

ACCJC*Connect*

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President's Message

ACCJC's NACIQI Recognition Renewed and Expansion of Scope Granted

Dear Colleagues,

ACCJC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The Department conducts a review of accrediting commissions every five years and confers recognition on agencies that continue to meet its rigorous criteria. The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), the body created to certify accrediting agencies and enforce the criteria for recognition, manages the review and makes recommendations to ED.

In August, following receipt of a “perfect” draft NACIQI report (without follow-up reports or compliance issues), ACCJC participated in its public appearance before NACIQI, the culmination of the comprehensive two-year recognition process. Although the questions posed by the congressionally and departmentally appointed members were challenging, Vice President Gohar Momjian and Former Commission Chair Lori Gaskin assisted me in representing the Commission, our institutions, and their students admirably. We were fortunate to receive glowing public comments from several ACCJC member institutions and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and the Department of Education Staff recommended our continued recognition without follow-up reports or compliance issues. The members of NACIQI unanimously voted to support the recommendation, and to approve the requested expansion of our scope to include direct assessment.

I am pleased to announce that last week ACCJC received its formal letter from The Department, finding our agency in full compliance, renewing our recognition for five years, and granting our expansion of scope to include the accreditation of direct assessment programs. I want to again acknowledge Vice President Gohar Momjian for leading this effort. We absolutely could not have achieved this amazing outcome without her. Finally, thank you to the staff who supported the work and to those who submitted letters of support and made comments on ACCJC's behalf.

Please read on for other updates on ACCJC happenings, resources that might be of interest, and an exciting development for several ACCJC member institutions. Updates on the 2024/2025 strategic initiatives are coming soon!

Yours,
Mac Powell

Commission Announcements and Updates

Utilizing Data to Increase Equitable Student Outcomes: Inspiration and Resources

A focus of ACCJC's 2030 Strategic Plan is to promote equitable student success and to highlight the importance of utilizing data to achieve equitable student outcomes. Below are highlights of some professional development opportunities and inspirational resources we hope you'll find valuable.

ACCJC's Recently Launched Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project

For the 2024-2025 academic year, ACCJC is advancing its 2030 Strategic Goals by working closely with member institutions on Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy. ACCJC believes that clearly sharing institutional outcomes required in our Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards (graduation, persistence, retention, transfer), along with consumer-based social mobility outcomes in transparent public-facing dashboards and websites, can help to refine campus efforts and increase transparency for students, parents, and the public. We believe this work highlights the positive impact of our institutions' high-value programs and offerings.

ACCJC President Mac Powell, ACCJC Vice Presidents, and thought leaders within our field will engage with college practitioners on these topics at a series of seven grant-sponsored convenings scheduled in geographically dispersed locations to allow for maximum participation from member institutions. We invite college administrators, faculty, staff, and trustees to participate in the conversations. Space can accommodate up to five attendees from each member institution at a designated regional convening.

Learn more at: <https://accjc.org/transparency-storytelling-and-value-literacy-project/>

ED's "Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence and Equity" Initiative

This summer, as part of its "Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence and Equity" Initiative, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) hosted a webinar (recording coming soon) to launch its [Data-Driven Improvement Resource Guide](#) and a new playbook: "[Using Data Effectively to Drive Equitable Improvements in Postsecondary Student Success](#)." The playbook focuses on four key tactics that institutions can consider using to promote data-driven inquiry and continuous improvement on their campuses:

1. Creating a culture and capacity for data-driven improvement
2. Using the metrics that matter for increasing student success
3. Conducting key analyses to identify and remove barriers to student success
4. Using data to select and evaluate success strategies.

More information about the "Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence and Equity" Initiative is available here: <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-initiatives/raise-the-bar/raise-the-bar-college-excellence-and-equity>

Civitas Learning 2024 Student Success Impact Report

Civitas Learning is a provider of data-framing analytics helping higher education institutions improve student outcomes through data-activated decision-making and collaboration. Their [2024 Student Success Impact Report](#) provides insights about student success initiatives and their impact on persistence at their partner institutions. You may be interested in the related [podcast](#) and [AAC&U webinar](#). For ACCJC, some key takeaways are the importance of un-siloed communication and robust, clear, and timely data.

Commission Announcements and Updates *continued...*

Distance Education Reporting Requirements

ACCJC has recently updated its [Policy on Substantive Change](#) and [Substantive Change Manual](#) and has clarified distance education approval requirements as seen in the U.S. Department of Education's [Letter on Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements for Distance Education](#). Even if your institution has received approval from ACCJC to offer programs in the distance education modality, if one or both of the following apply, you must receive additional Substantive Change approval from ACCJC:

- 50 percent or more of your total student population is enrolled in at least one course offered through distance education, or
- 50 percent or more of all your institution's courses are offered via distance education.

Last week, ALOs were sent instructions for approval and are asked to complete the required form by **October 31, 2024**.

Upcoming Changes to Federal Regulations

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) published in the Federal Register a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that would alter federal student aid regulations relating to distance education. An assessment from the American Association of Community Colleges states the rules are potentially problematic for community colleges. They would require potentially burdensome data collection and monitoring and the "Return of Title IV" funds policies that could eliminate Title IV eligibility for asynchronous clock-hour courses. ED is expected to release final rules by November 1, which would go into effect on July 1, 2025. ACCJC is monitoring these developments closely and will keep members apprised of any new regulations that may affect distance education.

U.S. Department of Education Expands ACCJC's Scope to Include Direct Assessment

As shared above, ACCJC's expanded scope of recognition now includes direct assessment programs, supporting the Direct Assessment Competency-Based Education Collaborative of the California Community Colleges Chancellors Office (CCCCO) and enabling institutions to apply for Title IV eligibility with the Department of Education. To learn more about ACCJC's expansion of scope, please visit the [expansion of scope announcement on the ACCJC website](#).

Advocacy in Action

ACCJC Advocates for College Civic Learning

ACCJC is a signatory of the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition (CLDE Coalition) shared commitment statement to demonstrate support of and commitment to civic learning and democracy engagement in higher education.

The CLDE Coalition released its new "[Every Student, Every Degree, College Civic Learning for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Democracy](#)" report, and on October 1st, President Powell participated in the second of two webinars on the report and its *call to action* ([recording to be available soon](#)). ACCJC believes in the CLDE Coalition's mission and supports the idea that the definition of student success should include gains in civic learning and engagement with diverse perspectives. ACCJC is proud of its *2024 Accreditation Standards*, and its requirement that all degree programs include a general education framework supporting that development in students (Standard 2.3).

Member Focus

11 Member Institutions Selected for U.S. Department of Education Recognition

11 ACCJC member institutions were invited to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's Post-secondary Success Recognition Program as part of the Department's Raise the Bar Initiative. This exciting program utilizes institutional data to identify exemplars in higher education. 200 institutions were identified as having a story to tell about their efforts to ensure student success based on their performance on key indicators related to equitable access, success, and post-college outcomes. ACCJC wishes to congratulate the eleven institutions for this inspirational recognition and is proud to share their achievements to promote the vital role and value of two-year institutions.

To learn more about the Post-secondary Success Recognition Program, please visit:

<https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-initiatives/raise-the-bar/raise-the-bar-college-excellence-and-equity>.



ACCJC On The Move

Stories of Student Success and Institutional Transformation

The story of an institution is the story of the people, places, and communities that serve its students. Conversations about student success often focus solely on graduation rates or other benchmark data that can obscure the true impact institutions, programs, and people have on the human beings served. *ACCJC On The Move* is about our journey to understand the distinct missions of the 137 institutions ACCJC serves, and the promising impactful practices changing lives inside and outside the classroom. Our most recent articles feature [Mendocino College](#) and [College of the Redwoods](#). Take a look at [ACCJC On The Move](#), follow us on [Instagram @accjc_onthemove](#), and please say hello when you see President Powell on campus!

Please forward *ACCJC Connect* to Your Colleagues

Please spread the word by forwarding *ACCJC Connect* to colleagues, members of the public, and students. Help ACCJC keep member institution personnel and other interested parties apprised of our news and updates. If you have any questions or comments about this communication, please email communications@accjc.org. Thank you!

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