

Resolution 20

Demand fair governance of California Community Colleges

Submitted by the Educational Issues Committee

Committee: Professional Issues Higher Education

Whereas, the avowed and historic mission of public education in general, and of California's Community Colleges in particular, is the enrichment of public life and promotion of the general welfare through maximum free access to educational enrichment for all who wish to study; and

Whereas, educational enrichment for all who wish to study encompasses both learning for gainful employment and lifelong learning in the broadest sense; and

Whereas, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and its subsidiary, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) form a powerful part of the governing mechanism of public education through their power to grant or withhold accreditation of schools; and

Whereas, WASC and ACCJC have historically stated their mission as "The purpose of the Commission is to foster excellence in elementary, secondary, adult and postsecondary institutions, and supplementary education programs;" and

Whereas, WASC and ACCJC have historically been funded by their member schools and school systems to carry out the public mandate of safeguarding public education; and

Whereas, the lack of transparency and lack of accountability exhibited by WASC and its subsidiaries is contrary to its responsibilities to the public; and

Whereas, the new economy of austerity promoted by corporate forces demands that access to public education be sharply curtailed and the mission of public education be narrowed to suit corporate needs without regard to educational and public needs, specifically reduced tax load on corporations and the rich, corporatization and financialization of education for profitable purposes, a preparation of students to serve corporate needs through heavy indebtedness and low-paying job; and

Whereas, recent policy actions of ACCJC such as the accreditation attack upon City College of San Francisco reveal ACCJC's and WASC's alignment with the line of austerity being driven forward by corporate-linked forces in both the Democratic and Republican wings of the California state government; and

Whereas, it is increasingly clear that attacks and demands on individual institutions are used as test cases and probes for further expansion of the corporatization of public resources, including and especially public education; and

Whereas, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation (which is funded by the Student Loan Marketing Association) are both well-known and documented agents of corporate interests in monetizing public education; and

Whereas, WASC acceptance of funding from the Lumina Foundation (\$1 million) and the Gates Foundation (\$1.5 million) provides evidence that WASC, and ACCJC in particular, is yet another example "regulatory capture" of a public-mandated agency by corporate forces, and a willing pawn in a strategic business plan driven by corporate power on a national and global scale; and

Whereas, it is increasingly clear that there is no middle ground between the public's need for resources including education and the corporate power's need to control, limit, reshape and destroy those resources;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) demand that WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) and its subsidiaries ACS (Accrediting Commission for Schools), ACCJC (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges), and ACSCU (Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities) divest themselves from the Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation immediately; and

Be it further resolved, that the CFT demands WASC and its subsidiaries be exclusively funded by its member institutions and be fully transparent and accountable to the public; and

Be it further resolved, that the CFT demands that accreditation standards reflect the highest mission and standards of education for the public good as articulated in the California Master Plan for Higher Education, and not the standards of austerity and the marketplace, and will settle for nothing less; and

Be it further resolved, that the CFT rejects ACCJC's current demands that community colleges narrow their mission, cut classes, reduce and narrow student access, shift governance away from Joint Governance toward Administration Governance, fire faculty while hiring administrators, sell off public property, and divert publicly voted funds from student and classroom needs to corporate-driven administrative priorities; and

Be it finally resolved, that the CFT will join with its statewide and nationwide community partners and further build that network to campaign for the realization of these goals, beginning with community organization through parents, students, and teachers to activate the public power necessary to enforce the will of the people on the government and its institutions.