

# Accreditation NOTES

Spring 2006

## Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

### *Community College Accreditation: A Public Member's Point of View*

Mr. Joseph Richey, ACCJC Chair

[Mr. Richey is a public member of ACCJC, former Director of Educational Relations for Pacific Bell, and former CEO of the Industry Education Council of California]

I am frequently asked by my friends and acquaintances what community college accreditation is all about. At the beginning of my first term as commissioner, I was sometimes hard pressed to explain a system as complex and comprehensive as educational accreditation. When the notions of institutional self study and the process of peer review were first explained to me, I admit they seemed somewhat foreign to me with my background in industry. Seven years have passed since I was first exposed to these concepts, and I would now be the first to emphatically state that the American Educational Accreditation System not only works, but is a system so worthy that many other nations are working to replicate it.

As a public member of the Commission, I am somewhat of an outsider poking my nose into the world of academia where some question my very presence. After one visit to a well-known college district, the President of that district stated, "Why would the Commission send a telephone man to evaluate our institutions?" Simply put, public members are appointed to the Commission because the constituents served by the colleges (the students, their parents and families, and the employers who hire the graduates) make up the general public and are the very ones who should expect quality throughout the system of higher education. One could offer a great deal of flowery rhetoric on this topic, but the bottom line is that this nation and its economy heavily depend on an educated and trained workforce, and American

community colleges play an enormous role in providing that force.

Many public members of the Commission are retired members of boards of trustees; others are retired educators. I found my way to ACCJC through my past role as the Director of Employment, Placement, and Training for Pacific Bell. In that capacity, it didn't take me long to realize that community colleges were an excellent source of well-trained candidates for the positions we needed to fill. I also soon realized that the two-year colleges could provide a rich and cost effective resource for training and re-training Pacific Bell's employee base. And so a very rewarding relationship between the community colleges and Pacific Bell began. Job specific programs were developed and implemented which provided upward mobility to our existing employee base that had not been available before. It was natural, then, that I developed a deep respect for and keen interest in community colleges and ultimately, their accreditation.

So when asked to define accreditation, I reply that it is a system of voluntary, non-governmental self-regulation based on peer review at several levels that is unique to American education. It is a system by which an institution first evaluates itself honestly in accordance with the standards of good practice relating to institutional goals and objectives; appropriateness, sufficiency, and utilization of its resources; the usefulness, integrity, and effectiveness of its processes; and the extent to which it is achieving its intended student outcomes. The institution is then evaluated by a visiting team of peer evaluators who verify that the assertions made by the institution during its self study process are indeed verified by the evidence available to the team. Finally,

*Continued on page 2...*

the institution is evaluated by the Commission itself which is made up of college administrators; faculty; representatives from California, Hawaii and the Western Pacific (the Western region); public and independent colleges; a representative each from the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, and the Schools Commission; and members representing the public (as defined in USDOE §602.3). It is a process by which accreditors provide students, the public, and each other with assurance of institutional integrity, quality and effectiveness. In short, the label “regionally accredited” is a statement to the public that an institution is worthy to receive federal financial aid funds for students.

It is the responsibility of the nineteen-member Commission to determine the accredited status of an institution. In determining that status, the Commission reads the institution’s Self Study Report, the report of the visiting team, and the recent accreditation history of the institution. At times the Commission agonizes over the tough decisions that must be made, but it strives to make those decisions with the sincere interest of the student, the public, and employers of our region at heart.

I have been fortunate to have worked with fine individuals all my life. I was fortunate to have had a career with an excellent company and to have had the opportunity to make a difference in the manner by which that company hired and trained its employees. But what I am proudest of is having had the honor and privilege of working side by side with a superb group of dedicated professional educators, administrators, and public members who share a common interest and bring to the deliberations an impressive wealth of experiences and knowledge devoted to ensuring American higher education produces contributing members of this society.

***Accreditation Notes*** is published by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

**Publication Address:**

10 Commercial Blvd, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949  
E-mail: [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org) • Web site: [www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)

## Accreditation Q&A

**Q.**What is accreditation?

**A.** Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. Institutions voluntarily seek accreditation, and it is conferred by non-governmental bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes:

- to assure the quality of the institution, and
- to encourage institutional improvement.

Accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general public that the institution:

- has appropriate purposes;
- has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes;
- can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes; and
- gives reason to believe it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

**Q.** How does the Commission determine if an institution meets accreditation standards?

**A.** An institution seeking initial accreditation prepares an extensive report on itself based on the criteria set forth in the document on Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation. This period of extensive self study is followed by an on-site visit by a team of peers selected by the Commission. Based on its findings, the team makes a recommendation to the Commission regarding the accreditation status of the institution. The team will recommend denial, candidacy, or initial accreditation. The Commission then acts to determine accreditation status, communicating its decision to the institution. Once accredited, an institution is expected to comply with the eligibility requirements and accreditation criteria continuously and must be evaluated periodically.

**Q.**How often are colleges evaluated?

**A.** Colleges maintain accreditation through continuous adherence to accreditation criteria as set forth by the Commission. Colleges follow a six-year cycle during which institutional review is continuous. These reviews include an Annual Report, an Annual Fiscal Report, a Midterm Report, completion of a comprehensive institutional self study, and an evaluation review by a team of peers. The Commission frequently requests other reports.

**Q.** Do colleges ever lose accreditation?

**A.** Loss of accreditation occurs infrequently. Commission practices, which include periodic institutional self study, peer evaluation, and Commission action, are designed to foster education excellence and continuous improvement at each institution. The processes of peer evaluation and follow-up offer support and guidance to institutions that need to improve practice in order to meet accreditation standards or policy requirements. Most institutions are able to correct any errant practices and retain institutional accreditation.

However, the primary purpose of accreditation is quality assurance to the public. Termination signals the Commission believes the institution lacks sufficient quality to be accredited. The Commission may terminate accreditation if an institution has taken action that places it significantly out of compliance with Commission standards or has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal. The institution's accredited status (including the sanction last issued by the Commission) continues pending completion of any review or appeal that is filed.

**Q.** What are the benefits of accreditation?

**A.** Commission practices, which include periodic institutional self study, peer evaluation, and Commission action, are designed to foster education excellence.

Accreditation provides both tangible and intangible benefits:

- It certifies to the public that an institution meets or exceeds specific standards of quality;
- It facilitates institutional eligibility to participate in Title IV student financial aid programs; and
- It provides a process of periodic self and peer review.

These activities are a positive force in improving institutional effectiveness. Many institutions rely in part on regional accreditation in their decisions to recognize transfer credit.

**Q.** Does accreditation mean that credits and degrees can transfer to another institution?

**A.** While it is typically true that many institutions recognize transfer credits only from regionally

accredited institutions, the basic principle underlying issues of transfer is that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices in regard to transfer and award of credit. The Commission requires that institutions have a policy on transfer of credit by which the institution certifies that courses accepted for credit from sending institutions achieve student learning outcomes comparable to its own courses.

**Q.** Does the Commission rank colleges?

**A.** Since each college is unique and has its own mission, the Commission does not rank colleges. The responsibility of the Commission is to accredit colleges based on standards of good practice in higher education.

**Q.** Can the Commission recommend a college to a student?

**A.** The Commission does not recommend colleges. Specific information about colleges can be located in the many reference books found in libraries. Other valuable sources of information are high school or college counselors and advisors, or college admissions officers.

**Q.** What happens to a student's records when a college closes?

**A.** Commission policy states that when a college is closing, all academic, financial aid, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing. The college should arrange with the state department of higher education, another appropriate agency, or another college or university for the filing of student records. Notification regarding the location of records and their accessibility should be sent to all students, including where possible, a copy of the student's record.

**Q.** Who evaluates the Commission?

**A.** The Commission is authorized by the U.S. Department of Education as a reliable agency of accreditation and must go through a periodic review process. ACCJC is also recognized by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a non-profit organization of colleges and universities, which recognizes, coordinates, and periodically reviews the work of its member accrediting bodies and the appropriateness of existing or proposed accrediting bodies and their activities.

## ***Update—Higher Education Act Reauthorization***

Congress continues to delay passage of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. It has, however, passed the Passed Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 which eliminates the “50% rules” which had heretofore limited the offering of distance education courses and programs by institutions participating in federal aid programs. Congress now permits accrediting agencies that have the evaluation of distance education in their recognized scope to evaluate institutions offering largely or solely distance education programs. The evaluation of distance education is included in the scope of the ACCJC.

Since fall, Congressman John Boerner has left the House Education and the Workforce Committee (HEW Committee) to become Majority Leader of the House. The new chair of this committee is Congressman Buck McKeon (R-CA). Senator Enzi remains the chair of the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee).

What remains from last fall’s efforts are two bills that contain most of the language dealing with accreditation. HR 609 was passed in the House Education and the Workforce Committee last fall and awaits assignment to the “floor” of the House for discussion. S 1614 was reported out of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee last fall. Staffs of both the House and Senate have indicated they will try to pass the Act this spring, with floor hearings coming as early as March.

The ACCJC and the other regional accrediting commissions, through the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), continue to work with Congress to support language that aligns with existing institutional practices and reporting requirements wherever possible rather than impose additional requirements. CRAC has prepared a side by side analysis of the current law containing the two congressional proposals and the CRAC preference for language. It is available via email to any member institution that writes the ACCJC at [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org). CRAC has relatively few yet specific concerns about some of the proposed language of each version of the Act, and will try to address those as the bills move forward. With the exception of language regarding due process in the Senate bill, the regional accreditors believe the language of both bills substantially reflects our interests,

as expressed in CRAC’s work with Congress over these last two years.

Congresswoman Millender McDonald (D-CA) has introduced an amendment to the House bill, HR 4795. ACCJC and CRAC oppose this amendment, as it adds unnecessary burden on accrediting processes and would significantly alter the current peer-based accreditation system our member institutions have designed.

## ***January 2006 Commission Actions on Institutions***

### **Reaffirmed Accreditation**

Columbia College  
DeAnza College  
Foothill College  
Modesto Junior College  
Mt. San Jacinto College  
Reedley College  
Santiago Canyon College  
Shasta College  
Solano College  
Yuba College

### **Placed on Warning**

College of the Redwoods  
Fresno City College

### **Continued on Warning**

College of Marin  
Windward Community College

### **Removed from Warning**

College of Alameda  
Evergreen Valley College  
Hawai’i Community College  
Honolulu Community College  
Laney College  
Merritt College  
San Jose City College  
Vista College

### **Removed from Show Cause**

College of the Marshall Islands  
Salvation Army Crestmont College

### **Placed on Probation**

Queen of the Holy Rosary

### **Accepted Progress Report**

College of the Siskiyous  
Cuyamaca College  
Ohlone College  
Oxnard College  
Mission College  
West Valley College

### **Accepted Progress Report with Visit**

Irvine Valley College  
Kapi olani Community College  
Kauai Community College  
Leeward Community College  
Maui Community College  
Northern Marianas College  
Palau Community College  
Saddleback College  
Santa Ana College

### **Progress Report with Visit Not Accepted**

Victor Valley College

### **Accepted Special Report**

Brooks College

*Continued on page 5...*

*Continued from page 4...*

### ***Commission Actions on Institutions***

College of the Marshall Islands  
Salvation Army Crestmont College

#### **Accepted Midterm Report**

American Samoa Community College  
College of the Canyons  
Long Beach City College  
Pasadena City College  
Santa Barbara City College  
Santa Rosa Junior College

#### **Accepted Focused Midterm Report**

Crafton Hills College  
Cuesta College  
San Bernardino Valley College

#### **Accepted System Report with Visit**

University of Hawai'i Community College System

#### **Approved Substantive Changes**

Brooks College: approval to 1) change credit recalculation, and 2) offer Animation at Sunnyvale.

Heald College: approval to 1) offer AA degree, and 2) change mode of delivery in Networking Tech program.

COM-FSM: approval to offer Small Engine Certification program.

Folsom Lake College: approval to offer AA program in Psychology.

MTI: approval for the Cosmetology Certificate program pending submission of additional materials related to physical facility.

Palau Community College: approval 1) to offer AS in Information Technology, and 2) to offer AS in Business Administration.

San Joaquin Valley College: approval 1) to offer the Respiratory Therapy program at Rancho Cordova (Sacramento) campus, 2) to offer the LVN-RN program at Visalia campus, 3) to offer the AS in Project Management program at the On-Line campus, and 4) to offer the AS in Construction Management at the Fresno and Rancho Cucamonga campuses.

---

## ***January 2006***

### ***Commission Actions on Policies***

#### **Adopted after Second Reading:**

Policy on Access to Commission Meetings. This revised policy eliminates subcommittees of Commissioners meeting with institutional representatives in Executive Session.

Policy on Commission Action on Institutions. This revised policy adds language referencing an institution's need to meet the eligibility requirements, policies, as well as the standards of accreditation when applying for candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation. It also clarifies adverse actions for accredited institutions in keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965. References in this policy to frequency of visits now state that the frequency will be determined by the Commission.

Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions. This revised policy incorporates editorial revisions that add language differentiating between self study as a process and the self study report. It also clarifies the nature of the institutional response to team reports and makes other editorial changes to language.

Policy on Conflict of Interest for Commissioners, Evaluators, Consultants, Administrative Staff, and Other Agency Representatives. This revised policy prohibits Commission staff from accepting honoraria and honorary degrees from member institutions and precludes Commissioners from consulting with member institutions on matters of accreditation for compensation.

Policy on Public Disclosure. This revised policy incorporates editorial revisions and eliminates the requirement that the President of the ACCJC invite the institution to develop a joint statement on its status of deferral of a decision, warning, probation, show cause or termination.

#### **Approved for First Reading:**

Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation. This policy makes changes to Eligibility Requirement 11 on General Education. Previous language required institutions to define and incorporate general education into all of its programs. New language would require institutions to define *and offer* a general education program and incorporate general education into all of its degree programs.

#### **Eliminated Policy:**

The Governing Board. This policy, adopted in June 1996, was determined to be erroneous after reviewing it for alignment with the 2002 Standards of Accreditation. The Standards cover governing boards in far more depth and detail, thereby making this policy unnecessary.

## Comprehensive Visits

Under current U.S. Department of Education regulations, ACCJC must provide opportunity for third-party comment regarding institutional qualifications for accreditation. The institutions noted below are scheduled to undergo a comprehensive visit in the spring of 2006, fall of 2006, and spring of 2007 and a review by the Commission at its June 2006, January 2007 and June 2007 meetings. Third-party comment on these institutions should be made to the ACCJC President, Barbara A. Beno, at 10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949. For consideration, such comment must be submitted in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled Commission meeting.

### **Spring 2006**

(for June 2006)

Barstow Community College  
City College of San Francisco  
Defense Language Institute  
Feather River College  
Guam Community College  
Hawaii Tokai International College  
Heald College (12 campuses)  
Lake Tahoe Community College  
Los Angeles Harbor College  
Los Angeles Southwest College  
West Hills College Lemoore  
West Los Angeles College

### **Fall 2006**

(for Jan. 2007)

Bakersfield College  
Cerro Coso Community College  
College of the Sequoias  
Hawaii Community College  
Honolulu Community College  
Kapiolani Community College  
Kauai Community College  
Leeward Community College  
Maui Community College  
Northern Marianas College  
Porterville College  
Windward Community College

### **Spring 2007**

(for June 2007)

Coastline College  
Copper Mountain College  
Gavilan College  
Hartnell College  
Imperial Valley College  
L.A. County College of Nursing and Allied Health  
Los Angeles Mission College  
Los Angeles Pierce College  
Los Angeles Valley College  
Orange Coast College  
San Joaquin Valley College  
Western Career College

## COMMISSIONERS TO BE SELECTED

A selection committee will meet in May to select four Commissioners. The committee will appoint Commissioners to fill the following positions:

Two Commission members representing the public. The incumbents are eligible for a second three-year term according to Commission policy.

Two Commission members representing faculty.

1. One incumbent is eligible for a second three-year term.
2. The incumbent for the other position is not seeking a second term.

## New Commissioners

Dr. Louanne Kennedy – Dr. Kennedy is currently a Consultant to private and public colleges and universities on issues of academic planning, management of academic and student services, management evaluation, and regional accreditation. She is the Emeritus Provost and Vice



President for Academic Affairs at the California State University, Northridge where she served from 1993 to 2003 including one year as Interim President. Dr. Kennedy served on the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU of WASC) from 1998 to 2004, on the ACSCU Substantive Change Committee for four years, and as Vice Chair of the Commission from 2002 to 2004. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from New York University. Dr. Kennedy began her service on the Commission as a representative of ACSCU on July 1, 2005.

---

Dr. Ann I. Morey – Dr. Morey is retired from the Center for Educational Leadership, Innovation, and Policy at San Diego State University where she served as Distinguished Research Professor and Director from 1999 to 2003. She has also served as the Director of the National Multicultural Education Infusion Center,

as Associate State University Dean for the California State University system, and has worked as Associate Professor of Education at the University of Miami and in various capacities at the University of Southern California. She was formerly Dean and Professor of the College of Education at SDSU from 1985 to 1999. Dr. Morey served as a Commissioner on the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities from 1999 to 2005. She holds a Ph.D. in Administration of Higher Education and Educational Statistics from UC Berkeley. Dr. Morey began her service on the Commission as a public member on July 1, 2005.

## *Commission News*

The new ACCJC web site is expected to be launched this spring. The features of the redesigned site include an easier-to-use toolbar, links to web pages of various groups and publications that may be of benefit to member institutions, and links to events and conferences, other than those co-sponsored or presented by ACCJC, that may be of interest to professionals in the field.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sponsored by the Community College League of California and held in conjunction with the California Community College Trustees Annual Conference, ACCJC will present two workshops during the May 5-7 Conference in La Jolla. For more information, see the CCLC web site at [www.ccleague.org](http://www.ccleague.org).

Accreditation – What Board and CEO Executive Assistants Need to Know will review the 2002 Accreditation Standards and discuss what assistants and secretaries to boards and CEOs should expect before, during, and after an accreditation self-study visit.

Accreditation Standards and the Board's Role will cover the board's role in accreditation and the standards that the board must meet as well as the new emphasis on institutional accountability for student learning.

## *Spring 2006 Workshops*

Each year, ACCJC holds workshops to train evaluators and team chairs who will conduct comprehensive reviews of member institutions as well as workshops for institutions who are about to begin the process of self study leading to the Self Study Report and comprehensive visit.

Self Study Training Workshops were held this spring for the following institutions preparing for self study review and comprehensive visits in two years:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| February 10, 2006 | Mendocino College                      |
| February 16, 2006 | Lassen College                         |
| February 21, 2006 | Palo Verde College                     |
| February 23, 2006 | Santa Ana College and Cerritos College |

Team Training Workshops were held for specific teams and required that all team participants and chairs attend. This process benefits team development and allows the teams to begin actual work on the upcoming visit well in advance. The following trainings were held:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| February 2, 2006 | Oakland, CA. Guam Community College, Lake Tahoe Community College, Heald Colleges, and West Hills College Lemoore teams.                        |
| February 3, 2006 | Oakland, CA. Los Angeles Harbor College, Los Angeles Southwest College, West Los Angeles College, and Defense Language Institute teams.         |
| February 7, 2006 | Los Angeles, CA. Barstow Community College, City College of San Francisco, Feather River College, and Hawaii Tokai International College teams. |

A Team Chair Training Workshop was held on November 22, 2005 for the chairs that would be conducting visits to colleges in the spring 2006.



ACCJC  
10 Commercial Blvd.  
Suite 204  
Novato, CA 94949

## *Substantive Change Committee Meeting Schedule*

Institutions seeking substantive change must submit complete documents to the Commission office one month before the Committee meeting. Results of the Committee action will be transmitted first via email notification to the Accreditation Liaison Officer and second via formal letter from the ACCJC President.

Spring 2006:

February 17    March 17    April 21    May 19    Summer as needed and as Committee members are available

### COMMISSIONERS

**Mr. Joseph L. Richey, Chair**  
Public Member

**Dr. E. Jan Kehoe, Vice Chair**  
Long Beach City College

**Dr. James A. Albanese**  
Public Member

**Dr. Sherrill L. Amador**  
Public Member

**Ms. Holly Beernink**  
Western Career College

**Dr. Steven Bruckman**

Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges

**Ms. Christina L. Dyer**  
Schools Commission Member

**Ms. Lurelean B. Gaines**  
East Los Angeles College

**Ms. Tess Hansen**  
Foothill College

**Dr. Brice W. Harris**  
Los Rios Community College District

**Ms. Margaret Manson**  
Santiago Canyon College

**Dr. Victoria P. Morrow**  
Skyline College

**Ms. Susan J. Moses**  
College of Micronesia-FSM

**Mr. Michael T. Rota**  
University of Hawaii

**Mr. Floyd K. Takeuchi**  
Public Member

**Ms. Margaret Tillery**  
Alan Hancock College

**Dr. Norval Wellsfry**  
Cosumnes River College

### COMMISSION STAFF

**Dr. Barbara A. Beno**  
PRESIDENT

**Dr. Deborah G. Blue**  
VICE PRESIDENT

**Mr. Garman Jack Pond**  
VICE PRESIDENT

**Dr. Lily Owyang**  
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT

**Ms. Barbara Dunham**  
BUSINESS OFFICER, ASST. TO PRESIDENT

**Mr. Thomas Lane**  
ITAS