



ACCJ Connect – February 2024



<http://www.accjc.org>



[ACCJ On The Move](#)



[ACCJ Official Twitter](#)

President's Message

Accreditation's Role in Improving and Sharing the Value of Higher Education

Dear Colleagues,

Accreditation is one of the most powerful levers available to influence change and create value in higher education. Accreditation focuses on what people care about most in education — quality, equity, access, and student success. It focuses on outcomes that matter: degree completion, readiness for work and community roles, and economic mobility for every student. Accreditation is actively informed by data, metrics, and benchmarks that are analyzed regularly to hold institutions accountable for financial sustainability and meaningful student outcomes. Accreditation moves faster than ever before to pave the way for innovative new institutions and models. Accreditation holds institutions accountable to rigorous standards and acts decisively to protect students when institutions close.

U.S. colleges and universities are the envy of the world yet over half the country thinks U.S. higher education needs a significant reboot, seeing it as too expensive with not enough access or guarantees of student success. Any evolution in higher education will require quality accreditation. ACCJC is a federally-recognized nonprofit commission overseeing 137 institutions serving students in California, New York, and the Pacific, and sets the bar in quality accreditation through accountability, data, transparency, innovation, and peer review. Through our 2024 Accreditation Standards, policies, processes, and advocacy, we support member institutions as they carry out their unique missions and advance educational quality and equitable student learning and achievement.

Community colleges, generally, and ACCJC member institutions, in particular, are incredible resources to the communities they serve, and provide essential opportunities for learning, economic mobility, and personal development, benefiting individuals and society overall. Through our partnership with member institutions in the accreditation process, ACCJC hopes to shine a light on the innovative and inspiring work taking place across our membership, support institutional transformation, and continue to improve our resources and processes as we all endeavor to meet the ever-changing needs of students.

As you read this newsletter, you'll find updates on our major initiatives and new resources, as well as many opportunities for engagement, including webinars, strategic planning work, and the [2024 Partners in Excellence Conference](#). Please join us May 9-10 for that event and consider submitting a proposal for a poster session to showcase a high-impact practice or outcome at your institution.

We live in challenging times, and right now your work is more important than ever. I look forward to continued collaboration and as always, please reach out if there is a way I can serve you.

Yours,
Mac Powell

ACCJC On The Move

Stories of Student Success and Institutional Transformation

The story of an institution is the story of the people, places, and communities that serve its students. Conversations about student success often focus solely on graduation rates or other benchmark data that can obscure the true impact institutions, programs, and people have on the human beings served. *ACCJC On The Move* is about our journey to understand the distinct missions of the 137 institutions ACCJC serves, and the promising impactful practices changing lives inside and outside the classroom. Take a look at [ACCJC On The Move](#), follow us on [Instagram @accjc_onthefirstmove](#), and please say hello when you see President Powell on campus!

Call to Action

New Distance Education Regulations and Substantive Change Approvals

ACCJC has recently updated its [Policy on Substantive Change](#) and [Substantive Change Manual](#) and has clarified distance education approval requirements as seen in the U.S. Department of Education's [Letter on Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements for Distance Education](#).

If your institution has received initial approval from ACCJC to offer programs in the distance education modality, you can continue offering those programs in this modality. However, please notify us within 30 days, through our [Substantive Change Inquiry Form](#), of any new or existing programs where 50 percent or more of the total program (including General Education courses) will be offered via distance education.

Additionally, if one or both of the following apply, you must receive additional Substantive Change approval from ACCJC:

- 50 percent or more of your total student population is enrolled in at least one course offered through distance education, or
- 50 percent or more of all your institution's courses are offered via distance education.

To receive approval, please submit the [Substantive Change Inquiry Form](#) by **March 1, 2024**.

Notification of these changes and instructions on how to complete this process were emailed to ALOs on January 29th. Please reach out to ACCJC if you have any follow-up questions.

Reminder: Comments from the Field on ACCJC Policy Revisions (First Read)

At its meeting January 10-11, 2024, the Commission considered one policy change for First Read. Following its Bylaws, ACCJC invites comments from the field on the first-read policy revisions. Policy comments must be received by **Friday, March 1, 2024**. Notice of Commission adoption of policy revisions and edits is also included in the memo.

[January 2024 Policy Revisions and instructions to make comments...](#)

Call to Action *continued...*

ACCJC Strategic Plan

ACCJC is crafting its 2030 Strategic Plan. As part of that process, we are seeking the feedback of our member institutions, stakeholders, and the public. Our hope is to engage with faculty, staff, students, administrators, and the communities that they serve to chart a path forward for our work in promoting student success. ACCJC invites participation in an [online survey](#) to gather stakeholder feedback. Additionally, we have scheduled a series of town hall listening sessions for early 2024. More information and registration for the **February 8th listening session** is available on the [Strategic Plan webpage](#).

ACCJC Updates Bylaws to Reflect New “Doing Business As” Name

ACCJC’s current legal name is “Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.” This name, adopted when ACCJC separated from WASC and incorporated independently in November of 2012, has been a source of confusion over the years with federal policy makers and the public. At its January 2024 Board Meeting, the Commission took action to amend the ACCJC Bylaws so that we may be formally recognized as an organization doing business as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The name of the nonprofit corporation, as stated in its Articles of Incorporation, will remain the same. The [updated Bylaws](#) and the related [Policy on Representation of Accredited Status](#) are available on the ACCJC website. As such, we ask that ACCJC member institutions **update their statements of accredited status** in publications and on college websites with the new name and [updated logo](#).

Commission Announcements and Updates

Recent Commission Actions on Institutions

ACCJC held its biannual meeting January 10-11, 2024. The Commission Actions on Institutions notification lists the actions taken by the Commission regarding ACCJC member institutions and is posted on the ACCJC website. [Commission Actions on Institutions...](#)

ACCJC Elects New Officers

ACCJC Commissioners completed the ACCJC officer election and announced the results at its January 2024 Board of Directors meeting. The Commission is pleased to announce that Commissioner Michael Zimmerman was elected as vice chair and Commissioner Mike Claire was reelected as secretary/treasurer. We thank the officers-elect for their interest in serving the Commission in a leadership capacity! [New Officer Announcement...](#)

Spring 2024 Election – Announcement of Vacancies

At its meeting, January 10-11, 2024, the Commission announced its spring 2024 Commission vacancies. The vacancies include **three academic members**. Information about the nomination and application process will be available on the ACCJC website and announced at the end of February. [Announcement of Vacancies...](#)

Commission Announcements and Updates *continued...*

ACCJC Makes Progress on Technology and Data Collection Initiatives

ACCJC Staff continue to work on the development and implementation of a **grant-funded customer relationship management (CRM) system**, thanks to the College Futures Foundation. The ACCJC Accreditation Platform streamlines the collaborative accreditation process for ACCJC and its members and will launch to institutions and peer reviewers this spring.

ACCJC has made exciting progress on the **related data project** and has established dynamic, easily accessible, equity-focused data dashboards that focus our efforts on closing institutional equity gaps. The data are used to evaluate institutions in ongoing monitoring and as foundational elements of ACCJC's work with institutions as they develop self-evaluation reports and campus-wide activities designed to achieve equitable student success. Our [January 2024 Report to the College Futures Foundation](#) highlights our progress and previews the data dashboards' design and capabilities.

Annual Fiscal Report and Annual Report Process

Each year, ACCJC member institutions submit an Annual Fiscal Report and Annual Report to ACCJC in accordance with the Commission's [Policy on Monitoring Institutional Performance](#). ACCJC uses the data in these reports as it monitors institutions' strengths, stability, and ongoing alignment with the Standards throughout the accreditation cycle. There are no major changes to the questions for the 2024 Annual Fiscal Report or 2024 Annual Report.

ACCJC anticipates emailing instructions for completing the reports to member institution ALOs the week of February 12th (*report deadline is April 12, 2024*). **On Thursday, February 15, at 1:00 p.m. PST, ACCJC will host a webinar** to provide an overview of both reports, and ACCJC staff will be available to answer your questions. CEOs, ALOs, chief business officers, research staff, and others who help compile or complete the annual reports are encouraged to attend! [Webinar information...](#)

2024 Accreditation Standards Update

ACCJC's new Accreditation Standards have been launched, and the institutions piloting them have begun to share their feedback and appreciation for the focus on students and the efforts that drive equitable outcomes. Several colleges will highlight those learnings at our 2024 Partners in Excellence Conference on May 9th – 10th in Orange County, California. As mentioned in previous updates, in the process of designing and adopting the 2024 Accreditation Standards, we noted several improvements to the process, including extending the accreditation cycle to eight years, revising the Midterm Report, streamlining the ISER, and redesigning training and engagement for stakeholders and peer reviewers. We are pleased to report that the new online peer reviewer certification training modules were launched in the new online Learning Platform. The first cohort of peer reviewers have been onboarded and are completing their certifications.

Commission Announcements and Updates *continued...*

Updated Resources

In line with recent changes in federal regulations and ACCJC policies, the following resources have been updated and are available on the ACCJC website:

- [Accreditation Handbook](#)
- [Substantive Change Manual](#)
- [Institutional and Peer Review Team Report Templates](#)

For Institutions with Clock-Hour Programs

Please note that the U.S. Department of Education recently completed revisions to an area of federal regulations pertaining to **the maximum length of a program that prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation** (34 CFR § 668.14(b)(26)). This regulation previously permitted an institution to establish a program length up to 150% of the minimum number of clock hours set by the host State for the particular occupation. Effective July 1, 2024, the 150% option will be removed, and the program length cannot generally exceed the State minimum. There are some exceptions institutions should carefully review, such as occupations requiring a degree, fully distance education programs, etc. Institutions should contact the appropriate State agency to identify these exceptions. ACCJC will support institutions in taking appropriate actions to meet new regulations by updating its resources and providing timely review of substantive change requests. More information will be available soon. The Federal Register Notice for the upcoming revisions is available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-22785/p-1846>.

Upcoming Events

Strategic Plan Listening Session 2

ACCJC invites participation to gather stakeholder feedback on the draft 2030 Strategic Plan.

Thursday, **February 8, 2024**, 1:00-2:00 p.m. PST

[Zoom Registration Link](#)

Annual Report and Annual Fiscal Report Webinar

Each spring, ACCJC accredited institutions submit an Annual Report and an Annual Fiscal Report as part of the Commission's institutional performance monitoring process. In this webinar, ACCJC staff will provide an overview of the contents and submission process for both reports and will leave ample time for attendee questions. ACCJC encourages CEOs, ALOs, chief business officers, research staff, and others who will be involved in the preparation of the reports to attend.

Thursday, **February 15, 2024**, 1:00-2:00 p.m. PST

[Zoom Registration Link](#)

Upcoming Events *continued...*

ACCJC Partners in Excellence Conference



Thursday, May 9 – Friday, May 10
Hyatt Regency Orange County

We look forward to hosting faculty, staff, students, trustees, and administrators at the 2024 ACCJC Partners in Excellence Conference. This year, our theme explores how accreditation can support our institutions as they ***Foster Outcomes, Improvements, and Innovations in Equitable Student Success***. The conference will feature nationally recognized speakers, plenary conversations with regional leaders, panels with colleagues sharing best practices, and a poster session sponsored by the Lumina Foundation featuring our member institutions' high impact practices and outcomes. ACCJC is **currently seeking proposals for the poster session!**

Registration will open the week of February 5th. We will publicize the information broadly to the field as soon as it is available. Program, speaker, poster session, and hotel information can be found on the [conference website](#). We hope to see you in Orange County, California in May!

Please forward **ACCJC Connect** to Your Colleagues

Please spread the word by forwarding *ACCJC Connect* to colleagues, members of the public, and students. Help ACCJC keep member institution personnel and other interested parties apprised of our news and updates. If you have any questions or comments about this communication, please email communications@accjc.org. Thank you!

If you have not already done so, consider subscribing directly to *ACCJC Connect* and other ACCJC news and updates.

[Click here to subscribe.](#)