



ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Barbara A. Beno, President
Steven M. Kinsella, Chair

December 18, 2015

To: Chancellors, Presidents, and ALOs of Member Institutions, All Interested Parties

From: Barbara A. Beno, *Barbara A. Beno*

RE: NACIQI Action on ACCJC – Recognition Continued, Compliance Report Required

Yesterday, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Improvement (NACIQI) voted to recommend that the Secretary of Education continue the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) recognition and require a six-month compliance report on three areas of federal regulations. NACIQI is a recommending body. Its recommendation, along with that of the United States Department of Education (USDE) staff, will be sent to the Senior Department Official, who makes a final decision. The ACCJC was asked by NACIQI, and agreed, that six months was sufficient time for ACCJC to fully respond to the remaining areas of noncompliance, rather than the one year recommended by USDE staff. ACCJC's compliance report will be due six months after it receives the Secretary's action letter, which usually occurs in February following a December NACIQI meeting. This means ACCJC's compliance report will likely be scheduled for the December 2016 NACIQI meeting.

In anticipation of the final decision, ACCJC will be making two changes to its action letters to satisfy minor USDE staff concerns. In addition, USDE staff asked that ACCJC put into its policies or standards the specific requirements for baccalaureate degree programs before approving any more baccalaureate degree programs. ACCJC's 2014 Accreditation Standards discuss accreditation standards for such degrees in much the same terminology as other regional accreditors. The Guide to Evaluating Institutions describes the specific quality criteria for baccalaureate degree programs, as well as other aspects of institutional quality, that evaluators must examine in evaluating institutions for reaffirmation of accreditation. However, USDE staff would like the ACCJC to place the specific standards and criteria for baccalaureate degree programs either into the Accreditation Standards or into policy to assure all member colleges and Commissioners use the requirements when designing and assessing, respectively, the quality of baccalaureate programs.

In order to respond to this requirement, ACCJC will be placing a *first reading* of a new policy, Accreditation Requirements for Baccalaureate Programs, on its January 2016 agenda. The agenda will be revised to reflect this addition. After the first reading, the policy will be circulated to the field for comment, as is usually done with first readings. When this

policy is approved, and if it satisfies the USDE staff, ACCJC will again apply for an extension of its scope to accredit baccalaureate degrees (authority that was suspended by NACIQI until the compliance report is reviewed). In the meantime, institutions whose addition of a baccalaureate program has been approved by the ACCJC Substantive Change Committee prior to the Secretary of Education's issuance of decision letter are accredited and will be able to proceed; any college whose application has not been approved will be deferred until ACCJC resolves this issue with USDE in December 2016.

Please feel free to send email inquiries or call if you have any questions.

In the meantime, best wishes for a happy holiday season.

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