



Western Association of Schools and Colleges

July 2009

We are pleased to provide a report on the actions of the Commission at its June 17-19, 2009 meeting and an update on Commission activities. We know that this is a challenging time for many institutions and wish to acknowledge the need for institutions to deal with budget reductions, hiring freezes and many other consequences of our current recession. As described further below, the Commission is focused on supporting institutions through communications, workshops, seminars and other activities that will allow for the sharing of information and adaptive responses.

## WASC Educational Seminars 2009-10

In the past two years, over 1000 individuals representing 400 institutions have found WASC's educational seminars to be a great way to build human capital and maintain momentum for institutional effectiveness.

In the upcoming year, WASC will be offering seminars on:

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#### Student Learning and Assessment, Level I

Sept. 24-25, 2009, Southern California

Feb. 4-5, 2010, Northern California

#### Student Learning and Assessment, Level II

Oct. 22-24, 2009, Northern California

Jan. 28-30, 2010, Honolulu, Hawaii

#### Program Review Workshop

Feb. 25-26, 2010, Southern California

#### President-Trustee Leadership Retreat

Dec. 1 and 3, 2009, Northern and Southern California

## Recent Commission Actions

At its meeting on June 17-19, the Accrediting Commission took action on 27 institutions and two structural changes, and approved 17 substantive change applications.

For a copy of the [full list of actions](#), please see the "[President's Corner](#)" section of the commission website.

[See the WASC website for more details!](#)

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## Higher Education Opportunity Act

As required by law, before the Department of Education can adopt new regulations it needs to enter into negotiated rule making, where representatives of stakeholder groups "negotiate" with a Department representative. Five negotiating panels were created to follow up on the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), and I had the opportunity to serve as the primary negotiator representing regional accreditation on one of these panels. Unlike the failed negotiations of 2007, there were representatives from ACE, NAICU and major educational groups included, and the tone of these negotiations was far more civil and effective than in 2007. Sixteen issues were negotiated, some very intensely, and we were able to achieve consensus on all 16 (meaning that all 11 primary negotiators agreed to the language of the 16 regulations.)

The proposed regulations will go into effect July 1, 2010, after the Department of Education circulates them for comment later this summer. They should be published soon in the Federal Register, with an invitation for public comment. If you have any questions regarding them, please contact me at [rwolff@wascsenior.org](mailto:rwolff@wascsenior.org).

Several of the regulations will require the adoption of new policies by the Commission. Among other things, these new policies will address authentication of students enrolled in distance education programs, changes to the requirements for teach out agreements should an institution or an off-campus location close, and monitoring of institutions between visits. At its June meeting, the Commission authorized its executive committee to review and approve draft policy changes that will be circulated to the region for comment in the fall.

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## Changes to the WASC Constitution

The Higher Education Opportunity Act also requires WASC to make changes to the appeals process that is used when institutions wish to appeal an action to terminate accreditation or deny candidacy.

Under current WASC policy, institutions may seek a review of such an action by the Commission, but may not introduce new evidence in support of their argument, if such evidence was not available at the time that the Commission made its decision. If the institution is unsatisfied with the result of the Commission review, it can then appeal to a hearing panel that is comprised of representatives from the Schools, Community College and Senior College Commissions.

According to the new federal regulations, if an institution loses its accreditation because of financial difficulties, it will be provided one final opportunity to present additional financial information prior to the finalization of the appeals process, even if that information was unavailable at the time that the adverse action was taken. Additional changes were also made regarding the authority of the hearing panel. In response, all three accrediting commissions of WASC have approved changes to the appeals process in the WASC Constitution.

A redline version of the appeals process changes may be found on the WASC

website at:

[http://www.wascsenior.org/findit/files/forms/Constitution\\_Article\\_VI.pdf](http://www.wascsenior.org/findit/files/forms/Constitution_Article_VI.pdf)

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## California Legislative Update

AB48, a bill that would re-establish a regulatory agency for private higher education in California, has passed the Assembly and is currently working its way through the Senate. We have worked hard to maintain a complete exemption for all WASC-accredited institutions, and such a provision has been included in the Assembly bill. In fact, the exemption has been extended to include all regionally accredited institutions that operate in California, not only those accredited by WASC. We have not opposed this extension and believe that the proper focus of a new Bureau for Private and Postsecondary and Vocational Education should be on the many unaccredited schools operating in California, and on nationally accredited vocational and technical institutions. We have worked closely with AICCU and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of WASC in supporting this bill. At an earlier stage, a number of you communicated your support for the WASC exemption and these communications have had a positive effect. We will be monitoring the bill closely, since a number of amendments have been approved to it, but we remain hopeful that a bill will pass in this legislative session and will be signed by the Governor.

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## Responding to the Financial Crisis

The Commission discussed at its June meeting how it should be responding to the financial crisis throughout the region. At the time of the meeting, the budget had not been adopted in California, but it was clear that major reductions would be imposed on the University of California and California State University campuses. Similarly, the University of Hawaii was notified of major reductions in its system budget.

In discussions with members of the Commission and institutional representatives appearing at the Commission meeting, it became clear that the financial crisis is affecting institutions differently. Some are better prepared and are able to be more flexible than others.

The Commission requested that discussions be held with presidents of different institutions in the fall, once budgets have been set and fall enrollments are known, to learn how the financial crisis is affecting different institutions throughout the region. The Commission will discuss the financial situation at its November retreat and explore how the it should respond.

While there will be more formal opportunities to address these issues, we invite your thoughts and comments on them now. Please send them to me at [rwolff@wascsenior.org](mailto:rwolff@wascsenior.org).

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## Final 2009-10 Budget Approved

The Commission approved a final budget for 2009-10 that included a freeze

in dues and fees for the upcoming year. A copy of the [2009-10 budget](#) is available on the WASC website, [www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org).

The Commission also will strive to hold to a zero or very small increase in annual dues for 2010-11 in light of the challenging financial situation in the region.

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## Commission Transitions

WASC is pleased to welcome three new members to the commission this summer: **D. Merrill Ewert**, President of Fresno Pacific University; **Harold Hewitt**, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Chapman University; and **Julia Lopez**, Chief Executive officer of the College Access Foundation of California. They will replace retiring commission members **Mark Bookman**, Senior Vice President and Provost at American Jewish University; **Larry Gould**, Counsel at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, LLP; and **Louanne Kennedy**, Emeritus Provost and Vice President at California State University, Northridge. The commission expressed its sincerest thanks to the retiring commissioners for their many years of service to the region and looks forward to working with the newly elected commissioners in the coming years.

We are also pleased to announce that **Linda Johnsrud**, Vice President for Academic Planning at the University of Hawaii has agreed to serve as Vice Chair of the Commission for the 2009-10 academic year.

Profiles of all current commissioners may be viewed at: [Commission Profiles](#).

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## WASC Staff Transitions

We are pleased to announce that two new Associate Directors have joined the WASC staff this spring and summer.

**Diane Harvey** joined the staff in March, after serving as a WASC evaluator since 2001. She is Emeritus Vice President for International Affairs, Dean, and Professor of Philosophy at Menlo College in Atherton, CA. While at Menlo College, she also served as Dean of the International Program, Dean of the Professional Studies Program (degree completion), Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and President of the Faculty Senate. Diane was the Founding Chairperson of three academic departments/programs and of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Executive Committee (early Faculty Senate). She was appointed Distinguished Faculty Member and has won awards for teaching, scholarship, and administration. Diane has taught at Peking University and Guangdong Law and Business University and researched at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University. Diane holds Bachelor's Degrees in Philosophy and in Education from San Diego State University, and earned both a Master's Degree in International Policy Studies and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Stanford University. She replaces **Ingrid Walker**, who has accepted the position of Director of General Education at the University of Washington, Tacoma.

**Richard Osborn** joined WASC in July, after serving for eight years as President of Pacific Union College in the Napa Valley. As a child, he grew up in Lebanon and Uruguay. He has worked at every level of education including service as a teacher, principal, and superintendent at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels. As a regional and national education vice

president, he served as a board member/consultant for fifteen college/university boards conducting many board training sessions and presenting seminars including strategic planning. He has also served on several hospital boards. He has served in a leadership capacity in several state and national associations including recent service as Chair of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities. He has an undergraduate degree from Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, and has a M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Maryland, specializing in the history of colonial Virginia. He replaces **Michelle Behr**, who has accepted the position of Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at University of Northern Colorado.

In addition, **Sharyl McGrew**, our Accreditation Resources Manager, has recently assumed responsibility for Substantive Change. Please feel free to contact her at [smcgrew@wascsenior.org](mailto:smcgrew@wascsenior.org) with any questions that you might have about substantive or structural change applications or processes.

**Henry Hernandez**, the former Substantive Change Manager, has moved into the newly created position of Communication and Information Systems Manager at WASC.

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## WASC Online Community

In response to many requests for interactive forums and discussions about accreditation and issues affecting higher education in the western region, WASC has recently launched an online community, or "ning."  
(<http://wascsenior.ning.com/>)

The online community is dedicated to issues of interest to WASC's constituents. Any member of the community may start a forum or discussion, and membership is free. You can post questions to your peers about accreditation and related issues, access and share resources and best practices, and share suggestions and ideas with WASC staff and the Commission. Many of your colleagues have already posted videos and information on subjects ranging from "[Assessment Quickies](#)" to [Developing Curriculum Maps](#) to the [Bologna Process](#), and we encourage you to take a look.

We also welcome any questions or suggestions that you might have about the site. Please contact Henry Hernandez, Communication and Information Systems Manager, ([hhernandez@wascsenior.org](mailto:hhernandez@wascsenior.org)) with any comments that you might have.

WASC has also recently launched its own pages on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and we welcome you to join us there, as well.