

Accreditation Reform . . .

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the ACCJC make recommendations to improve planning and participatory governance, but the sanctions simply seem inappropriate. At College of the Redwoods, for example, like at DVC a couple of years ago, bad working relationships on campus were finally on the mend with new leadership in place just before the ACCJC arrived and issued sanctions. Rather than offering support and encouragement, however, the Commission's sanctions threw everyone into a pressure cooker accelerating the pace of change beyond what was needed or even reasonable.

For the ACCJC, criticism of college administration is usually secondary. In every case where they have imposed severe sanctions, they also refer to student learning outcomes and the related paperwork of program review. In response to CCSF faculty claiming that the quality of instruction was not in question, the ACCJC issued a press release specifically to refute the notion that "there were no issues with instruction and services provided for students." The release stressed that "student learning outcomes for courses, programs, degrees and certificates must be developed and regularly assessed in order to align college practices toward continuous improvement." Also, faculty evaluation "must include a component addressing participation in student learning outcomes assessment."

This need for SLO documentation is included in both the Redwoods and Cuesta sanctions as well. And for the ACCJC, incomplete assessment records indicate a problem with the quality of instruction.

Many faculty, of course, would disagree. The divide between what goes on inside the classroom and the learning experience of students on the one hand, and SLO paperwork on the other hand, is a key issue in our colleges today. Clearly one's class can be terrific, even if one hasn't completed an SLO report, and "student success" can be measured in other ways. But it is the lack of dialog on this subject, the culture of fear that inhibits colleges and administrations from even challenging accreditation standards or ACCJC tactics, the persistent interference in collective bargaining (SLOs in faculty evaluations, after all, is clearly something that must be bargained, not imposed by the ACCJC), and the waste of resources and faculty workload that most concern CCCI. We are not satisfied with the status quo, and we are continuing to seek ways to reform our accreditation process.

At our spring 2012 meeting, CCCI voted to reaffirm our lack of confidence in the ACCJC. We agreed to press for an audit of costs because we know that districts are

spending huge sums of money hiring consultants and paying managers to meet the demands of the Commission. We are asking that the Chancellor's Office task force be reconvened. At a recent Consultation Council meeting, there seemed to be consensus on the need to reestablish the task force but some desire to wait until the new Chancellor is in place.

And we are looking for other ways to press for change. CCCI is committed to improving faculty working conditions and to making sure that the work faculty are asked to do directly affects and supports our students. As long as accreditation paperwork and the SLO project serve to distract faculty from teaching and real assessment, as long as the ACCJC insists on punishing rather than encouraging and on taking resources away from the classroom, we will continue to seek reform.

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last moment to remove most of these improvements from the bill that eventually made it to the governor's desk. Two important amendments remained: Board of Governor minimum academic and progress standards cannot include a maximum unit cap, and students will not lose their Board of Governor fee waiver unless they have fallen below academic or progress standards for "two consecutive academic terms."

While this might be a disappointing outcome, CCCI's perseverance will have a positive result for the organization. Our victory on SB 1456 lasted only two days, but people took notice, and CCCI's impact and influence is now firmly established. The organization is better known in the Capitol, and we have shown ourselves to be both a formidable opponent and a helpful ally in the legislature and among community organizations and unions. In the next legislative session, we will no longer be greeted with the question, "Who is CCCI?"

CCCI leadership believes the organization has made a good start, having its own advocate in Sacramento this year. The organization is respected and influential. CCCI's collaboration with FACCC and other organizations has been strengthened, and CCCI is poised to expand its influence as a leader on community college issues.

I am honored that I was asked to join with CCCI as it began this journey. Together, there is much more we will accomplish in the coming years.



President: Richard Hansen Foothill-De Anza CCD	Executive Secretary: Jeffrey Michels Contra Costa CCD
Treasurer: John Smith Rancho Santiago CCD	PT Faculty Officer: Cornelia Alsheimer Santa Barbara CCD



California
Community
College
Independents

12345 El Monte Road • Los Altos Hills, CA 94022 • (650) 949-7544

Prop 30 YES, Prop 32 NO Top List of Fall Challenges

by Richard Hansen, CCCI President

It is difficult to recall a fall when getting back to the academic year presented so many challenges. At the top of the list are Propositions 30 and 32 with Prop 30 offering a first step toward stopping the bleeding suffered by community college districts as a result of repeated budget cuts. In contrast, Prop 32 is a major threat to unions as a political voice for regular people whether they consider themselves middle or working class.



Hansen

Community college faculty unions, including CCCI, have joined with union colleagues throughout the state in a common get-out-the-vote effort on these two measures, urging a "YES" vote on Prop 30 and a "NO" vote on Prop 32. Complicating the situation is Proposition 38, the K-12 funding plan that relies on a graduated income tax increase on most Californians, including those earning taxable incomes as low as \$7,316 per year. The estimated \$6 to \$8.5 billion in annual revenue flows directly to K-12 school boards and charter school governing bodies and will have little effect on the funding difficulties faced by other public services and higher education, including the community colleges.

If both measures get enough votes to pass, only the measure gaining the most votes will be implemented. So if Prop 38 comes out ahead, the trigger cuts already outlined in the state budget will come down on higher education and other public services. Under Prop 38, the community colleges will be cut \$546 million in the current year while UC and CSU will get cuts of \$250 million each.

As this issue of the CCCI newsletter goes to press, the election is close at hand, and Prop 38 continues to poll badly with only about 42 percent in support while 45 percent oppose. In contrast, Prop 30 is still a winner

at about 54 percent in favor versus 37 percent opposed, on average. While this is encouraging for Prop 30 supporters, negative opposition advertisements have been nibbling away at this margin. Ironically, the multi-millionaire Munger siblings, liberal Molly who created and is keeping Prop 38 alive and conservative Charles Jr. who is backing Prop 32, find themselves in the same anti-Prop 30 camp.

It will be a sprint to the finish for CCCI and its labor allies joined in offense on behalf of Prop 30. At the same time this coalition must mount a formidable defensive effort against Prop 32. There may be some comfort in the fact that candidates and propositions funded by rich individuals and wealthy interests have not fared well in California elections. Recently, we have seen the Meg Whitman gubernatorial candidacy and the Pacific Gas and Electric ballot attempt to corner the energy market go down in flames.

In both of these examples, it was campaign exposure that turned the voters against well-funded efforts, and it has hurt Prop 32 when voters learn that its corporate authors and supporters have exempted themselves from the restrictions the initiative places on political spending. Even without Prop 32, corporations outspend unions 15 to 1. In the wake of the Citizens United decision declaring corporations "people" with the "free speech" right to spend as much money as they want in political campaigns, the backers of Prop 32 are hoping for a knockout punch against the right of unions to participate in politics. We will have to work hard over the next weeks to turn public opinion, which was initially inclined to support, against the measure.

Labor is looking for better results than we saw with respect to pension "reform" under which working people with pensions were made scapegoats for the continuing economic doldrums. At this point, faculty unions are coming to grips with the impact of AB 340, the pension reform bill that swept through the legislature at the end of the recent session. Yes, this presents another challenge

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Sacramento Now Knows, Respects CCCI

by David Balla-Hawkins, *CCCI Legislative Advocate*

“Who is CCCI?” This was a question commonly asked at the State Capitol early this year. Legislators and their staff now know who we are: an influential association of independent faculty unions representing over 12,000 community college faculty teaching over a half-million students. More importantly, CCCI is now viewed as an organization that can be relied on and trusted – a fact reinforced by calls we received from legislative offices asking for our advice and help.



Balla-Hawkins

Along with CCCI’s success in the legislative arena, we built strong allies with other unions. Numerous organizations and individuals called on CCCI to join them in legislative efforts. One example was when the California School Employees Association (CSEA) approached CCCI requesting our assistance with their sponsored legislation. We sat next to CSEA to testify at legislative hearings and meet with legislative staff. The CSEA-sponsored bill – AB 1908 (Luis Alejo-D), increasing from 45 to 60 days the layoff notices given classified employees – was signed into law by Governor Brown.

CCCI was also an active member on the statewide Labor and Retirement Coalitions. CCCI leadership

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greeting us on our return from summer break, and CCCI got a CalSTRS update at its Fall Conference in early October.

In yet another challenge, increasing conflict with the Accreditation Commission looms (see the related article in this newsletter). Our own College of the Redwoods along with Cuesta College were placed on “show cause” at the Commission’s January 2012 meeting, and the City College of San Francisco joined this group at the June meeting. In this most recent case, the Commission has made it clear that it intends to force its will not only on matters reserved for collective bargaining, but also on those inherent to the “shared” or “participatory” governance model under which community colleges operate.

The Commission, under the leadership of President/Executive Director Barbara Beno, has shown itself

wrote letters, testified at committee hearings, and met with legislators and staff on key bills.

CCCI’s most noticed victory was also the shortest lived. Legislation to implement recommendations of the Chancellor’s Office Student Success Task Force Report (SB 1456, Alan Lowenthal-D) was quickly moving through the Senate and Assembly. After six months of legislative hearings, SB 1456 had received only two “No” votes. One by one, organizations in opposition decided they had achieved all they could and removed or restrained their opposition, but CCCI continued to actively seek amendments.

We were told our efforts were fruitless, that we were “wasting our time.” We were told that any changes we wanted to SB 1456 would never be adopted. We were told the language in SB 1456 was a “done deal.”

Despite the odds against us, CCCI was successful in persuading legislative leadership and key staff to substantially amend SB 1456 to require community colleges to expand student support services and student intervention programs; to require campuses to have student support infrastructures in place prior to implementing new academic standards; to protect students receiving Board of Governor fee waiver grants; and to mandate that campuses report their counselor-to-student ratios.

CCCI accomplished what seemed impossible, only to have the Governor’s Office intervene at the

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to be protective of college administrators but aggressively hostile toward faculty and trustee boards. Like the crowd of community college analysts at UT Austin and Sacramento State, the Commission prefers a corporate efficiency model to the democratic egalitarian structure of the California Community Colleges. It has begun to look like our system is being set upon by a coordinated cadre of critics whose ideas found a home in the student success initiative that played itself out over the last two years and is now embodied in SB 1456, a bill that the governor signed last summer.

With serious challenges coming from every direction, faculty had better work together. CCCI is thankful that it took the initiative to enhance its advocacy efforts by engaging its own Sacramento advocate last October (see the related article in this newsletter). It won’t be easy, but the organization is well positioned to meet these challenges head on and to provide leadership among the groups defending faculty and the California Community Colleges.

CCCI Renews Push for Accreditation Reform

by Jeffrey Michels, *CCCI Executive Secretary*

Despite the crippling funding cuts of the past three years, the pressures and paperwork of accreditation continue to grow, sapping resources and often distracting the public (not to mention administrators, faculty and staff) from the real needs of our colleges. In May of 2009, CCCI took the lead in calling for accreditation reform by passing a resolution of “no confidence” in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), in the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and in ACCJC President Barbara Beno. Our statement endorsed the general goals of accreditation “as a means of ensuring quality education for community college students,” but we noted that accreditation under the ACCJC “has become an instrument of punishment rather than improvement” with sanctions too often imposed over issues “not directly related to student benefit or improved instruction.” By interfering inappropriately in matters reserved to collective bargaining, by making decisions in secret with little transparency and no oversight or accountability, and by driving colleges through fear of sanctions to expend resources on massive bureaucratic efforts that often have little to do with teaching or learning, the ACCJC, we argued then, had ceased to serve our colleges, faculty, and especially students.



Michels

CCCI’s efforts helped to galvanize work to reform the ACCJC, and in June of 2009, State Chancellor Jack Scott and the Consultation Council created a task force made up of representatives from the Academic Senate, Chief Instructional Officers, Chief Executive Officers, faculty and classified unions (including CCCI), and FACCC to discuss accreditation and make recommendations to the ACCJC. The task force delivered seven recommendations to the Commission in October of 2009 that included developing a means for colleges to provide periodic feedback to the ACCJC; strengthening standards-based training; reviewing the ACCJC visiting-team selection process to involve a wider cross-section of participants; scaling accreditation expectations to national benchmarks; lengthening the cycle of accreditation to 8-10 years; employing more cooperative (and in some cases non-public) means to stress improvement rather than just compliance; and avoiding recommendations that encroach on negotiable issues.

Unfortunately, as the activities of the Student Suc-

cess Task Force took center stage, the accreditation task force stopped meeting shortly thereafter with the Commission mainly ignoring all of these recommendations except for some increased cooperation with the Academic Senate with regard to training. The task force could claim one victory insofar as a complaint filed with the Department of Education brought federal scrutiny to the Commission’s practice of handpicking its members. As a result of a DoE directive, the Commission was forced to update its bylaws to make the process more transparent and open to candidates coming from within the system, both faculty and administrators.

Today, however, the ACCJC is as belligerent and as insensitive to faculty concerns as ever, and three colleges are currently facing sanctions of “show cause” (the most severe level of sanction, one step before denying accreditation and closing the college). These include one CCCI affiliate, College of the Redwoods, as well as Cuesta College and City College of San Francisco. In all three cases, massive efforts are now underway at each district, including the hiring of outside consultants and “special” trustees, to meet the paperwork demands of the ACCJC within the short timeframe allowed by the “show cause” finding.

The crux of the crisis is easy to see in public exchanges between faculty leaders and ACCJC President Barbara Beno.

English Professor and City College Faculty Union President Alisa Messer said on a local radio show that the college’s problems followed from funding cuts and that the Commission’s findings had nothing to do with the quality of education CCSF faculty provide to students. “We’re doing an amazing job of working with students. That’s not the question here,” she explained.

This mirrors what faculty have been saying at Cuesta College and College of the Redwoods (as well as at other colleges that have faced “show cause” in the last few years, such as Diablo Valley College [DVC] where I work). A statement by the Cuesta College Federation of Teachers, for example, insists that the “value of our students’ learning experiences . . . is not in question and never has been.” The accrediting issues, say Cuesta faculty, are focused “on deficiencies in how the college has been administered.”

For most faculty, the notion that our accrediting agency would close down a college (or threaten to do so) over issues not connected to teaching (such as the need for a “technology plan” referenced in the Redwoods show-cause order or the need to improve “institutional planning”) makes little sense. Many faculty are glad to see

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