



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL**

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Date: January 31, 2018

To: State Board of Fire Services

From: Dawn Robinson, Deputy State Fire Marshall III Specialist

Subject/Agenda Action Item: Merritt Community College
Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) Reaccreditation

Recommended Actions: Denial of Merritt Community College Reaccreditation.

Background Information: Merritt Community College was originally recommended for initial accreditation by the State Board of Fire service on May 22, 2014. On December 16, 2016, State Fire Training sent a letter via FedEx and email to Merritt Community College notifying them that their accreditation as an Accredited Regional Training Program would expire in May 2017. The letter outlined the reaccreditation process, outlined that if the reaccreditation was not achieved prior to expiration that their status as an ARTP would be revoked, as well as offered temporary accreditation through November 2017. A temporary accreditation was requested, the site visit was required to be completed before September 1, 2017.

A similar letter was sent to eleven ARTPs in December 2016, who were identified as expired (See January 2016 STEAC Staff Report Attachment 3). All eleven ARTPs met the requirements of reaccreditation in the timeframe outlined above.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

Upon review of the self-assessment report, a comparison was made to assess the status of goals that were set in March 2014 when Merritt Community College was first accredited. In the process of comparing the self-assessment report dated July 2017, it was found that the report was the same self-assessment provided in March of 2014 with dates and names changed. All data provided was the original data, and over three years old. State Fire Training requested additional information to be provided such as a comprehensive, recent report of how Merritt Community College has met the goals that were set in March of 2014 and to provide up and coming goals for the future. Additionally, five items were listed to be included in the submittal of a more comprehensive report. Merritt Community College simply answered the five items as answers to questions without providing substantial comprehensive details. Merritt Community College failed to provide the required documentation to the Office of the State Fire Marshal for ARTP reaccreditation.

The original site visit was scheduled for August 24, 2017. On August 13, 2017, SFT received an email from Merritt College Fire Science Director, Gilbert Cody requesting a postponement for the accreditation site visit scheduled August 24, 2017 due to unforeseen circumstances and requested a date in late September or early October 2017. On September 21, 2017, Fire Science Director Gilbert Cody contacted SFT via email apologizing for the delay and stated due to a transitional period with Oakland Fire Department and multiple deployments of personnel on task forces the college felt it could have the site visit the second week in October 2017 or anytime in November 2017. A site visit was scheduled for October 26, 2017,

however, SFT staff had to cancel due to illness. On October 30, 2017, a site visit was then rescheduled for December 8, 2017.

A site visit was conducted on December 8, 2017 with Gilbert Cody, Fire Technology Director; Sean Gascie, Firefighter 1 Academy Director; Wellington Jackson, Bay Area Youth EMT Program Executive Director; and Dawn Robinson, Deputy State Fire Marshal III Specialist, State Fire Training, in attendance. A meeting with Mrs. Burns, College President, and Dr. Jeffrey Lamb, College Vice President, also took place. At the time of the site visit to the Fire Technology offices, there were no computers, the bookshelf had a couple of textbooks, no lesson plans or curriculum documents present. With a fire academy beginning in January 2018, the college did not appear to be prepared for the 2013 Firefighter I Academy. The training center was lacking in some equipment required for the 2013 Firefighter I academy, which was anticipated to begin in January 2018. At the time of the site visit, no clerical staff was dedicated to the program, which is a concern to SFT due to all the required documentation to conduct the 2013 Firefighter I academy.

Health and Safety Code Section 13157 gives the State Fire Marshal the statutory authority to develop rules and regulations relative to the development of a statewide fire-training program. California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 19 Public Safety Code, Division 1 State Fire Marshal, Chapter 13 constitutes the basic State Fire Marshal training standards of the California Fire Service Training and Education Program which includes California Fire Service Training and Education System (CFSTES) and Fire Service Training and Education Program (FSTEP). CCR Title 19 Section 1990.00 incorporates the January 2015 *State Fire Training Procedures Manual* by reference. Per the *State Fire Training Procedures Manual*, the following deficiencies were identified:

- **To maintain its accredited status, an ARTP shall evaluate and update its application and self-assessment report and submit it to the Chief of State Fire Training for processing with a completed SFT Fee Schedule and a nonrefundable reaccreditation fee.** (Section 3.1.7(B))
 - The Self-Assessment report submitted to State Fire Training on approximately the last week of July 2017 was a duplicate of the report submitted in 2014 with only dates and names changed. After State Fire Training submitted a request on October 30, 2017 for an updated self-assessment with questions to be addressed in the report, Merritt College only addressed the questions.
 - State Fire Training never received the accreditation application and fee payment.
- **OSFM shall use the following criteria to evaluate the necessity and efficacy of an ARTP within a specific geographic region. These criteria form the basis of an applicant's self-assessment report when applying as a new ARTP or are updated when applying for reaccreditation.** (Section 3.1.4(A))
 - **Conduct a job market study before applying to OSFM for site accreditation** (Section 3.1.4.1(B)(1))
 - No current documentation was provided to State Fire Training, as the self-assessment report was data from March 2014.
 - **Convenes a Regional Fire Advisory Committee, consisting of local fire chiefs, training officers, community college representatives, instructors, and others as appropriate, to identify regional training and educational needs** (Section 3.1.4.1(B)(2))
 - The committee was primarily formed with college staff who worked for local fire agencies. The Regional Fire Advisory Committee shall consist of both individuals not affiliated with the college, such as local agency chiefs, as well as staff of the college.
 - **Each ARTP shall complete a demographic report describing the ethnic and gender population of the community it serves; provide a demographic report describing the ethnic and gender composition of the participants in the ARTP program; and provide a written plan including goals to achieve or maintain a composition that mirrors the community.** (Section 3.1.4.2(B)(1-3))

- No current written plan provided to evaluate future goals of the program as the self-assessment was the report from March 2014.
 - **ARTPs provide the management services to support their instructional programs.** (Section 3.1.4.3(A))
 - **Support participation by their instructor cadre and fire service personnel in establishing procedures and determining resource needs** (Section 3.1.4.3(B)(2))
 - No documented procedures identified.
 - **Provide clerical support sufficient to meet the program's needs** (Section 3.1.4.3(B)(2))
 - No dedicated clerical staff provided to meet the needs of the program at the time of the visit.
 - **Ensure course records, class rosters, and other documents are consistent with SFT procedures** (Section 3.1.4.3(B)(2))
 - No course materials were provided for evaluation at the time of the site visit.
 - **ARTPs should provide services that encourage and stimulate competency, innovation, and increased effectiveness of the program's student population. To that end, they shall make every effort to select an instructor cadre diverse in its cultural and gender composition.** (Section 3.1.4.4(A))
 - **Provide a chart that illustrates the organizational structure and an itemized listing of functional duties** (Section 3.1.4.4(B)(1))
 - No organizational chart was provided at the time of the visit.
 - **Provide a report that compares the ethnic and gender population of the community to that of the ARTP instructor cadre** (Section 3.1.4.4(B)(2))
 - Demographic report provided did not include ethnic and gender population comparison of the community to that of the instructor cadre.
 - **Utilize OSFM registered instructors** (Section 3.1.4.4(B)(4))
 - No registered instructor list was provided at the time of the visit.
 - **Provide a policy for faculty and staff conduct and demeanor consistent with the SFT Instructor Code of Ethics/Conduct** (Section 3.1.4.4(B)(5))
 - No policy provided in the self-assessment, as the self-assessment was the duplicate self-assessment from March 2014.
 - **ARTPs provide the facilities and equipment necessary to support the program. Computers, apparatus, tools, simulations, supplies, and equipment shall be relevant and available in sufficient quantity and quality.** (Section 3.1.4.5(A))
 - Unable to verify all equipment, as additional equipment is located off the site of the training center.
 - **Ensure that arrangements are clearly stated in a signed, written agreement when an agency or institution other than the ARTP provides resources** (Section 3.1.4.5(B)(1))
 - The written agreement provided with Oakland Fire Department is five years old. A current written agreement shall be provided. Written agreements with other agencies or resources for training, facilities, etc. shall be provided.
 - **Ensure classrooms, training towers, burn rooms, and storage facilities are sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the program's needs and objectives** (Section 3.1.4.5(B)(2))
 - Unable to verify burn boxes and vehicle fire prop as they were not onsite at the training center.
 - **Ensure equipment and training aids are sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the program's needs and objectives** (Section 3.1.4.5(B)(3))
 - Unable to verify all tools and equipment at time of the site visit. Unable to verify wildland (Type 3) apparatus and equipment at the time of the site visit.

- Ensure all personal protective clothing, apparatus, and equipment are properly maintained and readily accessible to the instructor cadre and student population (Section 3.1.4.5(B)(4))
 - Unable to verify wildland PPE at time of the site visit.
 - Ensure expendable supplies are sufficient to meet the program's needs (Section 3.1.4.5(B)(5))
 - Unable to verify expendable supplies at the time of the site visit.
- **ARTPs provide current learning resources, such as print and digital library materials and media equipment, sufficient in quantity to support the program's training needs.** (Section 3.1.4.6(A))
 - **Ensure training resources are adequate to support the various modes and levels of training to be conducted** (Section 3.1.4.6(B)(1))
 - No printed course materials were provided at the time of the site visit.
 - **Ensure on- and off-campus audiovisual materials are current, support the training program, and are readily accessible to the instructor cadre and student population** (Section 3.1.4.6(B)(2))
 - Unable to verify all training resources while at the training center at the time of the site visit.
- **Each ARTP shall convene a Curriculum Advisory Committee** (Section 3.1.4.7(B)(2))
 - No Curriculum Advisory Committee identified.
- **With input from college administration, the Regional Fire Advisory Committee, staff, students, and neighboring institutions, the ARTP shall provide the widest possible selection and variety of training and educational opportunities** (Section 3.1.4.8(A))
 - **Ensure all courses are delivered in compliance with SFT procedures** (Section 3.1.4.8(B)(1))
 - No printed lesson plans provided at the time of site visit.
 - **Ensure all courses are delivered in compliance with the CCCCO Standard Fire Technology Degree Core Curriculum** (Section 3.1.4.8(B)(2))
 - Unable to verify at the time of the site visit.
 - **Schedule training and continuing education programs on a regular basis** (Section 3.1.4.8(B)(3))
 - Unable to verify at the time of the site visit.
 - **Ensure SFT courses are readily available and offered per the needs analysis for the area served** (Section 3.1.4.8(B)(4))
 - A needs analysis was not provided to determine if this requirement is met.
 - **Provide and distribute catalogs and brochures of fire training and educational offerings** (Section 3.1.4.8(B)(5))
 - The college has a deficient library for the needs of the program.
- **To maintain a high-quality program in alignment with OSFM standards, ARTPs conduct regular testing and evaluation to provide feedback regarding student progress and success, instructor effectiveness, and the ARTP's overall viability.** (Section 3.1.4.9(A))
 - **Oversee the administration of summative and practical skills testing of students within the program** (Section 3.1.4.9(B)(1))
 - The training center lacked all the required equipment at the time of the site visit to conduct practical skills testing.
 - **Ensure a program evaluation process is in place by using the Regional Fire Advisory Committee** (Section 3.1.4.9(C)(2))
 - The current Regional Advisory Committee consists only of college staff and Instructors. An objective program evaluation shall be in place with individuals other than only college staff and instructors.

- **An ARTP shall provide California Fire Service Training and Education System (CFSTES), Fire Service Training and Education Program (FSTEP), California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS), and California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Standard Fire Technology Degree Core Curriculum courses in conjunction with the needs of its region** (Section 3.1.1(B))
 - CFSTES, FSTEP, and CICCS courses delivered by the college were not identified in the college schedule or catalog.
- **Once accredited by OSFM, each ARTP shall maintain records of classes delivered, including class rosters, attendance records, examination scores, and any modification that exceeds the statewide minimum standards** (Section 3.1.3(A)(6))
 - No record of previous class rosters, or classes delivered.
- **Once accredited by OSFM, each ARTP** Provide training-level certification testing site upon request (Section 3.1.3(A)(12))
 - SFT unable to verify required equipment at time of visit due to use of off training center site for training props.

Merritt Community College does not meet the minimum SFT requirements for reaccreditation. Due to the amount of deficiencies, SFT recommends denial of the Merritt Community College reaccreditation now.