Peer Review Team Follow-up Report

Mt. San Antonio College
1100 N. Grand Ave.
Walnut, CA 91789

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted a follow-up visit to Mt. San Antonio College on October 23, 2025. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its January 2026 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

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Team Chair

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Purpose of Follow-Up Visit

INSTITUTION: Mt. San Antonio College

DATES OF VISIT: October 22-23, 2025

TEAM CHAIR: Matt Wetstein

Purpose of Site Visit
The peer review team conducted its comprehensive peer review of Mt. San Antonio College on February 28-29, 2024. At its June 2024 meeting, the Commission determined noncompliance with Standard II.A.7 and Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education. Based on the peer review report, the Commission provided a single institutional recommendation for compliance: In order to meet the standard, the Commission requires that the college ensure that regular and substantive interaction takes place in distance education courses. The Commission acted to require a Follow-Up Report due no later than October 1, 2025, followed by a visit from a peer review team. Members of the peer review team conducted their follow-up site visit to Mt. San Antonio College on October 23, 2025.

The purpose of the visit was to verify that the Follow-Up Report prepared by the Institution was accurate, and through examination of evidence, and interviews with Institution representatives, to determine if the Institution now meets the Standards noted in the following compliance requirements:

Standard II.A.7 and Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education (College Requirement 1): In order to the meet the Standard(s), the Commission requires that the college ensure that regular and substantive interaction takes place in distance education courses.

During the visit, team members met with a dozen faculty, administrators, and classified staff in formal meetings and group interviews. The team thanks the Institution staff for hosting the site visit, coordinating meetings, providing additional documentation, and ensuring a smooth and collegial process.

Team Analysis of Institution Responses to Compliance Requirements

Standard II.A.7 and Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education (College Requirement 1): In order to the meet the Standard(s), the Commission requires that the college ensure that regular and substantive interaction takes place in distance education courses.

Findings and Evidence:

Mt. SAC faculty and staff have made important and noteworthy progress since 2024 on matters relating to regular and substantive interaction (RSI) in distance education courses. As noted in its Follow-Up Report to the Commission, the college used its Distance Learning Committee (DLC), with support from the Faculty Senate and Faculty Association to strengthen its training of faculty for skills and pedagogy for online teaching (SPOT training). Faculty who teach distance education must undergo SPOT certification before being assigned a course, and then complete SPOT recertification every four years. After the 2024 visit found many courses lacking regular and substantive interaction, the SPOT recertification process was enhanced with a module and workshops that focused solely on methods of effective RSI.

Immediately following the team's visit in February 2024, the Academic Senate established an accreditation and RSI Task Force that began to establish parameters for institutional improvement and to ensure institutional compliance with Commission standards and policy. The Task Force focused on developing recommendations for faculty RSI training, and immediate and long-term faculty support needed for distance education. The Task Force sought out best practices from other institutions, including Kapi'olani College's "RSI coaching program" as a model for RSI improvements. After a series of meetings, the Senate's RSI Task Force Report resulted in a set of recommendations and a two-pronged strategy for RSI training and professional development. Phase one focused on the development of a Mt. SAC RSI rubric that could be applied in a peer mentor training program that results in online course reviews. The college set to work on one-to-one training and mentoring, relying on strong RSI faculty leaders as mentors for participating faculty. The subsequent phase envisions using the College's SPOT training and recertification process as a mechanism to embed RSI training that ensures the continuing use of strong RSI practices going forward.

The scope of this work through the 2024-25 period is extraordinary. The College reports that 504 faculty members received peer mentoring support and online course review in the Fall 2024 to Spring 2025 timeframe. Interviews with a few of the peer mentor leaders and recipients of the training indicated that faculty were pleased with the process and felt better prepared to engage with students. One part time faculty member interviewed by the team raved about the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities available to faculty through this program. A classified staff member who created tracking systems for the training and peer mentoring process was also called out for her exemplary work in helping to coordinate such a large cohort of peer review in a brief time.

Central to the training regime has been the support and professional development offerings of the Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching (FCLT). The group of three staff members, supplemented by DE faculty leaders, provided open office hours, same-day drop-in appointments, peer led-training and mentoring, Faculty Flex day sessions, and individual consultations to provide best practices in RSI to distance education faculty. Faculty members interviewed by the team applauded the work of the FCLT and its staff. As part of this work, the college

has developed a Canvas shell that features exemplary models of RSI and distance education instruction that is accessible to all faculty, establishing an RSI hub. A best practices showcase for RSI was rolled out in Nov. 2024 as well, resulting in a series of workshop presentations that occurred then and in the spring 2025 Flex days. A part time faculty member who teaches at multiple colleges indicated to the visiting team that "Mt. SAC goes above and beyond what other colleges communicate" about RSI methods. She was complimentary of the resources, training sessions, workshops, and communications that came from the Mt. SAC FCLT and faculty leadership. While expressing some initial anxiety about going through the RSI review process, this faculty member said the process was positive and reassuring and resulted in better teaching across her courses.

The team reviewed the RSI training materials and found that they provided important, meaningful guidance to faculty as they prepare to teach distance education courses. The team also reviewed results from pre- and post-training surveys that documented significant improvements in understanding RSI methods in distance education. For example, before RSI training in the 2024-25 period, only 17 percent of the faculty said they were "very familiar with RSI criteria in online classes." In post-workshop surveys, that figure jumped to 78 percent. Similarly, prior to the workshops on RSI, 59 percent of the faculty indicated that they needed to "better understand exactly what counts toward RSI." After receiving training, that figure declined to 9 percent.

The team was impressed with the degree of Faculty and Administrative collaboration on compensation for RSI improvements. In 2024 the College Administration and Faculty Association negotiated two agreements that established release time for RSI Co-Coordinators and compensation for faculty to participate in guided professional development and peer review processes designed to improve RSI activities. As indicated earlier, more than 500 faculty took part in this process between fall 2024 and spring 2025. As a result of this work, the college has now embedded RSI review of distance education courses in the curriculum process. In addition, compensation for participating in the RSI professional development process has been enshrined in the collective bargaining agreement. The willingness to address training and peer review structures, professional development processes, and financial compensation has allowed the college to position itself for sustained momentum moving forward. This combination of institutional commitment to RSI improvement from faculty leaders and administrators has resulted in organizational changes that can become systemic if the momentum is sustained.

Successful completion rates in distance education courses have climbed at Mt. SAC. Before the 2024 visit, successful completion rates in DE courses hovered around 69 percent. In the college's most recent survey of course spring 2025 term course completion rates, they jumped to 72.7 percent. The improvement suggests that the college-wide focus on DE training and professional development has paid off with higher student success.

As the college prepared for the follow-up visit, the RSI Co-Coordinators engaged in its own internal audit of 100 course sections to examine them for RSI. This college-specific peer review concluded that 73 percent of the college's courses were meeting RSI standards. This represents a notable attempt to model institutional improvement after the Commission's own methodology for team review of distance education courses.

During the site visit, the team learned that the Distance Learning Committee had also asked the College's Institutional Research Office to conduct focus groups regarding students' recent online experiences. The report from those focus groups offers some revelations of what works along with challenges faced from the student perspective. For example, students indicate they prefer video lectures

where they can hear and see their instructor. The focus group report suggested that the courses seemed more "personable" when these were present in the online courses. Another student commented that recorded lectures allowed them to return to the content if needed, enhancing their retention of concepts and emphasizing the flexible learning that comes with asynchronous distance education.

Students also mention office hours, flexibility, and the willingness of faculty to meet outside of office hours as key elements that they like in Mt. SAC distance education courses. The college representatives interviewed during the visit suggested that the focus group responses were being used to develop an online survey to gather more comprehensive data. The team commends the comprehensive work being done on RSI and encourages the college to incorporate suggestions from student surveys and focus groups into a regular pattern of quality assessment of distance education courses.

The peer review team reviewed 50 randomly selected distance education courses from the spring term of 2025 to assess whether RSI is taking place in distance education courses. All the course sections were asynchronous offerings from the prior term that were made available through a Canvas login portal. Courses provided most of the features that faculty have when teaching at Mt. SAC. The college provided screenshots of course impact reports that identified whether regular messaging, grading, and feedback had been provided within the gradebook feature across the weeks of instruction for the sections. While useful as a dichotomous indicator of weekly interaction taking place in the gradebook module of Canvas (1 if yes, 0 if no), team reviewers devoted more time in the courses themselves to examine grade book responses, discussion threads, and assignment response prompts to determine the quality of faculty interaction, engagement, and feedback. The team relied on Commission policies and distance education rubrics to guide their work while assessing RSI in the courses.

As a guide for its work, the peer review team used the Commission's Rubric to evaluate the course sections on two key domains of quality instruction: 1) the substantive interaction methods apparent in the course sections, and 2) the degree of regular interaction that could be found. On the first domain, reviewers examined the course shells for evidence of direct instruction, assessment and feedback provided to students, the provision of information and responses to questions, and the facilitation of group discussions. The second domain focuses on evidence of regular and predictable engagement, and monitoring of success and engagement with students (with the implication that both elements must be evident to suggest compliance with Commission standards and policy).

The team was impressed with the quality of some of the courses. A substantial percentage of the course shells featured RSI statements that made clear to students the frequency of interaction and messaging that takes place in particular courses. These statements of RSI expectations appeared to flow from the peer review and coordinated professional development provided to the faculty. These statements are found in course syllabi and modules that describe the way that learning and faculty engagement will take place throughout the term. Team members validated the frequency and quality of messages and instructional feedback, noting some exemplary models of RSI. For instance, in Speech 1A classes that require video recordings of individual student speeches, Communication Studies faculty are using three key methods of instructional feedback: 1) student peer evaluations, 2) the faculty member's own grading rubric scoresheet, and 3) instructor comments above and beyond the grading rubric. The quality of these feedback messages is evident in the course shells for these sections, featuring substantive and formative evaluative feedback that reflects both student and instructor engagement.

Likewise, a statistics class featured noteworthy video lectures in the course shells that amplified course content and connected students with their professor in an engaging manner. Coupled with regular course messaging and Q&A sessions, the course provided multiple layers of professor-student interaction that were of high quality and sustained throughout the term of the class.

Overall, the team identified that 92 percent of the courses in the sample provided evidence of regular and substantive interaction in the distance education courses. This demonstrated clear evidence of institutional compliance and significant improvement over the 2024 initial site visit. In short, the work of the college's faculty, staff, and administration has been exemplary, and it has paid off, resulting in substantial improvements over the 18-month period both in patterns of regular and substantive interaction with students, and in higher successful course completion rates.

Conclusion

The institution has addressed the requirements of Standard II.A.7 and the Commission Policy on Distance and Correspondence Education.