

Accreditation NOTES

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accreditation and Self-Regulation: Meeting the Standards is Essential to Continued Privilege

American higher education has been privileged to be self-regulating for over 100 years since the first institutional accrediting commissions began in the 1890s in the New England and North Central states. In the last four years, as members of the Congress, the Department of Education, and others have discussed accreditation – in the context of the renewal of the Higher Education Act – some individuals have argued that accreditation is not effective in assuring quality. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and other regional accrediting commissions, operating as a united Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), have argued to the Congress and the Department of Education – as well as the critical public – that regional accreditation is effective, that it sets high standards for institutional quality, and that it holds institutions accountable for meeting or exceeding those standards.

When regional accreditors and other higher education representatives assert that non-governmental, peer-based accreditation is a reliable and sound means of assuring institutional quality and improving educational effectiveness, they draw upon the basic values and commitments of our profession and of our non-governmental, peer-based quality-assurance system to make their case. They maintain that, as an industry, higher education is staffed and led by people who understand the teaching and learning process. They claim, and the Commission believes it to be true, that higher educational professionals are personally and professionally committed to helping students learn. They reason that the higher education community's own professional and personal interest

in student success will drive it to be self-evaluating and continually self-improving. They insist that more federal regulation is not needed and would be disruptive.

It appears that the arguments have been successful. The Higher Education Act draft, now in Conference Committee, contains no dramatic changes to this system of self-regulation. It does include some adjustments to public reporting of information about institutional quality. In the future, there will be increased pressure for disclosure of more definitive data on institutional quality. In order to retain the continued trust of the Congress and the public – in our system of self-regulation – accrediting commissions and accredited institutions must make good on their promises. If accredited institutions do not commit, truly, to ongoing institutional self-assessment and improvement, to the use of objective and reasonable measures to assess the quality of education provided as well as the quality of student outcomes, and to systematically improving education, our sector will not maintain its self-regulatory privilege.

The ACCJC has been consistent and firm in both its statements and actions that its member (accredited) colleges conduct evaluative research on institutional and programmatic quality and student learning, and that colleges plan and implement improvements to educational quality which supports student success. The legitimacy of our self-regulatory system of quality assurance is predicated upon every accredited institution demonstrating through actions its commitment to meeting the standards and the professional values that these standards express and require.

Commission Sets Timeline on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation

When it adopted the 2002 Standards of Accreditation, the Commission made public its expectation that institutions would take eight to ten years to fully implement the new requirements to define intended student learning outcomes, assess learning, evaluate the results of assessment, and demonstrate planning and improvement efforts to improve student success. At its annual retreat in February, the Commissioners and the staff of the ACCJC considered the question of whether the timeline for full implementation of the standards on student learning outcomes set in 2002 should be extended beyond the ten years originally announced. The Commission examined data collected through an external review in 2007 as well as through the Annual Report forms on student learning outcomes submitted by member institutions in Spring 2007. The data show most institutions have begun the required work, and many are at the developmental level; some institutions are at the more advanced proficiency or continuous quality improvement levels, and approximately ten appear to have not started the work at all.

After careful consideration, the Commission decided to retain its expectation that member institutions work to implement the standards that require definition of intended student learning outcomes, assessment of learning, and use of assessment results to improve institutional quality be completed within a ten-year timeframe, or by 2012. Institutions evaluated beginning in fall 2012 will be required to have reached the “proficiency” level, which is the third level described on the Rubric on Institutional Effectiveness released by the Commission in September 2007. Failure to reach this level will be considered by the Commission as a deficiency in meeting the standards.

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Publication Address:

10 Commercial Blvd, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949
E-mail: accjc@accjc.org • Web site: www.accjc.org

Higher Education Community Focuses on Improving General Education

In late January, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) announced a national initiative to help institutions ensure that their graduates at the baccalaureate level demonstrate the broad knowledge, skills and abilities that are expected of higher education graduates in the American tradition (read: the goals of a liberal arts education, or of general education). At the CHEA annual meeting in Washington D.C., AACU president Carolyn Schneider was joined by representatives of the American Council on Education, the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of State Land Grant Colleges and Universities, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges in pronouncing a commitment by the higher education community to improve undergraduate learning in the area of general education.

AACU released a brief document entitled “New Leadership for Student Learning and Accountability,” which can be found on the AACU website at www.aacu.org. The document describes the need for each institution to “gather evidence about how well students in various programs are achieving learning goals across the curriculum and about the ability of its graduates to succeed in a challenging and rapidly changing world.” AACU is also working to define the general education learning outcomes expected of a baccalaureate degree. Community colleges will want to watch closely as four-year institutions adopt clearer definitions of general education and expected learning outcomes. Community College transfer programs will need to ensure they respond to the higher education community’s refocused concern with the broad results of higher education. Regional accrediting bodies such as the ACCJC have well-established standards that require institutions to define general education goals and expected learning outcomes. The renewed national focus on general education should help improve student success and public confidence in the educational effectiveness of higher education.

Higher Education Act Moves to Conclusion

The Higher Education Act is at last moving toward conclusion. The House of Representatives passed legislation in January. With the Senate bill passed last summer, both versions will now move into Conference Committee in April. The final bill is now expected to be completed sometime in late spring or early summer.

In Conference Committee, discussions of compromise language occur in closed session, and the public is generally not permitted to be present. Therefore, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC) has been working all spring to inform Congressional staff assigned to the Conference Committee and to help to rectify inconsistencies in the two bills in a manner that best preserves institutional autonomy and peer-based accreditation. Fortunately, following an agreement reached in late December, the accreditors and higher education associations have worked collaboratively and presented a fairly united front on matters of accreditation. The following major issues remain to be resolved through Conference:

- Will language in the Senate bill that would enable an institution to appeal an accretor's decision to impose "probation" remain in the final bill? Accreditors currently provide appeals processes for actions to terminate or deny accreditation, but not for other decisions. Accreditors feel this provision would reduce their ability to evaluate institutions in a timely manner, and would be expensive.
- Will language currently in the House bill that requires accreditors to seek the institution's response to a proposed action on an institution accreditation

before it takes the action remain in the final bill? Accreditors feel this provision will make it unclear that an accretor can act before announcing its intended action to an institution.

- Will the Secretary of Education's efforts to impose student achievement requirements be added to the legislation? The Secretary has sought and been granted access to the Conference process.

The House and the Senate bills contain identical or similar new provisions that are likely to be enacted into law:

- Accreditors would be required to confirm that institutions have a policy on Transfer of Credit and that they follow it. (ACCJC policy already addresses this matter.)
- Accreditors would be required to provide public disclosure of the reasons for its actions in the case of sanctions. Current law simply requires the accretor to provide this disclosure to parties that request it.
- Accreditors are required to fully evaluate the quality of distance education without being required to set separate standards for distance education. (ACCJC policy already addresses this matter.)

Following adoption of the Higher Education Act as amended by the full Congress, the Department of Education will again have to initiate the negotiated rulemaking process to define regulations that implement the new law. Prior to beginning rulemaking, the Department will be obliged to hold regional hearings, much like the meetings held two years ago prior to the spring 2007 negotiated rulemaking sessions. The process of negotiated rulemaking is unlikely to be conducted until spring 2009, under a new administration.

January 2008 Commission Actions on Institutions

At its meeting, January 9-11, 2008, The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, took the following institutional actions:

Reaffirmed Accreditation

Cabrillo College
Cuyamaca College
Grossmont College
MTI College
Riverside City College
Skyline College

Continued on page 4...

Granted Candidacy
Moreno Valley Campus
Norco Campus

Removed from Warning and Reaffirmed Accreditation
Cerro Coso College
College of the Sequoias

Removed from Probation and Reaffirmed Accreditation
Brooks College

Placed on Warning
Canada College
College of San Mateo
Cuesta College
Hartnell College
Imperial Valley College
Marymount College
Mira Costa College
San Joaquin Valley College
Shasta College
Sierra College
Solano Community College

Placed on Probation
College of Marin
Los Angeles County College of Nursing and Allied Health
Modesto Junior College

Accepted Progress Report with Visit
Bakersfield College
Columbia College
Crafton Hills College
El Camino College
Gavilan College
Heald College
Lake Tahoe Community College
Mt. San Jacinto College
Windward Community College

Continued on Warning
College of the Marshall Islands
Hawai'i Tokai International College
Porterville College
Victor Valley College

Continued on Probation
College of the Redwoods
Lassen College

Accepted Progress Report
Feather River College
Fresno City College

Accepted Focused Midterm Report

Irvine Valley College
Moorpark College
San Diego City College
San Diego Mesa College
San Diego Miramar College
San Jose City College

Accepted Focused Midterm Report with Visit

Oxnard College
Saddleback College
Ventura College

Accepted Midterm Report

Antelope Valley College
Evergreen Valley College
Mt. San Antonio College

Placed on Show Cause

Northern Marianas College
Salvation Army Crestmont College

Withdrawal from Accreditation (effective June 30, 2008)

American Academy of Dramatic Arts – Los Angeles

Accepted Special Report

Brooks College

Accepted Special Report and Visit

Defense Language Institute
Diablo Valley College
University of Hawai'i Community Colleges

Substantive Change Actions

American Samoa Community College – Approved 300 level courses in teacher education; deferred request for joint accreditation for baccalaureate degree with ACSCU/WASC.

Brooks College – Approved the teach-out of enrolled at Long Beach and Sunnyvale sites and the lease agreement for the Sunnyvale site in support of the teach-out.

Guam Community College – Approved the Certificate and Associate of Arts Degree program in Emergency Management.

National Polytechnic College of Oceanering and Engineering – Approved name change to: National Polytechnic College of Science; modified mission to reflect name change.

National Polytechnic College of Science – Approved closure of the Honolulu site.

Ohlone College – Approved Health Sciences and Technology at Newark Center.

Palau Community College – Approved the Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science program in Nursing for the state of Yap.

Reedley College – Approved the Willow International Community College Center.

Santa Rosa Junior College – Approved the online Associate degree for programs in University Transfer, Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Natural Sciences.

Changes in Commissioners

Commissioners Ending Second Term on the Commission:

Dr. Victoria Morrow – Dr. Morrow, President of Skyline College in the San Mateo Community College District, will be leaving the Commission in June. She has held a broad array of professional positions while serving two, three-year terms on the Commission –first as a representative of the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, where she served as Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Economic Development, and later as administrative representative. Dr. Morrow was appointed to the Commission in 2002 and served as the chair of the Commission’s Policy Committee and as a member of the Eligibility Committee.

Commissioners Ending First Term on the Commission:

The following Commissioners will be ending their first terms on the Commission and are eligible for a second term: **Ms. Holly Beernink**, representing independent institutions; **Mr. Steve Bruckman**, representing the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office; **Ms. Louanne Kennedy**, representing the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU/WASC); and **Dr. Ann Morey**, a public member.

Commissioners to be Selected

A Selection Committee will meet this year to fill six Commission vacancies in the following areas:

One Commission member representing administration: The incumbent has completed a second, three-year term.

One Commission member representing the independent colleges: The incumbent is eligible for a second, three-year term following Commission policy.

One Commission member representing the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities: The ACSCU shall provide to the ACCJC a list of nominations for the selection of a representative from that Commission. The incumbent is eligible for a second term.

One Commission member representing the public: The incumbent is eligible for a second term.

One Commission member representing the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges: The incumbent is eligible for a second term.

One Commissioner representing the Pacific Post-secondary Education Council. The incumbent has retired.

Comprehensive Visits

Under current U.S. Department of Education regulations, ACCJC must provide opportunity for third-party comment regarding the institutional qualifications for accreditation. The institutions noted below are scheduled to undergo comprehensive visits in the spring of 2008, the fall of 2008, and the spring of 2009, and review by the Commission at its June 2008, January 2009 and June 2009 meetings. Third-party comment on these institutions should be made to the ACCJC President, Dr. Barbara A. Beno, at 10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949. For consideration, such comment must be made in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled Commission meeting.

Fall 2008

(for Jan. 2009 Commission Review)
American Samoa Community College
College of the Canyons
Contra Costa College
Crafton Hills College
Cuesta College
Diablo Valley College
El Camino College
Long Beach City College
Los Medanos College
Rio Hondo College
San Bernardino Valley College
Santa Ana College
Santiago Canyon College

Spring 2009

(for June 2009 Commission Review)

Berkeley City College
Butte College
College of Alameda
College of the Marshall Islands
East Los Angeles College
Laney College
Los Angeles City College
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College
Merritt College
Palomar College
Pasadena City College
Santa Rosa Junior College

Fall 2009

(for January 2010 Commission Review)

American River College
Chabot College
Citrus College
Cosumnes River College
Folsom Lake College
Las Positas College
Napa Valley College
National Polytechnic College of Science
Sacramento City College
Santa Barbara City College
Southwestern College
Taft College

ACCJC Welcomes Two New Staff

The Commission is pleased to announce the appointment of two new staff members.

Dr. Susan Clifford has been appointed Vice President of Commission Operations. Dr. Clifford comes to the Commission staff from Pasadena City College, where she served as Dean, Health Sciences Division, Title III Grant Coordinator, and faculty member in dental hygiene. She has also served as Dean of Academic Services and Interim Executive Vice President for Educational Programs and Student Services at Fullerton College. She has served as a self study leader at her institution as well as an evaluation team member for the ACCJC.



Dr. Clifford will assume the staff role supporting the Commission's Substantive Change Process, taking over from Dr. Lily Owyang who will be continuing to work with the Commission on a part-time basis.

Dr. Clifford will also be helping the Commission to expand its services to members in the form of an annual conference, additional workshops on accreditation and on assessment, and web based training and information services. Like all of the professional staff of the Commission, she will participate in ACCJC training workshops, assist colleges with accreditation issues, and support the work of evaluation teams. Dr. Clifford began her work with the Commission on March 21, 2008. "I am very pleased to be working with the Commission and the processes that ensure quality education for our community and junior college students," said Dr. Clifford.

Dr. Steve Maradian has been appointed Vice President for Policy and Research. Dr. Maradian comes to the Commission after serving as President of Los Angeles City College. He has also served as Vice President of the University of Armenia for two years. He has held a number of administrative positions



(including president of Middle Georgia College, Lamar University at Orange, and Belmont Technical College) at colleges and universities in Louisiana, Ohio, Florida, Virginia and Massachusetts. Dr. Maradian has served as a team member and evaluation team chair for the ACCJC, and has accreditation experience in the Southern,

Middle States and North Central accrediting regions.

Dr. Maradian will be providing staff support to the Commission's Policy Committee and the Evaluation and Planning Committee. He'll have responsibility for working with institutional members on the Annual Report required by the Commission, and will conduct the Commission's own research and analysis on Commission operations as well as member institutions' annual report data. Dr. Maradian has already joined Dr. Lily Owyang and Mr. Jack Pond in conducting team and self study training workshops for the ACCJC. Like the other professional staff of the Commission, he will assist colleges with accreditation issues and support the work of evaluation teams. Dr. Maradian began his work with the Commission on February 20, 2008. "It's exciting to contribute to the overall quality of higher education within the Commission's region, and I look forward to working with teams and institutions to assure students have access to the very best."



ACCJC
10 Commercial Blvd.
Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

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