Contra Costa Community College District

pathways to success

GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA

CONTRA COSTA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Special Meeting

January 15, 2013

Public Session   2:00 p.m.

George R. Gordon Education Center
Sixth Floor Conference room
500 Court Street
Martinez, California 94553

925.229.1000   Phone
925.370.2019   Fax

www.4cd.edu

**Contra Costa
Community
College District**

pathways to success

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING
of the
GOVERNING BOARD

Notice is hereby given that the Governing Board of the Contra Costa Community College District will hold a special meeting on **Tuesday, January 15, 2013, at 2:00 p.m. in the sixth floor conference room** at the George R. Gordon Education Center, for accreditation training.

Sheila A. Grilli
President, Governing Board

Notices Posted:
Contra Costa College, San Pablo
Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill
Los Medanos College, Pittsburg
Brentwood Center, Brentwood
San Ramon Campus, San Ramon
Education Center, Martinez

CONTRA COSTA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA
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Sixth Floor Conference Room
500 Court Street
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January 15, 2013
Special Meeting
Open Session: 2:00 p.m.

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I. **CALL SPECIAL MEETING TO ORDER – 2:00 P.M.**
- Call special meeting to order. Notation of Board member(s) absent under provisions of Board Report No. 30-**F**, 2.12.86.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG – 2:05 P.M.**

III. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

> *According to Government Code Section 54954.2(a), when responding to public comment, Governing Board members and staff may respond as summarized below:*
> - *briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by persons making public comment;*
> - *ask questions for clarification or make a brief announcement;*
> - *provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information;*
> - *request staff to report back to the body at a later meeting; or*
> - *direct staff to place the matter on a future agenda.*

IV. **GOVERNING BOARD TRAINING ON ACCREDITATION – 2:10 P.M.**
- Dr. Barbara Beno, Commission President, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Facilitator

V. **SIGN DOCUMENTS**

VI. **ADJOURN – 5:00 P.M.**

> *The mission of the Contra Costa Community College District is to attract students and communities, to cultivate a sustainable culture of wellbeing, learning, success and achievement for our students. As a District, we are dedicated to continuously increasing our ability to serve the evolving needs of our students and community by providing accessible, equitable and outstanding higher education learning opportunities and support services. All decisions about resources are informed by looking at access and success through an equity lens.*

TWELVE COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

These questions and answers are meant to provide basic information about regional accreditation to college staff and students.

1. **What is regional accreditation?**

   Regional accreditation is a successful and robust, time-tested model of professional peer review that supports educational excellence. Accreditation is a voluntary process of quality review that institutions agree to undergo periodically. The accrediting commissions with responsibility for accreditation in various regions are legally recognized by the federal government. The public has come to value accreditation as a mark of quality.

   Accreditation is a system of self regulation developed by higher education institutions to evaluate overall institutional quality and encourage continual improvement. Colleges and universities form membership associations to set up an accrediting agency and work with that agency to establish the quality standards used to rigorously evaluate the institutions. Accreditation Standards represent the best practices in higher education and set a high expectation for quality.

   There are six geographic regions under the U.S. system recognized by the federal government and one accreditor has exclusive responsibility for accreditation within each. There are other kinds of accreditation (national, programmatic) but regional accreditation status is regarded as the most comprehensive and rigorous for institutions to attain.

   The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is part of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) region. WASC operates in California, Hawai'i and the Pacific Region that includes Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. Five other regional accreditors operate in and have names associated with other geographic regions of the United States.

2. **What authority do regional accreditors like ACCJC have to impose Accreditation Standards on institutions?**

   The regional accreditors are given the authority to apply their Accreditation Standards by the member institutions that have voluntarily joined a regional association to improve educational quality.

   The ACCJC and other regional accrediting bodies are also authorized to operate by the U.S. Department of Education through the Higher Education Opportunity Act. The USDE evaluates accrediting bodies every five years through a process called "recognition." The USDE has several requirements that accrediting bodies must demonstrate they continuously meet, including integrity of the process, making the results of accreditation available to the public, and fairness in the even application of the Accreditation Standards to all institutions.

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Accreditation from a U.S. Department of Education-recognized accreditor, such as the ACCJC, enables institutions to qualify for federal Title IV funds (financial aid for students) and other federal grants and contracts.

The Accreditation Standards of a recognized accrediting body such as the ACCJC are developed with some input from the Department of Education and Congress, which also asks each accreditor to encourage the active participation of all member institutions in a transparent and open process that assures educational quality.

3. What is the purpose of regional accreditation?

Accreditation is a proven method for assuring that a higher education institution has the ability to offer a quality education to the men and women who will lead their communities in the future, and to improve that quality over time. By establishing high standards and then being externally evaluated against those standards, colleges and universities can provide a degree or certificate that students and the community can trust.

In achieving and maintaining its accreditation a higher education institution assures the public that the institution meets standards of quality, that the education earned there is of value to the student who earned it, and that employers, trade or profession-related licensing agencies and other colleges and universities can accept a student's credential as legitimate.

Just as important, the process provides a means for an institution to continuously improve educational quality and grow to meet the changing needs of students and society. Internal evaluation is a critical part of the accreditation process and through the various phases of an accreditation process colleges and universities are able to build on strengths and improve weaknesses so that they offer a better education.

4. How is the accreditation review conducted?

There are four phases to the accreditation process involving internal evaluation, external evaluation by professional peers, Commission evaluation, and institutional self-improvement to meet evolving regional and federal standards. Every six years ACCJC members have agreed to undergo the comprehensive process to determine whether they are meeting their established Accreditation Standards and to develop ways to improve their future ability to serve students.

Every accreditation review starts with an internal evaluation. An institution engages in comparing itself to Accreditation Standards, writes an internal (i.e., self) evaluation report, develops its own plans for improvement where needed, and submits the written analysis to its accrediting agency for review.

At the second phase, a trained team of education professional peers from member institutions conducts an external institutional evaluation. The external evaluation team, all volunteers, visits the institution, examines the institutional internal evaluation, examines institutional practices, and writes an evaluative report with recommendations for improvement.

The third phase occurs when the members of the regional accrediting commission evaluate all the information and make the decision on the accredited status of the institution. The Commission may also provide recommendations and direction for institutional improvement in areas where

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improvement is needed.   ACCJC Commissioners review institutional cases at meetings in January and June of each year.

Whether the institution meets the current Accreditation Standards or not, the fourth phase is about self-improvement and each institution uses the recommendations of the external evaluation team and the Commission to guide changes that make their educational quality better.

The goal is always to improve institutional performance before the start of the next six-year review. The Commission may monitor and advise an institution until it improves. If an institution is out of compliance with the Accreditation Standards, the Commissioners may require a follow-up report from the institution, or another team visit, and/or may impose a sanction and deadlines for the institution to come into compliance with all Accreditation Standards.   A sanction signals the institution and the public that there are institutional issues that need to be addressed if quality is to be maintained. While on sanction, institutional accreditation continues and the institution works to resolve any such issues.

An institution seeking accreditation for the first time undergoes a similar process including an internal examination using the Accreditation Standards and an external team evaluation using the Accreditation Standards. It then will spend three to five years in pre-accreditation statuses of Eligibility and Candidacy as it demonstrates that it has the capacity to continuously meet Accreditation Standards. When the institution is found to meet all Accreditation Standards and policies, it is awarded "initial accreditation", and thereafter is subject to a comprehensive review every six years.

5. What are the Accreditation Standards?

The Accreditation Standards are the basic tool used by member institutions to gauge their success in providing high quality education and in continually improving. The Accreditation Standards focus a good deal on institutional practices that support student completion of certificates and degrees, and student learning. Accreditation helps assure that students get a sound and useful education that is of lifelong value.

Accreditation Standards are established in collaboration with an accrediting association's member institutions and discussed in public hearings with multiple opportunities for comment by the member institutions and the concerned public before they are adopted. Standards are reviewed, and changes are considered, every six years. In addition, Accreditation Standards are statements of expected practice that are developed by the Accrediting Commission, with input from the U.S. Department of Education that reflect Congressional guidelines and expectations for institutional quality. These federal requirements are increasingly more rigorous.

The Accreditation Standards describe good practices in areas of institutional operations, including institutional mission, institutional effectiveness (i.e., achieving stated mission, providing effective educational services), instruction, support services, library and learning resources, human resources, facilities and physical resources, information technology resources, fiscal resources and fiscal management, and governance and decision making.

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6. Who are the Commissioners?

The ACCJC has nineteen Commissioners who represent the interests of the general public and the regional member institutions.

According to the ACCJC bylaws established by the member institutions:
- five Commissioners are faculty from member institutions;
- three represent the public interest and have no affiliation with any member institution, as required by federal regulations;
- two may be people who do not fit any of the other categories of members;
- three are administrators from member institutions; and
- six people each representing one of the following educational entities:
  o the California Community Colleges,
  o the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges,
  o the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of WASC,
  o the Accrediting Commission for Schools of WASC,
  o the Pacific Colleges other than Hawai'i accredited by the ACCJC, and
  o private colleges accredited by the ACCJC.

7. How are the members of the Commission elected?

The Commissioner election process solicits nominations and applications for vacant Commissioner positions through a widely distributed announcement each year in February. Persons interested in becoming a Commissioner complete application materials. A Nominating Committee comprised of four sitting Commissioners and four persons from member institutions nominates a slate of candidates; chief executives of member institutions may add alternative candidates to the slate. The chief executive officers of member institutions then elect the new Commissioners. The Commissioner election process ensure that individuals with personal integrity and true commitment to higher education quality are elected to serve as Commissioners.

8. Who serves on evaluation teams?

Evaluation teams are comprised of eight to 12 volunteer education professionals from member institutions who have relevant expertise and are trained by the Commission staff to employ the ACCJC Accreditation Standards in evaluating institutional practices. They are administrators, faculty, and sometimes trustees of two-year colleges. They have experience in educational governance and administration, instruction, student services, research, facilities, learning resources, fiscal management, human resources and technology resources.

The Commission selects evaluation team members on the basis of their professional expertise and specializations (e.g., Distance Education experts are frequently needed), their experience with accreditation at their own campuses and their ability to apply the Accreditation Standards fairly and consistently. Work as a volunteer evaluator requires a substantial commitment of the evaluator's time, and a team member participates in a four-to five-day long evaluation visit.

Evaluators must also be analytic and use evidentiary materials, have strong interpersonal skills, be able to apply Accreditation Standards to institutions objectively, be able to write well, use a computer for writing, and work well as members of the team. Evaluator training and experience help the team members enhance their skills, and so individuals willing to serve as team members for several years are desirable.

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9. **Are the institutions expected to meet all Accreditation Standards at all times?**
    Yes. Institutions that seek ACCJC accreditation agree to adhere to the Accreditation Standards established by the member institutions at all times. Since accredited status is a signal to the public that an institution satisfies all Accreditation Standards, institutions have to remain in compliance at all times. Anything short of that would diminish public confidence in accreditation as a means of assuring quality. When there is a major change in Accreditation Standards, the Commission sets a reasonable timeline for institutions to comply with them; for example, the 10 year timeline for implementing student learning outcomes.

    However, institutional practices may change, and institutions sometimes don't continuously meet all Accreditation Standards. The purpose of the six-year review is to provide the impetus for re-evaluation of institutional quality. Recommendations for improvement result if the evaluation concludes there are some institutional deficiencies to address OR there are opportunities to improve and exceed the Accreditation Standards.

10. **Does the Commission's process help institutions improve, or just expose them to negative publicity when the institution is found not to meet all Accreditation Standards?**
    The accreditation process is very effective in helping institutions to improve their educational and institutional effectiveness. Accreditation Standards developed by the ACCJC are drawn from best practices within the member institutions as well as from best institutional practices nationally. The accreditation processes reinforces the institutional responsibility to implement these Accreditation Standards.

    The institution is given a good deal of professional advice and support for improvement and opportunities to train faculty and staff on the Accreditation Standards. Professional peers who comprise the evaluation teams give good advice, tailored to the institution's mission and other institutional characteristics. Professional peers on the Commission also provide advice and recommendations. Commission staff also gives advice, training and support to institutions that have been found out of compliance and are trying to make needed changes.

    Except in the most egregious cases, the Commission gives institutions some time to implement the recommendations for improvement and to come into compliance with Accreditation Standards. Colleges report to the Commission that the accreditation findings and recommendations, and the time limit given for improvement, and even the sanctions given, help to focus institutions on what must be done to improve.

11. **If found out of compliance, how long does the institution have to correct that situation? Is there a limit on the amount of time an institution will be given to improve?**
    Federal law requires higher education institutions that are found to be out of compliance to come into full compliance with all Accreditation Standards within two years. This is known as the "Two Year Rule." The law requires the Commission to terminate accreditation if an institution fails to come substantially into compliance within this period unless there are some rare and extenuating circumstances.

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12. How does the Commission ensure that its decisions are fair and unbiased, and that its evaluation teams are unbiased?

The Commission applies the Accreditation Standards in a consistent manner to all the institutions being accredited. The accreditation process is designed to be transparent and collaborative so that the institutions feel the accreditation process is fair and will yield accurate results. The Commission holds itself accountable for good practice by evaluating and assessing its own ability to make fair and unbiased decisions on accreditation. The evaluation encourages feedback so an institution's views of the process or an evaluation team report can be heard by the Commission.

The Commission works to make sure the process is fair through the development of clear conflict of interest policies, effective training of evaluators, rigorous evaluation of team members by staff and member institutions, and by encouraging feedback by institutions undergoing evaluation.

The Commission's policy on Conflict of Interest applies to Commissioners reviewing an institutional case as well as to evaluation team members and Commission staff. Commissioners with a conflict or potential conflict are not permitted to evaluate a case; team evaluators with a conflict or potential conflict are not permitted to serve on a team or are removed from an evaluation team if a conflict is identified by the individual, the institution or the Commission.

The Commission members undergo training on fairness and consistency. Commission meetings always begin with a review of the Policy on Conflict of Interest as well as a discussion of fairness and consistency in applying Accreditation Standards to all institutions.

All evaluation team members are trained prior to each comprehensive evaluation assignment. All members of comprehensive evaluation teams are evaluated by the team chair, and the ACCJC keeps data on those evaluations. Team members who receive critical evaluations are individually advised to correct behaviors, or are not asked to serve on future teams.

In addition to the extensive self-evaluations of these professional peer review teams, the accreditation process encourages feedback at all levels.

Colleges undergoing comprehensive evaluation are asked to evaluate the performance of the visiting evaluation team. That feedback may include general or specific statements about team members. These comments are also retained in the Commission's data base and, if negative, may result in a decision not to ask the individual to serve on future teams.

The chancellor, president, or other top official of an institution undergoing accreditation review is given opportunity to respond to draft evaluation team reports in order to correct errors of fact. A college may also exercise its right to respond to a team's findings and recommendations in writing or by appearing before the Commission when the case is being considered.

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES/WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
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February 2011

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GUIDE TO ACCREDITATION FOR GOVERNING BOARDS

**A Publication of the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges**
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

NOVEMBER 2012
Edition

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Introduction

The *Guide to Accreditation for Governing Boards* is designed for use by college governing board members as an introduction to regional accreditation and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and as a guide to their roles and responsibilities in accreditation. Governing Boards have leadership responsibilities for the college mission, institutional quality and improvement, institutional integrity, and, ultimately, student success. Accreditation Standards recognize the important role of governing boards in student success, holding them accountable for their leadership role. Governing boards carry out their responsibilities primarily through policy development and delegation of responsibility for institutional operations to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), holding the CEO accountable for implementing board policies. Defining the policy role of governing boards and distinguishing that role from the delegated role of institutional operations is a fundamental principle that informs Accreditation Standards, and this *Guide* offers guidance to governing boards on that principle. This *Guide* is both supplement and companion to other guides and manuals published by ACCJC, all of which are cited in the last section.

Section one of this *Guide* begins with general information on regional accreditation, including history, purpose, and organizational structure. It describes the goals of accreditation. This section also introduces the purposes and structure of ACCJC.

Section two introduces Eligibility Requirements (ERs), Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, as well as an overview of ACCJC procedures and processes.

Section three focuses on the roles and responsibilities of governing boards in accreditation. This section looks at ACCJC Accreditation Standards and processes through the lens of governing boards and their distinct roles in college governance and leadership. The section emphasizes the leadership role boards play in defining college mission and policy, as well as their leadership roles in quality assurance, student success and governance.

Section four provides questions and answers (Q&A) on effective practices for governing boards.

Section five presents a list of ACCJC guides, manuals, and other resources that are important to accreditation, and offers governing board members comprehensive information on all aspects of regional accreditation and ACCJC.

The Appendices include the *ACCJC NEWS* publication entitled *Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation* (Appendix A), and the complete Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation (Appendix B) and Accreditation Standards (Appendix C).

1 Regional Accreditation and ACCJC

1.1 Regional Accreditation: History, Purpose and Structure

In the United States, accreditation is the primary process for assuring and improving the quality of institutions of higher education. Accreditation of approximately 3,000 colleges and universities is carried out through a process known as "regional accreditation": seven commissions operate in six geographic regions of the country through nongovernmental, nonprofit voluntary associations. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) chose to have two higher education accrediting commissions, one for associate degree-granting colleges and one for colleges and universities that award the bachelor's degree or graduate degrees. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC/WASC) is one of the seven regional accrediting agencies and one of the two higher education accrediting agencies in the Western Region. The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) is the other higher education accreditor in the WASC region, and accredits baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions.

Accreditation in the United States is a based on a peer review process in which professional educators and persons representing the public interest evaluate an institution using rigorous standards for institutional good practice. These standards are developed with input from the higher education institutions affiliated with that commission. While each regional accrediting commission develops its own standards and policies, the ideas and content are broadly shared across the national higher education community, and lead to general acceptance of institutional credits and degrees across the country. Colleges are evaluated within the context of their institutional mission, and accreditation standards are written to be broadly applicable to a variety of institutional missions. Following a review by a team of peers, accrediting commissions determine the accreditation status of the institution and use a variety of means to ensure follow-up as appropriate. Additional evaluation occurs when an institution seeks accreditor approval for a substantive change.

All regional accrediting agencies are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and undergo a federal recognition review every five years. The USDE also sets regulations for institutional quality; some of these are incorporated in the accreditation standards of all recognized accrediting agencies, while others are enforced on institutions through the federal financial aid process.

Regional accreditation, which can trace its roots to 1885, is the proven method for assuring the public that a higher education institution meets established standards of quality and awards degrees, certificates or credits that students and the public can trust. The granting of accreditation by any regional accrediting commission enables an institution to qualify for federal grants, contracts, and to distribute federal financial aid.

Accreditation is a voluntary system for the regulation of higher education quality. Institutions agree to join an association and to uphold the accrediting association's standards of quality and its policies. Regional accreditors conduct a comprehensive

evaluation of an accredited institution on a regular basis, which varies from six to ten years among regional accrediting associations.

While the standards of each regional accreditor might be organized differently or use different wording, the seven regional accrediting commissions follow very similar processes and have very similar standards of quality. Today's accreditation enterprise is based on decades of experience and refinement, both leading and reflecting the evolution of American higher education. Today's accreditation standards go beyond the historical emphasis on inputs and processes, for example, do students have access to learning resources and are they using them? There is growing emphasis on student outcomes as a measure of quality. Over the past decade, regional accreditation commissions have been leaders in assisting colleges and universities to develop valid and useful ways to understand what and how students are learning and completing courses, programs and degrees, and use that understanding to improve institutional effectiveness.

1.2 Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)

The purposes of the ACCJC are to evaluate educational quality and institutional effectiveness and integrity and to promote institutional improvement. The ACCJC accreditation process assures the public that member accredited institutions meet the Eligibility Requirements (ERs -- standards to establish basic institutional quality), Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, and that the credentials earned at the institutions are of value to the students who earned them; of value to employers and trade or profession related licensing entities; and of value to other colleges and universities.

The ACCJC accredits public, private non-profit, and private for-profit associate degree granting institutions in California, Hawai'i, the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated State of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The ACCJC has two bodies. The 19 Commissioners make decisions on the accredited status of institutions and set policies and Accreditation Standards. Commissioners represent the interests of the public and the Commission's member institutions. Commissioners are elected for three-year terms and generally serve two terms. The Commission is led by a Chair who serves for two years. If elected to an officer position, a Commissioner may serve an additional term. The work of the Commissioners is part-time and voluntary.

The ACCJC also has staff that manage and support the accreditation activities mandated by federal regulations, ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The President of the ACCJC is an employee of the Commission, who is responsible for administrative and support staff who serve the Commission and its institutional members. The President and the Chair of the Commission are the spokespersons for the Commission to institutions and the public.

2 Eligibility Requirements (ERs), Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies and Processes

2.1 ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies

The Accreditation Standards form the core of the accreditation process. The Eligibility Requirements (ERs), Accreditation Standards and Commission policies are developed, adopted, evaluated and revised by the Commission, with input from member institutions and outside experts in higher education. They are informed by effective practices derived from years of experience of member colleges, as well as sound educational research and practices across the nation. The Standards and Commission policies are also informed by federal regulations. All member institutions must maintain compliance with all the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies at all times.

The four Accreditation Standards for ACCJC are:

1. **Standard I: Mission and Institutional Effectiveness**

   - focus on mission and purposes of each institution and institutional effectiveness achieving the mission
   - focus on data-driven assessment and continuous quality improvement and student learning outcomes

2. **Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services**

   - focus on instruction, student support, learning services and student learning outcomes

3. **Standard III: Resources**

   - focus on capacity of human, physical, technological and financial resources to support achievement of mission and maintain institutional integrity

4. **Standard IV: Leadership and Governance**

   - focus on decision making and capacity of leadership to support and achieve mission and student success, including governance structure and roles of CEO and governing board, including leadership roles and responsibilities in multi-college districts or systems

In addition to the Standards, ACCJC member institutions must comply with the ERs and Commission policies. As prerequisite to eligibility for accreditation, institutions must meet all ERs which are largely derived from the Standards. The ACCJC has defined 21 ERs listed in Section 5 of this *Guide*. Required by the USDE of all regional accreditors, Eligibility Requirements (ERs) not only are prerequisite to achieving accreditation, their compliance must be maintained by accredited institutions at all times. Ongoing compliance with ER's is validated periodically, usually as part of every institutional external evaluation process (six year cycles). Institutions that have achieved accreditation must include in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report information demonstrating continued compliance with the ER's.

Commission policies, which can be found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, represent additional ACCJC requirements and procedures related to the Standards, federal regulation, Commission actions and Commission operations. The Commission reviews and if necessary, adds, deletes, or revises its policies regularly in response to federal regulation, judicial action, or other Commission actions or findings. It is important to note that member institutions are held accountable for compliance with all Commission policies. Of particular note is the "Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems," which is relevant to many member institutions.

Discussion of the Standards specifically related to the roles and responsibilities of governing boards is found in Section 3.

2.2   Accreditation Processes

2.2.1   Obtaining Initial Accreditation

Accreditation processes begin with initial accreditation. An institution wishing to seek accreditation for the first time must undergo an eligibility review to establish compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements. If the institution meets the ERs, it will be declared eligible to prepare an Institutional Self Evaluation Report for application for Candidacy status. If the institution meets Accreditation Standards it will be granted Candidacy status for at least two years and for no more than four years. During that time, the institution will prepare a second Institutional Self Evaluation Report in application for Initial Accreditation. When Initial Accreditation in granted the institution receives a reaffirmation visit by an External Evaluation Team in ongoing six year cycles and is subject to monitoring and reporting requirements. Once accredited an institution is eligible for federal student financial aid and well as federal grants and contracts.

2.2.2   Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review

ACCJC member institutions undergo an Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review every six years to determine whether they meet the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. In addition, the review process validates that institutions are engaged in sustainable efforts to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The review process has four steps: self evaluation, external evaluation, Commission review and accreditation action, and institutional continuous quality improvement.

For accredited institutions, the review begins when the institution conducts a self evaluation using the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The outcome of the institutional self evaluation process is the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self Evaluation Report), which is submitted to the ACCJC. The report should include the institution's plans to address any weaknesses found through the self evaluation process, called improvement plans.

The Commission appoints a team of trained external peer reviewers which includes members of governing boards. All members of an External Evaluation Team are

selected on the basis of their professional expertise in higher education and areas of specialization.

The team examines the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, visits the institution to examine educational quality, and writes an External Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (External Evaluation Report) that determines the institution's compliance with the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The External Team Report makes recommendations for improvement and commends excellent practice when appropriate. The team makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission on the action it should take on the institution's accredited status based on the verification of assertions made in the Self Evaluation Report.

The External Evaluation Team submits its External Evaluation Report to the Commission after the institution has had an opportunity to correct any errors of fact it finds in the draft Report. The Commission evaluates the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Report and the institution's historical performance in accreditation reviews, and makes a decision on the accredited status of the institution. The Commission may also give the institution additional recommendations and direction for improvement. The Commission may impose a sanction and define deadlines for the institution to resolve any noted deficiencies. (See the "Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions" in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.)

The Commission communicates its decisions on the status of accreditation via an action letter to the institution and public announcements from the Commission within 30 days following the Commission's January or June meetings. Member institutions are required to share the External Evaluation Report, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Commission action letter with the college community and the public by posting these documents on the institution's website.

The final and ongoing step in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process is continuous quality improvement. The Commission expects the institution to resolve any deficiencies cited by the recommendations in the External Evaluation Report, and to do so in a timely manner. The Commission's standards also require institutions to implement processes for Internal Quality Assurance by practicing ongoing, evidence-based assessments of institutional effectiveness, and making improvements to quality as needed.

2.2.3   Other Reports and Evaluation Visits

The ACCJC requires institutions to submit a Midterm Report in the third year after the external evaluation visit to report on the progress made on improvement plans the college developed in conducting its Institutional Self Evaluation Report.

Institutions are required to remain in compliance with ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies at all times. If an institution is out of compliance with any of the above, the Commission may require a Follow-Up Report and/or another external evaluation visit, at intervals determined by the Commission. The

Commission may impose a sanction and deadlines for the institution to resolve noted deficiencies.

Federal regulations require institutions to submit applications and receive approvals for substantive changes if they wish to make changes to mission, scope of programs, nature of student constituency, location (or geographical area serves), control of the institution, content of courses or programs (when changes are significant departure from current status), credit awarded for program or course completion or any other change the Commission deems substantive. A Substantive Change Proposal is submitted in accordance with the Commission's "Policy on Substantive Change." (See *Substantive Change Manual*.)

3 Roles and Responsibilities of Governing Boards in Accreditation

3.1 Governing Boards and ACCJC Standards

As noted in the first section of this *Guide* the purpose of regional accreditation is to assure and improve the quality of higher education to support student success. Governing boards have a primary leadership role and responsibility for guiding institutions to achieve the mission of student success, and boards fulfill this responsibility through institutional policies and by delegating responsibility for implementation of policies and pursuit of mission. Governing boards hold the CEO accountable for policy implementation and for fulfillment of the college mission. And, by extension, governing boards set policies that hold all constituencies of the institution accountable for performance relating to implementation of policies and pursuit of mission. While the governance role of the board is centered on policy and delegation to the CEO and other institutional leaders and constituencies, the board has responsibilities beyond governance - responsibilities for the mission and, ultimately, for the success of students.

The four Accreditation Standards describe the educational and institutional practices, organizational structures, resources, and institutional decision-making processes that are necessary conditions for a high quality institution and for student success. Standards I and IV describe some of the specific roles of governing boards in assuring that the institution produces high quality educational services and works to achieve and improve student success. However, the Board's responsibility for institutional effectiveness is exercised through its policy making role and the delegation of policy implementation to college staff through the CEO. The governing board is responsible for adopting policy language that directs the institutional employees to good practice, and for examining how well the institution is meeting its goals for educational effectiveness and for student achievement and learning.

The governing board is also responsible for the fiscal integrity of the institution, and the board exercises its responsibility in fiscal matters through policy and by its review of the annual external audit and approval of the institution's annual spending plans. The governing board is responsible for developing the expertise needed to make sound budgetary decisions that support educational quality, including an understanding of an institution's current and projected revenues and expenditures, and the institution's long term obligations created through contractual agreements, borrowing or plans for institutional expansion.

Thus, the governing board should set policies that hold all leaders and constituencies accountable for performance. For example, such accountability would include faculty for work on data driven program review, the chief financial officer for sound fiscal management, and the board itself for avoiding fiscal or policy commitments that could jeopardize institutional effectiveness, integrity or stability. The governing board is expected to engage in professional development activities to improve its capacity for high performance in the conduct of its own work.

Accreditation Standard IV.B defines expectations for the roles and responsibilities of governing boards, emphasizing responsibility for "establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution." The primary role of the governing board is policy leadership, and the primary responsibility of the board is to create the policy environment that supports educational effectiveness. The governing board assures itself of strong institutional performance through its review of reports demonstrating how well the institution is achieving its mission. The board holds the CEO and, as appropriate, other leaders and constituencies responsible for organizing and implementing the processes that accomplish mission. That accountability is manifested through board policies that request information and data on institutional performance. Through policies, the board should ask the institution to establish key metrics, or measures, by which the institution can assess and demonstrate – to the board and to the public - achievement of its mission.

Setting standards of excellence and measuring performance tied to the mission of the institution connect the governing board with all four Accreditation Standards. For example, the board is responsible for the mission of the institution, and the Standards require regular review of the institutional mission (Standard I.A). The board is not concerned just with the review of the wording of the mission; it should be concerned with the institution's achievement of the mission. That assessment requires data on the outcomes achieved by the students defined in the mission. Similarly, the mission broadly defines the scope of programs and services offered by the institution, and the Standards require institutions to conduct regular program reviews of all programs and services to assess their effectiveness (Standard II. A). The governing board should have a policy on program review and require regular institutional reports on assessment results and on decisions for improvement based on program review and integrated planning.

By focusing on the *what* – mission, quality, outcomes, and improvement – and not the *how* – operations and means to outcomes - effective governing boards demonstrate their policy-and mission-directed leadership role and responsibility for institutional effectiveness and student success. The ACCJC promotes the use of common measures of institutional effectiveness, including course completion, persistence, completion of certificates and degrees, transfer and job placement, and mastery of learning outcomes. In addition, the Commission promotes setting goals, or targets, for student performance, based on institutional benchmarking. (Improvement is measured against the benchmark and goals.) Focusing on the *what*, governing boards should expect information and data that allow them to assess institutional effectiveness and achievement of mission. Thus, governing boards have roles and responsibilities related to the four Standards realized through policy and monitoring of policy implementation, holding the CEO and, through the CEO, other college leaders and constituencies accountable for institutional quality, improvement, integrity, stability, and student success.

3.2   Governing Boards and ACCJC Processes

Standard IV. B stipulates that "the governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process." Governing boards should receive training about the

accreditation process and ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. In addition, the board has an appropriate role to play in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process and in the development of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. Not only should the board receive regular reports on the progress of the review process and development of the Report, the board should give direct input on those areas of the Standards affecting the board directly, e.g., Standard IV. B.

The governing board should be informed of institutional reports submitted to the Commission and of communication from the Commission to institutions, including recommendations given to their institutions. With knowledge of the Accreditation Standards, boards should act to demonstrate commitment to supporting and improving student outcomes through planning and resource allocation, as reflected in the Standards. In the end, board action should indicate a commitment to implementing institutional improvement that has been planned as part of the institutional self evaluation and accreditation processes. Those improvement plans should take their place among important institutional priorities that the board ensures are addressed and adequately resourced.

In multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems, the governing board has responsibility for institutional mission(s) and for policy, just as the governing board has in a single-college district/system. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the CEO of the district or system is directly responsible to the governing board, while CEO's of the colleges/units within the district or system usually are responsible to the district/system CEO. In addition, the district/system has clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges/units and district/system, and the district/system acts as liaison between the colleges/units and the governing board. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the governing board should maintain and review policies that clearly articulate the delineation and distribution of responsibilities and authorities between the district/system and the colleges/units.

It is important to note that the Commission evaluates based on the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission polices regardless of organizational structure. All governing boards are required to meet Accreditation Standards, and to support the quality of the institutions they govern; all institutions are evaluated on the basis of their governing board's compliance with Accreditation Standards.

3.3 Governing Boards and Effective Leadership and Governance

The Standards delineate the roles and responsibilities of governing boards and the following principles summarize the expectations defined by the Commission for effective board leadership and governance:

- **Governing Boards Act as a Unit** - The board is a corporate body. It governs as a unit with one voice. This principle means that individual board members have authority only when they are acting as a board. They have no power as individuals to act on their own or to direct college employees or operations.

- **Governing Boards Represent the Common Good** – The board exists to represent the public or, in the case of private institutions, its owners. The board is responsible for balancing and integrating a wide variety of interests and needs into policies that benefit the common good and the future of its constituencies.

- **Governing Boards Set Policy Direction** – The board establishes policies that give direction and guidance to the CEO and staff of the institution. A major board responsibility is to define and uphold an institutional vision and mission that clearly reflect student and community expectations, as well as a realistic assessment of institutional resources necessary to accomplish the mission and related goals.

- **Governing Boards Employ, Evaluate and Support the CEO** – The successful board fosters a good relationship between the board and the CEO.

- **Governing Boards Set Policy Standards for Institutional and Board Operations** – The successful board adopts policies that set standards for quality, ethics, and prudence in institutional operations and in the operation of the board itself. Once institutional policy standards are established, the board delegates authority to the CEO, allowing the CEO and college staff the flexibility they need to exercise professional judgment.

- **Governing Boards use Resources to Achieve Mission** – The successful board assures that the institution's mission is periodically evaluated and adequately funded. The successful board also assures that its policies and resource allocations are linked and align with the educational priorities defined through the institutional mission and plans.

- **Governing Boards have Responsibility for Financial Integrity** – The successful board regularly monitors financial performance and policy. The board should require institutional leadership to maintain adequate reserves and to quickly address any issues discovered through external audits and reviews.

- **Governing Boards Monitor Performance** – The successful board holds institutions accountable for student success and institutional effectiveness. The board adopts the institution's direction and broad goals as policy and then monitors the progress achieving those goals. Board policy should set expectations for the use of sound student outcome data in program and institutional reviews and planning. For example, if the board adopts a policy goal that the institution will train workers for a particular industry, the board should receive regular reports on progress toward that goal.

- **Governing Boards Create a Positive Climate** – The successful board sets the tone for the entire institution. Through the behavior of board members and the board's policies, the successful board establishes a climate in which learning is valued, including learning by board members, assessment and evaluation are embraced, and student success is the most important goal. Effective boards are ethical and act with integrity, which also promotes a positive climate. The board must have a code of ethics and a policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.

4   Q&A on Effective Governing Board Practices

4.1   Questions and Answers on Issues of Specific Interest to Governing Boards

As noted in earlier sections of this *Guide*, governing boards have roles and responsibilities that relate to all aspects of accreditation, and yet the Accreditation Standards specify both the scope and limits of those roles and responsibilities. Board members often pose questions to the Commission about appropriate roles and responsibilities, and the following question and answer section of this *Guide* features answers to some of the commonly asked questions.

1. **What is the appropriate scope of policy responsibilities for governing boards?**

   The governing board has responsibility for institutional outcomes and for limits on the means by which staff pursues outcomes. In addition, the governing board uses policy to define its relationship with the CEO and to define its own governance processes. The board's most important policy role is to create a mission for the institution that defines the constituencies served, the programs and services offered to them, and the desired outcomes for them. Thus, the governing board uses policy to define the ends, or outcomes, for the institution. However, the board also sets limits through policy on the means by which the institution operates. The limits are manifested through policies on principles of prudence and ethics that form a boundary of staff practices, activities, circumstances and methods. The board also sets policies about how it relates to staff, which link the board to the CEO. The CEO is the board's link to staff, and the board-CEO relationship is defined through policies on the CEO's role, delegation and accountability. Finally, the board uses policy to define its own operations – its structure, its meeting protocols and the standards by which it operates, reflecting the board's responsibilities for providing vision and ethical leadership.

2. **How does a governing board act on its policies?**

   The governing board holds itself, CEO and, as applicable and appropriate, other institutional leaders and constituencies accountable for board policies. Recognizing that the board is responsible for the 'what' of ends and outcomes and not the 'how' of means and operations, the board asks for regular institutional reports and data on the status of achieving the institution's outcomes. In addition, the board evaluates and revises its policies on a scheduled basis. By acting on its policies in this manner, the board fulfills its leadership responsibilities.

3. **How does a governing board demonstrate integrity in its operations?**

   The governing board has responsibility for institutional outcomes and for limits on the means by which staff pursues outcomes. In addition, the governing board uses policy to define its relationship with the CEO and to define its own governance processes. The board's most important policy role is to create a mission for the institution that defines the constituencies served, the programs and services offered to them, and the desired outcomes for them. Thus, the

governing board uses policy to define the ends, or outcomes, for the institution. However, the board also sets limits through policy on the means by which the institution operates. The limits are manifested through policies on principles of prudence and ethics that form a boundary of staff practices, activities, circumstances and methods. The board also sets policies about how it relates to staff, which link the board to the CEO. The CEO is the board's link to staff, and the board-CEO relationship is defined through policies on the CEO's role, delegation and accountability. The board uses policy to define its own operations – its structure, its meeting protocols and the standards by which it operates, reflecting the board's responsibilities for providing vision and ethical leadership. Finally, the board evaluates its processes to ensure quality and effectiveness.

4. **How does the governing board monitor institutional mission, goals, and plans?**

The governing board is responsible for the institutional mission, and, as required by the Standards, the institution must review its mission on a regular basis. It is important to note that review of the institutional mission is not simply a matter of reviewing and revising the mission statement. Regular review of the institutional mission involves monitoring of institutional outcomes to determine whether or not the institution is fulfilling its mission. Such monitoring includes regular reporting to the board on outcomes relating to institutional goals, including measures of student success, and to implementation and evaluation of institutional plans. Again, the board is responsible for the 'what' of institutional performance, not the 'how' of operations. Through regular monitoring of the status and outcomes relating to mission, goals, and plans, the board appropriately fulfills its primary responsibility for the institutional mission and student success.

5. **Are roles and responsibilities of the governing board different in multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems?**

ACCJC Standard IV.B.3 and ACCJC "Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems" define accreditation requirements and expectations for multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems. In such districts or systems, the governing board has responsibility for institutional mission(s) and for policy, just as the governing board has in a single college district/system. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the CEO of the district or system is directly responsible to the governing board, while CEO's of the colleges/units within the district or system usually are responsible to the district/system CEO. In addition, the district/system has clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges/units and district/system, and the district/system acts as liaison between the colleges/units and the governing board. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the governing board should maintain and review policies that clearly articulate the delineation and distribution of responsibilities and authorities between the district/system and the colleges/units. It is important to note that the Commission evaluates based on the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission polices regardless of organizational structure.

6. **What is a 'conflict of interest' policy for a board?**

   The governing board should have a policy on 'conflict of interest" that ensures the board's personal and professional interests are disclosed and that those interests do not conflict or interfere with the impartiality of governing board members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic quality and fiscal integrity of the institution. The policy should reflect the board members' commitment to resist temptation and outside pressure to use their position to benefit themselves or any other individual or agency apart from the interests of the institution.

7. **How does the governing board execute its responsibilities for fiscal integrity of the institution?**

   ACCJC Standard III.D defines expectations for maintaining the fiscal integrity of institutions, including adequacy and use of resources and the policies and processes employed to manage those resources with commitment to mission and integrity. The governing board adopts policy on institutional budgeting and it adopts institutional budgets that are balanced and focused on student success, reflecting institutional goals and priorities. The board receives and reviews regular financial performance reports, and it validates fiscal accountability through review of annual financial audits.

8. **How does the governing board build a sense of teamwork?**

   Governing boards are corporate boards – individual board members do not have individual authority for governance or policy. As a corporate entity, the governing board is most effective when its members work together. Critical to board members becoming an effective team is maintaining a climate of trust and respect. The institutional CEO is also a part of the team, and the effective board team adheres to its role so that the CEO and staff can perform their roles.

9. **How does the governing board grow from good to great?**

   A good board assures that the institution's core mission is periodically re-evaluated and is adequately funded. A good board protects its core mission by not creating unfunded liabilities for the institution. A great board assures that its policies and budget allocations are linked and correspond to the educational priorities in the institutional mission and plans.

4.2 Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation

Although this *Guide* covers many aspects of regional accreditation, the ACCJC has developed a publication entitled *Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation* to provide basic information about regional accreditation purposes, principles, and practices. This information first appeared in the Special Edition February 2011 ACCJC Newsletter and is also available on the ACCJC website on the Newsletter page at: www.accjc.org/newsletter. (See Appendix A.)

5   ACCJC Resources on the Website

5.1   ACCJC Website

The ACCJC maintains a website at: www.accjc.org. The website contains all important reference documents and resources listed below. It also provides a calendar of upcoming accreditation related training events and copies of presentations made at some prior events. Board members are encouraged to explore the website as the best source of up to date reference documents.

This *Guide* frequently cites the ACCJC Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, which form the foundation of regional accreditation. (See Appendix B and C.)

ACCJC also publishes a number of manuals, guides and other resources, all of which are available online through the ACCJC website at: www.accjc.org. Current ACCJC publications are listed below.

5.2   Eligibility Requirements (ERs) and Accreditation Standards

The ERs and Accreditation Standards are found on the ACCJC website on the Eligibility Requirements & Standards page at: www.accjc.org/eligibility-requirements-standards. The ERs, Accreditation Standards and all Commission policies can also be found in a single publication, the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, which is found on the ACCJC website on the Publications & Policies page at: www.accjc.org/publications-policies.

The ACCJC publishes several manuals that are used by institutions preparing the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self Evaluation Report) and by the peer evaluation teams that visit an institution. The manuals listed below can be found on the ACCJC website on the Publications & Policies page at: www.accjc.org/publications-policies.

5.3   Guides and Manuals

- *Accreditation Reference Handbook*
- *Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation Manual*
- *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*
- *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*
- *Guide to Preparing Institutional Reports to the Commission*
- *Manual for Follow-Up and Special Visits*
- *Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation*
- *Substantive Change Manual*
- *Team Evaluator Manual*

5.4   Other Resources

The ACCJC has published some supplementary materials used in institutional evaluations that are also found on the Publications & Policies page on the ACCJC website including:

- Institutional Financial Review and Resources
  - Required Evidentiary Documents for Financial Review
  - Explanatory Matrix of Auditor's Opinions
  - Sample Schedule of Financial Trends Analysis
- Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness

5.5   ACCJC Newsletter

The ACCJC also publishes a newsletter, *ACCJC NEWS*, which provides important current information about institutional quality issues. All issues of *ACCJC NEWS* can be found on the ACCJC website on Newsletter page at: www.accjc.org/newsletter. Please see the cover article from *ACCJC NEWS* Summer 2012 for important information regarding Accreditation and Governing Board Roles and Responsibilities.

Accreditation Standards
Annotated for Continuous Quality Improvement and SLOs
(Adopted June 2002; Revised June 2012; Edited November 2012)

Blue type references assessment, research, planning, and continuous quality improvement
Violet type references responsibilities of the governing board.
Yellow highlights reference focus on teaching (instruction) and learning, and SLOs

Introduction: Shaping the Dialogue

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution. Although the Standards are presented in four parts, they work together to facilitate this dialogue on the institution's effectiveness and on ways in which it may improve. The self evaluation provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

The Standards

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning (Standard I). Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV).

A college-wide dialogue that integrates the elements of the Standards provides the complete view of the institution that is needed to verify integrity and to promote quality and improvement.

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.

2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.

3. Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.

4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

1. The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.

2. The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.

3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

4. The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

5. The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies.

6. The institution assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes by systematically reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, all parts of the cycle, including institutional and other research efforts.

7. The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

A. Instructional Programs

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.[1]

    a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.

    b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.[1]

    c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.

2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.[1,2]

    a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.

    b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general

and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.

c. High-quality instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning characterize all programs.

d. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.[1]

e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.

f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.

g. If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.

h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.[3]

i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.

3. The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course.

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:

a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

b. A capability to be a productive individual and life-long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.

c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.

4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.

5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.

6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies.[3] The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning outcomes consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.

   a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.[3]

   b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.[4]

   c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public, and its personnel through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.[5]

7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or world views. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

   a. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.

   b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.

   c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.

8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with Standards and applicable Commission policies.[2]

B. Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.[1,2]

2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

   a. **General Information**
      - Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
      - Educational Mission
      - Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
      - Academic Calendar and Program Length
      - Academic Freedom Statement
      - Available Student Financial Aid
      - Available Learning Resources
      - Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
      - Names of Governing Board Members

   b. **Requirements**
      - Admissions
      - Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
      - Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

   c. **Major Policies Affecting Students**
      - Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
      - Nondiscrimination
      - Acceptance of Transfer Credits
      - Grievance and Complaint Procedures
      - Sexual Harassment
      - Refund of Fees

   d. **Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found.**

3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.

   a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.[1]

   b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

   c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

   d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.

   e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.

   f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.

4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

C. Library and Learning Support Services

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.[1]

   a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.

   b. The institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency.

   c. The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.[1]

   d. The institution provides effective maintenance and security for its library and other learning support services.

   e. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible, and utilized. The performance of these services is evaluated on a regular basis. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the reliability of all services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement.

2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Accredited colleges in multi-college systems may be organized such that responsibility for resources, allocation of resources and planning rests with the system. In such cases, the system is responsible for meeting standards on behalf of the accredited colleges.

A. Human Resources

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services.

    a. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.[3]

    b. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.

    c. 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.

    d. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and

administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.

3. The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.

    a. The institution establishes and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.

    b. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.

4. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.

    a. The institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel.

    b. The institution regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission.

    c. The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, staff and students.

5. The institution provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on identified teaching and learning needs.

    a. The institution plans professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel.

    b. With the assistance of the participants, the institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

6. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

B. Physical Resources

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services, regardless of location or means of delivery.

    a. The institution plans, builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services.

    b. The institution assures that physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.

2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.

    a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.

    b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

C. Technology Resources

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.

   a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.

   b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.

   c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.

   d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.

2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.

D. Financial Resources

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning at both college and district/system levels in multi-college systems.

1. The institution's mission and goals are the foundation for financial planning.

   a. Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.

   b. Institutional planning reflects realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.

   c. When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies, plans, and allocates resources for payment of liabilities and future obligations.

   d. The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.

2. To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of its financial resources, the internal control structure has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making.

   a. Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, have a high degree of credibility and accuracy, and reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services.

   b. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.

   c. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution in a timely manner.

   d. All financial resources, including short and long term debt instruments (such as bonds and Certificates of Participation), auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants, are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source.

   e. The institution's internal control systems are evaluated and assessed for validity and effectiveness and the results of this assessment are used for improvement.

3. The institution has policies and procedures to ensure sound financial practices and financial stability.

   a. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and develops contingency plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.

   b. The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.

   c. The institution plans for and allocates appropriate resources for the payment of liabilities and future obligations, including Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), compensated absences, and other employee related obligations.

   d. The actuarial plan to determine Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is prepared, as required by appropriate accounting standards.

   e. On an annual basis, the institution assesses and allocates resources for the repayment of any locally incurred debt instruments that can affect the financial condition of the institution.

   f. Institutions monitor and manage student loan default rates, revenue streams, and assets to ensure compliance with federal requirements.

   g. Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.[6]

   h. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management practices and the results of the evaluation are used to improve internal control structures.

4. Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement of the institution.

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.

2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

   a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.

   b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

3. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.

4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission Standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.

5. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

B. Board and Administrative Organization

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.[7]

1. The institution has a governing board that is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or the district/system.

    a. The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.

    b. The governing board establishes policies consistent with the mission statement to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services and the resources necessary to support them.

    c. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity.

    d. The institution or the governing board publishes the board bylaws and policies specifying the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures.

    e. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. The board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.

    f. The governing board has a program for board development and new member orientation. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.

    g. The governing board's self evaluation processes for assessing board performance are clearly defined, implemented, and published in its policies or bylaws.

    h. The governing board has a code of ethics that includes a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.

    i. The governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.

    j. The governing board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/system chief administrator (most often known as the chancellor) in a multi-college district/system or the college chief administrator (most often known as the president) in the case of a single college. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively.

    In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.

2. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.

   a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.

   b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:

      • establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities;

      • ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions;

      • ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes; and

      • establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.

   c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.

   d. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.

   e. The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.

3. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system provides primary leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. It establishes clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system and acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board.[7]

   a. The district/system clearly delineates and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice.

   b. The district/system provides effective services that support the colleges in their missions and functions.

   c. The district/system provides fair distribution of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations of the colleges.

   d. The district/system effectively controls its expenditures.

   e. The chancellor gives full responsibility and authority to the presidents of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without his/her interference and holds them accountable for the operation of the colleges.

f. The district/system acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board. The district/system and the colleges use effective methods of communication, and they exchange information in a timely manner.

g. The district/system regularly evaluates district/system role delineation and governance and decision-making structures and processes to assure their integrity and effectiveness in assisting the colleges in meeting educational goals. The district/system widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

List of Policies Referenced in the Standards

1. Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education

2. Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals

3. Policy on Transfer of Credit; Policy on Award of Credit

4. Policy on Closing an Institution

5. Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

6. Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations.

7. Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems

Accreditation and Governing Board
Roles and Responsibilities

> *"THE GOVERNING BOARD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE (EDUCATIONAL) QUALITY, INTEGRITY, AND FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE INSTITUTION AND FOR ENSURING THAT THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION IS BEING CARRIED OUT."*
> *SOURCE: ACCJC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 3*

Institutional effectiveness and educational quality start with the administrators, staff and especially faculty, but depends upon the quality of the governing board. Excellent institutional performance requires well-defined roles and high performance from an institution's governing board. In recent years, many external events have created challenge for colleges: funding reductions, changing public policy, turnover due to retirements, changing student populations and needs, and the accountability movement are among them. These are challenging times, and it is the job of a governing board to assure that an institution finds the way to adjust to the external and internal pressures without compromising educational quality and financial integrity. Strong and effective governing boards are critically important to institutional success and survival.

However, the ACCJC's analyses show that governing board dysfunctions are increasing among member institutions, and that governing board difficulties provide opportunities for other organizational deficiencies to emerge or to go unaddressed, negatively impacting an institution's adherence to good practices and likelihood of maintaining educational quality or even fiscal viability.

The Commission regularly examines trends in institutional performance with regard to the Accreditation Standards. Each summer, the ACCJC publishes "Top Deficiencies Causing Sanctions,"[1] which describes trends at the institutions the ACCJC has sanctioned over the last few years. This year's report shows that between 2009 and 2012, the percentage of institutions on sanction that had deficiencies in governing board performance rose from 46% to 71%. The data also show that institutions with governing board difficulties always have additional challenges, most often in financial management and stability, and in institutional assessment, planning and effectiveness. In fact, *no* institution that has been sanctioned for board issues identified by an accreditation team has *only* governing board problems!

The ACCJC presents below some things that governing boards can do to help prevent or remediate governing board deficiencies (and related institutional deficiencies) most commonly seen by the ACCJC evaluation teams:

GET EARLY TRAINING, AND REGULAR RE-TRAINING, FOR EVERY BOARD MEMBER. The initial training should have sufficient breadth to provide a solid foundation in the fundamental roles and responsibilities of governing board members. Standard IV.B.1 states, "The governing board is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services, and the financial stability of the institution."

All new board members should receive an early training to help them understand policy governance and the elements of good policy, the meaning and content of financial reports and budgets, and the metrics used to assess institutional effectiveness. All board members should receive at least annual training that will allow the board members to fully understand budgets, audit reports, associated financial terminology, and reports that indicate educational effectiveness on topics such as student achievement data, student learning outcomes data, and other forms of ongoing institutional assessment. Training at venues where other institutions' governing board members are present allows a board member to gain access to expert advice, as well as perspective on alternative ways of understanding important topics or alternative governing board solutions to policy issues. Board members should be required to participate in a regular program for development, and individual board members should expect this important responsibility to build their own capacity to be good board members. *(Standard IV.B.1.f.)*

GET CLEAR ON THE POLICY ROLE OF GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS. The board exercises its control over the institution's quality and integrity by adopting policies to guide the actions of institutional members. These policies should be regularly evaluated and updated to remain useful. But governing board members are not practicing education experts; they are largely lay members of the public. If governing boards stick to their policy role and avoid becoming involved in college operations, they will be able to exercise the appropriate oversight of those operations by expecting, and reviewing, key reports and data analyses on institutional performance. Board members should not apply their own knowledge or skill to addressing operational issues. If there is a weakness or vacuum in the performances of key administrative staff, governing board members should assure that the vacuum is addressed with improved or new staff. Remember, the Board hires and evaluates the CEO, and *delegates* all operations and responsibility for implementing policy and institutional operations to that CEO. *(Standard IV.B.1.j.)*

PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO EXTERNAL FINANCIAL AND ACCREDITATION REPORTS. Boards should be vigilant in expecting that external audit reports be completed on time every year, that the institutional staff respond fully and quickly to any audit findings and explain what they have done to the Board, and that the institution changes auditing firms every few years. Boards should be especially concerned if external audit findings go unaddressed for multiple years – this could be a neon alert to difficulties with the financial management system of the institution or worse. Boards should also read carefully and understand Accreditation Standards, ACCJC action letters and evaluation team reports. These documents frame the basic requirements for quality institutional practices. Boards should expect the institutional CEO to ensure that there is a full report to the board on any Commission action on the institution, and that the institution is timely in its resolution of any deficiencies identified by the ACCJC. Boards should be aware that the ACCJC, responding to federal regulations, announced in 2007 that there is a two-year time limit for institutions to resolve deficiencies or face possible loss of accreditation. Since the governing board's role is to assure educational quality and fiscal integrity, governing boards are among those held accountable when institutions fail to address financial and accreditation concerns. *(Standard I.B.1.C.)*

ADOPT AND ENFORCE STRONG POLICIES ON ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST. "The governing board has a code of ethics that includes a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violated that code." *(Standard IV.B.1.h.)* The policy should have clear statements about conflict or potential conflict of interest that recuse board members from decisions where they have a conflict of interest. Most importantly, an ethics code is not useful if it is only voluntary. The board policy should define how governing board members who violate the code will be addressed. A suggested sequence is: new trustee training and mentoring, prompt feedback when violations occur, individual coaching, board warning, board censorship, legal action. Ethics violations by board members can threaten the integrity of an institution's financial or educational processes and quality, and often also disrupt productive board functioning, leading to the inability of a governing board to perform its important and appropriate functions.

REMEMBER AN INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD IS NOT A CITY COUNCIL. Many of the ACCJC-accredited institutions have elected governing board members. The political process provides a good deal of information to a board candidate on what the electorate desires and hopes for. However, once placed on a governing board, the board member must operate with the following bottom line: "The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and interests. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole." *(Standard IV.B.1.a.)*

Independence means the board member operates in the best interest of the overall institution, not in response to constituencies or special pleaders if those interests are not aligned with the basic mission, direction and resources of the institution, with the full board's direction, and with the institution's priorities that come from assessment and planning activities. City Councils often act to dole out "rewards" to their electorate; a college governing board member's job is to focus on achieving educational effectiveness within the bounds of the institution's mission and available resources. Finally, remember, no single board member has authority; the board as a body has authority. No trustee should be roaming a campus, giving direction to or attempting to influence college employees or governance committees. Trustees should not use their role on a college governing board to advance their own political careers and pet projects. A college board member should be a careful steward of higher education quality and integrity, and champion of student achievement and student learning.

ACTIVELY REVIEW AND ADAPT THE INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENT, and then require the institution to focus its efforts and resources on achieving that mission. "The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted and published by its governing board, and is appropriate to a degree granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to student learning." (Eligibility Requirement 2) The mission statement should be reviewed on a regular basis. (Standard I.A.3.) That review should ensure that the institution examines the effectiveness of the educational learning programs and services the mission statement promises to provide, and wisely uses its resources in achieving that mission. Board policies should require that the institution has a defined process with valid metrics for ongoing assessments of educational effectiveness - an internal quality assurance process that requires data driven program review, analyses, priority setting, planning and implementation. Governing boards should receive annual reports on the institution's educational effectiveness, goals, and priorities for improvement set through the institution's planning processes. Governing boards should participate in setting targets and goals for improving educational performance. Finally, governing boards should beware of the tendency for college constituencies to hope their college can be "all things to all people." It cannot, and in the current fiscal environment, every governing board should be identifying the core educational mission for their institution and avoiding commitments to other activities. Resources stretched too thin result in poor educational quality. The governing board is responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide sound educational programs, and these require adequate funding.

THINK SHORT RANGE AND LONG RANGE IN ADOPTING THE INSTITUTION'S FISCAL PLANS. Each year, the governing board adopts an institutional annual budget that reflects the ongoing commitments, priorities, and planned new expenditures for the institution. It is important that the board examine the budget proposed by the GEO with careful attention to short-term (current year) and longer-term (multiple out-years) consequences of expenditure plans and projected accelerating costs (e.g., planned salary or benefits costs, collective bargaining agreement costs, loan costs, possible revenue declines). In the area of contract negotiations alone, too often difficult discussions lead to a willingness to delay dealing with potential cost challenges until later, in "future years." That 'just kicks the can down the road.' Certain kinds of borrowing vehicles have been enticing to boards of colleges that wish to spend now and pay later. Governing boards have a responsibility to assure the fiscal integrity, short- and long-term, for the colleges they govern. The region and the country have experienced a significant financial downturn since 2008, and current federal projects suggest "recovery" will not really happen for another 5 or 6 years. In the view of many, higher education is undergoing a significant restructuring that will last. Wise boards ensure resources match programming.