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Accrediting Commission For Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**To: Dr. Lisa Waits,
Superintendent/President,
Solano Community College**

Date: February 4, 2009

Fax #: 1.707.864.7213

Pages: 6 (includes cover page)

From: Dr. Barbara A. Beno, President, ACCJC

Subject:

COMMENTS:

Please find enclosed from Dr. Barbara Beno,

the corrected Commission Action letter for Solano Community College.

ACCJC
10 Commercial Blvd Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949
Telephone: 415.506.0234
FAX: 415.506.0238
accjc@accjc.org



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

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Corrected Letter

February 3, 2009

Dr. Lisa Waits
Interim Superintendent/President
Solano Community College
4000 Suisun Valley Road
Suisun, CA 94585

Dear President Waits:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 7-9, 2009, reviewed the Special Report and the Midterm Report submitted by the college, and the report of the team that visited Solano Community College on November 3, 2008. The Commission also heard testimony on the college's condition by President Lisa Waits, Board Chair Ms. A. Marie Young, Vice President Robin Steinback, and Mr. Steve Bruckman, and received the Solano Community College District Governing Board Resolution in Support of a Special Trustee. The Accrediting Commission acted to accept the Midterm Report, reject the Special Report, to place Solano Community College on **Show Cause** and to require that the college correct the deficiencies noted.

Show Cause is issued when the Commission finds an institution in substantial non-compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or policies. The institution must show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period. The burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. If the loss of accreditation will likely cause an institution to close, during the show cause period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission's *Policy on Closing an Institution*. During the period of the show cause order, the accredited status of the institution continues. However, the institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed until the conditions which warranted the show cause are removed.

The Commission requires that the college submit a Show Cause Report by **April 1, 2009**. This will be followed by a visit by Commission representatives. The report and findings of the Commission representatives will be considered at the June 2009 meeting.

In order to avoid possible termination of accreditation at the Commission's June 9-11, 2009 meeting, the Show Cause Report must demonstrate that the college has resolved the following recommendations from the 2005 comprehensive evaluation team, some of which have been modified by the November 2008 team to provide greater clarity to the institution, as well as deficiencies in meeting Eligibility Requirements (ER), as identified by the 2008 evaluation team:

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Visiting Team Revised Recommendation 1: It is the responsibility of every constituent group at Solano College, including the Board of Trustees, to participate in productive dialogue, as defined by accreditation standards, that engages the entire college in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the college, and every constituent group must commit to action that improves educational quality and student learning. The college must proceed immediately to take this action and should not allow operational or collective bargaining issues to distract them from participating in planned opportunities for this dialogue, timely implementation of changes for improvement resulting from that dialogue, and assessment of the results of implemented changes. (Standards I.B.1, II, and IV)

Recommendation 2. Improving Institutional Planning: In order to improve institutional planning, the College should clarify and simplify its terminology and processes used in planning so that the vocabulary is more easily understood and accepted institutionally, the planning processes are more integrated, and the plans actually get implemented. (Standards I.A.4, I.B.3, ER 19)

Recommendation 3. Improving Institutional Effectiveness: In order to improve institutional effectiveness the College should establish and implement a clear, systematic, consistent, and ongoing method of measuring and evaluating its effectiveness in achieving stated strategic planning goals and student learning outcomes. (Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, I.B.7, ER 10, ER 19)

Recommendation 6. Staffing and Organizational Stability: The College should continue to focus on prior accreditation evaluation reports and implement the recommendations. Stability in personnel, particularly in leadership positions, fiscal services and human resources will help the College to meet the requirements of Standard III and assure institutional integrity. (Standards III.A, III.D.1, III.D.2, III.D.3)

Visiting Team Revised Recommendation 7: The College must take immediate and necessary action to address its inability to timely and accurately generate financial and apportionment reports. In order to assure the institutions future fiscal stability, the College should immediately develop a detailed plan with a timeline and fixed responsibility to address the establishment of a reserve for retiree benefits. The College must take immediate responsibility for planning all long-term financial obligations including financial obligations associated with negotiated collective bargaining settlements which should be evaluated and managed to determine long-range impact on institutional financial stability. (Standards III.D.1, III.D.2, III.D.3, ER 17)

Recommendation 8. Leadership: In order for the Governing Board to focus on the institution's major issues and questions of policy, the Board of Trustees is encouraged to delegate full responsibility and authority to the President to implement and administer board policies and the operation of the College. The institutional leaders should likewise foster empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence through dialogue that builds trust and increases focus on student learning and assessment of learning outcomes, institutional effectiveness, and integrity. (Standards IV.A.1, IV.A.3, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2.a)

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E.R. 3, Governing Board: The visiting team confirms that Solano Community College is governed by a publicly elected seven member independent policy-making Board of Trustees that is given responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the college by college policy. However, the Board disagrees on how the mission of the college is being carried out and is divided on most major issues brought to it. The Board's dysfunctions are contributing to the dramatic fiscal and administrative instability of the College. The College does not comply with this eligibility requirement.

E.R. 4, Chief Executive Officer: The visiting team confirms that Solano Community College's superintendent-president is appointed by and reports to the Board of Trustees. There is currently an acting superintendent-president. However, there have been three different superintendent-presidents in the past three years. A search is being conducted which is scheduled to conclude in the summer of 2009 when a new permanent superintendent-president is to be hired. The current superintendent-president has served one month in that position and has been a vice-president at the college for about one year. The previous superintendent-president was first acting, then hired after the presidential search failed and then retired in October. He served less than two years. While the college technically complies with this eligibility requirement, the extraordinary turnover in the last three years has contributed to the instability of the college.

E.R. 5, Administrative Capacity: The visiting team found that Solano Community College has an administrative staff that is inappropriate in number. This is due to the high turnover in executive level administrators and the use of other administrators to "fill in" and be used for "interim" and "acting" positions. In some cases the "acting" and "interim" assignments are given to individuals who have little preparation and have little experience at that level or even at their regular position. The college does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.

E.R. 17, Financial Resources: The Team has serious concerns regarding the college's ability to generate meaningful and accurate fiscal and apportionment reports for both internal decision-making purposes as well as annual reports to external agencies including a required financial report from last year. As of the team visit on November 2nd the college had not adopted an annual budget for fiscal year 2008-2009. It was reported to the team that the report submitted to the State Chancellor's Office the last week in October differed from the report approved by the Board on October 15. To strain matters more, the college implemented a new software system that is to be used for annual budgeting without running a back-up system. The college currently does not utilize a position control system to account for and budget for existing and new positions. Failure to utilize such a system has resulted in miscalculation of salaries and benefits and significantly increases the chances of under budgeting salary and benefit expenses. The College does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.

E.R. 18, Financial Accountability: The visiting team confirmed that Solano Community College annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant. The audit is conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
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However, the college continues to receive audit findings published in their annual financial statements concerning weaknesses in internal controls over the safeguarding of assets, in particular cash. In the college's 2006 and 2007 audit reports, the external auditors cited findings indicating that the college was not reviewing, in a timely manner, bank reconciliations for many of its bank accounts. The 2007 audit report cites the college for failing to address the concerns in the 2006 report. The College has a recent history of being in arrears in providing students with approved financial aid checks. Financial records have not been transparent to college budget managers nor to the public. The College does not fully comply with this requirement.

E.R. 19, Institutional Planning and Evaluation: The visiting team confirmed that Solano Community College has established components of an institutional planning and evaluation process for the development of the college, but has not fully implemented a process for the assessment of student learning outcomes to measure student achievement of educational goals. The college has begun a process that integrates planning and resources allocation but it is not fully implemented. The Commission's requirement that an institution have in place data-based institutional planning, that it implement its plans and improve institutional quality, is not yet met. The college does not fully comply with this requirement.

E.R. 21, Relations with the Accrediting Commission: The team did note that there were inconsistencies within the report documentation, such as changing meeting minutes to include distribution of a report which was not developed until a later date. Also the "Special Report" was excerpted verbatim from the mid-term report and did not add additional information on the Commission requirement to fully address Recommendations 2, 6, 7 and 8 by October 2008, as requested in the Commission meeting of January 2008. The extensive documentation, some of which was irrelevant to the Recommendations addressed, was sent to the team at a very late date and some team members had only five days to read and evaluate the extensive amount of material received from the college.

In addition to the abovementioned serious issues, the Commission is concerned by findings of the EDMAC Report to Solano Community College. The Commission is concerned that the relative inexperience of the remaining members of the administrative leadership and the governing board's behavior may contribute to the institution's challenges in addressing these serious issues.

Finally, the college is hereby notified that if its accreditation is continued after June, 2009, the Commission will set additional deadlines for the institution to fully resolve other recommendations contained in the 2005 and 2008 team reports.

The Commission has previously sent you a copy of the evaluation team report. The Midterm Report accepted by the Commission will become part of the accreditation history of the college and should be used in preparing for the next comprehensive evaluation. The Commission requires that you give the team and Midterm reports and this letter appropriate dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

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The Commission also requires that all reports be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the college library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your web site or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational programs and services. This office is prepared to offer appropriate assistance as the college works to come into compliance with Commission requirements. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness, and quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Dr. Robin L. Steinback, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Ms. A. Marie Young, Board President, Solano CCD
Dr. E. Jan Kehoe, Team Chair
Evaluation Team Members
Ms. Linda Henderson, U.S. DOE