May 28, 2013

Barbara A. Beno, President
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (WASC-ACSCU)
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Barbara,

I write to inform you formally that the attached statement, “Principles for Effective Assessment of Student Achievement,” has been endorsed by the six major national higher education associations— the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), American Council on Education (ACE), Association of American Universities (AAU), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU). My hope is that all of the regional accrediting commissions will soon endorse it as well.

This statement is the product of a meeting last fall that brought together the presidents of the seven accrediting commissions, six provosts from public and private universities, and officials from AAU and ACE. The statement, which was drafted at the meeting by one of the provosts and two commission presidents, was subsequently modified slightly to accord with current accrediting standards and circulated to all meeting participants.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum where university and accrediting commission officials could discuss issues of interest and concern and build a framework for cooperation as we move toward the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. In that context, the statement on student achievement, if eventually endorsed by the regional accrediting commissions and the six higher education associations, will be a substantive and politically important statement of common ground on one of the most important issues for which higher education institutions and accrediting agencies hold shared responsibility.

We understand that several of the commissions have already endorsed the statement. My association colleagues and I hope that it will soon be possible for the remaining commissions to join these commissions and the six higher education associations in endorsing the statement.

Thank you for your work with us on this important project, and we look forward to productive cooperation in the future.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Molly Corbett Broad
President

MCB/Idw
Principles for Effective Assessment of Student Achievement

Federal law requires that a higher education institution undergoing accreditation provide evidence of “success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution’s mission.” Both aspects of this requirement—the insistence upon achievement and the tailoring to institutional mission—are critically important. The demonstration of quality is a fundamental responsibility of all colleges and universities, but both the kinds of quality and the methods used to measure it will differ depending on the mission of the institution.

More specifically, though the exact content of these criteria and the methods for measuring them will differ, all institutions should be expected to provide evidence of success in three domains:

1. **Evidence of the student learning experience.** Institutions should be able to define and evaluate how their students are learning: more specifically, institutions should be able to describe the kinds of experiences that they expect students to have inside and outside the classroom. Relevant evidence may pertain to targets for the kinds of reading and writing assignments that students should complete; levels of personal interaction with faculty members; residential and/or co-curricular components of the learning experience, and other learning experiences that the institution deems relevant to its mission.

2. **Evaluation of student academic performance.** Institutions should be able to define meaningful curricular goals, and they must have defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals. Appropriate methods for the assessment of student work may include, among other approaches, meaningful and rigorous faculty evaluation and grading or external benchmarking.

3. **Post-graduation outcomes.** Institutions should be able to articulate how they prepare students consistently with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education. They should collect and provide data about whether they are meeting these goals. Relevant kinds of data may include completion rates, job placement rates, levels of post-graduation civic participation, kinds of jobs and vocations chosen, surveys pertaining to alumni satisfaction and success, and data on other post-graduation goals relevant to the institution’s mission.

The accreditation process needs to allow institutions flexibility with regard to the methods for measuring progress toward these goals. It is a mistake to conflate particular means for measuring goals with the achievement of those goals. Measures of all kinds will work best if they are integrated into the teaching and administration of colleges and universities, analyzed on a regular basis, and summarized in the accreditation process.
DATE: June 7, 2013

MEMO TO: Commissioners

FROM: Susan B. Clifford, Vice President of Commission – Operations

SUBJECT: Vice President’s Report

Substantive Change Reviews

The meetings of the Committee on Substantive Change were held March 18 and May 9, 2013. Thirty proposals, resubmissions, and addendums providing additional information were submitted by 26 different colleges and reviewed by the Committee. Of the proposals/addendums reviewed, 27 were approved, one was approved pending additional information, and two were denied.

Of the proposals and resubmissions the Committee reviewed in the past six months, approximately 53% were for distance education, 30% for new programs, 7% for new locations, 7% for campus closure, and 3% for change in mission.

I conducted three federally mandated site visits on: 1) February 26 to the Yuba College Sutter County Center in Yuba City; 2) March 4 to the College of Sequoias Tulare Center in Tulare; 3) May 13 to the Mendocino College Lake Center in Lakeport, CA.

Student Transfer Agreement Reform Act

California State Senate Bill (SB) 1440 mandates that California Community Colleges (CCC) develop transfer degrees to facilitate the successful transfer of CCC students to the California State University system. To date, ACCJC has sent 114 letters of formal acknowledgement for 64 colleges offering a total of 325 SB 1440 degrees.

Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP)

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is requesting verification from U.S. Department of Education (USDE) authorized accrediting agencies concerning the accredited status of certain locations or programs in which students with visas are studying. With appropriate information documenting when the locations were opened or the courses/programs started at the institution, ACCJC is preparing a formal letter regarding the institution’s accreditation in relation to the location or courses/programs.
Conferences and Presentations

The seventh annual Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) Accreditation Institute was held February 8-9 in San Jose, CA and was titled “Meeting and exceeding the Standards: The Evolution of Accreditation.” It was a collaborative partnership with ACCJC and the ASCCC. President Beno participated in presenting two general sessions, “Moving Forward – Accreditation in 2013 and Beyond” and “Hot Topics in Accreditation”, and I co-presented in the session: “Accreditation 101: The Rubrics and Beyond.”

Jack Pond and I facilitated the first and second ACCJC Regional Workshops on April 12 at Butte College, Chico, and April 19 at Los Angeles Pierce College, Woodland Hills. The title of this new series of regional workshops is “Institutional Internal Quality Assurance and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment.” The featured expert presenter from the Institute of Evidence Based Change was Dr. David Marshall, and specially featured colleges that presented their student learning outcomes and assessment processes were Sacramento City College and Cuesta College. Commissioners attending the workshops were Dr. Marie Smith, Public member, and Dr. Timothy Brown, Faculty member. Complete Power Point presentations are available on the ACCJC website. In total, 27 colleges and 130 participants attended these workshops.

Additional Conferences and Meetings


I facilitated the first Academic Quality Task Force meeting along with ACCJC staff Krista Johns, John Nixon and Norv Wellsfry on February 28, 2013. The purpose of the Academic Quality Task Force is to provide input about how the ACCJC is to define, measure, and assess academic quality so that its teams and the Commission can evaluate academic quality as part of the evaluation of an institution.

A few of the discussion topics/questions included: 1) What is academic quality and what are the components, criteria, metrics or measures? 2) How should the selected academic quality components be assessed? 3) What institutional data should be included in the External Evaluation Reports to demonstrate to the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the USDE that the ACCJC is monitoring academic quality and student achievement and learning outcomes?

I also participated with Commission staff conducting an Accreditation Liaison Officer Training, Self Evaluation Trainings, Team Trainings, Team Chair Trainings, and Governing Board Trainings.
Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation

There were approximately 20 inquiries for Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation.

Assistance to Member Institutions

In conjunction with administrative staff, I have communicated by phone or in-person with institutional representatives seeking clarification on substantive changes and other accreditation related inquiries.
Institutional Internal Quality Assurance and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
Regional Workshops

NEW REGIONAL WORKSHOPS BEGIN SPRING 2013
The Commission has conducted the first two regional workshops about using assessment of student learning outcomes to plan and improve instructional quality on April 12 at Butte College and April 19 at Los Angeles Pierce College. Dr. David W. Marshall, from the Institute for Evidence Based Change and the Associate Director of Tuning USA, gave a presentation on the topic “Elements of Design: Definitions of Learning Outcomes, Measures of Learning, Summarizing Learning Outcomes Data, and Using Assessment Data.”

Following presentations by ACCJC staff and Dr. Marshall, representatives from select member institutions showcased models that have been developed at their colleges. On April 12, Dr. Marybeth Buechner, Dean of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness at Sacramento City College, presented the model of “Course to Program to Institutional SLO Development/Assessment and Use.” On April 19, Ms. Deborah Wulff, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) at Cuesta College, and Mr. Greg Baxley and Ms. Sally Demarest, Faculty at Cuesta College presented their model of “Course to Program to Institutional SLO Development/Assessment and Use – More than Numbers: Assessing Institutional Learning Outcomes, Capturing Student Perceptions, and Ensuring Internal Quality Assurance.”

Following the college presentations, participants had an opportunity to share and discuss assessment tools that have worked at their institutions and how they have used assessment results to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. At the closing of the plenary sessions, attendees summarized the main strengths of the model practices presented and the strengths and weaknesses of the shared practices. Participants were able to ask presenters questions, and finally, identify one learning point or “take away” from the workshop to share with the entire group. At the Los Angeles Pierce College workshop, final comments were provided by ACCJC Commissioner Tim Brown. He stressed the importance of remembering the accreditation process is a review by our peers; people who have the same responsibilities as we do at their own institutions. We, not “they”, make up the Visiting Teams as well as the Commission. It is we who decide how to apply the Standards in our institutions and we decide what quality is. The next two regional workshops about using assessment of student learning outcomes to plan and improve instructional quality are scheduled for September 20 and October 4 at Solano Community College and College of the Desert, respectively.

Tab 5 - handed out at meeting