GUIDE TO ACCREDITATION FOR GOVERNING BOARDS

A Publication of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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ACCJC/WASC
10 Commercial Blvd.
Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

Phone: 415-506-0234
FAX: 415-506-0238
E-Mail: accjc@accjc.org
Website: www.accjc.org
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Appendix A: Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation

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Introduction

The Guide to Accreditation for Governing Boards is designed for use by college governing board members as an introduction to regional accreditation and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and as a guide to their roles and responsibilities in accreditation. Governing Boards have leadership responsibilities for the college mission, institutional quality and improvement, institutional integrity, and, ultimately, student success. Accreditation Standards recognize the important role governing boards play in student success, holding them accountable for their leadership role. Governing boards carry out their responsibilities primarily through policy development and delegation of responsibility for institutional operations to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), holding the CEO accountable for implementing board policies. Defining the policy role of governing boards and distinguishing that role from the delegated role of institutional operations is a fundamental principle that informs Accreditation Standards, and this Guide offers guidance to governing boards on that principle. This Guide is both supplement and companion to other guides and manuals published by ACCJC, all of which are cited in the last section of this Guide.

This Guide begins with general information on regional accreditation, including history, purpose, and organizational structure. This overview of regional accreditation presents what accreditation seeks to accomplish. This section of this Guide also presents an introduction to ACCJC, including its purposes and structure.

The second section of this Guide introduces ACCJC Standards, Eligibility Requirements (ERs), and Policies, as well as an overview of ACCJC procedures and processes.

The third section of this Guide focuses on the roles and responsibilities of governing boards in accreditation. This section looks again at ACCJC Standards and processes, but through the lens of governing boards and their distinct roles in college governance and leadership. The section emphasizes the leadership role boards play in defining college mission and policy, as well as their leadership roles in quality assurance, student success and governance.

The fourth section of this Guide provides questions and answers (Q&A) on effective practices for governing boards.

The fifth and final section of this Guide presents a listing of ACCJC guides, manuals, and other resources that are important to accreditation, offering governing board members comprehensive information on all aspects of regional accreditation and ACCJC. In addition, the section includes the complete Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements.
1 Regional Accreditation and ACCJC

1.1 Regional Accreditation: History, Purpose and Structure

In the United States, accreditation is the primary process for assuring and improving the quality of institutions of higher education. Accreditation of approximately 3,000 colleges and universities is carried out through a process known as “regional accreditation”: seven commissions operate in six geographic regions of the country through nongovernmental, nonprofit voluntary associations. The Western region - Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WSC) - chose to have two higher education accrediting commissions. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC/WASC) is one of the seven regional accrediting agencies and one of the two higher education accrediting agencies in the Western Region.

Accreditation is a self-regulatory, peer review process grounded by rigorous standards. Colleges and universities are judged based on evaluations that analyze how well they meet the standards, in the context of their institutional mission. Following a review by a team of peers, accrediting commissions determine the accreditation status of the institution and use a variety of means to ensure follow-up as appropriate. (Additional evaluation occurs when an institution seeks accreditor approval for a substantive change.).

All regional accrediting agencies are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and undergo a federal review every five years. The USDE also sets regulations for institutional quality, some of which are incorporated in the Accreditation Standards of all recognized accrediting agencies, while others are enforced on institutions through the federal financial aid process.

Regional accreditation, which can trace its roots to 1885, is the proven method for assuring the public that a higher education institution meets established standards of quality and awards degrees, certificates or credits that students and the public can trust. The granting of accreditation by any regional accrediting commission enables an institution to qualify for federal grants, contracts, and to distribute federal financial aid.

Accreditation is a voluntary system for the regulation of higher education quality. Institutions agree to join an association and to uphold the accrediting association’s standards of quality and its policies. Regional accreditors conduct a comprehensive evaluation of an accredited institution on a regular basis, which varies from six to ten years among regional accrediting associations. Each regional accrediting commission has developed standards that incorporate good higher education practice across the U.S.

While the standards of each regional accreditor might be organized differently or use different wording, the seven regional accrediting commissions follow very similar processes and have very similar standards of quality. Today’s accreditation enterprise is based on decades of experience and refinement, both leading and reflecting the evolution of American higher education. Today’s accreditation
standards go beyond the historical emphasis on inputs and processes - Do students have access to learning resources and are they using them? - Over the past decade, regional accreditation commissions have been leaders in assisting colleges and universities to develop valid and useful ways to understand what and how students are learning and use that understanding to improve institutional effectiveness.

1.2 Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)

The purposes of the ACCJC are to evaluate educational quality and institutional effectiveness and integrity and to promote institutional improvement. The ACCJC accreditation process assures the public that member accredited institutions meet the Accreditation Standards and that the credentials earned at the institutions are of value to the students who earned them; of value to employers and trade or profession related licensing entities; and of value to other colleges and universities.

The ACCJC accredits public, private non-profit, and private for-profit associate degree granting institutions in California, Hawai'i, the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated State of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The ACCJC has two bodies. The 19 Commissioners make decisions on the accredited status of institutions, and set policies and Accreditation Standards. Commissioners represent the interests of the public and the Commission's member institutions. Commissioners are elected for three-year terms and generally serve two terms. If elected to an officer position, a Commissioner may serve an additional term. The work done by Commissioners is part-time, voluntary and not compensated.

The ACCJC also has staff who manage and support the accreditation activities mandated by federal regulations, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The President of the Commission is an employee of the Commission, who is responsible for professional and support staff who serve the Commission and its institutional members. The President speaks for the Commission to institutions and the public.
2 ACCJC Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Policies and Processes

2.1 Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Policies

The Accreditation Standards form the core of the accreditation process. The Eligibility Requirements (ERs), Accreditation Standards and Commission policies are developed, adopted, evaluated and revised by the Commission, with input from member institutions and outside experts in higher education. They are informed by effective practices derived from years of experience of member colleges, as well as sound educational research and practices across the nation. The Standards also are informed by federal regulations. All member institutions must maintain compliance with all Standards at all times.

The four Accreditation Standards for ACCJC are:

1. Standard I: Mission and Institutional Effectiveness
   - focus on mission and purposes of each institution, and institutional effectiveness at achieving mission
   - focus on data-driven assessment and improvement and on learning outcomes

2. Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services
   - focus on instruction, student support and learning services and on learning outcomes

3. Standard III: Resources
   - focus on capacity of human, fiscal, physical, and technological resources to support achievement of mission and maintain institutional integrity

4. Standard IV: Leadership and Governance
   - focus on capacity of leadership to support and achieve mission and student success, including governance structure and roles of CEO and governing board, including leadership roles and responsibilities in multi-college districts or systems

In addition to the Standards, the ACCJC maintains two other types of requirements with which member institutions must comply. They are Eligibility Requirements (ERs) and Commission policies. As prerequisite to eligibility for accreditation, institutions must meet all ER’s, which are largely derived from the Standards. The ACCJC has defined 21 ER’s, which are listed in Section 5 of this Guide. Required by the USDE of all regional accreditors, Eligibility Requirements not only are prerequisite to achieving accreditation, their compliance must be maintained by all accredited institutions. Ongoing compliance with ER’s is validated periodically, usually as part of every institutional comprehensive-evaluation process (six year cycles). Institutions that have achieved accreditation must include in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report information demonstrating that they continue to meet the ER’s.
Found in the Accreditation Reference Handbook, Commission policies represent ACCJC positions and procedures related the Standards, federal regulation, Commission actions, and Commission operations. The Commission reviews, and, if necessary, adds, deletes, or revises its policies regularly in response to federal regulation, judicial action, or other Commission actions or findings. It is important to note that member institutions also are held accountable for compliance with all Commission policies. Of particular note is the “Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems,” which is relevant to many member institutions.

Discussion of the Standards specifically related to the roles and responsibilities of governing boards is found in Section 3 of this Guide.

2.2 Accreditation Processes

2.2.1 Obtaining Initial Accreditation

Accreditation processes begin with initial accreditation. An institution wishing to seek accreditation for the first time must undergo an eligibility review to establish compliance with the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements. If the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements, it will be declared eligible to prepare an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, as application for Candidacy. If the institution meets Accreditation Standards, it will be granted Candidacy status for at least two years and for no more than four years. During that time, the institution will prepare a second Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, in application for Initial Accreditation. Once Initial Accreditation is granted, the institution receives a reaffirmation visit by an evaluation team in ongoing six year cycles, and is subject to other monitoring and reporting requirements. Once accredited, an institution is eligible for federal student financial aid and well as federal grants and contracts.

2.2.2 Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review

ACCJC member institutions undergo an Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review every six years to determine whether they are meeting the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. In addition, the review process validates that institutions are engaged in sustainable efforts to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The review process has four steps: self-evaluation, external evaluation, Commission review and accreditation action, and continuous improvement.

For accredited institutions, the process begins with an institutional self-evaluation process in which the institution evaluates itself using the ERs and Accreditation Standards. The outcome of the institutional self-evaluation process is a written analysis, the Self-Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self-Evaluation Report), which is submitted to ACCJC. The report should include the institution’s plan to address any weaknesses found through self review.

The Commission appoints a team of trained, external, peer reviewers from its database of volunteer evaluators, which includes members of governing boards. All
members of an evaluation team are selected on the basis of their professional expertise in higher education and areas of specialization. Following the visit, team chairs will evaluate the performance of each team member, which is recorded in the Commission’s evaluator database and used to determine continued service on evaluation teams.

The team examines the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report; visits the institution as assigned; writes an External Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (External Evaluation Report) that determines the institution’s compliance with the Accreditation Standards and other requirements; makes recommendations for improvement; and commends excellent practice, when appropriate. The team also makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission on the action it should take on the institution's accredited status.

The evaluation team submits its External Evaluation Report to the Commission after the institution has had an opportunity to correct any errors of fact it finds in the draft Report. The Commission evaluates the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and the External Evaluation Report and makes a decision on the accredited status of the institution. The Commission also may give the institution additional recommendations and direction for improvement. The Commission may also impose a sanction and define deadlines for the institution to resolve any noted deficiencies. (See the “Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions” in the Accreditation Reference Handbook.)

The Commission communicates its decisions on status of accreditation via an action letter to the institution and via public announcements from the Commission, within a few weeks following the Commission’s January or June meetings. Member institutions are required to release and share the External Evaluation Report, the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, and the Commission action letter with the college community and the public.

The last and continuous step in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process is improvement. The Commission expects institutions to continuously assure the quality of their educational programs and services and supporting institutional resources and practices, in addition to resolving any deficiencies cited through recommendations in the External Evaluation Report.

2.2.3 Other Reports and Evaluation Visits

The ACCJC requires institutions to submit a Midterm Report in the third year after the external evaluation visit to report on the progress made to resolve any deficiencies cited through recommendations in the External Evaluation Report.

Institutions also are required to remain in compliance with all Accreditation Standards at all times. If an institution is out of compliance with any of the Standards, the Commission may require a Follow-Up Report and/or another visit. The Commission also may impose a sanction and deadlines for the institution to resolve noted deficiencies.
Federal regulations require institutions to submit applications and receive approvals for substantive changes if they wish to make changes to mission, scope of programs, nature of student constituency, location (or geographical area serves), control of the institution, content of courses or programs (when changes are significant departure from current status), or credit awarded for program or course completion. A Substantive Change Proposal is submitted in accordance with the Commission's "Policy on Substantive Change." (See Substantive Change Manual.)
3 Roles and Responsibilities of Governing Boards in Accreditation

3.1 Governing Boards and ACCJC Standards

As noted in the first section of this Guide, the purpose of regional accreditation is to assure and improve the quality of higher education to support student success. Governing boards have a primary leadership role and responsibility for guiding institutions to achieve the mission of student success, and boards fulfill this responsibility through institutional policies and by delegating responsibility for implementation of policies and pursuit of mission. Governing boards hold the CEO accountable for policy implementation and for fulfillment of the college mission. And, by extension, governing boards set policies that hold all constituencies of the institution accountable for performance relating to implementation of policies and pursuit of mission. While the governance role of the board is centered on policy and delegation to the CEO and other institutional leaders and constituencies, the board has responsibilities beyond governance - responsibilities for the mission and, ultimately, for the success of students.

The four Accreditation Standards describe the educational and institutional practices, organizational structures, resources, and institutional decision-making processes that are necessary conditions for a high quality institution and for student success. Standards I and IV describe some of the specific roles of governing boards in assuring that the institution produces high quality educational services and works to achieve and improve student success. However, the Board’s responsibility for institutional effectiveness is exercised through its policy making role and the delegation of policy implementation to college staff, through the Chief Executive Officer. The governing board is also responsible for the fiscal integrity of the institution, and the board exercises its responsibility in fiscal matters through policy and by its review of the annual external audit and approval of the institution’s annual spending plans. Thus, the governing board should set policies that hold all leaders and constituencies accountable for performance. For example, such accountability would include faculty for work on data driven program review, the chief financial officer for sound fiscal management, and the board itself for not making fiscal or policy commitments that could jeopardize institutional effectiveness, integrity or stability.

Accreditation Standard IV.B defines expectations for the roles and responsibilities of governing boards, emphasizing responsibility for “establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution.” The primary role of the governing board is policy leadership, and the primary responsibility of the Board is institutional quality, integrity, and successful outcomes for students. The governing board assures institutional performance through reports demonstrating how well the institution is achieving its mission. The board holds the CEO and, as appropriate, other leaders and constituencies responsible for organizing and implementing the processes that accomplish mission. That accountability is manifested through board policies that ask for information and data on institutional performance. Through
policies, the board should ask for key metrics, or measures, by which the institution can assess achievement of its mission.

Setting standards of excellence and measuring performance tied to the mission of the institution connect the governing board with all four Accreditation Standards. For example, the board is responsible for the mission of the institution, and the Standards require regular review of the institutional mission (Standard I.A). The board is not concerned just with the review of the wording of the mission; it should be concerned with the institution’s achievement of the mission. That assessment requires data on the outcomes achieved by the students defined in the mission. Similarly, the mission broadly defines the scope of programs and services offered by the institution, and the Standards require institutions to conduct regular program reviews of all programs and services to assess their effectiveness (Standard II. A). The governing board should have a policy on program review and require regular reports on assessment results and on decisions for improvement based on program review.

Focusing on the what - mission, quality, outcomes, improvement - and not the how - operations and means to outcomes - effective governing boards demonstrate their policy and mission directed leadership role and responsibility for institutional effectiveness and student success. The ACCJC promotes the use of common measures of institutional effectiveness, including course completion, persistence, completion of certificates and degrees, transfer and job placement, and mastery of learning outcomes. In addition, the Commission promotes setting goals, or targets, for student performance, based on institutional benchmarking. (Improvement is measured against the benchmark and goal.) Focusing on the what, governing boards should expect information and data that allow them to assess institutional effectiveness and achievement of mission. Thus, governing boards have roles and responsibilities related to the four Standards, realized through policy and monitoring of policy implementation, holding the CEO and, as appropriate, other college leaders and constituencies accountable for institutional improvement, integrity, stability, and student success.

3.2 Governing Boards and ACCJC Processes

Standard IV. B stipulates that “the governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.” Governing boards should receive training about the accreditation process and ACCJC Standards. In addition, the board has an appropriate role to play in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process and in the development of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. Not only should the board receive regular reports on the progress of the Review process and development of the Report, the board should give direct input on those areas of the Standards affecting the board directly, e.g., Standard IV. B. The governing board should be informed of institutional reports submitted to the Commission and of communication from the Commission to institutions, including recommendations given to institutions. With knowledge of the Accreditation Standards, boards should act to demonstrate commitment to supporting and improving student learning outcomes through planning and resource allocation, as reflected in the Standards. In the end, board action should indicate a commitment
to implementing institutional improvement that has been planned as part of the institutional self-evaluation and accreditation processes.

In multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems, the governing board has responsibility for institutional mission(s) and for policy, just as the governing board has in a single-college district/system. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the CEO of the district or system is directly responsible to the governing board, while CEO’s of the colleges/units within the district or system usually are responsible to the district/system CEO. In addition, the district/system has clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges/units and district/system, and the district/system acts as liaison between the colleges/units and the governing board. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the governing board should maintain and review policies that clearly articulate the delineation and distribution of responsibilities and authorities between the district/system and the colleges/units. It is important to note that the Commission evaluates based on the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies regardless of organizational structure.

3.3 Governing Boards and Effective Leadership and Governance

The Standards delineate the roles and responsibilities of governing boards, and the following principles summarize the expectations defined by the Commission for effective board leadership and governance:

- **Governing Boards Act as a Unit** - The board is a corporate body. It governs as a unit, with one voice. This principle means that individual board members have authority only when they are acting as a board. They have no power to act on their own or to direct college employees or operations.

- **Governing Boards Represent the Common Good** - The board exists to represent the public; or, in the case of private institutions, its owners. The board is responsible for balancing and integrating a wide variety of interests and needs into policies that benefit the common good and the future of its constituencies.

- **Governing Boards Set Policy Direction** - The board establishes policies that give direction and guidance to the CEO and staff of the institution. A major board responsibility is to define and uphold an institutional vision and mission that clearly reflect student and community expectations.

- **Governing Boards Employ, Evaluate and Support the CEO** - The successful board depends on a good relationship between the board and the CEO.

- **Governing Boards Set Policy Standards for Institutional and Board Operations** - The successful board adopts policies that set standards for quality, ethics, and prudence in institutional operations and in the operation of the board itself. Once institutional policy standards are established, the board delegates authority to the CEO, allowing the CEO and staff the flexibility they need to exercise professional judgment.

- **Governing Boards use Resources to Achieve Mission** - The successful board assures that the institution’s mission is periodically evaluated and adequately funded. The successful board also assures that its policies and resource
allocations are linked and correspond to the educational priorities defined through the institutional mission and plans.

- **Governing Boards have responsibility for Financial Integrity** - The successful board regularly monitors financial performance and policy. The board should require institutional leadership to maintain adequate reserves and to quickly address any issues discovered through external audits and reviews.

- **Governing Boards Monitor Performance** - The successful board holds institutions accountable for student success and institutional effectiveness. The board adopts the institution's direction and broad goals as policy and then monitors the progress in achieving those goals. Board policy should set expectations for the use of sound student outcome data in program and institutional reviews and planning. For example, if the board adopts a policy goal that the institution will train workers for a particular industry, then the board should receive regular reports on progress toward that goal.

- **Governing Boards Create a Positive Climate** - The successful board sets the tone for the entire institution. Through the behavior of board members and the board's policies, the successful board establishes a climate in which learning is valued, including learning by board members; assessment and evaluation are embraced, and student success is the most important goal. Effective boards are ethical and act with integrity, which also promotes a positive climate. (The board must have a code of ethics and a policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.)
4  Q&A on Effective Governing Board Practices

4.1 Questions and Answers on Issues of Specific Interest to Governing Boards

As noted in earlier sections of this Guide, governing boards have roles and responsibilities that relate to all aspects of accreditation, and yet the Accreditation Standards specify both the scope and limits of those roles and responsibilities. Board members often pose questions to the Commission about appropriate roles and responsibilities, and the following question and answer section of this Guide features answers to some of the commonly asked questions.

1. What is the appropriate scope of policy responsibilities for governing boards?
   The governing board has responsibility for institutional outcomes and for limits on the means by which staff pursues outcomes. In addition, the governing board uses policy to define its relationship with the CEO and to define its own governance processes. The board’s most important policy role is to create a mission for the institution that defines the constituencies served, the programs and services offered to them, and the desired outcomes for them. Thus, the governing board uses policy to define the ends, or outcomes, for the institution. However, the board also sets limits through policy on the means by which the institution operates. The limits are manifested through policies on principles of prudence and ethics that form a boundary of staff practices, activities, circumstances and methods. The board also sets policies about how it relates to staff, which link the board to the CEO. The CEO is the board’s link to staff, and the board-CEO relationship is defined through policies on the CEO’s role, delegation and accountability. Finally, the board uses policy to define its own operations - its structure, its meeting protocols and the standards by which it operates, reflecting the board’s responsibilities for providing vision and ethical leadership.

2. How does a governing board act on its policies?
   The governing board holds itself, CEO and, as applicable and appropriate, other institutional leaders and constituencies accountable for board policies. Recognizing that the board is responsible for the ‘what’ of ends and outcomes and not the ‘how’ of means and operations, the board asks for regular reports and data on the status of achieving the institution’s outcomes. In addition, the board evaluates and revises its policies on a scheduled basis. By acting on its policies in this manner, the board fulfills its leadership responsibilities.

3. How does a governing board demonstrate integrity in its operations?
   The governing board has responsibility for institutional outcomes and for limits on the means by which staff pursues outcomes. In addition, the governing board uses policy to define its relationship with the CEO and to define its own governance processes. The board’s most important policy role is to create a mission for the institution that defines the constituencies served, the programs and services offered to them, and the desired outcomes for them. Thus, the governing board uses policy to define the ends, or outcomes, for the institution.
However, the board also sets limits through policy on the means by which the institution operates. The limits are manifested through policies on principles of prudence and ethics that form a boundary of staff practices, activities, circumstances and methods. The board also sets policies about how it relates to staff, which link the board to the CEO. The CEO is the board’s link to staff, and the board-CEO relationship is defined through policies on the CEO’s role, delegation and accountability. Finally, the board uses policy to define its own operations - its structure, its meeting protocols and the standards by which it operates, reflecting the board’s responsibilities for providing vision and ethical leadership.

4. How does the governing board monitor institutional mission, goals, and plans?
The governing board is responsible for the institutional mission, and, as required by the Standards, the institution must review its mission on a regular basis. It is important to note that review of the institutional mission is not simply a matter of reviewing and revising the mission statement. Regular review of the institutional mission involves monitoring of institutional outcomes to determine whether or not the institution is fulfilling its mission. Such monitoring includes regular reporting to the Board on outcomes relating to institutional goals, including measures of student success, and to implementation and evaluation of institutional plans. Again, the board is responsible for the ‘what’ of institutional performance, not the ‘how’ of operations. Through regular monitoring of the status and outcomes relating to mission, goals, and plans, the board appropriately fulfills its primary responsibility for the institutional mission and student success.

5. Are roles and responsibilities of the governing board different in multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems?
ACCJC Standard IV.B.3 and ACCJC “Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems” define accreditation requirements and expectations for multi-college/multi-unit districts or systems. In such districts or systems, the governing board has responsibility for institutional mission(s) and for policy, just as the governing board has in a single-college district/system. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the CEO of the district or system is directly responsible to the governing board, while CEO’s of the colleges/units within the district or system usually are responsible to the district/system CEO. In addition, the district/system has clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges/units and district/system, and the district/system acts as liaison between the colleges/units and the governing board. In a multi-college/multi-unit district or system, the governing board should maintain and review policies that clearly articulate the delineation and distribution of responsibilities and authorities between the district/system and the colleges/units. It is important to note that the Commission evaluates based on the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies regardless of organizational structure.
6. What is a ‘conflict of interest’ policy for a board?
   The governing board should have a policy on “conflict of interest” that insures that the board’s personal and professional interests are disclosed and that those interests do not conflict or interfere with the impartiality of governing board members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic quality and fiscal integrity of the institution. The policy should reflect the board members’ commitment to resist temptation and outside pressure to use their position to benefit themselves or any other individual or agency apart from the interests of the institution.

7. How does the governing board execute its responsibilities for fiscal integrity of the institution?
   ACCJC Standard III.D defines expectations for maintaining the fiscal integrity of institutions, including adequacy and use of resources and the policies and processes employed to manage those resources with commitment to mission and integrity. The governing board adopts policy on institutional budgeting and it adopts institutional budgets that are balanced and focused on student success, reflecting institutional goals and priorities. The board receives and reviews regular financial performance reports, and it validates fiscal accountability through review of annual financial audits.

8. How does the governing board build a sense of teamwork?
   Governing boards are corporate boards - individual board members do not have individual authority for governance or policy. As a corporate entity, the governing board is most effective when its members work together as team. Critical to board members becoming an effective team is maintaining a climate of trust and respect. The CEO is also a part of the team, and the effective board team adheres to its role so that the CEO and staff can perform their roles.

9. How does the governing board grow from good to great?
   A good board assures that the institution's core mission is periodically re-evaluated and is adequately funded. A good board protects its core mission by not creating unfunded liabilities for the institution. A great board assures that its policies and budget allocations are linked and correspond to the educational priorities in the institutional mission and plans.

4.2 Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation

Although this Guide covers many aspects of regional accreditation, the ACCJC has developed a publication entitled Twelve Common Questions and Answers about Regional Accreditation to provide basic information about regional accreditation purposes, principles, and practices. This information first appeared in the Special Edition February 2011 ACCJC Newsletter and is also available on the ACCJC website on the Newsletter page at: www.accjc.org/newsletter. (See Appendix A.)
5 ACCJC Resources on the Website

ACCJC Website
The ACCJC maintains a website at: www.accjc.org. The website contains all important reference documents and resources listed below. It also provides a calendar of upcoming accreditation-related training events and copies of presentations made at some prior events. Trustees are encouraged to explore the website as the best source of up to date reference documents.

This Guide frequently cites the ACCJC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards, which form the foundation of regional accreditation. (See Appendix B and C.)

ACCJC also publishes a number of manuals and guides, and other resources, all of which are available on line through the ACCJC website at: www.accjc.org. Current ACCJC publications are listed below.

Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards
The Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards are found on the ACCJC website on the Eligibility Requirements & Standards page at: www.accjc.org/eligibility-requirements-standards. The ERs, Accreditation Standards and all Commission policies can also be found in a single publication, the Accreditation Reference Handbook, which is found on the ACCJC website on the Publications & Policies page at: www.accjc.org/publications-policies.

The ACCJC publishes several manuals that are used by institutions preparing the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self Evaluation Report) and by the peer evaluation teams that visit an institution. The manuals listed below can be found on the ACCJC website on the Publications & Policies page at: www.accjc.org/publications-policies.

Guides and Manuals
- Accreditation Reference Handbook
- Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation Manual
- Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education
- Guide to Evaluating Institutions
- Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation
- Substantive Change Manual
- Team Evaluator Manual

Other Resources
The ACCJC has published some supplementary materials used in institutional evaluations that are also found on the Publications & Policies page on the ACCJC website including:

ACCJC Resources on the Website
• Institutional Financial Review and Resources
  ▪ Required Evidentiary Documents for Financial Review
  ▪ Explanatory Matrix of Auditor's Opinions
  ▪ Sample Schedule of Financial Trends Analysis
• Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness

**ACCJC NEWS Newsletter**
The ACCJC also publishes a newsletter, **ACCJC NEWS** that provides important current information about institutional quality issues. All issues of **ACCJC NEWS** can be found on the ACCJC website on Newsletter page at: [www.accjc.org/newsletter](http://www.accjc.org/newsletter).