Shortcomings . . .

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tions in the rest of the United States; and inadequate monitoring and oversight by the State Chancellor's Office.

To its credit, the Chancellor's Office has already begun to address nine recommendations identified in the state audit. One of these recommendations, that the ACCJC should be removed from Title 5 regulations naming it as the sole accrediting agency for the California Community Colleges, was discussed at the October Consultation Council meeting, and new language is headed to the Board of Governors for a first reading at its November meeting. The change removes the ACCJC and substitutes a process under which the State Chancellor recommends an accreditor to the Board of Governors. While interest was expressed during the Consultation Council discussion to have the choice limited to a "single" accreditor, all of the faculty groups spoke in favor of language that would give the State Chancellor and the Board flexibility on this point. The faculty also suggested inserting a review and renewal cycle into the Title 5 provision under which reappointment of an accreditor would be required every three years or some other appropriate period of time. At this point, the matter is still under discussion.

In contrast, no one expects the ACCJC to publicly admit that the state audit has any bearing on its policies, practices, or actions. In a letter to JLAC members prior to their approval of the audit, ACCJC President Beno "demanded" the audit be dropped, claiming that ACCJC's decisions and campus evaluations were fair and unbiased even though ACCJC's accountability is determined only by the Commission's own self-evaluations and self-assessments.

Following upon Beno's claims that ACCJC did not have many of the documents being requested by legislators, the ACCJC adopted a new policy directing commissioners and campus visiting teams to return all accreditation documents to the ACCJC office "or destroy them by having them shredded."

Once the audit was underway, the State Auditor had difficulty obtaining ACCJC documents due to Commission's status as a private non-profit organization. In response to the State Auditor's report, ACCJC President Beno wrote that it "shows a complete void in understanding of federal law or jurisdiction in matters regarding the operations of regional accreditors like ACCJC." She went on to attack the competence of the auditing team itself whose members, she asserts, "do not have the expertise to conduct an audit of the type that was undertaken in this instance."

In addition to the audit, two bills were also introduced during the 2012-13 legislative session: SB 1068, sponsored by CCCI and co-authored by Senators Beall and Nielsen; and AB 1942, sponsored by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and authored by Assembly Member Rob Bonta (D). Unfortunately, the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Carol Liu (D) stood between these bills and a Senate vote. Because SB 1086 originated in the Senate, it was the first to face this roadblock and never made it to a floor vote. AB 1942 was able to build some momentum in the Assembly, winning a floor vote there before facing the Senate Education Committee.

In the end, a weakened version of AB 1942 passed in the Senate and got Governor Brown's signature. Although not as strong as faculty advocates wanted, the legislation has some helpful provisions. If the U.S. Department of Education does not renew the ACCJC's status as an accreditor, AB 1942 directs the Board of Governors to consider the creation of an independent accrediting agency. The bill also requires improvement in the ACCJC's adherence to open meeting laws, ensures that accrediting agencies in California have a clear process through which colleges can appeal accreditor decisions, and directs the State Chancellor's Office to give early notice to colleges at risk of being sanctioned.

The U.S. Department of Education is also reviewing ACCJC's status as an approved accreditor, and a trial began on October 27 pursuant to a lawsuit the San Francisco City Attorney filed to invalidate the ACCJC's decision to terminate the accreditation of the City College of San Francisco (CCSF). Pressure is mounting on the ACCJC, and the Commission's dismissive attitude toward CCSF's attempts to retain its accreditation is making it difficult for ACCJC supporters to justify their faith in the Commission.

For its part, CCCI will work in the coming year to gather support for legislation aimed at greater ACCJC accountability. Armed with the now completed audit and buoyed by a more active State Chancellor's Office, there may be more interest in taking action to improve the accreditation process for the California Community Colleges. It may prove increasingly difficult for the ACCJC to summarily dismiss the growing number of its critics.

The State Auditor's report is available online: http://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2013-213.pdf .

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Accreditation, Student Services Top List of Concerns

by Richard Hansen, *CCCI President*

The California Community Colleges are emerging from the recession burdened with many challenges. The two biggest immediate issues are an accrediting commission that continues to be more intent on punishing the colleges than helping improve them and the ramifications of the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) recommendations that the Board of Governors embraced back in January 2012.


Hansen

In this edition of the CCCI newsletter, Legislative Advocate David Balla-Hawkins reports on the State Auditor's recently released findings on the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). CCCI successfully guided the request for this audit through the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) in the 2012-13 legislative session. It continues the organization's confrontation with the accrediting commission that began as early as CCCI's 2009 Spring Conference at which we adopted a resolution of "no confidence" in the ACCJC.

At that time, CCCI members were incensed by the requirement that Student Learning Outcome (SLO) data be collected and analyzed, an unnecessary bureaucratic activity faculty felt was duplicative of normal classroom assessment and took time away from teaching. Concerns were amplified when a number of Independent districts reported being burdened with nonsensical sanctions, all the way to Show Cause.

After CCCI presented its resolution to the State Chancellor's Office Consultation Council in Fall 2009, the first version of the Accreditation Task Force was assembled and went to work preparing its seven recommendations for ACCJC improvement. These were delivered to a reluctant Commission at its January 2010 meeting. Tensions were rising, and along with the other faculty unions, CCCI anticipated that the major showdown would come when ACCJC dictates ran afoul of collective bargaining rights.

Instead, the ACCJC turned its attention to local governance and financial decisions, and was especially critical of the roles of faculty and trustees, favoring a top-down corporate structure. It also appeared to challenge the community college tradition of open access. CCCI launched its campaign for the JLAC audit after the ACCJC placed College of the Redwoods, Cuesta College, and eventually City College of San Francisco all on Show Cause.

Similar concerns are found also at the core of the critique of SSTF recommendations implementation through the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and the governor's companion project, the Equity Program, CCCI Executive Secretary Jeffrey Michels provides in this newsletter.

Back in 2011, the SSTF, over faculty objections, insisted on taking off the table issues of quality, like increasing the number of full-time instructional and service faculty and the professionalization of part-time faculty. Now, despite improved funding, many local implementations of the SSTF recommendations follow the same restrictive mandate, and Michels asks important questions about quality, challenging what is being funded, how the work will be done, and who will be doing it.

The same battle over quality that raged in the SSTF is now being fought on many college campuses. This struggle is taking place in a context of longer-term concerns that include the state's ramp up in pension contributions for both CalSTRS and CalPERS while completely ignoring the devastating loss of purchasing power of more than 16 percent suffered over the course of the recession.

Rather than address the system's immediate funding needs, the governor's office has targeted resources at expanding college services, even adding the Equity Program and opening the door to having colleges offer baccalaureate degrees in high cost technical training areas. While appealing, this doesn't make sense.

Real “Student Success” Requires Investment

by Jeffrey Michels, *CCCI Executive Secretary*

In responding to the Student Success Task Force proposals (approved by the Community College Board of Governors in 2012), one of CCCI’s core messages was that reform without investment is a recipe for failure. New ideas, we argued, can be great, but are less needed than new money because California Community Colleges in the 21st Century are less broken than starving. It is chronic underfunding that has led to our over-reliance on part-time faculty, the main weakness of our system with these faculty marginalized and kept from providing full professional service to our students. And our overcrowded classrooms, like our understaffed student services, have more to do with money than any lack of innovative ideas. We offer too few choices for students and too little support for teachers, and no list of reform goals or accountability tools seems likely to change that. So when the buzzword became “student success,” CCCI called out for investment.

Michels

As California’s economy has improved, however, and as the state has begun to allocate categorical dollars for “student success” and “equity,” we face a new challenge, and one that many of us had foreseen. In its zeal to support innovation, the state seems to be diverting funds our colleges desperately need for existing programs to recover from years of cuts. Worse still, rather than reinvigorating our colleges by investing in good teaching, the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 budgets appear to deliberately move money away from the classroom, as far from educators as possible.

Millions of new dollars, in fact, are now flowing to community colleges with specific restrictions that allow for none of the money to be spent on classroom faculty or offering classes. In 2013-2014, $50 million was added to the previous “matriculation” funding under the new heading of the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP). In 2014-2015, another $100 million was added for SSSP. Plus, $70 million was allocated for “student equity plans.” Now the State Chancellor’s Office is seeking another $200 million in SSSP and Equity funding for 2015-2016.

None of this money, by law, can be spent on courses. But all of the SSSP and Equity money comes out of the Proposition 98 guarantee (which determines the minimum level of funding schools and colleges receive in California), so if it wasn’t being allocated as part of these special programs, it would be coming to the colleges in less restricted ways, possibly as an enhanced/restorative COLA or a similar general fund augmentation to help colleges recover from years of losing ground against increasing expenses.

What’s more, the SSSP funding requires districts to contribute two matching dollars for every dollar of funding, so not only does SSSP divert apportionment, it also forces colleges who want the new money to pull from existing general fund projects.

CCCI, of course, fully supports the services that the new SSSP and Equity funding are meant to improve: “orientation; assessment; counseling, advising, and other education planning services.” But the State Chancellor’s Office defines these as “core services” without even mentioning teaching!

This is no accident. The Student Success Initiative itself grew out of a disastrous shift in focus in education policy away from support for educators to expanding bureaucracy and empowering administrators. Driven by so-called reformers who emphasize goal setting and accountability at the expense of resources and creative instruction, the new corporate model for colleges prioritizes research and evaluation, planning and development, coordination and administration but ignores the classroom itself and especially teachers.

CCCI thus finds itself no longer calling simply for more investment in community colleges but stressing that there can be no effective investment in students that is not also an investment in faculty. The real “core service” that colleges provide, after all, is instruction.

When part-time faculty are excluded from pedagogical discussions and professional development, are forced to string together too many underpaid teaching assignments at multiple colleges to make even a modest living, and are not even paid (or expected) to hold office hours, students lose. When full-time faculty must spend more time producing and verifying reports (not to mention hiring and evaluating part-time faculty, who rotate in and out every semester) than they can spend preparing for classes, students lose.

We must continue to insist that “student success” and “equity for students” depend on investment in faculty and in classes. There are no “programs,” after all, without people. The new funding must not be allowed to shift focus or investment to “counseling services” rather than counselors. We need more faculty counselors. Invest in those trained profession-

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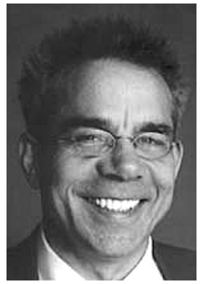
Audit Confirms Commission Shortcomings

by David Balla-Hawkins, *CCCI Legislative Advocate*

The Office of the State Auditor released its report on the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in June 2014. This is the result of CCCI’s advocacy during the 2012-13 legislative session seeking Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) approval of the audit. State Senators Jim Beall (D), who sits on the JLAC, and Jim Nielsen (R) carried the proposal through the Committee.



Balla-Hawkins

CCCI persisted in its pursuit of the audit despite claims on the part of some community college stakeholders that, because the ACCJC operated in closed session, it could not be audited and that results would be disappointing and inconclusive at best and, at worst, might incur the ire of the Commission, resulting in negative repercussions for the colleges.

On the contrary, as the process leading to JLAC approval developed, ACCJC actions and the behavior of its representatives confirmed the need for a state audit. Legislators found themselves confronting an agency that considered itself above the law and came away from meetings with ACCJC President Barbara Beno describing her as “combative, arrogant and dismissive.”

While the original concept focused on the cost of the accreditation process for the colleges, as the JLAC learned more about the issues swirling about the ACCCJC and the colleges it accredits, the scope of the audit was expanded to include the laws and regulations governing the accreditation process, the role of the government and the State Chancellor’s Office in accreditation, the procedures and policies of the ACCJC, accreditation criteria and any changes over the period from 2009 to 2012, and comparisons among the six regional accreditors in terms of process and actions. Three California community colleges were chosen for the study.

The resulting audit report confirms many of the concerns raised by critics of the ACCJC, including accreditation policies that were applied inconsistently; ACCJC meetings that lack transparency; a faulty appeals process; a huge discrepancy in the sanction rates imposed by ACCJC on the California Community Colleges in comparison with community college sanc-

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Investment . . .

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als (along with staff to support them and resources to do their job), and student services will improve. But let’s not take money away from counselors to invest in new “advising” programs while creating a new bureaucracy to “incentivize” education plans by limiting and policing students. Those ideas may be new, but that doesn’t mean they’re any good.

We also need more full-time faculty; office hours for part-time faculty; and more support for innovative teaching, cohorts and learning communities (including smaller classes, supplemental instructors and tutors, expanded library hours and access to technology). These are not new ideas, but that doesn’t mean they are bad.

The worst of the so-called reformers like to talk about a “new normal” where the public is tired of hearing that teachers are underpaid or that classes are too big. In the new normal, these liars insist, people hate taxes and investing in schools. So we need new ideas, they say: ways to fund “student success” without hiring more teachers or raising pay; ways to standardize instruction and assessment (since the myth of the good teacher who needs to be attracted and retained is out of date). That line of thinking may have influenced the shift from COLA to SSSP and Equity funding, but it can’t be the last word. CCCI locals are already fighting in collective bargaining to influence how these new dollars are being spent: arguing, for example, that part-time faculty office hours are a student equity and student success issue. At the state level, CCCI will be pressing this year for more investment in instruction, particularly in full-time faculty hires.

We simply cannot allow the continued deterioration of the teaching profession in our community colleges. Students deserve to learn from fully engaged full-time faculty whose morale is high because they work in a supportive, creative environment where good teaching is at the core of all our policies and plans. Money is still the key, but money badly spent can be worse than no money at all. And of course, the nice thing about being independent is that we in CCCI are free to voice these truths and to fight for community college faculty and students in Sacramento without being hampered or held in check by other interests like those of K-12 or the four-year institutions, where the fight to defend teachers and teaching is similar but where the politics sometimes differ.