

# ACCJC NEWS

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Fall 2010

## The Bologna Process II: Impact on U.S. Higher Education

*The summer 2010 edition of ACCJC NEWS featured an article on the purposes and main activities of the European Bologna Process. This second article is a follow-up, and it focuses on the potential impacts of the Bologna Process on U.S. higher education.*

The Bologna initiative, which is likely to have the most effect on U.S. higher education, is the introduction of a degree structure based on common principles, i.e., a first cycle degree, typically called a Bachelor's Degree, of minimum three years' duration, and a second cycle degree, typically a Master Degree, of minimum one years' duration. This means that U.S. higher education institutions will have to decide how to handle the admission of students with a three year bachelor's degree into a system dominated by four-year bachelor's degrees.

It is an important parameter for this decision that it is the freshman year, not the senior year which is missing in the European three-year degrees. As opposed to U.S. higher education, general education is a component in secondary school education in most European countries, which enables the bachelor's degree to be specialized.

Furthermore, it is critical to understand that the European countries have not introduced one common Bologna Degree. Rather, European countries are now offering degrees which are compliant with the agreed principles, but there is still great variation across the education systems in Europe.

### **Mobility**

One of the overarching purposes formulated by the Bologna signatories is to facilitate mobility of students and graduates in higher education. The development of the ECTS (European Credit and Transfer System), the Diploma Supplement and, most recently, the

Qualifications Framework at the European and national levels are efforts initiated to facilitate mobility. These initiatives share the characteristic that they are providing information using a common language and principles, and they are thus introducing a higher level of transparency into European higher education degrees, where information previously varied with each university.

*“There is a myth from the U.S. side that there is just one undergraduate ‘Bologna degree’ and that there is a three-year degree. The truth is that there are numerous degree structures, some of which are three-year bachelor’s with two-years master’s, while others are, but are not limited to, four-year bachelor’s and one-year master’s. These vary by country and sometimes within countries.”*

*Source: NAFSA, International Educator Supplement 2007:  
the Bologna Process*

There is a need for U.S. higher education institutions to familiarize themselves with these sources of information, what they mean and what their limitations are. The latter would require that institutions keep track of the European developments as many of the Bologna initiatives are still evolving. The ECTS is a mechanism that U.S. higher education institutions are likely to become acquainted with. As ECTS is primarily based on student workload and hours spent over a

**The Bologna Process II, continued on page 3**

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**ACCJC NEWS** is Published by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC),  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

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## The Bologna Process II, *continued from page 1*

year of study, as opposed to the U.S. system of credits based on faculty contact hours, it is necessary to find ways of translating the ECTS into the U.S. context.

### Quality Assurance

It should always be kept in mind that the Bologna Process was initiated as a means to strengthening the European higher education systems and their global competitiveness.

For that reason the ministers of education at an early stage stated that quality assurance was at the heart of the Bologna Process, and they committed to establishing national quality assurance procedures. The so-called European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) that were developed at the request of the ministers by the main stakeholders in European higher education, i.e., higher education associations, students and quality assurance agencies, introduce joint standards of quality that higher education institutions have to comply with. The ESG also include minimum standards for quality assurance agencies, some of which have implications for higher education institutions, such as the requirement that quality assurance agencies' reports on institutions should be published. The Bologna Process has thus led to the establishment of measures for accountability, joint quality standards and means of transparency of the quality work of the higher education institutions, similar in principle and general approach to the accreditation requirements that are in place for U.S. higher education. ♦

## Professional Development for QA Professionals

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) has developed a Quality Assurance Program (QAP) aimed at educating quality assurance professionals in higher education institutions and accrediting commissions, stimulating research and producing new initiatives in quality assurance. The development of the QAP has been sponsored by a grant from the World Bank and with support from Unesco.

The QAP consists of four modules:

1. Higher Education in a Global World: The context of quality assurance.
2. External Quality Assurance: What is quality and how has it been implemented in different countries?
3. Operating an External Quality Assurance Agency: Practical training in the structure and management of quality assurance agencies around the world.
4. Maintaining Quality within the Institution: Assessing learning, conducting self-study, and using data.

The QAP course materials are available for download at the INQAAHE website: [www.inqaahe.org](http://www.inqaahe.org).

Since the spring of 2010, the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development in cooperation with the School of Continuing and Professional Studies of New York University and LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management at the University of Melbourne, respectively, have been offering graduate-level programs online in quality assurance. The QAP materials have been incorporated into the course curricula of both universities. More information about the online programs is available at: [www.scps.nyu.edu/qa](http://www.scps.nyu.edu/qa) and <http://www.lhmartinstitute.edu.au>. ♦

*INQAAHE is a global network of more than 200 organizations involved in quality assurance in higher education. The majority of its members are quality assurance agencies, although the Network also welcomes as associate members higher education institutions and organizations with an interest in quality assurance in higher education. ACCJC is a member of INQAAHE.*

# New Federal Regulations - Next Steps

In June 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S.D.E.) proposed new regulations on three topics of interest to accreditation: the definition of a credit hour and the role of accreditors in assessing the credit hours awarded by institutions; the role of states in authorizing postsecondary institutions and to operate in providing consumer protection; and gainful employment of graduates from career and technical training programs. All regulations will be effective July 1, 2011.

## THE CREDIT HOUR

The term “credit hour” is used in federal laws and U.S.D.E. regulations to define the academic year, define the length of a program eligible for federal financial aid, specify the work load that a student must carry to be eligible for federal aid in the forms of Pell Grants or loans, and requires that recognized accrediting agencies assess an institution’s measure of program length. The term is also widely used by the higher education community, and is reflected in student transcripts and in the count of credits toward degree and program completion. Federal law does not currently contain a definition of credit hour, and the new U.S.D.E. regulations proposed to impose one.



The proposed regulations define credit hour as “One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” The proposed regulations also state that “at least an equivalent amount of work as required for a credit hour for other academic activities, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, or institutionally established reasonable equivalencies for the amount of work required including [equivalencies for the amount of work] as represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement.”

In response to these new regulations, the Commission has developed a new Policy on the Award of Credit that will be considered for second reading and adoption in January 2011, and it will also be adding procedural material to the comprehensive evaluation process to assure that evaluation teams examine institutional practices on the award of credit.

## STATE AUTHORIZATION

The proposed regulations would require an institution to be legally authorized by a State through an approval process that would give the institution the authority to operate. The authority would be given to the institution conditioned upon the ability of the State to take adverse action to remove authorization, and to review and act on complaints concerning an institution. Institutions run by the federal government or Indian tribes would be exempt from this requirement. The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) has proposed additional language that would provide an exemption for institutions in cases where the state has established a Memorandum of Understanding with a recognized accrediting body. This new language affects private institutions.

## GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

In July 2010, the USDE published proposed regulations for determining whether postsecondary programs lead to gainful employment in recognized occupations. The proposed regulations would use ratios based on students’ education-related debt and the students’ subsequent income or discretionary income in the occupations for which they trained. It would also use students’ loan repayment rates to measure whether they were gainfully employed. The proposed regulations would apply to all non-liberal arts programs at for-profit institutions and all certificate (i.e., non-degree) programs at private non-profit and public institutions. The proposed regulations have generated great controversy and much lobbying and press coverage. The ACCJC joined other accreditors and higher education associations in a letter expressing concerns about some aspects of the proposed regulations, and that letter can be viewed at the ACCJC web site under the President’s Desk [http://accjc.org/president\\_desk.htm](http://accjc.org/president_desk.htm). The Department has delayed release of the final regulations until after January 1, 2011, and has scheduled new hearings on a new draft of the regulations for early November 2010. ♦

# Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions - Updates

## C-RAC TRI-ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT

It is a tradition that executives and professional staff of the regional accrediting commissions meet every third year to share good practices, discuss topics of common interest and plan for the future. The most recent meeting was held in Chicago from August 30 to September 1, 2010, hosted by the Higher Learning Commission. Some 70 people attended the retreat. The program was planned to give the participants an opportunity to work in small groups and share practices and views on topics of key importance to regional accreditation and as relevant to identify areas of attention for the individual commissions and/or projects for C-RAC members to undertake jointly. Some of the topics discussed were: transfer of credit, retention and completion, accreditation of for-profit institutions, distance education, transparency and disclosure practices, and assessment of student learning.

The program also included two invited key note speakers. Peter Ewell, Vice President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems spoke on the topic 'The Merits of National and Comparable Standards'. The second key note speaker was Terry Hartle, Senior Vice President of the American Council on Education, who provided an update on the current Congressional discussions, and new regulations relevant to accreditation and higher education.

While the seven regional accrediting commissions may organize their standards differently or use different wording, their standards are in fact very similar, and they follow very similar processes for conducting their evaluation reviews. The retreat was therefore a very valuable occasion to share ideas and views, to consider challenges which are common to the regional accrediting community and discuss possible actions to take in view of the challenges.

## CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS LIKELY TO EXPAND SCOPE

In June, August and September, the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held hearings on for-profit higher education institutions, examining abuses in marketing, recruitment and enrollment practices in relationship to the institutions' increasing share of total federal financial aid funds.

The hearings have been well publicized, and Senator Harkin's publication, "The Return on Federal Investment in For-Profit Education: Debt Without a Diploma," described some of the practices of the for profit higher education sector in highly critical terms. Two key issues emerged. One is a concern about tax payer-funded federal student financial aid, and the degree to which such aid contributes to corporate profits. The second concern is one about the high turnover and low completion rates of students, and the consequent impact on their repayment of federal student loans.

While many of the for-profit institutions have historically been accredited by national accrediting agencies, an increasing number are now accredited by regional accreditors. The federal hearings are of concern, and the ACCJC and other regional accreditors are watching them carefully. Generally, the for-profit institutions accredited by the ACCJC have been very careful to comply with all standards and have not been the subject of federal investigations at this time.

Discussions of the for-profit higher education sector in Congress have led to concerns about the efficacy of other sectors of higher education, and a good deal of discussion has now occurred about whether there needs to be a parallel examination of the public higher education sector and an examination of what accreditors do to ensure that accredited institutions are more effective than they currently appear to be at producing students who complete certificates and degrees. Senator Harkins has announced that he will hold hearings on accreditation after the November elections, and if such a hearing occurs, regional accreditors expect to be asked to testify. C-RAC is preparing informational documents on regional accreditation in preparation for such hearings. The regional accreditors hope to share information about the already rigorous standards to which they hold institutions accountable. ♦

# Focus on Quality - Fall 2010

## SHARING OF PRACTICES ON PROGRAM REVIEW AND INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

*The ACCJC Regional Workshop held on October 1, 2010 hosted by Mt. San Antonio College.* ACCJC sponsored its first regional workshop on Program Review and Integrated Institutional Planning. The topic of the day was “*Capacity Building for Educational Excellence through Program Review and Integrated Institutional Planning*”. Sixty representatives in teams of up to four from a total of 15 colleges attended the event. The program included presentations from ACCJC on Commission views on Program Review and Integrated Institutional Planning, Dr. Brad Philips from Cal-PASS on Data Collection for Program Review and Integrated Institutional Planning, Mt. SAC’s process for Planning for Institutional Effectiveness, and the Multi-campus Model for Integrated Institutional Planning model used by West Hills Community College District. The feedback from participants was positive and the opportunity to focus on aspects of program review and integrated planning and to learn about models for program review and planning implemented by sister colleges was highly appreciated.

ACCJC will sponsor a second regional workshop in the spring of 2011. Attendance at the workshop will be free. Colleges with an interest in and capacity to host a workshop are invited to contact the Commission by email to Ms. Dorte Kristoffersen, Associate Vice President ([dkristoffersen@accjc.org](mailto:dkristoffersen@accjc.org)). The requirements of the host are: 1) a room with a capacity of a minimum of 100 people, 2) ability to organize coffee/tea breaks and lunch (costs will be covered by the Commission), and 3) proximity to sister colleges. The Commission will collaborate with the chosen host to identify the date of the workshop. Expressions of interest should be sent to the Commission by December 1, 2010. ♦

## GOOD MODELS FOR ASSESSMENT, DIALOG AND CHANGE

*The Student Success Conference held on October 6-8, 2010 at the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa.* The Student Success Conference presented by the Research and Planning (RP) Group for California Community Colleges in collaboration with the ACCJC, Academic Senate, the Career Ladders Project, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, provided a rich array of pre-conference sessions, keynote speakers, interactive breakouts, briefings, and problem solving community sessions. In all there were 86 substantive opportunities for the 525-plus attendees to delve into the tools for developing institutional capacity for educational excellence and student success.

Many of the sessions provided practical information on how to assess learning outcomes. An Accreditation strand also included productive interactive discussions about institutional program review and integrated planning, data collection and decision making, outcomes assessment and analysis for improving student learning and support services, and a study of national research on comprehensive assessment reports.

The three keynote speakers, Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade, San Francisco State University; Dr. Frank Chong, U.S. Department of Education, and Dr. Donna McKusick, Dean of Developmental Education at the Community College of Baltimore County, gave excellent and relevant presentations with the common themes of equity issues and using evidence to improve student success.

For further information please visit the RP Group web site at [www.rpgroup.org](http://www.rpgroup.org), and mark your calendars for October 12-14, 2011 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott for next year’s conference. ♦

## INSTITUTIONALIZING CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

*The CCCIO 2010 Fall Conference held on October 27 to 29, 2010 at the Dana on Mission Bay, San Diego.* On October 28 a special day was planned jointly by the CIO leadership group and the ACCJC. The aim of the special day was to provide accreditation training for Chief Instructional Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers. The title of the day is Institutionalizing Continuous Quality Improvement and the program included the following sessions: Commitment to Educational Excellence, Institutionalizing Educational Planning, Effectively Using Research, and the Value of Substantive Change. More information about the outcomes of the event will be provided in the ACCJC NEWS spring 2011 edition. ♦

# Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

## WCET 22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**November 10-13, 2010 - La Jolla, California.** The annual WCET Conference is the premier professional development event for e-learning. The conference will introduce participants to practical solutions for e-learning. The conference themes include: Federal policy implications, Funding models, E-learning research findings, Data driven decision making, and Effective use of technology. ACCJC President Dr. Barbara Beno and other regional accreditors will be discussing the new federal regulations regarding verification of student identity.

More information about the WCET 22nd Annual Conference can be found at:

<http://wcetconference.wiche.edu/index.php>. ♦

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA 2010 ANNUAL CONVENTION

**November 18-20, 2010 - Pasadena Convention Center.** The theme of the conference: *Sustaining the Legacy, Making a Difference* reflects that the conference celebrates 100 years of the community college system's achievements in making a difference for student success and the CCLC's 20th anniversary of supporting student success. The program strands are: Teaching and Learning, Student Services and Student Success, Institutional Performance and Accountability, Community and Global Partnerships, Fiscal, Legal and Administrative Operations and Professional and Leadership Development.

More information about the Community College League of California (CCLC) 2010 Annual Convention & Partner Conferences can be found on the CCLC web site at: <http://www.ccleague.org>.

### ACCJC WILL PRESENT TWO PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2010

- *Increased Institutional Effectiveness through Program Review, Integrated Planning and Resources Allocation (9:00 a.m. - noon)*
- *Accreditation Liaison Officer Workshop (1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.)*

### AND A FOCUS SESSION ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2010

- *Quality Institutional Practices that Support Student Success (9:45 a.m. - noon)*

### SPECIAL SESSION ON NOVEMBER 18, 2010

- *Dr. Barbara Beno will speak on the topic of Accreditation of International Education at the invitation of California Colleges for International Education (11.00 a.m. - noon)* ♦

## ACADEMIC RESOURCE CONFERENCE 2011

**April 6-8, 2011 - Hyatt Regency in San Francisco, California.** The Conference is co-sponsored by the ACCJC and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The 2011 conference theme is *Higher Education's Third Horizon*.

The program tracks are:

1. Financial and Structural Transformation
2. The Curriculum, Co-curriculum, Learning and the Future
3. The "Third Horizon" and the World beyond the Campus
4. Assessment, Student Success, and Institutional Learning
5. Evolving WASC Accreditation Processes

Information about the Academic Resource Conference will be uploaded on the ACCJC website at:

[http://www.accjc.org/workshops\\_meeting.htm](http://www.accjc.org/workshops_meeting.htm) and the ACSCU/WASC website at: [www.wascarc.org](http://www.wascarc.org). ♦

## Future 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 fall of 2010, the spring of 2011 and the fall of 2011 and review by the Commission at its January 2011, June 2011, and January 2012 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.

SPRING 2011  
(for June 2011 Commission Review)

College of the Desert  
Cypress College  
Deep Springs College  
Fashion Institute of Design &  
Merchandising  
Fullerton College  
Merced College  
Victor Valley College  
West Hills College Coalinga  
West Hills College Lemoore

FALL 2011  
(for January 2012 Commission Review)

College of the Redwoods  
Columbia College  
DeAnza College  
Foothill College  
Fresno City College  
Lake Tahoe Community College  
Modesto Junior College  
Mt. San Jacinto College  
Reedley College  
Shasta College  
Solano Community College  
Willow International Center  
of Reedley College\*

\*Candidacy

SPRING 2012  
(for June 2012 Commission Review)

Barstow College  
City College of San Francisco  
Defense Language Institute  
Feather River College  
Guam Community College  
Hawaii Tokai International College  
Heald Colleges (12 Branch Campuses)  
Los Angeles Harbor College  
Los Angeles Southwest College  
West Los Angeles College



# Lumina Proposal: National Degree Qualifications Profile

Lumina Foundation for Education (Lumina) has developed a draft Degree Qualifications Profile. The Degree Profile attempts to define associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees by student learning, i.e. what students should know, understand and be able to do with their knowledge, exclusive of discipline. This approach is similar to qualifications frameworks established internationally. Qualifications frameworks have existed in a few countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, for more than a decade. But the discussion about the values of qualifications frameworks has picked up pace over the last year, not least with the introduction of qualifications frameworks for higher education and life-long learning in Europe as part of the Bologna Process.

According to Lumina the driving force behind the project is a belief that the definition of degrees by student learning as opposed to credit hours and seat time will allow for greater student success, facilitate more seamless transfer mechanisms, develop an improved understanding of degrees and their meaning by stakeholders, and open the opportunity for needed innovation in higher education. Lumina emphasizes that the Degree Profile is not an attempt to 'standardize' degrees or to define what should be taught and how it should be taught. Rather, the Profile is an attempt to describe student performance appropriate for each degree level through clear reference points that indicate the incremental and cumulative nature of learning. This approach is also meant to serve as a tool for increased accountability as the information provided through the Degree Profile could have the potential for making higher education more transparent and readable for students.

The Degree Profile consists of broad areas of learning, i.e., Applied Learning, Knowledge, Skills and Civic Learning. The areas of learning embrace both applied fields of study, such as medical technology, engineering and accounting, and traditional arts and sciences. Under each degree level and area of learning, statements



are formulated about what students are expected to be able to do. An example of an Associate Degree level statement under the 'Applied Learning' area is: ***At the Associate's level, the student: Describes in writing at least one substantial case in which knowledge and skills acquired in academic settings were applied to a challenge in a non-academic setting; evaluates, using evidence and examples, the learning gained from the application; and analyzes at least one significant concept or method related to the course of study in light of learning from outside of classroom.***

Lumina has circulated the draft Profile to key stakeholders in higher education for comment. The closing date for responses is November 20, 2010. The ACCJC will provide input to the Degree Profile in cooperation with the other regional accrediting commissions. ♦

## What is the role of the Accreditation Liaison Officer?

*If you are the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) on your campus, this article is for you.*

The role of the ALO is to work with the college CEO and the campus community in creating capacity for educational excellence. The ALO leads the institution in promoting assurance to the public that the education provided by the institution meets acceptable levels of quality and implements continuous improvement. The ALO is also the person on campus that the Commission relies on to communicate ongoing matters of accreditation between the Commission and the College.

Every institution must have an ALO and they should be persons with authority and resources to communicate with, engage, and lead the campus in matters related to accreditation. The ALO must:

- Assist the College CEO in addressing accreditation matters and serve as the second contact person for Commission staff.
- Promote an understanding of Accreditation Standards and keep the campus informed about accreditation and the Commission's activities and publications through the distribution of the newsletter, ACCJC NEWS, and other important information.
- Stay knowledgeable about accreditation and be familiar with the ACCJC website.
- Serve as the key resource person in planning the Self Study Process/Self Evaluation Process and maintain an institutional file containing Commission compliance information.
- Facilitate timely reports to the Commission, including the Substantive Change Proposals for the College.

*If you are interested in more specific and current information about the ACCJC Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, plan to attend the Community College League of California Conference in Pasadena November 18-20, 2010. The ACCJC workshop for ALOs will be offered on the first day of the conference, November 18 from 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.*

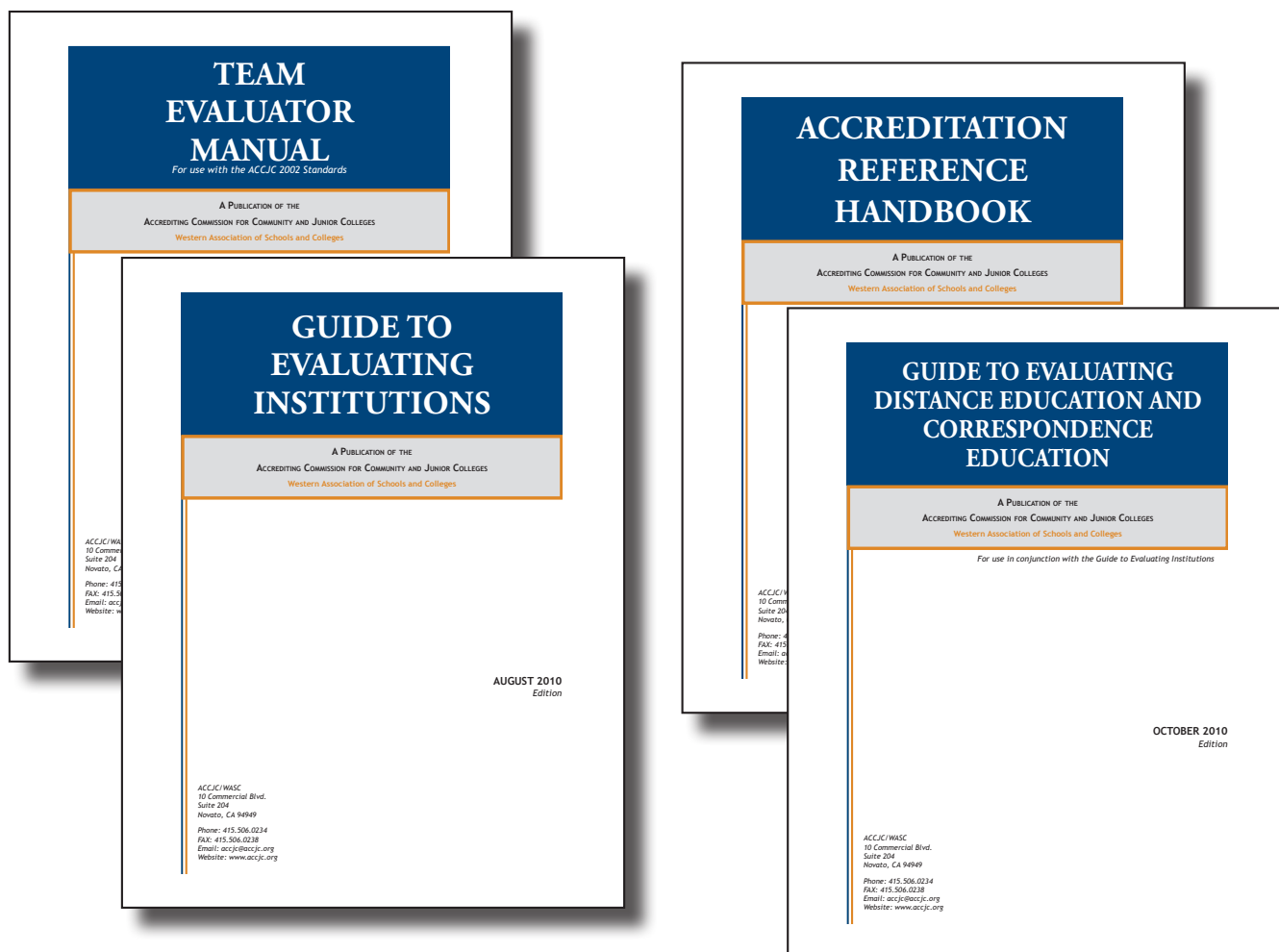
# New ACCJC Publications

The ACCJC has introduced a new design for all its publications. The cover design now reflects the design of the newsletter ACCJC News. We have also introduced new features, such as font and margins to give the publications enhanced readability.

Copies of the Accreditation Reference Handbook (ARH) and the Guide to Evaluating Institutions have been sent to college Chief Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers. Copies of the ARH are also sent to district/system Executive Officers.

The former Distance Education Manual has undergone a major revision. The previous Manual offered institutions useful information and guidance in developing a distance education program that meets acceptable levels of quality as required by the Accreditation Standards. The new Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education will assist colleges and teams in the assessment of distance and correspondence education programs and services to students. Written in the format of the Guide to Evaluating Institutions, the new Guide raises questions related to the Accreditation Standards, where relevant, for distance and correspondence education activities at an institution. The Guide is meant to provoke thoughtful consideration about how an institution's programs and services offered in the distance or correspondence mode are integrated into the institution's mission and planning processes and how institutions offer these programs and services while demonstrating a commitment to student learning and achievement of expected learning outcomes.

All manuals are posted on the Commission's website ([www.accjc.org/publications.htm](http://www.accjc.org/publications.htm)) as they are completed. ♦





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