



ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Barbara A. Beno, President
Steven M. Kinsella, Chair

March 11, 2016

To: Chancellors, Presidents, and ALOs of Member Institutions; All Interested Parties

From: Barbara A. Beno *Barbara A. Beno*

RE: Final U.S. Department of Education Decision on ACCJC's December 2015 Review

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) received today a final decision letter on the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) review of ACCJC's report considered at the December 2015 NACIQI meeting. I previously wrote to you about the outcome of the NACIQI hearing on December 18, 2015. There is one important difference between the NACIQI hearing outcome and the final decision of the Senior Department Official.

In the final decision, ACCJC's current scope is retained, and ACCJC *may continue* to accredit the first baccalaureate degree offered at community colleges through the ACCJC's substantive change review process. The rest of the final decision letter reflects the NACIQI discussion that ACCJC is to provide a report in six months on how it has addressed a small number of criteria for recognition. The ACCJC is also to demonstrate it has adopted and implemented its policy language on the accreditation of baccalaureate degrees that meets the USDE's requirements. ACCJC may petition as well for expansion of scope when it is able to demonstrate the consistent application of the new policy and the experience of its evaluators with such programs.

The Policy on the Evaluation of Baccalaureate Degrees has been circulated to the field for comment, and the deadline for comment is April 15, 2016. We welcome your comments.

The letter also states, "I am satisfied that accreditation by ACCJC is a required element in enabling the institutions the agency accredits to establish eligibility to participate in programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education under the HEA, and I concur with the recommendations of Department staff and of the NACIQI to continue ACCJC's recognition and require submission of a compliance report. I continue the Department's recognition of ACCJC as a nationally recognized accrediting agency with the scope of recognition as detailed below... I am confident that ACCJC will be able to come into full compliance with all the criteria cited (in this letter) by the October 10, 2016 deadline and document its compliance in its compliance report within 30 days thereafter."

The USDE's letter has been posted to the ACCJC website, where you may read it.

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