



# **ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES**

## *Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

Richard Winn, Interim President  
Raúl Rodríguez, Chair

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**January 26, 2017**

**MEMO TO:** Member Institutions: Chief Executive Officers, Chancellors,  
Accreditation Liaison Officers

**COPY TO:** U.S. Department of Education, Accrediting Agencies, Governmental  
Agencies and Others Organizations

**FROM:** Stephanie Droker, Ed.D.

**SUBJECT:** Commission Actions on Policies and Bylaws

At its January 2017 meeting, the Commission considered and approved three policies for first reading. Please refer to the attached memorandum about the period for providing comment on the proposed policies. The attached memorandum also describes the policies which were approved, recent amendments to the ACCJC Bylaws, and two policies which have been deleted.

We request that you publicize the information in this memo at your institution. Please note that comment is invited from the field on the three first reading policies listed below. A window of time through April 15, 2017 has been established for comment. Information about how to submit comment is included below.

The Policy Committee is a standing committee of the Commission. Through Commission processes, the Policy Committee oversees the ongoing review and updating of Commission policy. Commission procedures require that proposed institutional policy changes and/or new policies be considered by the Commission in a two-meeting process. At the first meeting, new policies and policy changes are discussed and modifications are made as appropriate (i.e., "First Reading"). These policies are then circulated to ACCJC accredited institutions via email, and to other interested parties via the online posting of Recent Commission Actions, for review and comment before presentation at the next Commission meeting for second reading and adoption.

When policy changes are needed in order to align with federal regulations or guidelines, they must be made expeditiously; these changes can be made by the Commission without the normal First Reading/Second Reading process for institutional policies. If these changes are made by Commission action between regular meetings, then the changes are reported to the field at the next Commission meeting. New or revised operational policies of the ACCJC are adopted by a vote of the Commission in Public Session. Amendments to ACCJC Bylaws are made in accordance with Bylaws requirements.

These policies are attached for your reference, and are also posted on the ACCJC website at: <http://www.accjc.org/actions-on-policy>.

The institutional policies and operational policies of the Commission are published annually in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook (ARH)* along with Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The publication is completed after the June Commission meeting each year. The ARH is available online at [www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org).

### **Comment Invited**

The policies considered for first reading, as well as the adopted policies and organizational documents, are attached to the electronic version of this correspondence emailed to Chief Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers. The policies can also be found online at [www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org) under 'Recent Commission Actions,' 'Actions on Policy.'

*Please note:* The Commission invites comment on the first reading policies through April 15, 2017, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

There is no special form for comments on policy. Comments may be made in written form and mailed, FAXed, or emailed to one of the following addresses:

- Email: [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org)
- FAX: 415-506-0238
- Mail: ACCJC, Comment on Policy, 10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949

### **Items for First Read**

- 1. Revision of the Policy on Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions –** This policy has been revised for clarity and new language has been added to address Commission actions on institutions where deficiencies have been identified. All references to the Policy on Review of Commission Actions have been deleted (see policy deletion under items for second read of this memo).
- 2. Policy on Complaints Against the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges –** A minor revision to this policy adds language to allow the President of the ACCJC to delegate responsibility for providing a response to a complaint.
- 3. Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions –** Language to the section on third party comments has been revised to further clarify the difference between a third party comment and a complaint against an institution.

### **Items for Second Read**

- 1. Deletion of the Policy on Review of Commission Actions –** This policy is being deleted in order to align to the appeal process for institutions whose candidacy or accredited status may be withdrawn by the ACCJC, which is stipulated in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions.

Discussion on the elimination of the Policy on Review of Commission Actions commenced during the June and March Commission meetings which directed staff to move forward with the policy change. It is important that the Policy on Review of Commission Actions be eliminated at the same time that the appeal process of the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions is being reviewed.

## **2. Deletion of the Policy on Interregional Policies on the Accreditation of Institutions Operating Across Regions**

Policy is being deleted as it no longer is relevant.

### **Bylaws Revisions**

#### **1. Commission Composition**

##### **Background**

Discussions regarding changes to the Commission's membership and composition have occurred formally and informally amongst different groups over the last couple of years. At the Commissioner Development Workshop in March 2016, Commissioners engaged in a dialog that focused on the need for individuals serving on the Commission to have specialized knowledge, specifically in financial expertise and academic affairs, respectively.

It was suggested that Commission composition be changed to allocate seats to an individual serving as a chief financial officer, or someone possessing the certifications or significant financial expertise at the level of a chief financial officer or business officer, and a chief instructional officer or chief academic officer.

Change to the Commission size and composition was also recommended by CEO Work Group 1. In their report, "A Preliminary Report to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges" (June 2016), California Community College CEOs recommended that the ACCJC Commission membership "be reviewed in order to provide additional expertise and balance to better support the decision-making process" (p. 45).

##### **Recommendation**

To increase the effectiveness of the Commission, it is suggested that the ACCJC Bylaws be revised to relabel the 3 administrator members to 3 chief executive officers. The current 2 public representative slots would be reallocated as 1 financial member and 1 instruction member. The remaining 3 slots for public representatives would stay as-is in order to meet the federal regulatory requirements for such members.

#### **2. Officers**

Language has been added to clarify the selection process for officers, including the time frame when the election will occur, as well as increasing the word count for the written statement required to be submitted by each interested nominee.

### **3. Committees**

The first paragraph of this section has been revised to further ensure continuity of leadership on the executive committee.

### **4. Appeals**

Section 1 has been revised to further align with federal regulations on the appeal processes (and align to the ACCJC Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions).

### **Revisions to Align With U.S. Department of Education Policy**

#### **Revision of the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions**

Proposed amendment to the Commission's Restoration Policy to include an appeal process for institutions whose accreditation is not reaffirmed following a period of restoration. Also proposed is the elimination of review of a decision to withdraw accreditation.

Attachments

## **Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions**

*(Adopted June 1980; Revised June 1996; Edited October 1997; Revised January 1999,  
January 2001, January 2006, January 2011; Edited June 2012, August 2012;  
Revised June 2013, October 2013, June 2015; 1<sup>st</sup> read January 2017)*

### **Policy**

The Commission makes the commitment to follow good practices in its relations with the institutions it accredits.

**The Commission will fulfill its commitment by adhering to the following practices:**

- A. Visit an institution on the initiative of the Commission only after notice, appropriate to the situation, is provided to the institution.
- B. Evaluate institutions in the context of their mission, respecting institutional integrity and diversity, so long as the mission is within the general frame of reference of higher education and consistent with the standards of the Commission.
- C. Use the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards), along with relevant authentic, factual qualitative and quantitative information in institutional evaluations, including information in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and any Special Reports, in the evaluation team report, Annual Reports, External Audits, and other information including written supplemental information provided by the institution in response to the final team report, and oral testimony before the Commission. Encourage educational innovation and continuous improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.
- D. Publish the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluation.
- E. Accept relevant third-party comment on member institutions as delineated in the Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions.
- F. Provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others items of a non-confidential nature<sup>1</sup>.
- G. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with the Commission's Standards as to why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action by the Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> Also refer to the Policy on Access to Commission Meetings.

H. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for conflict of interest or demonstrated bias.

I. Require that the comprehensive evaluation include a publicized opportunity for an open meeting with students and interested others during the visit.

J. Examine the institution set standards for student achievement, and institutional performance against those standards, in reviews of institutional effectiveness.

K. Expect that the evaluation team in its report make clear the areas of deficiency and those Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards) with which the institution does not comply and also those areas of institutional practice needing improvement.

L. Provide to the institution written notice of the Commission action and a detailed written evaluation report assessing the institution's compliance with the Commission's Standards and its reported performance with respect to student achievement and student learning. The evaluation team report will note findings, conclusions and recommendations in areas for which the institution has deficiencies and must take steps to meet the Commission's Standards. The team report also includes, when appropriate, recommendations for improvement of institutional effectiveness and educational quality. The Commission action letter will specify the period, not to exceed two years, within which the institution must resolve deficiencies in meeting standards.

**Commission practices also affirm the following:**

The Commission has the responsibility to require that team members keep confidential all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the team visit and after the Commission acts<sup>2</sup>.

The Commission provides institutions due process<sup>3</sup> concerning accrediting decisions made by the Commission.

- A. Evaluation team reports are held as confidential until the Commission has conducted its review and acted on the accredited status of the institution.
- B. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the draft evaluation team report before it becomes final. The institution through its CEO is provided an opportunity to respond to the evaluation team chair concerning the draft team report, in order to correct errors of fact.
- C. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the evaluation team's final evaluation team report in advance of the Commission meeting. The institution is provided an opportunity to submit a written response (no less than 15 days in advance of the Commission meeting) to the final team report on issues of substance concerning any perceived remaining errors of fact in the team report, and to any

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<sup>2</sup> Also refer to the Statement on the Process for Preserving Confidentiality of Documents Related to Institutional Evaluations.

<sup>3</sup> Complies with 34 C.F.R. § 602.18, § 602.23, § 602.25.

deficiencies noted in the report which could result in a finding of noncompliance with an Eligibility Requirement, Accreditation Standard, or Commission policy. The written supplemental information may also pertain to the evaluation process, conditions at the institution at the time of the visit, verification of final policy adoption or similar actions noted in the team report as pending or imminent, or to the institution's ability to achieve and maintain compliance with standards.

- D. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the opportunity to appear before the Commission to present oral comments in closed session before the Commission acts on the accredited status of the institution. The oral comments must pertain to the matters identified in section C., above, for inclusion in supplemental written responses by the college.
- E. If the Commission's action on an institution will be based upon any deficiency which has not been noted as part of an accreditation review in the evaluation team report, Self Evaluation Report or other institutional report, or in the submitted annual reports and audit reports, then before making any decision on the institution's compliance with the pertinent Accreditation Standard that will become part of the basis for sanction or denial or withdrawal of accreditation or candidacy, the Commission, through its President, will afford the institution additional time to respond in writing to the perceived deficiency before including the related finding of noncompliance in a sanction or accreditation denial or withdrawal action. In its response, the institution also may address any asserted procedural errors as well.

The Commission will notify the institution in writing, through an action letter, as soon as reasonably possible after Commission decisions are made and will include in its action letter the reasons for actions taken, and will refer the institution to the evaluation team report for detailed reasons.

An institution subject to an adverse decision, may request an appeal as described in the Bylaws of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC), and Appeals Procedure Manual, if the nature of the action warrants an appeal.

## Policy on Complaints Against the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

*(Adopted January 1999; Edited August 2007, August 2012; Revised June 2014; 1st read January 2017)*

The purpose of this policy is to provide a process whereby individuals who have been aggrieved as a direct result of acts or omissions by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) related to its accreditation functions may file a complaint. Complaints against the ACCJC may be about the ACCJC's lack of compliance with its own published Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards), with federal regulations, and with accreditation procedures.

In order to be considered a formal complaint against the ACCJC, a complaint must involve issues broader in scope than a concern about a specific institutional action or a specific evaluation team. The ACCJC does not review complaints seeking to substitute Commission or team judgments related to institutional reviews or raise matters about which a member institution has due process procedures as a part of accreditation reviews.<sup>1</sup> An accreditation action not in accord with a complainant's expectation is not in and of itself cause for review of a complaint against ACCJC.<sup>2</sup> The ACCJC does not review complaints presented primarily to indicate disagreement with accreditation standards, or to indicate comment concerning the accredited status of a member institution.<sup>3</sup>

The complaint must be written and addressed to the President of the ACCJC and delivered to the ACCJC office in original copy. It must state clearly the nature of the complaint and the

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Commission policies, the institution through its Chief Executive Officer is provided the opportunity to challenge the appointment of any evaluation team member for cause, and to provide an evaluation of the team chair and team visit to the Commission following an on-site visit. The institution also is provided the opportunity to review draft team reports for errors or omission of fact, to provide comment or supplemental information following receipt of the final team report, and to present oral comment at the Commission meeting during which the institution is being reviewed. In the event of an adverse action (denial or termination of accredited status), the institution may request a review by the Commission of its action, and then may appeal the adverse action.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Commission's Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process, the institution's CEO is required to notify the campus community about accreditation activities and participation in them, about submission of third party comments, and about providing input related to the review of the institution's accredited status. In accordance with the Policy on the Role of Accreditation Liaison Officers, the ALO is appointed by the institution's CEO and is responsible to communicate information about accreditation and institutional quality to the constituencies at the college and to facilitate communications related to the institution's team evaluations. College constituents and interested members of the public are encouraged to follow institutional procedures for providing information or complaints related to the institution's accreditation review.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the forms and formats for Third Party Comment, Complaints Against Member Institutions, and for submitting comment on policies and standards (Policy on Review of Accreditation Standards) for these kinds of communication.



manner in which the complainant was directly aggrieved by the acts or omissions. The complainant must be clearly identified and the complaint must contain an original signature. The complaint must identify the Commission's Standards, or procedure in question and include substantial evidence to support the allegations being made. Should a complaint require Commission consideration and action, the complainant will be notified of the timing of the Commission's review.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, the ACCJC does not consider complaints if the concern alleged occurred more than three years prior to filing the complaint. The ACCJC may elect to consider complaints together if they concern the same circumstances, complainants, or period of time. The ACCJC does not accept amendments to a complaint.

The President, or their designee, on behalf of the ACCJC, responds to each complaint made against the ACCJC within 30 days of receipt of the complaint (if more time than this is required to complete an investigation, the complainant is notified within the initial 30 days); implements corrective action where appropriate or makes recommendations to the Commission to implement the corrections; reports the nature and disposition of any complaints to the Chair of the Commission; and compiles annually a list, available to the public on request, which summarizes the nature and disposition of any such complaints. Upon advice of counsel, the ACCJC retains the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved in the complaint.

If a complaint filed against the ACCJC under the provisions of this section is not resolved by the President, or if the President is a direct subject of the complaint, the Commission Chair shall designate one or more persons to review the handling of the complaint. The Commission shall review the report of the designated reviewer(s) and shall notify the complainant and the President of its response.

The ACCJC's disposition of complaints under this policy is final. Complainants do not have a right to appeal the disposition of a complaint.

## **Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions**

*(Adopted January 2005; Edited August 2007, October 2007; Revised June 2011, June 2012;  
Edited August 2012; Revised October 2013, January 2014, January 2016; 1st read January  
2017)*

### **Background**

Students, the public, higher education bodies, and various levels of government need assurance that an accredited institution is of high quality and possesses integrity. American higher education has chosen to use a voluntary, non-governmental, self-regulatory process to provide this assurance. Such a process must balance institutional autonomy, independence, and freedom with an institution's responsibilities to its various constituencies. Therefore, the process must carefully delineate the rights and responsibilities of both the accrediting bodies and the institutions they accredit. Mutual understanding and respect for the rights and responsibilities of each party will assure that higher education remains fundamentally sound, responsible, responsive, and effective, so that the public may have confidence in the integrity and quality of educational institutions with a minimum need for government regulations.

### **Policy**

The Commission is committed to partnering with a member institution in a voluntary non-governmental accreditation process that results in a mutual commitment to self-regulation, quality assurance to the public, and continuous institutional improvement. The Commission and its member institutions share rights and responsibilities to develop and promulgate Accreditation Standards and an agreed-upon accrediting process for comprehensive institutional evaluations. The institutional Chief Executive Officer is the chief representative of the institution to the Commission. The Commission communicates to the institution primarily through the Chief Executive Officer.

### **Policy Elements**

#### **A. Development and Promulgation of Commission Standards**

The Commission has the responsibility to develop standards<sup>1</sup> which are consistent with the purposes of accreditation, which are sufficiently flexible to allow diversity and effective program development, and which allow and encourage institutional/programmatic freedom and autonomy, and allow the institution to exercise its rights within a reasonable set of parameters relevant to the quality of education.

The Commission has the responsibility to provide opportunities for broad participation of affected constituencies in the development and acceptance of the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and to permit institutional input on new or revised policies by providing for an opportunity for review at public meetings of the Commission and to consider such input from a member institution when making changes to the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies together represent the Commission standards. Implementing procedures can be found in the ACCJC Guides and Manuals.

A member institution has the responsibility to participate in development of the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies and in the Commission's periodic reviews. The Commission has the responsibility to develop and promulgate Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies that meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regarding a member institution's eligibility for Title IV. The institutional Chief Executive Officer and the Accreditation Liaison Officer have the responsibility to communicate and promulgate information to their institutional constituencies about the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, any changes to them, and the institution's plans for changes needed to comply with them. A member institution has the responsibility to communicate directly to the Commission any comments on or concerns about the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and policies.

## **B. Institutional Records of Accreditation**

The Commission has the responsibility to provide, when requested, copies of correspondence pertaining to that institution to the Chief Executive Officer and, when appropriate, to the Accreditation Liaison Officer.

A member institution has the responsibility to develop an effective mechanism to ensure the internal coordination of accreditation activities. A member institution has the responsibility to maintain all correspondence and records on the accreditation history of the institution, and on substantive change applications and the outcomes of the application.

A member institution has the responsibility to share records of the institution's accreditation history, as appropriate, within the campus community.

## **C. Information Collection**

The Commission has the responsibility to specify items to be addressed in all reports to the Commission, require only information that is relevant to the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accreditation process. The Commission also collects information required by USDE regulations.

A member institution has the responsibility to: determine how to design and conduct the institutional self evaluation process, involve broad and appropriate constituent groups in the preparation and process of the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, disclose to the Commission all information which is required to carry out the Commission evaluation and accreditation functions and respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accreditation process.

A member institution has the responsibility to maintain records of formal student complaints and grievances between each review cycle, and make them available to the Commission and evaluation team upon request, in accord with federal regulations. A member institution must submit substantive change proposals for approval by the Commission before such substantive changes are implemented.

## **D. Site Visits and Reviews**

The Commission has the right to: conduct site visits as required under the Commission's adopted accreditation processes; exercise its discretion whether or not to conduct joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits when requested by an institution; and note in its accreditation documents any attempt by professional organizations, collective bargaining groups, or special interest groups to impede or interfere with participation in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process and visit. The Commission has the right to monitor and report as required by USDE regulations for recognized accrediting agencies.

A member institution has the right to request the Commission to hold joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits; and review the list of proposed evaluation team members in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

The Commission has the responsibility to select evaluation team members, who are competent by virtue of experience, training, and orientation, and are sensitive to the unique mission of the institution. Teams will include both academic and administrative representatives. Faculty members will be included among the academic representatives on comprehensive evaluation teams. Prior to the selection of the evaluation team, the Commission will consult with the institution to determine any special needs or concerns. The Commission has the responsibility to assure that evaluation team members are impartial, objective, and without conflict of interest and that the evaluation team is of an appropriate size and composition for the purposes of the site visit. The institution has the right and responsibility to review the evaluation team members and report any conflicts of interest or concerns to the Commission before the team composition is finalized. The Commission has the responsibility to assure that evaluation team members keep confidential all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the site visit. The Commission has the responsibility to set the length of a site visit, ordinarily three days for a review and one or more days, as needed, for a follow-up or any other special visit. The Commission has the responsibility to set the dates of the site visit in consultation with the institution.

The Commission also has the responsibility to communicate its findings derived from the site visit to the institution; ensure that the Evaluation Team Report identifies and distinguishes clearly between findings, conclusions and recommendations related to deficiencies in meeting the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, and those recommendations representing suggestions for quality improvement; provide the Chief Executive Officer of the institution with an opportunity to correct all factual errors in the draft External Evaluation Report; and provide supplemental materials pertinent to the facts and conclusions in the External Evaluation Report before it takes action on the Institutional Self Evaluation and External Evaluation Report.

A member institution has the responsibility to provide maximum opportunity for communication between all relevant constituencies and the evaluation team, and ensure that professional organizations, collective bargaining groups, or special interest groups not impede or interfere with reports, visits, and reviews. A member institution also has the responsibility to make the External Evaluation Report available to the public. A member institution has the responsibility to acknowledge that specialized accrediting agency recognition, local governmental requirements and/or collective bargaining agreements, in and of themselves, do not abrogate or substitute for institutional and employee

obligations to comply with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

## **E. Accreditation Decisions**

A member institution has the right to withdraw a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request. A member institution also has the right to appeal an accreditation decision to deny accreditation or to terminate accreditation in accordance with the policies of the Commission and to maintain accredited status during the appeal. A member institution has the right to withdraw from Commission membership by sending a written notice to the Commission of the intent to withdraw as of the end of the institutional semester or term. Ordinarily, the notice must be sent with adequate time for the Commission to approve the request at its next scheduled meeting<sup>2</sup> prior to the anticipated date of withdrawal of accreditation.

The Commission has the responsibility to: permit the withdrawal of a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request; require an institution voluntarily withdrawing from Commission membership to take appropriate steps to notify its student body, the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state/governmental licensing and authorizing agencies, and the public, and where appropriate to follow the Commission's "Policy on Closing an Institution"; make decisions solely on the basis of published standards, policies, and procedures using information available and made known to the institution; avoid conflicts of interest in the decision-making process; and ensure the confidentiality of the deliberations in which accreditation decisions are made, and observe due process in all deliberations.

The Commission also has the responsibility to: notify institutions promptly in writing of accreditation decisions and give reasons for the actions; ensure that the communication of the final accreditation decision identifies and clearly distinguishes between recommendations related to deficiencies in meeting the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies and recommendations representing suggestions for quality improvement; publish accrediting decisions, both affirmative and negative, except for initial denial of candidacy or eligibility (which are not made public); and maintain the confidentiality of the External Evaluation Report until after the Commission has acted on it. The Commission may require that corrective action be taken if an institution releases information misrepresenting or distorting any accreditation action taken by the Commission or the status of its affiliation with the Commission. If the institution is not prompt in taking corrective action, the Commission may release a public statement providing the correct information.

A member institution has the responsibility to accept the Commission's action after availing itself of its due process rights afforded in Commission policy, and to make public the Commission's action letter and the External Evaluation Report as well as the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. A member institution has the responsibility to uphold the credibility and integrity of the accreditation process by accurately portraying the Commission's actions and helping institutional constituencies to understand the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies pertinent to an accreditation action taken on an institution. A member institution has a responsibility to respond to evaluation team or Commission recommendations within the time parameters set by the Commission.

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<sup>2</sup> The Commission meets in January and June of each calendar year to take actions on institutions.

## **F. Third Party Comment for Candidacy, Accreditation, or Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

A third-party comment assists the Commission as it considers applications for candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation. When an institution is undergoing a review, the Commission requires the institution's chief executive officer to notify the campus community and public of the opportunity for submission of third-party comments and the process for doing so. Such comments must be submitted in writing, signed, and accompanied by the affiliation, return address and telephone number of the correspondent. Commission staff will review all third-party comments to assess its applicability to Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies. In order to ensure evaluation by the external evaluation team, third-party comments should be received by the Commission no later than five weeks before the evaluation team visit. The team evaluation of third party comment will become part of the Commission review of the college at the scheduled Commission meeting. Institutions will be provided an opportunity to review applicable third-party comments.<sup>3</sup> All applicable third-party comments will be provided to the Commission for consideration.

## **G. Follow-Up**

The Commission has the right to take action to assure that a member institution meets its responsibilities and to request periodic reports, special reports, annual reports, additional visits, and consultative activities relevant to the institution's accreditation status. The Commission has the right to request the reevaluation of an institution at any time as a means for monitoring specific developments within an institution between comprehensive evaluations.

If a member institution fails to make complete, accurate and honest disclosure of information required by the Commission, or if the institution does not comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, then the Commission may act to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.<sup>4</sup>

## **H. Special Report and Visit**

The Commission requests a special report when it receives information that raises significant concerns about the institution's compliance with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and/or Commission policies. The institution may be required to provide a narrative report, evidentiary documents, and/or documents prepared by

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<sup>3</sup> If it is determined, in the review of the third party comment, there is the need to hold the contact confidential for legal, investigative or other purposes, then the institution will not be notified of the report made. Also, if the U.S. Department of Education requests certain reported information remain confidential, then there will be no notification to the institution. 34 C.F.R. § 602.27(b).

<sup>4</sup> Eligibility Requirement 21. See also the Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality, § II: "If an institution conducts its affairs so that it becomes a matter of public concern, misrepresents a Commission action, or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission President may announce to the public, including the press, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to the Commission."

external third parties, such as external audits. The Commission may require a team visit, which will be scheduled after the due date for the special report. The Commission's letter requesting a special report will identify all specific requirements to be addressed by the institution.

The Commission has the responsibility to provide written notice to the institution of the action taken in relation to a special report or visit, support improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution, and work with the institution to identify appropriate assistance.

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

**Bylaws of the  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges,  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

*(Adopted January 2013; Amended May 2013, October 2013, January 2014, March 2014,  
June 2014, January 2015, June 2015, November 2015, February 2016, June 2016,  
January 2017)*

**ARTICLE I  
PURPOSE**

**Section 1. Name**

The name of this nonprofit corporation shall be the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This corporation shall be referred to throughout these bylaws as ACCJC.

**Section 2. Purpose**

ACCJC is a nonprofit, public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporations Law of the State of California for public and charitable purposes. Those public purposes include improving and validating the quality of post secondary education at public and private educational institutions, with a focus on community colleges, career and technical colleges, and junior colleges, through the creation and application of standards of accreditation and related policies, and through a process of review by higher education professionals and public members. ACCJC's evaluation of institutions assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to higher education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets ACCJC's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. ACCJC encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through an institutional self-evaluation using the Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements and Commission policies, as well as Midterm, Follow-Up and Other Special Reports, Annual Reports, and periodic evaluation of institutional quality by qualified peer professionals.

**Section 3. Principal Office**

The principal office of ACCJC is located at 10 Commercial Blvd, Suite 204, Novato, CA, 94949, or at such other location as the ACCJC shall decide. The ACCJC may establish branch or subordinate offices.



## **ARTICLE II ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Member Institutions**

The application for membership is made by an institution through its chief executive officer and governing board when it applies for candidacy or initial accreditation. The members of ACCJC shall consist of the institutions that it has accredited, and membership shall be granted automatically upon the initial accreditation of an institution. Membership shall thereafter continue for so long as the institution remains accredited, complies with these bylaws and remains current on payment of any dues or special assessment obligations. Institutions that receive candidate (pre-accredited) status have achieved initial association with the ACCJC and may so identify themselves to the public. In the event an institution loses its accreditation for any reason, its membership status shall cease immediately. In the event an institution resigns its membership, its accredited status shall cease immediately and none of the review or appeal rights which might otherwise be applicable shall apply.

The membership and member institutions referenced in these Bylaws do not constitute any class of membership under the California Corporations Code or any successor statute, including Section 5342.

### **Section 2. Scope**

The ACCJC accredits institutions in California, Hawaii, the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, which have as a primary mission the granting of associate degrees<sup>1</sup>, but which may also award certificates and other credentials, including bachelor's degrees, where the provision of such credentials is within the institution's mission and, if applicable, as authorized by their governmental authorities. The ACCJC may accredit non-domestic institutions in other geographic regions at its discretion.

## **ARTICLE III THE COMMISSION**

### **Section 1. Membership**

The Commission consists of nineteen members, all of whom are elected by the member institutions, as described in Article IV. As referenced in Article VI and elsewhere in these Bylaws, the Commission comprises the Board of Directors of ACCJC.

Commission composition is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> The operational definition of having as a primary mission the granting of associate degrees includes the following: 75% of the programs offered by the institution must be at the associate degree or pre-associate college level, and 60% of students at the institution must be in associate degree or pre-associate level programs, except that a primarily 2-year higher education institution may offer one baccalaureate degree without regard for these percentages.

- a. One (1) Commissioner shall be from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.
- b. One (1) Commissioner shall be from the system office of the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges.
- c. At least five (5) Commissioners shall be academic members who are faculty, reflecting the region and/or institutional membership.
- d. At least three (3) Commissioners, the precise number of whom shall at all times represent at least one seventh of the total membership of the Commission, shall be representatives of the public.
- e. At least three (3) Commissioners shall be administrative members who are two-year college/system chief executive officers.
- f. At least one (1) Commissioner shall have expertise in higher education finance.
- g. At least one (1) Commissioner shall be a chief academic officer.
- h. At least one (1) Commissioner shall be from an independent institution.
- i. At least one (1) Commissioner shall be from a secondary educational institution accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- j. At least one (1) Commissioner shall be from a four-year college/university accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- k. At least one (1) Commissioner shall be from an institution in the American Affiliated Pacific Islands.

A representative of the public is someone who is not: an employee, member of the governing board, owner, shareholder, or consultant to an institution that has applied for or is in candidacy or is accredited by the ACCJC; a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the ACCJC; or a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of such individuals.

A maximum of two Commission members will meet the definition of an Affiliate Member. An Affiliate Member shall be a person who does not qualify under any of the other categories enumerated in the preceding sentence but who shall nonetheless be deemed to have expertise or skills that will add meaningfully to the Commission.

## **Section 2. Election of Commissioners**

Commissioners are elected for staggered three-year terms. Commissioners comprise the members of the Board of Directors of the ACCJC. Appointments are limited to two three-year terms unless the person is elected an officer for a term which extends beyond a sixth year, in which case an additional three-year term or a term of the length necessary to complete service as an officer may be served. Regular appointments are effective on November 1 of the first year and end on October 31 of the last year of a Commissioner's term.

Commissioners are elected to a membership category defined by position or status. If the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which elected, the Commissioner shall notify the Commission's chair or President in a timely manner. A Commissioner who held the status of faculty may be allowed to complete their term if they continue to meet the requirements of an academic representative. A Commissioner who holds an administrative, faculty or other position on the Commission and elects to retire will, upon review and approval of the

Commission Chair, be permitted to complete their term as a Commissioner.

### **Section 3. Vacancies During a Term**

If the position of a Commissioner becomes vacant, whether through resignation, removal, separation from his/her institutional affiliation, or death, the Nominating Committee shall be promptly notified. The Nominating Committee shall, at its sole discretion, either recommend to the Commission a replacement to serve out the remainder of the term of the position vacated or have the position filled at the next regularly scheduled election as described in this Article IV. In recommending a person to fill a vacancy, the Nominating Committee should consider, but not be limited by, the list of those persons previously proposed by the chief executive officers of constituent institutions.

### **Section 4. Other Vacancies**

Except as otherwise provided in Section 3 of this Article, Commission vacancies will be filled through the Commissioner Election Process described in Article IV of these Bylaws.

Anticipated vacancies will be announced at the January meeting for Commission terms due to expire at the end of the following October 31. Notice of Commission vacancies will be sent to the chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and academic senate presidents of all member institutions, districts and systems; major organizations; and individuals known to have expressed interest. The notice will include the positions open for election, the Commissioners eligible for election, and the deadline for receipt of applications. Institutional and organizational representatives may submit nominations.

Individuals may also submit applications. Applications are considered to be in effect for one year.

All individuals that wish to be considered will complete application materials required by the Commission. All applicants and nominees, including Commissioners seeking re-election, will be asked to submit the following:

- a. A letter of application stating the basis for interest in the Commission.
- b. A completed ACCJC data/biographical form. (Service as a Commissioner will be considered for Commissioners seeking a second term.)

Individuals who are seeking initial appointment to the Commission will be asked to submit a resume and two letters of recommendation.

### **Section 5. Removal of a Commission Member**

Commissioners may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the Commission then in office for failure to exercise their responsibilities in accordance with the Commission policy on Professional and Ethical Responsibilities of Commission Members or for conduct which is detrimental to the purposes of the Commission.

### **Section 6. Resignation**

A Commissioner may resign at any time and such resignation shall become effective on the date the Commissioner provides written notice to the Chair or President of ACCJC.



## **ARTICLE IV COMMISSIONER ELECTION PROCESS**

### **Section 1. Nominating Committee**

There shall be a Nominating Committee, the purpose of which shall be to nominate persons for election to the Commission from among the applications received. The Nominating Committee shall consist of eight (8) persons, and shall serve for two years. The Executive Committee shall appoint four Commissioners and four individuals from member institutions to the Nominating Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission may not serve on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will be chosen to represent the broad interests of the Commission's member institutions. The Executive Committee shall select the Chair of the Nominating Committee. The names of individuals appointed to the Nominating Committee shall be reported to the member institutions by the Commission.

### **Section 2. Solicitation of Commission Applicants**

The Commission shall notify the members of the Nominating Committee of the number and types of Commissioners to be selected and of any special considerations pertaining to such vacancies. The Commission shall write to all of the chief executive officers of the Commission's member institutions, the President of the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) and the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS), the chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and academic senate presidents of all member institutions, districts and systems, and major organizations, and individuals known to have expressed interest, listing the number and nature of any positions to be filled and soliciting nominees for the projected vacancies. To be considered the nominations must be returned by the date and time established by the Commission. Members of the Nominating Committee are ineligible for nomination to the Commission while serving on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall review the nominees' qualifications, and shall prepare a slate of candidates, with one candidate being recommended for each position. In reviewing applications and preparing the slate, the Nominating Committee shall consider the need to meet the membership requirements of the Commission as outlined in Article III of the Bylaws, as well as the following:

- Representatives from the entire area served by the ACCJC, including California, Hawai'i, Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas;
- Diversity in institutional characteristics, such as mission, size, geography, and location, and
- Diversity in personal characteristics, such as ethnicity and gender, and in specialized professional experience.

The Committee may not nominate applicants from institutions which already have a sitting Commissioner and will not nominate two applicants from the same institution.

### **Section 3. Nominations At Large**

The notice to the chief executive officers informing them of the slate of the Nominating Committee shall also include a notice of the right of the chief executive officers to nominate

candidates on an at-large basis for the vacant positions on the Commission within the time frame established by the Commission. To be added as an at-large candidate, a candidate must have the written endorsement of ten (10) or more chief executive officers. An at-large candidate may not be placed on the ballot if a sitting Commissioner is from the same institution or if the nominating committee has recommended an applicant from the same institution for a different position on the Commission. Chief executive officers should also be mindful of the desired diversity in institutional and personal characteristics of Commissioners in nominating at-large candidates.

#### **Section 4. Election**

The ACCJC shall send a ballot to the chief executive officer of each member institution which shall include the slate of the Nominating Committee and any candidates at-large. Each chief executive officer shall be asked to vote for or against the slate, or for any at-large candidates nominated by the process described in Section 3 in lieu of those individuals on the Nominating Committee's slate. To be considered, ballots must be returned to the ACCJC offices within the time frame established by the Commission. Ballots received after the cutoff date will not be counted. Ballots shall be handled by the ACCJC executive staff in a manner to preserve, insofar as practicable, the privacy of persons voting and the institutions they represent. Measures shall be taken by the executive staff to assure the validity of all ballots. The executive staff shall be responsible for the preservation of ballots and tally sheets, which shall be preserved for a period of one hundred eighty (180) days after the election is announced, absent a challenge to an election, in which case the ballots shall be preserved until the challenge is resolved. A challenge to the election results can be brought by any chief executive officer of a member institution. Any challenge to the election results must be received by the Chair of the Commission within fourteen days after the announcement of the election results. The Chair shall refer the challenge to the Nominating Committee which shall have the authority to take whatever steps it considers appropriate to make a final decision on the matter.

#### **Section 5. Counting the Ballots**

The counting of the ballots shall take place at the ACCJC offices and shall be conducted by the executive staff. In the event there are at large nominees included on the ballot, the persons receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected to the Commission. In the event of a tie, there shall be a runoff of those persons who tied. The runoff shall be by electronic means or mail and shall be conducted according to time frames established by the Commission. The results of the election shall be announced as soon as practicable thereafter. Every effort shall be made to complete the process by mid-May.

### **ARTICLE V COMMISSION MEETINGS**

#### **Section 1. The Time and Place**

The Commission shall meet in regular session twice each year to consider the accredited status of institutions evaluated since the previous meeting and to address such policy and organizational business as shall come before it. Written notice of the time and place of meetings, and a preliminary agenda shall be mailed to the chief executive officer of each member institution, normally 45 days prior to the date of each meeting. At its discretion, the

Commission may schedule such additional meetings as it deems necessary.

## **Section 2. The Agenda**

Consideration of the accredited status of institutions and other confidential matters concerning member institutions will take place in Closed Session. ACCJC personnel matters will be considered in Executive Session as will any matter where it has been deemed necessary to consult with legal counsel.

All institutional policy language being considered for Commission approval as first or second readings, and all language revising Accreditation Standards, shall be considered in public session. Attendees are provided the opportunity to address the Commission in accordance with the Commission Policy on Access to Commission Meetings.

## **Section 3. Minutes**

The Commission shall maintain minutes of all of its meetings. The Commission Chair, in consultation with the President, shall designate those subjects which are to be discussed in executive, closed and public sessions.

## **Section 4. Operational Policies**

From time to time, the Commission may adopt, amend, or repeal policies that deal with the internal operation of the ACCJC and its staff. Action on such policies may take place at any Commission meeting, in open or closed session, and do not require two readings.

# **ARTICLE VI THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

## **Section 1. Composition of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors shall at all times consist of those individuals elected to the Commission pursuant to Article III. The initial directors of ACCJC shall be the individuals identified under Article III, Section 1, who shall also be named as directors in the Action by Incorporator, filed with the minutes of the Board of Directors ("Board"). The Board and the Commission shall at all times constitute the same body and shall consist of the same individuals; however, the Board shall be referred to as the Commission when it is meeting on matters concerned with the accreditation of its member institutions.

## **Section 2. Authority and Responsibility of the Board of Directors**

The direction and management of the affairs of ACCJC and the control and disposition of its properties and funds shall be vested in the Board. All powers, duties and functions of ACCJC, conferred by the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws, state statutes, common law and otherwise, shall be exercised, performed, or controlled by the Board. The Board shall determine ACCJC's policies or changes therein and supervise the management of funds. The Board of Directors also hires and participates in evaluating the President of the ACCJC.

The Board may adopt, by majority vote, such rules and regulations for the conduct of its business and the business of ACCJC as shall be deemed advisable, and may in the execution

of its duties, delegate its authority to an executive committee. Under no circumstances, however, shall any actions be taken which are inconsistent with the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws, and the fundamental and basic purposes of ACCJC, as expressed in the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws.

### **Section 3. Vacancies, Resignations, and Removals**

A board position will become vacant when the director filling such position ceases to be a Commissioner, regardless of the reason. For procedures and processes relating to resignation, removal, or other reasons which will cause a position to become vacant on the Commission and on the Board, see Article III, Section 4, 5 and 6.

### **Section 4. Quorum**

The majority of the Board (not counting any board positions that are vacant) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, except in no instance may a quorum be less than one-fifth of the authorized number of directors. Every action taken by a majority of the directors present at a meeting held at which a quorum is present shall be regarded as the act of the Board, subject to the provisions of the Nonprofit Corporation's Law (California Corporations Code, § 5000 et. seq.). A meeting at which a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business, notwithstanding the withdrawal of any director, if any action thereafter taken is approved by at least a majority of the quorum required for the meeting. A majority of the directors present, regardless of whether a quorum is present, may vote to adjourn a meeting.

### **Section 5. Minutes**

The Board shall maintain minutes of all of its meetings and proceedings. The meetings of the Board may take place concurrently with meetings of the Commission or separately, at the discretion of the Board, but the minutes of Board meetings shall be maintained separately.

### **Section 6. Agenda**

The Board's Chair, in consultation with the President, shall decide the Board's agenda. The Board's business shall include all matters which require Board action or review. When the Board meets to consider actions that concern the candidacy or accreditation of member institutions, the imposition of sanctions, or the review and approval of eligibility criteria, accreditation standards or institutional policies ("Accreditation Matters"), the Board shall do so as the Commission, meeting in closed session, and shall act under Articles III and V of these Bylaws. Authority and responsibility over all Accreditation Matters resides exclusively with the Board when it is acting as the Commission. Examples of Board agenda items, when the Board is not acting as the Commission, include the review and acceptance of ACCJC's annual audit, review and approval of any internal operational policies, review of ACCJC's investments and reserves, receipt of reports from the Executive and other committees concerning matters that do not involve Accreditation Matters, review of ACCJC's relationship with vendors, including its banking relations, review and approval of any leases for space or other significant contracts, approval of any loans or lines of credit, personnel issues that require board review, periodic evaluation of its President, review of ACCJC's insurance policies, and such other matters, involving the policy or direction of ACCJC that are referred to it. Board meetings that do not involve Accreditation Matters will ordinarily be conducted in Executive Session.



## **ARTICLE VII OFFICERS**

### **Section 1. Officers**

ACCJC shall maintain the following elected officers: a Chair, a Vice Chair, and a Secretary/Treasurer. The positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer shall be held by different members of the Board. The regular two-year term of an elected officer will begin on November 1, and will end on October 31 at the end of the second full year of service. Additionally, the ACCJC will maintain a President, who shall serve as the Chief Executive Officer. The President shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.

### **Section 2. Selection of Officers**

The position of Chair is filled by the succession of the Vice Chair. The Vice Chair is elected by the Board and succeeds to the office of Chair when that office becomes vacant. He or she then serves a two-year term as Chair. No member of the Board may serve as its Chair for longer than three consecutive years. Thus, the Vice Chair may succeed to no more than twelve months of an unexpired term, followed by his or her two-year term. When a vacancy occurs in the Vice Chair position, an election to fill that office must be initiated within 45 days of the position becoming vacant.

Nominations for Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer are normally solicited from the Directors in January prior to the end of the Chair's term. Prior to the scheduled vote, each nominee must submit a statement of no more than 500 words, explaining why he or she is seeking the office. The statement is distributed to the full Board prior to the vote. Voting is conducted through a secret ballot submitted to the ACCJC executive staff. The results are to be announced to the entire Board at or before the March Commission meeting.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall be elected by the Board and shall serve for a two-year term. The Secretary/Treasurer can serve for multiple terms. The Secretary/Treasurer shall be a member of the Board who possesses the appropriate budget, finance, and/or audit knowledge, skills, and ability to oversee financial matters.

Officers are expected to serve in several capacities. The Chair serves as a voting member of the Budget Committee and the Policy Committee, and serves as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Commission chair also serves on the WASC Board. The Vice Chair serves as a voting member of the Executive Committee, and the Committee on Substantive Change, and may serve as the Substantive Change Committee's chair. The Secretary/Treasurer serves as the chair of the Budget Committee, is a member of the Audit Committee, serves as a voting member of the Executive Committee.

The President shall be appointed by the Board and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, subject to the rights, if any, under any contract of employment.

### **Section 3. Subordinate Officers**

The Board may appoint, and may empower the President to appoint, such other officers as the business of the corporation may require, each of whom shall hold office for such period, have such authority, and perform such duties as are provided in these Bylaws or as the Board may from time to time determine.

#### **Section 4. Removal and Resignation of Officers**

Subject to the rights, if any, of an officer under any contract of employment, any officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chair. Subject to the rights, if any, of an officer under any contract of employment, any officer may be removed, either with or without cause, by the Board, and, if appointed by the President, by the President.

#### **Section 5. Vacancies in Office**

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification or any other cause shall be filled in the manner prescribed in these Bylaws for regular appointments to that office.

#### **Section 6. President**

The President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of ACCJC, and the general supervision, direction, and control of the operations of ACCJC, including its business and accreditation operations, shall reside with the President.

#### **Section 7. Chair**

The Chair of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board and of the Commission. The Chair of the Board shall also serve concurrently as Chair of the Commission. The Chair shall exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may be from time to time assigned to him or her by the Board or by the Commission or as may be prescribed by these Bylaws. In the absence or incapacitation of the President, the Chair may perform the duties of the President. In that circumstance, the Vice Chair shall perform the duties of Chair.

#### **Section 8. Vice Chair**

In the absence or incapacitation of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair, and, when so acting shall have all the powers of the Chair. The Vice Chair shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Chair or by these Bylaws.

#### **Section 9. Secretary/Treasurer**

The Secretary/Treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept, at the principal executive office or such other place as the President may direct, a book of the minutes of all meetings and actions of Board (the Commission) with the time and place of holding, whether regular or special, and, if special, how authorized, the names of those present at such meetings, and actions taken.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the Commission and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board or these Bylaws.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall examine the budget, schedule of dues/fees, financial condition of the ACCJC and shall regularly review revenue and expenditures. The Secretary/Treasurer shall work with the Budget Committee and Audit Committee to review and recommend all financial related matters to the Board.

## **ARTICLE VIII COMMITTEES**

The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Secretary/Treasurer. For purposes of continuity of leadership, an individual who has completed two years of service on the Executive Committee, served as Chair, and who remains on the Commission for a year to complete a term as Past Chair will also serve on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall oversee the evaluation of and recommend compensation for the President, and shall serve as advisors to the President between the Board and Commission meetings.

The Board shall be served by such standing and ad hoc committees as they create. Ad hoc committees, to serve the Board, may be created at the discretion of the Chair, but their creation, functions, and authority must be ratified by a simple majority of the Board at the first Board or Commission meeting following the creation of the ad hoc committee.

Standing committees shall be authorized by a simple majority of the Board and may be dissolved by the same margin of the Board. The Commission may charge a standing committee with authority to act on its behalf, to the extent permitted by law. In such case, the standing committee membership must be Commissioners, and must include academic representatives and administrative representatives, and at least one seventh of the committee membership must comprise representatives of the public. No standing committee membership may be comprised of a majority of the Board. Members and chairs of standing committees are appointed by the Chair and serve one-year terms. Current standing committees of the Commission are the Audit Committee, Budget Committee, the Committee on Substantive Change, the Policy Committee, and the Evaluation and Planning Committee. The Commission has charged the Substantive Change Committee with authority to act on its behalf on substantive change requests. The Commissioner Nominating Committee is constituted at regular intervals as described in Article IV, above.

## **ARTICLE IX METHODS FOR BOARD ACTION WITHOUT A MEETING**

### **Section 1. Executive Committee Actions**

The Executive Committee is authorized to act for the Board (the Commission) between meetings on any and all matters that would appropriately come before the Board (the Commission) and where action prior to the next Board or Commission meeting is necessary. All actions taken by the Executive Committee shall be reported to the Board at its next meeting, or earlier as appropriate.

### **Section 2. Alternate Means of Taking Action**

At the call of the Chair, actions on institutions or institutional policy required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Commission may be taken without a meeting. Such call for action shall include the reasons, and shall describe the means by which the action will be taken, whether in writing, electronically, or other means. The action must include a statement of consent by voting Board members for the action to be taken without a meeting. The action taken without a meeting must pass by a 2/3 vote of the Commission then in

office. The substance of the Commission action must be filed with the minutes of proceedings of the Commission.

### **Section 3. Amendments to Bylaws**

These bylaws may be amended by telephone, mail, or electronic ballot processes by a simple majority vote of the Board after the proposed amendments have been circulated among the Board members at least two weeks before the vote is taken. If the vote is taken without the amendments being circulated among the Board members for at least two weeks, then all Board members must individually consent to that action for it to take effect.

### **Section 4. Other Action without a Meeting**

The Chair may call for any other action, required or permitted to be taken by the Board, to be taken without a meeting. Such action by written consent shall have the same force and effect as a vote of the Board at a meeting. Such vote shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board.

## **ARTICLE X APPEALS**

### **Section 1. Right to Appeal**

If an institution, is the recipient of a Commission action that denies or terminates candidacy or accreditation, the institution shall have the right to appeal that decision. In order to perfect the appeal, the institution, acting through formal authorization to its chair from the institution's governing board, must deliver a notice of appeal to the ACCJC President within 30 calendar days of receiving notice of the **Commission's** decision on an adverse action on the institution. The notice of appeal must be in the form described in the ACCJC Appeal Procedures Manual (described in Section 3 below). During the period up to and including the pendency of the appeal, the institution's status with the Commission shall remain the same as it was prior to the decision being appealed.

### **Section 2. Hearing Panel**

Upon receipt of a properly completed and delivered notice of appeal, the Executive Committee shall appoint a Hearing Panel consisting of not less than five (5) or more than seven (7) qualified persons. The Executive Committee shall also appoint the chair of the Hearing Panel. The Hearing Panel members may not be current Commission members and may not have participated, whether through Review Committee participation<sup>2</sup> or through prior team participation, in the decision being appealed. At least one member of the Hearing Panel shall be a representative of the public. A representative of the public is someone who is not: an employee, member of the governing board, owner, shareholder, or consultant to an institution that has applied for or is in candidacy or is accredited by the ACCJC; a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of such individuals. The Hearing Panel shall also include an administrative representative with post-secondary administrative experience, and an academic representative with post-secondary faculty experience.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information, please refer to the Policy on Review of Commission Actions.

Each member selected must sign the Commission's "Appellate Conflict of Interest Policy," acknowledging that they do not have conflict of interest. The institution shall have the ability to challenge the selection of any Hearing Panel member for cause according to the procedures in the ACCJC Appeal Procedures Manual. Any replacement of Hearing Panel members shall be selected in the same manner.

### **Section 3. Appeal Procedures Manual and Appellate Conflict of Interest Statement**

The Commission has adopted an appeals manual, referred to herein as the "ACCJC Appeals Procedures Manual." The ACCJC Appeals Procedures Manual sets forth more fully the procedures for conducting the appeal. A copy of the ACCJC Appeals Procedures Manual will be provided to the institution when the institution receives notice of an appealable Commission action. The Commission has adopted an "Appellate Conflict of Interest Policy" which members of the Hearing Panel must sign before they may be seated to hear an appeal.

### **Section 4. Costs**

An institution bringing an appeal shall file a deposit to cover one half of those out of pocket costs of the Commission, as set forth more fully in the ACCJC Appeals Procedures Manual. The Commission will establish the amount of the deposit and may modify it from time to time at its discretion. In the event the actual costs exceed the amount of the deposit, the institution shall be responsible for the balance and may be required, during the appeal, to supplement the deposit. In the event the deposit exceeds the necessary costs, the institution shall receive a refund of the difference at the conclusion of the appeal. In the event the institution prevails in the appeal, the Hearing Panel shall have the discretion to refund the institution's deposit at the conclusion of the appeal.

### **Section 5. New Financial Evidence**

If, following the Review of Commission Action, the institution's deficiencies leading to noncompliance only relate to the institution's finances, then on one occasion only and not later than thirty (30) days prior to the date the appeal is scheduled to commence, the institution may request a special review of new financial evidence by filing a written request for such review with the President and identifying that information which, in the opinion of the institution's chief executive officer, constitutes New Financial Evidence. Such request shall be co-signed by the chair of the institution's governing board. New Financial Evidence is evidence that (1) was unavailable to the institution until after the date upon which the Commission's policies permitted the institution to submit evidence that was considered in connection with the action being appealed (and is therefore timely), and (2) bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Commission which resulted in findings of noncompliance. Evidence shall be deemed to bear materially on the financial deficiencies only if such evidence is of sufficient gravity that, if proven, would be likely to cause the Commission to reverse the decision being appealed.

Upon receipt of the New Financial Evidence, the Commission's Chair shall form an ad hoc committee of no fewer than three (3) Commissioners (the New Financial Evidence Committee) to review the New Financial Evidence. The membership of the New Financial Evidence Committee may include Commissioners who have acted as readers or for other reasons are familiar with the issues affecting the institution, but may not consist of any Commissioners

who have a conflict of interest with respect to the institution as defined by the Commission's Conflict of Interest Policy. The New Financial Evidence Committee shall conclude prior to the date the appeal hearing is scheduled to commence. The decision of the New Financial Evidence Committee shall be communicated in writing to the institution and to the ACCJC President. The decision of the New Financial Evidence Committee shall not be subject to any further review or appeal, except as herein provided. If, in the sole judgment and discretion of the New Financial Evidence Committee, acting by majority vote, the New Financial Evidence is found not to have been raised in a timely manner or is found not to bear materially on the financial deficiencies of the institution, the appeal hearing shall continue without interruption, and the New Financial Evidence shall not become part of the record on appeal.

If, in the sole judgment and discretion of the New Financial Evidence Committee, the New Financial Evidence is found to have been raised in a timely manner and to bear materially on institution's financial deficiencies, the President shall immediately postpone the hearing until after the date of the next Commission meeting at which time the Commission will reconsider the decision being appealed. The Commission shall independently review the New Financial Evidence and make its own determination regarding whether such evidence was timely and material. If, in the sole discretion of the Commission, the New Financial Evidence is found to have been raised in a timely manner and to bear materially on the institution's financial deficiencies, the Commission shall render a new decision which shall act to remove the previous sanction. It may, in its sole discretion, impose any other lesser sanction and conditions which it deems appropriate, and the institution shall not be able to seek further appeal or review from such lesser sanction, if any is imposed. In such instance, the Commission shall instruct the ACCJC President to dismiss the appeal.

If, in the sole discretion of the Commission, the New Financial Evidence is not found to have been raised in a timely manner or if it is found not to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies which served as the basis of the decision that is being appealed, the Commission shall instruct the President to take the necessary steps to resume the appeal hearing. In all events, the decision of the Commission shall include findings on the timeliness and materiality of the New Financial Evidence. Such decision shall not be subject to consideration by the Hearing Panel. Such decision in all instances shall be communicated in writing to the institution, to the President, and to the Hearing Panel's Chair.

## **Section 6. The Appellate Hearing**

The ACCJC President shall arrange the appellate hearing at the earliest practicable date. Those testifying shall not be placed under oath. The Commission will ordinarily have legal counsel present, and the institution has a right, but is not required, to have legal counsel present.

At least sixty (60) calendar days before the time set for the appellate hearing of such an appeal, the President shall cause notice of the time and place of the appellate hearing to be delivered, by a means that will assure a written receipt, to the Chair of the governing board of the institution with a copy to its chief executive officer.

## **Section 7. Grounds for Appeal**

The grounds for appeal shall be limited to the following: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission

which materially affected the Commission's action; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's action; (3) the evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the action which is being appealed was materially in error; or (4) the action of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence. The "action" referred to in this Section refers to the Commission's action at the conclusion of the Review of Commission Action process.

## **Section 8. Decision of the Hearing Panel**

The Hearing Panel shall make its decision by a vote of the majority on the basis of the admissible evidence and arguments presented to it at the hearing. Each member, including the Chair, shall have one vote. The Hearing Panel's decision shall include a determination as to whether the grounds for appeal were established. The Hearing Panel may act to dismiss the appeal for lack of grounds, affirm in whole, affirm in part and amend, reverse, or remand the action being appealed and the reasons that were cited in its support. The Hearing Panel shall issue its decision and the reasons therefore in writing within thirty (30) calendar days and will inform the ACCJC President, the chair of the governing board of the institution and the chief executive officer of the institution of such decision. Such decision shall not be subject to any further appeal.

1. If the Hearing Panel finds in favor of the institution on one or more of grounds (1) through (4) of Section 7 above, the Hearing Panel's decision will have the effect of reversing the denial or termination of the candidacy or accreditation of the institution. Its decision may recommend, but shall not dictate, any terms or conditions to be imposed on the accreditation or candidacy of the institution by the Commission when it implements the Hearing Panel's decision. The Commission shall thereafter implement the Hearing Panel's decision and, in doing so, shall retain the discretion to impose conditions, including a sanction which is less than the denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation of the institution. The Commission's implementation action shall be on the accredited status of the institution, and shall be consistent with the Hearing Panel's decision. Such implementation action by the Commission will be communicated to the institution and shall not be subject to further review or appeal.
2. If the Hearing Panel finds against the institution on any of the four grounds in Section 7 above, it shall deny that portion of the appeal which is based on that ground. If the Hearing Panel finds against the institution on all grounds appealed, its decision shall act to affirm the action of the Commission which was appealed. The decision under this subsection (2) shall not be subject to any further review or appeal.
3. If the Hearing Panel finds that there are issues which deserve further consideration by the Commission, the Hearing Panel shall remand the Commission's action to the Commission. Such remand decision shall identify the issues that must be addressed further by the Commission and shall include any instructions which the Hearing Panel believes are necessary in order to assure that the Commission's final action will be consistent with the Hearing Panel's decision. The Commission shall thereupon consider such issues and arrive at a final action which shall be consistent with the Hearing Panel's decision and instructions.

The action by the Commission following such remand shall be final and shall not be subject to further review or appeal.

## **Section 9. Institutional Financial Obligations Following Litigation**

Any institution which takes legal action against the ACCJC regarding an accreditation decision and withdraws or loses its case is responsible for assuming all costs incurred by the ACCJC while defending its position, including attorney fees. These costs must be paid in full within 45 days following the institution's receipt of the ACCJC invoice, unless other arrangements are approved by the Executive Committee acting on behalf of the ACCJC Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE XI LEGAL EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT**

In the event and in instances when ACCJC is not a party to litigation, that ACCJC receives criminal or civil inquiries, including subpoenas, deposition notices or other discovery requests related to institutions which are applicants to ACCJC, accredited or granted candidacy for accreditation by ACCJC, or which have been previously accredited by ACCJC, then the institution that is related to the request will be responsible for reimbursing ACCJC for all costs associated with responding to the subpoena, deposition notice or other discovery request, including the reasonable cost of legal counsel, staff time, and associated costs such as travel and making copies. In addition, the institution will be responsible for the legal fees and related expenses associated with legal review of proposed memoranda of understanding, contractual agreements with other institutions or other issues arising from the accreditation process, including substantive change.

## **ARTICLE XII STANDING RULES**

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all meetings of the Board, the Commission and committees, except in the case where ACCJC has adopted standing rules. All standing rules of the ACCJC shall take precedence over Robert's Rules of Order.

## **ARTICLE XIII INDEMNIFICATION**

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) does hereby grant indemnification to any officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, or former officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, including but not limited to the ACCJC's employees and team members, for claims or actions asserted against said person arising out of acts or omissions alleged to have occurred in connection with, or as a result of his or her activities as an officer, director, commissioner, employee, or agent, of the ACCJC, to the fullest extent permitted by law; provided however, as follows:

- a. When any claim or action is asserted or threatened to be asserted, as described in such statutes, the person requesting indemnification must give timely notice thereof to the President of the ACCJC; and
- b. The ACCJC must approve of the law firm that will defend that person in such claim or action.



Indemnification shall be provided herein only to the extent that valid and collectible insurance coverage under all existing policies of insurance held by the ACCJC has been exhausted.

#### **ARTICLE XIV AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended by a simple majority vote of the Board after the proposed amendments have been circulated among the Board members at least two weeks before the meeting at which the vote is taken. If the vote is taken without the amendments being circulated among the Board members for at least two weeks, then all Board members must individually or collectively consent to that action.