July 13, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

I have received a number of requests for a document that covers the important messages we are seeking to convey to our various constituents (students, donors, community members) during the accreditation crisis. You can help us convey accurate information by referring to this memo, and to documents mentioned below, in your discussions.

We must stress three key points:

1. The college is fully accredited and operating as usual.

2. The Accreditation Report cites more structural issues than fiscal issues that are in need of correction.

3. CCSF is taking responsibility for fixing the problems cited and the work has begun, led by the Chancellor’s Accreditation Response Team, which includes representation from all key constituencies.

Here is how I have been describing the current situation to put it in the proper context:

- CCSF’s accreditation remains intact as it has since 1935. We are NOT closing. We are not going to let that happen. City College is far too important to San Francisco and to our students.

- There has been speculation about a scenario where the college could close. Unfortunately, that kind of conjecture takes attention away from dealing with the very serious fiscal and structural issues that we must address between now and March.

- The ACCJC’s 14 recommendations focus on structure, process and governance not just fiscal issues. Therefore, we cannot blame all of CCSF’s problems on state budget cuts.

- Our current accreditation status is “Show Cause,” which is severe. It means we continue as an accredited institution but need to show significant progress toward resolution of the 14 recommendations by October 15 and achieved all of them by March 15, 2013.
• We have to change how we operate, including how we are structured. We will have to be even more efficient in our decision-making, be much more cost effective, and be able to provide evidence of student success.

• To successfully resolve our accreditation crisis, every CCSF employee will have to be a part of the solution.

What Are We Doing About It?

• Trustees have adopted a budget for fiscal year 2012-13 that contains further overall reductions of $8 million.

• CCSF has requested the state’s Financial Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), a panel of school finance specialists, to examine finances and processes and make specific recommendations for improvement. FCMAT has already started its work and will be on site in late July.

• The Board of Trustees placed a $79 parcel tax before San Francisco voters on the November ballot. If passed by the voters, it will raise $14 million/year in funding for City College.

• I appointed and am directing an Accreditation Response Team. This group includes trustees, administrators, staff, faculty, and student representatives. Smaller workgroups are focused on each of the 14 recommendations and charged with developing timely action plans. I have also appointed Gohar Momjian as our Accreditation Liaison Officer to accommodate this massive effort.

• If you or others would like key accreditation information and reports, consult www.ccsf.edu.
How Did We Get Here?

- It’s clear that as an institution, City College has always had a big heart. We have always put our students first. We made a lot of generous decisions when we could afford to do so. We just don’t have the resources, or the time, to do that any more.

- People can and will disagree on specific causes of our current situation, but blaming others will not move us forward. For the benefit of all of the City College community, we have to stay focused on the future, and what needs to happen between now and October 15, our first deadline to show meaningful progress to the ACCJC.

We have retained outside communications support. If the press contacts you, feel free to contact CCSF’s spokesperson, Larry Kamer who will be happy to assist you. He can be reached at lkamer@kamergroup.com or 415/290-7240.

I will do my very best to keep you informed of our progress. You have my sincere thanks for everything you do for City College.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pamila Fisher
Interim Chancellor