**Accreditation policy changes – January 2010**

At their January meeting the ACCJC Commissioners changed some policy language in a way that I think is important to us.

**Meaning of Some Commission Actions:**
They changed the meaning of some commission actions, including the one we got to “Reaffirm accreditation with a progress report by a certain time”. The new language related to this action is more serious than the previous language describing this action.

Previously, “Reaffirm accreditation with a progress report” was the second in the list of commission actions and was defined as “based on the team’s assessment that some of its recommendations need more immediate attention”.

Now it is the fourth level of action and is defined as “recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and Commission Policies.

When our visiting team made their recommendation to the Commission, they were working under the old language. However, since the new language was approved at the same Commission meeting at which our action was made official, it’s possible that some may interpret it under the new language when we file our report next March.

**Definition of Distance Education:**
Definitions are provided that separate “distance education” from “correspondence education” with the major difference being that distance education “supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor”, while in correspondence education “Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student”. The definition provided in the ACCJC Newsletter for Spring 2010 is the same as that in the 2009 Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA)

The Commission has additional requirements that institutions have a process for verifying that the student who enrolls in a distance education course is the same student participating in the course and receiving credit for the course. The Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education notes that “This requirement will be met if the institution verifies the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the institutions discretion, such methods as secure log-in and password, proctored examinations, and/or new or other technologies and/or practices that are developed and effective in verifying each student’s identification.”