

# ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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February 15, 2012

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Services Officers, Academic Senate Presidents and

**Interested Others** 

FROM: Michael Rota, Commission Chair Milalt Rt

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D. Barbara a Beno

SUBJECT: Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices:

Invitation for Written or Oral Comment at Hearings

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges conducts a comprehensive study of the utility, effectiveness, relevance, and consistency of its Standards and practices approximately every six years. Commission Chair Michael Rota wrote a letter to the field on November 9, 2011 announcing the commencement of a review, noting significant developments in higher education, and inviting written comment on the Accreditation Standards and practices. On behalf of the Commission, I invite you to provide written or oral comment on changes you think are needed in the Accreditation Standards and practices.

# **Hearing Information**

The Commission plans three public hearings to get general information from member institutions and the public on the broad issues of what should be considered in updating Accreditation Standards and practices. Member institutions and persons from the public will be invited based on geographic proximity to the meeting place. The first two hearings will be held in California on the specific dates noted below. A third hearing is planned to provide opportunity for Hawaiian and Pacific member institutions, and the public, to comment. It will be scheduled for September, the date and location to be coordinated with the pertinent institutions. Each hearing will begin at 9 a.m. and will end when all testimony is heard or at noon.

## **Hearing Number 1: Southern California**

Persons representing ACCJC-accredited institutions in Southern California, from Bakersfield and Allan Hancock Colleges south, are specifically invited to participate in the hearing held on Wednesday, March 14, 2012, beginning at 9:00 a.m., at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 21500 Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach, California.

### **Hearing Number 2: Northern California**

Persons representing ACCJC-accredited institutions in Northern California, from Cuesta College and College of the Sequoias north, are specifically invited to participate in the hearing held on Wednesday, June 6, 2012, beginning at 9:00 a.m., at the SFO Marriott Hotel, 1800 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, California.

### **Hearing Number 3: Hawaiian and Pacific Colleges**

Persons representing ACCJC-accredited institutions in Hawaii and the Pacific Region are specifically invited to participate in the hearing held on **Day and Date TBA**, **September**, **2012**, **Honolulu**, **Hawai'i**.

If you intend to attend a hearing and provide oral comment, please let our office know so that we can accommodate all the individuals that are planning to attend, and can send you any updated information on the hearing process. Be sure to give us your name and contact information. You may let us know you intend to attend by sending an email or fax to the ACCJC.

E-mail: accjc@accjc.orgFAX: 415-506-0238

### **Background**

The Commission last undertook a review of the Accreditation Standards adopted in 2002 during the years 2006 to 2008. The results of that review were published in *Quality Assurance: A Formative Review* (ACCJC publication, 2008). Since then, there have been significant changes in the higher education practices, in the national regulatory environment, and in public expectations regarding educational quality and transparency. Distance education and the use of technology mediated learning, have increased significantly. There is greater interest in globalization and internationalization of the curriculum and educational experience. Recent national interest in an educated workforce has focused greater attention on the knowledge and competencies of certificate and degree completers, as well as on improving the efficacy of the college experience so that more students complete higher education credentials.

While the Commission believes the Accreditation Standards still largely reflect practices indicative of educational quality, it hopes a review will provide opportunity to update the Accreditation Standards and practices in order to maintain alignment of ACCJC practices with the new higher education environment. The 2011 to 2014 review is being led by the Commission's Accreditation Review Steering Committee. The Committee will consider the federal regulatory environment, the national and regional dialogues about higher education quality and best practices, the work done by other federally recognized accrediting bodies, changing forms of pedagogy and institutional organization, and the growing knowledge about student learning and assessment practices, among other topics, as it considers updates and changes to the Accreditation Standards and practices.

#### **Timeline and Process for Review**

A general timeline for the Review of Accreditation Standards and practices has been established. The Commission intends to review current Accreditation Standards and practices in 2012, to draft the updated Accreditation Standards in 2013, and to present them to the Commission for review at a first hearing in January 2014, and a second hearing for adoption in June 2014. Throughout the process, member institutions will be invited to participate through hearings, on task forces focused on special topics, and through other working groups.

In the Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices, the Commission seeks to:

- Improve clarity in the expression of standards, eliminating unnecessary repetition;
- Incorporate best and current knowledge about effective higher education practice and student learning;
- Move colleges toward a greater emphasis on student outcomes, assessment, and accountability;
- Reflect current federal regulations and policy directions;
- Increase emphasis on institutional integrity;
- Focus on the present and *future* needs of institutions, students and the public;
- Address general education/civic education needs of states and national governments; and
- Improve effectiveness and efficiency of accreditation processes.

Attached find a format for input entitled, "Suggestions for Change to the Accreditation Standards and Practices." Please provide your name, title, institutional affiliation or other interest on the form when you submit the form, and be prepared to provide the same information when you provide oral comments to the Commission. The Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies are available on the Commission's website, <a href="https://www.accjc.org">www.accjc.org</a>.

Your written comments may be mailed, Faxed, or e-mailed to one of the following addresses:

• E-mail: accjc@accjc.org

• FAX: 415-506-0238

• Mail: ACCJC

10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204

Novato, CA 94949

The Commission welcomes your thoughts during this important review of our Accreditation Standards and practices.

Attachment