

**Strategic Plan 2017 - 2025
Progress Summary: 2020-2021**

Primary Strategic Goal:

By 2025, the Commission will realize the positive impact of its mission and core values by implementing action steps to re-design policies and practices in training, communications, evaluation, process and structure, and operations to the ultimate goal of mission fulfillment.

By 2025, member institutions will:

- attest to the integrity, collegiality, and transparency of ACCJC practices and actions (S1);
- know that ACCJC is first and foremost concerned with improving student learning and achievement (S1, S2);
- know and experience the balance and alignment between the dual purposes of institutional quality assurance and improvement (S1, S2);
- see peer review as one dimension of capacity building for quality and improvement (S2, S3);
- see ACCJC as an advocate for regional accreditation as a self-regulated, peer review process (S3).

Strategies and Objectives in support of the Primary Strategic Goal

Key Strategies:

- Key Strategy 1: Communicate and collaborate to advance the mission of ACCJC
- Key Strategy 2: Foster institutional innovation
- Key Strategy 3: Lead advocacy efforts on accreditation

Objectives to Meet the Strategies:

- Objective 1: Support institutional efforts to increase student achievement
- Objective 2: Refine the comprehensive review process
- Objective 3: Develop a new accreditation standards framework
- Objective 4: Nurture ongoing collaborations and expand partnerships
- Objective 5: Strengthen ACCJC infrastructure and capacity
- Objective 6: Increase opportunities for two-way communication with member institutions

Linking Strategies and Objectives

The matrix below shows the objectives that support each Key Strategy. In the attached report, progress in each of the key strategic areas is evaluated by considering activities related to each objective.

	Key Strategy 1 (Communication)	Key Strategy 2 (Institutional Innovation)	Key Strategy 3 (Advocacy)
Objective 1	X	X	
Objective 2		X	
Objective 3	X	X	
Objective 4			X
Objective 5	X		X
Objective 6	X		X

Progress at a Glance: Areas of Strategic Effort, July 2020 – June 2021

The heat map below illustrates ACCJC’s strategic activities over the past reporting cycle. Cells are shaded to indicate areas of strategic energy over the past reporting cycle, with darker shading representing higher degrees of activity. **This graphic should not be construed as evaluative, nor should it be assumed to be an exhaustive list of all ACCJC operations and activities. Rather, it provides an overview of the Commission’s recent strategic focus.**



	Key Strategy 1 (Communication)	Key Strategy 2 (Institutional Innovation)	Key Strategy 3 (Advocacy)
Objective 1			n/a
Objective 2	n/a		n/a
Objective 3			n/a
Objective 4	n/a	n/a	
Objective 5		n/a	
Objective 6		n/a	

Progress Summary & Evaluation: High Level, by Key Strategy

Key Strategy 1: Communicate and collaborate to advance the mission of ACCJC

Summary Highlights:

Objective 1 - Support institutional efforts to increase student achievement: Two policy revisions during 2020-2021 are particularly notable in their support for institutional efforts increase to student achievement: the Policy on Social Justice specifies the Accreditation Standards that require institutions to ground their work in equity, diversity, and inclusion, and the revised Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits allows colleges more flexibility in their approach to understanding student work and engagement. Both policies are scheduled for potential adoption at the June 2021 Commission meeting.

Objective 3 - Develop a new accreditation standards framework: In spring 2021, ACCJC Staff launched a Standards Review process on behalf of the Commission. The process reinforces principles of collaboration, transparency, and inclusivity. Information about the timeline, process, and anticipated structural changes has been shared through written memos to the field, as well as during live webinar and symposium sessions. More than 80 individuals representing 65 member institutions will participate in the development of the initial draft of the 2025 Accreditation Standards over the 2021-2022 year.

Objective 5 - Strengthen ACCJC infrastructure and capacity: In fall 2020, ACCJC staff on-boarded two new vice presidents. The expanded staff capacity has strengthened support for and collaboration with member institutions. ACCJC staff also began a process to select and implement an accreditation platform that will streamline and support the work of both members and the Commission.

Objective 6 - Increase opportunities for two-way communication with member institutions: In 2020-2021, the Commission (via the Educational Programming Committee) hosted or sponsored multiple opportunities for two-way communication related to the mission of ACCJC, including five webinars, a 3-day virtual symposium, and a 3-day seminar series. All of these events were free to support broader attendance, and each included Q&A sessions with presenters. Evaluation surveys for each event included an open-ended comment box for participant feedback.

Progress Evaluation Summary

Evaluation data for the webinars and symposium sessions suggests that programming continues to be timely, engaging, and relevant for furthering an understanding of topics related to accreditation and the ACCJC mission. Webinar evaluations ask specifically whether respondents had sufficient opportunity for questions

and dialogue with presenters; for each webinar, 80% or more of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the opportunities for dialogue were sufficient. Open-comments on webinars and other sessions also indicated a satisfaction with the level of communication and collaboration. For example:

- These sessions continue to demystify the ACCJC and I really appreciate them.
- The email newsletters and these webinars have been great. I also really appreciate that webinar recordings are always available at the commission's website.
- Very useful and informative. Thank you for being transparent with all areas for continuous improvement.
- The commitment to your collegial approach to institutional/organizational development and the spirit of collective improvement is very much appreciated.

Survey respondents responded extremely favorably to content related to student equity, and equity-focused seminars and symposia sessions were well attended. Respondents also expressed preference for content that showcased practical applications or concrete examples of the topics under consideration, and appreciated “hands-on” examples. These comments appear to be echoed by attendance trends for the webinars. Webinars with more immediate practical applications (e.g., Distance Education and Accreditation; Annual Report and Annual Fiscal Report) had higher recorded attendance than webinars on more general topics.

The majority of survey respondents, regardless of whether they had attended a webinar, symposia session, or seminar session, reported that they had heard about the event via an ACCJC email or newsletter.

Key Strategy 2: Foster institutional innovation

Summary Highlights:

Objective 1 - Support institutional efforts to increase student achievement: During the first half of 2020-2021, the Commission continued to provide responsive guidance for institutions regarding shifts in instructional modalities and other institutional practices due to the pandemic. Evidence of pandemic-related shifts and innovations pertaining to Accreditation Standards are being documented in institutional reports to the Commission (ISERs, Follow-Up Reports, Midterms) and in Peer Review Team Reports.

Objective 2 - Refine the comprehensive review process: On behalf of the Commission’s Formative/Summative Ad Hoc Committee, ACCJC Staff conducted Team ISER Review for colleges in the first pilot group in March 2021. In April, ACCJC Staff briefed the members of the Formative/Summative Ad Hoc Committee on lessons learned from Pilot Group 1, and anticipated adjustments for Pilot Group 2.

Objective 3 - Develop a new accreditation standards framework: In spring 2021, ACCJC staff launched a collaborative Standards Review process on behalf of the Commission. The structural framework for the revised Standards involves a systems approach, and is intended to emphasize institutional outcomes, innovations, and improvements across all content areas within the Standards. The structural framework was shared with the field in spring 2021 during live webinar and symposium sessions, as well as during a mandatory launch meeting for individuals from the field who will be participating in the development of the initial draft of the new Standards.

Progress Evaluation Summary

Early evaluation data for two ongoing initiatives related to this strategy, the Formative/Summative approach to peer review and the Standards Revision process, show promise for continued progress. As discussed with the Formative/Summative Ad Hoc Committee, discussions with the Team Chairs and Vice Chairs after the Team ISER Review for Pilot Group 1 and comments on the first Team ISER Review evaluation survey included a mix of enthusiasm and constructive suggestions for improvement, many of which have been immediately implemented for the second phase of the pilot. Overall, however, evaluation data suggest that both colleges and peer review teams see benefits in the new approach. In 2021-2022, the initial evaluation of Focused Site Visits will be conducted with Pilot Group 1, and a second evaluation of Team ISER Review activities will be conducted with Pilot Group 2.

Similarly, activities related to the Standards Review process were just getting underway in spring 2021, but early evaluation data are promising. Comments from webinar and symposium sessions specifically focused on Standards Review expressed engagement and interest in the process, as did written comments from individuals applying to participate in the Standards Review process on a writing or reading team. In addition, survey respondents indicated interest in that future trainings around the implementation of new Standards could help them be innovative, particularly around topics of strengthening “systems thinking” on individual campuses and connecting equity work to the new Standards.

Key Strategy 3: Lead advocacy efforts on accreditation

Summary Highlights:

Objective 4 - Nurture ongoing collaborations and expand partnerships: Throughout 2020-2021, webinars, seminars, and symposium sessions hosted by the Commission’s Educational Programming Committee highlighted guest presenters and expert practitioners drawn from ACCJC’s own membership, as well as from higher education more broadly. Notably, in December 2020, the Commission co-hosted an online seminar series in partnership with California Community College system, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), Pacific Postsecondary Education Council (PPEC), and the University of Hawai’i Community Colleges (UHCC). Guest presenters included a mix of individuals from ACCJC institutions, as well as national figures such as Natasha Jankowski, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, and Michael Crow.

Objective 5 - Strengthen ACCJC infrastructure and capacity: In October 2020, the Commission reflected on how it adapted during the pandemic and tested a protocol that would help to provide proactive support for peer review processes and empathetic, nimble decision-making during a potential future crisis. In June 2021, the Commission considered a revision to the Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice with Member Institutions (previously titled Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions). The proposed revisions emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship between the Commission and its members, and streamline and clarify expectations around several processes where the Commission and member institutions each have distinct roles.

Objective 6 - Increase opportunities for two-way communication with member institutions: The Commission hosted or sponsored several opportunities for two-way communication with member institutions in the 2020-2021 year. These included five webinars, a 3-day virtual symposium, and a 3-day seminar series. All of these events were free to support broader attendance, and each included Q&A sessions with presenters, as well as an evaluation survey with an open-ended comment box for participant feedback. In particular, the Virtual Symposium, organized around the topic “Equity, Quality, and Innovation through Action,” provided a forum for dialogue about how accreditors and institutions alike can better hold themselves accountable for dismantling structural racism.

Progress Evaluation Summary

Notable events in which the Commission had an opportunity to nurture ongoing collaborations and expand relationships with constituencies, expert practitioners, or external agencies include the Learning Seminar Series (December 2020) and the Virtual Symposium (April 2021). Evaluation results for the Learning Seminar Series and Virtual Symposia were generally positive. Survey respondents were asked to rate individual sessions based on how engaging, useful, and timely they found the content. Average ratings for all sessions were high, with no individual session receiving an average rating of less than 4.5 out of 5. This suggests strong appreciation for the topics, and for ACCJC’s advocacy for diversity, equity, and inclusion work as an important component of quality assurance and ongoing improvement.

Comments from the survey responses also suggest that the sessions were thought-provoking, and prompted many attendees to think beyond practices at their own institutions to learn from other systems, regions, industries, and governance models.

Comments also reflected a desire for concrete examples of how the ideas presented to could be (or have been) implemented. Similarly, when asked what topics or speakers would be useful for future seminars/symposia, respondents overwhelmingly asked for information that could help move past challenges to implementation. Occasionally, comments reflected pessimism or acknowledged challenges about implementing the ideas at scale. For example, an attendee from the third day of the Learning Seminar commented:

I love the innovation, but some of these ideas we have talked about for 7 years. I don't see how they can get implemented to scale in a multi-college district without serious incentives. We may buy in at the practitioner level, but we need president and chancellor level buy-in to implement.

Comments such as the one above suggest that further advocacy work that links innovation, leadership, and action in the context of accreditation may be well received.

Appendix: Strategic Activities, July 2020 – June 2021

Objective 1: Support institutional efforts to increase student achievement

- July 2020: Began implementation of newly updated (June 2020) Commission policies on Competency-Based Education & Credit for Prior Learning
- Oct 2020: Guidance to the field regarding approval for COVID-related instruction via Distance Education and Correspondence Education modalities in Spring 2021
Clarification around reporting of Institution-set Standards and related stretch goals for 2021 Annual Report sent to select members
- Nov 2020: Revised Substantive Change processes to streamline the submission and approval processes
- Jan 2021: Engaged in first reading and public comment on policies related to student achievement, including a Policy on Social Justice that affirms the Commission's commitment to social justice and specifies the Accreditation Standards that require institutions to ground their work in equity, diversity, and inclusion
- June 2021: Engaged in first reading and public comment on policies related to student achievement, including revisions to the Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits that allow more flexibility colleges in their approach to understanding student work and engagement

Objective 2: Refine the comprehensive review process

- Sept 2020: Met with *ad hoc* Formative/Summative Advisory Group and Pilot Colleges to provide an orientation and overview of resources and tools used in the Formative/Summative peer review process
- Dec 2020: Hosted Chair Training for Chairs and Vice Chairs in first Formative/Summative pilot group
- Feb 2021: Hosted Team Training for teams conducting peer reviews of colleges in the first Formative/Summative pilot group
- Mar 2021: Conducted Team ISER Review for colleges in first Formative/Summative pilot group
Supported Peer Review Teams in first Formative/Summative pilot group through the development of initial Core Inquiries Reports
- Apr 2021: Conducted initial orientation meetings for the CEOs, ALOs, Team Chairs, and Vice Chairs in second Formative/Summative pilot group
Met with *ad hoc* Formative/Summative Advisory Group to review lessons learned to date with pilot group 1 and discuss adjustments for pilot group 2

Objective 3: Develop a new accreditation standards framework

- Oct 2020: Established milestones, timeline, and proposed process for review and revision process

- Jan 2021: Began communications with the field regarding the Standards Review process, including announcements about the timeline and peer team member recruiting
- Feb 2021: Began recruiting for Peer Writing and Peer Reading teams, via open application process
Identified Standards Review Leadership Team members and co-facilitators for Peer Writing and Peer Reading teams from the field
- Mar 2021: Began sharing anticipated structural changes and process information with the field (e.g., ACCJC Initiatives webinar, Mar. 23, 2021; Virtual Symposium session, Apr. 21, 2021)
- Apr 2021: On behalf of the Commission, ACCJC staff invited over 75 individuals from the field to serve on a Peer Writing or Peer Reading team
- May 2021: Hosted Standards Review Launch, a mandatory orientation meeting for members of Peer Writing and Peer Reading teams, to officially kick off the Standards Review process

Objective 4: Nurture ongoing collaborations and expand partnerships

- Sept 2020: Participated with fellow Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) members to advocate for additional COVID-19 relief funding

Webinar: Accreditation and the National Conversation on Equity, featuring guest presenter Cynthia Jackson-Hammond, President of CHEA
- Oct 2020: Webinar: Distance Education & Accreditation: Ensuring Quality in a Time of Change, featuring invited presenters from Irvine Valley College, Cuesta College, and Windward Community College

Sponsored RP Group’s virtual Strengthening Student Success conference

Established partnership with Student Senate for California Community Colleges, and began joint discussions of a student guide to accreditation
- Dec 2020: Presented online seminar series (The Future of Learning: An Equity-Minded Approach) in partnership with the California Community College system, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), Pacific Postsecondary Education Council (PPEC), and the University of Hawai’i Community Colleges (UHCC)
- Mar 2021: Participated with CHEA, Lumina Foundation, and others in the development of a Public Systems and Accreditation Framework for Action, a tool to support collaborative work between public higher education systems and accrediting organizations in both routine work and during times of significant change
- Apr 2021: Hosted free, three-day Virtual Symposium, centered on the theme “Equity, Quality, and Innovation through Action.” Speakers and facilitators included Commissioners, leaders from member institutions, and expert practitioners from the field

Objective 5: Strengthen ACCJC infrastructure and capacity

- Aug 2020: On-boarded two new Vice Presidents to strengthen use of portfolio/case management approach to communication and collaboration

Developed a process to select and implement an accreditation platform
- Oct 2020: Developed process and protocol for supporting peer review during times of crisis
- May 2021: Completed update of Bylaws
- June 2021: Considered revision to the Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice with Member Institutions (previously titled Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions). Revisions emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship between the Commission and its members, and streamline and clarify expectations around several processes

Objective 6: Increase opportunities for two-way communication with member institutions

- Aug 2020: Launched ACCJC Connect, a quarterly newsletter designed to enhance communications to the field

- Sept 2020: Kicked off fall webinar series, including three educational webinars (Sept, Oct, and Nov) with opportunities for dialogue and time for Q&A with expert panelists from the field and ACCJC staff
- Nov 2020: Launched a revised, video-based Accreditation 101 series on the ACCJC website to replace outdated training and supplement in-person trainings
- Dec 2020: Co-hosted an online seminar series (The Future of Learning: An Equity-Minded Approach) in partnership with the California Community College system, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), Pacific Postsecondary Education Council (PPEC), and the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges (UHCC); the series provided opportunities for dialogue and reflection with expert higher education practitioners and peers from member institutions
- Expanded access to Commission Meetings by expanding opportunities for public comment and observation of Open Session via Zoom
- Feb 2021: Kicked off spring webinar series, which included two webinars (Feb and Mar) focused on ACCJC processes and initiatives. Both webinars included opportunities for dialogue and Q&A with ACCJC staff
- Apr 2021: Hosted a free, 3-day Virtual Symposium, organized around the topic "Equity, Quality, and Innovation through Action." Opportunities for dialogue and Q&A sessions with guest panelists were provided throughout the 3-day event.