Shortcomings . . .

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tions in the rest of the United States; and inadequate monitoring and oversight by the State Chancellor’s Office.

To its credit, the Chancellor’s Office has already begun to address nine recommendations identified in the state audit. One of these recommendations, that the ACCJC should be removed from Title 5 regulations naming it as the sole accrediting agency for the California Community Colleges, was discussed at the October Consultation Council meeting, and new language was recommended. The Chancellor recommends an accreditor to the Board of Governors for a first reading at its November meeting. The change removes the ACCJC and substitutes a process under which the Board of Governors would oversee the adoption of an “independent” accreditor by all of the faculty groups spoke in favor of language that would give the State Chancellor and the Board flexibility on this point. The faculty also suggested inserting a review and renewal cycle into the Title 5 provision under which reappointment of an accreditor would be required every three years or some other appropriate period of time. At this point, the matter is still under discussion.

In contrast, no one expects the ACCJC to publicly admit that the state audit has any bearing on its policies, practices, or actions. In a letter to JALC members prior to the February 2013 audit, ACCJC President Bono “demanded” the audit be dropped, claiming that ACCJC’s decisions and campus evaluations were fair and unbiased even though ACCJC’s accountability is determined only by the Commission’s own self-evaluations and self-assessments.

Following upon Bono’s claims that ACCJC did not have many of the documents being requested by legislators, the ACCJC adopted a new policy directing campuses to submit for approval all audit documents to the ACCJC Office “or destroy them by having them shredded.”

“Do not have the expertise to conduct an audit of the type that was undertaken in this instance.”

In addition to the audit, two bills were also introduced during the 2012-13 legislative session: SB 1068, sponsored by CCCI and co-authored by Senators Beall and Nielsen; and AB 1942, sponsored by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and authored by Assembly Member Rob Bonta (D). Unfortunately, the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Carol Liu (D) stood between these bills and a Senate vote. Because SB 1068 originated in the Senate, it was the first to face this roadblock and never made it to a floor vote. AB 1942 was able to build some momentum in the Assembly, winning a floor vote there before facing the Senate Education Committee.

In the end, a weakened version of AB 1942 passed in the Senate and got Governor Brown’s signature. Although not as strong as faculty advocates wanted, the legislation has some potential to move more criticism of punishing the colleges than helping improve them and the ramifications of the State Chancellor’s Office audit. AB 1942 directs the Board of Governors to consider the creation of an independent accrediting agency. The bill also requires improvement in the ACCJC’s adherence to open meeting laws, ensures that accrediting agencies in California have a clear process through which colleges can appeal accreditor decisions, and directs the State Chancellor’s Office to give early notice to colleges at risk of being sanctioned.

In the U.S. Department of Education is also reviewing ACCJC’s status as an accrediting agency, and a trial began on October 27 pursuant to a lawsuit the San Francisco City Attorney filed to invalidate the ACCJC’s decision to terminate accreditation of the City College of San Francisco (CCSF). Pressure is mounting on the ACCJC, and the Commission’s decision to terminate CCSF’s accreditation is determined only by the Commission’s own self-evaluations and self-assessments.

At some time, the Governor’s Office has targeted resources to the ACCJC for an independent accrediting agency. The bill also requires improvement in the ACCJC’s adherence to open meeting laws, and a report on the State Auditor’s recently released findings on the Accreditation Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). CCCI successfully guided the request for this audit through the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) in the 2012-13 legislative session. It continues the organization’s confrontation with the accrediting commission that began as early as CCCI’s 2009 Spring Conference at which we adopted a resolution of “no confidence” in the ACCJC.

At that time, CCCI members were incensed by the requirement that Student Learning Outcome (SLO) data be collected and analyzed, an unnecessary burden for small or moribund faculty. Now a top-down corporate structure. It also appeared to punish the colleges than helping improve them and the ramifications of the State Chancellor’s Office audit. AB 1942 directs the Board of Governors to consider the creation of an independent accrediting agency. The bill also requires improvement in the ACCJC’s adherence to open meeting laws, ensures that accrediting agencies in California have a clear process through which colleges can appeal accreditor decisions, and directs the State Chancellor’s Office to give early notice to colleges at risk of being sanctioned.

The California Community Colleges are emerging from the recession burdened with many challenges. The two biggest immediate issues are an accreditation crisis and some legislation aimed at greater ACCJC accountability. Armed with the now completed ACCJC’s status as an accreditor, AB 1942 directs the Board of Governors to consider the creation of an independent accrediting agency. The bill also requires improvement in the ACCJC’s adherence to open meeting laws, ensures that accrediting agencies in California have a clear process through which colleges can appeal accreditor decisions, and directs the State Chancellor’s Office to give early notice to colleges at risk of being sanctioned.

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At the time, CCCI members were incensed by the requirement that Student Learning Outcome (SLO) data be collected and analyzed, an unnecessary burden for small or moribund faculty. Now, despite improved funding, many local improvements are still not being funded, how the work will be done, and who will be doing it.

The same battle over quality that raged in the SSTF is now being fought on many college campuses. This struggle is taking place in a context of longer-term concerns that include the state’s ramp-up in pension obligations and the California Courts of Appeal’s decision to completely ignoring the devastating loss of purchasing power of more than 16 percent suffered over the course of the recession.

Rather than address the system’s immediate funding needs, the governor’s office has targeted resources at expanding college services, even adding the Equity Program and opening the door to having colleges offer bachelor’s degrees in the cost technical training. While appealing, this doesn’t make sense.
Real “Student Success” Requires Investment

by Jeffrey Michels, CCCI Executive Secretary

In responding to the Student Success Task Force proposals (approved by the Community College Board of Governors in 2012), one of CCCI’s core messages was that reform without investment is a recipe for failure. New ideas, we argued, can be great, but are less needed than new money because California Community Colleges in the 21st century are less broken than starving. It is chronic underfunding that has led to our over-reliance on remediation, the main source of our funding, while full professional service to our students is barely covered.

And over the years, support for full professional service, like our understaffed faculty and in classes. There are no “programs,” but where the politics sometimes differ. Money is still the key, but money badly spent can be a recipe for failure. New ideas, we argued, can be new, but that doesn’t mean they’re any good.

Millions of new dollars, in fact, are now flowing to community colleges with specific restrictions that allow for none of the money to be spent on classroom faculty and in classes. These new dollars for “student equity” will be the first step in a new “advising” program that Court of Appeal judges urge the ACCJC operated in closed sessions, it could not be audited and that results would be disappointing and inconclusive at best and, at worst, might incend the ire of the Commission, resulting in negative repercussions for the colleges.

As California’s economy has improved, however, and as the state has begun to allocate categorical dollars for more investment in community colleges but stressing that there can be no effective investment in the classroom itself and especially teachers. We must continue to insist that “student success” is a real “core service” that colleges provide, after all, is instruction.

We never need more full-time faculty; office hours for part-time faculty; and more support for innovative teaching, especially among community colleges (including smaller classes, supplemental instructors and tutors, expanded library hours and access to technology). These are great ideas, but that doesn’t mean they are bad.

The worst of the so-called reformers like to talk about a “new normal” where the public is tired of hearing that teachers are underpaid or that classes are too big. In the new normal, these lies persist, people hate taxes and investing in schools. So we need new ideas, they say: ways to fund “student success” without hiring more teachers or raising pay; ways to standardize instruction and assessment (since the myth of the good teacher who needs to be attracted

agency that considered itself above the law and came away from meetings with ACCJC President Barbara Beno describing her as “combative, arrogant and dismissive.”

While the original concept focused on the cost of the accreditation process for the colleges, as the ILAC learned more about the issues swirling about the ACCJC and the colleges it accredits, the scope of the audit was expanded to include the laws and regulations governing the new accreditation process and the role of the government and the State Chancellor’s Office in accreditation, the procedures and policies of the ACCJC, accreditation criteria and why the state could not have influence over the period from 2009 to 2012, and comparisons among the six regional accreditors in terms of process and outcome. Three California community colleges were chosen for the study.

The resulting audit report confirms many of the concerns raised by critics of the ACCJC, including accreditation policies that were applied inconsistently; ACCJC meetings that lack transparency; a faulty appeals process; a huge discrepancy in the sanction rates imposed by ACCJC on the California Community Colleges in comparison with community college sanctions.

Investment . . .

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