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President's Message

Strengthening Support, Sharing Stories, Shaping the Future

Dear Colleagues,

As we move through yet another dynamic academic year, our institutions continue to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to the success of all students. Despite the challenges we face, from shifting federal landscapes to questions about the value of higher education, your work remains a source of inspiration and hope.

At ACCJC, we've been busy strengthening the ways we support our institutions, our volunteers, and the students we all serve. We've fully launched ACCJC's Accreditation Platform and the Peer Reviewer and Institutional Portals designed to streamline processes and make engagement easier and more intuitive. Our refreshed website features a modern design, improved navigation, and an updated institutional directory with integrated data dashboards designed to enhance usability and transparency for members, students, and the public.

We're proud to share that ACCJC has received a \$400,000 grant from the College Futures Foundation to continue our Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project. As part of this work, ACCJC will host four regional convenings focused on elevating institutional strategies for understanding and improving return on investment (ROI) at the programmatic level, and to continue our work around data transparency and student engagement.

Our advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. have continued despite the government



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ACCJC staff are engaging with members of Congress and their staff, as well as thinktanks and thought leaders, to publish white papers and propose policy solutions related to data, ROI, and workforce partnerships. We're excited to continue sharing stories through *ACCJC On The Move* and to publish our first Accreditation in Action spotlight in *ACCJC Connect*. These projects help ACCJC amplify your work and its impact as we advocate for two-year institutions, students, and the valuable relationship between accreditors and their members.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming webinars, regional convenings, and the 2026 Partners in Excellence Conference, spaces where we can learn from one another and continue building momentum towards our shared goals of quality education and success for all students.

Thank you for all you do. Let's keep moving forward, together.

Yours,
Mac Powell

Commission Announcements and Updates

Streamlined and Strengthened: ACCJC Launches New Tools and Resources

[Interactive Data Dashboards and ROI Metric](#)

ACCJC recently launched its [Student Achievement Dashboards](#) and [Return on Investment \(ROI\) Metric](#), key tools that reflect the Commission's ongoing commitment to transparency and institutional improvement. These public-facing dashboards enable students, policymakers, and institutional leaders to explore historical trends in student outcomes across all ACCJC member institutions, providing a clearer picture of educational value and impact.

New Accreditation Platform and Portals

After a multi-year development effort, the ACCJC Accreditation Platform is now fully deployed. The platform features dedicated portals for staff, commissioners, peer reviewers, and member institutions, each designed to streamline communication and simplify accreditation processes. The launch of the Institutional Portal marked the final step in this initiative, completing a comprehensive upgrade to how ACCJC supports its members and volunteers.

Refreshed ACCJC Website

The ACCJC website now features a modern design, improved navigation, and an updated



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Together, these updates reflect ACCJC's ongoing commitment to improving the experience for member institutions, volunteer peer reviewers, and the broader ACCJC community.

[ACCJC Technology, Data, Transparency Initiatives Video...](#)

ACCJC Receives \$400K Grant from College Futures Foundation to Advance Transparency, Storytelling, and Social Mobility

ACCJC has [received an additional \\$400,000 grant from the College Futures Foundation](#) to deepen its work around data transparency, institutional storytelling, and the social mobility fostered by ACCJC-accredited colleges. The funding will support the expansion of the Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project through the 2025–2026 academic year.

As part of this effort, ACCJC will host four regional convenings focused on elevating institutional strategies for understanding return on investment (ROI) at the programmatic level, as well as data transparency and student engagement. Each convening will feature Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, winner of the 2025 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, leading a workshop on program-level ROI.

More information on the [Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project](#) and Regional Convenings is available on the ACCJC website.

ACCJC Showcases Workforce Partnerships Driving Student Success

ACCJC recently [released a new paper](#) highlighting how member institutions are partnering with local industries to meet workforce needs and create meaningful opportunities for students. The report, *Building a Future-Ready Workforce: Highlighting Best Practices in ACCJC Member Institutions*, shares examples from member institutions leading collaborations in fields such as healthcare, clean energy, and public safety. These partnerships demonstrate the power of innovation and regional collaboration in supporting both students and communities.

This and other recent publications are available on the [Publications Page](#) of the ACCJC website.

2025 Commissioner Election

The [2025 ACCJC election](#) brought both continuity and new voices to the Commission. Commissioners Ball, Broad, Reyna, Teraoka, and Thorossian were reelected, continuing their committed service to ACCJC. We are also excited to welcome two new commissioners: Herman Bounds Jr., who brings insights from his tenure at the U.S. Department of Education, and Rowena Tomaneng, whose years of leadership in the California Community College system and at the Chancellor's Office will greatly enrich the Commission's work.

At the same time, we bid a heartfelt farewell to Lori Gaskin, Public Member and Immediate



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wisdom have left a lasting impact. She will be greatly missed by her colleagues, and we extend our deepest gratitude for her service. [ACCJC Commissioner Bios...](#)



Herman Bounds Jr.



Rowena Tomaneng



Lori Gaskin

Call to Action

Now Recruiting: ACCJC Appeals Hearing Panel Pool

ACCJC is seeking individuals to serve in the Commission's Appeals Hearing Panel Pool, a group of higher education professionals and public representatives who may be called upon in the rare event of an institutional appeal to an ACCJC action.

Members of the pool serve three-year terms and reflect the diversity of ACCJC's membership and region, with consideration for institutional size, mission, geography, and professional background. If you or someone you know is interested in contributing to this important aspect of ACCJC's institutional accreditation process, please submit the [Appeals Hearing Panel Pool Interest Form](#). For questions, please contact communications@accjc.org. For more details, view the [Policy on Institutional Appeals](#).

Please Update Statements of Accredited Status and ACCJC Logo

ACCJC kindly requests that all member institutions review and update, as necessary, their statements of accredited status in publications and on college websites per the [ACCJC Bylaws](#) and the [Policy on Representation of Accredited Status](#). ACCJC's [updated logo](#) and the [ACCJC Logo Use and Style Guide](#) are available to assist with these updates.

Background: Since 2024, ACCJC has been doing business as "Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges". As such, the reference to Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) should be removed from statements of accredited status.

Advocacy in Action

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Accreditation



ACCJC is proud to be a strong advocate for two-year institutions and their students. Over the past year, President Powell has served as Vice Chair of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), traveling frequently to Washington, D.C., to engage with Congress, higher education committees, and federal officials. These efforts ensure that the perspectives and needs of ACCJC member institutions are heard at the highest levels.

Recent advocacy efforts have focused on navigating the rapidly changing federal landscape, the valuable partnership between accreditors and their members,

and amplifying the voice of two-year institutions in national and regional conversations about data-transparency, workforce partnerships, and the value of higher education. By sharing data, best practices, and institutional stories, ACCJC ensures that the impact of its member institutions is recognized at the local, state, and national levels.

We are also deeply committed to increasing our capacity to deliver educational programming and resources by seeking funding and strategic partnerships with organizations such as College Futures Foundation and Lumina Foundation and have recently secured an additional \$400,000 grant from College Futures Foundation to expand our Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project.

Advocating for Students Through Innovation

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) recently released a statement encouraging the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) to advance learning evaluation and recognition. The statement affirms that using AI for learning evaluation does not conflict with accreditation standards and emphasizes the importance of transparent, ethical deployment of AI tools. By leveraging AI thoughtfully, institutions can reduce unnecessary credit loss for students and strengthen pathways toward degree completion.

[C-RAC Statement on the Use of AI to Advance Learning Evaluation and Recognition...](#)

Member Focus

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Aligned with our 2030 Strategic Plan, ACCJC proudly introduces “Accreditation in Action,” a new feature spotlighting how the peer review process supports innovation and continuous improvement across our member institutions. This series is part of ACCJC’s ongoing advocacy for the mission and value of two-year institutions, sharing stories that demonstrate the essential role of accreditation in advancing student success and institutional excellence.



We begin with Mount Tamalpais College, whose groundbreaking work inside San Quentin Rehabilitation Center reflects the innovation, resilience, and dedication found throughout our membership.

Mount Tamalpais College, the first independent liberal arts institution dedicated specifically to serving

incarcerated students, has undergone a remarkable evolution. As part of its path to Initial Accreditation in 2022, the college strengthened its academic and operational foundations, including hiring key personnel, aligning learning outcomes, and launching its first computer lab within the facility. The accreditation process provided a framework that supported these efforts, helping the institution deepen its impact and expand student access to high-quality, college-level education, often for the first time.

[Full feature on Mount Tamalpais College...](#)



Million Dollar Winner Case Study: Madera Community College

In case you missed it, this summer, Lumina Foundation and StrategyForward Advisors released the [case study for the winner of the Million Dollar Community College Challenge, Madera Community College](#). Congratulations to the Madera Community College community for your success and vision!



Two ACCJC Member Institutions Receive IEBC Caring Campus Silver Certification

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) has created Caring Campus based on research that shows students who feel more connected to their college are more likely to be retained, persist from semester to semester, and complete their academic goals. Several ACCJC Member Institutions are engaging with Caring Campus and adopting their framework. This fall, **West Los Angeles College** and **Yuba College** have each earned silver certification – demonstrating their deep commitment to fostering connection,

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ACCJC On The Move

Stories of Student Success and Institutional Transformation

The story of an institution is the story of the people, places, and communities that serve its students. Conversations about student success often focus solely on graduation rates or other benchmark data that can obscure the true impact institutions, programs, and people have on the human beings served. *ACCJC On The Move* is about our journey to understand the distinct missions of the 138 institutions ACCJC serves, and the promising impactful practices changing lives inside and outside the classroom. Our most recent articles feature [Honolulu Community College](#), [Merced College](#), and [Mt. San Antonio College](#). Take a look at [ACCJC On The Move](#), follow us on [Instagram @accjc_onthemove](#), and please say hello when you see President Powell on campus!



Upcoming Events

Webinar - Listening to Lead: Amplifying the Student Story Through Focus Groups

Join ACCJC and expert facilitators Michelle Fowles and Rebecca Stein for a follow-up webinar summarizing key takeaways from the "Conducting Focus Groups to Better Understand and Relay the Student Story" training. This session will highlight how colleges are using focus groups to amplify student voices and enhance institutional storytelling, with reflections from expert facilitators and peers.

Thursday, October 30, 2025, from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. PDT.

[Zoom Registration Link - Focus Groups](#)

Webinar - Bridging the Gap: Helping Students Translate Competencies into Career Success

While community colleges offer a variety of curricular and co-curricular opportunities to learn, the National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE) career competencies research shows that students often struggle to articulate what they have learned or to connect this learning to the workplace. In fact, there is a gap in the competencies

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NACE Competency Assessment Tool strengthens professional networks and improves employment outcomes, especially for first-generation and underserved students. NACE partner, Career Launch, will share how their digital NACE Career Readiness Inventory tool assists practitioners in measuring students' growth in their competencies and skills in real-time.

Tuesday, December 9, 2025, from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. PST

[Zoom Registration Link - Career Competencies](#)

Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project Regional Convenings

ACCJC will host four convenings in 2026, bringing together diverse campus teams for a workshop led by representatives from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, winner of the 2025 Aspen Prize, showcasing how ROI data can be embedded into planning and culture to ensure students graduate into living-wage careers. Invitations and registration instructions will be sent to CEOs, ALOs, Chancellors, and Board Presidents. *We invite college administrators, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to participate in the conversations.* Space can accommodate **up to seven attendees** from each member institution at a designated regional convening. There is no charge, and the cost of attendance is subsidized. More information is available on the ACCJC website. The regional convenings are supported by a grant from the College Futures Foundation.

[Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project...](#)

- Regional Convening at Kapi'olani Community College – January 12th, 9 am – 4 pm HST
- Regional Convening at Long Beach City College – April 13th, 9 am – 5 pm PDT
- Regional Convening at Skyline College – April 15th, 9 am – 5 pm PDT
- Regional Convening at Sacramento City College – April 16th, 9 am – 5 pm PDT

2026 ACCJC Partners in Excellence Conference



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SAVE THE DATES



ACCJC CONFERENCE

PARTNERS | 20
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November 17-18, 2026
Riverside Convention Center
Riverside, California

Join us for a gathering of regional and national visionaries celebrating and sharing bold ideas, breakthrough gains in student success, and the powerful impact of our member institutions.

**More information will be available in the fall,
for now, please save the dates!**



ACCJC In the Field

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Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) Retreat in downtown Chicago. The event was highlighted by national speakers and facilitated sessions that showcased best practices across the seven institutional accrediting agencies. We spent a tremendous amount of time in fellowship with colleagues from all over the United States, learning about the ever-evolving landscape of higher education.

Vice President Melynie Schiel visiting **American Samoa Community College**



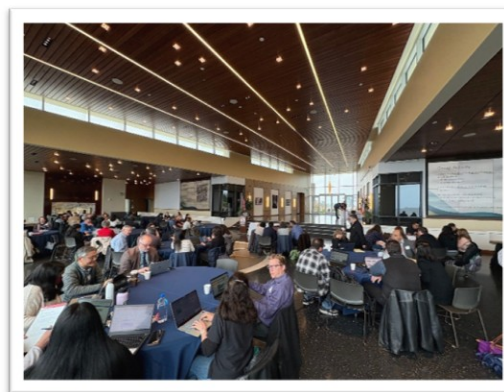
Vice President Kevin Bontenbal and Peer Review Team at **Hawai'i Community College**



Peer Review Team learning about Ag Tech at **College of the Sequoias**



ACCJC Regional Convening at **Skyline College**



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[email](#) to colleagues, members of the public, and students to help ACCJC keep member institution personnel and other interested parties apprised of our news and updates. If you have any questions or comments about this communication, please email communications@accjc.org. Thank you!

In an effort to ensure wide distribution of this information ACCJC is utilizing multiple means of communication, we apologize if you receive this as a duplicate.

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