

October 9, 2015

Dear Commissioners and Commission Staff:

My name is Kate Pluta. I want to make clear that I am not speaking on behalf of my college but on my own behalf as a faculty member in the field who is deeply invested in the mission of the California Community Colleges.

- I teach English at Bakersfield College.
- I serve as the faculty chair of our Accreditation & Institutional Quality committee.
- I speak from several perspectives:
 - I served for 3 years as Academic Senate President;
 - I served for another 3 years as my District's Union / CCA president.
 - I have served on 10 accreditation teams.

I have worked with other people in the field who are deeply committed to the peer review process and who devote much time, unpaid, to helping to make sure the process is effective.

I believe in the peer review process as a form of quality assurance—our students, our communities, our taxpayers rely on this process to assure that quality. We cannot rush to jeopardize this trust by moving so quickly.

I have read the CCSF trial transcript, presented at and participated in Accreditation Institutes and on the state academic senate listserv. I converted the closed captioning of the BOG meeting so that I could follow the discussion and the BOG's decision to vote on sending the Task Force Report to the Department of Education at the same day it was on the agenda for discussion. It seemed clear from that discussion that the members of the BOG had no idea what would happen next in the process.

I have been surprised at the haste at which the process has moved in the past few months: the appearance of the Task Force Report, with apparently limited input from the field; the move of the Board of Governors at the September 21st meeting to endorse and send the Task Force Report to the Department of Education.

I am deeply concerned about the political nature of the discussion. I am deeply concerned about the apparently entrenched position of bodies like the Commission, the Academic Senate, and the Chancellor's Office.

The Task Force Report does not speak for me; the Chancellor's Office does not speak for me. Neither does the Commission. My position is grounded in my experience in the field.

I had no opportunity to shape, to participate in, or to respond to drafts of the Task Force Report. We had no role in the process and have had this virtually dumped in our laps. The process of developing the report appears to have occurred behind closed doors. Again, I speak as a voice from the field.

My college has not yet taken a position on this matter but has been examining documents as they become available. We first saw the Task Force Report when the press release came out. Our committee meets next week and will be making a recommendation to our Academic Senate and College Council.

Yes, my college is one of the 37 the task force report cites as not having received a sanction in the last 10 years. Yes, we continue to work to embed the accreditation standards in our work. Yes, we see the standards as a way of showing evidence of the excellent instruction and services we offer our students and communities. Yes, we have worked hard to improve our processes and close the loop and figure out how to make integrated planning and evaluation work.

Yes, I have seen the commission respond, incrementally, extending the accreditation cycle, monitoring the number of and basis for sanctions. Yes, I had the opportunity to respond in the development of the current standards, primarily through the academic senate accreditation committee listserv.

But I also see groups that are apparently entrenched in their positions. People seem to have forgotten the goal of accreditation—assuring quality for our students and our communities.

I remain deeply concerned about the political nature of the discussion. What has happened to collaborative discussion in an effort to ensure sustainable continuous quality improvement for all processes and for all entities?

Where is the transparency in the decision-making process? Why are we reduced to making presentations to entities like the Board of Governors and the Commission?

I object to being dragged through this kind of process. Is this the best we can do? I want the opportunity to engage in the discussion, to shape the dialog, and not declaim at meetings.

Again, I am not representing my school because we are still examining documents and deliberating.

I do speak as a practitioner out in the field, invested in the good work the colleges are doing. Somehow entities like the BOG, the Commission, and the Chancellor's Office seemed to have forgotten about the rest of us.

Thank you.