



Academic Senate
for California Community Colleges

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December 17, 2013

Barbara Beno, President
ACCJC
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

Dear President Beno,

I'm writing to you on behalf of the faculty of California's community colleges. As you may be aware, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges concluded its Fall 2013 Plenary Session last month. A portion of each plenary session includes the consideration of formal resolutions about a broad array of topics. Member senates discuss, edit, debate, and vote on resolutions, which determine the positions of the Academic Senate and direct its activities. During this plenary session, a number of resolutions related to accreditation were considered and adopted by the body.

We recognize that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regards the college chief executive officers (CEOs) as the representative voice of member colleges; however, other than students, faculty are the largest constituency at all community colleges. From our experience, thoughtful and engaged faculty leadership is essential to meeting the ACCJC standards, and thus the interests and concerns of faculty, especially when identified through the collective, democratic vetting process of academic senates, must be considered if the accreditation decision-making process is to be successful.

In total, the Academic Senate adopted 10 resolutions directing communication to the ACCJC. Five resolutions urge improvements to Commission practices to aid colleges in successfully meeting the standards, four resolutions provide suggestions for the draft 2014 standards, and one resolution relates to City College of San Francisco (CCSF) and its deadlines for meeting the Standards. The Commission may be in the process of addressing these same concerns already or may even have made a formal change to ACCJC policy by the time you receive this letter; however, the official resolutions process of Academic Senate requires that we provide the ACCJC with a complete record of the body's adopted concerns and recommendations.

Resolutions Regarding Policies, Processes and Practices of the ACCJC

1. 2.02 F13 Request of ACCJC to Model Effective Self-Evaluation Practices

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to model and exemplify for its member institutions effective and transparent self-evaluation practices by acknowledging and addressing any areas of non-compliance identified in evaluations by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Accreditation Group and the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Improvement (NACIQI), and to document and make public what steps it will take to address any areas of non-compliance.

2. 2.03 F13 Sufficient Advance Notice for Changes to Required ACCJC Annual Reports

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges formally request that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) provide member institutions opportunities for meaningful input to the ACCJC about any proposed changes to the required annual reports, and that any adopted changes by ACCJC to annual reports be published at least one year in advance of the effective date of implementation of the required annual reports.

3. 2.04 F13 Employ the Term "Action Required" Rather Than "Recommendation" for Evaluations Findings That Must be Addressed by the Two-Year Rule

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges formally request that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) adopt and employ two consistent terms: One, such as “action required,” used for those ACCJC findings of non-compliance that must be addressed under the Two-Year Rule, and a second term such as “recommendation,” used exclusively for Commission suggestions that the institution may implement at its discretion.

4. 2.08 F13 ACCJC Transparency

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges call on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to implement a policy of transparency in its proceedings and decision making which includes the opportunity for the public to discuss proposed sanctions before they are voted on and to publish visiting team recommendations for sanctions and minutes of ACCJC meetings including a tally of votes taken.

5. 2.10 Request of the ACCJC to Evaluate and Improve Inter-rater Reliability of Visiting Teams

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to include training to promote inter-rater reliability in and among visiting teams sent to institutions under review; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge that ACCJC conduct evaluations to determine if standards are being consistently applied across institutions and that their findings be reported to all colleges.

Resolutions Regarding Modifications to the Existing Standards in Preparation for Adoption of New Standards in 2014

1. *2.05 F13 Responding to Draft ACCJC Accreditation Standards as they Relate to Libraries and Learning Support Services*

Resolved, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges advocate for the concerns of library faculty and for reconsideration of the draft Standards by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) at the January 2014 meeting of the ACCJC; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges advocate for the retention of the “Library and Learning Support Services” as a separate Substandard in the proposed new ACCJC Standards.

2. *2.06 F13 Equitable Access to College Resources for Part-Time Faculty*

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community recommend that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges add to II.A.8, or another appropriate location in the accreditation standards, language that reflects the expectation that colleges will provide equitable access to college infrastructure and resources to all faculty members so that the teaching mission of the college may be more effectively attained.

3. *2.09 F13 Resolution Affirming Support for Diversity and Equity in Accreditation Standards*

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges strongly urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to retain requirements in the Standards for colleges to actualize the principles of student equity and foster respect for diversity including a standard that institutions recruit and admit diverse students who are able to benefit from their programs, consistent with their mission; and

Resolved, That Academic Senate for California Community Colleges strongly urge ACCJC to include a standard that institutions demonstrate commitment to hiring and maintaining personnel of diverse backgrounds, recognizing the significant educational role such diversity plays in the education of all students.

4. *2.11 F13 Reinserting terms “Academic Senate” and “Curriculum” in Standard IV, Criterion A.4*

Resolved, Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to revise Standard IV, criterion A.4 to read:

Faculty and academic administrators, through well-defined structures and processes, including those established by state and local laws and regulations such as academic senates and curriculum committees, have primary responsibility for recommendations about curriculum and student learning programs and services, with support from academic administrators as appropriate.

Resolution Regarding City College of San Francisco

The Academic Senate is especially concerned about the fate of CCSF and has provided support and technical assistance to the faculty, academic senate, and the college in general with their efforts to meet standards in the areas of governance, planning and budget processes, student learning

outcomes, and program review, as is our charge. The college is making progress on all fronts, and the CCSF faculty is to be commended for continuing to educate students under extremely dire conditions. The following resolution was adopted to acknowledge the unique legal situation faced by CCSF and its impact on meeting accreditation timelines.

2.07 Extend Deadline for CCSF to Meet Accreditation Standards

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to extend by one year the deadline for City College of San Francisco (CCSF) to comply with accreditation Standards and recommendations, due to the unprecedented legal situation faced by CCSF.

These resolutions above represent the scope and depth by which the faculty not only critique the current accreditation process but offer solutions and ideas for improving the peer review process that we value. Additional background for understanding and interpreting these resolutions can be found in the full text of the resolutions. Please go to <http://www.asccc.org/resources/resolutions> and enter the resolution number where prompted. As always, I am also happy to meet with you personally to discuss these resolutions and ways that we can work together on them.

One additional accreditation-related resolution was adopted at Fall Plenary; however, this resolution was directed to the Academic Senate to guide its work on accreditation. In Resolution 2.01, the ASCCC adopted the following statement on accreditation to be published widely in our organizational materials:

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) values the peer review process of self-reflection and improvement known as accreditation. Since local academic senates have Title 5-mandated roles within the accreditation process, the ASCCC sees its primary responsibility as helping colleges to meet the adopted standards for which they will be held accountable and to generate comprehensive and forthright assessments of progress toward the standards. The ASCCC's main tool for supporting colleges is the annual Accreditation Institute, through which faculty and other colleagues are encouraged to learn about and address the standards and recommendations from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. Additionally, the Academic Senate shares accreditation information and provides support through local college visits and regional presentations. As a professional matter, in support of the ideal of a fair and meaningful accreditation process, the ASCCC's secondary responsibility is to recommend and advocate for improvements to the accreditation standards and processes by providing thoughtful feedback and input to all accreditation participants.

If you have any questions about the adopted positions of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, please don't hesitate to contact me for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Smith