

Karen Saginor, first vice president of the academic senate and a librarian at City College of San Francisco, prepared the following summary of some of the more notable developments in CCSF's ongoing struggle with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. Last summer, ACCJC formally moved to disaccredit the state's biggest public institution of higher learning.

NACIQI hearing, December 12-13

Similarly to accreditation for colleges, the ACCJC must periodically seek recognition from the Department of Education, showing that it follows department regulations and meets requirements. Last December 12-13 in Washington DC, personnel from the Department of Education (DOE), along with the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), reviewed a preliminary report, heard from ACCJC and the agency and heard [oral commentary](#) from others, including seven students and six faculty from City College of San Francisco. The NACIQI committee voted to extend ACCJC's recognition for only one year, at which point it must come back and show that it is fully in compliance with the requirements for recognition. The clock for the one year period starts when the Secretary of Education issues his decision, which is expected to follow the NACIQI recommendation. With this timeline, ACCJC will be back at NACIQI in June, 2015. For one of the deficient areas, ACCJC needs to provide convincing evidence that its standards, procedures, and decisions are accepted by educators and educational institutions – ACCJC must improve this during the coming year. NACIQI will post full transcripts of this meeting soon, (not up yet).

The Injunction

On January 2, Judge Karnow of the Superior Court of California ordered an [injunction](#). ACCJC cannot take away the accreditation of City College of San Francisco until the court has determined whether their decision to withdraw accreditation was fair and lawful. The injunction does not stop the process of review and appeal that City College is following with ACCJC, but loss of accreditation can not be implemented until ACCJC's treatment of City College is scrutinized in court. At the end of January Judge Karnow will meet with the attorneys from both sides to schedule dates for the case to begin. It is expected to continue into the summer or early Fall. This injunction blocking the withdrawal of accreditation until the case finishes is a crucial protection for City College.

For a layperson's understanding of the arguments made by both sides, I have posted notes for the court hearings on [December 26th](#) and [December 30th](#). This injunction was one of six motions decided on January 2nd. The City Attorney's Office had also requested that ACCJC be prevented from taking adverse actions against other educational institutions statewide until its evaluation policies comply with federal regulations. Judge Karnow did NOT issue a preliminary injunction about that, but that will still be part of the case when the trial starts. Judge Karnow denied AFT2121's request for a preliminary injunction, but, again, only the request for injunction, a full hearing for AFT2121's case is still headed for trial. There were three motions brought by ACCJC. One was an anti-SLAPP motion, saying that the AFT suit attacked ACCJC's right to free speech, one was a request that the judge abstain on the grounds that the plaintiffs didn't have a case in state court, and the third was a motion for a stay, or delay in hearing the case. Judge

Karnow denied all three of the ACCJC motions. The ACCJC motions are over, they cannot be made again later in this court, although ACCJC could file a request for the First District Court of Appeals to review the judgment "for prejudicial errors of law."

Nancy Pelosi

On Monday, January 6, [Nancy Pelosi](#) came out to support City College of San Francisco. She talked about the educational value of City College to students of every age and the whole community. She said, "I sing the praises of Dennis Herrera for succeeding with the case," and she pledged that the accreditors will be "subjected to really harsh scrutiny in terms of how they do what they do, and why is it that the Dept. of Education cannot do more." She talked briefly, without details, about communication and coordination with Jack Spier, Anna Eshoo, and other members of the California delegation.

ACCJC meeting

The ACCJC had its January meeting last week, January 8-10 in Sacramento. The "public" portion of the ACCJC on Friday afternoon was comprised of reports, policy changes and a first "reading" of greatly revised standards. Most significant of the policy changes were a removal of the requirement that changes to ACCJC Bylaws be considered in public session and extensive changes to the [Policy on Complaints Against the ACCJC](#) narrowing the scope of complaints to which ACCJC must respond, requiring more information and substantial evidence from the complainant; specifying the form that the complaint must take (including an original signature) and disallowing the right to appeal the disposition of a complaint.

The new standards

At the beginning of the ACCJC meeting on the afternoon of January 10, Tim Karas, President of the Council of Chief Librarians, spoke in public comment about the process used by his organization to provide consensus from the field on standards for libraries. ACCJC has used none of their input. He asked the group to reconsider merging Standard II.C., concerning libraries, into Standard II.B. Student Services. I spoke during public comment about the contrast between the statements made by ACCJC at the NACIQI meeting in December claiming wide vetting of the new standards and the actual practice, including the withholding of half the standards from the ASCCC and the lack of responsiveness to input. Vice President Krista Johns and others responded to say that the phase for feedback to the standards was just beginning now - even the Commission members had just received the new standards for first reading two days ago -- and there will be a wide process for feedback this Spring. These statements were contradicted a few hours later when the commission started its discussion of the standards and John Nixon, speaking for the standards committee, talked about how much input and feedback they've already had from "experts in the field" including the ASCCC. In the discussion, one of the commissioners remarked "I just don't want us to leave the impression with the public that this is the first time the Commission is looking at these standards. It is not." I cannot reconcile these various statements with each other or with the experiences many of us have had in not being able to access the text of the draft standards and the agency's lack of responsiveness to feedback during a time when the agency announces it is seeking input. It is also unclear how the January

10th afternoon meeting qualified as a public presentation of the standards as a first “reading,” since these standards were not provided to members of the public who attended the meeting, nor were they read out loud. There was some discussion of sections of it by members of the commission (mostly impossible for us public to follow with no text) but no changes were made before it was unanimously approved. Vice President Krista Johns estimated that the text as approved may be provided to college CEOs and ALOs by the end of January.

For City College of San Francisco

The faculty of City College of San Francisco are continuing work to ensure that our college meets all ACCJC standards. I’ve noticed that in public discussion by college and State officials about work remaining to be done, references are no longer made to SLOs or to faculty governance, focusing instead on financial issues and the hiring of administrators. The college is being financially protected for this year by stabilization funding against the severe drop in enrollment resulting primarily from all the bad publicity – next year may be a different story. The injunction has NOT changed faculty commitment to meeting standards at City College. The difference made by the injunction is that we now have some assurance that our accreditation will not be cut off by ACCJC without good cause, and that the next time it assesses our college, we have a chance of a fair assessment, thanks to Judge Karnow, Nancy Pelosi, Jackie Spier, Anna Eshoo and others who have critical eyes on ACCJC

In the Bay Area: Upcoming FREE Policy Forum on Accreditation in California

[“The Escalating Fight Over Accreditation: Lawsuits, Legislation, Audits, and More”](#) sponsored by FACCC, the Faculty Association of the California Community Colleges

January 24th, Friday, 10:30 – 1:00, including free lunch at DeAnza College.

Speakers include Deputy City Attorney Sara Eisenberg and our own Alisa Messer.

Karen Saginor

First Vice President of the Academic Senate and Librarian

City College of San Francisco Conlan Hall - E202

ksaginor@ccsf.edu (415) 860-4173