

**BOARD REPORT NO. 14-3-2B** March 26, 2014

**RESOLUTION NO. 14-3**

**BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE**

**SAN MATEO COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES**

**WHEREAS**, the United States system of regional accreditation has been well-established and has traditionally provided essential guarantees of quality in America's post-secondary institutions since the 1950's; and

**WHEREAS**, the goal of accreditation, according to the United States Department of Education (USDE), "is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality"; and

**WHEREAS**, accreditation, as interpreted by Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), has little to do with the quality of instruction received by students. Accreditation by the ACCJC focuses on "four standards" that largely emphasize compliance with non-academic matters such as mission statements, planning documents, "functional maps" and governance, rather than student success factors such as degree completion, university transfer and workforce preparation; and

**WHEREAS**, ACCJC's standards regarding the financial health of a college conflict with existing Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP) and ignore collective bargaining agreements; and

**WHEREAS**, as a result of ACCJC requirements for an excessive number of documents necessary to satisfy ACCJC's reporting requirements, tens of millions of dollars have been diverted away from classrooms and related student services. Many of these documents have little to do with the compulsory review conducted every six years by ACCJC, but rather are interim reports or "Substantive Change" reports that have little, if any, benefit to the institutions that prepare them; and

**WHEREAS**, sanctions imposed by ACCJC are rarely based on the actual quality of education and student services delivered by an institution or the adequacy of instruction delivered by its faculty; and

**WHEREAS**, key to the success of an accreditation system are a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between the regional commissions and their member institutions and a shared focus on the needs and interests of the students who attend these institutions; and

**WHEREAS**, for the last decade, the relationship between the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and many of California's 112 public community colleges has been contentious and, in many instances, antagonistic; and

**WHEREAS**, the troubled nature of the relationship between ACCJC and many of its member institutions is manifested in multiple ways, including the following: since 2007, all 112 California community colleges have been reviewed by the ACCJC and 63% were sanctioned. Conversely, the average sanction rate for the other six accrediting agencies in the nation is approximately 2%. Since 2003, there were 20 instances that a California Community College underwent accreditation while they had a representative sitting on the Commission and ONLY ONE of those colleges was sanctioned. Nationally, ACCJC generated 89% of all sanctions issued nationwide from 2003-2008 and 64% of the 75 sanctions issued nationwide from June 2011 to June 2012; and BOARD REPORT NO. 14-3-2B 2

**WHEREAS**, ACCJC has been under scrutiny by the USDE which has given the agency one year to correct deficiencies it found; the State of California, which has ordered an audit of the agency; and the City of San Francisco, which has filed a lawsuit against the Agency and was granted a court injunction to prevent ACCJC from withdrawing accreditation from City College of San Francisco; and

**WHEREAS**, the Western Region is the only one of the six accrediting regions of the United States where a separate commission exists for the purpose of accrediting two-year institutions rather than having a single commission accredit both two-year and four-year institutions.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the San Mateo County Community College District Board of Trustees hereby expresses its deep concern over the adversarial nature of the relationships between ACCJC and many of California's community colleges and the excessive and overly punitive nature of sanctions; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the San Mateo County Community College District Board of Trustees urges the USDE to carefully monitor ACCJC's work as a regional accreditor during the year and assure that it completely addresses all of the deficiencies found by the Department; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the San Mateo County Community College District Board of Trustees recommends that the USDE include in its review of ACCJC consideration of merging ACCJC and WASC Senior into a single higher education accrediting commission for the Western Region in order to bring the structure of this region's commission in line with the structure of the other five regions; and

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED**, that the San Mateo County Community College District Board of Trustees urges ACCJC itself to consider, in its own self-evaluation, how ineffective the Commission has been in fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between itself and its member institutions and that the Commission take meaningful steps to begin developing a more collaborative spirit in its work with the California community colleges and that it amend its accreditation standards to remove the regulatory and compliance issues and re-focus the standards on student access and success.

**REGULARLY PASSED AND ADOPTED** this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2014.