

The New Accreditation Standards:

Guidelines for the Field

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*Because this is printed as one continuous document, marginal arrows have been used to indicate the beginning and end of documents such as the Cuesta, Copper Mountain, and Bowen selections:

⌋ Beginning

⌈ End

The New Accreditation Standards: Guidelines for the Field

Preface

Over the past year, the Academic Senate has entertained a host of ideas about how to respond to the now-adopted new accreditation standards that will go into effect in the fall of 2004. These potential responses have been expressed through resolutions, in a variety of documents, in live and written testimony to the Accrediting Commission, and in plenary session breakouts. The one point they have all had in common is an element of opposition to what has been seen as the heart of the new standards, the focus on measurable student learning outcomes (MSLOs). The most radical proposal has been that faculty simply refuse to participate in the application of the new standards altogether, both in the development of self-studies and as members of accreditation teams. While appealing for its simplicity and directness, this strategy has not been adopted by the Academic Senate; not only would such an approach present a seemingly insuperable logistical challenge (*everyone* would have to participate for it to be successful), but abandoning the local response to those outside the faculty would seem to be an extremely risky gambit. Indeed, our thinking is that the only reasonable course at the local level is for faculty to assume ownership of the new standards and of the techniques for responding to them.

What the Senate has determined upon, then, is a multi-dimensional strategy, with activities at the national, state and local levels that reflect the directions pointed by Plenary Session resolutions. At its September 2002 meeting, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate agreed that there was a rapidly developing need in the field for guidelines or suggestions for responding to the new standards. Faculty on virtually every campus were being called upon to attend workshops offered across the state on responding to the requirement for MSLOs, and to participate in college or district planning sessions focused on the new standards. With a view to providing assistance to the field, the Executive Committee directed (1) that the Senate publish on its Web site materials related to the new accreditation standards, materials that were originally published by the Senate, the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)¹; and (2) that the Accreditation Working Group produce guidelines for the field in time for discussion at fall area meetings and plenary session workshops.

On October 1st, I made the following observations in an email to the Working Group:

While it is important to pursue a multi-dimensional strategy, I want to remind you that there is considerable urgency around the need to provide the field with some guidelines for use on their campuses now. The discussion of and gearing up for these new standards has already begun all over the state—it is not limited to those campuses that are first to come

¹ The documents are currently on the site at <http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us>, and will remain there for your continued reference.

up for review in 2004. We must proceed on the assumption that critical decisions about how to deal with the new standards, including the reallocation of scarce resources, will be made on most campuses in this academic year. We have been very effective in calling attention to the seriousness of the Accrediting Commission's actions. We have a concomitant responsibility to provide the field with concrete strategies for dealing with the pressures to which faculty are going to be subjected.

While we await materials from the Working Group, we have direction from Fall 2002 Resolution 2.06 that “the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges work with local senates to develop materials and strategies for resisting the new Standards in ways most relevant to their local situation and place in the accreditation cycle.” To the degree that resources permit, the Senate will of course carry out this directive. In the meantime, however, the Executive Committee was correct in anticipating the need for general guidelines that could then be tailored to the specific college situation, with or without the involvement of the Academic Senate.

To that end, then, I am issuing the following guidelines, which are a synthesis, a beginning dialogue, comprising my own thinking, that of the AAUP, positions contained in Academic Senate Resolutions, and suggestions from others. Also included are a thoughtful document developed by Dennis Baeyen of Cuesta College and adopted by his academic senate, a report from Copper Mountain College's faculty senate president Greg Gilbert to his campus, and a “catalog of goals” or “intended outcomes” of higher education taken from Howard R. Bowen's book, *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. In the introduction to the Bowen selection, I have tried to indicate the fundamental flaw at the heart of the new Accreditation Standards. I am joined in the presentation of these guidelines by the other elected officers of the Academic Senate, Kate Clark, Mark Snowwhite, and Ian Walton, who have participated actively in editing and reviewing the material and have made substantive additions to it. Because I have not, in every instance, followed their editorial advice, the document's defects must be claimed as my own.

As others of you begin to work on these issues on your own campuses, it would be most helpful if you would email your own guidelines and strategies to the Academic Senate office so that we might share them with other colleges throughout the system.

Guidelines

Guideline 1: The Bottom Line

The following observations are adapted from my earlier-referenced email to the Accreditation Working Group, where they were identified as “thoughts for your consideration as you address the issue of local strategies.”

1. “Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes, including self-study and annual reports” is identified in Title 5 section 53200 as an academic and professional matter. ***Local decisions don’t get made about how to deal with the new standards without collegial consultation with academic senates.***
2. There are many workshops scheduled for the coming year, beginning this fall, that purport to advise colleges on how to respond to the new standards. Their focus seems to be on “measurable student learning outcomes” (MSLOs). It is a safe bet that many of these are going to be telling us the sort of research we need to do to satisfy the standards. Faculty should be in attendance at these workshops asking the “prior question”—that is, “Before we invest in research, where is the research that tells us that this effort will improve educational quality?” We’ve asked this from the beginning and gotten no answer. The reason, as we know, is that the push for MSLOs is not based on science, but on ideology. Faculty should also be asking the “Where’s the research?” question on their local campuses whenever administrations push for a reallocation of time, energy and resources. The bottom line is that ***faculty must not let those outside the faculty assume ownership of the new standards and the techniques for responding to them.***
3. From our discussions with the statewide chief instructional officers’ association, we have the distinct impression that many CIOs are disposed to give spare treatment to MSLOs, interpreting them within the framework of instructor grades and the objectives contained in course outlines of record and instructors’ syllabi. In short, they seem indisposed to allow the standards to distract the faculty from their usual hard work on behalf of student success. Local CIOs might be strong allies for faculty. ***Faculty should, in any case, define the standards so as to produce minimal distraction or, positively, so as to produce positive dialogue about the real issues that faculty have always cared about.***
4. There is substantial literature from within the assessment movement designed to tell us that we CANNOT satisfy the demand for MSLOs by doing what we have always done (assignments, tests, papers, grades), or by striving to do it better. The literature I have seen is sheer sophistry, and is easily refuted theoretically. In no way does it constitute a “clear showing” of the inadequacy of current practices; nor, as we have noted, are there data showing that the proposed alternatives are in any way superior. This thinking is echoed in resolution 2.01 F02, which begins by noting that:

The American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) 1991 Statement on "Mandated Assessment of Educational Outcomes" notes that the justification for developing any assessment plan must be "accompanied by a clear showing that existing methods of assessing learning are inadequate for accomplishing the intended purposes of a supplementary plan."

The resolution then concludes:

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge local senates to assert the right and responsibility of faculty to determine appropriate measures of student learning and achievement (such as grades, certificates, and degrees), and that absent "clear showing" of the inadequacy of current measures faculty need not develop additional outcome measures simply to satisfy the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) requirements for continuous documentation and improvement of student learning outcomes.

Faculty, then, must continue to use time-proven measures of academic achievement to communicate to their students, and to the wider public; they must adopt new measures only where there is documented good reason to do so.

5. We are not victims. We are the largest, hardest working, most creative postsecondary system in the world. If we choose to treat the Commission's standards as a minor annoyance, they will be a minor annoyance. If we find in them the occasion for serious dialog about the true ends of higher education and the conditions for student success, then we will have turned lemons to lemonade, and shown yet again our capacity to wring value from the most meager of resources. ***Faculty must engage the communities of our colleges in discussions about genuine education, its aims and objectives, and its intangible benefits as well as more visible results.***

6. It's unfortunate that our practical response to the accreditation process has to be somewhat cynical and dismissive. However, having ignored the advice of the faculty, having discounted our experience and expertise in adopting the new standards, the Accrediting Commission has made itself largely irrelevant to the legitimate aims of higher education and has lost much of its claim to our serious consideration. ***Faculty must maintain their traditional role in helping to define the significant and multiple components of a quality institution and its quality education.***

Guideline 2: Taking control of the process

Practically, we have to take control of the process, which means that we define what we want to do to provide our students with a quality education, and we define what constitutes meaningful outcomes for our students, our institution and our community. In

short, we continue to assert the enduring values of education,² we determine the conditions that are essential to promoting those values, and we focus on those conditions—the degree to which they are and are not realized—in our accreditation self-studies. In taking control of the process, in other words, local senates identify standards, evaluate them, report upon them, and thus supplement the dubious set of accreditation standards presented by ACCJC. This approach has been endorsed by the Academic Senate’s plenary body in its adoption of Resolution 2.02 F02 that concludes:

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge local academic senates to insist that their local accreditation self-studies continue to include attention to generally accepted standards for institutions of higher education including:

- *The provision of qualified full-time faculty sufficient to conduct programs of academic excellence and to meet the learning and support needs of our students;*
- *Appropriate faculty control over the assessment of students and over the content and teaching of their courses and programs;*
- *The right of faculty to determine that grades and other current indicators of student achievement (such as degree and certificate attainment, transfer, and subsequent occupational success) are appropriate to the measurement of student learning;*
- *The protection of academic freedom, due process, and tenure;*
- *A substantive role for faculty in college and district governance and support for the processes of collegial governance; and*
- *The provision and allocation of sufficient resources to support high quality educational programs, student services, and libraries.*

The AAUP Statement on “The Role of Faculty in the Accrediting of Colleges and Universities” contains its recommended standards for institutions of higher education as well as their regional accrediting teams. Those recommendations provide a baseline for local consideration as well, particularly with regard to assessments of academic freedom, faculty governance, and the need for “preparation of the academic aspects of the self-evaluation” to “rest with a committee composed largely of faculty members and responsible to the faculty as a whole.”³

² For a thoughtful “catalog” of the accepted goals of higher education, see the selection from Howard Bowen’s book, *Investment in Learning*, later in this document.

³ American Association of University Professors. *Policy Documents and Reports, 9th Edition*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 271-272.

Guideline 3: Using What We Already Have and Do

Grades as measures of learning outcomes

It is clear that faculty on many campuses have begun to respond to the accreditation standards by emphasizing the value of existing methods of assessing learning and of the measures, such as grades, that these methods generate. Faculty interested in moving in this direction should keep in mind point #4 under Guideline 1 above: the literature of the assessment movement may assert that existing methods of measuring student learning are inadequate, but it nowhere constitutes a “clear showing” that this is the case.

In a letter written last June to Wallace Albertson, chair of the Accrediting Commission, I asked “why the Commission is challenging the legitimacy of our traditional treatment of student learning outcomes and the measurement of their achievement.” The letter went on to point out that “One can find the statement of desired learning objectives in every catalog course or program description, in course outlines of record, and in virtually any instructor’s syllabus. The latter, when done well, will also contain statements of the standards by which student work will be judged, and the measure of the achievement of student learning is reflected in the assigned grade at the end of the term. Wouldn’t the Commission achieve its aims by calling for these things to be done better?” I repeated these points in live testimony to the Commission; they responded by adopting the Standards.

Last April, I presented to the Executive Committee for discussion the following outline, the premise of which is that, at the course and department or program levels, we could endorse grades as the appropriate measures of student learning:

⇓ *The conception of course grades as the appropriate measures of student learning presents two challenges:*

1. *To ensure that grades accurately reflect student accomplishment.*
2. *To enhance student learning with the result that more students are successful, while maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity.*

These challenges might be met in the following ways:

1. *Ensuring grade accuracy*
 - a) *Monitor grade inflation through the program review process.*
 - b) *Provide faculty development programs to mentor faculty in*
 - 1) *Creation of syllabi in which course objectives are clearly identified and standards for their achievement are clearly stated and related to course grades A through F;*

- 2) *Effective construction of tests and assignments;*
- 3) *Effective grading of tests, essays, and assignments;*
- 4) *Effective follow-up with students on tests, essays, and assignments.*
- c) *Encourage widespread inter- and intra-departmental discussion of grading standards and expectations of students.*
- d) *Support classroom-based research projects.*

2. *Enhancing student learning*

The Academic Senate, in its paper “The Faculty Role in Planning and Budgeting” (Fall 2001), is committed to the principle that “Planning, coupled with critical assessment of successes and failures, is a means of taking conscious control of the process of serving students, and enables the emergence and elaboration of best practices.” This principle can be applied at both the individual course and department/program levels in a way that clearly conforms to the Accreditation Standards requirement that student learning be enhanced through a systematic cycle of evaluation, planning, implementation, and re-evaluation.

(One should keep in mind that the purpose of the model that follows is to show that the process of constant self-examination and striving for improvement that is the hallmark of all good teaching is already in conformity with requirements of the new Accreditation Standards. Standard 1 calls for the evaluation of institutional effectiveness employing a “systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation.” An earlier iteration of the new standards, Draft A, made it clear that all calls for evaluation or assessment of effectiveness, wherever they occurred in the Standards, were to be conceived in terms of such a cycle.)

Evaluation (or Initial Analysis):

Instructors (departments/programs) identify obstacle(s) to student success in their classes (programs).

Planning:

Instructors (departments)ask:

- 1) *What will I (we) do differently to overcome the obstacle(s) to student success in my classes (our program)?*
- 2) *Which of these changes, if any, are expected to result in measurable improvements (i.e., greater student success as measured by grades)?*
- 3) *Which of these changes, if any, are expected to result in enhancements to student success that are not measurable by grades, and what are those enhancements?*

- 4) *What resources are presently available to assist me (us) in overcoming these obstacles?*
- 5) *What will I (we) do differently, making full use of these resources?*
- 6) *What additional resources would assist me (us) in overcoming these obstacles? (Identify these resources.)*

Implementation:

Classes are taught; plans for enhancing student success are implemented by instructors (departments); student learning outcomes are measured (i.e., grades are given).

Re-evaluation:

Did the change(s) work?

- 1) *If Yes, incorporate the change(s) into future activities.*
- 2) *If No, why not? Is correction possible?*
- 3) *What new obstacles arose or were noted?*
- 4) *How will I (we) address the new perceived obstacle(s) to student success?*

↑ *Note that, with the last question, the Planning phase of the cycle has begun again.*

Again, the cycle just described does no more than make explicit the thinking that teachers go through in their ongoing efforts to improve instruction. By describing this process in terms of a cycle of evaluation, planning, implementation, and re-evaluation, it becomes clear that existing practices are already in conformity with the demands of the new accreditation standards.

Strategies for dealing with the new standards, then, might include having individual instructors as well as departments/programs document their efforts to enhance student learning. It might be helpful for faculty undertaking this approach to read Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*, as this sort of systematic approach to learning enhancement can be conceived as engagement in "the scholarship of teaching," an activity for which, Boyer maintains, community college instructors are uniquely well-positioned.⁴

Recommendations from the AAUP:

In a memorandum to the academic senate, AAUP Associate Secretary Marcus Harvey wrote:

Local senates are also looking to the ASCCC for advice on how they should now engage in the accrediting process. This is a more difficult question and it seems highly unlikely that there will be uniformity of

⁴ Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Jossey-Bass, 1997.

response; however, the ASCCC ought to produce guidelines for local senates as quickly as possible. The dilemma is how to participate without being co-opted, or becoming a rubber stamp for the changed standards. My recommendation would be to produce a set of guidelines—based on the AAUP’s statement on “The Role of the Faculty in the Accrediting of Colleges and Universities” as well as an input-critical set of criteria—that the ASCCC urges faculty involved in the accrediting process to follow, REGARDLESS of the directives passed along to them by the accrediting agency or their administration.

These Guidelines are an attempt to satisfy the first part of Harvey’s recommendation, that is, to suggest how faculty might participate in the process without being co-opted by it. The principle underlying the recommendations in these Guidelines is that faculty should focus, as they always do, on enhancing students’ educational experience and success. The documentation of their efforts should be offered to—and accepted by—accrediting teams as evidence of faculty and institutional concern with “learning outcomes.” The second part of Harvey’s recommendation—that faculty establish their own list of critical accreditation criteria—is addressed in Resolution 2.02 F02 cited earlier. In the accreditation process, faculty can tie their own criteria to their echoes (however faint) in the official Accreditation Standards.

Finally, Harvey’s memo also contains the following suggestion which faculty on some campuses might find helpful:

[A] committee charged to recommend ways to develop and implement measures for outcomes assessment, might return with [for example] a report showing the decline in full-time instructional faculty over a period of years, worsening faculty to student ratios, etc. ...Even if the reports generated by faculty are then ignored, we will begin to amass a body of politically valuable material with which to fuel our media and political campaigns.

Cuesta College Academic Senate Document

Cuesta College underwent accreditation in the Fall of 2002. They were criticized by the accrediting team for failing to have sufficient emphasis on student learning outcomes in their program review process. According to Cuesta academic senate president, Dennis Baeyen, it was clear that the accrediting team was using program review as a “Trojan horse” through which to introduce MSLOs into the accrediting process a full two years ahead of schedule. In anticipation of a response to the accreditation critique by their college administration, Baeyen drafted, and the Cuesta academic senate adopted, the following document.



Three Concerns:

1. We have not seen any evidence that colleges who have adopted an outcomes and assessment process improve students' success and so are reluctant to embrace an emphasis on outcomes and assessment as an institutional and imperative.
2. An outcomes and assessment process will be one more layer of responsibility put on the faculty. After AB 1725 was passed, we saw the value in participating on hiring committees, evaluation committees, college governance committees, and so we agreed to accept the extra responsibility with no workload reduction. If we are to perform what is essentially a quality control process through outcomes and assessment activities, we will have accepted more responsibility with, again, no workload reduction.
3. The AAUP noted in their 1991 paper *Statement on Mandated Assessment of Educational Outcomes* that assessment plans "must be accompanied by a clear showing that existing methods of assessing learning are inadequate for accomplishing the intended purpose." The AAUP says that AACJC has not provided evidence that new instruments are needed. We would like to see evidence that current measures such as grades, certificate, and degree structures are inadequate. We also believe that the best indicators of the college's quality should be gathered from external sources—not from what we, ourselves, evaluate. Transfer rates, degree and certificate completion rates, satisfaction surveys of students who have left the institution—all would seem to be better success indicators of the community college's programs than internally created outcome measures.

Principles on which Outcomes and Assessment Should Be Based:

1. If faculty are to participate in an outcomes and assessment process, we believe it should be done for excellence not for accountability. The first is an information feedback process to guide faculty, programs, and schools in improving their effectiveness. The second is a regulatory process to ensure institutional conformity to specified standards. Outcomes and assessment theorists like Richard Frye, a planning analyst for the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing at Western Washington University, maintain that this distinction is essential. We agree. Faculty are concerned that the distinction be clearly maintained between assessment for excellence and assessment for accountability.
2. Since we already have faculty evaluation and program review procedures in place (and since faculty evaluation procedures are negotiable), outcomes assessment tools should not have any potential for being evaluative or punitive. Therefore, when departments (or college-wide bodies, such as a body that might pursue GE assessment) are implementing assessment tools, faculty names should be removed from student work so that we are truly assessing outcomes, not teachers.

3. Faculty have been told that if we participate in the outcomes and assessment process, the process is in our hands. ACCJC, our accrediting agency, says nothing about how to do assessments. It says only that assessments should be meaningful. If, for example, the English faculty decide on a sample size X of randomly chosen essays to assess every other year, will our selected number of essays and frequency of assessment be considered meaningful? We hope the process will be truly in our hands.
4. If the faculty does outcomes, we need to remember that all the faculty in a discipline need not agree on all the outcomes. What should happen is that the faculty should look for a few important outcomes that everyone can agree on. If the English composition faculty can agree to assess only on the student skill of writing clear, correct, and compelling prose, but not on concise or structured prose, then only those three outcomes should be assessed.
5. Outcomes should drive assessment and not the other way around. So if an agreed upon outcome, like “appreciation of the essay as an art form” is not measurable, then it remains an outcome but one the faculty may never be able to measure.
6. We should be assessing only basic competencies. Essentially, we will be assessing “C” or competent work. The question we should ask ourselves in the assessment process is “Does this work reflect an adequate grasp of the essential skill or knowledge we want to see demonstrated?” We do not need to then define what might be an A or B level grasp of the material.
7. Students should not be burdened with additional measurements that are not integral to a course and its grading procedures. Assessment should not interfere with (or be antithetical to) course objectives.
8. Disciplines that are typically measured through primarily qualitative measures should not be forced to adjust to quantitative measures. Measures should be developed by the particular disciplines so that they fit the learning objectives being measured.
9. The assessment process should start with faculty who are interested, invested, and excited by it. As faculty members discover particular assessment methods that are useful, they can share creative and effective ideas with fellow faculty. From there, departments might begin to discover ways to assess outcomes that are in keeping with other principles.



Report to Copper Mountain

After attending a breakout on the new Accreditation Standards at the Fall 2002 plenary session of the Academic Senate, Copper Mountain faculty senate president Greg Gilbert wrote the following report to his faculty.

↓ **Accreditation Concerns and the Fall 2002 Academic State Senate Plenary** By Greg Gilbert, Faculty Senate President, Copper Mountain College

Accreditation Discussion:

Without doubt, the subject of accreditation standards inspired impassioned discussion among senators. Opinions vary, but for a sizable majority, the new accreditation standards represent a cause for serious alarm. While everyone agrees that there is nothing inherently wrong with assessment, it was stated that outcomes-based assessment, as adopted in June 2002 by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), replaces traditional methods with “simplistic and unproven” approaches to assessment. Moreover, the new standards, as part of their ideological shift, no longer consider a substantive role for faculty in college and district governance and offer no support for the processes of collegial governance. According to senate resolutions, “The new accreditation standards are modeled after private corporate models of authoritative control over profit-making outcomes rather than historically successful collegial processes.” In addition, senators expressed concern because all attempts by the State Academic Senate to discuss the new standards with the ACCJC have been answered with a “chilling” silence. Rather, according to senate leadership, the ACCJC is requiring a reorganization of our community college system around a demand for outcomes, while, ironically, they steadfastly refuse to present research in support of their demand. If, as the ACCJC asserts, the new culture of evidence is a good movement, senators wondered why the commission would not report on their own evidence. Moreover, it was reported that the ACCJC refuses to query those colleges that they themselves selected to conduct pilot programs of the new standards, and they reject offers to discuss the implementation of the new standards with the only representative body for all of California’s community and junior college professors, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges.

The Assessment Question:

During the three days of the Fall Plenary, senators acknowledged the importance of accountability and the role of outcomes, both in traditional academic courses and vocational education. Where many took exception was with the ACCJC’s emphasis on product over process. By overturning traditional standards, the ACCJC is, in effect, exchanging an open-ended model of higher education for a narrower, more prescriptive and, as yet, “untested” approach that entails a “simplification of the customer base.” Part of what is at stake, according to many, goes to the methodological center of the largest and most successful institution of higher education in the world, and to impose a radically different approach to accreditation without a comprehensive research base or consultation

with those educators who work directly with California's 2.7 million community college students is, according to those who attended the senate plenary, unconscionable.

Motives and Concerns Beyond the Assessment Question:

It didn't take long for senators to understand that the discussion needed to shift from a consideration of assessment methodologies to concerns about possible motives behind the implementation of new accreditation standards. The old adage, "Follow the money" was invoked. According to one senator, about \$200 billion is spent on higher education annually in the U.S., and a bottom-line approach to assessment is in tune with private industry's desire to acquire as many education dollars as possible. The argument was made that if colleges formulate their own assessment tools and measures they will avoid the imposition of standardized exams and lesson plans, but other senators claimed first-hand knowledge that the ACCJC's intent is to marginalize the influence of teaching professionals system-wide.

Anecdotal Evidence:

During the decade of the 90's, California's K-12 system began to address an external demand for outcomes. From this history, much can be inferred. Within the classroom, teachers could create successful and personalized approaches to teaching and assessing for the obvious reason that they knew their students. Beyond the classroom, the challenge that overworked teachers create reliable and valid assessments was far trickier, particularly when the site's outcomes were required to fit within coded reporting matrixes. The effort to design reliable and valid local standards and measures was soon supplanted by district instruments and eventually by state and federal requirements. Where once the teachers controlled curriculum design and assessment, now they were regimented and scripted by external authorities. The curriculum was fragmented and directed toward an array of governmentally determined outcomes, all of which required time-consuming and costly reporting processes. Many of those present at the plenary assessed the K-12 experience as a most ruinous "outcome."

It's the Economics:

The standards-based movement in K-12 has given rise to an industry of test designing, proctoring, assessing, and textbook and supplemental materials. In addition, the sudden blizzard of testing statistics is providing data for politicians, grant writers, entrepreneurs who would open private schools, and by those who would form institutions to intervene with failing schools, offer conferences to raise test scores, train new administrators, and assess those teachers whose students are not making the grade. When one considers that the imposition of standards and its resultant money trail came into being without student-centered research or a substantive dialogue with teachers, the financial impetus of the movement becomes apparent, and, if one would believe many of the senators at the plenary, the K-12 debacle is a harbinger of things to come for community colleges.

The Cost to Instruction:

According to attendees, the cost of implementing such unproven standards, both in terms of dollars, particularly during lean times, and in terms of the time that it takes from teaching, is worthy of consideration. According to figures released at the senate, the

average community college professor works a 50-to-60-hour week, and throughout the system, instructional resources are being forfeited. According to senate resolutions, cuts in staff development funds, senate budgets, and travel allowances are undermining the faculty's ability to network and remain current. Ultimately, this loss of resources is a denial of best practices to our students.

Many senators saw the imposition of the new standards as an assault on local control, particularly when it was pointed out that some colleges in other states no longer allow teachers to give and grade exams. Rather, they teach to the standards, and their students are tested at a campus-testing center. Now, because California is the world's largest system of higher education, and because one statewide senate and only a handful of unions unite it, some have described it as the last great battleground for the future of our time-honored approaches to collegiality and instruction.

The World We Live In:

The suggestion was made that there are divide-and-conquer approaches working in favor of the new standards, some of which are based on a rather anti-intellectual atmosphere that is increasingly prevalent. Tenure is under attack because people fail to appreciate the importance of intellectual freedom. Critical inquiry is often considered improper, as one senator suggested, since the September 11 attacks, and, it was pointed out, statistics, in-and-of themselves, are not a civilizing force, that, indeed, we seem on the verge of a high-tech dark ages. The whole discussion was stimulating and disturbing. While some may see the imposition of standards as philosophical and not important, others suggested that what transpires around this issue may represent a defining time for liberty and education's ability to remain a civilizing force in the modern world.

Repeatedly, we were reminded that, as has already happened in K-12, agencies will likely one day provide tests and teaching materials tailored to exams, and that there will be less funding for professional development – and what funding does remain will be focused on outcomes-based preparation, training, and faculty evaluations. Thus, within the scenario, education becomes narrowed to the test, the teacher's role is tightly regulated, scripted in some instances, as in K-12, and the next step is privatization and the realization that something precious has been forfeited.

What to Do?

The question was raised as to the advisability of passively accepting the added bureaucracy, time constraints, and expenses imposed by an unproven means-end business model? While no single, all encompassing answer surfaced, the consensus was to fight on many fronts: resolutions at the state and local senates, letters to accrediting agencies, and the use of our educational skills to place this issue before people everywhere. Among the organizations that have challenged the new standards are the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, and the Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers (CCC/CFT).

Various individual responses were also suggested: we can design our own outcome assessments, conduct self-studies, speak as colleagues to accrediting teams, lobby for new standards in all of our professional organizations and settings, phone and write our legislators, and we can all wear buttons that say, “Show Us the Evidence!” We were reminded repeatedly that we belong to the largest body of teaching professionals in higher education, and, clearly, our state senate believes that we can and must use our collective talents to forestall what has been described as a display of corporate and political greed whose own “outcomes-based” goals are vastly more concerned with material gains than the individual successes of students.

Howard R. Bowen on the Intended Outcomes of Higher Education

At the heart of any criticism of the new Accreditation Standards must be the observation that the exclusive focus on measurable student learning outcomes represents a radical truncating—and, hence, distortion—of a traditional vision of the aims of higher education. It seems to me that anyone who has experienced a college education, and who has the capacity to reflect on that experience, should know this, and it is therefore curious and strange, indeed, that highly educated people should be advancing the cause of MSLOs. In writing the Academic Senate’s response to the Master Plan—the Joint Committee seems to share the same vision as the Accrediting Commission—I put the point this way:

Most importantly, we feel that the stress on learning outcomes is not credible in that it reflects a vision of education, or a theoretical model, that is contrary to the reality of education itself. [I]f the members of the Committee would use their own educational experience as a touchstone, they could not help but recognize that the most significant effects of their own educations are not measurable, and could not have been displayed on tests taken upon the granting of their degrees. Education...is concerned with the whole person, with self-actualization. As such, it provides one with the resources for living one’s life richly and productively, and with the confidence for doing the same. One’s educational experience remains with one through the duration of one’s life, inseparable from one’s growth and development as a person. Unfortunately, the misplaced obsession with short-term learning outcomes would reduce the capacity of our institutions to play this critical, life-affirming role by diverting resources into irrelevant activities.

While it is true (I hope) that higher education addresses the whole person in a concern for the full actualization of the student’s personhood, the “traditional vision of the aims of higher education” is considerably more complex than that and, if one is going to see how

limited the Accrediting Commission's (and Master Plan's) vision is, one needs to look at a more "traditional vision" in all its complexity.

In 1977, economist Howard R. Bowen attempted to respond to growing demands for "accountability and efficiency" in higher education in his book, *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. While he acknowledges that "many of the outcomes—perhaps the most important ones—are intangible and therefore not easily identified or measured,"⁵ Bowen nevertheless undertakes to enumerate the intended outcomes of higher education, to assess the extent to which they are realized, and to evaluate whether the results are worth the costs. In what follows, I have excerpted a "catalog of goals for higher education" from Bowen's book (pp. 55-59). I have done this for two reasons: First, while I doubt that we would reach consensus on the entire list, I think that Bowen's catalog can provide a useful basis for discussions of "what we are doing" as college educators, and believe that it will certainly point us beyond the simplistic, truncated views of our accrediting commissioners, master planners, and most of our political leaders. Second, I hope that the excerpt inspires you to purchase and read the entire book, as you will find there a powerful and humane intellect grappling with and providing considerable insight into the issues that face us today.

⇩ *Goals: The Intended Outcomes of Higher Education*

I. Goals for Individual Students

A. Cognitive Learning

- (1) *Verbal skills*. Ability to comprehend through reading and listening. Ability to speak and write clearly, correctly, and gracefully. Effectiveness in the organization and presentation of ideas in writing and in discussion. Possibly some acquaintance with a second language.
- (2) *Quantitative skills*. Ability to understand elementary concepts of mathematics and to handle simple statistical data and statistical reasoning. Possibly some understanding of the rudiments of accounting and the uses of computers.
- (3) *Substantive knowledge*. Acquaintance with the cultural heritage of the West and some knowledge of other traditions. Awareness of the contemporary world of philosophy, natural science, art, literature, social change, and social issues. Command of vocabulary, facts, and principles in one or more selected fields of knowledge.
- (4) *Rationality*. Ability and disposition to think logically on the basis of useful assumptions. Capacity to see facts and events objectively—distinguishing the normative, ideological, and emotive from the positive and factual. Disposition to

⁵ Bowen, Howard R. *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. xxi. The book was originally published in 1977 by Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.

- weigh evidence, evaluate facts and ideas critically, and to think independently. Ability to analyze and synthesize.
- (5) *Intellectual tolerance*. Freedom of the mind. Openness to new ideas. Willingness to question orthodoxy. Intellectual curiosity. Ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity. Appreciation of intellectual and cultural diversity. Historical perspective and cosmopolitan outlook.² Understanding of the limitations of knowledge and thought.
 - (6) *Esthetic sensibility*.³ Knowledge of, interest in, and responsiveness to literature, the fine arts, and natural beauty.
 - (7) *Creativeness*. Imagination and originality in formulating new hypotheses and ideas and in producing new works of art.
 - (8) *Intellectual integrity*. Understanding of the idea of “truth” and of its contingent nature. Disposition to seek and speak the truth. Conscientiousness of inquiry and accuracy in reporting results.
 - (9) *Wisdom*. Balanced perspective, judgment, and prudence.
 - (10) *Lifelong learning*. Love of learning. Sustained intellectual interests. Learning how to learn.

B. Emotional and Moral Development

- (1) *Personal self-discovery*. Knowledge of one’s own talents, interests, values, aspirations, and weaknesses. Discovery of unique personal identity.
- (2) *Psychological well-being*. Progress toward the ability to “understand and confront with integrity the nature of the human condition” (Perry, 1970, p. 201). [Bowen is citing: Perry, W. G., Jr. *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.] Sensitivity to deeper feelings and emotions combined with emotional stability. Ability to express emotions constructively. Appropriate self-assertiveness, sense of security, self-confidence, self-reliance, decisiveness, spontaneity. Acceptance of self and others.
- (3) *Human understanding*. Humane outlook. Capacity for empathy, thoughtfulness, compassion, respect, tolerance, and cooperation toward others, including persons of different backgrounds. Democratic and nonauthoritarian disposition. Skill in communication with others.
- (4) *Values and morals*. A valid and internalized but not dogmatic set of values and moral principles. Moral sensitivity and courage. Sense of social consciousness and social responsibility.

²Appreciation of the local, provincial, and parochial is commendable. Values such as cosmopolitanism are not undesirable but perhaps they are most valuable when they occur in tension with their opposites, when the person achieves an appreciation of both the cosmopolitan and the provincial and a critical capacity to stress the merits and deficiencies of both.

³Esthetic sensibility is often classified under affective development rather than cognitive learning. It contains elements of both.

- (5) *Religious interest.* Serious and thoughtful exploration of purpose, value, and meaning.
- (6) *Refinement of taste, conduct, and manner.*

C. Practical Competence

- (1) *Traits of value in practical affairs generally.* Virtually all of the goals included under cognitive learning and emotional and moral development apply to practical affairs. In addition, the following traits, which are more specifically related to achievement in practical affairs, may be mentioned:
 - (a) *Need for achievement.* Motivation toward accomplishment. Initiative, energy, drive, persistence, self-discipline.
 - (b) *Future orientation.* Ability to plan ahead and to be prudent in risk-taking. A realistic outlook toward the future.
 - (c) *Adaptability.* Tolerance of new ideas or practices. Willingness to accept change. Versatility and resourcefulness in coping with problems and crises. Capacity to learn from experience. Willingness to negotiate, compromise, and keep options open.
 - (d) *Leadership.* Capacity to win the confidence of others, willingness to assume responsibility, organizational ability, decisiveness, disposition to take counsel.
- (2) *Citizenship.* Understanding of and commitment to democracy. Knowledge of governmental institutions and procedures. Awareness of major social issues. Ability to evaluate propaganda and political argumentation. Disposition and ability to participate actively in civic, political, economic, professional, educational, and other voluntary organizations. Orientation toward international understanding and world community. Ability to deal with bureaucracies. Disposition toward law observance.
- (3) *Economic productivity.* Knowledge and skills needed for first job and for growth in productivity through experience and on-the-job training. Adaptability and mobility. Sound career decisions. Capacity to bring humanistic values to the workplace and to derive meaning from work.
- (4) *Sound family life.* Personal qualities making for stable families. Knowledge and skill relating to child development.
- (5) *Consumer efficiency.* Sound choice of values relating to style of life. Skill in stretching consumer dollars. Ability to cope with taxes, credit, insurance, investments, legal issues, and so on. Ability to recognize deceptive sales practices and to withstand high-pressure sales tactics.
- (6) *Fruitful leisure.* Wisdom in allocation of time among work, leisure, and other pursuits. Development of tastes and skills in literature, the arts, nature, sports, hobbies, and community participation. Lifelong education, formal and informal, as a productive use of leisure. Resourcefulness in overcoming boredom, finding renewal, and discovering satisfying and rewarding uses of leisure time.
- (7) *Health.* Understanding of the basic principles for cultivating physical and mental health. Knowledge of how and when to use the professional health care system.

- D. Direct Satisfaction and Enjoyments from College Education.
 - (1) During the college years.
 - (2) In later life.

- E. Avoidance of negative outcomes for individual students. [Bowen has prefigured the notion of “negative outcomes” for both individual students and society (see below) in his discussion leading up to this catalog.]

II. Goals for Society

(Note: These goals may be achieved through education, through research and related activities, or through public services.)

- A. Advancement of Knowledge
 - (1) Preservation and dissemination of the cultural heritage.
 - (2) Discovery and dissemination of new knowledge and advancement of philosophical and religious thought, literature, and the fine arts—all regarded as valuable in their own right without reference to ulterior ends.
 - (3) Direct satisfactions and enjoyments received by the population from living in a world of advancing knowledge, technology, ideas, and arts.

- B. Discovery and Encouragement of Talent.

- C. Advancement of Social Welfare.
 - (1) Economic efficiency and growth.
 - (2) Enhancement of national prestige and power.
 - (3) Progress toward the identification and solution of social problems.
 - (4) “Improvement” in the motives, values, aspirations, attitudes, and behavior of members of the general population.
 - (5) Over long periods of time, exerting a significant and favorable influence on the course of history as reflected in the evolution of the basic culture and of the fundamental social institutions. Progress in human equality, freedom, justice, security, order, religion, health, and so on.

- ⤴ D. Avoidance of Negative Outcomes for Society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is hoped that the thoughts contained herein will serve perhaps not so much as guidelines but as stimuli to creative reflection on campuses wrestling with the ambiguous demands of the new accreditation standards. I would end by re-emphasizing something I said at the beginning, and that is that faculty must not let those outside the faculty assume ownership of the new standards and the techniques for responding to them. In some of our earlier reactions to the proposed standards we speculated as to the possible effectiveness of simply refusing to participate in the process. It did not take long to conclude, however, that the dangers in this course of action far outweigh the potential benefits. Our recommendation today, therefore, is that faculty take the new standards head on and creatively mold them into a form that serves to enhance the superb work that faculty in the California community colleges already do. Accreditation ought to be the ultimate form of accountability in higher education, a process in which we measure ourselves and are measured in terms that are native to our enterprise. Unfortunately, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has decided to speak in the language of corporate rather than academic America, and in so doing has rendered itself largely irrelevant to our purposes. For the present, then, we must dance around their faddish requirements, and continue to demand for our students the finest resources, instruction and support, to ensure that their educational experience will be of the highest possible quality.