November 8, 2019

Richard A. Winn, President
Western Association of Schools and Colleges,
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, California 94949

Dear Mr. Winn:

I am writing to inform you of my decision on the renewal of recognition of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). U.S. Department of Education (Department) staff and the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) have each made recommendations to me. These recommendations were made under Sections 114 and 496 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and pursuant to relevant statutory and regulatory provisions.

Both the Department staff and the NACIQI recommended that I grant ACCJC renewed federal recognition for a period of five years and expansion of scope. I concur with the recommendations of the Department staff and of the NACIQI. Accordingly, I grant renewed recognition to ACCJC for a period of five years and expansion of scope. In addition, I would like to require ACCJC submit a progress report in two years to provide to the Department a list of all four-year degree programs accredited since receiving the expanded scope.

I would also like to thank NACIQI’s consideration of the problem of credential creep in the context of this review, however, in this case, it doesn’t appear that this expansion of scope is linked to increased entry requirements for license occupation, but instead that community colleges will be permitted to accredited occupationally-focused bachelor’s degrees at community colleges as long as those programs remain aligned with the community college’s mission.

Scope of Recognition: The accreditation and preaccreditation ("Candidate for Accreditation") of community and other colleges in California, Hawaii, the United States territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, which have as a primary mission the granting of associate degrees, but which may also award certificates and other credentials, not to exceed the bachelor degree level, where the provision of such credentials is within the institution’s mission and, if applicable, is authorized by their governmental authorities, and the accreditation

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The Department of Education’s mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness

by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.
of such programs offered via distance education and correspondence education at these colleges. This recognition also extends to the Committee on Substantive Change of the Commission, for decisions on substantive changes, and the Appeals Panel.

Please convey my best wishes to the members of the ACCJC. We appreciate their work to improve the quality and success of U.S. postsecondary education.

Sincerely,

Diane Auer Jones  
Principal Deputy Under Secretary  
Delegated to Perform the Duties of Under Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education