

## California community colleges seek new accreditor

VVC, Barstow among those accredited by agency under fire

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The Community College Board of Governors recently passed a resolution declaring the need for replacement of the accrediting agency of both Victor Valley and Barstow community colleges, along with over 100 others across the state.

Since a community college task force recommended earlier this year that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges be dropped for not responding constructively to criticisms, the Board of Governors unanimously passed the resolution this month, declaring the ACCJC “no longer meets the current and anticipated needs of California community colleges.”

According to a news release from the American Federation of Teachers, the ACCJC has issued far more sanctions than other accreditors and has “failed to focus on improving learning and academic achievement.”

However, Victor Valley College officials told the Daily Press that they never thought the college was treated unfairly by the ACCJC, and that in their experience with the system, it has performed well in keeping junior colleges accountable.

“I’m not convinced that moving to another accrediting agency is going to improve how colleges feel about accreditors,” VVC President/Superintendent Roger Wagner said. “I think in the end we are all going to find that compliance is still going to be the issue for many colleges. We are either going to be fully engaged with standards intended to improve our processes or we are not.”

VVC Board of Trustees President Joseph W. Brady said that he has taken no issue with the ACCJC personally or professionally, and that while he’s not a fan of “adding government on top of government,” he does believe there is good purpose for having an accrediting commission.

“There is a time and a place that we need to have a higher level of oversight,” Brady said. “It wasn’t the ACCJC that was picking on us. We didn’t do what we were supposed to.”

Barstow Community College President/Superintendent Dr. Deborah DiThomas told the Daily Press that although “sanction is not a positive experience” in general, as BCC was put on warning in 2012, she hasn’t had any negative experience with the agency itself.

“When I first came to Barstow, we were on warning, but there were issues we needed to resolve,” DiThomas said. “In my district it has made us stronger.”

Still, DiThomas said that she feels like “the decisions made have already passed the talking stages of what to do about the ACCJC,” and the district is already looking for a new accrediting agency.

“We have definitely articulated some need for change,” DiThomas said. “Now the decision is made, and now we need to figure out how to find another accreditor. I think that we will be looking for another peer evaluation process.”

The Board of Governors also directed Chancellor Brice Harris to form “a recommendation for action to establish a new model for an accrediting agency,” including a plan and timeline, according to a California Federation of Teachers news release.

In addition to the CFT, the Chancellor’s task force report is gaining widespread support from around the state, including the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, the California Community Colleges School Employees Association and the Community College Association.

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