



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

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August 17, 2015

Dr. Kimberlee Messina  
Interim President  
Foothill College  
12345 El Monte Road  
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

RE: 2015 Annual Report Responses  
Notice of Enhanced Monitoring

Dear President Messina:

**Foothill College** is being given notice of enhanced monitoring. We ask that you provide this letter to others on campus and at the district as appropriate.

The college has been flagged for enhanced monitoring on the basis of its responses in the March 2015 Annual Report concerning institution-set standards and student achievement. As part of the ACCJC monitoring process and to assist the college, we recommend the college revisit the Commission's standards in these areas and evaluate and determine strategies for enhancing its practices related to student achievement.

**Recommended Self Evaluation**

Member institutions are required to have institution-set standards for job placement rates and licensure examination passage rates and to track these rates for CTE program completers. In the 2015 Annual Report, institutions were asked to provide this information for any program which had at least ten program completers in 2012-2013.

In its 2015 Annual Report, the college reported institution-set standards for job placement rates below 40% (some at 0%) in Adaptive Fitness Therapy, Applied Photography, Business Administration, Business International Studies, Emergency Medical Technician, Environmental Horticulture, Graphic and Interactive Design, Music Technology, and Nanoscience.

Institution-set standards (ISS) set an expectation for level of performance as to student achievement below which the institution will not be satisfied.

The ISS is a statement of what the institution has determined is acceptable given its mission, the expectations of students and the public concerning its instructional programs, and expectations across higher education. It is intended to inform college planning and decision-making. When student achievement results in a program fall below the ISS level, the institution is called upon by the Commission's standards to analyze the results and to

Dr. Kimberlee Messina  
Foothill College  
August 17, 2015

plan for and implement appropriate actions in the program. The results also become part of the analysis of the institution in enhancing student learning and achievement across the institution. Please note that a continuation of ISS for job placement rates at these levels in subsequent years will result in the need to seek further information from the college. We recommend the college evaluate its ISS and results for job placement rates in its CTE programs.

### **Institution-Set Standards**

In January 2013, ACCJC President Barbara Beno wrote to the CEOs and ALOs of member institutions, apprising them of the requirement for institutions to establish institution-set standards (ISS) for performance related to student achievement. Member institutions were to define each standard (what was being measured) and establish the level (for that standard) of expected performance pertinent to the institutional mission. The ISS would be appropriate to higher education and would be used by institutions in evaluating student achievement results, assessing institutional achievement of mission, and identifying needed improvements, both within programs and across the institution.

In 2014, and again in 2015, member institutions were asked to provide information concerning institution-set standards in their Annual Reports. Institutions were required to report the ISS and their performance related to course completion across the institution, and to licensure examination passage rates and job placement rates in career and technical education programs, according to ACCJC-defined criteria.<sup>1</sup> All career-technical programs with at least 10 program completers in the designated academic year were to be included in the Annual Report. In their reports, institutions were also asked to provide both the definitions and expected performance levels of ISS they developed for the other areas of student achievement related to their institutional mission.

As you are aware, the ongoing discussions in Washington around the Higher Education Act and institutional accountability concern the setting of benchmarks by the Department of Education or by regional accreditors as to levels of student achievement which will be required in order for institutions to qualify for accredited status and federal student aid and grants. The ACCJC believes that *institution-set* standards are the appropriate means by which institutional performance as to student achievement is evaluated by accredited institutions and by peer evaluators. The active use of institution-set standards by institutions in assessing program and institution-wide performance as to student achievement is an important element of institutional practice as well as accreditation review. Institution-set standards correspond with principles of effective practice, including: applying accreditation standards to the institutional mission and goals; directing institutional energies toward enhancing student learning and increasing student achievement; promoting academic quality with recognition of student needs and societal expectations; operations which remain current with the evolving higher education expectations

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<sup>1</sup> These three areas of student achievement performance are specifically required in federal regulations to be among the institution-set standards and achievement levels monitored by the ACCJC. For these, the ACCJC established the definitions to be used by member institutions.

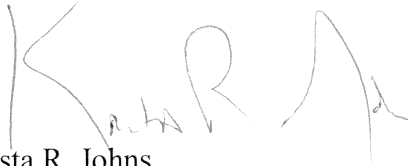
Dr. Kimberlee Messina  
Foothill College  
August 17, 2015

for institutional effectiveness; and continuous quality improvement from within the institutions and systems of higher education.

Please refer to the College's 2015 Annual Report for additional detail concerning the College submission. The report form instructions can be found at [www.accjc.org/annualreport/index.php](http://www.accjc.org/annualreport/index.php) by clicking on *Getting Started Instructions* in the dialog box. No log-in or password is required for the instructions. We also recommend that you review the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards adopted in 2014. These can be found at: <http://www.accjc.org/eligibility-requirements-standards>.

If you have any questions concerning this request for additional information, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "KRJ". The letters are stylized and connected.

Krista R. Johns  
Vice President for Policy and Research

KRJ/mg

cc: Dr. Andrew LaManque, Accreditation Liaison Officer