

Statement on the Benefits of Accreditation

(Adopted June 2004; Revised January 2011; Edited June 2012, August 2012)

Background

Accreditation is the primary means by which colleges and universities in the United States assure and improve quality. Both accrediting bodies and the institutions they accredit must use the highest standards of professionalism to ensure that accreditation provides value to the institutions themselves, the students, the public, the government, and other institutions of higher education. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is statutorily recognized by the U.S. Department of Education¹ as one of seven (7) regional accrediting commissions.

Statement

The Commission shall ensure that its accrediting actions sustain and enhance quality and maintain the values of higher education among member institutions. The Commission serves the public interest by providing information on its actions to institutions, the public, and students.

Statement Elements

The Commission serves to assure a threshold level of quality. When the Commission accredits an institution, it certifies that the institution has an appropriate mission, has the resources necessary to accomplish its mission, has the data and utilizes those data appropriately to demonstrate that it is accomplishing its mission, and gives reasons to believe that it will continue to accomplish its mission.

The Commission functions to reinforce the following core values of higher education: institutional quality and autonomy, academic freedom, commitment to degree education, commitment to general education, and collegial governance. The Commission reinforces the value of institutional autonomy through its emphasis on a mission-based approach to quality review. The Commission values and supports academic freedom for all constituencies. The Commission provides a firm foundation for the value of the academic or career/technical degree and general education by requiring that institutions both grant degrees and offer general education as a component of every degree. The Commission's accreditation process is a collegial *process* of peer review.

The Commission and its accreditation provide to students an assurance that the educational activities of the accredited institution have been found to meet Accreditation Standards and are satisfactory. This accredited status provides students the following benefits: easier transfer of earned academic credits when those credits are appropriate to the receiving institution; the opportunity to access federal financial aid; and greater acceptance of the

¹ Authority is contained in 34 C.F.R. § 602. Also see U.S. Department of Education listing of regional and national institutional accrediting agencies, http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html

students' credits, certificates and degrees by employers, licensing agencies, and other institutions of higher education.

The Commission provides to its member institutions an incentive for self evaluation and self-directed institutional improvement through the institutional self evaluation, the first stage of the accreditation process. The Commission provides to member institutions valuable information and recommendations for improvement through the peer evaluation process, and through the Commission's action letters, monitoring and follow up evaluations of institutions that may occur. The Commission provides to its member institutions a guard against external encroachment harmful to institutional quality, an enhanced reputation of the accredited institution because of its voluntary participation in peer review, and access to federal programs and private support that aid postsecondary education.

The Commission provides to the public an assurance that through external evaluation the institution conforms to established standards of good practice in higher education, and that its credits, certificates and degrees can be trusted. The Commission provides assurance that an institution of higher education is committed to improving the quality of its educational offerings and an assurance that the institution is operating within legal and fiscal practices of good conduct appropriate to an institution of higher education.