

ACCJC GONE WILD

By Martin Hittelman

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Introduction

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is the accreditation agency for the Community Colleges of California. It currently works under the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) although there seems to be activity by the ACCJC to **distance itself from WASC**.

The proposed ACCJC appeal process removes WASC from the appeals process leaving the final decision made on any appeal of an ACCJC Commission action left to an ACCJC Commission appointed panel.

Barbara Beno has served as the President of the ACCJC since August of 2001. During her term of office the ACCJC has changed from being a collegial accrediting agency that helps its colleges to satisfy accreditation standards by offering training and assistance to both visiting teams and college constituencies to one that issues sanctions with a vengeance. Beno and the Commission members, have, since Beno took over, conducted a reign of terror in which any sign of disloyalty to the ACCJC or difference with any of their policies is met with threats of more severe sanctions. As one CEO told me, it is "her way or the highway." As a result, most college administrators and faculty are afraid to speak out against the excesses of the ACCJC. Even visiting team members have been unwilling to step forward and expose abuses for fear of hurting the chances of their home institutions.

The goal of accreditation, according to the United States Department of Education, "is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality." In the Special Edition of the February 2001 ACCJC News it is pointed out that "In achieving and maintaining its accreditation a higher education institution assures the public that the institution meets standards of quality, **that the education earned there is of value to the students who earn it, and that employers, trade or professional-related agencies and other colleges and universities can accept a student's credentials as legitimate.**"

The ACCJC does not value colleges for their quality of instruction, but instead the ACCJC issues sanctions that are based on the successful performance of excessive documentation and data gathering, reviews of policy and procedures, and adherence to education practices that are not based on scientific studies. Approaches to evaluation such as Measurable Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), that are not recognized as model standard practices by the majority of college educators as illustrated by faculty resistance to the imposition of the measurable student learning outcome methodology, are imposed on the colleges using the threat of sanction.

34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 602.10 and 602.13 require that an accrediting agency "must be able to demonstrate that its standards, policies, and accreditation decisions are **widely accepted** in the United States by educators and educational institutions, licensing bodies (if appropriate), practitioners, and employers of graduates for accredited institutions/programs." **The ACCJC is out of compliance with this fundamental requirement.**

In fact, the ACCJC discourages any consideration of how the college meets state and federal requirements. This disinterest in California and federal law and practice is emphasized in the ACCJC Team Evaluator Manual. On page 23 of the August 2012 Manual it advises that "Recommendations should not be based on the standards of governmental agencies, the legislature, or organizations."

The actual quality of the education offered is not a consideration. In addition, the ACCJC has attempted to micro-manage colleges by using accreditation as the tool to force colleges to change their budgeting and governing patterns to fit the ACCJC's vision of how a college should operate. In the case of Northern Marianas College (Saipan North Marianas Islands), the Commission has even attempted to force change in their trustee composition.

Some of the arguments supporting ACCJC sanctions against City College of San Francisco and several other colleges raise questions with regard to the mission of the community colleges in California. A goal of ACCJC's interpretation of its standards seems to be to reduce open access to a wide variety of programs and students in the name of reduced resources. In short, to attempt to change the very mission of community colleges through ACCJC's ability to sanction.

From 2003 to 2008 the six United States regional accrediting bodies issued a total of 126 sanctions to community colleges in the United States. 112 of these were issued by the ACCJC under Beno's direction. ACCJC has continued to be out of step with the other accrediting agencies. Most recently, from June 2011 to June 2012 the ACCJC issued forty-eight of the seventy-five sanctions (64%) issued nationwide. The community colleges in California represent about 19% of the community colleges accredited nationally. In short, 19% of the colleges under ACCJC generated 64% of the sanctions. Clearly, **the ACCJC has become a rogue agency.**

According to the ACCJC, its accreditation process provides assurance to the public that the accredited member colleges meet their Standards and that "the education earned at the institutions is of value to the student who earned it; and employers, trade or profession-related licensing agencies, and other colleges and universities can accept a student's credential as legitimate." Contrary to this claim, the emphasis of ACCJC has not been on the value of the education to the student or to the colleges and universities that would accept the credits earned. Rather it has been on compliance with the ACCJC standards (the majority of which do not directly address the quality of education that students receive).

According to their own published report, the following are the reasons given for the ACCJC sanctions of January 2012:

- Six colleges did not have adequate procedures and did not appropriately implement program review of instructional programs and services.
- Twenty colleges failed to meet requirements regarding the use of assessment results in integrated planning.
- Twenty colleges were sanctioned for deficiencies in governing board roles and responsibilities; seven of these were colleges in multi-college districts where the key deficiencies were in district governing board operations.
- Fourteen colleges lacked appropriate and sustainable financial management.
- Thirty colleges had miscellaneous other deficiencies, primarily related to staffing (6), library and technology resources (4), and evaluations (4).

Most recently, the ACCJC has entered a stage of micro-managing of district-level operations through sanctions on the colleges of multi-college districts. This includes attempting to dictate to college governing boards how they should operate and how district chancellors should operate in relation to local college presidents. It has even gotten to the point where Beno is calling college presidents and district chancellors on the telephone and demanding changes be made immediately or harsh sanctions will follow.

Carl Friedlander (President of the CCC), writing in the March 2013 issue of the CFT's Community College Council Perspective, called for the ACCJC to "stop using the threat (or fact) of accreditation sanctions to undermine California's system of locally elected board of trustees. Providing training to trustees about accreditation and their role in it is a good thing. However, it is an affront to democracy to tell trustees that they put at risk the accreditation of the colleges they were elected to represent if they speak out on issues they care about or communicate with a wide range of individuals, constituencies and interest groups rather than relying almost exclusively on the perspective of their district's chancellor/superintendent."

"These kinds of behaviors by ACCJC leadership compound the problem of the federal pressures and make many faculty feel that accreditation in California today has almost nothing to do with "peer and professional review" and is instead about ACCJC spearheading an aggressive (and, many believe, misguided) "reform" agenda. Spearheading a "reform" campaign is not the business of an accrediting commission."

The ACCJC operation is cloaked in secrecy with all involved required to sign a pledge that they will not reveal the inner workings of the college visiting teams or how the ACCJC itself operates in determining what level of sanctions to impose. After the visiting team issues its report, all actions of the ACCJC are done out of the public view. The votes on sanctions by the Commission are never disclosed. Even the meetings of the ACCJC are held in places and at times difficult for the public to find out about or attend and comment. They have paid little attention to their own timelines for posting the agendas for their meetings or for posting the resulting actions of the Commission, including even where their meetings will be held.

It is now becoming commonplace for the ACCJC to impose sanctions that are much harsher than those suggested by the visiting teams. The latest such incidents occurred at the January 9-11, 2013 meeting when the Commission placed Northern Marianas College and College of the Sequoias on SHOW CAUSE in contradiction to what the visiting teams had suggested. One wonders what has happened to the recognition of the work of "peers" in the accreditation process.

In short, the ACCJC has become, in words taken from a report by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) on accreditation agencies, **"unnecessarily intrusive, prescriptive, and granular in ways that may not advance system goals nor match institutional priorities, and is costly in resources such as time, funds, and opportunity."**

Carl Friedlander in his Perspective column of March 2013 addressed the role of ACCJC as follows: "ACCJC's singular focus should be ensuring that standards are met. Yet President Beno, along with other ACCJC staff, serves on the Advisory Board for the Campaign for College Opportunity (CCO). **The work of CCO is controversial within the system.** There should be a firewall between ACCJC staff and the boards of community college advocacy organizations. It is similarly inappropriate for ACCJC to take positions on legislation affecting the community colleges, as the Commission has recently done. Returning to Lumina its \$450,000 grant for "exploring use of the Degree Qualifications Profile and Tuning at community colleges in California" would be another way ACCJC could clarify that the Commission is about ensuring standards, **not spearheading a reshaping of community college education.**"

This document has been prepared by reading the non-secret portions of visiting team reports, publications of the ACCJC, sanction letters to colleges, and confidential discussions with persons on the college campuses and on visiting teams with direct knowledge concerning the behaviors of the ACCJC and its President Barbara Beno and includes exchanges of correspondence between President Beno on behalf of the ACCJC and interested parties such as the California Federation of Teachers and the Community College Association of the California Teachers Association. The study by the RP Group was also important to the discovery of abuse. This document is intended to expose how the ACCJC actually operates.

It is sad that the ACCJC has added to college woes. The colleges have enough to worry about without also being required to exist under the yoke of the ACCJC and its micro-managing sanctions. Something must be done concerning the ACCJC and its abusive posturing - and sooner rather than later.

Marty Hittelman
Retired Community College Faculty member

Higher Education Accreditation

The goal of accreditation, according to the United States Department of Education, “is to ensure that **education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.**”

Accrediting agencies in the United States are private educational associations of regional or national scope. “The U.S. Department of Education does not accredit educational institutions and/or programs.

However, the Secretary of Education is required by law to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the Secretary of Education determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education or training provided by the institutions of higher education programs they accredit.”

Applications for recognition as an accreditation agency requires that an application with the U.S. Department of Education, a review by the **National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity**, and a final decision made by the Secretary of Education. The **Accrediting Agency Evaluation Unit** located within the Office of Postsecondary Education within the Department of Education deals with reviews of accreditation agencies and acts as a liaison with these agencies. It provides support to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

ACCJC and WASC

The **Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges** (ACCJC) is the accreditation agency for the community colleges of California. It currently works under the **Western Association of Schools and Colleges** (WASC). Each of the three Commissions of WASC is reviewed periodically for renewal of recognition by the US Department of Education (USDOE). WASC itself is currently required to come into compliance with national standards within 12 months of their 2012 request for continued recognition.

The ACCJC’s status as a federally approved accrediting agency was renewed by the Secretary of Education in December of 2007 for a five year term. Their next review will come up in the Fall of 2013.

The WASC Corporate Board oversees the work of three Commissions. It is comprised of nine members, three from each Commission, including the chairs from each. The WASC Board meets annually to **certify the accrediting actions of the three Commissions, receive audits, and take action on business** as necessary. There appears to be some change in this relationship in the wind as the **ACCJC sought to take WASC out of several of their policies at the January 2013 meeting**. Some of this seems to come out of the national accreditation of WASC in 2012.

For example, a January 2013 first reading of policy change proposals regarding Representation of Accredited Status, Commission Actions on Institutions, Review of Commission Actions, Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process, and Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions were considered. The reasons for these changes included the need to “**delete dated references to Commission interactions with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)**” or “**the changes more accurately reflect pertinent interactions, if any, with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)**”

The Commission also considered for second reading and then adopted the institutional policies on the review of accreditation standards and on their student and public complaints against institutions. “The revised Policy on Relations with Governmental Agencies provides a description of the consultation undertaken when conflicts between state and local laws and Accreditation Standards are identified.”

The reason given for these changes involved the claim that “The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Bylaws are being amended to align language with current expectations for nonprofit organizations in California. Each of the three independent accrediting agencies within WASC is separately formalizing its incorporated status and amending Bylaws as necessary. ACCJC Bylaws revisions will take full effect upon final passage of the WASC Bylaws. ACCJC Member institutions will be notified when the adoption of WASC Bylaws is completed.”

Attempt to Change Appeal Process

A new appeal process was unveiled at the January 10-11, 2013 meeting. Since there was **no advance notice** on the ACCJC website until just days before the meeting, it was impossible for members of the public and others to testify against the changes.

The process for appeal is basically one that is completely controlled by the ACCJC itself and its staff. Only an institution can appeal and only an “adverse action” (the removal of accreditation) decision. If the staff and the ACCJC agree, a review team is appointed. *“If the Commission Chairperson concurs with the judgment of Commission staff that the statement of reasons is deficient, a notice of return and the statement of reasons will be returned to the institution and no review committee will be appointed.”* And that is it. If the staff and ACCJC agree, then an actual hearing of the case is scheduled. Despite what the review committee determines, the ACCJC makes the decision on the review.

Previously if the Commission acts to reaffirm the adverse action, the institution could appeal the decision to the Western Association of Schools. The appeal of the action on the review (which can be found in Article IX of the ACCJC Bylaw) now goes to a five to seven member hearing panel appointed by the Executive Committee of the ACCJC (which is comprised of the Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee).

The grounds for appeal of a decision to terminate accreditation are limited to errors or omissions relative to procedures by the evaluation team and/or the Commission, demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission, evidence before the Commission was materially in error, or the action by the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence. The hearing panel has the power to affirm, amend, reverse, or remand the action being appealed.

It should be noted that there is no federal mandate that only the “adverse action” of removal of accreditation can be brought to appeal. The New England Accreditation Agency, for example, **allows for probation to be appealed.**

The proposed changes to a number of proposed policies including the deletion of the role of WASC can be found on the ACCJC website as part of the report of actions taken at the January 2013 meeting.

Quality Assurance, Continuous Improvement, or Compliance

The accreditation process is supposed to provide assurance to the public that the accredited member colleges meet their standards and that “the education earned at the institutions is **of value to the student who earned it**; and employers, trade or profession-related licensing agencies, and other colleges and universities can **accept a student’s credential as legitimate**.” Contrary to this claim, the emphasis of ACCJC **has not been** on the value of the education to the student or to the colleges and universities that would accept the credits earned.

A discussion regarding the proper role of accreditation agencies is currently under discussion in Washington. In April of 2012, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) released a report making accreditation policy recommendations for the Higher Education Act Reauthorization. The discussion noted that accreditation is meant to assist “individuals in making informed post-secondary educational choices, in consumer protection, and in the continuing improvement of education and the institutions that provide it.” “However, there are both commonalities and divergences among notions of ‘**quality assurance**,’ ‘**continuous improvement**,’ and ‘**compliance**’.” “And there is tension among notions of gate-keeping for student aid eligibility, mechanisms of public accountability, and notions of accreditation as a broader quality improvement and assurance process.”

The NACIQI came down on the side of **continuing the current system of accreditation** using independent private agencies like the ACCJC. The basic argument was: “With accreditation being a system of self-regulation, the involvement of member institutions in the process of establishing the standards and then applying them in volunteer peer review, accreditors also promote understanding of the expectations and buy-in for the standards and policies.” **This is not the way it works in ACCJC accreditations. Member institutions are reluctant to enter the debate for fear of losing accreditation and there is little actual buy-in for the standards and policies of the ACCJC.**

The ACCJC sees their requirements as, in the words of the NACIQI, “essential to allow accreditors to evaluate institutional or program quality.” More often, again in the words of the NACIQI, the ACCJC oversight is “**unnecessarily intrusive, prescriptive, and granular in ways that may not advance system goals nor match institutional priorities, and is costly in resources such as time, funds, and opportunity.**”

Ability to Plan, Prepare Reports, Review

The **Mt. San Antonio College** accreditation of January 13, 2011 is an example of a college receiving accreditation from the ACCJC based on its ability to plan (educationally and fiscally), prepare reports and do reviews. In a letter to then President/CEO of Mt. San Antonio College John Nixon (now a member of the ACCJC staff), Barbara Beno, President of the ACCJC, wrote “The College is commended for the high quality of educational programs guaranteed through the various academic approval and control committees and processes; and the successful **linking of program review, planning, and budgeting inclusive of student services and instruction through the College's Planning for Institutional Effectiveness process**. In addition, the college is commended for its overall financial stability achieved through sound fiscal management in difficult times; the **use of data** to demonstrate success with retention

and success of at risk students; and its innovative programs that provide orientation to college success and provide students with the requisite library and learning support to enable them to be successful.” But even though accredited, Mt. SAC still was told in Beno’s letter that “The Commission expects that institutions meet standards that require the identification and assessment of student learning outcomes, and the use of assessment data to plan and implement improvements to educational quality, by fall 2012.”

The ACCJC sanctions are based on the ACCJC’s interpretation of their Standards. Based on the actions of the ACCJC, there is no clear path from one level of sanction to another. It is not clear how the ACCJC decides what level of sanctions is required. In addition, the actual **sanctions have had little to do with the quality of instruction received by students who attend**. Instead of concentrating on the value of the college to students and the value of the credits earned, the ACCJC has taken a path that requires colleges to expend an incredible quantity of time and resources to satisfy the ACCJC that they are performing the **excessive documenting, planning, and reviews of policy required by the Commission**.

Some colleges under attack have been virtually forced to hire a temporary “Special Trustee” to “provide advise and counsel, and make recommendations on all matters relating to the operation of the district” in order to convince the ACCJC that they are serious about the threat of disaccreditation. The agreement with the Special Trustee most often contains language that the recommendations made by the Special Trustee will normally be accepted by the District and approved by the Governing Board. So much for the shared governance processes required by state legislation and State Board of Governors regulations.

The colleges in California are already underfunded and the ACCJC is helping to drain these limited resources. In addition, the ACCJC is attempting to micro-manage the fiscal and governance processes of the colleges it accredits through fear and intimidation. Instead of helping the community colleges in California to be successful in offering quality instruction, the ACCJC’s current micro-managing mode has made hard times in the community colleges even harder.

The ACCJC has become a rogue accrediting body. The sanctions by the ACCJC over the years have easily exceeded the total sanctions by all other accreditation bodies combined. The reasons for the sanctions have little if anything to do with assuring colleges and universities that their degrees and units represent quality. Over the last year they have continued their pattern of micro-managing district operations without regard to the quality of education received by students. They have established an adversarial relationship between the ACCJC and the colleges they are to accredit.

Sanctions Criteria

The criteria for the level of sanctions imposed by the ACCJC include the following:

Issue Warning: Sanction when ACCJC finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies.

Impose Probation: Sanction when ACCJC finds that an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning.

Order Show Cause: Sanction when the ACCJC finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission.

Terminate Accreditation: If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, or has taken an action that has placed it significantly out of compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, its accreditation may be terminated.

What is the measure of when a college has “deviated,” deviated “Significantly” or is in “substantial non-compliance”? Without more definition, how can ACCJC decisions be anything but arbitrary? The ACCJC definitions of sanctions differ from those of other accrediting agencies. For example, at the **Middle States Commission on Higher Education**, “The Commission acts to **Warn** an institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy when the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission standards and a follow-up report, called a monitoring report, is required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance. Warning indicates that the Commission believes that, although the institution is out of compliance, the institution has the capacity to make appropriate improvements within a reasonable period of time and the institution has the capacity to sustain itself in the long term.” The ACCJC does not consider the ability of the college to continue to operate while making corrections.

Middle States “places an institution on **Probation** when, in the Commission's judgment, the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission standards and that the non-compliance is sufficiently serious, extensive, or acute that it raises concern about one or more of the following:

1. the adequacy of the education provided by the institution;
2. the institution's capacity to make appropriate improvements in a timely fashion; or
3. the institution's capacity to sustain itself in the long term.”

ACCJC's Extreme Number of Sanctions

From 2003 to 2008 the six regional bodies had the following sanction actions and the number of accreditations that they performed for community colleges:

	Number	Warnings	Probation	Show Cause	Termination	Total
Middle States	95	6	0	0	0	6
New England	64	0	0	0	0	0
North Central	243	0	1	0	0	1
Northwest	56	0	0	0	0	0
Southern	298	6	1	0	0	7
Western (ACCJC)	174	75	20	12	5	112

From June 2011 to June 2012, the ACCJC continued to be an agency gone wild.

	Warnings	Probation	Show Cause	Termination	Total
Middle States	10	0	0	0	10
New England	0	0	0	0	0
North Central	0	0	0	0	0
Northwest	5	2	0	0	7
Western (ACCJC)	24	20	3	1	48

U.S. Department of Education Pressure

Carl Friedlander in his 2013 column in the March 2013 issue of the Perspective noted that “ACCJC argues that its ever-stricter and more directive standards and policies are the unavoidable result of pressures and mandates from the U.S. Department of Education: pressures and mandates that escalated dramatically under Bush/Spellings and have barely abated under Obama/Duncan. Washington D.C. is, indeed, part of the problem. As Judith Eaton, the respected President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) describes it, ‘Federal law and rules now constrain the peer and professional review process of accreditation, taking us down a path of accreditation as compliance intervention—in stark contrast to its traditional collegial role.’”

“Why is accreditation turmoil concentrated in the California community colleges? I believe it's because the ACCJC leadership, more than the leadership of any other regional commission, has inappropriately embraced a **particular "education reform" agenda**. This Commission's zealotry is roiling the system and **poisoning faculty attitudes about accreditation itself**.”

ACCJC Sanctions

Sanctions at January 2012 meeting

Twenty eight colleges were on sanction as of January 2012. In February 2012, the ACCJC summarized the types of “deficiencies” that “caused” the Commission to impose a sanction of Warning, Probation or Show Cause.

The vast majority of reasons dealt with the **adequacy of procedures, reviews of programs, services, and operations** as well as whether the college **adequately used assessment tools** such as student

learning outcomes in the evaluation of faculty. Sanctions were rarely, if ever, based on the actual quality and adequacy of instruction received by students. The focus of the Commission has been, instead, on the gathering of data.

Reasons, according to the ACCJC, given for the sanctions as of January 2012 were:

- Six colleges did not have **adequate procedures** and did not appropriately implement **program review** of instructional programs and services.
- Twenty colleges failed to meet requirements regarding the **use of assessment results in integrated planning**.
- Twenty colleges were sanctioned for deficiencies in **governing board roles and responsibilities**; seven of these were colleges in multi-college districts where the key deficiencies were in district governing board operations.
- Fourteen colleges lacked **appropriate and sustainable financial management**.
- Thirty colleges had miscellaneous other deficiencies, primarily related **to staffing (6), library and technology resources (4), and evaluations (4)**.
- Nineteen colleges were considered to have three or more areas of deficiency. Fifteen of the colleges on sanction were instructed to work on the same “issues” as they were directed to in their last Comprehensive Report and subsequent Follow-Up Reports.

Reasons why Colleges were on Sanctions as of January 2012 (28). Each has one or more “Areas of Deficiencies”

Program Review	6
Planning using Assessment Results	20
Board Roles and Responsibilities	20
Internal Governance Issues	5
Financial Management or Stability	4
Miscellaneous Other Categories	30

Included under the Miscellaneous Other Conditions were: 6 for Staffing, 4 for Library and Technology Resources, 4 for Evaluations, and 16 others.

June 8-10, 2011 Sanctions

At its meeting of **June 8-10, 2011**, the ACCJC took the following institutional actions:

REAFFIRMED ACCREDITATION

College of the Desert
West Hills College Coalinga
West Hills College Lemoore
Glendale Community College
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College
Palomar College
Southwestern College

PLACED ON WARNING

Cypress College
Fullerton College
Merced College
San Joaquin Delta College
College of the Siskiyous
Berkeley City College
College of Alameda
Laney College
Merritt College

PLACED ON PROBATION

Victor Valley College
MiraCosta College

January 10-12, 2012 Sanctions

REAFFIRMED ACCREDITATION

De Anza College
Foothill College
Irvine Valley College
Lake Tahoe Community College
Mt. San Jacinto College
Saddleback College
Taft College

PLACED ON WARNING

College of Marin
Columbia College
Fresno City College
Reedley College
Solano Community College
Evergreen Valley College
San Diego Miramar College

PLACED ON PROBATION

Modesto Junior College
Moorpark College
Oxnard College
Palo Verde College
Shasta College
Ventura College
San Jose City College

PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

College of the Redwoods

Cuesta College

June 6-8, 2012 Sanctions

REAFFIRMED ACCREDITATION

Feather River College
College of the Siskiyous
Cypress College
Fullerton College
San Joaquin Delta College
MiraCosta College

PLACED ON WARNING

Barstow College
Berkeley City College
Laney College
Merritt College
Merced College

PLACED ON PROBATION

Los Angeles Harbor College
Los Angeles Southwest College
Victor Valley College
Moorpark College
Oxnard College
Palo Verde College
Ventura College

PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

City College of San Francisco

January 9-11, 2013 Sanctions

REAFFIRMED ACCREDITATION

Bakersfield College
Cerro Coso Community College
Porterville College
Evergreen Valley College
Fresno City College
Reedley College
San Diego Miramar College
College of Marin
Moorpark College
Palo Verde College

Oxnard College
 San Jose City College
 Shasta College

PLACED ON WARNING

Woodland Community College
 El Camino College
 Columbia College
 Solano Community College
 Cuesta College (off of SHOW CAUSE)

PLACED ON PROBATION

Yuba College
 Modesto Junior College
 Victor Valley College
 College of the Redwoods (off of SHOW CAUSE)

PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

College of Sequoias

Actions on California Community Colleges from June 2011 – January 2013

ACCJC				
California Community Colleges				
	Actions June 2011	Actions Jan. 2012	Actions June 2012	Actions Jan. 2013
Bakersfield College				RA
Barstow College			W	
Berkeley College	W		W	
Cerro Coso College				RA
City College of SF			SC	
College of Alameda	W		W	
College of Marin		W		RW
College of Redwoods		SC		P
College of Desert	RA			
College of the Siskiyous	W		RA	
College of Sequoias				SC
Columbia College		W		W
Cuesta College		SC		W
Cypress College	W		RA	
DeAnza College		RA		
El Camino College				W
Evergreen Valley		W		RA
Feather River College			RA	
Foothill College		RA		

Fresno City	W			RA
Fullerton College	W		RA	
Glendale College	RA			
Irvine Valley College		RA		
Lake Tahoe College		RA		
LA Harbor College			P	
LA Southwest College			P	
LA Trade Tech College	RA			
Laney College	W		W	
Merced College	W		W	
Merritt College	W		W	
Mira Costa College	P		RA	
Modesto Junior College		P		P
Moorpark College		P	P	RP
Mt. San Jacinto College		RA		
Oxnard College		P	P	RA
Palo Verde College		P	P	RP
Palomar College	RA			
Porterville College				RA
Reedley College		W		RA
Rio Hondo College				
San Diego Miramar College		W		RA
San Joaquin Delta College			RA	
San Joaquin Valley College	W			
San Jose City College		P		RA
Shasta College		P		RA
Solano College		W		W
Southwestern College	RA			
Taft College		RA		
Ventura College		P	P	RA
Victor Valley College	P		P	P
West Hills College	RA			
West Los Angeles College			W	
Woodland College				W
Yuba College				P
Total Sanctions	12	15	15	10
Total Decisions	18	21	21	24
Percentage Sanctioned	67%	71%	71%	42%
RA -reaffirmed accreditation				
W- Warning				
P- Probation				
SC - SHOW CAUSE				

RW - Removed from Warning
RP - Removed from Probation

Colleges on Sanctions January 2009 – January 2012
Top Perceived Deficiencies Causing Sanctions

	Colleges on Sanction	Program Review	Planning	Internal Governance	Board	Financial Stability or Management
2009	24	17	22	11	11	13
2010	19	13	17	8	11	11
2011	21	4	15	5	14	13
2012	28	6	20	5	20	14

The ACCJC has been focused on issues of planning, review, and the behavior of local governing boards. There is some question of whether the action of the governing board is a proper or legal item to consider in the evaluation of the individual colleges. **The attack by ACCJC on local governing boards has increased significantly over the last year.**

Visiting Team Reports and Privacy

Visiting teams are given one day of training and then sent out to a college to do an evaluation. The training is seen by many to be inadequate to the task involved. Team leaders are also not well educated on how to write a report and how far they are allowed to go with recommendations that are overly micro-managing in nature.

College representatives that met with visiting teams have often been surprised by the harshness of some of the sanctions imposed by the Commission. Many of the visiting team members assured the local college that their accreditation would go smoothly only to find that the college was put on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause. Members of the college accreditation team are left to wonder what happened. In addition, several team members on college visits have confidentially disclosed that their team's recommendations regarding their team's recommended level of sanctions were changed to more harsh sanctions by the Commission. **There is no public record of what the teams recommended with regard to the level of sanctions** but it appears that since each team is assigned an ACCJC staff member who "helps" the chair of the visiting team write the final report, the actual sanctions are often based on the current demands of the staff member and Barbara Beno. The teams tend to deal with the way the college is operating today whereas the ACCJC itself is also interested in the long-term compliance of the college and **will make sanctions harsher** when it feels that the college has not been adequately responsive to the demands of the ACCJC or the recommendations of the visiting team.

It is very difficult to find out what happens from the time the visiting team report is submitted and the final judgment by the Commission is made. It does appear to be true that the ACCJC commissioners themselves actually vote on the sanctions to be imposed (although no official record of voting is available to the public or to the colleges sanctioned). It is clear from all information that I have uncovered that Barbara Beno plays a heavy hand in discussions. Her approach is identified as a "my way or the highway" approach.

One cause of the secrecy in the ACCJC process results from ACCJC rules on confidentiality. In one part it reads: "In order to assure the accuracy and appropriateness of institutional information which is made public, the Commission expects evaluation **team members to keep confidential** all institutional information read or heard before, during, and after the evaluation visit. Except in the context of Commission work, **evaluation team members are expected to refrain from discussing information obtained in the course of service as an evaluation team member**. Sources of information that should remain confidential include the current Institutional Self Evaluation Report; previous External Evaluation Reports; interviews and written communication with campus personnel, students, governing board members, and community members; evidentiary documents, and evaluation team discussions."

"The institutional file in the Commission office is part of the private relationship with the institution and is therefore not available to the public. Correspondence and verbal communication with the institution or its members can remain confidential **at the discretion of the ACCJC President**. The Commission will consider institutional requests for confidentiality in communications with the Commission in the context of this policy."

In addition, the work of the Commission in determining the sanctions is done in private. The public is thus unable to determine if the final determinations are the work of one person, come after a vote of the

Commission members, or are determined by some method of consensus. Actual votes are never published. There is a virtual cone of silence imposed on the proceedings.

Commission Composition

The ACCJC Commissioners are not representative of the diversity in the California community colleges. The large urban districts such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, San Jose - Evergreen, and Long Beach are not represented on the Commission whereas Riverside City College has two member of the Commission. The faculty of the California Community Colleges are represented by only four of the members of the Commission. The Commission also includes a number of members who were not well respected as administrators at their home campus.

Many of the present and past ACCJC Commissioners have served as members of college visiting teams. It is not clear if they voted when those college accreditations came up for a vote before the Commission. The votes on the levels of sanctions imposed are not made public.

Dr. Sherrill Amador | Chair

Dr. Amador serves as a public member of the Commission. Dr. Amador began her service on the Commission July 1, 2004. She was a very unpopular college president at Palomar College where she received several votes of non-confidence.

Dr. Steven Kinsella | Vice Chair

Dr. Kinsella serves as an administrative member of the Commission. He serves as Gavilan College's Superintendent/President where his total compensation is currently in excess of \$255,000 per year. Dr. Kinsella began his service on the Commission in January 2010. Politically he serves as an Advisory Board Member of The Campaign for College Opportunity. He has also served as the chairperson of the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) of the Community College League of California (CCLC). The JPA is designed to help districts comply with GASB 45 (funding employee health retirement) with the establishment of an Investment Trust under the control of the JPA. Gavilan College has joined the JPA and pays money into the CCLC JPA. The District also contracts with the CCLC to help develop its policies. Dr. Kinsella has served on a number of ACCJC college/district visiting teams in which he participated in looking at the college's pre-funding of GASB 45. He also served on an ACCJC task force that helped to create what are called "Required Evidentiary Documents" that are used to evaluate institutional financial services to reflect "accounting requirements for other post-employment benefits and liabilities .." In short, Kinsella helped develop the CCLC JPA, then helped the ACCJC to develop a standard directed at funding GASB 45, participated in teams looking at GASB 45 funding, and finally voted as part of the Commission on college sanctions. Kinsella is a former marine.

Dr. Joseph Bielanski, Jr.

Dr. Bielanski serves as a faculty member of the Commission. He serves as the Institutional Effectiveness Coordinator and Articulation Officer Berkeley City College (where Commission President Barbara Beno served as a college president). Dr. Bielanski began his service on the Commission July 1, 2010. He was appointed to the California Community College Board of Governors on November 30, 2011.

Dr. Timothy Brown

Dr. Timothy Brown serves as a faculty member of the Commission. He is the Chair of English and

Speech Communications at Riverside City College. Dr. Brown received his Ed. D. in 1996 from Pepperdine University where, for his dissertation study, he developed an evaluation model to assess the effectiveness of reading instruction to adults using the television as the primary delivery mode. Dr. Brown began his service on July 1, 2011.

Mr. Chris Constantin

Mr. Constantin serves as a public member of the Commission. He serves as Assistant City Auditor for San Diego. Mr. Constantin began his service on the Commission July 1, 2010.

Dr. Gary Davis

Dr. Davis represents the Accrediting Commission for Schools of WASC. Dr. Davis began his service on the Commission July 1, 2010.

Dr. Frank Gornick

Dr. Gornick serves as an administrative member of the Commission. He is the Chancellor at West Hills Community College. Chancellor Dr. Gornick began his service on the Commission on July 1, 2009.

Ms. Virginia May

Ms. May serves as a faculty member of the Commission. She teaches mathematics at Sacramento City College. Ms. May began her service on the Commission July 1, 2009.

Dr. Richard Mahon

Dr. Mahon serves as a faculty member of the Commission. He teaches Humanities at Riverside City College. He is the second serving member from Riverside City College. Dr. Mahon began his service on the Commission July 1, 2012.

Mr. Charles Meng

Mr. Meng serves as a **public member** of the Commission. He served 14 years as member of the Napa Valley **Board of Trustees**. He was once an active member of the Community College League of California. He served in the U.S Army Corps of Engineers after attending West Point. Mr. Meng began his service on the Commission January 1, 2011.

Ms. Susan Murata

Ms. Murata serves as a faculty member of the Commission. She is the Library Director at Kapi'olani Community College. Ms Murata began her service on the Commission July 1, 2010.

Dr. Raul Rodriguez

Dr. Raul Rodriguez serves as an administrative member of the Commission. He currently serves as Chancellor in the Rancho Santiago Community College District where his compensated is in excess of \$250,000 per year. Dr. Rodriguez began his service on July 1, 2011.

On March 28, 2009, as college president at Delta College, Dr. Rodriguez issued the following statement regarding the action of the ACCJC that placed Delta College on probation: "On February 6th I received notification from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges that they have placed Delta College on probation. Additionally, the Commission is asking us to provide a second report by March 15, 2009."

"As you know, the college has been on warning status since June of 2008. Since that time, we have accomplished a great deal toward addressing the recommendations provided to us by the

Commission. We provided evidence of this continuing work to the Commission in the form of a follow-up report dated October 21, 2008. Being placed on probation was clearly not the result that we hoped for **or expected for our efforts**. However, that work did have some positive results. That is, the Commission has now reduced the number of recommendations on which we have to report from eleven down to six. Without downplaying the significance of the remaining recommendations, the good news is that we have been consistently working on these recommendations since we submitted the last report. This does not mean that there is not work to be done. **There is a lot yet to be done and we will have to redouble our efforts to get it done. We will have to make this our top priority and marshal our resources to make improvements that remedy our deficiencies and that satisfy the Commission.**”

“It is of little solace that we have plenty of company across the state. A number of colleges are already on warning, probation, or show cause status and a number of others have just been placed into those categories. **There is a general consensus across the community colleges that the Commission is taking a hard line on colleges that deviate from the accreditation standards and recommendations.**”

Mr. Michael Rota

Mr. Rota represents the seven community colleges of the University of Hawai`I. Mr. Rota began his service on the Commission July 1, 2004.

Dr. Barry Russell

Dr. Barry Russell represents the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office on the Commission. Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. He is a former Vice President of Instruction at College of the Siskiyous and dean at El Camino College. Dr. Russell began his service on July 1, 2011.

Dr. Eleanor Siebert

Dr. Eleanor Siebert represents the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of WASC on the Commission. Dr. Siebert began her service on July 1, 2011.

Dr. Marie Smith

Dr. Smith serves as a public member of the Commission. Dr. Smith began her service on the Commission July 1, 2007.

Dr. Patrick Tellei

Dr. Patrick Tellei represents the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council on the Commission. Dr. Tellei began his service on the Commission July 1, 2008.

Dr. Sharon Whitehurst-Payne

Dr. Sharon Whitehurst-Payne serves as a public member of the Commission. She is from Cal State University San Marcos where she serves as the chair of the Education Dept. Dr. Payne began her service on the Commission July 1, 2008.

Mr. John Zimmerman

Mr. John Zimmerman represents independent institutions on the Commission. He serves as president of MTI College in Sacramento. MTI is a for-profit college with a very high default rate on student loans. 86% of its students receive financial aid. Mr. Zimmerman began his service on July 1, 2011.

Commission Staff member: Dr. Barbara A. Beno | President

Dr. Beno joined the Commission as President in August 2001. Since she became President of the Commission she has served on several visiting teams for colleges in Hawaii. Her husband Peter Crabtree, a Division Dean at Laney College, served on the visiting team that led to the SHOW CAUSE sanction on CCSF. Prior to her appointment, she served as Commissioner for both the ACCJC and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Dr. Beno served as president of Berkeley City College (formerly Vista Community College) in the Peralta Community College District for twelve years. It is not known to me what role Dr. Beno played in the sanctions against CCSF or the colleges in the Peralta district as the records are not made public.

Sanctions on Colleges – A Picture of Mixed Conclusions

Shasta College – PLACED ON PROBATION

At the January 10-11, 2012 of the ACCJC, the Commission put Shasta College on Probation. Prior to that action, Shasta was under no sanctions. They had been on Watch status in January of 2009. They were taken off of Watch status in June of 2009.

In order to receive accreditation the college was told:

- it “must establish an integrated, comprehensive and linked **planning process** that ensures an ongoing, systematic, and cyclical process to include evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, re-evaluation, and one that ties fiscal planning to the college's Strategic Plan and Educational Master Plan. Critical to this planning process is expediting completion of the Educational Master Plan.”
- to “identify **student learning outcomes** for all courses, programs, certificates, and degrees, assess student attainment of the intended outcomes, use assessment results to plan and implement course/program/service improvements, and assess student attainment of intended outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of those improvements.”
- to “complete the development of its new **Program Review** process and implement a cycle of review for all areas of the college in order to adequately assess and improve learning and achievement, and institutional effectiveness.”
- it “should undertake a **review** of its governance committee structure and functions and communicate to all college constituents the results of this review.”
- **integrate** financial planning with the “other planning activities of the College”
- it should fully integrate institutional planning and assessment so that it is “fully integrated, comprehensive, or linked.”
- To complete “an Educational Master Plan.”

In short, Shasta College was put on probation for not doing enough planning, review, integration of planning, and implementing student learning outcomes. **The sanction had nothing to do with the actual education received by students attending the college. This approach to accreditation is being repeated over and over by the ACCJC.**

It should be noted that the use of “student learning outcomes” in the manner proposed above requires a great deal of time and effort and is **not well accepted** by many, if not most, of the faculty in the California Community Colleges and is viewed **as an unproven method of developing quality instruction**. It is

rather seen as unproductive “busy work” being forced down their throats by an outside non-public Commission.

Although the Commission requirements, for the most part, paralleled those of the visiting team’s recommendation, **it is unclear as to whether the actual level of sanction was recommended by the visiting team.** The process from the filing of the visiting team report and the final ACCJC decision **is shrouded in secrecy.** There is no public record of votes taken, the process used to determine the final decision, or who actually did the work. Reports have been circulating for years of team members who were shocked at the severity of the sanctions imposed by the ACCJC. The teams will often highly praise the college in its report for its work with students and the community but this never seems to be considered in the ACCJC judgments.

In the case of Shasta College, the October 2011 visiting team commended the college for:

- “**achieving its mission to serve its geographically diverse and expansive district** through online and ITV instruction at the Intermountain, Trinity, and Tehama extended education centers.”
- “meeting the growing demands for healthcare workers in the state of California by **promoting increased enrollment, access, and retention through its state-of-the-art Health Sciences Center.**”
- “serving its community by targeting regional economic improvement through its Economic & Workforce Development Division and by providing local access to university-level instruction through its University Program.”
- “**positive and collaborative relationship with the campus community and for their innovative activities that promote student engagement and success.**”
- providing “**faculty with innovative teaching tools for increasing student engagement and retention.**”

Los Angeles Southwest College – PLACED ON PROBATION

Los Angeles Southwest College was placed on **Probation** by the ACCJC at its June 6-8, 2012 meeting. LA Southwest College had been on Probation in January of 2009 but all sanctions were removed in June of 2009.

In the June 2012 action, a follow-up reported was ordered to be delivered by March 15, 2012. The Commission cited problems associated with the Los Angeles Community College District as well as the college itself. **Actions against districts has been illustrated by recent actions related to the Ventura County Community College District, the Peralta Community College District, the San Jose-Evergreen Community College District, and the State Center Community College District.** It is not clear from the mandate of the ACCJC that its role includes the evaluation of districts. Its role has traditionally been limited to the **accreditation of colleges.**

In September of 2012 the ACCJC informed Los Angeles Valley College that they had been placed in a “special category” that would require a “more comprehensive analysis” of the college’s financial condition. Four reasons were provided to justify this review.

1. Negative ending balances

2. Reserve levels of less than 5%
3. Audit concerns
4. Concerns in the bond audit conducted by the State Controller

It is not clear how the ACCJC can act without holding a meeting but in any case, a college can not have a negative ending balance or reserves –**these are district issues. The Los Angeles Community College has a substantial reserve and no negative balance.** Concerns about audits are also district issues. **This is just another example of how the ACCJC is attempting base a college accreditation on the district it is part of. The ACCJC does not accredit districts.**

The March 12-15, 2012 visiting team found, for Los Angeles Southwest College that:
 “The college leadership and community are commended for their resilience and commitment to student learning in the face of myriad challenges. **The college community's passion to maximize the human capacity in the lives of its students and its dedication to the college mission is evident and exemplary.**”

The team found Los Angeles Southwest College in compliance with all of the “Eligibility Requirements established by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges with the exception of numbers 17 (Financial Resources) and 18 (Financial Accountability).”

It found that:

- LASC “is operational with students actively pursuing degree and certificate programs.”
- “LASC’s offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant portion of its students are enrolled in them. In fall 2011, over 85% of the courses were degree-applicable and over 80% of LASC students were enrolled in these degree-applicable courses.”
- “Degree programs are based on recognized fields of study in higher education, are of sufficient content and length, and are **conducted at appropriate levels of rigor.** “
- “LASC has a **substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time** responsibility to the institution.” This finding seems to contradict the finding that the College “**employs 75 full-time contract faculties and over 200 part-time adjunct faculty.**”
- “**The size and scope of LASC student services are consistent with the needs of the student body, the college mission, and support student learning.**”
- “LASC provides, through the campus library and learning centers, as well as specific contractual agreements, long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to supports its mission and instructional programs. **The team finds that information and learning resources are available in all modes of delivery.**”

Three teams for three of the LACCD **commended the district** for:

- “revising district service outcomes, district wide committee descriptions, and the district wide functional map to create a user-friendly and clear delineation of College and district functions. The process of survey, dialog, and district-wide review demonstrates a commitment to providing an informed understanding of the district's role in governance and service.”
- “its commitment to planning driven by data and service to the colleges.”

Despite these findings, the ACCJC placed the college on Probation.

The LACCD “deficiencies” cited related to the following non-academic areas:

- construction bond oversight
- prevent future audit exceptions
- the adoption and implementation of an “allocation model for its constituent colleges that addresses the size, economies of scale, and the stated mission of the individual colleges.” It should be noted that the March 12-15, 2012 visiting team found that “the district has conducted a review of its allocation model and crafted a recommendation for a revision to address the concerns of the constituent college. This recommendation has been met.”

The Southwest college “deficiencies” cited by the ACCJC included:

- a need to formally assess “the effectiveness” of the **planning model** with “qualitative and quantitative data.”
- a need to maintain a functioning **website**
- a need to “review the **parity of services** provided to students in distance education”
- the need for the library to “**regularly update its print and online collections**”
- the need to “**review** all aspects of professional development”
- the need to fully utilize the established consultative committee structure **by documenting actions and recommendations in agendas, minutes ..**” and communicate the dialogues and decisions “widely and clearly across the campus constituencies.”

Again, no questions were raised relative to the outstanding educational experience of the students attending the college.

Solano Community College – PLACED ON WARNING

At its meeting of January 10-12, 2012 the Commission issued a Warning to Solano College. They had been placed on Probation in June of 2010 but all sanctions were removed in January of 2011.

The Warning of January 2012 directed the college to

- “**modify its mission statement**”,
- develop “an **integrated planning process**”,
- “accelerate” the completion **student learning outcomes** (SLOs)”
- make available the resources and support for **institutional research**
- “expand its **data collection, analysis, and planning**”
- assure that “students in distance education are achieving **student learning outcomes**”
- develop a clear, written **code of ethics**

The visiting team found that Solano College was “a college that has **a dedicated cadre of faculty, staff and students who believe strongly in their mission and in the value of student learning**. Those beliefs were evident to the team as they observed the daily operation of the College and listened to the comments and discussions of employees and students.”

The team commended “the faculty and staff for maintaining a **caring and nurturing educational culture focused on student learning and success** even in the face of organizational turbulence and fiscal crisis.”

"The President is to be commended for the vision and energy he has brought to Solano College and for creating **a sense of community on-campus and in the greater community.**"

The team found no fault with the college degrees, academic credits, or the breadth of general education. It found that the faculty was properly qualified, that appropriate student services were offered, and sufficient information and learning resources and services were available to students.

In short, **quality education was being offered at Solano College.** Nevertheless, the College was given a WARNING.

Solano College was continued on Probation status at the January 2013 meeting of the Commission. The reasons for continuing WATCH status included the following team recommendations:

- the College should “expand its data collection, analysis and planning related to meeting the needs and fostering the success of an increasingly diverse student population. Student and staff equity and diversity plans should be fully integrated with the College's planning processes and should include strategies geared toward attracting a diverse pool of qualified applicants able to contribute to the success of the College's student population. “
- The College should “develop mechanisms and learning support systems to ensure that students enrolled in distance education courses are achieving stated learning outcomes at a level comparable with students enrolled in onsite programs and courses.”
- the College should “develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures that incorporate effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes into the evaluation process of faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving student learning outcomes.”
- the College should “develop a clear, written code of ethics for all its personnel.”

Even though “The Commission has determined that Solano Community College is near having fully addressed the recommendations noted above, resolving the associated deficiencies, and meeting Accreditation Standards” and that “The College is using its enhanced data collection on student demographics to be more attentive to the needs of its diverse student population and improve employee recruitment.” The ACCJC felt that “the College needs to assess the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at enhancing the online experience for students. The College needs to continue to make explicit the connection between the requirement that faculty develop and assess student learning outcomes and the Standards' requirement that this be part of the evaluation process.” “Finally, the College has reported that the code of ethics is expected to be approved by the Board of Trustees this spring.”

In conclusion “The Commission took note of the considerable work Solano Community College has accomplished to address Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 since the comprehensive visit in fall 2011. The College has completed the process of review and revision of the mission statement and revised its planning process following assessment of its effectiveness. The College has accelerated its efforts in the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels and acquired key personnel and enhanced data reporting tools to develop a culture of evidence-based decision-making. Finally, the College has improved its library services, improved tutoring at the Vacaville and Vallejo Centers, and enhanced services for online students.” But the ACCJC expect perfection and continued a WATCH sanction. This seems inconsistent with what the federal guidelines consider a “holistic” consideration when addressing accreditation.

Bakersfield College – REAFFIRM ACCREDITATION

At the January 9-11, 2013 meeting of the ACCJC, Bakersfield College accreditation was reaffirmed. It should be noted that the Chancellor of the Kern Community College District (which includes Bakersfield College) is Sandra Serrano. **Serrano was the Chairperson of the visiting team for San Francisco Community College in the Spring of 2012.** I have discovered that the recommendations for sanctions of that team that visited CCSF were not followed, instead the ACCJC put CCSF on SHOW CAUSE. I am not able to determine what Chancellor Serrano recommended as that has not been publically disclosed.

The College was ordered to complete a Follow-Up Report to be submitted by October 15, 2013. At that time the College shall demonstrate that the college “has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.” It appears that the ACCJC is using a **different standard** (and perhaps a better one) than the one they used in Solano and many other community colleges in California. The College Recommendations included:

- a. Develop and Implement Evaluation Processes to Assess Effectiveness of the Full Range of Planning
- b. Establish Student Learning Outcomes for Instructional/Academic Programs
- c. Include comments on how effectively adjunct faculty members produce student learning outcomes
- d. Evaluate effectiveness of professional development programs
- e. Human Resources should complete a program review
- f. Develop a long-range capital projects planning process that supports and is aligned with institutional improvement goals of the College
- g. Develop an assessment methodology to evaluate how well technology resources support institutional goals
- h. The College President should establish effective communication with communities served by the College.

The District Recommendations included:

- Review and Update Board policies on a Periodic Basis
- Board Member Development Program
- Evaluate the Board of Trustees Self Evaluation Process
- Evaluation of Role Delineation and Decision-Making Processes for Effectiveness

Note. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the **ACCJC is again attempting to micro-manage at both the college and district levels.**

City College of San Francisco - PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

In June of 2012, the City College of San Francisco was placed on Show Cause by the ACCJC. Prior to that time no sanctions were in place against City College of San Francisco. In short, **CCSF went from accreditation with no sanctions to Show Cause why the institution should not lose its accreditation. There appears to be no sense of progressive discipline. In addition, CCSF was charged with not addressing suggestions from past visiting teams that were not considered violations by the Commission itself at that time.**

The City College of San Francisco sanction to cease operations is another good example of how the ACCJC prioritizes its work.

The ACCJC, at its meeting June 6-8, 2012, considered the institutional Self Study Report, the report of the evaluation team which visited City College of San Francisco Monday, March 12-Thursday, March 15, 2012, and the additional materials submitted by the College. Contained in a letter from ACCJC President Barbara Beno was the following: "The Commission is compelled to order Show Cause and to require that the College complete a Show Cause Report by March 15, 2013." "City College of San Francisco must show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn by the Commission at its June 2013 Commission meeting." "The burden of proof rests on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued." This is a clear example of Commission policy – guilty unless the district can prove itself worthy.

CCSF is now ordered to “develop an overall plan of how it will address the mission, institutional assessments, planning and budgeting issues identified in several of the 2012 evaluation team recommendations, and submit a Special Report describing the plan by October 15, 2012.”

In terms of the quality of the program, the visiting team found that CCSF:

- “operates in accordance with a mission statement that is comprehensive and clearly defined.”
- “The mission statement is appropriate to the college as a degree-granting institution of higher education with a **commitment to its local community**.”
- “is fully operational and has students who are actively pursuing programs of study in its degree and certificate programs.”
- “offers degree programs that are appropriate to and congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, and **are of sufficient content and length to ensure quality. Noncredit classes and programs also are offered with appropriate rigor and in accordance with the college’s mission**.”
- “defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed **to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry**.”
- “The faculty members are qualified to conduct the institution’s programs and services and meet state-mandated minimum requirements.”
- “provides specific, long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs through a variety of formats, including library collections, media centers, computer labs, and other means.”

In short, the team found that “The college is to be commended for **embracing all aspects of its mission and for the dedication of its staff to understanding and responding to the needs of the communities served by the college**.” Of course, all of this will be lost if CCSF loses its accreditation as proposed by the ACCJC board.

Show Cause was ordered for City College of San Francisco (CCSF) because the ACCJC felt that City College of San Francisco (CCSF) had "failed to demonstrate that it meets the requirements outlined in a significant number of Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. It has also failed to implement the eight recommendations of the 2006 evaluation team; five of these eight were only partially addressed, and three were completely unaddressed."

The emphasis of the ACCJC was on such items as assessments, planning, budgeting, and adapting to the new realities of underfunded community colleges which should therefore reduce their missions. The college is advised to stop relying on grants and contracts to provide the financial support needed to address basic operational expenses. The college was told to stop its "longstanding pattern of late financial audits and deficit spending." **It was not pointed out that deficit spending was possible because of large reserves built up over the previous years.**

The belief by the Commission that CCSF was wrong in spending down reserves is interesting in light of the 10 percent dues to colleges increase that the ACCJC is set to put in place due to its own use of reserves in order to address their \$191,883 deficit. CCSF addressed its need for more revenue by having a parcel tax approved by voters.

As with most colleges, the district has "not fully addressed its post-employment medical benefits (OPEB)" **(which is actually not required by law –the District did report its obligation as required)** and a "substantial underfunding of the district's workers compensation self-insurance fund." This issue is of particular interest given the role of Commissioner Kinsella discussed later in this paper. **Instead the District used its limited funding to maximize class offerings.**

The district was also held accountable **for having too few administrators and too many administrative positions held by temporary employees.** No mention was made of the large number of temporary faculty being used to teach classes. In fact, the visiting team found that "...the college has fulfilled its priority to hire and maintain **an ample number of full-time faculty** to meet the instructional mission of the college." This in spite of the reported fact that the college employed 810 full-time faculty and more than 1,000 part-time faculty.

The ACCJC claimed that from their point of view "the College **lacks adequate numbers of administrators** with the appropriate administrative structure and authority to provide oversight and leadership for the institution's operations." This may stem from the strong shared governance structure of the college. This shared governance climate has, in the ACCJC's mind, "kept City College of San Francisco from adapting to its changed and changing fiscal environment." That is, the need to reduce the mission has been thwarted by the governance structure in place.

One of the characteristics of CCSF shared by most community colleges in California is the lack of "a funding base, financial resources or plans for financial development that are adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability." It would be good if the ACCJC pointed that out to the State Legislature and the Governor.

One of the biggest crimes of CCSF is that it "has failed to follow Commission directives to address the deficiencies noted by the 2006 evaluation team." Later it is noted that "The Commission wishes to remind you that while an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the report, City College of San Francisco is expected to use the Evaluation Report to improve educational programs and services and to resolve issues identified by the Commission."

Another issue that was brought up several times concerned the measuring of "the intended student learning outcomes at the course, program, general education, and certificate and degree levels." **The value of SLOs as a way to improve instructions is still widely disputed among academics. Many**

members of the community college faculty believe it is just another passing fad that the ACCJC is attempting to force on all colleges and their faculty.

The visiting team also recommended "that the college identify, develop and implement assessments of student learning, and analyze the results of assessment to improve student learning. The results of ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes should foster robust dialogue and yield continuous improvement of courses, programs and services and the alignment of college practices for continuous improvement." As a mathematician I find the concept of "continuous improvement" mathematically flawed. "The team recommends that the institution systematically assess student support services using student learning outcomes and other appropriate measures." How to do this is at best vague.

Even though the college does not have enough money to provide all the classes that it should be offering, the visiting team suggests that it **spend their limited funds** to "engage the services of **an external organization** to provide a series of workshops for all college constituencies, including the members of the governing board, the chancellor, faculty, staff, students and every administrator, in order to clarify and understand their defined roles of responsibility and delineated authority in institutional governance and decision making." No recommendation was made as to the identity of such an external organization or how much the district could expect to pay for such external "enlightenment." It was also not clear if the workshops should inform those in attendance regarding the roles defined in California laws and regulations or rather just concentrate on the ACCJC Standards (**which are often not consistent with California's laws and regulations including those deriving out of AB 1725 and the Rodda Act**).

The College first hired "Interim Chancellor" Pamila Fisher. Fisher retired as chancellor of the Yosemite community College in 2004. At a radio interview on July 6, 2010, Dr. Fisher stated that "Ninety-two percent of our costs are in personnel and that is much larger than the state average with respect to personnel costs. So we're going to have to address personnel costs. The number of people we have, the compensation, the way people are compensated for certain kinds of work, the reassigned times -- there are a lot of issues there that relate to or contribute to that 92 percent."

"The state has redefined the mission of community colleges. We are doing our darn best to still be all things to all people and the state has essentially said, 'You can't do that anymore.' So that means our Board of Trustees and our campus leadership are going to have to make some priority decisions about what programmatic things are most critical to the city of San Francisco, and do more of some and less of others."

In October 2012, Bob Agrella was then chosen by the state community college chancellor's office to serve as the "special trustee" to oversee efforts to reverse the SHOW CAUSE action of the ACCJC. Agrella was voluntarily accepted as "special trustee" by the elected trustee board in San Francisco. Under this arrangement the elected board continues to maintain authority but the special trustee will have veto power over any action he deems inconsistent with the college's recovery plan. Agrella holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in mathematics from Purdue University and a doctorate in education from Nova Southeastern University in Florida. Nova is often used by community college administrators wishing to hold a doctorate in order to become a college president or chancellor and it is often joked that "Nova" spelled backwards is "Avon" due to its almost correspondence school approach to education degree granting. Agrella receives a reported \$163,236 per year in CalSTRS retirement and is reported to receive \$1,000 for each day he works for CCSF as the "Special Trustee".

After Pam Fisher left, the District Trustees appointed interim Chancellor Thelma Scott-Skillman on November 1, 2012. She recently retired as president of Folsom Lake College. Scott-Skillman is reported to be receiving the same pay as Fisher received to serve as interim chancellor - \$276,000 per year. And the Commission is concerned with the high faculty salaries?

Under the newly arrived leadership of Scott-Skillman and Agrella, the district has attempted to unilaterally cut employee salaries by 5% without bargaining as required under California law. The cuts unilaterally imposed are on top of over \$4 million in negotiated salary cuts and freezes over the last four years. Local 2121 has filed a grievance and an unfair labor practice charge against the district. The College administration is also attempting to budget the funds derived from Proposition A, a voter approved parcel tax, in a way that is in conflict with the stated purposes of the Proposition. The \$79-a-year parcel tax will last for eight years and is expected to generate \$17 million. The money is supposed to be used offset budget cuts, prevent layoffs, and provide affordable, quality education to almost 100,000 students at City College's nine campuses.

The College administration is also trying to impose or bargain changes in the faculty collective bargaining contract that would reverse gains made to part-time faculty employment rights, health care benefits, and salaries. Nanette Asimov writing in the San Francisco Chronicle on February 28, 2013 accurately described the positions of the faculty and the administration as "If the administration gets its way, faculty members say, the college would be a shrunken shadow of itself, closed to many students who depend on it for a leg up into the middle class, and an inhospitable environment for part-time faculty - the majority of instructors - unable to earn a living wage. If the faculty vision prevails, administrators say, the college would run afoul of the accrediting commissioners who hold its fate in their hands." So once again we see the power of the ACCJC to destroy the very essence of a long-time successful college through the threat of removal of accreditation.

Later in this paper we discuss how the ACCJC has attempted to impose its values on faculty union/district negotiations.

Fullerton College - REMOVE WARNING AND MOVE TO ACCREDITATION

The ACCJC meeting on June 6-8, 2012 removed Fullerton College's Warning and reaffirmed accreditation. Even as the ACCJC approved accreditation it still found that "The Commission requires that a Follow-Up Report be submitted by March 15, 2013. The Follow-Up Report should demonstrate that the institution has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Accreditation Standards." I am not sure how the ACCJC decides to grant either accreditation or a sanction when the college still has recommendation and "deficiencies" to meet.

The recommendations made in order to meet the standard or reach Proficiency level are:

- Related to student learning outcomes and timeline. They are directed to "fully address Recommendation 5 of the previous visiting Team report, the Team recommends that the institution accelerate the identification and assessment of course and program-level student learning outcomes, and use the results to make improvements in courses and programs."
- that "the College fully implement and strengthen its institutional planning process to include: 1)

reporting systematically on an agreed upon set of College wide critical indicators and measures that clearly assess the progress of College wide goals; 2) closing the planning loop by evaluating actions taken and then documenting future actions based on the evaluation results; 3) expanding efforts to engage all relevant constituents in a collaborative inquiry process that is facilitated by a broad range of College members; 4) building in mechanisms for regularly evaluating the effectiveness of planning processes; and 5) providing transparency in the institutional planning process by communicating clearly, broadly, and systematically, and by providing, structured, well-defined, opportunities for broad employee participation.”

Again one wonders how the above recommendations differ from other college’s recommendations which received less than full accreditation.

Victor Valley College – PLACED ON PROBATION

“The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting June 6-8, 2012, considered the Follow-Up Report submitted by the Victor Valley College, the report of the evaluation team which visited the College on Thursday, April 19, 2012, and President O’Hearn’s testimony provided at the Commission meeting. The Commission took action to continue Probation and require the College to complete a Follow-Up Report by October 15, 2012. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.”

In June of 2011 Victor Valley College was placed on Probation by the ACCJC. Prior to that they had no sanctions imposed on them since a Watch in June of 2008.

In the June 2012 report, the Commission recognizes that many of the recommendations deal with “processes of assessment and program review, planning, budgeting, funding and implementing improvements.” The visiting team did recognize that **“the College has spent a good deal of energy designing and refining its program review process.** But despite the inordinate amount of time and resources needed to complete the process of program review and that the college has planned to complete the process in six year cycles, it goes on to advise that **“if this is the case, it will be unable to demonstrate compliance within the required timelines for correction of institutional deficiencies.”**

In order to meet the Standards, the College has been directed to:

- revise its planning documents to reflect the current mission
- “establish and maintain an **ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.**”
- “complete the development of **student learning outcomes** for all programs and ensure that student learning outcomes found on course syllabi are the same as the student learning outcomes found on the approved course outlines of record.”
- “cultivate a campus environment of **empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence by creating a culture of respect, civility, dialogue and trust.**”
- “examine and provide evidence that appropriate leadership ensures the accessibility, quality and eligibility of online and hybrid courses and programs, and that such programs demonstrate

that all services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.”

- “develop long-term fiscal plans that support student learning programs and services that will not rely on using unrestricted reserves to cover deficits.”
- “build and maintain a system for effective, stable and sustainable”
- “members of the Board of Trustees **must limit their role in governing** the College to those responsibilities established in Board Policy, including delegating power and authority to the Superintendent/President to lead the district and to make administrative decisions regarding the effective implementation of Board Policies **without Board interference.**”
- “Trustees **must avoid micromanaging** institutional operations including their participation in campus committees and governance groups.”

Again the Commission forgets that **the Board of Trustees is the elected body** and the district and campus bodies are under their direction, not the other way around as Barbara Beno seems to believe and attempt to enforce. **The Commission again places time and financial consuming responsibilities that the college can ill afford in these tough financial times.**

Cuesta College – PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

At its January 10-12, 2012 meeting the Commission issued a Show Cause sanction on Cuesta College. Cuesta College had been on Probation since January of 2010. The College, in 2012, was order to prepare a “Show Cause Report of October 15, 2012” that demonstrates college compliance with Standard 1B (strategic planning, systematic evaluation process, assessment tools), Standard IIIC (regular and systematic planning with regard to technology infrastructure), Standard IIID (long range financial and capital planning strategies), and Eligibility Requirement 19 (Institutional Planning and Evaluation). In short, **Cuesta College is being threatened with closing down if they don’t spend more of their resources on compliance with Commission imposed reporting and planning processes rather than on offering more classes and services to students.**

It seems clear that the Commission is either unaware or doesn’t take into account the extreme underfunding of California’s community over the past several years. Given the lack of prior knowledge that the colleges receive regarding current year or future funding, **it would seem that spending extreme amounts of time on planning rather than on how to get through the current year with any academic program at all would be a misplacement of priorities.** What the community colleges of California do not need is a Commission demanding that they **spend their limited funds on excessive planning and report making.**

At the January 9-11, 2013 meeting of the ACCJC, Cuesta College was moved from SHOW CAUSE status to **Warning.** The visiting team recommendations now include:

- A recommendation that the college complete the strategic plan, institute an ongoing systematic evaluation process
- The institution should systematically evaluate and make public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes.

Again, the recommendations of the ACCJC have little to do with the actual quality of teaching and learning and the institution. Given that the ACCJC keeps preaching outcomes, ironically their actual standards criteria only consider data on inputs.

Ventura County Community Colleges PLACED ON PROBATION

Ventura, Moorpark, and Oxnard Colleges were placed on Probation by the ACCJC at its meeting of January 10-12, 2012. The Commission was **primarily upset with 12 year veteran Board of Trustee member Arturo Hernandez** who the Commission described as “disruptive” and displayed “inappropriate behavior.” According to Trustee Hernandez, he was “**never interviewed** by the Accreditation Team regarding the comments and perceptions that were presented to them in April 2012, and therefore, I had no opportunity to correct the accusations presented.”

James Mezenek resigned as Chancellor of the Ventura Community College District in the Spring of 2012. Mezenek had served on a number of ACCJC visiting teams in the past. His resignation was described in the press as having come from disagreements with Board Vice Chair Hernandez. This slant to the resignation was leaked by Chancellor Mezenek to the press. This came after a number of stormy meetings of the Board of Trustees at which many students and community members spoke against proposed program cuts. Vice Chair Hernandez was commended by many of the community and student speakers for his speaking up on behalf of the interests of the community served by the colleges.

The ACCJC directed the Ventura District together with its three colleges to “develop clearly defined organizational maps that delineate the primary and secondary responsibilities of each, the college-to-college responsibilities, and that also incorporate the integrity of activities related to such areas as **budget, research, planning, and curriculum.**” It should be noted that ACCJC President Barbara Beno had problems with her local district when she served as President of Vista College. She appears to continue to **carry a grudge** against local Boards of Trustees and district management whom she routinely accuses of “micro-managing” the colleges. Ironically, the ACCJC under Beno’s leadership has now taken on the **role of micro-managing** the various colleges (and their districts) in the areas of shared governance, fiscal planning, and Board of Trustees roles and responsibilities.

Other directions to the District and colleges included document the review of District Policies and Procedures, conduct periodic outcome assessment and analysis of its strategic planning, ensure open and timely communications, formally adopt expected outcomes and measures of continuous quality improvement, equitable decision-making across the three colleges, and professional development of Trustees. **If they don’t satisfy all of the above within two years, the three colleges may lose their accreditation and then the community will lose access to community college education for reasons other than the quality of the educational offerings.**

At the January 9-11 meeting of the ACCJC all three of the Ventura District Colleges received **reaffirmed accreditation**. The Commission found that the recommendations of the previous visiting team had been addressed, that the associated deficiencies had been resolved, and that the Eligibility, Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies met. A Midterm Report is now required to be filed by October 15, 2013. The clowns have left the arena but the circus must continue.

Peralta Community College District Colleges – PLACED ON WARNING

The ACCJC has been including judgments on Districts when imposing sanctions on colleges. This appears to be a new approach. One such instance is the June 6-8, 2012 **sanctions on the colleges of Peralta**. It must be noted that Barbara Beno was once the College President of what was then Vista College. She had many problems working with the district administration and governing board and eventually was forced to leave the district after she was unable to have Vista become its own independent college. **Her husband continues to work at one of the district colleges and was on the visiting team for the City College of San Francisco evaluation that eventually led to a SHOW CAUSE sanction by the ACCJC which is led by his wife.** It appears that she raised no conflict of interest concern related to her relationship with the Peralta district or to her husband being on the visiting team.

The Peralta colleges were placed on Warning in part based on district “deficiencies.” These “deficiencies” included the need to resolve remaining audit findings, resolution of long term financial stability, completion of evaluation of Board of Trustees policies with regard to governance (**micro managing the college presidents**), and quality of programs after program reductions. These must be cleared up by March of 2013. **One wonders if the Commission was aware of the tax increase proposed for the November 2012 election and the financial uncertainty that all of the California community colleges continue to feel. Even with the passage of the CFT/Governor compromise initiative (Proposition 30) to increase revenue to the state, community colleges will continue to wait until the final budget is passed to know how much state money will be flowing to provide district funding in any given fiscal year.**

West Los Angeles College – PLACED ON WARNING

At the June 6-8, 2012 meeting of the ACCJC, West Los Angeles College was placed on WATCH. The college was ordered to complete a “Follow-Up Report” by March 15, 2013. The Report will be followed up by a visit of Commission Representatives.

In the words of the letter from Barbara Beno dated July 2, 2012, “The Commission wishes to convey its concern that the Los Angeles Community College District is out of compliance with Eligibility Requirements 17 and 18 as noted in the recommendations below. The Commission urges the District and the colleges to rectify these issues that are related to the financial planning and distribution of resources of the District and its ability to resolve continuing concerns expressed in the District's audit. These issues are ongoing and place the District's colleges at risk.” From the above it is clear that the problem, in the eyes of the ACCJC, rest at the District not the college level.

The Recommendations from visiting team included:

- Measurable Goal Setting
- Systemic Evaluation and Planning

- Student Learning Outcomes
- Student Learning and Service Level Outcomes
- College Catalog Currency
- Library Collection Development
- Financial Resources
- Construction Bond Oversight
- District Financial Audit
- District Allocation Model
- Professional Development of Trustees

I have learned that the Visiting Team's recommendation was that the college be fully accredited but that the Commission upped their recommendation to a Warning.

The Visiting Team commended the Los Angeles Community College District on the basis of

- "The district office is commended for revising district service outcomes, district wide committee descriptions, and the district wide functional map to create a user-friendly and clear delineation of college and district functions. The process of survey, dialog, and district-wide review demonstrates a commitment to providing an informed understanding of the district's role in governance and service."
- "The district office is commended for revising district service outcomes, district wide committee descriptions, and the district wide functional map to create a user-friendly and clear delineation of college and district functions. The process of survey, dialog, and district-wide review demonstrates a commitment to providing an informed understanding of the district's role in governance and service."

In the suggestions above the visiting team basically found that West Los Angeles College needed to "increase effectiveness and improve its compliance" of some standard or "that the college has partially met" previous year suggestions of visiting teams.

West Los Angeles College was commended as follows:

- Student services is to be commended for the pervasive commitment to developing alternative modes of delivery and incorporating appropriate technologies for serving students at a distance and in an effort to develop efficiencies in providing services with shrinking resources.
- West should be commended for the institutional efforts to address equity gaps in student achievement through such programs as *Umoja*, *Puente*, and participation in *Achieving the Dream*
- Student Services should be commended for the focus on developing community partnerships to address gaps in service or specialized services that cannot be provided by college staff and faculty, such as mental health services provided by USC interns; assessments for Child Development Center children with special needs provided by the pediatrics department at St. John's Hospital, and working with U.S. Vets to provide mental health services and support specific to the needs of Veteran students.
- West Los Angeles College is to be commended for an established governance structure that embraces open, candid dialogue and encourages involvement from all constituent groups in the planning and decision making process

- The team commends the college for expanding its online learning program in a thoughtful and effective way that combines technological and pedagogical innovations while maintaining high instructional training standards, collegial oversight, and a strong commitment to student learning. Both the growth and the quality of the online program are impressive.
- The team commends the college for pursuing and obtaining external funding from various sources including state capital funds, Title V grant, and Predominately Black Institution funding.
- The team commends the college for the attractiveness of the college's campus and its emphasis upon sustainable facilities that provide state of the art classrooms and address ever increasing non-instructional operating costs. The commitment to a clean, welcoming campus is a positive reflection of the culture of the college
- The team commends the college for its CTE programs that strongly emphasize the outcomes of employability, licensure and placement of their students.

West Los Angeles College is clearly a good place to study and to work.

Modesto Junior College – PLACED ON PROBATION

Modesto Junior College was placed on Probation at the Commission Meeting of January 10-17, 2012. They had been placed on Probation in June of 2008 but were clear of sanctions until the 2012 action against the college.

As with other colleges in multi-college district, Modesto was faulted for perceived failures by the District. The list of District “deficiencies” to meet the Commission Standards included the need for systematic evaluation of personnel, a review of institutional missions and delegation of authority policy, and clearly defined processes for hiring. The college has been directed to analyze community demographics; force faculty to “differentiate between course learning outcomes and course objectives”; and **“create venues to maintain an ongoing, collegial, self reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional process; and so on.”** This is the kind of **self-invented education-speak** that the faculty on the campuses are being forced to put up with.

College of the Sequoias – PLACED ON SHOW CAUSE

At the January 10-11, 2013 meeting of the ACCJC, the College of the Sequoias was placed on SHOW CAUSE. At the time of this action the College of Sequoias had full accreditation status and was under no sanctions. Even though the college had no outstanding issues as a result of their 2006 accreditation, “The Commission found that College of the Sequoias was in substantial non-compliance and that it failed to meet a significant number of Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards, and failed to address five recommendations, and resolve associated deficiencies, identified for the institution at the time of its last comprehensive evaluation in 2006.”

The College was directed to complete a SHOW CAUSE Report by October 15, 2013 which will include a Closure Report. Action by the ACCJC is scheduled for January 2014.

The complaints against the College of Sequoias from the Commission include

- a. Not having fully defined and published student learning outcomes for all programs
- b. The visiting teams inability to verify that faculty responsibilities include the required assessment of learning
- c. Has not addressed the findings and recommendations in the 2006 comprehensive evaluation (this despite the fact that they had received a full accreditation between 2006 and 2013 and had no outstanding issues prior to the 2013 sanction)

The recommendations from the Evaluation Team include the following:

- The college should “integrate, strengthen, and formalize its planning processes, systematically reviewing and revising them to ensure informed decisions for continuous improvement.”
- “In order to be more effective, the team recommends that the college improve the campus climate by encouraging all constituents to participate in an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust.”
- “In order to fully comply with the standards, the team recommends the college increase the research capacity of the institution in order to compile and provide data to guide institutional planning and resource allocation, program review and assessment, and decision-making for institutional effectiveness.”
- “To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college advance its progress on student learning outcomes by regularly assessing those outcomes and using the results to improve student learning and strengthen institutional effectiveness.”
- Improve counseling services for a variety of students
- Improve hiring processes for all employees and “establish a clear connection between employee evaluation and improvement.”
- “the team recommends that the college develop and implement a systematic evaluation of its decision-making and budget development processes and use the results of those evaluations as a basis for improvement.”

In the Special Edition of the February 2001 ACCJC News it is pointed out that “In achieving and maintaining its accreditation a higher education institution assures the public that the institution meets standards of quality, **that the education earned there is of value to the students who earn it, and that employers, trade or professional-related agencies and other colleges and universities can accept a student’s credentials as legitimate.**”

With regard to quality of the educational program and its value to students and others at COS the visiting team found that:

- “COS degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized patterns of study, and are conducted at levels of quality and vigor appropriate to the degrees offered.
- “COS provides a comprehensive set of student services to all students including online students.
- “the instructional program addresses and meets the mission of the institution. It also verified that the college identifies and meets the educational needs of its student through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the demographics of the community.”
- “students completing vocational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable state or national standards.”
- “The college provides quality support services to support student learning.”
- “The college creates an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.”

- “College of the Sequoias has a qualified staff the is supportive of student learning.”
- “Despite the state budget reductions that have impacted all California Community Colleges, it appears that COS is well run from a financial perspective and is fiscally sound.” It maintains “reserves that exceed the prudent level of 5% of unrestricted expenditures.”

Once again the SHOW CAUSE sanction was imposed in contradiction to what the visiting team recommended and based on issues that have to do with inputs such as processes and evaluations but not on actual student learning or the quality of the programs. Nowhere in the report is their any claim that the students attending the College of the Sequoias are not receiving an excellent education and the credits they earn should not be accepted at other higher educational institutions. Quite the contrary as noted above.

Out of Touch With California Educational Environment

The ACCJC seeks to improperly and contrary to California law impose standards for faculty evaluation. Evaluation is an area of collective bargaining. The team recommendation "that the evaluation of faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes include a component that assesses the effectiveness in bringing about those learning outcomes" is **not something that the ACCJC can legally require under California law.**

Another area where the ACCJC does not follow California’s regulations occurs when it looks at the adequacy of the district’s financial status. For example, in the case of CCSF the Evaluation Team found that **“While the reserves meet the minimum California community college requirement,** it is well below a minimum prudent level, as demonstrated by an increase in short-term borrowing to meet cash flow needs.” Again the Commission does not recognize what colleges must do in order to meet their student needs in this time of California’s financial crisis. **CCSF should be commended not condemned for effectively using all resources available to it in order to properly serve its students.**

The disinterest in California and federal law and practice is emphasized in the ACCJC Team Evaluator Manual. On page 23 of the August 2012 Manual it advises visiting teams that **“Recommendations should not be based on the standards of governmental agencies, the legislature, or organizations.”**

Public Disclosure and Retaliation

Colleges are loath to complain about the fairness of an accreditation. The ACCJC has not refrained from answering complaints before the press. This is encouraged under a section of the Public Disclosure rules of the ACCJC: “If an institution conducts its affairs so that it becomes a matter of public concern, misrepresents a Commission action, or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission President **may announce to the public, including the press, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to the Commission.**”

“The Commission does not ordinarily make institutional self evaluation reports, the external evaluation reports or the Commission action letters public. Should the institution fail to make the institutional self

evaluation report, the external evaluation report, or Commission action letter available to the public as per the institution's responsibilities for public disclosure contained in this policy, or **if it misrepresents the contents of the reports**, the Commission will release the reports to the public and provide accurate statements about the institution's quality and accreditation status.”

Again, the cloak of silence: “In order to assure the accuracy and appropriateness of institutional information which is made public, the Commission expects evaluation team members to keep confidential all institutional information read or heard before, during, and after the evaluation visit. Except in the context of Commission work, evaluation team members are expected to refrain from discussing information obtained in the course of service as an evaluation team member. Sources of information that **should remain confidential** include the current Institutional Self Evaluation Report; previous External Evaluation Reports; interviews and written communication with campus personnel, students, governing board members, and community members; evidentiary documents, and **evaluation team discussions**.”

Interference with Collective Bargaining

Hittelman Letter of November 21, 2001

As president of the Community College Council, I wrote the commission on November 21, 2001 objecting to certain policies of the ACCJC. Many of these concerns have magnified over the years. In particular I wrote “The Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers is opposed to the direction that the new proposed standards (Draft A) has taken. We oppose using so-called “quantifiable outcomes” as the mandated approach to determine effectiveness of education. We believe that many institutions would prefer to use qualitative issues and educational standards as their guide to institutional quality. While a few colleges may wish to use the Total Quality Management approach, we do not believe that it should be imposed on all institutions, especially in light of its still controversial status. We do not believe that the “learning objectives” and “outcomes” approach to education necessarily produces the highest quality educational experience. Many “objectives” that can be easily measured are not important whereas many important results cannot be measured. Education is more than standardized tests - it is a holistic experience which should include social, societal, and self-actualizing goals. The goal of education should include the ability to learn on one’s own, be motivated to work hard in pursuit of truth, and want to continue learning. None of these goals are valued in the new proposed standards.

In Standard III, the new standard requires that “Evaluations of faculty also includes effectiveness in producing stated student learning outcomes.” By defining what evaluation must specifically include, the Commission is entering an area that is the domain of collective bargaining. In the past (Standard Seven), the Commission did not determine how effectiveness would be measured but rather stated that “Criteria for evaluation of faculty include teaching effectiveness, scholarship or other activities appropriate to the area of expertise, and participation in institutional service or other institutional responsibilities.” The change to the required outcome-based criteria is not appropriate. Evaluation processes are best defined at the local level via local expertise and the collective bargaining process and **that is what is required by California law.**”

“We are concerned with the removal of what seemed to be, in the previous standards, a commitment to collegial governance. The changes seem to reflect a veiled attempt to overthrow the gains made through the passage AB 1725 in California. In addition, the new “Vested Authority” section is too prescriptive as to the rights of the chief executive officer. One example is the statement that “(T)he governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district, system, or college.” This seems more like a “protect administrators” device rather than an accreditation standard. Another example of micro managing by the Commission is the statement in the multi-college district section where it requires that the chief executive ‘delegates full responsibility and authority to them to implement and administer district or system policies without interference and holds them accountable for the operations of the colleges.’”

“The Community College Council also believes that a community college district should be required to comply with the laws and regulations governing districts including those requiring the participation of faculty, staff, and students in the development of district and college policy. Faculty rights and responsibilities are specified and guaranteed in the California Code of Regulations (Title 5) and therefore should be addressed in the accreditation self-study. The issue has been partially addressed in the current standard Ten B.7 in the statement that ‘faculty have established an academic senate or other appropriate organization’ and that “faculty have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutionalized governance.” This language should be continued and enlarged to include classified and student participation. “

The CCC also believes that there should also be a standard directed at the working relations between the district and its collective bargaining agents. It should be noted that most districts currently include faculty unions in the development of policy and in January 2002 will be required to include classified unions as representatives in shared governance. How these arrangements work reflect on the quality of the experience at the college and should be addressed in a standard and reflected in the college self study.

October 13, 2008 Hittelman Letter to ACCJC

Later in October of 2008, acting as the president of the California Federation of Teachers, I wrote a letter to the ACCJC with regard to the actions of the ACCJC. I wrote with respect to amendments to Standards III.A.1.c and II.A.6. The letter was as follows:

“I write as President of the California Federation of Teachers, AFT/AFL CIO. As you know, the Accrediting Commission for the California Junior Colleges (ACCJC) serves an important function by virtue of California law. In particular, the State has dictated that, “Each community college within a district shall be an accredited institution. **The Accrediting Commission for California Junior Colleges shall determine accreditation.**” (5 Cal. Code Regs. ' 51016)

In conferring on this important responsibility on the ACCJC, the State of California and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges expect the ACCJC to fulfill an important state objective, providing education through accredited public community colleges. ACCJC may or may not be a quasi governmental entity, but either way **it must respect State laws created by the Legislature, when fulfilling its functions.**

Of particular importance to the California Federation of Teachers, and its constituent locals, is the Educational Employment Relations Act, California Government Code section 3540 et seq... The Act, as

you know, provides a framework for collective bargaining for faculty in the California Community Colleges.

One of the most important rights faculty have is to negotiate with their employer over evaluation procedures, criteria and standards. In fact, this right is so important that the Legislature deemed it worthy of explicit enumeration within the Act. In addition, pursuant to the EERA academic freedom policies are negotiated at community colleges.

In recent years, considerable controversy has existed within the community colleges over the issue of **Student Learning Outcomes** or SLOs. It is an understatement to say that many within the college community, faculty and administrators alike, feel the ACCJC has gone too far in its demands regarding SLOs, **because they intrude on negotiable evaluation criteria, and violate principles of academic freedom.**

Not long ago, the CFT invited comment from its faculty unions about SLOs, and their impact on their local colleges. Of particular concern to CFT is the propensity with which accreditation teams from the ACCJC have indicated to the colleges that they should "develop and implement policies and procedures to incorporate student learning outcomes into evaluation of those with direct responsibility for student learning." This directive is based on ACCJC Accreditation Standard III.A.1.c., which states,

"Faculty and others directly responsible for student programs toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those student learning outcomes." (ACCJC Accreditation Standard III.A.1.c.)

Another standard has been used by accreditation teams to justify changes in faculty work such as syllabi. This standard, which has interfered in faculty's academic freedom rights, states: one:

"The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information ... In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning objectives consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline." (ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.6.)

We believe both of these standards, as written and as applied, intrude on matters left to collective bargaining by the Legislature. For a time, we recognized that the ACCJC's inclusion of these standards appeared to be mandated by the regulations and approach of the U.S. Department of Education, hence we understood ACCJC's apparent justification for including them.

Now, however, with the recently re enacted Higher Education Act, the Federal mandate for the **SLO component has been eliminated for community colleges** and other institutions of higher education. I'm sure you are aware that Congress passed, and the President signed, legislation amending 20 U.S.C. 1099 (b), to provide that the Secretary of Education may not "establish any criteria that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards that accrediting agencies or associations shall use to assess any institution's success with respect to student achievement." [See Higher Education Act, S. 1642 (110th Congress, 1st Session, at p. 380)]

Given this amendment, it is CFT's position that the **ACCJC has no statutory mandate which prescribes inclusion of the above referenced standards dealing with faculty evaluations, and syllabi.** Under the EERA, absent mandatory proscriptions in the law, each and every aspect of evaluation is negotiable. See, e.g., Walnut Valley Unified School District (1983) PERB Dec. No. 289, 7 PERC & 14084, pp. 321 322;

Holtville Unified School District (1982) PERB Dec. No. 250, 6 PERC & 13235, p. 906. The Legislature reaffirmed the negotiability of evaluation procedures and criteria when it adopted A.B. 1725 in 1989. (See Cal. Ed. Code ' 87610.1, 877663(f)). The Legislature did specify that community college evaluations procedures must include a peer review process and, to the extent practicable, student evaluations. (See Cal. Ed. Code ' 87663(g)). However, it did not mandate SLOs.

Accordingly, the CFT wishes to inquire as to what actions ACCJC intends to take to conform its regulations to the requirements of State law, and to recognize that the adoption of any local provisions which include faculty effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes, should be entirely a matter of collective bargaining negotiations. And, similarly, that the ACCJC cannot mandate inclusion of information in syllabi which faculty, by reason of academic freedom and tradition, are entitled to determine using their own best academic judgment, or through the negotiations process. Of course, in negotiations over evaluation, the law also provides that faculty organizations shall consult with local academic senates before negotiating over these matters.

While ACCJC is free to encourage colleges and their faculty organizations to negotiate over this topic, **it is not free to mandate or coerce the adoption of such standards by sanctioning colleges which do not adopt standards that ACCJC would prefer in these areas.** Given its state function, **ACCJC must respect the negotiations process mandated by state law, and academic freedom rights adopted by contract or policy.**

California's public community colleges are an extraordinary public resource, and the Legislature has seen fit to decree that when it comes to faculty evaluation, that process shall be subject to collective bargaining. With the adoption of the landmark bill A.B. 1725 almost 20 years ago, the Legislature came down squarely on the side of faculty determining, with their employers, the method and content of their evaluations. This system has worked exceptionally well for almost 35 years.

Given the change in Federal law, I call upon ACCJC to **take prompt and appropriate action to amend its standards to respect the boundaries established by the Legislature and not purport to regulate the methods by which faculty are evaluated or determine their course work such as syllabi.**"

December 2008 ACCJC Reply Filled with Errors

On **December 2, 2008** I received a reply from the Commission regarding my letter. The Commission attempted to respond to each of my points as they saw them. Unfortunately they had not done their homework and were just wrong on most of their responses.

On December 12, 2008 I responded, on behalf of the California Federation of Teachers, back to the ACCJC as follows:

"This letter responds to your letter of December 2, 2008. Your attempt to address our issues was **not very well researched and contains a number of errors.** I will try to address them as clearly as possible.

1. You state that "The ACCJC does not provide education. Its purpose is to assure that its accredited institutions adhere to its standards which are designed to assure that certain levels of quality are maintained. The ACCJC was not developed to help achieve any State objective. The ACCJC was not

developed by the State, and it is not an agent of the State, and it has not been delegated any State function. The ACCJC is a private organization, and its standards are developed without any involvement or directions from the State of California. Its accreditation activities are not limited to the State of California. It also accredits institutions in Hawaii and in the Pacific regions accredited by WASC."

This reply **completely ignores** "Each community college within a district shall be an accredited institution. The Accrediting Commission for California Junior Colleges shall determine accreditation." (5 **Cal. Code Regs. § 51016**). The fact that the ACCJC has activities outside of California does not contradict the fact that its accreditation activities in California are empowered under Section 51016 above. It is also clear that **the majority of ACCJC's funding comes from California community colleges. In other words, it is funded heavily by the State of California and is, to a great extent, answerable to the laws of California.**

2. You argue that the "the ACCJC is not a governmental or quasi-governmental entity. It is a private organization. Its functions are of course carried out in a manner that are consistent with all applicable laws, state and federal. " In part, you are making our point. As I will address later, **evaluation is a collective bargaining issue and when ACCJC attempts to dictate in this area, it is conflicting with California law.** By the way, the statute involved is the Government Code, **not the Labor Code as your letter indicated.**

a. You are completely wrong in your analysis of collective bargaining law in California, particularly when you state that "terms and conditions" does not include "criteria and standards" to be used for evaluation. I believe that if you checked this assertion with any lawyer familiar with collective bargaining law as it has been adjudicated, you will find that you are in error.

b. **The PERB has ruled repeatedly that the evaluation criteria are negotiable.** I am not sure why your lawyer is unaware of this. For instance, PERB has ruled that evaluation criteria are negotiable in both Holtville Unified School District (1982) PERB Decision No. 250 (Holtville) and Walnut Valley Unified School District (1983) PERB Decision No. 289 (Walnut Valley). Both cases hold that criteria and standards to evaluate faculty are negotiable. See also State of California (Department of Motor Vehicles) (1998) PERB Decision No. 1291[performance standards within scope of negotiations under Dills Act governing State employees] .

In addition, when AB1725 was enacted, the Legislature confirmed that faculty evaluation procedures include negotiable criteria. The following is from AB 1725:

"(v) ...

(2) The evaluation process should be effective in yielding a genuinely useful and substantive assessment of performance. Among other things, this requires an articulation of clear, relevant criteria on which evaluations will be based.

(3) The evaluation process should be timely. This requires that evaluations be performed regularly at reasonable intervals.

(4) The specific purposes for which evaluations are conducted should be clear to everyone involved. This requires recognition that the principal purposes of the evaluation process are to recognize and acknowledge good performance, to enhance satisfactory performance and help employees who are performing satisfactorily further their own growth, to identify weak performance and assist employees in

achieving needed improvement, and to document unsatisfactory performance.

(5) A faculty member's students, administrators, and peers should all contribute to his or her evaluation, but the faculty should, in the usual case, play a central role in the evaluation process and, together with appropriate administrators, assume principal responsibility for the effectiveness of the process.

(6) The procedures defined by negotiations should foster a joint and cooperative exercise of responsibility by the faculty, administration, and governing board of the community college and should reflect faculty and administrator expertise and authority in evaluating professional work as well as the governing board's legal and public responsibility for the process."

The Legislature then enacted these standards with **Education Code section 87663**. I am not sure why you cite section 87663, but it appears that you are ignorant of the meaning of the section, and the interpretation of PERB in the above, and other, cases.

As is apparent, the Legislature anticipated that evaluation process and procedures includes the criteria for evaluating faculty work. PERB held in the above cases, and in others, that only when the Legislature expressly excluded evaluation criteria, are they not negotiable. And the only place that this took place is with respect to academic employees of UC and CSU (owing to a lot of historical factors, including the then very weak academic unions).

So, your claim that evaluation criteria are not negotiable based on the law is simply wrong.

Moreover, in every community college district, the criteria ARE negotiated. That is the contemporaneous understanding of those charged with complying with the EERA.

When ACCJC attempts to force SLOs into evaluation, it is intruding on the collective bargaining process.

By the way, the Federal NLRB law is consistent with this.

You claim that "California law leaves the final decisions on all such matters squarely with the governing body of the institution. It does not leave the content of these matters to collective bargaining although it does permit consultation from the collective bargaining unit." Again you are just wrong. You need to consult someone who understands the collective bargaining law in California in order to perfect your understanding of the law.

In short, the **ACCJC is legally obligated to respect the Rodda Act when it acts to accredit community colleges and districts in California. Among these obligations is to not involve itself in the collective bargaining process and the procedures and policies with respect to evaluation of faculty.**

Finally, could you **send me the minutes** of the meeting at which you took up my letter and your response to it?"

NO RESPONSE

I never received a response to the above letter.

CCA/CTA Correspondence

The Community College Association (a branch of the California Teachers Association) was also concerned with the actions of the ACCJC and met with Barbara Beno on March 17, 2009. In a memo from the CCA/CTA dated March 24, 2009 it was stated that “**Not one community college in California has received a sanction because of SLOs.**” On March 20, 2009, Barbara Beno sent a **memo to the CEO’s and ALO’s** from California community colleges. She referred to meeting with representatives of the “CAA” but of course she meant “CCA.” The CEOs are the college presidents and the ALOs are the accreditation liaison officers. In the memo she stated that “The CAA may now be trying to communicate some information about its informational meeting with me. Unfortunately, from what I’ve heard, **it appears the CAA communications are not very accurate.** I want you to be assured that the Commission has not changed its position or its expectations of institutions, nor would the Commission communicate any changes in its expectations of institutions through another agency or organization. “Beno addressed a future meeting she will be holding with the “SoCal CEOs.” She would advise them as to the “**22 ACCJC member institutions that are currently on a sanction to be placed on sanction. The institutions currently on sanction** are deficient in meeting standards in one or more of the following areas: **program review, integrated planning, governance, and financial stability or management.** These are the same four common reasons for sanction that I reported to the CEOs last time the ACCJC did this analysis, in Spring 2004.”

Beno went on to write: “The CAA is apparently conveying a confused message that faculty can or should stop work to implement the accreditation standards that have to do with student learning outcomes and assessment because colleges are not yet being commonly sanctioned for failure to do this work.

This logic would imply that colleges should only meet standards as the result of the **extreme pressure of an accreditation sanction.** This is not the message that the ACCJC conveyed to the CAA, and it is an **ill-advised message.**”

Beno also stated, **as if she had anything to say about it,** “ We agree that on issues of accreditation, colleges should contact ACCJC, however, CCA has the right to contact membership concerning issues that deal with collective bargaining. “

CTA Letter

On March 16, 2009 the **Department of Legal Services of the California Teachers Association** wrote a letter to the ACCJC regarding accreditation at Solano Community College. The letter states that “I write to discuss and clarify various statements you have made pertaining to the future of the Solano County Community College District that have been reported in the media and have **caused great consternation and anxiety among the faculty.**

The statements that are attributed to you include the following: “If the faculty do not adopt Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) **regardless of collective bargaining the college will lose its accreditation and close at the end of the 2009 Spring semester.**

As you know, the terms and conditions of employment of the faculty are governed by the California Education Code and the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA). This law mandates that public school employers, including community colleges, negotiate with the exclusive representative of the faculty over wages and other terms and conditions of employment. Most subjects that relate to the terms and conditions of employment of faculty are mandatory subjects of bargaining and cannot be changed or imposed by college employers.”

“Currently the contract between the College and the Association is not open. We are advised that the Association is not necessarily opposed to SLOs, but the college has not made a specific proposal. As a result **your directive that a dialogue among all constituent groups take place, regardless of collective bargaining is unlawful.**”

The CTA letter went on to state what has been going on in California: “It appears to us that the **directives and threats** from your office are **causing more problems than they solve**. As you know the ACCJC of WASC **has a much higher percentage of institutions on probation, warning or show cause status than do the other accreditation agencies elsewhere in the United States. While the other college accreditation agencies have a small percent of institutions in some negative status, ACCJC of WASC has approximately 37% of its member institutions on a negative status.** Needless to say this is a statistic that is setting off alarms in the minds of higher educators both in California and in Washington, D.C.

We suggest that you give serious thought to **moderating the tone and volume of the rhetoric**. If that or some other approach does not de-escalate the threat of the college losing its accreditation because it is attempting to follow California law, it appears that the **courts will become the ultimate arbiter of whether ACCJC/WASC may revoke accreditation when the conduct of the institution is mandated by state law**. That being said, it is a result that no one is hoping for.”

California Community Colleges Task Force

In October of 2009 the **Consultation Council of the California Community Colleges Task Force** on the ACCJC stated the following:

“In the spirit of collaboration, and with the belief that accreditation is necessary and important, we provide the following recommendations to the ACCJC to enhance the process, especially as it applies to the California Community Colleges. We pledge our ongoing support to this effort to ensure the success of accreditation, the ACCJC and the California Community College System.

Recommendations to ACCJC from Task Force

1. Develop a means for **colleges to provide periodic feedback to ACCJC** on the accreditation processes and their experiences, including both commendations for what went well and identification of what needs improvement.
2. Strengthen standards-based training of both visiting-team members and ALOs. Consider instituting an annual multi-day statewide California Community College conference to provide training and information to all interested constituencies. This could be co-presented with the Academic Senate

and the CC League at the November annual CCC conference. Colleges could also present their best practices.

3. **Review the ACCJC visiting-team selection process and consider means to involve a wider cross-section of the individuals in our system who desire to participate.** Team participation should be treated as a professional development opportunity.
4. **Scale accreditation expectations** of Western Region colleges to benchmarks formulated relative to evidence of best practices documented in all of the accrediting regions in the country.
5. Consider lengthening the cycle of accreditation to 8 -10 years.
6. **Employ cooperative ways to have accreditation result in improvement rather than just compliance.** Also, develop more non-public ways to communicate to campuses their need for improvement.
7. **Avoid recommendations that encroach on negotiable issues.”**

When Jack Scott, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, requested that he be **allowed to address the ACCJC on the above list of recommendations - his request was initially rejected.** Later, after a hastily called executive session, he was allowed to speak for a couple of minutes. This is an example of the contempt that the ACCJC shows to its California community college representatives.

The ACCJC responded in writing to Jack Scott on January 20, 2012. It spends much space on listing all of the trainings and workshops they now provide - in short the lack of responsibility to have more real interchange with the faculty and others in the colleges.

On point 1, the Commission stated that “ the Commission believes it is getting **ample feedback** from its member institutions and from individuals engaged in accreditation activities.” This despite the stated feelings of the Consultation Task Force.

On point 2, the letter states “In the same spirit of collaboration with which you offered your suggestions, the Commission wishes to suggest that the **Chancellor's Office endorse the philosophy and set the expectation that all California Community Colleges meet or exceed accreditation standards,** and that college CEOs support and engage themselves in the efforts needed to develop their own staffs' capacities to understand and apply the standards in order to help their own institutions achieve educational excellence. The vast majority of California Community Colleges already do this, but those that are struggling, and presumably those that believe they need more training, also need the leadership of the CEO and the ALO at their own campuses. The Chancellor's Office might encourage the CEOs of those California Community Colleges in need to **make a greater effort to attend the workshops and presentations that the Commission sponsors, as well as send their staffs to such trainings.** They can also be encouraged to contact the Commission directly for assistance.”

On point 3, “The Commission fields approximately 13 comprehensive teams each semester, approximately 26 per year. This means there are only approximately 52 slots per year available to give first time team members their first experience.

Those approximately 52 slots are divided among evaluators in all ranks used on evaluation teams — administrators, faculty, institutional researchers, CFOs, trustees, etc. Therefore, each group **may perceive that few new evaluators are selected each year.** Some kinds of expertise are in higher demand than others and will receive more of the "slots" for first time team members than others.”

On point 4, “the ACCJC must evaluate institutions against its own Standards of Accreditation, and will continue to do so. “ **No explanation is given as to why the ACCJC is so out of line with the other accreditation agencies.**

On point 5, “Institutions are expected to be in compliance with the Standards at all times, not just during the peak of the accreditation cycle. “

On point 6, “**It is no longer sufficient** to use the accreditation self study and team review as the only form of evaluation or assessment of institutional and programmatic quality.”

“The genie is out of the bottle on this issue. The Commission moved to **all public sanctions** many years ago in response to pressures from the Department of Education. The increasing public, student and government interest in institutional quality has created a climate in which **more information about accreditation decisions is demanded.**” **This standard of public disclosure has not yet been adopted by the ACCJC with regard to its own workings and the need for more information on how the ACCJC reaches its conclusions.** Public disclosure is great for the colleges but not for the ACCJC?

Carl Friedlander, a member of the Task Force, notes in the March 2013 issue of the Perspective that “In response to a recommendation from the 2009 Chancellor's Office Accreditation Task Force to ‘develop more non-public ways to communicate to campuses their need for improvement,’ ACCJC President Barbara Beno replied that ACCJC ‘moved to all public sanctions...in response to pressures from the DOE.’ Yet other regional accrediting commissions continue to treat and describe ‘Warning’ as ‘a private sanction.’ So is it D.C. or Novato (where ACCJC is based) demanding that all sanctions be public?”

On point 7 the ACCJC **avoids completely the legality of encroaching on issues of collective bargaining.** “This would not be in the best interests of institutional quality nor of students. The ACCJC's institutional membership includes institutions with and without collective bargaining units. It is the Commission's obligation to the public and to member institutions that the standards be applied uniformly to all institutions that choose to be accredited by the ACCJC. **The existence of labor contracts does not exempt any accredited institution from meeting all accreditation standards and policy directives.** Member institutions are responsible for labor relations matters at their own institutions. **Labor unions are encouraged to raise any direct concerns with their own institutions.**” Under this policy, how does a college recognize college law and ACCJC demands at the same time? Which trumps which? **It may take a court case for this issue to be decided.**

The letter closes with the following “The Commission remains open to continuing and even expanding, where possible, its training collaborations with the California Community College system-wide organizations within the context of the information provided above.

The Commission thanks you for your suggestions, hopes that this response has been informative, and **encourages your support for institutional adherence to the Standards of Accreditation as a means to support institutional quality among the California Community Colleges and greater student success.**”

The RP Group Findings of February 2011

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) published its research findings regarding community college accreditation policies and practices in February 2011. The title of the report was “Focusing Accreditation on Quality Improvement.” Robert Gabriner directed this project and was, at that time, the director of the RP Group’s evaluation division. He also serves as the director of the doctoral program in educational leadership at San Francisco State University. He served as an accreditation liaison officer and member of numerous accreditation teams over the past twenty years. Before being employed at San Francisco State University he worked at the community college level for forty years as a faculty member, dean of research and planning and vice chancellor for advancement at City College of San Francisco.

The research project grew out of a conversation at a joint conference of the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) and the Chief Information Systems Officers Association (CISOA) held in April 2009. The RP Group's board was concerned with the increasing number of community colleges in the state receiving sanctions from the ACCJC. Concerns revolved around the training of visiting evaluation teams, inconsistent application of accreditation standards by the commission, ACCJC’s focus on compliance instead of on student success and institutional improvement, and the degree of culpability on the part of the colleges being sanctioned. The RP Group decided to look at practices of other regional commissions and compare what was happening in California with what was happening elsewhere across the country.

The Preface to the report states that “The RP Group knew that weighing in on this issue held some risk; the debate on accreditation was growing contentious. ACCJC asserted that college leadership had to take responsibility for the sanctions received by their institutions, while college leadership pointed to the commission as the problem. Wasn’t it safer for the RP Group to let the institutions work with ACCJC and stay on the sidelines?” In the end, they decided to go forward with “the hope of moving the discussion in a positive direction.” Even though the report did not have that effect as the controversy is even more heated today, as this paper points out, but the findings are worth looking at.

To find out what was happening with regard to the ACCJC the RP Group interviewed staff and faculty from five colleges in the region. In order to keep remarks confidential the five colleges were denoted by College A, B, C, D, and E. They were both large and small, urban and suburban. Their results echo the concerns of this paper.

Three of the five CEOs from the colleges were “dissatisfied with ACCJC’s approach” to compliance. One is quoted as saying “I don’t know how much compliance really improves us all especially if its strict compliance with the attitude the commission has exhibited in the recent past in that you will do it our way.”

One faculty member was quoted as saying “The self-study should be about celebrating what you do well and identifying what needs to improve and not just how we can best get through this nightmare.” Many of the faculty and staff responded in a similar manner but some administrators felt that the tough accreditation application help force faculty to adapt more readily to changes forced on the colleges by the ACCJC and gave them the leverage they needed to force change. As one CEO said “Many times its been a nice stick to get people to change.” In short, it made some CEOs job easier. The use of a stick is one

way of educating but not one that most educators believe in today as a way of making real and productive changes. Of course the fact that between 2004 and 2008, a total of 40 California community colleges had received a sanction makes the argument stronger for the CEO that needs to use a stick in order to get the attention of his or her faculty and staff.

This was reflected in the belief by many of those interviewed that “ACCJC has not succeeded in creating a culture in the region that focuses on quality improvement” and that the “actions of the commission appear to emphasize compliance over improvement and process over outcomes.” In short, “a commission that emphasizes compliance rather than improvement, real and lasting change is difficult to achieve.”

One ALO noted that “the high proportion of institutions on sanctions has created a culture of fear among California community colleges.” Avoiding sanctions was critical to most respondents, not the need to make actual institutional improvements or focus on the actual teaching that goes on in the institution.

An IR director was quoted as saying that “We switched from seriously looking at program review as improvement, with always some worry about compliance, to just focusing on compliance. Our administrators are so overloaded that they’re just trying to comply. They have a lot more work to do and their attitude has shifted more towards survival and we get through this.” This feeling is repeated many times in the report.

Many of those interviewed did not believe that the Commission and its staff helped colleges very much and did not look carefully at their own practices. They felt that “the commission is not being receptive to constructive criticism and not encouraging feedback from the colleges and expressed concerns about retaliation. One CEO said it directly: “People are fearful to give open, honest feedback for fear of retribution.” In talking to a number of people across the state, I have found the feeling of fear of reprisal at epidemic levels. Some might even connect the issuance of the RP report with the SHOW CAUSE sanction on CCSF.

There was also much concern on the part of those interviewed that the Commission was not consistent in the application of sanctions. As one ALO said “teams are at times unclear what warrants a sanction and what the distinction between being placed on warning or probation.” Many of the responses to the RP Group involved how much harsher to Commission was a compared to the visiting teams in the placement of sanctions. The group found that “interviewees expressed two concerns related to a perception that the commission did not value the work or judgment of the evaluation teams. First interviewees commented that the commission makes changes to team reports and second, that the commission will take more severe action than what was recommended by the evaluation team. The CEOs from Colleges A, B, and D all had served as evaluation team chairs and all reported having experienced one of both of these results.” “College B’s CEO, who has chaired several evaluation teams, shared that the commission’s action on accreditation status was in every case more severe than what his last three teams recommended.”

Training for evaluation teams was criticized on a number of grounds including “you can’t train somebody for two days and think they understand accreditation.” Some descriptions of the ACCJC training were:

1. Waste of time
2. horrible, nothing but talking heads, very confusing and mystifying process and kind of unrealistic too
3. not effective or engaging
4. little value

5. massive PowerPoint slide presentation that's almost too fast to learn anything
6. inconsistent information
7. lack of applicable training and absence of quality assurance
8. conflicting information at different trainings
9. emphasis on rules and policies, but not how to apply them

In short, "ACCJC respondents indicated that the commission's training lack cohesion and shared concerns about the timing, quality, consistency and relevance of the commission's offerings." "The commission shared that in their view, colleges and constituent groups should lead training and effective practice sharing." Their capacity was limited by the size and scope to address a full professional development program.

One question that stuck out in the study was whether the amount of work necessary to write a successful college report as well as the work involved in making big changes in a short period of time were justified by the changes made. Most of those responding said that benefits achieved through ACCJC accreditation did not justify the "significant amount of time, effort and resources invested by institutions in the accreditation process and in particular the development of the self-study report."

Attacks on Board of Trustee Members

Among the reasons given for sanctions for **twenty colleges** at the January 2012 meeting of the ACCJC were "deficiencies in governing board roles and responsibilities; seven of these were colleges in multi-college districts where the key deficiencies were in district governing board operations."

The ACCJC has entered a stage of micro-managing of district-level operations through sanctions on the colleges of multi-college districts. This includes attempting to dictate to college governing boards how they should operate. Actions against districts has been illustrated by recent actions related to the Ventura County Community College District, the Peralta Community College District, the San Jose-Evergreen Community College District, and the State Center Community College District.

Standard Ten of the ACCJC relates to elected Boards of Trustees in the community colleges. In Section A. Governing Board it calls for:

"A.1 The governing board is an independent policy-making board capable of reflecting the public interest in board activities and decisions. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.

A.2 The governing board ensures that the educational program is of high quality, is responsible for overseeing the financial health and integrity of the institution, and confirms that institutional practices are consistent with the board-approved institutional mission statement and policies.

A.3 The governing board establishes broad institutional policies and appropriately delegates responsibility to implement these policies. The governing board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.

A.4 In keeping with its mission, the governing board selects and evaluates the chief executive officer and confirms the appointment of other major academic and administrative officers.

A.5 The size, duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, structure and operating procedures, and processes for assessing the performance of the governing board are clearly defined and published in board policies or by-laws. The board acts in a manner consistent with them.

A.6 The governing board has a program for new member orientation and governing board development.
A.7 The board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.”

While the above may seem reasonable on its fact, the actual application is quite different. The ACCJC under Beno’s leadership is attempting to dictate how governing board members behave as elected public servants and how they should act against trustees that are not following the district party line.

Barbara Beno at the California Community College Trustees Annual conference held on May 5, 2012 cautioned those in attendance that "boards must recognize which members need help, and then provide the help." She goes on to claim that "Only the board can regulate its members!" This statement, of course, overlooks the role of the voters to decide whether they approve of the behavior of their elected board members.

In her presentation Beno noted the following steps for "Improving Board Performance"

- Board Policies
- New Trustee Orientation/Changes in BOT
- Mentoring
- Prompt Feedback/Correction when Behaviors Stray
- Continuous Training
- Individual Training
- Board Warning
- Board Censorship
- Legal Action

Presumably, if the above are not followed by a board, sanctions on their district will follow.

Beno is a strong advocate for no dissenters on the board. She has been quoted in training before administrators and trustees as saying that "once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure." There should be an expectation of a "commitment to board decisions.” She wants boards to "avoid public conflict" and once a decision is made, all board members must publically support the action of the board or "risk an accreditation ding." This is not the way democracy should work nor is it the role of accrediting agencies to dictate to governing boards how they will function, but if local governing boards were to seriously follow her advice to defend and protect from undue influence or pressure, then they should make clear to all what the ACCJC is doing to destroy their districts.

Beno calls on boards to "represent the entire community and not single interests." Although not stated above, Beno's major target for “undue influence” are the unions that help elect governing board members and the students and community members that speak at board meetings. On a number of occasions, including at a recent conference of the Community College League of California, Beno spoke to unions having undue influence on "problem boards." With regard to unions she is quoted as saying "Frankly, the unions come in and institutional effectiveness is politically driven." She stated that "some boards are so politically weak, they cave to contracts they can't afford. Although they are elected by some folks, once they take office they need to stay focused on institutional effectiveness. If you keep this in mind, it will help you from being distracted and bending to political pressure." Again, not much understanding of democracy and how it works.

Beno does not want Boards to "micro-manage" the district but rather leave the responsibilities and authority to implement and administer board policies to the local CEO "without board interference." The operation of the district is to be in the hands of the CEO instead of the elected board.

Among the many recent "dings" for discussing public issues in public are the following:

Los Angeles Southwest College

The Visiting Team at Southwest College accurately described the Los Angeles Community College District as being run by a publically elected board. "LASC is one of nine constituent colleges of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). The District Board of Trustees is a seven-member policy-making body. Board members are elected for four-year terms district-wide by voters in the city of Los Angeles and in neighboring cities without their own community college districts. Elections are staggered, with three or four seats filled every two years. An advisory student member is elected annually district-wide. The Board governs through policies that ensure and secure the academic and fiscal integrity of the constituent institutions. A policy on conflict of interest assures that conflicting interests are disclosed, and do not interfere with the impartiality of board members in decision-making."

In their "Findings and Evidence they found that: "The Board of Trustees is an independent policy making body that serves the public's interest; uniting to support local planning decisions made through shared governance processes. In the self-evaluation of Standard IVB.I.a, the board members are reported to work together collaboratively; however, in their recent Board Self-Evaluation (spring 2012) there is evidence that describes the Board's communications to be **disrespectful of one another and the administration**. In interviews, the Board Members described **spirited dialogue rather than arguments**, and reported that their outcomes were better vetted through this open communication style. Additionally, the evaluation described some board members as coming to the meetings unprepared and not giving their full attention to speakers during board meetings."

"Recently in the Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation Survey, participants reported that the Board focuses too much on processes that should be delegated and not enough time on policy matters; that the work of the **Board of Trustees Committees is departing from oversight and policy level and becoming directive at the operational level**, to include micro-managing the Chancellor and his decisions. The Board has been participating in several retreats this year and has one more planned before the end of the academic year. Evidence from interviews of trustees reveals a willingness to continue to refine their roles and attend to issues of collaboration, delegation and focused responsibilities. "

Ventura College

In the letter of February 1, 2012 to Ventura College the Commission stated the following: "Commission Concern: The team report confirmed that the board development activities had been provided and all board members were encouraged to attend. At the same time, the team expressed concern about the consistency and long-term sustainability of the Board's demonstration of its primary leadership role and reiterates its recommendation for **evidence of ongoing professional development for all Board members**. Specifically, the Commission notes a **particular board member's disruptive and inappropriate behavior and the entire board's responsibility to address and curtail it**." I have addressed this issue elsewhere in this paper.

It is clearly time for governing board members to organize themselves and confront the ACCJC on its attempt to interfere with the functioning of democratically elected boards. After all, the governing boards are not playgrounds where children are to be disciplined for bad behavior but rather a part of the sometimes dynamic democratic process in California.

CFT letter of January 8, 2013 Concerning Failure to Obey Timelines

On January 8, 2013, the CFT President Josh Pechthalt wrote the ACCJC a letter outlining the CFT's concerns with the ACCJC's Failure to Comply With Its Policies Regarding the Agenda for the Meetings of January 9-11, 2013. The CFT expressed its frustration in trying to find out about the January meeting. CFT wrote "Our lawyers contacted the Commission on November 8, 2012, and December 13, 2012. On each occasion Commission staff advised us that the Commission meeting was not a public meeting, and on that basis declined to apprise us of the location of the meeting. Given the detailed agenda, which we located on the Commission website on January 4, it seems highly unlikely that on November 8 or December 13 Commission staff thought the meetings of January 9-11 were not intended as public meetings."

The Commission rules call for a 30 day notice. CFT wrote that "Only two weeks ago, long **after** the Commission's 30 day deadline for giving notice had elapsed, and after the 15 day time limit for the public to submit notice of a desire to speak to the Commission, did the ACCJC website finally indicate that the meeting of January 9-11, 2013, would occur in Burlingame, at the Hyatt. It was not until around January 4, 2013, however, that the [preliminary] agenda for January 9, finally appeared on the Commission's website and expressly indicated there would be a public meeting. This means that **proper notice was "posted" about 25 days late.**"

The CFT letter concluded that "If our understanding of the facts is accurate, the Commission has failed to satisfy its declared policy of "supporting" and "encouraging" the presence of the public at its meetings. It is difficult not to conclude that by the way it neglects to provide notice to the public of its activities, the Commission actually seeks to discourage or effectively restrict public attendance and comment at its meetings." The CFT requested that the Commission defer all actions until their next meeting. **The Commission failed to defer actions taken.**

Community College Challenges Not Taken Into Account

In the Summer 2012 *ACCJC NEWS*, the ACCJC recognized that "In recent years, many external events have created challenge for colleges; **funding reductions**, changing public policy, turnover due to retirements, changing student populations and needs, and the accountability movement are among them. These are challenging times, and it is the job of a governing board to assure that an institution finds the way to adjust to the external and internal pressures **without compromising educational quality** and financial integrity. Strong and effective governing boards are critically important to institutional success and survival."

Conclusion

Again, quoting Carl Friedlander, "ACCJC sanctions colleges with a frequency and ferocity unheard of in any other region of the U.S. (or in the four-year section of WASC). The comparative data is clear and mind-boggling."

“Meeting and documenting compliance with accreditation standards is not a favorite faculty activity anywhere in American higher education—especially in the brave new world of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's).

“Faculty across the country may grouse about the work involved in accreditation, but only in the California community colleges do faculty find themselves fantasizing about shifting to a new Commission that can accredit our colleges or even substituting state oversight for ACCJC oversight. We consider these desperate alternatives because the relationship between ACCJC and the California community colleges has become rather toxic.”

“These kinds of behaviors by ACCJC leadership compound the problem of the federal pressures and make many faculty feel that accreditation in California today has almost nothing to do with "peer and professional review" and is instead about ACCJC spearheading an aggressive (and, many believe, misguided) "reform" agenda. **Spearheading a "reform" campaign is not the business of an accrediting commission.**”

It is sad that the ACCJC has not acted on its understanding of what the colleges have been facing in determining reasonable sanctions. Instead, it has added to the college woes. The colleges have enough to worry about without also being required to exist under the yoke of the ACCJC and its micro-managing sanctions. Something must be done concerning the ACCJC and its abusive posturing - and sooner rather than later.

Although I am not yet convinced that the sanctions and recommendations of the ACCJC and their use of grants from groups that seem more interested in privatizing education than expanding public education indicates that the ACCJC itself has an interest in privatization, many in the community college family are convinced. For example, some believe that “In view of the extraordinarily high number of colleges the ACCJC has sanctioned recently, in comparison to the very low number in the rest of the country, many of us have concluded that ACCJC has exceeded its public-policy scope and authority and the accreditation crisis is part of a larger movement to downsize and privatize community colleges.”

I do believe that a number of college administrators and trustees have attempted to use the club of the Commission to force educational and collective bargaining condition changes that do not advance the quality of the institution or the service to students. Often the changes imposed result in the erosion of community support, laying off of critical faculty and staff, cuts in benefits and pay (and the resulting unfair labor charges), changes in the collegial governance systems, a breakdown of communication between administration and staff, and even a loss in support for the treasured California Master Plan for Higher Education. These actions often negatively affect long established employee working conditions as well as the collegial atmosphere on campus. In short, the current “my way or the highway” attitude of the Commission is helping to change community colleges in California in negative ways.

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