/Other Legal Responsibilities) Alternatives to Closing (Merging, Forming Consortiums, Inter-Institutional Sharing/Cooperation);
* Instructional Services Agreement (ISA) with an accredited College to offer contracted instructional services. A substantive change proposal would need to be approved by ACCJC for this to be a viable option;
* Governing Board fully informs all affected constituents; and
* Provide for student completion of programs and the securing of student records.

In adherence to the ACCJC’s “Policy on Closing an Institution” requirements, the following is a list of the activities that the College would need to or has already begun to embark upon to ensure that transition for students is smooth.

* A Complete Analysis/Address of the Following Elements will be accomplished:
	+ student completion;
	+ disposition of academic records and financial aid transcripts;
	+ provisions for faculty and staff;
	+ disposition of assets;
	+ obligation of assets;
	+ coordination with the ACCJC; and
	+ key governing board obligations.
1. **Student Completion:**
* In the event the Closure Plan needed to be activated, CR will provide for the academic needs of students who have not completed their degrees and educational programs.
* Arrangements for transfers to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions.
* Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept records will be submitted to the ACCJC for approval.
* Arrangements will be made with the appropriate agencies (federal or State grants), to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. For student-held scholarships or grants or other available funds that can be legally used, appropriate agreements must be negotiated or students must be fully informed.
* For students who have completed 75 percent of an academic degree and educational program, arrangements shall be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree and educational program elsewhere or through any approved partnerships, but to receive the degree and educational program from the closed institution. Arrangements shall be made with ACCJC for continuation of the College’s accreditation by the ACCJC for this purpose only. These steps (for which written ACCJC consent required) normally require the institution to continue as a legal corporate entity for 12-18 months beyond the closing date. Once the College’s accreditation is terminated, it will no longer be authorized to award accredited degrees.
* If accreditation is removed, a list of students who have completed 75 percent of an academic degree/educational program/certificate program by the end of Spring 2013 semester will be generated. Included with the final transcript, there will be a letter addressing the College’s accreditation status and the student’s eligibility for transfer. If applicable, The University of California and the California State University campuses as well other institutions will receive correspondence from the President/ Superintendent on the College’s accreditation status.
* The Vice President of Student Development will be responsible for notifying students who have completed 75 percent of an academic degree/educational program or certification program of their potential graduation/completion status. Students will be informed of their status for degree or certificate and their option to receive degree or certificate under CR or other institutions if they are to complete the respective curriculum. After a loss of accreditation, CR students would have no other option except to transfer to another accredited institution.
* Since CR is a public institution, credits earned from the College will be accepted by other Colleges and universities. The College will issue a letter for each student indicating the closure of the College and to ensure the acceptance of the credits by other accredited institutions. If applicable, the President/Superintendent of College of the Redwoods will send College closure notifications to the neighboring Colleges for them to accept the students and their credits before any termination date.
* The College will provide each student with the most up-to-date transcript at the time of request. The College will also provide information to the students by mail and telephone hotlines, and through the College’s website to inform students where they can retrieve a copy of their transcripts. Communication will also be made available in Spanish.
1. **Disposition of Academic Records and Financial Aid Transcripts:**
* The District has taken steps to digitize and microfilm student files. Student records have been electronic since Fall 1985. CR student records from 1985 through the academic year 2011-12 are stored in the Colleague Datatel/Ellucian Student Information System. Records from 1963 through 1985 are on microfilm. Records from 2004 to the current date are scanned and are accessible via Softdocs.
* A vendor has been secured to digitize financial aid records, human resources records, and business office records. A vendor has been secured to digitize and store financial aid records from the 2009-10 and 2010-11 years in a secure climate-controlled facility where all records are easily accessible.The financial aid records are also stored electronically and can be accessed through the Colleague Datatel/Ellucian Student Information System.
* The College will notify ACCJC and students of the location of stored records and accessibility once the process has been completed. The College will also work with the State Chancellor’s Office to contract with an entity to electronically store all transcripts and provide the students with the process to order them.
* The District will announce the process and procedure on how students can obtain their transcripts through the news media in both English and Spanish and arrange for the Admissions and Records Office to be open for pick-ups as campus closure is in effect. CR will set up a dedicated phone number that will be prominently displayed on the existing College which will be continuously maintained. Students will be given instructions on how and where they can order transcripts.

**C. Provisions for Faculty and Staff:**

* In the event of closure, CR will inform each constituency as fully and as early as possible.
* The institution can make no guarantees but will genuinely and in good faith assist faculty and staff in finding alternative employment.
* In the event of closure, all certificated employees would receive a March 15 notices.
* In the event of closure, all classified employees would receive lay-off notices with the provisions in Education Code Sections 45117 and 88017.
* In the event of closure, the District would contact neighboring Districts and Colleges for advertised positions and notify the faculty and staff of the openings.
* The College would continue to accept resignation or early retirements.
* CR administration is available, upon request, to write references for faculty and staff. In addition, the College would disseminate information regarding other job opportunities to faculty and staff. Through lay-off notices, the College would be informing all faculty and staff of the possibility of closure. The Human Resources Department (HR) would actively list job opportunities and work with faculty and staff in alternative placement where available. In the event the College loses faculty mid-term, the College would work with neighboring institutions to provide students the opportunity to complete courses.
* In the event of closure, all long-term off-site (credit/non-credit instruction) existing contracts/MOUs or lease agreement would be terminated. In some locations the College would establish a month to month arrangement based on Summer course offerings. All lease agreements would be reviewed and established in collaboration with any potential merger with another District upon notification of closure.
* The College may consider an early retirement incentive to be processed for certificated and classified employees.

**D. Disposition of Assets:**

* The District will remain as the legal entity to monitor the disposition of its assets if necessary.
* In the event of closure, all long-term off-site (credit/non-credit instruction) existing contracts/MOUs or lease agreements would be terminated. In some locations the College would establish a month-to-month arrangement based on Summer course offerings. All lease agreements would be reviewed and established in collaboration with any potential merger with another District upon notification of closure.
* The District will notify the U.S. Department of Education upon closure and submit to the Department financial reports and performance reports within 45 days. The District will notify the USDE how records will be retained and stored.
* The District will develop procedures for collecting any outstanding student loans reconcile any over-awards, overpayments, and/or withdrawal calculations.
* The District will return all unexpended funds of all categorical programs to the respective agencies if these agencies require such action.
* The District will work with the College Foundation to ensure that the assets would honor the intentions of the original providers including endowments and donors, and grantors. All donors and grantors will be notified of the College’s disposition of endowments and donations.
* The District will follow the State or federal laws regarding the disposition of funds and institutional assets if necessary. The District will determine the value of real and personal properties. The District will explore all viable options and confirm that employee long-term retiree benefits, vacation and compensation time obligations are satisfied. The District will satisfy vendor obligations as required by federal and State regulations.
* With the assistance of legal counsel the District will also explore the sales of physical plant, equipment, library, special collections, art, or dispensation of other funds if necessary.
* In the event the College does not have sufficient finance resources to honor commitments, the Board of Trustees will determine the necessary steps to proceed with a possible declaration of bankruptcy. At which time, the bankruptcy court judge will determine the dispositions of assets.

**E. Obligations to Creditors:**

* The District will identify all outstanding creditor obligations for all funds, including local bond fund creditors, if the District deems this necessary.
* The District will process properly all claims and interests with creditors and other agencies if the District deems this necessary.
* The District will apprise all agencies of the institutions arrangements in order not to be subject to later legal proceedings if the District deems this necessary.
* The District will follow the State or federal laws regarding payments of creditors.
* The District will develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution by involving potential claimants if the District deems this necessary.
* In the event the District does not have sufficient financial resources to honor obligations to creditors, the Board of Trustees will determine the necessary steps to proceed with possibility declaration of bankruptcy. At which time, the bankruptcy court judge will determine the dispositions of assets.

**F. Coordination with the ACCJC:**

* In the event of closure, the Board of Trustees of CR and the President/Superintendent of the College will consult with and keep apprised the ACCJC of developments as the plan to close an institution progresses.
* The District will complete arrangements with the ACCJC before the closure is in place in order to assure that students have transferred to legally authorized and accredited institutions including any partnership institutions.
* In the event of closure, the District will submit a final closure report to the ACCJC and indicate where students’ records will be stored.

**G. Key Governing Board Obligations:**

* In the event of closure, the CR Board of Trustees, will take a formal vote to terminate the institution as determined by ACCJC’s termination-of-accreditation decision and based on the progress of the closure activities. The Board of Trustees will ensure that the current students who are at 75 percent completion will be able to be graduated from CR by completing their requirements elsewhere or through any approved partnerships. The Board of Trustees will take the legal action to set a deadline for completion of degrees and certifications, authorize the President/Superintendent of the College or District Chief Executive Officer to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied; and make arrangements with ACCJC in advance regarding CR granting degrees. CR and the Board of Trustees are clear that in the event of termination, the College will not be authorized to award accredited degrees.
* The Board of Trustees will determine the date to file for bankruptcy if necessary and whether or not all obligations to students have been satisfactorily discharged.

**Fruition:**

In the event of closure, CR District will provide the students with services during the final term in the academics, business office, financial aid office, registrar’s office, counseling, and other essential support services. The District will notify management, faculty and classified staff which personnel are to be retained. The District will make every effort to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them. The District will continue to operate in its legal capacity regarding relevant personnel services, fiscal services, facilities services, and other related student services during and after the closure period until such time as all legal obligations are met.