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

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

February 1, 2016

Memo to: **Member Institutions: Chief Executive Officers, Chancellors, Accreditation Liaison Officers**

Copy: **Interested Others: Accreditors, Governmental Agencies, and Other Organizations**

From: **Dr. Krista Johns, Vice President, Policy and Research** KJ

Subject: **Commission Actions on Policy, Policy Committee Activities**

We request that you publicize the information in this memo at your institution. Please note that comment is invited from the field on the two first reading policies listed below in section one. A window of time through April 15 has been established for comment. Information about how to submit comment is included below.

The Policy Committee is a standing committee of the Commission. Through Commission processes, the Policy Committee oversees the ongoing review and updating of Commission policy. Commission procedures require that proposed institutional policy changes and/or new policies be considered by the Commission in a two-meeting process. At the first meeting, new policies and policy changes are discussed and modifications are made as appropriate (i.e., "First Reading"). These policies are then circulated to ACCJC accredited institutions via email, and to other interested parties via the online posting of Recent Commission Actions, for review and comment before presentation at the next Commission meeting for second reading and adoption.

When policy changes are needed in order to align with federal regulations or guidelines, they must be made expeditiously; these changes can be made by the Commission without the normal First Reading/Second Reading process for institutional policies. If these changes are made by Commission action between regular meetings, then the changes are reported to the field at the next Commission meeting.

New or revised operational policies of the ACCJC are adopted by a vote of the Commission in Public Session. Amendments to ACCJC Bylaws are made in accordance with Bylaws requirements.

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The institutional policies and operational policies of the Commission are published annually in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook (ARH)* along with Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The publication is completed after the June Commission meeting each year. The ARH is available online at www.accjc.org.

Changes to existing policies are noted in bold italic font and strikethrough. New policies are all bold italic font.

1. **The following policies were approved by the Commission for first reading:**

- **Policy on Substantive Change**

  During the recent ACCJC recognition review by the U.S. Department of Education and the December 2015 NACIQI meeting, it was learned that department analysts felt certain information related to substantive change and reviews of baccalaureate degree programs should be included in Commission policy. In addition, additions and changes were made to ensure alignment of the policy and the Substantive Change Manual.

- **Policy on Accreditation of Baccalaureate Degrees**

  This new policy sets forth the general requirements for accreditation of baccalaureate degrees, in accordance with advice from U.S. Department of Education staff as part of the recent ACCJC recognition review and December 2015 NACIQI meeting. Included are general requirements, limits on institutional baccalaureate offerings, and citations of Commission standards and special evaluation criteria related to the initial accreditation of baccalaureate degrees through substantive change approval, and the review of such degrees during the comprehensive evaluation of an institution which offers the baccalaureate degree.

Comment Invited

The policies considered for first reading as well as the adopted policies and organizational documents were attached to an electronic version of this correspondence emailed to Chief Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers. The policies can also be found online at www.accjc.org under 'Recent Commission Actions,' 'Actions on Policy.'

Please note: The Commission invites comment on the first reading policies through April 15, 2016, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

There is no special form for comments on policy. Comments may be made in written form and mailed, FAXed, or emailed to one of the following addresses:

- Email: ACCJC@accjc.org
- FAX: 415-506-0238
- Mail: ACCJC, ATTN: Comment on Policy, 10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949

2. **The following revised institutional policy was presented for second reading and adopted by the Commission.**

   - **Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions**

   The substantive revision clarifies when Third Party Comment must be submitted to the ACCJC so that it may be included as part of an external evaluation team's evaluation of an institution. In other cases, the regular process for addressing Third Party Comment is followed. A few additional edits were made for understandability.

3. **The ACCJC Bylaws are presented for information to the public on recent amendments.**

   - **ACCJC Bylaws—Report on Action Taken**

   The ACCJC Bylaws were amended in November 2015. A new footnote was added which provided the operational definition of when an institution is determined to have as a primary mission the granting of associate degrees. Notice of this addition to the Bylaws was provided to the field at the time the change was made. Additional amendments were made to the Bylaws effective February 1, 2016, to clarify the new footnote and to align the identification of various dates across the bylaws referring to commissioner terms.

4. **Policy Committee Activities:**

   Reorganization of Commission policies.

   The Policy Committee revisited its plans for reorganization of Commission policies. For the July 2016 Accreditation Reference Handbook, the policies which colleges must specifically address in Institutional Self Evaluation Reports will be pulled out separately. In addition, as part of the ACCJC website redesign project beginning this year, functionality will be enhanced to permit searches of individual policies or all policies as a whole, using self-defined searches or commonly-requested searches.