



**TESTIMONY OF JONATHAN LIGHTMAN TO NACIQI
February 22, 2017**

Thank you Mr. Chair and members.

My name is Jonathan Lightman, executive director of FACCC, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges. We are a 64 year-old statewide professional membership association for the faculty throughout the California Community Colleges. In November, we filed a third party written comment and I would refer you to that document for a more thorough understanding of our concerns.

FACCC is also the organization that devised and advocated California Assembly Bill 404 requiring a survey of the constituency groups in the California Community Colleges on how our regional accreditor has complied with federal law prior to a hearing of NACIQI such as this.

AB 404 is pertinent to this hearing because it was triggered for the first time this fall. While I had prepared to discuss with you a few sections of federal law whose compliance by ACCJC was in question, it's simply impossible to overlook how the faculty comments we received on our AB 404 FACCC-member survey differed from the Department's preliminary staff analysis on CFR Section 602.13 which claimed ACCJC met the legal threshold for wide acceptance by faculty on their standards, practices, policies, procedures and decisions. We have 11,000 faculty members in our association, only a handful of which are in San Francisco, and I'm here to challenge the presumption of compliance with that law.

In many ways, I believe that our position on ACCJC has mirrored that of faculty as a whole and of other non-faculty system partners. What began as a mildly critical but overall even-handed posture has deteriorated to a state of extreme distrust, exacerbated by the number of institutions recently placed on a limited 18-month accreditation renewal.

Last fall, when the Department of Education announced the call for third-party written comments on ACCJC, several FACCC board members described facing local pressure to send positive statements about the accreditor that ran counter to their own experiences and opinions. Not surprisingly, they feared retaliation against their colleges in the next accrediting cycle if they did not comply.

While we acknowledge that ACCJC has recently changed its leadership, FACCC's overwhelming sense is that the agency has failed to live up to the letter of the law, and even more importantly, to the spirit of those sections of the U.S. Code and Code of Federal Regulations governing accreditation. FACCC joins the many voices who believe it is in the best interest of our colleges and students to align with an accreditor that already serves four-year colleges and universities, and that this is preferable over lifting the limitation on ACCJC's authority to accredit baccalaureate degree programs.

In closing, I want to emphasize that my comments are not meant to challenge the need for accreditation. This process provides a critical safeguard for students and taxpayers to ensure that colleges employ sound educational and fiscal standards. Your recommendation on the disposition of ACCJC is less about that than whether they have contravened federal law in a way that has been harmful to our colleges and students.

Thank you for your consideration.