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Judge rules accreditor acted illegally in terminating City College of San Francisco's accreditation

Today the California Federation of Teachers hosted a press teleconference call to discuss Superior Court Judge Curtis Karnow's ruling in "The People vs. ACCJC." Participating were CFT president Joshua Pechthalt, Assemblymember Phil Ting (D-San Francisco), AFT Local 2121 president Tim Killikelly, and Shanell Williams, Student Trustee at City College of San Francisco. Here are highlights.

In a vindication of the CFT's longstanding contention that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) acted illegally in its decision to terminate City College of San Francisco's accreditation, San Francisco Superior Court judge Curtis Karnow issued his ruling today in "The People vs. ACCJC."

Judge Karnow found the ACCJC has violated federal regulations and common law fair procedure, and committed "significant unlawful practices," in its handling of CCSF's accreditation review. To remedy the violation of City College's due process, the court ordered the ACCJC to revisit the disaccreditation decision and provide the college with the opportunity to respond to ACCJC actions that it had been denied previously.

California Federation of Teachers president Joshua Pechthalt said, "The judge's decision is important. It says clearly that the commission broke the law, and that City College of San Francisco must be given a new opportunity to keep its accreditation. But the broader meaning is that the ACCJC is not a fair and constructive overseer of accreditation for California's community colleges. Its bad behavior was revealed in this trial, and demonstrates the need for reform of community college accreditation in California."

"ACCJC broke the law," said Assemblymember Phil Ting (D-San Francisco). "Judge Karnow's decision clearly states ACCJC is accountable to the people of California and our state laws. The Legislature will discuss and determine if ACCJC needs reform or replacement."

Speaking of the impact on governance at CCSF, AFT Local 2121 president Tim Killikelly said, "This decision demonstrates that the justification for imposing a 'special

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trustee with extraordinary powers' and displacing the democratically elected Board of Trustees at CCSF was wrong. There is no need for a special trustee at CCSF. We call upon the State Chancellor and the state community college Board of Governors for the immediate return of the Board of Trustees.”

In addition, American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten sent a statement of support for the judge’s decision. “The court’s decision confirms what educators, students and the entire San Francisco community have known for years—City College is part of the fabric of San Francisco because of the higher education opportunities it has provided for decades. Its name has been illegally and arbitrarily sullied by a rogue accreditation agency, harming the very people an accrediting body is suppose to help. We know this ruling is only the first step in regaining CCSF’s accreditation and restoring its good name. With a renewed national focus on ensuring community colleges are affordable and accessible to all, we are so pleased that CCSF can continue to provide the high-quality education its students and the community have come to know.”

The CFT represents more than 25,000 faculty in thirty community colleges districts, and 120,000 educational employees at every level of the education system, from Head Start to UC. More information: cft.org.