

## 20 QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCREDITATION

### Hawai'i Community College

#### 1) Who is ACCJC?

*There are 6 regional American accrediting commissions. Hawai'i is covered by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Within WASC, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) specifically accredits community colleges.*

#### 2) What is accreditation? How long is accreditation good for?

*Accreditation is the process American institutions of higher education use to regularly evaluate and assure quality. Peer institutions conduct the evaluation by using "collectively set standards for good practice." Accreditation is then conferred on or reaffirmed for an institution, and the review results are made public. <http://www.accjc.org/>*

*Once initial accreditation is awarded, a college enters a 6 year cycle of review, during which the college prepares a self-study to validate for ACCJC that the standards and other eligibility criteria continue to be met. As a result of the evaluation process, ACCJC makes one of several decisions about reaffirmation of accreditation;*

- a. **Reaffirmation of accreditation** because a college "substantially meets or exceeds" the requirements. A Midterm report is due in the third year after the Self-Study;*
- b. **Reaffirmation of accreditation and a request for a focused midterm report** because the college needs to meet a small number of recommendations. This may or may not require a follow-up visit by ACCJC;*
- c. **Reaffirmation of accreditation and a request for a progress report** because the college needs to meet a small number of recommendations with some urgency. This may or may not require a visit by ACCJC.*

*If deficiencies are found at a college, a period of no more than 2 years is allowed for the institution to make corrections. Different sanctions can be imposed, the less severe of which is **Issue Warning** and the most severe is **Order Show Cause** that can lead to termination of accreditation. Six of the seven UHCC's were put on Issued Warnings in 2004. HawCC was placed on warning on June 28, 2005.*

*Six of the seven UHCC's had warning status lifted in January 2006 because they demonstrated significant progress to an institutionalized program review process that included the development of course and program student learning outcomes. HawCC was remarkably quick to be removed from warning status. Windward CC remains on warning status at this time.*

#### 3) What are accreditation standards? What are the four used by ACCJC?

*Accreditation standards are best practices of quality education developed collectively by peer institutions and are what a college must meet or exceed. Until 2002, there were **ten** ACCJC standards but those were consolidated into **four**, each with several criteria:*

- **Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness** Addresses how well the college mission facilitates student learning;*
- **Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services** Focuses on whether instructional, student support services, and library and learning support services accomplish student learning outcomes;*

- **Standard III: Resources** *The use of human, physical, technological, and financial resources are evaluated to see if the college has achieved its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and if there is evidence of an improvement in institutional effectiveness;*
- **Standard IV: Leadership and Governance** *Assesses how well the college utilizes contributions of leadership throughout the organization for self-improvement.*

**4) What are the six themes required by ACCJC to be addressed in the self-study?**

*ACCJC now has six themes that a college is required to integrate into its self-study:*

- a. **Dialogue** *that encourages campus-wide engagement about quality and that facilitates improvement;*
- b. **Student Learning Outcomes** *that departments and all programs have developed to show the effectiveness of support for student learning;*
- c. **Institutional Commitments** *as evidenced by the college mission and actions to support the mission with an emphasis on student learning;*
- d. **Evaluation, Planning and Improvement (EPI)** *are used by the college to determine if student needs are being met and decision making is adjusted for improvement;*
- e. **Organization** *indicates that the college has a systematic, formal process to identify, support and publicize its learning outcomes; and*
- f. **Institutional Integrity** *is how the college supports a code of ethics for its students, faculty, staff, conducts honest self-assessment and takes the steps toward improvement, and how it communicates with its constituents.*

**5) What is a campus self-study? How often is this done? Who writes it? What are the main parts?**

*A college conducts a self-study that evaluates how it meets or exceeds the four ACCJC standards. Evidence is presented to support that the standards are being or will be met. A college often sets up an accreditation steering committee with representatives from the major functional areas and then organizes committees based on the standards to gather campus-wide input. **Participation in writing the self-study is expected to be broad-based and represent the viewpoints of all constituents of the college— administration, faculty, staff and students.***

*The self-study process usually starts about two years prior to the site visit. The self-study is a written report, organized according to the guidelines given by the ACCJC and includes an **abstract** of the self-study, evidence that **eligibility requirements** for accreditation have been met, and has, for each of the four standards—**descriptive summary, self-evaluation, planning agenda, and references to the evidence.***

**6) Where can I find HawCC's self-study? With limited time, which parts should I become familiar with?**

*HawCC's self-study can be found online from the college's [home page](#) by clicking the link, **2006 Self-Study**. Pages 2-24 and the Planning Agenda for each of the four standards is useful information to become familiar with HawCC's current self-study.*

**7) What is a site visit? Who is on the team?**

*After the campus completes the **Comprehensive Self-Study**, a team of approximately 10-12 members conducts a review that includes an on-site visit to determine the extent to which an institution meets the standards. Team members, selected for their expertise from peer*

*institutions of the accrediting region, make recommendations for improvement, commend exemplary practices, and provide both the college and the Commission with a report of their findings. The nineteen-member ACCJC determines the accredited status of an institution.*

**8) When will the site visit take place?**

*The site visit to validate a self-study usually takes place in October. **HawCC's site visit is October 23-26, 2006.***

**9) Who is on the Visitation team?**

*There are 11 members on HawCC's Visitation Team chaired by Dr. Jan Kehoe, President of Long Beach City College. Other members' affiliations, bios and photos can be found on the college's website: <http://hawaii.hawaii.edu>.*

**10) How will the campus community be involved?**

*All levels of the campus community are expected to be involved in the Team visit. Usually, the Chair will request meetings with specific campus groups to validate what has been written in the self-study. Often, there are several open forums scheduled in which anyone in the campus community is invited to meet with team members, ask questions, and give comments on the self-study. Frequently, team members will select classes to "drop in on" and to get a "feel" of campus facilities, teaching approaches, and campus life as described in the self-study.*

*At the campus exit interview (open meeting) on the morning of Oct. 26 at HawCC, the Chair will present a summary of the Team's findings which will be given to the Commission of ACCJC. Those from the campus attending the meeting will be asked to listen to the findings only and not ask questions of the team about the content of the report. The team members will do the presentation, will not solicit any questions, and then exit as a group.*

**11) What happens after the ACCJC site visit?**

*The nineteen-member Commission is responsible for determining the accredited status of an institution based on the team report, the self study, and the accreditation history of the institution. The Commission's decision is communicated to the institution via an action letter and is made public through Commission announcements. (**Guide to Evaluating Institutions, A publication of ACCJC/WASC, August 2004**) The action letter will most likely be received in late January 2007 or early February 2007.*

**12) What is a program review? Who is responsible for writing program reviews?**

*"Program reviews are intended to provide a regular assessment of the effectiveness of degree programs, of significant non-credit programs, of areas of major curricula emphasis, and of major educational and administrative support functions. Program reviews are conducted by the faculty and staff in the program, based on agreed upon measures and program plans. Program reviews provide for assessment of student learning, program demand and efficiency, analysis of external factors impacting a program and assessment of planned program improvements. Program review results shall be used for decisions relating to program improvement, program modification, and program termination." (Taken from UHCCP #5.202, October 2005)*

**13) What is an instructional program review? What is a unit review? What is the difference between the two?**

*At HawCC, **Program Review** refers to the 27 instructional programs that grant credits for a sequence of classes leading to a certificate or degree. At HawCC, **Unit Review** refers to 17 non-instructional or non-credit units that support student learning such as academic support services, student support services, and administrative services.*

*At HawCC, **Instructional Program Review and Unit Review templates** are different but have some similarities for the review process. Both of these can be found online on the assessment website: [www.hawaii.hawaii.edu/assessment](http://www.hawaii.hawaii.edu/assessment) under the Program Review tab. Both instructional programs and units follow the same **13-step review process**, which can be found online on the assessment website.*

**14) What is the difference between an objective and a student learning outcome (SLO)?**

*Some sources make a distinction between a learning outcome and an objective, other sources use the term objective synonymously with the word outcome. The individual UHCC campuses are still in discussion about these differences. According to ACCJC, a student learning outcome (SLO) is generally defined in the context of the knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes the student has gained in a course, program, certificate, or degree.*

*An emphasis on SLO's is an emphasis on what it is the student has learned (not on what the teacher is teaching), on measuring the outcome and **by being able to describe what the student can do with what s/he has learned**. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) is helpful in assisting faculty to describe outcomes.*

*For HawCC, SLO's are broad and are determined at the end, whereas objectives consist of discreet skills/content that contribute to the final outcome. Objectives emphasize the small pieces the teacher teaches in order for the student to achieve the SLO. The final question is, how do we measure student learning? By finishing the statement, "Upon completion of this course (program, degree,) the student will be able to ...."*

**15) What are program learning outcomes?**

*Program learning outcomes describe what the student will be able to do once s/he has completed the program. Behaviors the student will be able to demonstrate at the end that provides evidence that s/he has achieved the knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes consistent with the goals of the program. According to ACCJC, all programs are required to have them.*

**16) What is assessment?**

*Assessment is a term that describes the collection of data (evidence) used to measure the effectiveness of the course, program and institution by way of measuring student achievement (movement through the institution) as well as the degree to which learning outcomes are achieved. The data is then used to measure the effectiveness of the course as it relates to the outcomes of the program/degree, the effectiveness of the program/degree as it relates to the overall mission/plan of the college, and finally, data collected through assessment processes provides an overall measure of institutional effectiveness. The data provides a measure of and*

means to evaluate the overall effectiveness as well as serve to locate/ identify areas needing improvement.

**17) How is assessment implemented/carried out?**

“Assessment methods can be indirect using criteria that assume learning has taken place, or they can be direct, that is using criteria that measure student learning directly. Examples of indirect measures include grades, success rates, retention rates, enrollment patterns, degree and certificates awarded, placement, outcomes in special programs, and student equity data. Direct student learning outcomes are measures of competencies or attainment levels reached by students, i.e. skills, abilities, knowledge. (**Guide to Evaluating Institutions, WASC/ACCJC, August 2004**)

Strategies to assess student learning include: capstone experiences or courses, exit exams, faculty-developed rubrics for scoring student work, performances, licensure information, locally developed tests, portfolios (hard copy and electronic), practicum/internship evaluations, standardized tests, etc. Usually, it is more effective to have multiple strategies to measure a student learning outcome.

**18) How do you assess general education?**

On almost any campus (two-year, four-year, public, or private) that offers undergraduate education, assessment in the General Education program will be found to be the most complex, controversial, and furthest behind. This important element of the educational process serves as the foundation for the degree programs or majors at the institution.

There are two basic approaches to curriculum development and assessment of Education. The first of these approaches deals with the concept of General Education as a whole. However, it acknowledges the contribution of separate disciplines such as communications, mathematics, humanities, behavioral and social science, natural science, etc. This approach usually fits well with regional accreditation requirements.” (**The Departmental Guide and Record Book For Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, Nichols and Nichols, 2000, p. 63**)

According to the Association of American Colleges, strong general education programs can be transformative in affording faculty opportunities to transcend narrow disciplinary loyalties. Although one of the most challenging of educational tasks, regular review of an institution’s general education philosophy and a coordinated plan to assess it is mandated by accreditation. At HawCC, we are overdue to start this process.

**19) For students, why is accreditation important?**

- a. Without accreditation, the college would be ineligible to receive federal student aid funds. Therefore, you would not be able to receive federal financial aid (Pell grant, SEOG) or loans.
- b. Students may be unable to obtain employment if their degree is from an unaccredited college. Obtaining a degree from an accredited college assures employers that the student has met certain standards through their educational training.
- c. Most employers who offer tuition assistance will not reimburse your tuition if you attend a college that is not accredited.
- d. Students who wish to transfer credits from one college to another will only be able to do so if they’ve attended an accredited college.

## **20) What is the current vision/mission and imperatives of HawCC?**

### Vision

*To promote student learning, Hawai`i Community College will emphasize the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for students to pursue academic achievement and workforce opportunities. As lifelong learners, the students will become productive and engaged citizens capable of meeting the complex challenges of a global community.*

### Mission

*Hawai`i Community College promotes student learning by embracing our unique Hawai`i Island culture and inspiring growth in the spirit of E`Imi Pono. Aligned with the UH Community Colleges system's mission, we are committed to serving all segments of our Hawai`i island community.*

### Imperatives

*Dedicated to student learning, Hawai`i Community College commits to the following imperatives:*

#### Community Development

*The College will provide students with opportunities to serve their community.*

#### Workforce Development

*The College will teach the skills needed to succeed in the workforce.*

#### Cultural Competency

*The College will respect and learn from all its students.*

#### Environment

*The College will build an awareness, appreciation, and sense of personal responsibility for the natural, social, and economic environments.*

#### Hawaiian Culture and Values

*The College will be the center for the study of Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge.*

#### Healthy Communities

*The College will work with students to build healthy communities.*

#### Technology

*The College will provide access to current technology that supports student learning.*

*Prepared by: Assessment Committee, Sept. 2006*