FACCC has welcomed the new year with an addition to its communications line-up. Joining its print, electronic, and social media, FACCC has launched a blog to offer additional perspectives on contemporary issues. Contact Communications Director Austin Webster if you would like to contribute to this effort.

The inaugural blog looks at the year ahead with 10 questions (in no particular order) we should ask in 2016.

1) Will the plug be pulled on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)? The extreme lack of confidence in this body is now expressed up and down California, and in Washington, DC. Last month’s recommendation by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) to deny ACCJC any expansion of scope to accredit four-year programs while providing it only six more months to get its act together with federal law could portend a monumental change for this accreditor.

2) Will the Chancellor’s Office Workforce Task Force result in substantive, or merely cosmetic, changes for Career Technical Education in the California Community Colleges? Legislative, regulatory, and budgetary proposals will soon be forthcoming.
3) Will the Legislature finally allow for a substantive part-time faculty seniority/due process bill to advance to the Governor’s desk? Last year’s sidelining of AB 1010 (Medina) was one more slap in the face to this dedicated corps of faculty professionals.

4) Will the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision in Friedrichs vs CTA, the constitutional challenge to mandatory fair share union dues, wreak havoc on organized labor’s influence in California politics or will its effect be negligible? Labor and business leaders, along with Supreme Court watchers, are tracking this closely.

5) Will the 2016-17 Budget Act include additional money for full-time faculty hiring and/or restoration of categorical programs that were cut during the recession? While it’s too early to predict what will be included in the budget, the Legislative Analyst’s Office has already suggested that next year’s increase in community college funding will be substantially smaller than this year’s.

6) Will the November elections feature an epic initiative battle over Defined Benefit pensions? Recent polling suggests that the electorate might be less than originally thought to undermine the hard-earned retirement of community college faculty and other public employees.

7) Speaking of elections, will the Democrats return to a two-thirds legislative super-majority, and if so, will that make a difference? With fewer Republican victories over the past decade, the voters have shifted in a number of districts to supporting so-called “moderate” Democrats, those with a pro-business, and not necessarily a pro-labor, leaning. Although identified as Democrats, these “mods” do not necessarily follow traditional party leanings and might oppose tax reform or other grand policy items requiring a two-thirds vote.

8) Will the so-called “education reformers” intensify their attacks on the California Master Plan for Higher Education or will they find a new target this year? The whole concept of accessible, affordable, higher education available to all Californians through the California Community Colleges could disappear if the reformers have their way.
9) Will Congress and/or the Legislature address safety concerns at community colleges and other postsecondary institutions? While California state lawmakers are willing to engage on this topic, little is anticipated from our federal representatives who remain beholden to the gun lobby.

10) Finally, will the new Chancellor of the California Community Colleges respect and value diversity of opinion, particularly from faculty? Above all else, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors should consider this in its hiring decision.

Please share your predictions with me at jlighman@facc.org It will be interesting to revisit these in a year, along with a new set of questions for 2017. Happy New Year!

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