

June 18, 2014

Dr. Sherrill Amador, Chair  
Dr. Barbara Beno, President  
Members of the Commission  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204  
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Dr. Amador, Dr. Beno, and Commissioners:

The primary purpose of this correspondence is to share, on behalf of the CEO Board, our recommendations for improvements to the accreditation process and ways in which the relationship between California CEOs and the Commission can be strengthened. Secondly, we will address the fact that we have not received a response to the letter we sent to you on April 25 of this year.

As the Commission is aware, the CEO Board requested a meeting with Commission representatives earlier this year. That request resulted in conversations held on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in Los Angeles and Sacramento, respectively. Approximately 50 CEOs participated. We are most grateful for the participation of Dr. Amador and Dr. Beno in the planning and implementation of the conversations. We thank Commissioners Gornick and Rodriguez for their participation in the conversations as well. CEOs in attendance found the experience meaningful in that, among other discussion points, our roles and responsibilities were clarified. Following the conversation, debriefing sessions were held at our annual Northern and Southern regional meetings, the results of which were compiled and shared in our May 16 CEO Board meeting.

The attached document delineates CEO recommendations for ACCJC stemming from these meetings, organized in three major areas of concern: collaboration and communication with CEOs; professional development; and reaffirmation/accreditation. Our hope is that our recommendations will be taken seriously and that the Commission will include us in all aspects of planning and implementing the changes we recommend. We want to work collaboratively with the Commission since, as was emphasized repeatedly in our conversations, the Commission belongs to the membership.

A related concern in developing a strengthened relationship with ACCJC is the fact that we have not received a response to the letter sent to you on April 25 of this year regarding San Francisco City College (CCSF). Even though it seems progress is being made regarding CCSF, we would like formal acknowledgement of our letter. As indicated, we are concerned about the increase in dues and the role the Legislature is taking in establishing legislation that will have an impact on accreditation. Regarding the former, we would like the Commission to address in its response the extent to which the Commission anticipates dues increases as a result of legal fees over the next year; regarding the latter, please share with us the Commission's approach/response to legislation being created and how we may be of assistance.

We are very concerned about the future of our Commission and want to work cooperatively. Please give us the opportunity to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Helen Benjamin, President  
CEOCCC

Cindy Miles, Past President  
CEOCCC

## **Recommendations to ACCJC on Improvements to the Accreditation Process**

*Submitted by*

**California Community College CEOs, June 2014**

### **I. Collaboration and Communication with CEOs**

*Effectively engage college and district CEOs as partners in creating a culture in which ACCJC is valued as a member-driven organization.*

#### **A. Hold annual meeting with CEOs and ACCJC Commission leadership and staff.**

1. Meet as allies to improve communication, mutual understanding, information exchange.
2. Promote improvement of institutions and the Commission as learning organizations.
3. Work together to mitigate perceptions of the Commission as operating in secret, not listening to needs and concerns of institutions, being unwelcoming and uncaring.

#### **B. Respect the leadership role of chancellors in multi-college districts.**

1. Copy chancellors on all CEO and trustee correspondence.
2. Engage chancellors as organizational CEOs in all facets of the accreditation process.

### **II. Professional Development**

*Leverage the vast resources that exist among ACCJC members and allied organizations to strengthen colleges and support accreditation activities.*

#### **A. Develop a comprehensive plan for professional development for institutional members.**

1. Develop the plan in collaboration with existing constituency organizations.
2. Develop a plan that builds capacity, assists in training, and provides technical assistance (e.g., in California, statewide organizations of CEOs, trustees, chief instructional/business/student services/human resources officers, academic and classified senates, CCLC, State Chancellor's Office, Association of Community College Administrators).

#### **B. Hold an annual accreditation conference.**

1. Exchange proven practices, provide team-based workshops for all groups, share accreditation updates.
2. Convene planning group with representatives of constituent organizations to design and implement conference, referencing other commission conference models (e.g., SACS, HLC).
3. Link with CCLC Annual Convention for cost savings and member access.

#### **C. Improve institutional training for accreditation.**

1. Establish taskforce with professionals in constituent groups above for design and implementation of improved training.
2. Develop tool kits and online training modules.
3. Develop a structured *Pathway to Accreditation & Institutional Excellence* guide (like a student learning pathway model) that institutions can use to navigate the new standards and promote institutional engagement. Include features such as examples of good practice, implementation challenges, sample engagement questions, and references.

#### **D. Improve external evaluation team preparation.**

1. Establish a taskforce with professionals from constituent groups to help with redesign of team training curriculum and delivery.
  - a. Consider the following challenges: inconsistent information; too much time on basics; need more engaging and effective materials and exercises.
2. Include the following recommended sign changes.

- a. Provide focused training on each standard rather than global overview of all standards.
- b. Provide case study models of sample self-studies, specific examples of evidence that meet/do not meet standards.
- c. Provide hybrid, modularized training for teams.
- d. Offer online competency-based basic training that all new members must pass before team training.
3. Strengthen team chair training to emphasize role in shaping positive, focused, nonthreatening visits.
4. Provide more intensive training, including significant time for members to meet as team with the chair.
5. Provide college reports as soon as possible to allow for thorough review.

### **III. Reaffirmation/Accreditation**

*Champion and evaluate what matters most: student and organizational learning.*

#### **A. Improve external evaluation team selection.**

1. Establish and publish solid timelines and processes for recruiting and selecting team members.
2. Develop a database of potential team members.
  - a. Solicit nominations from all constituency organizations annually.
  - b. Work with CEOs to validate lists of visiting team members annually.
  - c. Include contact information, current college role, areas of expertise, team experience, and other relevant factors (e.g., conflicts of interest).
3. Select and confirm team chairs and members at least six months prior to visits.
4. Notify CEOs (including chancellors) of selections, so campus leave arrangements can be planned well in advance, particularly for faculty members.
5. Prioritize employees of colleges with planned visits to participate on teams 1-2 years ahead of their colleges' visits.

#### **B. Focus on prevention/advance warning of institutional shortfalls.**

1. Provide clear and diagnostic *Early Warning Indicators (EWIs)* for colleges at risk of slipping below standards.
2. Integrate use of EWIs into training materials and modules for teams.
3. Establish *Technical Assistance Teams* to support colleges with challenges.
4. Work with CEOs to develop collective ways for accreditation recommendations to be more constructive experiences.

#### **C. Strengthen peer-based, collegial approach to accreditation.**

1. Consider WASC Sr. model for style, tone of college visits – more collaborative, concentrated on specific areas of interest determined in preliminary review and reviewed with institution well in advance of visit.
2. Redesign midterm report with conference prior.

#### **D. Shift focus to institutional quality and improvement vs. threat of sanction and public disgrace.**

1. Focus more on peer evaluation for quality vs. watchdog for compliance regulation.
2. Shift attention from bureaucratic details and technical deficiencies to serve as champion of student engagement and success.