

Representing faculty
and classified workers in
public and private schools
and colleges, from early
childhood through higher
education

January 9, 2014

By First Class U.S. Mail and e-mail

Sherrill Amador, Chair
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
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American Federation of
Teachers, AFL-CIO

Dear Chair Amador:

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) continues to express the greatest concerns about the persistence of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in avoiding transparency in matters of public interest, which impacts the community colleges, their students, and employees.

Regarding the January 2014 meeting of the ACCJC, other than a preliminary agenda, precious little information is available to the public. Furthermore, this preliminary agenda produced in memo form is not obviously posted – certainly not “one click away” from the homepage – on the website.

This Memo lists four policies, which are set for first reading, including the *Policy on Closing an Institution* and the *Policy on Complaints Against the ACCJC*. Both policies are of keen interest to the CFT and its members, yet we are unaware of any prior posting of copies of the proposed new policies such as would allow comment to be considered prior to the ACCJC’s January 10, 2014 meeting. If ACCJC does provide such notice, kindly identify for the CFT where such materials are made available.

The Memo lists three policies set for a second reading. The *Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of Commission and Member Institutions* was up for a second reading in June 2013 and is now up for another second reading in January 2014. Again, we are unable to find any notice as to the contents of this proposal, on the ACCJC website.

The Preliminary Agenda mentions an “operational” policy on *Access to Commission Meetings*. This policy is also of keen interest, but also appears to have been kept confidential by ACCJC.

The Preliminary Agenda notes that in October 2013, the ACCJC revised seven of its policies – but again, the content of the revised policies is not apparent on the ACCJC website, and we presume these revised policies were not made available for review by faculty, students and the public, before they were adopted, or since. If ACCJC adopted revised policies in October 2013, and those proposed revised policies were not published before adoption, how is the public able to comment on said proposed policies, which have direct effects on the community colleges and their constituencies?

Given the above, the CFT objects to the Commission’s consideration of policy changes as to any policy or revision where the Commission has failed to provide adequate public notice of proposed changes prior to adoption.

The CFT notes that ACCJC is now also relying on a supposed "practice" of limiting members of the public to twenty at any Commission public meeting. The CFT is only aware of one prior meeting – June 2013 – where the Commission insisted on limiting attendance to 20 members of the public. Please provide the CFT with documents showing that such prior notice has been given to the public on prior occasions by the ACCJC. If it is true that the only prior instance was in June 2013, then one prior instance of such limitations does not make a practice. Regardless, the CFT also objects to the ACCJC, which is clothed with governmental authority, limiting access to its public meetings to just 20 members of the public. We note that the room for June meeting mentioned above had room for dozens if not hundreds of people. Why work to keep out members of the public seeking to learn about and participate in the Commission's proceedings?

The CFT is particularly concerned with amendments or revisions of the ACCJC's conflict of interest policy. In particular, the CFT has previously complained that ACCJC has placed commission members and staff on visiting evaluation teams, because such service destroys the "independence" which is supposed to exist between the evaluation teams and the Commission. Apparently – since no information was publicly available concerning this proposed revision – the ACCJC intends to amend its policies to allow such placements. This action would effectively institutionalize the actual or apparent conflicts resulting from such appointments.

Based on the above, it appears that ACCJC's practices continue to emphasize secrecy and lack of transparency. We call on ACCJC to adhere to a strong policy of transparency.

Sincerely,



Joshua Pechthalt
President

cc: Secretary Arne Duncan, U.S. Department of Education
Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., State of California
Chancellor Brice Harris, California Community Colleges
Superintendent Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Representative Nancy Pelosi, United States Congress
Representative Jackie Speier, United States Congress
Representative George Miller, United States Congress
Representative Anna Eshoo, United States Congress
Representative Alan Lowenthal, United States Congress
Representative Barbara Lee, United States Congress
Representative Mark Takano, United States Congress
Representative Henry Waxman, United States Congress
Representative Susan Davis, United States Congress
Senator Diane Feinstein, United States Senate
Senator Barbara Boxer, United States Senate
Senator Tom Harkin, United States Senate
Assemblymember John Perez, California State Assembly Speaker
Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, California State Assembly
Assemblymember Paul Fong, California State Assembly
Assemblymember Rob Bonta, California State Assembly
Assemblymember Phil Ting, California State Assembly
Senator Darrell Steinberg, Pro Tem California State Senate
Senator Mark Leno, California State Senate
Senator Leland Yee, California State Senate
Senator Jim Beall, California State Senate
Senator Jim Nielsen, California State Senate
Supervisor David Campos, San Francisco Board of Supervisors