MEMO TO: Chief Executive Officers, Accreditation Liaison Officers, Board Chairpersons, Academic Senate Presidents, Handbook Task Groups, Interested Others

FROM: John C. Petersen

DATE: January 23, 1996

SUBJECT: ACCJC Standards of Accreditation

Enclosed is the final draft of the proposed Standards of Accreditation for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. We ask that your institution or organization review them and provide a response by March 15, 1996. A response form is included to facilitate your consideration.

The Commission publishes standards of good practice which serve the higher education community as a whole, not one system or segment. The Commission accredits 137 colleges in California, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands. Many are public community colleges, but many are private colleges. Some are proprietary and some are non-profit; some are independent and some are religiously affiliated, some are comprehensive and some are specialized. As part of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Commission is a private, non-governmental association of institutions. It is not part of a state government, nor does it enforce the laws and regulations of governments or other associations.

The language of the accreditation standards is, of necessity, general and inclusive. They represent statements of good practice which each institution must apply to its mission and context. The Commission expects that different standards will carry different weight in different types of institutions, or in the same institution over time.

What has changed in these standards?

- This set of standards is quite a bit shorter than the current standards.
- Standards on institutional mission, integrity, and effectiveness have been separated into distinct standards.
- The laundry lists of functions and services are reduced or eliminated.
- There are sections on degrees and on multi-college districts or systems.
- The standards focus on institutional results and how an institution demonstrates achieving its goals and less on resources and processes.

(over)
The Guide to Self study will be expanded to include more discussion of key issues, examples of evidence which institutions should provide, and examples of how the standards might be interpreted by different types of institutions.

All institutions must first meet twenty-one eligibility requirements for membership in the association. These requirements include such basic matters as legal authority to operate, a governing board whose majority has no ownership interest, degree granting authority, and the like.

The Commission distributed drafts of the standards during the fall of 1995 and met with many groups and organizations. The Commission intends to adopt a set of standards at the June 1996 meeting and publish a new *Handbook of Accreditation* in September 1996. In order to review the comments carefully and prepare for publication we ask for your comments and response by March 15.

The Commission looks forward to your comments.

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Enclosure
In June 1994 the Commission established an Editorial Board of Commissioners to oversee the revision of the Handbook of Accreditation. Commissioners named to the Editorial Board were Robert Jensen, Chancellor, Contra Costa Community College District; Constance Carroll, President, San Diego Mesa College; Carmen Maldonado Decker, faculty member at Cypress College and Chair of the Commission; Robert Evans, President, Kelsey-Jenney College; Celina Sau Lin Ing, faculty member at Sacramento City College; and Bruce Smith, faculty member at Antelope Valley College. (Smith resigned from the Commission in 1995 to take an administrative position and was replaced by Barbara Beno, President, Vista College. Robert Jensen resigned as Chair of the Editorial Board to take a position in Arizona and was replaced as Chair of the Editorial Board by Constance Carroll).

Editorial Board met three times to determine the course and conduct of the project, review national eligibility requirements and threshold standard drafts, review current standards and policies, and identify the composition and leadership of task groups to review issues and provide advice.

Commission reviewed comparisons of current accreditation standards with proposed common threshold standards and approved the new Eligibility Requirements for first reading.

Meetings with Task Groups

A cross section of leaders in each of the task group areas was invited to hold a conversation about the issues and characteristics of standards needed in the next edition of the Handbook. The members of the task groups were asked to advise the Editorial Board regarding the effectiveness of the current standards, the areas of confusion and ambiguity, developing issues which merit consideration for standards of good practice, and the appropriateness of any of the proposed national threshold standards. Each group met at least once.

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Commission staff and Frances Conn, consultant to the Editorial Board, were asked to draft language for the standards on Institutional Mission, Institutional Integrity, and Institutional Effectiveness.

**June-Dec. 1995**
The Commission reviewed the standards draft produced by the Editorial Board as a result of the task group meetings. After the Commission meeting the Editorial Board and staff modified the draft in a series of working sessions and telephone conference meetings.

**Sept.-Dec. 1995**
Meetings with a variety of constituent groups. It should be noted that the Editorial Board meetings and conference calls occurred during the same period as the presentations for groups and organizations. As a result, different presentations used different drafts of the standards depending on the ongoing revisions which the Editorial Board decided to undertake as issues were brought to their attention.

The Executive Director, Associate Director, and Chair of the Editorial Board conducted a series of presentations and information meetings throughout the region. Groups participating were the Chief Executive Officers, the Chief Instructional Officers, the Chief Student Services Officers, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Executive Board of the California Community College Trustees, the private school members, the Hawaii Community College System, and public and private colleges in Hawaii, American Samoa, and the Western Pacific.

**Dec. 1995**
The Editorial Board refined the proposed draft standards as a result of all of these discussions and presented this draft to the Commission as a whole for review and discussion.

**January 1996**
The Commission reviewed the draft standards at its regular Commission meeting and adopted the draft as a first reading. Discussions at the public session included contributions by Regina Stanback Stroud, representing the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. After modifications based on the discussion, Commission staff distributed the draft standards to all institutional Chief Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers, major organizations and government offices in the region, participants in the standards development process, other accrediting agencies and educational organizations, and interested parties who requested copies.
1. Areas where the proposed standards strengthen quality assurance and institutional improvement, in your opinion. What do you like?

2. Areas where the proposed standards need further review or clarification.

3. Any additional comments. Is anything important omitted in the draft?

Name ________________________________ Date ___________

Institution/Organization ____________________________________________

Return to: ACCJC, P.O. Box 70, Aptos, CA 95001
FAX: (408) 688-1841; E-Mail: ACCJC@aol.com
ACCJC 1996 STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

STANDARD ONE: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution, its educational purposes, its students, and its place in the higher education community.

1. The institution has a statement of mission, adopted by the governing board, which identifies the broad-based educational objectives it seeks to fulfill.

2. The mission statement defines the students the institution intends to serve as well as the parameters under which programs can be offered and resources allocated.

3. The mission statement includes objectives for which accomplishments can be documented and made public.

4. Institutional planning and decision making are guided by the mission statement.

5. The mission statement is examined, evaluated, and revised periodically with the participation of the institutional community.

STANDARD TWO: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates honesty and truthfulness in representations to its constituencies and the public; in pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge; in its treatment of and respect for administration, faculty, staff, and students; in the management of its affairs and in relationships with its accreditation association and other external agencies.

1. The institution represents itself accurately and consistently to its constituencies, the public, and prospective students through its catalogues, publications, and statements. Precise, accurate, and current information is provided in the catalog concerning (a) educational purposes; (b) degrees, curricular offerings, educational resources, and course offerings; (c) student fees and other financial obligations, student financial aid, and fee refund policies; (d) requirements for admission and for achievement of degrees, including the academic calendar and information regarding program length; and (e) the names of administrators, faculty, and governing board.

2. The institution has a readily available governing board-adopted policy regarding academic freedom and responsibility which states the institutional commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and fosters the integrity of the teaching-learning process. Faculty and other college staff distinguish between
personal conviction and proven conclusions and present relevant data fairly and objectively to students and others.

3. Institutions which strive to instill specific beliefs or world views or to require codes of conduct of faculty, staff, or students give clear prior notice of such policies.

4. The institution provides faculty and students with clear expectations concerning the principles of academic honesty and the sanctions for violation.

5. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of issues of equity and diversity.

6. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its athletic programs.

7. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with the Commission and agrees to comply with Commission standards, policies, guidelines, public disclosure, and self study requirements.

8. The institution regularly evaluates and revises institutional policies, practices, and publications to ensure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs and services.

STANDARD THREE: INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution, appropriate to its mission and purposes as a higher education institution, develops and implements a broad-based and integrated system of research, evaluation, and planning to assess institutional effectiveness and uses the results for institutional improvement. The institution identifies institutional outcomes which are validated by objective evidence.

A. Institutional Research and Evaluation

A.1 Institutional research is integrated with and supportive of institutional planning and evaluation.

A.2 The institution provides the necessary resources for effective evaluation.

A.3 The institution has developed and implemented the means for evaluating how well, and in what ways, it accomplishes its mission and purposes.

A.4 The institution provides evidence that its program evaluations lead to improvement of programs and services.
A.5 The institution systematically reviews its institutional research efforts and its evaluation processes to validate their on-going effectiveness.

B. Institutional Planning

B.1 The institution defines and publishes its planning processes and involves appropriate segments of the college community in the development of institutional plans.

B.2 The institution engages in systematic and interrelated educational, financial, physical, and human resources planning which results in integrated plans for its programs and services.

B.3 The institution systematically reviews its institutional plans and planning processes to validate their on-going effectiveness.

C. Institutional Outcomes

C.1 The institution defines its institutional outcomes and the evidence by which it demonstrates their accomplishment.

C.2 The institution uses the results of its systematic evaluation and planning activities to identify institutional priorities and to improve its programs and services.

C.3 The institution uses information from its evaluation and planning activities to communicate matters of quality assurance to the public.

C.4 The institution systematically reviews its systems for assessing institutional effectiveness and makes changes as appropriate.

STANDARD FOUR: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The institution offers collegiate level programs in recognized fields of study that culminate in identified student competencies leading to degrees and certificates. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all educational activities offered in the name of the institution, regardless of where or how presented, or by whom taught.

A. General Provisions

A.1 The institution seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with its institutional mission and purposes and the demographics and economics of its community.
A.2 Programs and courses leading to degrees are offered in a manner which provides students the opportunity to complete the program as announced, within a reasonable time.

A.3 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.

A.4 The institution provides sufficient human, physical, and financial resources to support its educational programs and to facilitate achievement of the goals and objectives of those programs wherever and however they are offered.

A.5 The institution designs and maintains academic advising programs to meet student needs for information and advice and adequately informs and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

B. Degree and Certificate Programs

B.1 The institution demonstrates that its degrees and programs, wherever and however offered, support the mission of the institution. Degree and certificate programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate length, breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and use of information and learning resources.

B.2 The institution identifies its degrees and certificates in ways which are consistent with the program content, degree objectives, and student mastery of knowledge and skills including, where appropriate, career preparation and competencies.

B.3 The institution identifies and makes public expected learning outcomes for its degree and certificate programs. Students completing programs demonstrate achievement of those stated learning outcomes.

B.4 All degree programs are designed to provide students a significant introduction to the broad areas of knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, and focused study in at least one area of inquiry or established interdisciplinary core.

B.5 Students completing degree programs demonstrate competence in the use of language and computation.

B.6 The institution documents the technical and professional competence of students completing its vocational and occupational programs.

C. General Education

C.1 The institution requires of all degree programs a component of general education that is published in clear and complete terms in its general catalog.
C.2 The general education component is based on a philosophy and rationale that are clearly stated. Criteria are provided by which the appropriateness of each course in the general education component is determined.

C.3 The general education program introduces the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. The general education program provides the opportunity for students to develop the intellectual skills, affective and creative capabilities, and social attitudes that will make them effective learners and citizens.

C.4 The institution's general education program requires of students completing the program competence in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and information technology.

D. **Curriculum and Instruction**

D.1 The institution has clearly defined processes for establishing and evaluating all of its educational programs. These processes recognize the central role of faculty in developing, implementing, and evaluating the educational programs. Program evaluations are integrated into overall institutional evaluation and planning and are conducted on a regular basis.

D.2 The institution ensures the quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of all of its courses and programs wherever and however they are offered.

D.3 The institution has clearly stated transfer of credit policies. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the credits accepted, including those for general education, are comparable to its own courses. Where patterns of transfer between institutions are established, efforts are undertaken to formulate articulation agreements.

D.4 The institution utilizes a range of delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the needs of its students.

D.5 The institution provides evidence that all courses and programs, both credit, and non-credit, whether conducted on or off-campus by traditional or non-traditional delivery systems, are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures. This provision applies to continuing and community education, contract and other special programs conducted in the name of the institution.

D.6 Institutions offering curricula by non-traditional means, in foreign locations or to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with applicable
Commission policies and statements on Principles of Good Practice in Distance Education, Principles of Good Practice for Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals, and Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations.

STANDARD FIVE: STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The institution recruits and admits students appropriate to its programs. It identifies and serves the diverse needs of its students with educational programs and learning support services, and it fosters a supportive learning environment. Student access, progress and success is the focus of the entire student pathway through the institutional experience.

1. The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission and appropriate to its programs and follows practices that are consistent with those policies.

2. The institution provides to all prospective and currently enrolled students current and accurate information about its programs, admissions policies and graduation requirements, social and academic policies, refund policies, student conduct standards, and complaint and grievance procedures.

3. The institution identifies the educational support of its student population and, through appropriate assessment and counseling, provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.

4. Admissions, assessment and placement instruments and procedures are designed to minimize test bias and are regularly evaluated to assure effectiveness.

5. The institution provides comprehensive, reliable and accessible services to its students no matter where enrolled or by whatever means the educational programs are offered.

6. The institution systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy and effectiveness of its student services and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for improvement.

7. The institution, in keeping with its mission, serves its diverse student population by creating and maintaining a campus climate which is attractive, hospitable, and supportive.

8. The institution supports a co-curricular environment that fosters intellectual and personal development for all of its students and encourages personal and civic responsibility.
9. Student records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained.

STANDARD SIX: INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Information and learning resources and services are sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currentness to support the institution's intellectual and cultural activities and programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered. The institution provides training so that information and learning resources may be used effectively and efficiently.

1. Information and learning resources, and any equipment needed to access the holdings of libraries, media centers, computer centers, data bases and other repositories are sufficient to support the courses, programs, and degrees wherever offered.

2. Appropriate educational equipment and materials are selected, acquired, organized, and maintained to help fulfill the institution's purposes and support the educational program. Institutional policies and procedures ensure faculty involvement.

3. Learning resources and appropriate training in their use are readily accessible to students, faculty, and administrators.

4. The institution provides professionally qualified staff sufficient to provide appropriate instruction and support to users of information and learning resources. Faculty, staff, students and administrators are provided with training in the effective application of technology to student learning.

5. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the effective maintenance, security, and improvement of its information and learning resources.

6. When the institution relies on other institutions or other sources for information and learning resources to support its educational programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate, easily accessible, and utilized.

7. The institution plans for and systematically evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of its learning and information resources and services and makes appropriate changes as necessary.
STANDARD SEVEN: FACULTY AND STAFF

The institution has sufficient qualified full time and part time faculty and staff to support its educational programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse ethnic, social and economic backgrounds by making positive efforts to foster such diversity.

A. Qualifications and Selection

A.1 The institution has sufficient faculty and staff who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to support its programs and services.

A.2 Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selecting all personnel are clearly stated, public, directly related to institutional objectives, and accurately reflect job responsibilities.

A.3 Criteria for selecting faculty include knowledge of the subject matter, effective teaching, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution.

A.4 Degrees held by faculty and administrators are listed in the institution's primary catalog. All U.S. degrees are from institutions accredited by recognized accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

B. Evaluation

B.1 The evaluation of each category of staff is systematic and conducted at stated intervals. The follow-up of evaluations is formal and timely.

B.2 Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness and encourage improvement.

B.3 Criteria for evaluation of all faculty include teaching effectiveness, scholarship or other activities appropriate to the area of expertise, and participation in institutional service or other institutional responsibilities.

C. Staff Development

C.1 The institution provides appropriate opportunities to all categories of staff for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission.

C.2 Planning and evaluation of staff development programs include the participation of staff who participate in, or are affected by, the programs.
D. **General Personnel Provisions**

D.1 The institution has and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.

D.2 The institution regularly assesses and reports its achievement of its employment equity objectives, consistent with the institutional mission.

D.3 Personnel policies and procedures affecting all categories of staff are systematically developed, clear, equitably administered, and available for information and review.

D.4 The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Personnel records are private, accurate, complete and permanent.

**STANDARD EIGHT: PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical resources to support its purposes and goals.

1. The institution ensures that adequate physical resources are provided to support its educational programs and services wherever and however they are offered.

2. The management, maintenance, and operation of physical facilities ensure effective utilization and continuing quality necessary to support the programs and services of the institution.

3. Physical facilities at all site locations where courses, programs, and services are offered are constructed and maintained in accordance with the institution’s obligation to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment.

4. Selection, maintenance, inventory and replacement of equipment are conducted systematically to support the educational programs and services of the institution.

5. Physical resource planning and evaluation support institutional goals and are linked to other institutional planning and evaluation efforts, including district or system planning and utilization where appropriate.

**STANDARD NINE: FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

The institution has adequate financial resources to achieve, maintain and enhance its programs and services. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of financial viability and institutional improvement. The institution
manages its financial affairs with integrity, consistent with its educational objectives.

A.  **Financial Planning**

A.1 Financial planning supports institutional goals and is linked to other institutional planning efforts.

A.2 Annual and long range financial planning reflects realistic assessments of resource availability and expenditure requirements. In those institutions which set tuition rates, and which receive a majority of funding from student fees and tuition, charges are reasonable in light of the operating costs, services to be rendered, equipment, and learning resources to be supplied.

A.3 Annual and long range capital plans support educational objectives and relate to the plan for physical facilities.

A.4 Institutional guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development are clearly defined and followed.

A.5 Faculty and staff have appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of financial plans and budgets.

B.  **Financial Management**

B.1 The financial management system creates appropriate control mechanisms and provides dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making.

B.2 Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, demonstrate the appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support institutional programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive and timely.

B.3 The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments.

B.4 Auxiliary activities and fund raising efforts support the programs and services of the institution, are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution and are conducted with integrity.

B.5 Contractual agreements with external entities are governed by institutional policies and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.
B.6 Financial management is regularly evaluated and the results are used to improve the financial management system.

C. Financial Stability

C.1 Future obligations are clearly identified and plans exist for payment.

C.2 The institution has policies for appropriate risk management.

C.3 Cash flow arrangements or reserves are sufficient to maintain stability.

C.4 The institution has a plan for responding to financial emergencies or unforeseen occurrences.

STANDARD TEN: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution. The institution has an administrative staff of appropriate size to enable the institution to achieve its goals and is organized to provide appropriate administrative services. Governance structures and systems ensure appropriate roles for the board, administration, faculty, students, and staff, and facilitate effective communication among the institution's constituencies.

A. Governing Board

A.1 The governing board is an independent policy-making board capable of reflecting the public interest in board activities and decisions. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.

A.2 The governing board ensures that the educational program is of high quality, is responsible for overseeing the financial health and integrity of the institution, and confirms that institutional practices are consistent with the board approved institutional mission statement and policies.

A.3 The governing board establishes broad institutional policies and delegates to the administration and faculty responsibility to administer and carry out these policies. The governing board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.

A.4 In keeping with its mission, the governing board selects and evaluates the chief executive officer and confirms the appointment of other major academic and administrative officers.
A.5 The size, duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, structure and operating procedures, and processes for assessing the performance of the governing board are clearly defined and published in board policies or by-laws. The board acts in a manner consistent with them.

A.6 The governing board has a program for new member orientation and governing board development.

A.7 The board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.

B. Institutional Administration and Governance

B.1 The institutional chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

B.2 The institutional chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations and board policies.

B.3 The institution is administratively organized and staffed to reflect the institution’s purposes, size, and complexity. The administration provides effective and efficient leadership and management which makes possible an effective teaching and learning environment.

B.4 Administrative officers are qualified by training and experience to perform their responsibilities and are evaluated systematically and regularly. The duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators are clearly defined and published.

B.5 Administration has a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance.

B.6 Faculty have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance, exercise a substantial voice in matters of educational program and faculty personnel, and other institutional polices which relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise.

B.7 Faculty have established an academic senate or appropriate organization for providing input regarding institutional governance. In the case of private colleges, the institution has a formal process for providing input regarding institutional governance.

B.8 The institution has written policy which identifies appropriate institutional support for faculty participation in governance and delineates the participation of faculty on appropriate policy, planning and special purpose bodies.

B.9 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of staff in institutional governance.
B.10 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of students in institutional governance.

C. Multi-college Districts and/or Systems

C.1 The district/system chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

C.2 The district/system chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations and board policies.

C.3 The district/system has a statement which clearly delineates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system and those of the college.

C.4 The district/system provides effective services that support the mission and functions of the college.

C.5 The district/system and the college(s) have established and utilize effective methods of communication and exchange information in a timely and efficient manner.

C.6 The district/system has effective processes in place for the establishment and review of policy, planning, and financial management.