



**ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES**  
*Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

Barbara A. Beno, President  
Raúl Rodríguez, Chair

---

**December 1, 2016**

**Memo to:** College Presidents at Institutions Undergoing  
Comprehensive Review

**From:** Barbara Beno, President *Barbara A Beno*

**Subject:** Steps in the Evaluation Process that Provide  
Opportunity for Important CEO Participation

In the coming months, your institution will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit by an External Evaluation Team sent by the ACCJC. My purpose in writing is to remind you of several steps in the accreditation process in which you, as the College President, will have opportunity to provide guidance and feedback to the Chair of the external evaluation team and to correct errors of fact in the evaluation team's report to the Commission.

1. The Commission's protocol for selection of an evaluation team includes the requirement that faculty and administrators with sufficient expertise serve as peer evaluators. The team must cover all standards and be able to evaluate the institution in the context of its size and mission. Therefore, a basic team will include at least 3 faculty members, and at least one CEO, chief instructional officer, student services officer, researcher, business officer, and librarian or information specialist. Other positions will be added as needed to provide evaluator expertise in distance education, learning assessment, information technology, administrative service, human resources, governance, and the types of programs the institution offers, such as career and technical education, basic skills or pre-collegiate education, or baccalaureate education. As CEO, you will be given opportunity to review the list of proposed team members and object to any you believe have a conflict of interest, as per the ACCJC's policy on conflict of interest.

2. Prior to the evaluation team visit, the Team Chair will schedule a visit to the college and will meet with you to discuss plans for the future team visit. At this time, you will have the opportunity to give the Chair any new information about the institution that has arisen since the Institutional Self Evaluation Report was published. The Team Chair will have a series of team logistics issues to discuss as well, and will want to see the campus and the team meeting room.

3. When the team is on site during the comprehensive evaluation visit, **the Team Chair will meet with you, usually at least once a day, to check in** and see whether you have feedback or questions about the process of evaluation. These meetings or phone calls give you opportunity to raise questions such as:

- Was the team able to find the evidence it requested be provided this morning?
- Is the team getting access to all of the individuals and groups it wishes to meet with?
- Are there any other ways that our college can facilitate the team's work?

You can also raise concerns about the college's experiences with and impressions of the team, in hopes that the Chair will make some adjustments to the team's work in cases where adjustment is warranted. You can provide feedback such as:

- We became concerned that Team Member X seemed to focus a good deal of attention on his own perspective, and we hope the team will be open to our own institution's approach to meeting the standards.
- Team member Y did not make it to a meeting she scheduled with our individual or office, and we wondered if she needs to reschedule or simply did not want to meet any longer?
- Team member Z seems to have a style that is aggressive, and we are a little concerned about it.
- Of course, the CEO's feedback that the process seems to be going well, that team members are professional and prepared, are also welcome.

4. At the end of the evaluation visit, and before making the exit report to the assembled college community, **the Team Chair will meet with you and privately discuss the team's findings**, usually on a somewhat general level. The Chair will also tell you about the areas in which the team is making recommendations for change. However, please recognize that at this point in the process, the Chair has only the draft language for standards chapters of the evaluation report, and has not yet melded and edited those chapters into a whole and edited it for consistency and clarity, nor has the exact language of the recommendations been finalized through the editing process that will come after the visit. At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to express to the Chair any comments you wish about the overall evaluation team visit, or to ask that the report contain such things as helpful advice in the team's response to issues the college is particularly concerned about.

5. After the Team Chair has created an edited Draft Report of the External Evaluation Team, which s/he does in consultation with the team members and an ACCJC staff member, **the Chair will send you a copy for purposes of correction of errors of fact**. The Report will be considered confidential and should not be widely distributed, but you may share it with chief advisors as you review it for any errors. The review for errors of fact is very important, because it is the facts in the External Evaluation Report as well as those in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and other supporting evidentiary materials that form the basis of the Commissioners' deliberations about whether the College meets standards.

Because the Team Chair is on a schedule to produce a Final Draft Report in time for it to be sent back to you and to the Commission for its upcoming meeting, s/he is on a deadline, and will generally give you five to seven days to identify any errors of fact. You may find it helpful to point out specific evidence that was available to the team in making your assertions about errors of fact.

6. After the Team Chair creates a final draft report sends it to the ACCJC, **ACCJC will send the report to you with a letter** that states (the language below is abbreviated):

- If you believe that the Report in its current form contains inaccuracies, you are invited to call them to the attention of the Commission by letter. A date will be identified as a deadline in order for the letter to be included in the Commissioner's materials.
- If you wish to submit additional material on issues of substance and pertaining to any Accreditation Standard deficiencies noted in the Report, material should arrive at the ACCJC office timely in order for the Commissioners to be able to read and absorb it. A deadline date will be provided to you.
- ACCJC policy provides that you may, if you desire, request to appear before the Commission in closed session to discuss the Report. A deadline date will be given to indicate your intention to appear before the Commission.
- Please note this version of the External Evaluation Team Report is still confidential, because it has not been finalized by the Commission. The material you send to the Commission, or the oral presentation you make before the Commission, could cause the Commission to edit the report. The Commission's own discovery of error in the Report could also cause it to edit the report.

7. Within 30 days after the Commission meeting, the **ACCJC will send you via email an action letter and a copy of the External Evaluation Report in its finalized form.** This version is the one that should be shared widely by the College. A federal law requiring that ACCJC notify the public of its decisions at the same time it notifies the institution has caused ACCJC to send its action letters via email to all institutions on a single day, and to immediately thereafter post public notice of the actions the Commission has taken. It is wise to consider what communication you will likely want to make regarding the Commission's action and the External Evaluation Team Report before the Commission's action letter arrives. That way you'll be ready to release your own statement shortly after the Commission action letter arrives via email.

Please feel free to call the ACCJC staff for information about any of these steps of the evaluation process.

Best wishes to you for a successful evaluation visit that provides helpful information to the College.

BAB/tl