

The Commission will examine the Task Force Report carefully before developing a response, but I expect there will be one sometime next week. Some of the material in the Task Force Report is material that has circulated before, such as the State Audit Report, and the Commission is familiar with it. Other material is newer.

The Task Force Report, coming from the Chancellor's office, certainly contradicts the input that ACCJC received directly from member institutions. Accreditation is a voluntary, peer review system in which institutional members help to create standards for quality, serve on evaluation teams and also serve as Commissioners.

Accreditation standards are adopted after a great amount of input and review by member institutions. ACCJC's Standards adopted last year had such review, with hundreds of persons providing input over a period of three years. There was to a great extent little call for change in the content of standards, but a request for simplification, clarification and elimination of redundancies. The ACCJC announced new standards in June 2014, and just this May announced new practices such as the move from a six to a seven-year cycle, a midterm with a greater emphasis on and support for quality improvement, an annual conference designed to showcase best practices, and more. The Task Force Report appears to not take into account the review and changes ACCJC has made.

As you know, teams may find areas of non-compliance, and they are asked in their team reports to provide recommendations to an institution on how to make needed improvements to meet standards. The ACCJC also asks teams to promote excellence by making recommendations to help an institution excel. Generally, institutions report they are satisfied and feel team reports are useful, as described in our own evaluation of team visits and in the State Auditor's Report survey of about 89 California colleges. Those recommendations and support for continuous quality improvement are what help colleges improve.

Moreover, the evaluation teams in this region are largely comprised of academics and administrators from California public colleges, and it is these teams finding the deficiencies, good practices and opportunities to excel in college practices. Similarly, the Commission is comprised of many California public college representatives. That the Task Force Report rejects the decisions of peers and suggests an alternative accreditor be found suggests that the Task Force rejects the work of its own constituency groups.

Certainly, the USDE regulations for accreditors, particularly 602.13 (I think this is the number for the "two year rule"), play a role in the Task Force's concerns. The regulations put great pressure on accreditors to take negative action on institutions when they are found to be out of compliance and have not quickly come into compliance. Conditions in California have contributed to institutional challenges over the years, including erratic or declining funding, lack of funds for professional development to enhance college staffs' skills and knowledge, a good deal of leadership turnover are among those issues the Commission identified in a communication to the State Chancellor as early as 2010. The State has also left to the Commission the task of pointing out fiscal instability and even crisis that detracts from educational quality. In the vacuum of state oversight of college

financial conditions, it's too often an accreditation team that comes and finds ongoing severe financial problems that compromise educational quality. More state oversight and leadership is needed.

There is much detail in the Task Force Report for the ACCJC to read and think about, and we'll be doing so over the next week or so. The ACCJC should have a more complete response after that review.

*-- Barbara Beno, president of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges*