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DATE: January 18, 2008
TO: Chief Executive Officers, Accreditation Liaison Officers
FROM: Barbara Beno, President
E. Jan Kehoe, Chair
SUBJECT: US Department of Education Recognition Hearing for ACCJC

The Commission is pleased to report that on December 19, 2007 the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Improvement (NACIQI) of the US Department of Education reviewed the ACCJC's application for renewal of recognition as a federally approved accrediting agency and voted to recommend to the Secretary of Education that the ACCJC recognition be renewed for the maximum term of five years.

However, the Department of Education also found that the ACCJC did not fully meet the so called two-year rule. The rule requires accreditors to provide no more than two years for an institution to correct deficiencies and come into compliance with accreditation standards. It also requires accreditors to terminate accreditation if the two-year time limit is not met unless the Commission identifies "good cause" for extension. Member institutions may be already familiar with the section of Commission action letters that has referenced this rule since the regulation was adopted in 1998.

In order to satisfy the Department of Education's specific concerns with the ACCJC's performance on this matter, the Commission will be making some changes to its procedures, as follows:

1. The Commission will strengthen the language regarding the two-year rule that is included in action letters sent to institutions with deficiencies. The Commission action letter will now set a specific date, within the two-year time limit, by which deficiencies must be addressed by the institution. The Commission will track institutional responses to identify those institutions that have passed their time limit and act accordingly.
2. The Commission will not extend beyond a maximum of two years the accreditation of an institution that is deficient in accreditation standards that significantly affect educational quality or institutional integrity.
3. The Commission will create a small list of reasons that it will consider as a reasonable basis for extending the time permitted for "good cause" and communicate those to the Department for consideration. A decision to extend the time permitted for "good cause" will be at the sole discretion of the Commission.

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Also as part of the recognition review, the Commission refined some of its policies, its Bylaws and the WASC constitution. The Commission will mail notice of these changes to all institutions as part of the Commission's report on its January actions. The revised policies are also available on the Commission's website (www.accjc.org) under the button "Policy Updates."

Finally, the Commission was required to make some small changes to its existing practice of monitoring key information on institutional quality. As a result, the annual report forms sent to member institutions will add some new elements this year.

The ACCJC is pleased that NACIQI has recommended a renewal of its term of recognition. The Secretary of Education will make the final decision on recognition some time in the coming six months.

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