

June 14, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

The past month has again been a very productive period in advancing our work together to address short-term and long-term challenges involving accreditation. Chancellor Helen Benjamin and I spent about an hour and a half last Wednesday, June 8, at the ACCJC meeting in San Jose in conversation with the Commissioners about the Preliminary Report of Workgroup I. On Friday, Chancellor Benjamin also provided an update on the first meeting of Workgroup II chaired by Chancellor Cindy Miles and shared the notes of the Workgroup with the Commission.

I know we are all inundated with an amazing volume of emails and attachments, but **I strongly encourage you to read the Introduction and Executive Summary of the Preliminary Report of Workgroup I** (*the first nine pages*). The bulk of the time Chancellor Benjamin and I spent at the Commission meeting last Wednesday was allocated to a review and discussion of the Preliminary Report. We reviewed each of the five areas of focus in the Report, including an emphasis on:

- Improving the processes for training and selecting accreditation teams.
- Improving the tone, timing and quality of communications from the Commission.
- Developing a process for member colleges to offer feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the Commission.
- Improving the process and structure for visits to colleges.
- Addressing financial considerations impacting members, including the costs of years of litigation.

We discussed how challenging the recent years have been for both the member colleges and the Commission. The time-consuming nature of complex lawsuits as well as the immense cost of defending multiple lawsuits has been a significant burden for everyone involved. (**P. 46** of the Report notes that—according to the publicly available IRS 990 Filing of the Commission for 2014—the expenses of the Commission for 2014 exceeded revenues by about **\$1.6 million with income at slightly more than \$3 million and expenses in excess of \$4.6 million.**) Recent supplemental assessments have been necessary to address the operating deficit and rebuild the depleted reserves of the Commission. One of the lawsuits, California Federation of Teachers, et al. vs. ACCJC, remains active. CFT recently filed an amended complaint in Superior Court on May 19, 2016.

Last Friday, the Commission appointed Commission Vice Chair Raul Rodriguez, Chancellor of the Rancho Santiago District, to serve as a Commission representative on Workgroup II. The President and Board Chair of the WASC Senior Commission are already serving on Workgroup II, so we very much appreciate ACCJC now agreeing to participate as well.

Though the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission is not until **January of 2017**, we anticipate that the Commission will also hold several special meetings in the coming weeks and months. The time between now and the required filing by the Commission in response to deficiencies noted by the Department of Education is going quickly. We remain hopeful that the work of our presidents and chancellors to address short and long-term challenges and concerns will be embraced by the Commissioners. We have been informed that the Executive Committee of the Commission is drafting a letter in response to the recommendations of Workgroup I shared last Wednesday, and we look forward to receiving this correspondence in the next couple of days.

I am proud of the commitment so many of our colleagues have made to the future of the peer accreditation process. We will continue to provide you regular updates as the work continues. Please let me know if you have any questions, suggestions or insights.

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