

SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE ALL FACULTY ASSOCIATION CABINET

RESOLUTION

Date: September 4, 2013

Authored by: Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet

Title: Resolution in Support of Third Party Comment to USDOE Regarding ACCJC

Text:

Whereas, The fundamental right of California community college students to quality education is ensured and preserved through a collaborative relationship between the colleges and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC);

Whereas, For the last decade, the relationship in the Western region between the ACCJC and many of California's 112 public community colleges has declined sharply as a function of: unclear and unsupportive communication from ACCJC; vague and non-specific criteria for meeting Standards; and selective application of policies and rules, leading to inconsistent evaluations, ambiguous recommendations, and unclear timelines across colleges (34 CFR § 602.18);

Whereas, The requirement from ACCJC leadership to destroy all documents pertaining to accreditation visits has impeded the transparency required to guarantee a fair and impartial enforcement of Standards, and contributed to an appearance of partiality on the part of accreditation teams;

Whereas, The Western region is the only one of the six accrediting regions of the U.S. where a separate commission exists for the purpose of accrediting two-year institutions, as distinct from a single commission charged with accrediting both two-year and four-year institutions;

Whereas, The contentious relationship between ACCJC and many of its member institutions has resulted in unprecedented stress to the California Community College system and its taxpayers, by the expenditure of significant human and fiscal resources* in good faith efforts to respond to inconsistent recommendations based on unclear Standards in order to receive reaffirmation of accreditation (34 CFR § 602.18(b)).

Resolved, That the Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet requests the United States Department of Education (USDOE) include in its review of ACCJC consideration of merging ACCJC and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior into a single higher education accrediting commission for the Western region in order to bring the structure of this region's commission in line with the structure of the other five regions;

Resolved, That the Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet urges careful scrutiny of ACCJC's work as a regional accreditor during the upcoming review of ACCJC for federal recognition by the USDOE;

Resolved, That the Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet requests training and oversight by the USDOE for the ACCJC in the production of organized and clear accreditation materials and reports, including the following: Standards, actionable recommendations, feedback, and timelines;

Resolved, That the Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet requests AACJC comply with the legislative bill introduced by state Senators Beall and Nielsen for the purpose of an audit, with direction from the USDOE;

Resolved, That the Santa Rosa Junior College All Faculty Association Cabinet urges ACCJC to consider, in its own self-evaluation, the extent to which the Commission has worked to foster a consistent practice of collaboration and mutual respect between itself and its member institutions; and that the Commission take meaningful steps to apply Standards evenly and develop a responsible and reliable partnership in its work with the California community colleges.

* Our college, sister colleges, statewide governance organizations, and Chancellor's Office have incurred serious expenditures of time and of very limited resources in efforts to respond to, and cooperate with, the ACCJC. The contentious nature of our relationship with the ACCJC is witnessed by the following:

- The extraordinary frequency and severity of sanctions levied by ACCJC against California community colleges compared to sanction levels and types seen in all other regions, and in four-year institutions accredited by WASC-Senior.
- Widespread distrust of ACCJC by our faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College as reflected in numerous resolutions and workshops, as well as articles and complaints prepared and approved by organizations such as the Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers, the Community College Association of the California Teachers Association, the California Community College Independents, and the Faculty Association of the California Community Colleges.
- The imposition of a redundant, and conceptually incoherent apparatus of Student Learning Outcomes in virtually every aspect of college operations leading to the massive redirection of resources from student instruction and services toward the creation of costly administrative positions, programs, trainings, advisory committees, and reassignment of faculty and staff time with no evidence of any related increase to student achievement.
- The creation of two separate Task Forces by two different State Chancellors in order to grapple with the issues surrounding the accreditation of the system's colleges.
- ACCJC's announcements in July 2012 and July 2013, of its action first to place CCSF on "Show Cause" and then to deny accreditation to CCSF, effective July 2014, actions which have created an unprecedented crisis in public relations, enrollment and financial stability for that institution, threatening its very existence as the only public community college in the City and County of San Francisco, despite widespread support for the college from the San Francisco citizens it serves.