

**California Community College  
Board of Governors Public Meeting  
Regarding Agenda Item 2.1  
July 7, 2014**

*Comment of Joshua Pechthalt President, CFT  
on behalf of the California Federation of Teachers, AFT, AFL-CIO*

Good afternoon: My name is Joshua Pechthalt, President of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT). I am here today to comment on Agenda Item 2.1 proposing renewal of the contract of Robert Agrella as Special Trustee with Extraordinary Power (STWEP), at the City College of San Francisco (CCSF). I ask that my written comments, which I will provide to the Board, be made a part of the record of this proceeding.

It was one year ago almost to the day that our union came to this Board to vehemently oppose the decision of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to deny accreditation to CCSF effective July 2014.

We stated then that this punitive action by the Commission denying accreditation to CCSF coming on the heels of violations of Federal and State law, revealed the extent to which ACCJC was out-of-touch with its primary mission of working collaboratively with member colleges in order to assist them in meeting Federal requirements for the benefit of their students.

Since then the poor performance of the ACCJC has been detailed and documented numerous times including:

- In an August 2013 letter from the US Department of Education (DoE) which found ACCJC was in violation of its own policies and federal regulations when it placed CCSF on a show cause sanction;
- During a November 2013 town hall hearing convened by US Congresswomen Speier and Eshoo, CA Senator Beall and Assembly member Ammiano;
- Through San Francisco Superior Court hearings leading to an injunction keeping CCSF open; and most recently,
- With a critical report issued by the Bureau of State Audits.

*ACCJC's illegal behavior continues today.* This is evidenced most recently in the manner in which they conducted the appeal by CCSF of its accreditation termination order. The Panel's membership was riddled with conflicts of interest. Its decision upheld actions that are unlawful and unfair, actions the US DoE already concluded violate its standards.

Concerned, I wrote June 25<sup>th</sup> on behalf of the CFT and asked that Chancellor Harris and the Board: “...seek immediate guidance from the US DOE as to what recourse an institution has when a regional accreditor effectively denies adequate right of appeal by a sanctioned institution of an accreditation termination order.” I still await your reply.

**The ACCJC needs to rescind its "show cause" and disaccreditation orders, and run a new, fair review of the college's progress, with a properly composed team without conflicts of interest.**

There is much the state Board of Governors (BOG) can do to help:

**First, the BOG should remove language from Title V of its regulations naming ACCJC as the sole accreditor of California's community colleges.** This was recommended in the Bureau of State Audits June 26<sup>th</sup> scathing report on ACCJC.

Similarly on June 5<sup>th</sup> I wrote and asked that you “set in motion a process to expand accreditation options for California's Community Colleges.” I will resubmit that letter along with these comments while continuing awaiting your reply.

**Second, the BOG could work to ensure a fair and transparent accreditation process by actively supporting accreditation reform legislation AB1942 (Bonta).** It is now widely accepted that the ACCJC is secretive, and denies due process to colleges. It ignores the public interest, and has lost sight of its obligation to evaluate based on the quality of education. The Commission needs to be opened up to a rigorous and thorough review of its approach to the accrediting process by our elected leaders and the government bodies responsible for overseeing it. That is why the CFT is advancing legislation promoting responsible accreditation reforms many of which are outlined in the state auditor's report referenced above.

**Finally, the BOG could develop a plan to return San Francisco's community college district to the control of its democratically elected Board of Trustees (BOT).** As is made clear in the May 20<sup>th</sup> correspondence from BOG President Baca to ACCJC Chair Sherrill Amador and in a June 10<sup>th</sup> declaration from Chancellor Harris to the SF City Attorney, Baca and Harris were duped and manipulated by the ACCJC. This deception led to the extraordinary act of sacking the CCSF BOT and installing Robert Agrella as STWEP. This action should be reversed as soon as possible. It is not needed, but the people of San Francisco DO need their Board democratic rights restored now. Before voting to extend the Mr. Agrella's contract for another year a plan should be put in place to return the BOT and restore local control.

The entire California community college system has been victimized by the high-handed, arbitrary and vindictive approach that has characterized the work of the ACCJC under its current leadership for the last decade.

ACCJC's disregard of the public interest is needlessly harming tens of thousands of students. This is wrong.

It is now patently clear that the accreditation climate for California community colleges cannot normalize and the educational futures of the Bay Area's students cannot be restored as long as ACCJC is allowed to continue operating with its current leadership and no effective oversight. The CFT and AFT 2121 believe a robust, thorough, and transparent accrediting process conducted by qualified and legitimate educators -- and that engages the entire education community -- is critical to develop workable short and long term strategies for strengthening academic achievement.

We want CCSF to be an even stronger, better college. And we want an Accrediting Commission that follows state and federal law and its own policies and procedures and that works in partnership with its member institutions.

Thank you for your consideration of my remarks.