



ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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Memo To: Chancellors, Presidents and ALOs of Colleges with Comprehensive Reviews in Fall 2015

From: Barbara Beno *Barbara A. Beno*

Subject: Questions about Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions

ACCJC has received a request to provide an explanation of the Commission's recent actions announced on the Commission Actions on Institutions posting, with regard to the action to Reaffirm Accreditation for 18 Months on the Basis of a Comprehensive Evaluation. I'm glad to provide some further clarity to this action.

First, the announcement of Commission Actions simply reports the accredited status of institutions. It does not report requirements for follow-up reports for any category of commission actions. Second, the action letters reflect the new policy language.

The relevant policy language can be found in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions, section III. The policy language with regard to this action was approved in June 2015, after being circulated to the membership and the public as a proposed policy and provided the usual period for comment on the proposed language prior to adoption. ACCJC also discussed this proposed policy language during the Commission's Symposium last April. Each college president undergoing review in fall 2015 received a letter dated September 21, 2015, reminding them of the new policy language.

The policy defines the two possible actions to reaffirm accreditation as follows:

Reaffirm Accreditation. The institution is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards). The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report midway through the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm Accreditation and Require a Follow-Up Report. The institution is in substantial compliance with the Commission's Standards. The institution is required to submit a Follow-Up Report demonstrating that it has resolved all cited deficiencies. The Commission will specify the issues to be addressed and the due date of the report, with or without an evaluation team visit. The period for reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report may be up to 18 months, but generally will be one year. Upon successful completion of the reaffirmation with a Follow-Up Report period, the institution will qualify for reaffirmation for the remainder of the six-year accreditation cycle and will be required to submit a Midterm Report midway through the six-year accreditation cycle.

The second action allows the Commission to reaffirm accreditation for a limited time, and to provide an institution up to 18 months¹ to correct a small number of deficiencies in that period. If an institution does not come into compliance in that period, it may be subject to sanctions. If it does come into compliance, it will have its accreditation reaffirmed for the remainder of the six-year cycle of accreditation, and this will be noted in the usual manner, “The Commission acted to reaffirm accreditation.”

The Commission developed this policy in response to feedback from the field that requested adequate time for an institution to respond to findings of non-compliance before any sanction is imposed on an institution. This policy provides time for institutions to come into compliance when the Commission finds the college is, “in substantial compliance” (see policy language above).

The Commission welcomes comments from all on this policy language.

BAB/mg

¹ One important point is that the longstanding federal requirement that an accreditor provide no more than two years for an institution to meet standards when a deficiency is found still applies. The two year maximum time period permitted begins with the original notice that the Commission has found deficiencies. So in this case, the eighteen month period permitted for a follow up report is part of that maximum of two years provided for in federal law, with an additional period provided only if the Commission grants good cause extension.