Community college board ends agency's exclusive right to accredit state's community colleges

By Bay City News

The California Community College Board of Governors decided this week to open up competition for the accreditation of community colleges in California by removing language from their regulations that gave the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges a monopoly.

California Community Colleges Vice Chancellor for Communications Paul Feist said Thursday that the decision to change the regulation, which allowed ACCJC the exclusive right to accredit California's two-year community colleges, follows a recommendation by the Bureau of State Audits in April.

The change also comes just days after San Francisco Superior Court judge Curtis Karnow tentatively ruled in favor of a lawsuit filed by the San Francisco City Attorney's Office against the ACCJC in response to the commission's efforts to disaccredit City College of San Francisco.

Karnow ruled that the ACCJC carried out unlawful business practices and "is liable for
California Federation of Teachers president Joshua Pechthalt welcomed the California Community College Board of Governors' decision, which he said is a necessary prerequisite to eventually replacing the ACCJC.

"This move, following on the heels of the San Francisco Superior Court's finding last week that the rogue accreditor broke four laws in its irresponsible decision to disaccredit City College of San Francisco, places the agency on notice that its destructive actions have consequences," Pechthalt said in a statement released Thursday.

Pechthalt said the ACCJC "cannot be trusted, and does not deserve to hold that position any longer" and commended the Board of Governors' decision.

Feist said this change will allow the California Community College's chancellor to choose an accrediting commission recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Feist said accreditors, such as those that oversee four-year colleges or other geographic locations, could expand into this role in the future now that the regulation has changed.

He said the Bureau of State Audits recommended the regulation change in an April report. The change could increase the quality of commissions, by adding competition and flexibility.

Feist said, however, that because accreditation is granted on a seven-year cycle, it would take "at least a decade to move any colleges over to a new accreditor."