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May 9, 2014

Lynn Mahaffie  
Senior Director, Policy Coordination  
Development and Accreditation Service  
U.S. Department of Education  
1990 K Street, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Mahaffie:

I am writing to request clarification from the Department of Education based on recent statements made by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC) regarding City College of San Francisco (CCSF).

As you know, education is the best investment we can make in our children, in ourselves, and in our nation's future. CCSF is an indispensable part of San Francisco—one of our city's most important ladders of opportunity—and a cornerstone of the Bay Area's educational system. Since ACCJC issued the Show Cause measure more than 18 months ago, the entire CCSF family—including the administration, faculty, unions, students, and business community—have rallied behind this beloved institution to make the necessary changes and tough decisions under the ambitious Roadmap to Success.

However, recent statements by ACCJC raise more questions than answers. On April 12, 2014, ACCJC Commission Chair Sherrill Amador and Vice-Chair Steven Kinsella penned an op-ed in the San Francisco Chronicle that stated:

“While some plead that City College simply be given more time to mend, this is not up to the commission... Congress and the U.S. Department of Education require an accrediting body to allow a substandard college no more than two years to come into compliance or lose accreditation. The ‘two-year rule’ is designed to protect students and taxpayers. In fact, the Department of Education has put all accrediting bodies on notice that they could lose their federal recognition if they do not apply the rule. Without federal recognition of the commission as an accrediting body, every community college in California could lose access to taxpayer dollars - federal financial aid for students. Any change to the two-year rule would require Congress to enact a new law.”

Based on the statements above:

1. Does the Department of Education require ACCJC to make the decision to terminate CCSF's accreditation as the result of federal regulations or requirements?

2. Does ACCJC have the authority to implement policies to accommodate CCSF with additional time 'for good cause' to come into compliance?

Under the ambitious agenda to keep CCSF open and accredited, the Roadmap to Success has met significant milestones in operational, governance, and educational standards progress, including:

- Completing nearly 85% of the 350 objectives laid out in the Roadmap to Success,
- Hiring a permanent, accomplished Chancellor, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Counsel, Chief Instructional Officer, and other key leadership positions,
- Finalizing collective bargaining agreements with all of its unions,
- Stabilizing the financial management structures including tighter internal controls and more effective financial planning, and
- Updating nearly every facet of student learning outcomes and needs.

Further, California's recent "Student Success Score Card" for community colleges throughout the state shows that CCSF has a higher percentage of City College students transferred to a four-year university or earned a vocational certificate within five years than the statewide average.

I am proud to stand by the outstanding progress made at City College, and am confident that CCSF will surpass accreditation standards and keep its doors open for the tens of thousands of San Franciscans it serves every day. CCSF is 'Still Strong, Still Committed, Still City College.'

I look forward to your prompt and timely response. Please contact Patricia Ross on my staff at (202) 225-0100 with any questions.

best regards,



NANCY PELOSI  
Democratic Leader

Cc: The Honorable Edwin Lee, Mayor of San Francisco  
Brice Harris, Chancellor, California Community Colleges  
Dr. Robert Agrella, City College of San Francisco, Special Trustee  
Arthur Tyler, City College of San Francisco, Chancellor