Informal, Unofficial Notes on ACCJC meeting, June 7, 2013 at the SFO Marriott
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By arriving long before the meeting time, Academic Senate President Teti and I were able to gain admittance to the ACCJC Public meeting on Friday, June 7. I have posted online the written materials provided to the public, www.ccsfacademic-senate. These are decorated with my illegible scrawls because we were not allowed to take laptops into the meeting room.

Here’s what I learned. The materials covered during the meeting were voluminous. Each item was described and its main points summarized by a member of the staff -- Barbara Beno or one of the Vice Presidents -- or by a chair of a commission committee. All items requiring a vote were unanimously approved by the commission, with few questions asked and no discussion. If robust dialog takes place, it must happen somewhere else, perhaps through email before the meetings? The commission is not a public body and not required to adhere to the Brown Act, so it may discuss business in private.

ACCJC/WASC is now a separate non-profit corporation from WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges). WASC has been restructured from one non-profit corporation with three divisions, to four separate corporations. With the three former divisions of WASC becoming full-fledged nonprofit corporations on their own, it was not clear to me what purpose will be served by the continued existence of WASC, the parent organization. (Agenda Item 4, Doc 1 – President Beno’s Report. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-C)

The President’s report and many other items made frequent reference to the Department of Education and some other entities as the drivers of change for ACCJC.

In the future, expect the Degree Qualification Profiles (DQP) to become a required component of community college work. DQP is the description or definition of the learning outcomes for degrees. “DQP began as an idea for helping to realize the central goal of the Lumina Foundation [funder of the ACCJC DQP pilot project]: to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality college degrees, certificates, or other credentials to 60% by 2025. The DQP provides a framework to help create understanding of the value of a degree, and offers a means for establishing both the common and unique elements of a college’s offering within a shared vocabulary around outcomes.” (Agenda Item 6, Doc 4 – Vice President Krista Johns’ Report on Degree Qualifications Profile Project. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-FileH) It appears to me that “understanding the value of a degree” for this project does NOT mean developing appreciation of its significance for enriching lives. Rather, it seems to mean parceling out and defining its components so that they may be more easily replicated.

Teeka James, President of AFT Local 1493 (San Mateo Community College District), one of two members of the public signed up to speak, delivered a statement about the general concerns of CFT in regards to ACCJC’s lack of timeliness and accountability, fairness, and transparency. (after Agenda Item 9, Public Comment, Teeka James. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-I) You can find questions/challenges from commissioners and her responses in a 15 minute sound file online (http://soundcloud.com/fitzthereporter/2013-06-07-01-35-2)

A number of new or significantly changed commission and operational policies received a first or second reading at the meeting. These include:

- Additional circumstances that will require substantive change approval (a fee based service) and the delegation of approving substantive changes to a committee of the commission (Agenda Item 11, Doc 1. Policy on Substantive Change http://tinyurl.com/accjc-K)

- Policies that will increase confidentiality or secrecy, depending on your perspective. These include not sharing third party comment with the institution if “there is a need to hold the contact confidential for legal, investigative, or other purposes.” (Agenda Item 10, Doc 3, footnote on p. 5 of Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-FileJ); reaffirmation of the requirement that the institutional CEO keep the visiting team draft confidential (Agenda Item 11, Doc 7, p.7 of Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-M); a operational policy on the “Process for Preserving Confidentiality of Documents Related to Institutional Evaluations” (Agenda Item 12, Doc 1. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-FileN); and new clauses that prohibit commissioners from responding to requests for information or from speaking on behalf of the Commission unless directed to do so. (Agenda Item 12, Doc 2, p. 2 of Policy of Professional and Ethical Responsibilities of Commission Members. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-FileN).

- Changes of language concerning institutional compliance to add that institutions must comply with “Commission requests, directives, decisions” as well as Eligibility Requirements, Standards and Commission Policies, with possible consequences of the Commission revoking accreditation if an institution fails to comply. (Agenda Item 11, Doc 2. Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics http://tinyurl.com/accjc-K)

I cannot report on the finances of ACCJC, because those reports were left out of the binders provided to the public, although we could see them in the hands of the commissioners at the table.

Significant changes are being made to the basic Accreditation standards. These changes slated to be adopted one year from now in June 2014 include:

- Simpler format.
- Current Standard II.C. on library and learning resources will be merged into II.B. on student support.

Although a draft of the new standards language has been created it was not clear whether the draft will be seen by colleges before the commission conducts the first reading in January, 2014. (Agenda Item 17, Doc 1. Report on Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-Q)

Barry Russell, from the State Chancellor’s Office, reported that the number of AA-T/AS-T degrees is expected to increase from about 671 degrees currently approved to 1,658 by July 2014. [Have these been developed for your programs yet?] (Agenda Item 22, Doc 1. Update from CCCCO for Accrediting Commission, by Barry Russell. http://tinyurl.com/accjc-T)