

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this email is to provide an update on the work of presidents and chancellors across California to address immediate and long-term challenges involving the accreditation of our colleges. Though the work involving accreditation has been ongoing for several years, the last couple of weeks have been particularly eventful and momentous, culminating in action taken by the Board of Governors today.

This afternoon, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges took action on the item: **Moving to a New Model of Accreditation for California Community Colleges**. After a robust conversation at the Board of Governors meeting, including testimony from Cindy Miles, Chancellor of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca District, Helen Benjamin, Chancellor of the Contra-Costa District, and me, Brian King, Chancellor of the Los Rios District, the Board of Governors approved the following resolution: [Resolution of the Board of Governors No. 2016:03](#).

As has been the case with previous issues involving accreditation, the action of the Board of Governors and the CEOs of our colleges is attracting national attention in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: [California's 2-Year Colleges Explore a New Model of Accreditation](#).

The presidents and chancellors of the California Community Colleges have played a crucial leadership role leading up to the action taken by the Board of Governors and have assumed a clear leadership role in moving forward. The California Community Colleges' CEOs devoted almost four hours at our March 14, 2016 statewide meeting to a discussion about the future of accreditation. This was the first time in many years that the CEOs from the north and the south met together at one unified symposium. During the historic meeting, the CEOs reaffirmed our role in institutional accreditation and accepted the responsibility for shaping the future direction for this important function.

Following the discussion on March 14, 73 of the CEOs in attendance provided feedback. More than **95%** of the respondents in attendance expressed a desire and need to work together to develop a new model of accreditation in response to the changing world of higher education. Almost **85%** of the respondents committed to a specific set of action steps to make improvements in the existing processes and culture of ACCJC and at the same time explore alternative structures for a regional accreditor (with the understanding that such an exploration is a multi-year process). In addition, we have compiled responses from colleagues who were not able to attend the meeting on March 14, which brings the total number of respondents to 99 (nearly three-fourths of all CEOs in the state) with **89%** supporting specific action steps for change.

The [letter from the U.S. Department of Education to ACCJC dated March 10, 2016](#), frames the urgency of the work and the need for immediate action. The October 10, 2016 deadline from the Department of Education will be upon us soon. The CEO Board of the Presidents and Chancellors of California Community Colleges met on Tuesday, March 15, 2016, and approved a process and framework to support and work with ACCJC in coming into compliance. The process and framework is adopted in the resolution approved today by the Board of Governors linked above.

This past Friday, March 18, 2016, ACCJC invited three members of the CEO Board—Helen Benjamin, Frank Gornick, Chancellor of the West Hills District, and me— to meet with the Commission in Oakland at the ACCJC Board Retreat to share and discuss the feedback from the statewide meeting on Monday, March 14, 2016, and the actions taken at the CEO Board meeting on March 15, 2016. Before the meeting of the full Commission of ACCJC on Friday, Chancellor Benjamin and I also met with ACCJC President Barbara Beno and the three California Community College CEOs who currently serve on the Commission: Steve Kinsella, President of Gavilan College and ACCJC Board Chair; Raul Rodriguez, Chancellor of the Rancho Santiago District; and Sonya Christian, President of Bakersfield College. ACCJC Commissioners and staff expressed interest in working together collegially to address the immediate and long-term challenges.

The next steps in the coming weeks will continue this positive momentum through formation of two specific workgroups dedicated to these efforts. The CEO Board is currently identifying the membership of these groups, to include representatives from ACCJC member colleges (California Community Colleges, University of Hawaii Community Colleges, Western Pacific Community Colleges, private two-year colleges, and members of the ACCJC and other accrediting commissions, as appropriate). As the incoming CEO Board president, I have agreed to take on the overall coordination of this effort. Chancellor Helen Benjamin has agreed to chair the workgroup focusing on improvements in the existing processes and culture of ACCJC. Chancellor Cindy Miles has agreed to chair the workgroup that will facilitate communication leading to the long-range goal of California's community colleges participating in a structure for regional accreditation that aligns all segments of higher education. Your continued focus and participation will be crucial to the success of these efforts and will be sought through the CEO Board and workgroup representatives, who will be identified shortly and shared with the field.

In collaboration with the Community College League of California, ACCJC, and the Chancellor's Office, the CEO Board will continue to keep you informed as these workgroups move forward. Few efforts will have a greater impact on our students and colleges in the months ahead.

Brian

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