



# Department of Education Responds to Complaint Against ACCJC

## Accreditation Newsletter ISSUE 03 | August 2013

On August 13, 2013 the Department of Education (DOE) released its findings regarding complaints filed against the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The complaints were filed by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and other interested parties.

### What were the DOE's findings?

The DOE found that some aspects of the ACCJC's accreditation review process are not in compliance with federal standards in 4 key areas:

1. The ACCJC does not have a specific policy regarding the composition of the teams that visit institutions during the accreditation review process.
2. The ACCJC's current policies allow for potential conflicts of interest to occur.
3. The current method for the ACCJC to make recommendations to colleges is unclear. The ACCJC states that it has two types of recommendations: improvement and noncompliance.
  - Recommendation for Improvement: Recommendations for an institution that relate directly to improving effectiveness. These recommendations give directions for improvement but do not conclude that the college is not upholding a Standard or Eligibility Requirement.
  - Recommendation of Noncompliance: Recommendations made when an institution is found to not be fully upholding a Standard or Eligibility Requirement.

The DOE concluded that it is difficult to distinguish between the two types of recommendations and that the ACCJC needs to more clearly identify what types of recommendations can lead to a Reaffirmation (with or without required follow-up reports), Sanctions (Warning, Probation, Show-cause) or a Termination of Accreditation.

4. The ACCJC has not properly implemented the "two-year rule". This federal regulations requires that institutions correct deficiencies within the time frame. The DOE found that the ACCJC allowed CCSF to be out of compliance during the time it was placed on Show-Cause status and that ACCJC must demonstrate that it clearly follows the federal "two-year rule".

The DOE has given the ACCJC up to 12 months to be in compliance regarding these issues.

### What does this mean for City College of San Francisco?

It is still unclear how the DOE findings will impact the situation regarding CCSF. The ACCJC has stated that it will review the recommendations, make any necessary policy changes, and will include a formal response to the DOE letter in December 2013 as part of its recognition review for the national Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Improvement. The ACCJC can also appeal the decision.



### What does this mean for Pasadena City College?

There are several potential benefits for PCC:

1. Addressing the composition of visiting teams could help make the process more transparent and offer more diversity in the types of recommendations made after a team visits our campus.
2. Transparency would also be increased by ensuring that any potential conflicts of interest are avoided.
3. Clarification regarding recommendations will help remove any ambiguity regarding the steps PCC must take to improve and what steps we need to take to comply.
4. A clear understanding of the timeframe for required changes/improvements will help facilitate the process.