

Local residents well aware of CCSF accreditation battle

VVC awaits ACCJC decision whether to place school on show cause status

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VICTORVILLE • A Northern California judge will decide by Friday whether to block a decision made by an accrediting agency to revoke City College of San Francisco's certifications. Meanwhile, Victor Valley College officials say they're hopeful that same agency will decide against placing the college on "show cause" status in February.

City College of San Francisco officials were given one year, or until July 31, by the Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to make improvements in order to stay open.

But halfway through the show cause review period, San Francisco city attorneys and two teachers unions are suing the ACCJC. All three parties stated that the ACCJC did not follow due process in sanctioning the college of 80,000 students and bringing it to the brink of closure.

San Francisco Superior Court Judge Curtis Karnow heard arguments Monday on motions by the ACCJC to either have the case dismissed or have it delayed until City College completes its review and appeal process with the commission.

But San Francisco city attorneys countered that the school's current accreditation standing is causing the students at one of the state's largest community colleges to leave in droves, and that postponing the ruling could be detrimental to the institution.

VVC is currently awaiting the ACCJC's determination regarding its own standing, and the decision is expected to be announced in February.

The ruling in San Francisco could affect the perception of the ACCJC's authority, but three VVC officials said this week that the case should not directly impact the ACCJC's handling of VVC's accreditation determination.

VVC Trustee Brandon Wood said if the judge overturns the ACCJC accreditation decision, it might send a message regarding the ACCJC's power to place demands upon the schools.

"Of course, I would suspect that any decision of the judge would be temporary pending further discovery and review," Wood said. "In the end, I believe that VVC would be well-advised to continue to follow the guidelines and requirements established by the ACCJC. The ACCJC is the accrediting body; the VVC Board of Trustees has an obligation to the students and the community to maintain VVC at the highest possible level of quality. We want to be the best, not 'within standards.'"

Board President Dennis Henderson said he is waiting to see how the case plays out to form an opinion about whether it could affect VVC, stating "anybody can take anybody to court."

"It's (City College) winning that might throw the (ACCJC's) credibility into jeopardy," he said. "I don't know if it will change everything, it may just change things in this instance. Or (the judge) may rule across the board. It sounds and looks like what they're looking for is a ruling in that instance."

Henderson said he remains optimistic that the ACCJC will not place the college on show cause status.

"If the college goes to show cause, I'd be really upset," Henderson said. "I'd be really scratching my head and trying to figure out where they're coming from."

Henderson said school officials have done everything in their power to resolve the agency's recommendations regarding VVC's student learning outcomes, integrated planning and long-term fiscal plans. He said a show cause status after they have completed "a majority" of the recommendations "doesn't make sense."

"I'm hoping they're going to put us back to warning or take us back completely," Henderson said. "Really, if you make strides and they know that and we go to show cause, it's like we never did anything. It's like why did we go through all this trouble? Because I know all these people are working overtime to make sure it's getting done. The problems aren't that great that we can't make changes."

VVC spokesman Bill Greulich said the San Francisco case is a separate issue that would not affect the ACCJC's evaluation of VVC.

"I don't think it will affect VVC's outcome," Greulich said, "(City College) had like 13 to 14 recommendations that they had to complete and we had three. And for the most part, I think we did what we could do. I remain optimistic that we're going to meet all of the recommendations."

However, Greulich said if the college were to be placed on show cause in February, the school would remain open and accredited. VVC credits would continue to transfer to four-year universities and college officials would continue to recruit students, he said.

"If we don't meet (the recommendations) completely, at this point in time, they could move us to show cause," he said. "Like I said, I remain optimistic."

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