

Working with the 2002 Accreditation Standards: The Faculty's Role

Standards and Practices Committee 2004-05

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Abstract

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has a long standing tradition of encouraging faculty involvement in the self study process and in serving on accreditation teams and at the Commission. Though the Academic Senate takes exception with the 2002 Accreditation Standards, particularly their reliance on marketplace values, faculty roles in accreditation are essential to a healthy peer review process and founded in the Education Code and Title 5 Regulations. This paper identifies the many roles faculty must play in the self-study activities: determining how outcomes and objectives should be defined and evaluated; participating throughout the accreditation process from data gathering to responding to drafts; functioning as visiting team members; serving on the Commission, and finally, by responding to Commission actions and recommendations. Appendices include a brief history and overview of accreditation and a consideration of Academic Senate resolutions and resources related to accreditation. In sum, this paper stresses the faculty's roles at the local level and how this experience serves as a precursor to contributing to accreditation efforts on other campuses and in representation on the Commission itself.

Introduction

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) approved new accreditation standards in June 2002 and implemented them in Fall 2004, thus necessitating a revision of the Academic Senate's paper on the faculty role in accreditation (2.02 F.04). This paper of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is intended to provide readers with a brief description of the accrediting process as it relates to the California's community colleges, with an emphasis on faculty involvement at the policy and implementation levels, on visiting teams and at the Commission. Previous Senate papers on this topic have been published in Spring 1984, Fall 1986, and Spring 1996. An Academic Senate paper, *The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation*, was adopted Spring 2004 as a response to the 2002 standards and provides a philosophical and practical guide for the field. The present document follows in the tradition of Academic Senate papers on the faculty's role in accreditation and confines most of its discussion to working with the 2002 Standards as provided for by Academic Senate papers, resolutions and guidelines.

An earlier incarnation of this paper, the 1986 edition, begins with a statement that embodies educators' pride and professionalism:

"It is the right, duty, and responsibility of informed faculty to participate in every aspect of accreditation."

The statement goes on to say:

Workshops and discussion sessions on accreditation at recent conferences of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges have revealed that many faculty

members, even faculty presidents and elected representatives of their colleges to the statewide Academic Senate, are poorly informed about the processes by which their institutions are accredited. Very few have been actively involved in the preparation of their institutional self-study, and even fewer have served as members of accreditation teams.

Nearly two decades later, the above statement still requires no revision. Today's Academic Senate continues to produce workshops, write papers, and visit numerous local senates to discuss accreditation standards. Yet, as in prior years, the majority of faculty have had little direct experience with the accreditation process, including serving on self-study teams, serving as a self-study chair or co-chair, or working directly with visiting teams. As a consequence, a relatively small number of faculty meet ACCJC's criteria for selection for accrediting visiting teams, thereby limiting faculty perspectives in the accreditation process. The seemingly small pool of faculty from which the Commission repeatedly draws and the distance of some Commission members from their own local senates presents a challenge to us. In Fall 2004, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) to ensure that faculty comprise a minimum of 25% of the site visiting teams; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges reaffirm its support in the recruitment and training of faculty for accreditation site visits. (2.04 F04)

Clearly, the 1986 statement embodies a sustained tone of optimism, for in the formulation of that paper, including its list of eighteen Senate resolutions on the topic of accreditation, there exists an enduring investment of optimism, a belief that “informed faculty” will *always* “participate” and uphold the historical values of academic freedom and scholarship so foundational to our profession. Today, as in 1986, this paper acknowledges the contributions of earlier Academic Senate documents that uphold these traditions and their unbroken lineage. At the same time, it suggests how to incorporate responses to the 2002 Standards.

The Academic Senate Perspective on the 2002 Standards

Before discussing how to approach the 2002 Standards, it is important to consider the Academic Senate's perspective on their adoption. The Academic Senate is on record as opposing the 2002 Standards for accreditation and their reliance on Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) as part of a massive incursion of marketplace ideologies. The Academic Senate objects to aspects of the new standards as unsubstantiated by research, reductive, expensive, invasive, needlessly encroaching on time better spent on instruction, lacking sufficient references to local senate authority and expertise, and demonstrating an insensitivity to local bargaining agreements. More on Academic Senate perspectives may be seen in its 2004 paper, *The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation*, in dozens of Academic Senate resolutions, by reading "The New Accreditation Standards—Guidelines for the Field," and three *Rostrums* in particular: February 2002 ("Ignore Us At Your Peril!"), October 2003 ("What is a Good Education?"), and September 2004 ("Thinking Outside the Horse") at www.academic-senate.cc.ca.us. In the meantime, this paper will confine the majority of its remarks to helping local senates fulfill their academic and professional responsibilities with respect to accreditation.

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A Broader Perspective on Faculty Participation in Accreditation

THE ROLE OF ACCREDITATION IN NORTH AMERICA

While this paper has narrowed its focus on the role California community college faculty have with the ACCJC, a subset of the Western Accreditation for Schools and Colleges, accreditation is much larger with national and international implications. To help the reader understand that broader context, we include Appendix A.

LOCAL SENATE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

“The primary mission of the community colleges is the provision of rigorous, high quality degree and certificate curricula in lower division arts and sciences and in vocational and occupational fields” (AB 1725, August 31, 1988).

Because faculty are subject matter experts and work with students on a daily basis, it is appropriate that the accreditation process be faculty-driven. Local faculty authority in academic and professional matters is founded in the legislative intent language of Assembly Bill (AB) 1725, and specified in the Education Code and in Title 5 Regulations; those mandates reflect the longstanding recognition of the faculty’s central role in the accreditation processes. Refusal of faculty to participate in the accreditation process would further erode the influence of faculty in controlling their environment and asserting their proper authority over the services they provide to students.

During the 1980’s California state legislators adopted AB 1725 which resulted in the repositioning of community colleges within the state’s *Master Plan for Higher Education*; minimum qualifications for faculty hiring were elevated and probationary periods were extended for tenure-track faculty. Peer review was attached to faculty evaluation, and funding was established for professional development. Significantly, to underscore the status of community college faculty as a post secondary partner, faculty authority was extended to academic and professional matters requiring collegial consultation, and AB 1725 serves as the basis for college governance policies established between local senates and their governing boards. According to Education Code §70902 “The Governing Board shall...ensure...the right of the Academic Senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards.” Within the ten-plus-one areas requiring collegial consultation, accreditation is item seven. Title 5 §53200 provides the following definition: “Academic senate,” “faculty council,” and “faculty senate” means an organization formed in accordance with the provisions of this Subchapter whose primary function, as the representative of the faculty, is to make recommendations to the administration of a college and to the governing

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board of a district with respect to academic and professional matters.”

Title 5 identifies the following areas as requiring such collegial consultation:

1. Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites
2. Degree and certificate requirements
3. Grading policies
4. Educational program development
5. Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success
6. College governance structures, as related to faculty roles
7. **Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes** (*emphasis added*)
8. Policies for faculty professional development activities
9. Processes for program review
10. Processes for institutional planning and budget development
11. Other academic and professional matters as mutually agreed upon

To consult collegially means that the district governing board shall develop policies on academic and professional matters through either or both of the following mechanisms:

1. Rely primarily upon the advice and judgment of the academic senate, OR
2. Reach mutual agreement by written resolution, regulation, or policy of the governing board effectuating such recommendations.

Thus, local senates have an agreement with their boards of trustees to either rely primarily or to reach mutual agreement on academic

and professional matters, including item seven, accreditation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FACULTY INVOLVEMENT AT ALL LEVELS OF ACCREDITATION

Viewed globally, accreditation provides faculty with opportunities to help evaluate and shape institutional commitments in support of local missions. Faculty may serve on the Commission, on visiting teams, in preparing for their institution’s accreditation process, and in responding to the Commission’s recommendations.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT ON THE COMMISSION

Of nineteen commissioners, five are faculty. All commissioners are appointed by the Commissioner Selection Committee and serve staggered three-year terms, beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Anticipated vacancies are announced at the winter meeting and notices are sent to college presidents, accreditation liaisons, local senate presidents, major organizations, including the Academic Senate, and individuals who have expressed interest. Selection will favor candidates who have served on visiting teams and have extensive experience with local accreditation. Thus, a strong faculty perspective on the Commission depends upon strong faculty participation at local stages of the accrediting processes discussed below.

FACULTY SERVICE ON VISITING TEAMS

Service on a visiting team provides more than an opportunity for an intimate view of how another college functions; it allows faculty to apply their expertise toward helping a college and its local senate to properly direct resources and planning toward serving students and upholding its mission. One should expect to serve for four days and be prepared to read the institution’s self study review all supportive materials with care and be able to write clearly.

Visiting teams include volunteers from all college constituencies, except students: administrators, faculty, classified staff and board members. Visiting teams are carefully configured so that a good cross section of experience is represented, and every effort is made to have colleges visited by team members who work in other parts of the state. Therefore, the ACCJC pays travel expenses, and local colleges should be prepared to do their part, to supply substitutes, and to generally support faculty involvement in this important work.

The Commission provides training for all team members in advance of the team visit. This training acquaints team members with Commission policies and practices. Team members learn about the standards and how to apply them, how to evaluate responses to the previous accreditation report and the college's response, how to evaluate a current self-study report, how to conduct themselves during their visit, and how to write the final report and recommendations.

The team leader will make assignments to standards based on expertise, position, and interest derived from a questionnaire members have completed. Given their particular expertise, faculty members are often assigned to standards covering academic programs and integrity, and if counselors and librarians are among the faculty representatives, they may also be assigned to examine standards addressing student services and learning resources. Members, including faculty, will likely be invited to attend the local senate, or to visit with others.

All members of a visiting team, including faculty members, represent the ACCJC and agree to assess the college fairly as representatives of the Commission; however, faculty members on the team should be particularly sensitive to faculty issues related to all standards. Moreover, faculty

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have as much right as any other team member in writing the team's final report and are expected to comment on parts of the final report other than the ones they were assigned. Faculty members on visiting teams are not sent to adjudicate conflicts between faculty and other campus constituencies that are at issue in an accreditation, but faculty team members do have the responsibility to remind other team members of faculty rights and responsibilities.

During their visit, faculty will work with their teams to interview faculty, staff, students, and write a report in conjunction with others that contributes to the team's overall response to the visit and self study.

While controversy over final report content and recommendations are not typical, it does occur. In the most extreme cases, one or more team members may write a minority report and submit it to the Commission. More frequently a team member submits a change in the report that the team leader must decide on. Such comments often result in changes to the report. A faculty member of an accreditation visiting team must be satisfied that the final report reflects the facts discovered during the visit and provides reasonable and appropriate recommendations.

The selection of faculty for the accrediting teams is significant. The ACCJC maintains a pool of potential team members. A call for nominations

goes out in April to college presidents and, according to ACCJC, to local senate presidents and other interested parties. Because the local senate presidents change frequently, we suspect that too few local senate presidents are aware of or included in the nomination process. The Academic Senate will also provide notification to local senates. The April notification asks college presidents to verify that previous nominees are still employed in a position indicated, and asks presidents to nominate additional personnel. Local senate presidents should work with the college president to ensure that names of capable faculty members are included on that list. Again, to suggest the chain of participation, if we want knowledgeable faculty to represent California community colleges' concerns on the Commission itself, we must ensure that faculty have ample opportunity to participate on visiting teams. And that effort begins at home with faculty roles in accreditation on campus.

Faculty Roles in Accreditation on Campus

Faculty roles in accreditation on their home campus are continuous and multiple. Faculty are responsible for ensuring the ongoing integrity of their programs and their courses, for serving students and fulfilling their college's mission: these activities, conducted individually and collectively today become the stuff of accreditation evaluation tomorrow. To that extent, each faculty implicitly contributes to the accrediting process. The more obvious roles, however, are these: (1) faculty's roles in preparing for the accreditation visit, including the self study; (2) faculty's role with the visiting team; and (3) faculty's role in the ongoing responses to ACCJC recommendations.

PREPARING FOR THE ACCREDITATION TEAM VISIT AND THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

Professional development and the accreditation process

The Academic Senate has been a staunch supporter of professional development for faculty; such training seems particularly important for this accreditation undertaking. ACCJC Executive Director, Barbara Beno, concurs: **"No quality organization lacks money for professional development,"** she noted at a February 16, 2005, meeting with Academic Senate representatives. Though the ACCJC provides accreditation-related training for team members, professional groups and local colleges, it is incumbent upon faculty to demand appropriate training for this endeavor, as well as within their academic and vocational areas so that they may provide the level of service that is

expected by students and required within its local missions.

While various organizations and consultants continue to offer conferences and workshops on accreditation and SLOs, not all of them will offer training that is entirely consistent with ACCJC approaches. Some will provide short cuts that deny the benefits derived from an institutional dialogue. Others may be too bound up in quantitative analysis to the exclusion of local dialogic planning that considers qualitative and observable evidence. The ACCJC is prepared to offer training that allows institutions to develop their self studies in a manner that is consistent with their own ACCJC polices, while accommodating the needs of local institutional cultures. Local faculty should have primacy in deciding which organizations or consultants, if any, will be hired to help them work with the 2002 Standards.

Assigning roles within the accreditation process

Normally the college president assigns the role of Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) to an administrator, though faculty members do serve in this position at some colleges. The ALO acts as a contact person for the ACCJC and visiting team and serves as an administrative liaison for the faculty responsible for completing the self study.

Generally, one or more faculty are selected by the local senate, after consultation with the college president, to oversee the self study process. The study's faculty chair establishes and coordinates subcommittees that contribute to the self study, assists in the collection of data, and works with the steering committee to oversee the writing of the final draft of the self study. While the writing of the final report is sometimes shared with an administrator, it is appropriate that a faculty member be selected by the local senate to do so.

Because of the range of responsibilities assumed by local faculty in creating the self-study report, not to mention their importance to an institution's overall accreditation effort, it is imperative that they be granted sufficient reassigned time, according to local governance and contractual agreements.

Not only will faculty be selected to chair standards or themes committees as part of the self-study process, they may also be recruited as members of an independent steering committee that works with classified employees, students and their representative organizations, trustees, community leaders, and members of local economic consortia. Whether at the levels of the course, program, and institution, or within the surrounding community, the faculty's role in accreditation extends to any venue wherein the institution strives to fulfill its local mission.

An additional faculty role emerging with the new standards is the Learning Outcomes/Assessment Coordinator (LOAC) (this title may vary). Whereas the ALO and local senate are responsible for specific and periodic accreditation tasks, such as the production of an institutional self study, the LOAC's responsibility for overseeing the creation and evaluation of institutional measures is ongoing. If the new standards assume that measures will guide planning at all institutional levels, the ongoing role of the LOAC is essential. Additionally, because of its cross-curricular nature and potential influence on all segments of instruction, the LOAC is a faculty position that is rightfully appointed by the local senate and supportive of the Academic Senate's recommendation that local faculty guide all processes associated with the establishing and measuring of SLOs. As such, the position of LOAC deserves appropriate stipends and/or reassignment considerations (Academic Senate

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resolution 2.02 F03). Without such support, this critical, ongoing work may not be completed.

Local faculty expertise and the successful self study

As argued in earlier Academic Senate papers on the faculty role in accreditation, strong faculty leadership in the development of the self study is vital to the integrity of the entire accreditation process. At the local level, senates should be involved in the development of the self-study plan, including committee structures and the appointment of faculty to the self-study committees. "All faculty have a major role to play in the self-study process. The faculty perspective on the integrity, quality, and effectiveness of the institution is an integral part of the self study document. Adjunct faculty should be included in the process to the extent possible" (2004 *ACCJC Self Study Manual*, p. 4). In particular, faculty's expertise in integrative, critical thinking, in writing, in evaluating programs, in insisting upon credible evidence for claims, and in their familiarity with all corners of their college campus make them essential to developing a self study that reflects their college honestly.

Local senates should work in close cooperation with the administration, student services, the library, and all student support services in the coordination of processes for designing and reporting outcomes. Local senates are urged to establish resolutions and processes that

ensure faculty rights, protect the identities of individual faculty and students, and uphold local bargaining agreements, as discussed in the Academic Senate's paper, *The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation*.

When to begin

Because "continuous improvement" requires ongoing research and assessment, preparation for the self study is now viewed as a cyclical requirement within a continuous process of institutional review. Even so, it is important that the development of the self study itself begin well in advance of the team visit, eighteen months or more, as time must be allotted to collect and interpret evidence, review drafts, edit, allow for board of trustees review and publication. Remember, the completed document must be delivered to the ACCJC six weeks prior to the team visitation. Also, the ACCJC will provide to the college preparing its self study copies of their publications and, upon request, samples of recent self studies from other institutions. The ACCJC will also send someone to provide an orientation session for the staff. Everyone who will be part of developing the self study should attend this introduction.

How the self study is organized within the ACCJC 2002 Standards

Where the former standards invited validation of processes that supported local missions, the new standards require evidence, including SLOs at the levels of the course, program and institution, as detailed in ACCJC documents: the 2004 Self Study Manual, the 2002 Accreditation Standards, the 2004 Accreditation Reference Handbook, the 2004 Guide to Evaluating Institutions Using ACCJC Standards, the 2004 Distance Learning Handbook and the 2004 Accreditation Handbook, as well as other publications available at the WASC website.

The self study is organized under four areas referred to as standards, or it may be organized around six themes (listed in this paper under "Writing the Self Study"). The standards in the 2004 Accreditation Reference Handbook are:

- I Institutional Mission and Effectiveness
- II Student Learning Programs and Services
- III Resources
- IV Leadership and Governance

Gathering evidence for the self study: outcomes, objectives, goals and measurability

Among faculty's most difficult assignments is the application of SLOs to all elements of instruction, program development and review, and institutional planning and assessment. Since the introduction of SLOs to the 2002 Standards, the Academic Senate has taken exception with the ACCJC definitions, particularly because they do not directly reference the requirement that SLOs be developed by local faculty. In addition, any suggestion that all outcomes should be measurable has caused further consternation. At the aforementioned February 2005, meeting with representatives of the Academic Senate, ACCJC Executive Director, Barbara Beno, discussed the varying roles of evidence and said that SLOs could be observable and qualitative in nature. She further noted that ACCJC documents clearly state the importance

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of local dialogue in the creation of SLOs. To that end, the ACCJC’s Executive Director accepted the following understanding of SLOs:

Student Learning Outcomes refer to overarching specific observable characteristics developed by local faculty that allow them to determine or demonstrate evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specific course, program, activity, or process.

The ACCJC Standard Glossary definition of SLOs has, on occasion, been erroneously interpreted as condoning the application of SLOs to intersegmental documents, textbooks and mass produced worksheets by publishers and/or consultants that, in effect, would deny the dialogue that is essential to the creation of locally defined SLOs. The net effect of importing prefabricated SLOs is a direct abuse of academic freedom and a step toward standardization by ignoring the necessity of local dialogue. Alarm over such attempts to boilerplate planning and assessment has resulted in Academic Senate resolutions that stress the need for locally developed SLOs and suggest the inclusion of objectives in intersegmental and externally developed documents where local faculty have not had direct input. The ACCJC definition of SLOs is: “Knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences.” For purposes of this paper, the more specific definition provided above will be used. In addition, the following definitions are offered:

- ▶ “Outcomes” are broader statements of intent or vision that are not necessarily measurable, but are observable.
- ▶ “Objectives” are small steps that lead toward an outcome, or goal.
- ▶ “Measurability” refers to both qualitative and quantitative means of measuring.

Three additional definitions from the ACCJC Standard Glossary are also useful for our purposes:

- ▶ Dialogue: Self-reflective exchanges engaged in by the college community, characterized by a free exchange of ideas without the purpose of defending or deciding on a course of action.
- ▶ Evidence of Institution and Program Performance: Quantitative and qualitative data which an institution as a whole uses to determine the extent to which it attains the performance goals it establishes for itself.
- ▶ Ongoing: Addressed regularly as part of the business of the college rather than in response to periodic external requirements.

Faculty dialogue is essential, then, in defining the broad outcomes and the specific objectives, in identifying which are observable (in what way), and which are measurable (and how). The most obvious application of SLOs occurs in discussion about

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the Course Outlines of Record (COR). There has been an ongoing debate as to whether COR should contain SLOs, objectives or some combination of both. ACCJC Standard II.A.6 states, “In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning objectives consistent with those in the institution’s officially approved course outline.” In no instance does the ACCJC require that COR contain SLOs, and the Academic Senate recommends that local faculty consider carefully any decision to do so.

The COR is a legal document that is developed locally, goes through a local approval process, and may be forwarded to the System Office for approval. Because SLOs have an ongoing relationship to local faculty dialogue and decision making, it is advisable that faculty consider carefully before they concretize SLOs into the COR. On the other hand, because objectives are defined as “small steps that lead toward an outcome,” they may represent valuable skills, tools, or content that enable a student to engage in a particular subject. As such, objectives may serve as a list of those skills or abilities required within a course’s COR, while SLOs would represent overarching products of the course. If SLOs are included in COR, they may most appropriately be contained as big picture elements within the course description. For example, an English 1A objective may state that “Students will enliven style by eliminating wordiness and weak verbs.” The SLO may require that “Students will write essays, including research-based writing, demonstrating academic rhetorical strategies and documentation” (Cabrillo College).

Whatever the local decision with regards to including SLO and/or objectives in the COR, it is also worth noting that the 2002 Standards constitute an unfunded mandate and that our CORs have been subjected to numerous new

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requirements with changing TOP codes, distance learning addenda, compressed calendar revisions, and curriculum review. Local faculty may decide to not add additional layers of review and revision to the COR as a result of including SLOs. If SLOs are included, it is strongly recommended that they be kept to a minimum and that they always reflect local faculty consensus.

Faculty participation is also essential in the application of SLOs to areas such as student services. Here, attempts to **measure** actual student learning often result in meaningless counting of students served or tasks completed; these areas respond more appropriately to the concept of observable outcomes as when students experience changes in behavior, adopt new attitudes, set new goals for themselves, and begin to take an active role in preparing for their futures.

Avoiding any misuse of evidence

ACCJC Standard III.A. states that, “Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.” Though our objection to this intrusion into contractual matters is fully articulated in the Academic Senate paper, *2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation*, so important is this issue that the following recommendations are worthy of repeating:

...the dialogic aspect of the self study is vital if faculty, staff, administrators and students are to develop shared insights and a collective understanding of complex issues.

- ▶ Employ methodologies that create a blind between individual class sections and the institution to protect the privacy of students and faculty (2.01 F03);
- ▶ Take measures to safeguard the academic freedom of untenured and adjunct faculty, including adopting statements on academic freedom and privacy such as those adopted by the Academic Senate, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2.01 F03).

According to ACCJC documents, Evidence is the data upon which a judgment or conclusion may be based. As such, it is presented in answer to questions that have been deliberately posed because an institution regards them as important. Evidence tells all stakeholders that an institution has investigated its questions and knows something about itself—it knows what it achieves.

For evidence to be useful, it must have undergone analysis and reflection by the college community. The dialogue required for analysis and reflection is an integral part of the capacity an institution has for using the evidence it has accrued to make improvements.

Good evidence, then, is obviously related to the questions the college has investigated and it can be replicated, making it reliable. Good evidence is representative of what is, not just an isolated case, and it is information upon which an institution

can take action to improve. It is, in short, relevant, verifiable, representative, and actionable. (2004 *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*, p.9)

Writing the self study

Having now gathered reliable evidence and data, having conducted surveys and focus groups, the self-study team must organize the materials into a cohesive whole. As with the former accreditation process and its ten standards, the current approach entails pre-planning, a self-study report, and accreditation team visits. An important difference, however, according to Darlene Pacheco, recently retired ACCJC Associate Director, (LACCD Accreditation Retreat, October 24, 2003), is that the new standards and their subsections should not be addressed in the self study in a sequential and linear manner, as were the former standards, but, rather, dialogue should lead to emphatically ordered narratives that reference, fairly thoroughly, the guidelines and themes. Pacheco explained that the new standards and guidelines are not intended as a template for self studies, but rather as starting points for an institution-wide dialogue. Individuals responsible for the self study should work together within their teams and not in isolation. Though the opportunities afforded by such communication are intended to advance institutional planning, this process places new pressures on participants to meet and work toward consensus on such complex and unfamiliar issues as large-scale assessment, outcomes, and a myriad of related considerations. Though this will entail an exceptional commitment of time and energy early on, once the process is “ongoing,” such discussions will become fully integrated into the life of the institution.

According to the ACCJC, the dialogic aspect of the self study is vital if faculty, staff, administrators and students are to develop shared insights and

a collective understanding of complex issues. The ACCJC document, *Guide to Evaluating Institutions Using ACCJC Standards*, introduces six themes to provide guidance and structure for dialogue and the evaluation of institutional effectiveness:

- ▶ Institutional Commitments
- ▶ Evaluation, Planning, and Improvement
- ▶ Student Learning Outcomes
- ▶ Organization
- ▶ Dialogue
- ▶ Institutional Integrity

Under the 2002 Standards, the college may organize subcommittees in various manners. One approach is to create four committees, one for each standard, and another is to establish six committees, one for each theme.

In either instance, faculty members or a faculty member and either an administrator or a classified staff person chair these subcommittees. Faculty serving as chairs or co-chairs should be appointed by the local senate (See Title 5§53200-53206) in consultation with the college president.

Subcommittees are responsible for developing drafts of the reports for each standard or theme. Each subcommittee should have input from all of the institution's constituencies. More people involved in this work means less that each person will need to do. Also, it is very important that each of the college's employees feels that he or she shares responsibility for the development of the self study. Whether the dialogic approach is organized around the four standards or the six themes, the themes must be integrated into the final draft of the self-study report. The ACCJC recommends that this be accomplished through a holistic approach that involves all participants, and

in close cooperation with a steering committee. The steering committee, comprised of contributors to the institutional dialogue, should be responsible for the overall planning and supervision of the self-study report. An important recommendation is that dialogue, though it should be ongoing, should have an agreed upon point of completion for purposes of creating the self study.

Suggestions from the field for writing the self study

Faculty who have been responsible for developing self studies under the 2002 Standards on their campuses provided the following advice:

- ▶ Have the standard committee chairs be the primary writers and, thus, avoid having many voices responding to individual bullets. Each standard committee's member can be a resource to retrieve information and to function within focus groups. The chairs should get reassigned time since they will be doing the writing.
- ▶ Beware of giving chairs responsibility without authority.
- ▶ While surveys can be of value, rely more on focus groups for information.
- ▶ While the self study should be faculty controlled, include administrators who offer a unique perspective.
- ▶ Write holistic narratives for each standard. For example, the section on presidential leadership might have a single narrative at the beginning – with portions of it cross-referenced to specific sub-standards.

Ensuring a holistic report

After the subcommittees have created their reports, the faculty chair works in conjunction with the subcommittee chairs and the steering

committee to create a holistically rendered report that is carefully edited for punctuation, format, and a consistent voice. Subsequent to the steering committee's careful review of the edited draft, the entire college community should have an opportunity to read the self study before it becomes finalized and delivered to the printer. It is very important that everyone feels that the self study is a fair and accurate representation of the college's programs and activities.

The preparation of the self study ideally involves active participation by those from every segment of the institution: faculty, administrators, governing board members, classified employees, and students. Such involvement should result in a document that reflects the perspectives of all constituencies in the college community.

After the self-study report is completed

After the self-study report is completed, according to the guidelines set forth in the ACCJC's publications, all constituent groups, including the board of trustees, should review it. Faculty have an important role at this stage to ensure that the claims made in the final draft are accurate representations and are substantiated by additional documentation. Regrettably, in some instances, faculty groups—sometimes as large as the entire local senate or as small as a few who hold dissident views—cannot support portions of the final report. In those cases, those faculty may need to determine whether a “minority” report or an “alternative” report should be produced and also sent to the Commission to be shared with the visiting team. Minority opinions need to adhere to standards of accuracy; claims must be substantiated. Additionally, local senates may need to determine which of several versions they, as a body, will affirm when the time comes for the senate president to sign-off on a

Minority opinions need to adhere to standards of accuracy; claims must be substantiated.

report. This function of local senates cannot be underestimated, particularly given the potential that they may be called upon to represent people who feel intimidated by having to take a principled stand at their college, particularly when their view may be in opposition with administrative views.

The college will then send four copies of the self-study report, four catalogues and four class schedules to the ACCJC, along with one electronic version of the self-study report. In addition, the college should provide each member of the visiting team a copy of the self-study report, a catalogue and schedule. Again, distribution of the report should occur six weeks ahead of the evaluation visit.

Faculty roles and the team visit

Local faculty involved in the accreditation process need to work with administration and the ALO to devise a schedule to accommodate team needs as well as afford the maximum number of faculty and staff possible to participate in discussion, meetings and interviews. Teaching and non-instructional schedules need to be considered so that all groups will be as fully represented as possible.

While the team is on campus

Faculty members can use this time to communicate their individual perceptions to team members. It is also important that local senates provide team chairs a schedule of senate and other faculty committee meetings and invite the

team members to attend a senate meeting. The visiting team will focus on reviewing the information contained within the self study. The team's goal is to evaluate the institution's commitment in action to providing high-quality education congruent with its institutional mission. A comprehensive statement about the team visit is contained in the Porterfield statement, an explanation written by a college faculty member (Appendix B). Team members will evaluate the institution's programs and activities, interview administrators, faculty, classified employees, community members, and students. They will also visit classrooms, offices, off-campus facilities, and wherever else college activities are conducted. Additionally, time will be set aside for anyone from the college community to meet with team members as individuals and provide any information they feel is important.

Team members will write individual reports based on their findings, following the visit, and these individual written reports will be submitted to the team leader, who will incorporate them into a large report. As a result, the team will formulate major recommendations to the college intended to help correct significant weaknesses. The team leader will review the team's preliminary report with the college president and members of the college to allow for the president to suggest changes and to point out any factual errors in the report that should be corrected. To conclude the visit, the team leader, with the rest of the team present, will deliver a summary report to the college community at an exit meeting. Faculty should be attentive to their remarks as they preview the contents of the final draft.

After the team has left the campus

The final draft of the report is not completed until two weeks following the visit. A copy of that final draft is sent to the college president and

team members, who may only make corrections of factual misstatements. Once their comments have been received by the team chair to consider or correct, the ACCJC receives the final report, and a copy is sent to the college president. Best practices suggest that the president will share this preliminary report with contributors to the self study. The team's recommendation regarding accreditation status will not be revealed in the team report. Of course, as stated above, if members of the team disagree with the findings of the majority of the team, they may file a minority report.

Once ACCJC receives the report, it is taken up at either the January or June meeting of the Commission. Upon their private discussions, they will identify one of the following actions:

- ▶ Reaffirm accreditation without conditions. Recommendations are focused toward strengthening the institution, not correcting deficiencies. The institution is required to complete a midterm report in the third year of a six-year cycle.
- ▶ Reaffirm accreditation, with a request for a focused midterm report. The institution meets or exceeds requirements but must direct attention to a small number of issues within a focused midterm report in the third year of a six-year cycle.

Teaching and non-instructional schedules need to be considered so that all groups will be as fully represented as possible.

- ▶ Reaffirm accreditation, with a request for a focused midterm report and a visit. The institution meets or exceeds requirements but must direct attention to a small number of issues. The ACCJC will specify the focus of the report and visit. The institution will submit a report in the third year of a six-year cycle.
- ▶ Reaffirm accreditation, with a request for a progress report. The institution meets or exceeds requirements, but a small number of issues of some urgency may threaten its accreditation. The ACCJC will specify the issues to be considered and the report's due date.
- ▶ Resolution of the issues is expected within a one-to-two-year period. A midterm report is required in the third year of the six-year cycle.
- ▶ Reaffirm accreditation, with a progress report and a visit. The institution meets or exceeds requirements, but a small number of issues of some urgency must be addressed. A midterm report is required in the third year of the six-year cycle.
- ▶ Defer a decision on reaffirmation of acceptance. A decision is postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution to permit it to correct serious problems and report to the ACCJC within six months. The response may be followed by a visit. Accredited status continues during the period of deferment.
- ▶ Sanctions. Institutions are advised that the Commission is required by the U.S. Department of Education not to allow deficiencies to exist for more than a total of two years. Consequently, institutions may remain under sanction for a cumulative total

of no more than two years. If concerns are not resolved within this period, the Commission will take action to terminate accreditation.

In extreme instances, the team may recommend to accept or not accept the report. If the team believes that the institution's response is inadequate, it may recommend placing the institution on *Warning, Probation, Show Cause, or Termination*. On the other hand, if a report demonstrates that an institution has adequately addressed previously recognized problems, the team report may recommend lifting such a sanction.

A warning may instruct the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities within a certain time frame. In the meantime, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at least every six months, during which accredited status continues. Probation occurs as a result of a significant deviation from the ACCJC's eligibility criteria. The ACCJC will specify a time period for resolving deficiencies. The institution will be subject to reports and visits at a minimum of every six months. If probation results from the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of probation. An *Order Show Cause* is when the ACCJC finds a substantial non-compliance or when the institution has not responded to conditions imposed by the ACCJC. A timeframe for resolving the issues will be set, and if the loss of accreditation will cause an institution to close, it must make preparation for closure in accordance with the ACCJC's "Policy Statement on Consideration when Closing a Postsecondary Educational Institution." *Terminate Accreditation* may occur if the ACCJC determines that the institution is significantly out of compliance with its standards. There are procedures for review and appeal, but once termination has occurred,

if an institution wishes to become accredited, it must complete the entire process to qualify for candidacy (*2004 Accreditation Reference Handbook, pp. 54-57*).

The ACCJC also has policies regarding actions on institutions that are applicants for candidacy or extension of candidacy, and for applicants for initial candidacy. A thorough and detailed understanding of these policies may be obtained at the ACCJC website: *Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions*. In brief, an institution may be granted full accredited status for the next six years, accreditation for a shorter period with a review or revisit to determine whether serious deficiencies have been corrected, probation, or even suspension of accreditation.

The college response to the Commission's action

Once the college president has been notified of ACCJC's actions and recommendations, it is vital that the college as a whole be informed so that faculty, staff and administrators can work in unison to address concerns and to recommend corrective actions. Such involvement has always been attributed to the cyclical nature of accreditation, but now with the 2002 Standards, faculty involvement in planning and assessment must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to continual improvement. The ongoing nature of this involvement is part of the central intention of the 2002 standards, as reflected in the four standards, that planning involving the college mission, programs, and the utilization of resources will be addressed within a cooperative process of leadership and governance.

The Faculty's Role in Strengthening the Accreditation Process

"It is not what we intend but what we do that makes us useful."

– Henry Ward Beecher

Here we come full circle and return to the 1986 Academic Senate paper on accreditation and its statement that, "It is the right, duty, and responsibility of informed faculty to participate in every aspect of accreditation." Today, as corporate, public and legislative entities raise their voices for new and redesigned curricula, for new programs, for courses offered via distance education and in reduced timeframes, and as California's community college mission is stretched to accommodate the varied needs of California's population, the need for a strong peer review process in accreditation has never been greater. Our professional standing rests upon our ability to meet today's challenges without compromise to those academic and professional matters entrusted to us by our educational forbearers.

The Academic Senate, through its resolutions (see Appendices C and D) as well as through its liaisons and committees, has worked to increase faculty participation in accreditation procedures and to improve the process. More specifically, the Academic Senate encourages full faculty participation in the ongoing accreditation process and continual self study. That participation prepares individual faculty members to serve on self-study teams, either as faculty chairs

or standard chairs. In turn, that experience prepares faculty to serve on visiting teams; and that experience beyond their college enables those faculty to assume leadership on the Commission itself. Therefore, local senates should encourage faculty participation at all levels of the accreditation process and work with their college president to put forward the names of faculty who express such an interest. Increasing the number and diversity of faculty who serve throughout the accreditation process—at all junctures—can only increase the credibility and integrity of that process. While the Academic Senate does not endorse the 2002 Standards and their reliance on marketplace values, it does recognize that because accountability is centered on institutional missions, local faculty have an opportunity to provide the necessary planning to help direct resources in support of the success of each individual student.

Our professional standing rests upon our ability to meet today's challenges without compromise to those academic and professional matters entrusted to us by our educational forbearers.

Recommendations

1. Faculty should read the Academic Senate paper, *The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation* and disseminate that paper along with the present one;
2. Faculty should recognize their right, duty, and responsibility to participate in every aspect of accreditation, including serving on the Commission, on visiting teams, and in working on their institution's self study. Faculty authority in academic and professional matters is founded in the legislative intent language of AB 1725, and specified in the Education Code and in Title 5 Regulations;
3. Faculty preparation for accreditation should embody the view that "no quality organization lacks money for professional development";
4. Faculty must be granted sufficient reassigned time, according to local governance and contractual agreements, to support their involvement in the broad range of responsibilities associated with creating the self study and contributing to the institution's overall accreditation effort;
5. Faculty should begin preparations for the team visit anywhere from eighteen months to two years in advance and play a substantive role in the development of self-study planning, including the arrangement of the subcommittee structure;
6. Faculty senates should work in close cooperation with the administration, student services, the library, and all student support services in the coordination of processes for designing and reporting outcomes;
7. Faculty must insist that all course and program student learning outcomes are developed by local faculty;
8. Faculty are well advised to have a thorough understanding of student learning outcomes, objectives, goals and measurability when engaging in dialogue about the assessment of evidence and what should be included in course syllabi and the course outline of record;
9. Faculty should consider the selection of a Learning Outcomes/Assessment Coordinator (LOAC). Because the uses of evidence are ongoing, it is appropriate for local senates to select a faculty member to oversee the ongoing coordination of evidence and assessment and that such a position should be provided appropriate release, stipends or reassignment (2.02 F03);
10. Faculty serving on visiting teams must recognize that they have as much right as any other team member in writing the team's final report and commenting on parts of the final report other than the ones they were assigned;
11. Faculty senates should make recommendations for faculty who express an interest in serving on accreditation visiting teams.

In addition to the above suggestions, the recommendations from the 1996 paper, *Faculty Role in Accreditation* still hold true.

In summary, the responsibilities of the local academic senates in the accreditation process are:

1. Play a substantive role in the development of the self-study plan, including the committee structure.
2. Appoint faculty members to serve on all levels of the self-study plan, including the committee structure.
3. Encourage broad-based faculty participation.
4. Provide a schedule of senate and other faculty committee meetings to the visiting team chair and invite the team members to attend a senate meeting.
5. Have the senate president included in the meeting between the team chair and the college president to review the proposed recommendations for factual accuracy.
6. Receive and review the recommendations in the final report.
7. Develop, through consultation, a plan to respond to the recommendations in the final report.
8. Participate in drafting whatever interim reports are requested by the Commission.

References

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC): <http://www.academicssenatereferences.ca.us>.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP): <http://www.aaup.org>.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA): <http://www.chea.org>.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.

The Higher Education Act (HEA): <http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/HEA.htm>.

The Higher Education Reauthorization Act (HERA): <http://www.languagepolicy.org/hea.html>.

The United States Department of Education (USDE): <http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC): <http://www.wascweb.org>.

Appendices

Appendix A: An Overview of Accreditation

The accrediting agency

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which includes the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), is a private, nonprofit organization. WASC is supported through assessments of its member institutions. A member institution pays its dues and establishes its status of good standing by being designated as a fully accredited institution by the Commission after it successfully completes accreditation, a process by which institutions are evaluated to determine if they have engaged in an institution-wide dialogue, as part of a self evaluation. The dialogue contributes to the writing of an institutional self study, which provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

The importance of the accreditation process

While WASC is not a governmental organization, it provides the public with a means to recognize institutions that have met established standards. Such recognition is critical to prospective students of those institutions and to other institutions that are asked to accept degrees or courses from other institutions. It is also required for access to funds used as federal financial aid that is provided only to students of colleges accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.

The history of accreditation

The first official oversight and evaluation of education began in 1787 when the University of the State of New York (through the New York Board of Regents) established the state board for King's College (now Columbia University) and other

colleges and schools in the state, and assigned to it the responsibility of registering each curriculum at each institution by a yearly visit and report to the legislature. Accreditation by voluntary associations of schools began in the late 19th Century for the purpose of defining the difference between preparatory schools and colleges, to improve cooperation in the development of standards and procedures, to establish requirements for graduation from secondary schools, and to set admission standards and graduation requirements for colleges and universities.

By 1949 there was such a proliferation of accrediting agencies that university presidents created the National Commission on Accrediting. In 1975 the National Commission was supplanted by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), which, in turn, was supplanted in Fall 1996 by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA is a private, nonprofit national organization that coordinates accreditation activity in the United States. Today, there are six regional accrediting agencies in the United States, all of which are members of C-RAC, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions.

How accrediting organizations interact with the national government

While accreditation in the United States is decentralized and complex, the linkages between various components in the system are profound. Higher education is comprised of about 6,500 accredited degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions, public, private, two- or four- year, for-profit and not-for-profit. These institutions enroll 15 million students and employ 2.7 million people. Accreditors review colleges and universities in 50 states and various countries and territories. Their review responsibilities

include many professions, including law, medicine, business, nursing, social work, pharmacy, arts, and journalism (www.chea.org).

The connections between regional accreditation and Washington DC are often multifaceted. While CHEA purports to coordinate accreditation activity in the United States, its membership is composed of institutions of higher education. In some instances the regionals, through C-RAC, have become actively engaged in working with members of Congress on topics that comprise the Higher Education Reauthorization Act (HERA). HERA oversees authorizations in the Higher Education Act (HEA) for Title IV programs that provide grant aid (which does not have to be repaid), loans, and work-study assistance. Among the largest Title IV student aid programs is the Pell Grant program wherein undergraduate students receive funds, based on need, to attend the postsecondary education institutions of their choice. In other words, accreditation affirms institutional compliance with numerous interconnected policies, many with direct connections to national government. The U.S. Department of Education formally recognizes accrediting commissions that meet all federal standards. Further, CHEA extends recognition to accrediting bodies and their institutions that meet established quality standards. Generally, accrediting bodies fall into three major categories: national, regional, and specialized/professional, and each works through CHEA and C-RAC at the national level.

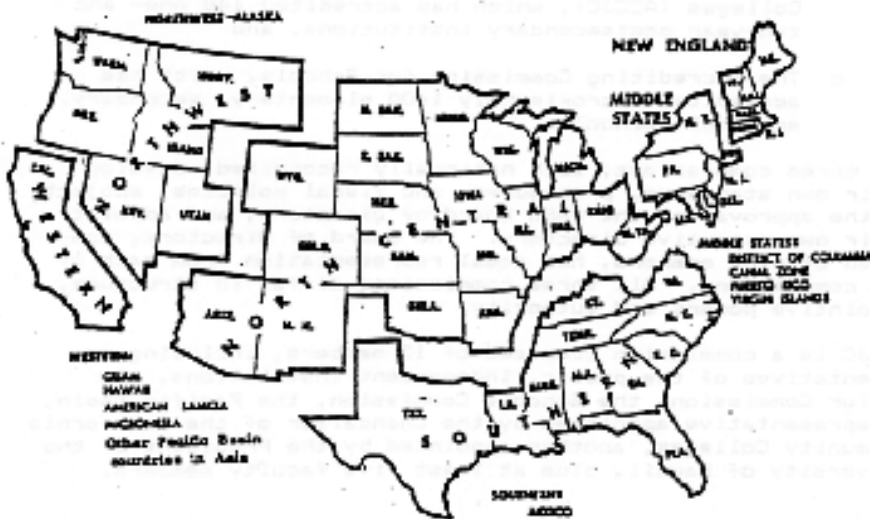
How the accreditors are reviewed

Accreditors undergo a periodic external review known as “recognition.” Recognition is carried out either by another private organization, CHEA, or the United States Department of Education (USDE). Although accreditation is strictly a non-governmental activity, recognition

is not. CHEA accreditors are normally reviewed on a ten-year cycle with a five-year interim report. The Committee on Recognition makes recommendations to the CHEA governing board to affirm or deny recognition to an accreditor. USDE and CHEA recognize many of the same accrediting organizations, but not all. Accreditors seek USDE or CHEA recognition for different reasons: USDE recognition is required for accreditors whose institutions or programs seek eligibility for federal student aid funds. CHEA recognition goes beyond this objective and confers an academic legitimacy on accrediting organizations, helping to solidify the place of these organizations and their institutions and programs in the national higher education community.

The regional accreditors

Institutional accreditation is awarded by the respective commissions of six regional accrediting associations, which together cover the United States, American Samoa, the Central Zone, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, the former Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (which includes the Federal States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau) and the Virgin Islands. The accrediting agencies and states within their jurisdiction are Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).



Areas for which WASC has accreditation responsibilities

It is worth noting that the California Community College system is the largest organization of post-secondary education in the world, employing nearly 60,000 faculty and serving approximately 3 million students at 109 colleges. As such, even though the ACCJC is not bound by the California Community College system of governance, California comprises, by far, the largest proportion of ACCJC duties and responsibilities.

- ▶ California
- ▶ American Samoa
- ▶ Guam
- ▶ Hawaii
- ▶ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- ▶ Federated States of Micronesia
- ▶ Republic of the Marshall Islands
- ▶ Republic of Palau
- ▶ The Pacific Basin
- ▶ East Asia, and areas of Pacific and East Asia where American/International school or colleges may apply to it for service.
(www.wascweb.org/)

Appendix B: Porterfield Statement

As with previous incarnations of this paper, the Porterfield Statement is included here as an ideal that the Academic Senate continues to support.

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

PORTERFIELD STATEMENT

A TEAM CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM OTHER COMMUNITY COLLEGES IS COMING TO EVALUATE US

What Must It Do?

Reach a decision as to how well, overall, our college is doing what colleges like us are generally expected to do.

Make a judgment as to how well, overall, our college is doing what it claims to do.

Point out to us, and to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, any notable strengths and weaknesses that could or do significantly affect the education of our students.

Recommend steps we might take to strengthen ourselves.

Evaluate the progress we have made in carrying out the recommendations of previous visiting committees.

Communicate its findings, judgments, and recommendations to the Accrediting Commission, which makes the actual decision on accreditation.

To This End, What Will It Try To Do?

Become as intimately acquainted with us as circumstances will permit.

Listen to any member of our college community (students or staff) who wishes to be heard. We must take the initiative.

Answer any questions we have about accreditation.

Be helpful rather than punitive.

Assure itself that there has been widespread participation in our self study.

Encourage sound innovation.

Distinguish between limited and individual problems, which must be resolved in other ways, and general problems, which could or do significantly affect the teaching and learning that goes on here.

What Will It Not Try To Do?

Visit every class or confer with each staff member, because time does not permit.

Resolve all of our problems. It can't.

What Will It Try Not To Do?

Let the biases of individual team members affect its evaluation of us or lead to witch hunting.

Be picayune or become embroiled in intramural conflicts.

Usurp or interfere with the normal functions of faculty senates, professional organizations, the administration, or the governing board.

Prepared by John H. Porterfield, retired Member of the Teaching Faculty, Diablo Valley College, and a former member of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The Statement was originally included in the 1984 ASCCC paper Faculty Role in Accreditation.

Appendix C: Recommendations from the 2004 paper, “The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation”

1. Local faculty should be familiar with references that establish the basis for local senate rights and responsibilities in the Education Code and Title 5, understanding that those take precedent over accreditation standards if and when they are determined by local senates to be in conflict with their academic and professional rights;
2. Local senates should determine the selection of certain key people involved in the self study process, including the self study’s Lead Faculty Chair and the Learning Outcomes/ Assessment Coordinator (LOAC) who should be compensated with appropriate release, stipends, and/or reassignment considerations (2.02. F03);
3. Local senates should engage the entire college community in the holistic exploration of appropriate and reasonable criteria for the implementation of SLOs for library and student support services units;
4. Local Senates are encouraged to adopt a statement of philosophy about the nature of and use of assessment mechanisms and SLOs prior to their being implemented;
5. Local senates are urged to work with local bargaining units to resist efforts to link evaluation of faculty to the accreditation process itself and to reject recommendations that suggest a college must accede to such demands.
6. Local senates are strongly advised to employ methodologies that create a blind between individual class sections and the institution to protect the privacy of students and faculty (2.01 F03).
7. Local senates are urged to take measures to safeguard the academic freedom of untenured and adjunct faculty, including adopting statements on academic freedom and privacy such as those adopted by the Academic Senate and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2.01 F03);
8. Local senates are advised to establish processes, timelines and guidelines for creating, identifying and assessing SLOs in all matters related to accreditation and ongoing planning, including curriculum, program review—and in close cooperation with all student service related programs (2.01 S04; refer also to Appendix D).
9. Local senates are urged to not accept for adoption externally designed, prefabricated SLOs except as required by those certificate and occupational education programs requiring licensure or board certification – and to recognize that even with such national and state standards, local faculty retain responsibility to scrutinize such instruments in relation to course and program goals and objectives (2.01 F04).
10. Local senates and curriculum committees are strongly advised to use “objectives” in Course Outlines of Record as opposed to “Student Learning Outcomes.” Until definitions of assessment terminology have been standardized within the system and among intersegmental groups, the term “Student Learning Outcomes” is suggestive of assessment choices that are rightfully a matter of course level determination by the instructors of record (2.05 F04).

Appendix D: Resolutions

There are more than one hundred Academic Senate resolutions on record, dating from 1979 until the present, dealing directly with accreditation—and dozens more expressing a tangential interest in the subject. To include the full text of these resolutions in this paper would more than triple its length, an outcome that would not comply well with conservational best practices. Still, a review of the resolutions, their dates of adoption and concerns, imbues one with a sense of the Senate’s history and its ongoing commitment to academic and professional matters. Because one may view these resolutions, going back to Fall 1989, at the Academic Senate website, a brief overview is offered here.

The eighteen resolutions contained in the 1986 paper, *The Faculty Role in Accreditation*, go back to 1979. While these eighteen resolutions are not recorded at the Academic Senate website, they do establish many of the processes that today we take for granted. For example, these first resolutions recommend that senates receive copies of the *Accrediting Commission Handbook*, be informed of who will serve on visiting teams, be included in making the schedule for the visiting team, and that local faculty receive a copy of the team’s final report. Others of the original eighteen resolutions urge local senates to ensure faculty participation, urge the commission to include minority reports, recommend reassigned time for faculty chairing or co-chairing the self study committee, and “urge the Accreditation Commission to require local senate sign-off showing appropriate senate involvement in accrediting progress reports from local colleges.”

Also of interest is how the Academic Senate and ACCJC appeared, through resolutions, to

be working in unison. In Fall 1986, the Academic Senate adopted a resolution that stated:

Amend the position paper on credentials adopted at the 1968 Spring Conference to read “from a regionally accredited institution” wherever a degree is mentioned as a requirement for teaching or for administration, and

Be it further resolved that the academic senate recommend to local senates that faculty members serving on hiring committees evaluate the degrees offered by candidates and consider only degrees from regionally accredited institutions, and

Be it further resolved that the Academic Senate recommend to local senates that college publications list only degree from regionally accredited institutions, and

Be it further resolved that the Academic Senate recommend to local senates that for salary schedule placement and academic rank only degrees from regionally accredited institutions be considered, and

Be it finally resolved that the Academic Senate recommend to local senates that they establish a Professional Standards Committee where necessary to consider these recommendation and related issues.

In fact, so strong was the desire of those early senators to have faculty involved in all aspects of the accreditation process that the following was also adopted in Fall 1986.

Recommend to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges:

1. That in the review of the accrediting handbook the Commission focus on the delineation of functions, enhancing the role of local academic senates in the accreditation process of their institutions.
2. That the Commission consider procedures for involving the senates in the various stages of the accreditation process.
3. That, in the event objections or reservations reach the Commission from a local senate, the Commission acknowledge receipt of those objections or reservations and make them a part of the accreditation process.
4. That the final report that is sent before publication to the college president for factual corrections also be sent to the co-signators for similar corrections and approval.

Academic Senate resolutions dealing with accreditation, from Fall 1989, are available at the Academic Senate website and fit into several primary categories: procedural issues (who signs what when); political considerations (recommendations regarding local senate involvement, with appropriate stipends and/or reassigned time); collaborative involvement (seeking to have input into proposed revisions of accreditation handbooks, policies and procedures); and oppositional stances (taking issue with proposed and/or adopted processes and policies). While a majority of the resolutions are procedural or collaborative in nature, beginning in 2001, as the ACCJC began its shift to outcomes assessment, resolutions began to raise objections.

2.01 Proposed Resolution Concerning the Revision of Accreditation Standards

Fall 2001

Topic: Accreditation

Whereas, The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has proposed sweeping revisions to the Accreditation Standards for the community colleges that mirror the current Department of Education's preoccupation with quantitative measures over all else, inculcate a corporate model of organization and functioning, and complete the movement away from concern for minimum standards and quality of education;

Whereas, The proposed revisions minimize collegial governance in its own right, entirely delete reference to academic senates, focus institutional leadership on recognition of the "vested authority" of governing boards and college presidents, and generally retreat from attention to processes designed to foster academic standards, the credibility of the transcript and the assurance of educational excellence for students;

Whereas, The proposed standards require institutional effectiveness planning based on quantifiable outcomes as the main criterion for accreditation, while qualitative issues and educational standards are largely absent and issues of institutional integrity are minimized; and

Whereas, Student needs are addressed primarily through "learning objectives" and "outcomes" without appropriate regard to the fiscal, social, or other human needs relative to an educational experience of quality, and emphasis on developing programs responsive

to student and local community needs is largely absent;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate urge the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to reconsider its proposal to refocus accreditation primarily on management by objective and the use of quantitative assessment and outcomes, and to reinstate appropriate concern for minimum standards, educational quality and institutional integrity;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate vigorously object to the removal of a central commitment to collegial governance as an expectation for institutions of higher education and insist that the Commission remove from the proposed standards the elevation and privileging of the college president's authority over the collective expertise of faculty and the processes of collegial consultation; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate provide detailed refutation of the proposed standards and work with faculty colleagues in University of California and California State University as well as American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to initiate a wider discussion of the role of accreditation in ensuring educational excellence and integrity as well as the implications of current trends for the credibility and viability of the accrediting process.

Since Resolution 2.01 F.01, eighteen additional resolutions were adopted by Fall 2004, which deal exclusively with accreditation. As with the original eighteen resolutions from the 1970s, their primary concern remains the faculty role in the process.

Where the most recent eighteen resolutions differ from the original eighteen is in their lack of common cause with the methods adopted by the ACCJC in the 2002 Accreditation Standards. While one would expect peer review to remain collegial and dedicated to providing quality assurances to students, now, as never before, such expectations depend largely on the willingness of faculty to remain actively involved and prepared to exert influence at all levels of the accreditation process. By so doing, perhaps accreditation may continue to provide useful information to local colleges and, as a result, lead to Academic Senate resolutions that once again focus on a collaborative relationship with the ACCJC.