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## Statement on the Benefits of Accreditation

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January 2022

### Background

Accreditation as a system of voluntary, non-governmental, self-regulation, and peer review is unique to American educational institutions. It is a system by which an institution evaluates itself in accordance with standards of good practice regarding mission, goals, and objectives; the appropriateness, sufficiency, and utilization of resources; the usefulness, integrity, and effectiveness of its processes; and the extent to which it is achieving its intended student achievement and student learning outcomes, at levels generally acceptable for higher education. It is a process by which accreditors provide students, the public, and each other with assurances of institutional integrity and effectiveness and educational quality.

The Commission supports its member institutions through a collaboration that fosters institutional excellence and continuous improvement. Grounded by a set of core values, ACCJC's interaction with its members is guided by a commitment to the principles of collegiality, transparency, and consistency, which create mutual and clear understandings to ensure fair and value-adding results for institutions. The work of accreditation is mediated through the relationships that are formed among all the participants, characterized by mutual respect and engagement around common interests. In order to foster this relationship, the Commission and its member institutions fulfill their respective roles in the accreditation process in accordance with the following policy elements.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is statutorily recognized by the U.S. Department of Education<sup>1</sup> as an institutional accrediting agency.

### Statement

Guided by the Commission's mission, values, and strategic plan, 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 assures 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Authority is contained in 34 C.F.R. § 602. Also see U.S. Department of Education listing of recognized accrediting agencies, [http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg6.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html)

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, collegial governance, and social justice. 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 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.

*Adopted June 2004; Revised January 2011; Edited June 2012, August 2012; Edited January 2022*

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