

Orange Coast College Academic Senate

ACCJC Resolution: Concerns for Sanctions and Loss of Collegiality, Recommendations for Changes

WHEREAS, the U.S. system of regional accreditation has been well-established and provided essential guarantees of quality in America's post-secondary institutions since the 1950's; and

WHEREAS, keys to the overall success of this unique system are a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between the regional commissions and their member institutions and a shared focus on the needs and interests of the students who attend these institutions; and

WHEREAS, for the last decade, the relationship in the Western region between the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and many of California's 112 public community colleges (which collectively constitute 84% of the institutional membership of ACCJC and serve over 95% of the student enrollments at ACCJC member institutions) has been contentious and, in many instances, antagonistic; and

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 rather than having a single commission accredit both two-year and four-year institutions; and

WHEREAS, the troubled nature of the relationship between ACCJC and many of its member institutions is manifested in multiple ways, including the following:

- The extraordinary frequency and severity of sanctions levied by ACCJC against California community colleges compared to sanction levels and types seen in other regions and in four-year institutions accredited by WASC-Senior;*
- Widespread distrust of ACCJC by faculty statewide as reflected in numerous resolutions, 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 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 public relations, enrollment and financial crisis 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 people of San Francisco.*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Academic Senate of Orange Coast College hereby expresses its deep concern over the adversarial nature of the relationships between ACCJC and many of California's community colleges; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Academic Senate urges careful scrutiny of ACCJC's work as a regional accreditor during the upcoming review of ACCJC for federal recognition by the United States Department of Education (USDE); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Academic Senate recommends that the USDE include in its review of ACCJC consideration of merging ACCJC and 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; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this Academic Senate urges ACCJC itself to consider, in its own self-evaluation, how ineffective the Commission has been in fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between itself and its member institutions and that the Commission take meaningful steps to begin developing a more collaborative spirit in its work with the California community colleges.