

June 10, 2013

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President
Western Association of Schools and Colleges,
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, California 94949

Dear Dr. Beno:

The Accreditation Group in the Office of Postsecondary Education received a complaint from the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), as well as other interested parties, about the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (WASC-ACCJC or the Commission). The specific complaint was provided to the WASC-ACCJC by the CFT at the same time as submitted to the Department.

The complaint primarily addresses the accreditation review process and decision by the WASC-ACCJC concerning the City College of San Francisco (CCSF or the institution). Specifically, the complaint alleges that WASC-ACCJC breached commonly-accepted conflict-of-interest scenarios and did not follow its policies, procedures, and standards in the review of CCSF.

The Secretary's recognition of an accrediting agency attests that the agency is a reliable authority regarding the quality of education or training offered by the institutions it accredits. The Secretary's Criteria for Recognition includes §602.15 (a)(6) which requires that an agency has clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest, by the agency's commissioners, evaluation team members, administrative staff, and other agency representatives. The Secretary's Criteria also includes §602.18 which requires that an agency must consistently apply and enforce standards with respect to an institution's mission. The subsections include requirements such as written specifications for accreditation, effective controls against the inconsistent application of standards, decisions based on published standards, and detailed written reports of any compliance deficiencies.

As WASC-ACCJC is recognized by the Secretary of Education, the concerns of the CFT about the Commission are taken seriously. The CFT provided a voluminous narrative and substantial documentation concerning these issues to both the Commission and Department simultaneously. Before a final compliance determination is made, I am requesting that WASC-ACCJC provide a full and documented response to the complaint by July 8, 2013. This response must include any new and related information and documentation from the June 5-7, 2013, Commission meeting, the Commission's response to the complaint, and any other information and documentation, not already provided in the CFT complaint materials, that the Commission deems relevant regarding the issues raised.

The analyst assigned to your agency is Ms. Elizabeth Daggett. Please send the information requested to her via email at elizabeth.daggett@ed.gov. If you have any questions regarding this letter's content or requests, please contact Ms. Daggett by phone at 202-502-7571 or email.

Thank you for your prompt response to the requests for information made in this letter.

Sincerely,

Kay W. Gilcher, Director
Accreditation Group

Cc: Mr. Robert J. Bezemek,
Counsel for Third Parties and Complainants
California Federation of Teachers
AFT Local 2121
Additional complainants not listed individually
Mr. Alvin Ja
Mr. Paul Harvell