

# **IMPROVING ACCJC STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, AND RELATIONS FIRST YEAR REPORT**

**A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

## **Prepared by**

**Helen Benjamin, Convener  
Retired Chancellor, Contra Costa CCD, Convener  
Lori Bennett  
President, Clovis College (State Center CCD)  
Roanna Bennie  
Vice President, Academic Services, Las Positas College  
Julie Bruno  
President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges  
Michael Claire  
President, San Mateo College (San Mateo CCD)  
David Wain Coon  
Superintendent/President, Marin CCD  
Debbie DiThomas  
Superintendent/President, Barstow CCD  
Kathy Hart  
Superintendent/President, San Joaquin Delta CCD  
Victor Jaime  
Superintendent/President, Imperial Valley College  
Kathryn Jeffrey  
Superintendent/President, Santa Monica CCD  
Marvin Martinez  
President, East Los Angeles College (Los Angeles CCD)  
David Morse  
Past President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges  
Kindred Murillo  
Superintendent/President, Southwestern CCD  
Meredith Randall  
Associate Superintendent,  
Chaffey College, Chaffey College  
Kevin Walthers  
Superintendent/President, Allan Hancock CCD  
John Weispenning  
Chancellor, Coast CCD)  
John Zimmerman  
President, MTI College**

**September 15, 2017**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|             |  |           |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>Area Focus I</b><br>VISITING TEAM CHAIR TRAINING, TEAM MEMBER SELECTION, COMPOSITION,<br>AND TRAINING | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>Area Focus II</b><br>COMMUNICATION  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b>Area Focus III</b><br>EVALUATION  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>V.</b>   | <b>Area Focus IV</b><br>PROCESS AND STRUCTURE OF VISIT   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>VI.</b>  | <b>Area Focus V</b><br>COMMISSION OPERATIONS   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>VII.</b> | <b>Accreditation Reform Timeline 2009-2017</b>   | <b>XX</b> |

## INTRODUCTION

On April 21, 2016, Workgroup I held its first meeting to fulfill its charge as established by the Chief Executive Officers of California Community Colleges: work with ACCJC commissioners to immediately undertake significant improvements in the structure and functioning of the Commission to address long-standing concerns of its members, giving special attention to the concerns noted by the U.S. Department of Education requiring compliance by October 2016.

The responsibilities of the Workgroup follow.

1. Develop a plan, with timeline and measurable outcomes, to be submitted to the ACCJC Commission for action at its June 2016 meeting;
2. Lead and monitor ongoing implementation of changes; and
3. Provide regular updates of the group's activities and progress to ACCJC members and the CEOCCC Board, as well as formal quarterly progress reports.

Several whole group and sub-group meetings were held in 2016 and 2017 by phone and in person as the group developed and refined its recommendations. The Workgroup met six times with ACCJC's Policy and the Evaluation and Planning Committees and/or with Commission representatives to clarify the recommendations and to monitor ACCJC's implementation of these recommendations. In addition, members of the Workgroup made presentations at statewide meetings (ACCCA, Academic Senate, CEO Annual Symposium) on its work on the ACCJC reform efforts and developed strong working relationships with the members of the Commission, CEO, and staff.

The group organized its work around five areas of focus: (1) Training and Selection, (2) Communication, (3) Evaluation, (4) Process and Structure of Visits, and (5) Commission Operations. The purpose of this report is to share the progress of the Workgroup in fulfilling the responsibilities established for completion within the first year of formation.

The timeline lists activities undertaken by the CEO Board and the State Chancellor's Office in their joint and respective efforts in bringing change to the Commission. The specific status for each recommendation is addressed within each of the five areas of focus.

The Commission has been cooperatively engaged in the entire process. It has implemented many of the recommendations with quite a few in progress. The Commission has asked that the Workgroup continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and to serve as an advisory group to the Commission. Much has been achieved in a short period of time. Individually, the members of this Workgroup have undertaken their responsibilities in an impressive and collegial manner and, collectively, have contributed greatly to the success of the project.

## **Area of Focus I**

### **VISITING TEAM CHAIR TRAINING, TEAM MEMBER SELECTION, COMPOSITION, AND TRAINING**

#### **Visiting Team Chair Training**

Twelve recommendations were made in the area of visiting team training and selection. The Commission has addressed two of these recommendations. Nine are In Progress, none are outstanding, and one was declined. Overall, the Commission has implemented many of the recommendations in one form or another. Clearly, this is a culture change requiring several years to implement and gain momentum.

The first set of the recommendations deals with timely and effective team chair assignments. The major consideration is ensuring the Commission uses technology for calendaring and tracking chairs and evaluators. Another major consideration is ensuring that two CEOs are on each team and the visits are used as training for future chairs. These two areas are In Progress with a positive response from the Commission.

The next group of recommendations deals with educational programming and online educational tools. Again, the Commission is adopting the recommendations and has formed power teams, one of which is focused on educational programming. There has been progress made in the areas of content, tone, and timing of trainings.

Recommendations related to topics and strategies for chair training are addressed or in the process of implementation. Chair training is under redesign with the assistance of experienced chairs and will be conducted in August by a Commission staff member and an experienced chair. The ACCJC distributed a survey to experienced chairs in early May 2017. Results will be used to improve the training sessions. The recommendation related to shadowing an experienced chair is addressed and is an ongoing practice.

Of the 12 recommendations including sub-recommendations, one was declined. It related to sending the final report and action letter to the teams. The group agreed the intent of this recommendation could be achieved by the team chairs sending a copy of the final report to the teams after the “ACCJC Report of Institutional Actions” is published. ACCJC staff and the Workgroup members agreed this should be included in the Chair Training.

#### **Team Member Selection, Team Composition, and Team Member Training**

Twelve recommendations were developed in this area. The Commission addressed two, eight are In Progress, none are outstanding, two are new, and none were declined. Overall, the Commission has implemented most of the recommendations in one form or another. Many of the recommendations will require more time to implement fully.

The first set of recommendations deals with the team member selection and suggests that more standardization is needed as well as transparency in the team selection process. It was

also recommended the Commission implement a mechanism for volunteers to sign up. The first recommendation is In Progress and the voluntary sign up is in place.

The next group of recommendations focuses on the training prior to the face-to-face training. The recommendation includes using an online training module to include only areas relevant to the team members. The Commission is working through the mixed response and feedback on this recommendation and has referred it for further development by the educational programs and services power team.

The final group of recommendations involves using experienced chairs and ALOs to conduct training in conjunction with ACCJC staff. Adapting exercises to the particular colleges and relevant issues was recommended along with a focus on the standards. Other recommendations were to provide samples of good evidence, site protocol training, and provide exercises to ensure “inter-rater reliability”. The last two recommendations related to using a best practices model from experienced team chairs and team members, as well as breaking the trainings into smaller groups. All the recommendations are In Progress with one completed.

## **Area of Focus II**

### **COMMUNICATION**

The Commission has responded well to the ten major recommendations which focused on the broad area of communication. Emphasis is on improving communication between the Commission and its member institutions. Demonstrable improvement includes an enhancement in the tone and quality of all communications, and a successful conference with huge attendance from the membership. Members are being used as resources to the Commission based on their areas of expertise, thereby strengthening collaboration between the Commission and its member institutions. The majority of the recommendations in this area are in progress and time is needed for institutionalization. Monitoring will continue.

## **AREA OF FOCUS III**

### **EVALUATION**

The ACCJC Policy Committee is responsible for developing the policy for a comprehensive evaluation process. Member institutions have not been involved in evaluating Commission operations, services or staff, although periodic input from them has been solicited on particular issues relative to revising standards.

The Evaluation section has one major recommendation with two parts: to create a comprehensive process for evaluation of the Commission; and to use the evaluative results to strengthen the Commission. The depth and breadth of this recommendation require reasonable time for it to be fully implemented, although some pieces are now in place.

## **Area of Focus IV**

### **PROCESS AND STRUCTURE OF VISIT**

#### **Institutional Self-Evaluation Report**

Seven recommendations are presented for improvement of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), the document that demonstrates college compliance with the Standards. The first three recommendations are specifically about the ISER and the last four pertain to training, which the Commission has referred to its educational programming power team. At the time of this writing, the Commission has not addressed the training recommendations specifically, although it has demonstrated a willingness to move toward implementation of these recommendations. The Commission is in the process of revising the ISER requirements and providing more guidance; additionally, training sessions are planned for fall 2017 with input from the field. Monitoring will continue until completion.

#### **Pre-Visit**

The intent of the five recommendations is to make the pre-visit more timely and meaningful by identifying potential problems early so the institution has time to start an initial response. Altering the pre-visit process will allow the team more time to review the institution prior to the formal visit. In short, the request is for the Commission to review the pre-visit practices of other Commissions. The goals of the pre-visit will be accomplished by making minor changes to existing processes coupled with a change in philosophical focus that emphasizes formative and summative approaches to peer review.

#### **Site-Visit**

Five recommendations were proposed regarding the site visits performed by Accreditation Visiting Teams. According to the Commission, these five recommendations are in various stages of progress with a variety of strategies and practices designed to address some or all components of the recommendations. Although one recommendation has been completed, the remaining four are in various stages of implementation, with the majority still outstanding. Although the Commission is making some progress, evidence of change is still required. Monitoring will continue.

#### **Post Visit**

Seven recommendations concerning the post-visit were made. The focus on these recommendations is to allow as much dialogue as possible among the team chair, the institution CEO, and when necessary, ACCJC staff to ensure the team report is correct before the Commission considers it. The amount of post-visit discussion has varied considerably and there has been some confusion in the field regarding the amount and type of post-visit discussion allowed. Of the seven recommendations for improving the post visit, five have been addressed, one is in progress and one remains outstanding. Progress has been made, and monitoring will continue.

## **Substantive Change Reports**

Colleges were spending inordinate amounts of time of accreditation reporting requirements, especially on substantive change reports. Only one recommendation was made on this report, and the Commission is in the process of addressing the major related issues.

## **Annual Report/Workload**

The Commission has fully addressed the one recommendation on the Annual Report by revising the report format.

## **Area of Focus V**

### **COMMISSION OPERATIONS**

Regularly identifying areas of strength and weakness ensures continuous operational improvement. Therefore, evaluation and feedback of the Commission's operations must be ongoing to work more effectively with member institutions.

Commission Operations is divided into three parts: Financial Transparency, Commission Size and Composition, and the Nominating Committee. Nine recommendations relative to each part were proposed to improve the functions of the Commission and provide better services to members. These recommendations offer institutions a greater sense of inclusion and trust in the Commission.

#### **Financial Transparency**

The Commission, in light of dues increases without explanation over the last few years, responded favorably to the recommendation for greater transparency regarding its finances.

#### **Commission Size and Composition**

After a careful review of the current size and composition of the Commission compared to other commissions, three recommendations were made. Only one was accepted, to add a CFO category. The other two were declined, involving making the ACSCU/WASC position ex-officio and replacing commissioners who transition away from the original category in which they were selected.

#### **Nominating Committee**

Five recommendations were proposed to make the nominating and selection process fair and transparent. Four of the five are in the process of being addressed; one has been addressed.