



California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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CFT leaders challenge college accreditation agency
Complaint alleges conflicts of interest, violations of law

Yesterday the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and its City College San Francisco (CCSF) affiliate, AFT 2121, filed a complaint or “third party comment” with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and sent a copy to the United States Department of Education (USDOE). With this action the CFT is protesting the ACCJC’s placement of City College San Francisco on a “show cause” sanction in 2012. The document argues that no sanction, let alone “show cause,” should have been imposed on CCSF. It also notifies the ACCJC and the USDOE that in the view of CFT, the accrediting agency is in violation of federal and state law and its own policies, and has overstepped its authority in a number of ways. The agency is currently undergoing its own review by the USDOE, and CFT is presenting the complaint as information useful to that process.

“It’s ironic that an accreditation agency itself has to be held to account,” said CFT president Joshua Pechthalt at a press conference today. “But it’s past time for someone to blow the whistle here. Community college faculty should be in their classrooms with their students, not fearfully pushing paper to appease a wrong-headed “education reform” agenda, or worse, standing in unemployment lines because of these actions. CFT is prepared to do whatever it takes to make this right for students, faculty, and the quality of education in California’s community colleges.”

CCSF has suffered the loss of thousands of students due to fears they would not receive credit for classes taken, and would not be eligible for student financial aid. The ACCJC’s action has thrown the college into turmoil,

disturbed what had been a collegial atmosphere, and negatively affected the college's ability to deliver a quality education to its students.

Alisa Messer, CCSF English instructor and president of AFT 2121, said, "City College's accreditation process should be used to improve the quality of education we offer, not to diminish educational choices or support for students. Instead, this process has done harm to our college and our ability to offer the quality education our students deserve. We once had an atmosphere of engagement and collegiality that could carry the college even through challenging times. Unfortunately, though our support from the San Francisco community remains strong, the process has been used as an excuse to dismantle many things our college community holds dear."

The complaint seeks remedies, the most significant of which are to lift the "show cause" sanction on CCSF, and for the ACCJC to cease violating laws and its own policies in pursuit of an inappropriate "education reform" agenda.

CFT's Community College Council president Jim Mahler observed, "We need to get the commission back to where it used to be, as a positive force for quality instruction, not as an agency to be feared." The CFT Community College Council includes 34 locals and 28,000 community college faculty members.

For more information, and to view the "third party comment," please visit www.cft.org.