

Update on Spring Semester Accreditation Activities

In late March through early April, Accreditation Focus Groups were formed to read and comment upon the second drafts of our self-study report. The Focus Groups' comments and recommendations were forwarded to and reviewed by the members of the four Standard Committees, providing them with direction as they began their final revisions. These Standard Committee members have worked furiously over the past several weeks in order to complete our self-study report by the end of the spring semester. These folks have dedicated much time reading, discussing, researching, and writing, and we all owe them a hearty *thank you*.

Next Steps: What Will Happen This Summer?

In mid-June, our accreditation self-study coordinator will begin the editing process, working through much of the summer. Her primary charge is to make the multiple sections of the self-study report come together as one voice, format the document for ease of reading, insert charts and other images to enhance comprehension, check the validity and reliability of the cited evidence, and add other components to complete the report as stipulated by our accrediting agency, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC/WASC). The coordinator will also work closely with our IPRO staff and others on campus to create an electronic "site visit team room" in which to house e-copies of the self-study report and all supporting documents.

Fall Preview—Self Study debut and Town Halls scheduled

Our accreditation self-study report will be available at the start of the fall 2008 semester. The campus community will be encouraged to access the document electronically via our web site, and each college department will have a couple of hard copies available for reading. In addition, an executive summary of the self-study report will be made available and presented in a PowerPoint format at several Town Halls scheduled at the CEC on Wednesday, September 17 from 12-1 pm in the Jack Scott Multipurpose room (CEC 126) and at PCC's main campus on Thursday, September 18 from 12 – 1 pm in the Forum, and again from 5:30-6:30 pm in the President's Conference room (C233).

Accreditation Timeline

Friday, June 13	Reports from Standard Committees due to Self-Study Coordinator
June 16—July 31	Self-Study Coordinator edits report
Tuesday, September 2	Self-Study Report available online for the campus community to read
Wednesday, September 17	Accreditation Town Hall at the CEC (12-1 pm, CEC room 126)
Thursday, September 18	Accreditation Town Halls at PCC (12-1 pm in the Forum; 5:30-6:30 pm in C233)
November 2008	Mock Site Visit and Addendums incorporated into Self-Study Report
December 2008	Final version of the Accreditation Self-Study submitted for Board approval
January 2009	Final Accreditation Self-Study Report submitted to ACCJC/WASC
March 16-19, 2009	Accreditation Site Team Visit

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PCC's Accreditation Process—a team effort!



Don't be left without *your* sword.

The following is excerpted from the Spring 2008 edition of ACCJC/WASC's *Accreditation Notes* newsletter.

Accreditation and Self-Regulation: Meeting the Standards is Essential to Continued Privilege

American higher education has been privileged to be self-regulating for over 100 years since the first institutional accrediting commissions began in the 1890s in the New England and North Central states. In the last four years, as members of the Congress, the Department of Education, and others have discussed accreditation—in the context of the renewal of the Higher Education Act—some individuals have argued that accreditation is not effective in assuring quality. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and other regional accrediting commissions, operating as a united Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), have argued to the Congress and the Department of Education—as well as the critical public—that regional accreditation is effective, that it sets high standards for institutional quality, and that it holds institutions accountable for meeting or exceeding those standards.

When regional accreditors and other higher education representatives assert that non-governmental, peer-based accreditation is a reliable and sound means of assuring institutional quality and improving educational effectiveness, they draw upon the basic values and commitments of our profession and of our non-governmental, peer-based quality-assurance system to make their case. They maintain that, as an industry, higher education is staffed and led by people who understand the teaching and learning process. They claim, and the Commission believes it to be true, that higher educational professionals are personally and professionally committed to helping students learn. They reason that the higher education community's own professional and personal interest in student success will drive it to be self-evaluating and continually self-improving. They insist that more federal regulation is not needed and would be disruptive.

It appears that the arguments have been successful. The Higher Education Act draft, now in Conference Committee, contains no dramatic changes to this system of self-regulation. It does include some adjustments to public reporting of information about institutional quality. In the future, there will be increased pressure for disclosure of more definitive data on institutional quality. In order to retain the continued trust of the Congress and the public—in our system of self-regulation—accrediting commissions and accredited institutions must make good on their promises. If accredited institutions do not commit, truly, to ongoing institutional self-assessment and improvement, to the use of objective and reasonable measures to assess the quality of student outcomes, and to systematically improving education, our sector will not maintain its self-regulatory privilege.

The ACCJC has been consistent and firm in both its statements and actions that its member (accredited) colleges conduct evaluative research on institutional and programmatic quality and student learning, and that colleges plan and implement improvements to educational quality which supports student success. The legitimacy of our self-regulatory system of quality assurance is predicated upon every accredited institution demonstrating through actions its commitment to meeting the standards and the professional values that these standards express and require.

Commission Sets Timeline on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation

When it adopted the 2002 Standards of Accreditation, the Commission made public its expectation that institutions would take eight to ten years to fully implement the new requirements to define intended student learning outcomes, assess learning, evaluate the results of assessment, and demonstrate planning and improvement efforts to improve student success. At its annual retreat in February, the Commissioners and the staff of the ACCJC considered whether this timeline should be extended. The data examined show most institutions have begun the required work, and many are at the developmental level; some institutions are at the more advanced levels, and approximately ten appear to have not started at all.

After careful consideration, the Commission decided to retain its expectation that member institutions work to implement the standards related to student learning outcomes, assessment, and improvement within the original ten-year timeframe, or by 2012. Institutions evaluated beginning in fall 2012 will be required to have reached "proficiency" level, which is the third level described on the Rubric on Institutional Effectiveness released by the Commission in September 2007. Failure to reach this level will be considered as a deficiency in meeting the standards.