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Accreditor Fumbled in Acting Against City College of San Francisco, State Court Says

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A state judge in California has concluded that a regional accreditor denied due process to City College of San Francisco, and says the two-year college must be given a new opportunity to argue against being closed.

In a draft decision handed down on Friday, Judge Curtis E.A. Karnow of the state's Superior Court in San Francisco said the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges had violated federal regulations and a law requiring that the college be given due process when the commission decided to revoke the college's accreditation, in 2013.

Judge Karnow's ruling said he planned to issue an injunction requiring the accreditor to revisit its decision after first giving the college a chance to respond to its allegations. The ruling leaves the door open for the accreditor to again decide to terminate the college's accreditation if a fuller hearing of the facts warrants such an action.

The decision said: "This relief directly accounts for the significant unlawful practices I have found, it pays attention to the extensive federal regulations which surround the accreditation process, and it respects, as it must and as all parties agree, the fact that under federal law it is the ACCJC, and not this court, which exercises its discretion with respect to accreditation decisions."

The ruling, in a lawsuit filed against the accreditor by the San Francisco city attorney's office rather than by the college itself, marks yet the latest twist in a long-running battle to keep the college open in the face of the accreditor's charges that it is poorly governed and in a perilous financial position. The decision came just two days after the ACCJC decided to grant the college an additional two years to meet all of its accreditation standards.