Program Review and Institutional Quality

Program Review, which is required by the Higher Education Act that was passed in 1965, amended several times, and just renewed in fall 2008, is intended to engage colleges in a careful evaluation of how effective their educational and student support programs are, and how well students are succeeding. Colleges must use information gleaned from such ongoing evaluation to make improvements to educational quality and student success.

Accreditation is higher education’s system of quality assurance through self-regulation. Higher education is one of the few professions that is privileged to be self-regulating. Associated with this privilege is a belief that higher education professionals will care about, and will best know what to do about, improving student outcomes. A professional interest in maximizing student success is fundamental to the profession of college educators. Individual faculty members are often dedicated to assessing the effectiveness of their own courses in order to improve student outcomes, but program review is designed to engage the broader educational program and the institution in focusing on student success.

Educational Programs refers to the sequence of courses leading to a degree or certificate, such as the “liberal arts/transfer program” or the “nursing program,” or the sequence of courses or learning activities leading to intellectual mastery, such as the Basic Skills course sequence leading to college readiness, the lifelong learning course sequence that enhances career and job skill set, etc.

Student Support Programs refers to non-instructional services, such as advising, counseling, learning resources, financial aid, tutoring, mentoring, etc., that facilitate student success and provide strategies for students to overcome the varied factors in life that may disrupt their education and reduce their success.

“The accreditation requirement that colleges review the quality of their programs and the student outcomes that result, and that colleges work to improve quality and student success, is the only acceptable response to the trust students and the public place in institutions that are accredited.”

Student Success means the students’ completion of a course of study (course sequence, a certificate, a degree) and movement to the progression of steps fundamental to their goals: job placement, passing the licensure exam, transfer to a four-year institution, or just success in life. Smaller steps on the path to program completion can also be important measures for some programs -- successful course completion, movement to the next course in a sequence, completion of general education requirements -- as attention to these measures gives an institution information about where students are successful (or unsuccessful) at finishing programs. These interim indicators also provide measures of student success for the many students who don’t seek to complete degrees and certificates. The Commission’s terminology for these measures of success is “student achievement.”

In addition to the idea of “completion” of the course, course sequence, certificate or degree, student success is also measured by what students have learned - can they demonstrate knowledge by applying it, pass a standardized examination, perform the tasks a job requires, manage their time effectively, communicate clearly and effectively, etc. The Commission’s terminology for this form of student success is “student learning outcomes.”
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Program Review, continued from page 1

The 2002 Standards of Accreditation ask colleges to identify intended student learning outcomes at the course, program and degree/certificate levels and to assess the degree to which students are learning.

Analyses of learning assessment data are meant to be added to program review so that institutions can examine and work to improve student achievement and student learning - both vital components of student success.

Students entrust their lives and their futures to the colleges they attend. They enter higher education expecting to learn, to obtain knowledge and skills that will improve their lives, and to earn the credentials that will allow them to move forward, personally, economically, and socially. The accreditation requirement that colleges review the quality of their programs and the student outcomes that result, and that colleges work to improve quality and student success, is the only acceptable response to the trust students and the public place in institutions that are accredited.

Pressure on institutions to improve student success will not subside. As evident from many speeches and comments on education in the United States, President Obama’s agenda for higher education is to achieve many more college graduates by 2020 and to increase student “success.” Staff appointed to the Department of Education, including Secretary Arne Duncan and Undersecretary Martha Kanter, refer to the agenda of the Obama administration as emphasizing student success and institutional accountability for student outcomes. Furthermore, the national higher education community is focusing more on measuring student outcomes and using the results to improve institutional effectiveness and student success.

The ACCJC requires its member institutions to develop and maintain the practice of regular and careful self-assessment and improvement (where needed) of educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Program review is central to institutional quality.

The Higher Education Act (HEOA)

The Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) was passed in September 2008, and negotiated rulemaking to set the new regulations that will implement the Act concluded in May 2009. The regulations will be published by November 2009 and will become effective in July 2010. Areas that will directly affect institutions and accreditors include the following:

- distance education
- standards for achievement
- direct assessment
- teach-out plans
- monitoring and evaluation
- transfer of credit
- summary of Commission actions
- evaluation team members
- direct assessment
- due process
- substantive change
- public announcement

Check the President’s Desk on the ACCJC website, at www.accjc.org, for an article detailing these issues.
Deficiencies Leading to Sanction

In March 2009, the ACCJC analyzed institutional deficiencies that caused the Commission to impose a sanction of Warning, Probation and Show Cause. Twenty-two ACCJC member institutions were on a sanction as of January 2009. The five most frequently cited deficiencies that caused sanctions are described at right.

The 2009 analysis produced results very similar to an ACCJC study conducted in 2004.

The institutions on sanction are different from one year to the next as some have made improvements and were removed from sanction while others have been found deficient and were placed on sanction.

Of the institutions on sanction in January 2009,

- 16 colleges did not have adequate program review of instructional programs or services at least at the Proficiency Level;
- 21 failed to have integrated planning using assessment results at least at the Proficiency Level on the Commission’s Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness;
- 9 suffered from financial management or stability issues;
- 10 had governing boards that failed to adhere to appropriate roles;
- 13 had ineffective internal governance processes; and
- 16 had miscellaneous other deficiencies

It is noteworthy that 15 colleges on sanction have deficiencies in both program review and planning using assessment results (both required by the 1994 Standards); 14 have three or more areas of deficiencies; and 12 were instructed to address some of the same issues at the time of the last comprehensive review (and several were instructed to do so at the time of the comprehensive review before that).

The Commission awards accreditation or reaffirmation (i.e., renewal) of accreditation when an institution that is reviewed meets or exceeds the Standards of Accreditation. Sanctions are imposed when an institution fails to meet all standards, eligibility requirements and policies:

- **Issue Warning**: An institution has pursued a course deviating from requirements to an extent that gives concern to the Commission;
- **Impose Probation**: An institution deviates significantly from requirements or fails to respond to conditions imposed on it by the Commission;
- **Show Cause**: An institution is in substantial noncompliance with requirements, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission.

In making a decision on the accreditation of an institution, the Commission also takes into account the recommendation of the peer evaluation team (comprehensive evaluations only), the institutional history of compliance with the Standards, the relative importance of the standards that are at issue, the particular conditions at a college that are or have historically been affecting the institution’s quality and compliance, and the consistency of the proposed action with other actions the Commission has taken on other institutions.

Success After Sanction

Most institutions find a sanction from the Commission to be an uncomfortable but useful stimulus to make needed changes and improve quality. An analysis of institutions placed on sanction by the ACCJC indicates that the average time an institution spends on an ACCJC sanction is 14.65 months, although the range of time varies from six months to more than four years. Institutions report to the Commission that while an accreditation sanction is distressing to institutional morale and self image, the sanction also stimulates greater focus of institutional energies that are necessary to resolve deficiencies, to put in place better institutional practices, and to improve quality. Some of the ACCJC-sanctioned institutions have developed exemplary practices and are asked to present their work at Commission-sponsored workshops and conferences.
Stopping the Use of Fraudulent Degrees

Fraudulent degrees, fake credential certification, and fake accreditation continue to be problems world-wide. The ACCJC advised its member institutions about the problem in an article in the Summer 2008 issue of Accreditation Notes. Now there is a new article that provides critical information on this issue. “Toward Effective Practice: Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education,” was published in June 2009 by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

It is available from the ACCJC or on the CHEA web site at: http://www.chea.org/pdf/degree_mills_effective_practice.pdf

President Obama’s Community College Plan

Recently, President Obama unveiled a $12 billion community college plan to “boost community colleges and propel the United States toward his goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020” and followed this with a speech at Macomb Community College on July 15th with more details. In his plan, the President calls for $9 billion to address the challenge of students dropping out of college, $2.5 billion as seed money to generate $10 billion in renovations and construction of new facilities, and another $500 million to develop online courses and improve student learning.

How do these proposed policies and funding affect ACCJC member institutions?

Much of the work, to respond to these opportunities, takes place at the campus and community level. These may require Substantive Change proposals to the Commission to assure that financial aid continues to flow to students in new programs and/or at new sites. If new online courses are developed and result in the student being able to earn more than 50 percent of degree or certificate requirements, that may also call for a Substantive Change proposal.

The Commission resources include:

- Substantive Change Policy and ACCJC Substantive Change Manual;
- Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically Mediated Learning and ACCJC Distance Learning Manual;
- Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations, Institutions with Related Entities; and,
- Interregional Policies on the Accreditation of Institutions Operating Across Regions.

Integrity in Distance Education

The Higher Education Opportunities Act has added new requirements that institutions be able to ensure that the student enrolled in a distance education course is the same student that participates and does the work that is submitted for grading. Congress and the Department of Education stopped short of requiring specific means of assuring the integrity of student work and grading in distance education, and have made clear that until new technologies become widely available, institutional use of a user identification and password would suffice.

Nevertheless, institutions are urged to consider carefully how to protect the integrity of distance education courses. Two organizations that support institutional e-learning offer much useful information: the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) and the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET). With the University of Texas Telecampus (UTTC) and ITC, WCET has published a combined document, “Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education, Version 2.0, June 2009,” which is available at the Cooperative’s web site, www.wcet.edu, under the “academic integrity” button. You may also use the following URL to go directly to the article: http://wiche.edu/attachment_library/Student_Authentication/BestPractices.pdf
Training on Assessment for Faculty

The two postsecondary commissions of WASC have been cosponsoring assessment workshops devoted toward faculty for a number of years. Many community colleges have found the workshops valuable. This spring, workshops were offered in Northern and Southern California and Hawai‘i. The workshops were a blend of presentations from institutions and interactive exercises for institutional teams that attended.

Assessment Level I - 135 community college staff took part in the beginning level workshops. Presentations were made by institutions that have begun assessment on their campuses. Topics included the following:

- assessing general education,
- assessing the major,
- assessing the co-curriculum,
- analyzing student learning,
- improving curriculum and pedagogy, and
- developing and applying rubrics.

At the conclusion of the program, teams returned home with campus implementation plans.

Assessment Level II - 68 community college staff attended the second-level workshop. Presentations were made by institutions with broad assessment systems in place. Topics included the following:

- adapting the campus infrastructure to support the culture of evidence,
- successful strategies for engaging faculty and other campus professionals in assessment,
- a specific assessment study, including description of data collection, data analysis, and the impact of the study,
- incorporating a culture of evidence into program reviews, and
- assuring the quality of campus assessment.

Assessment Workshops to Continue in Fall 2009 and Spring 2010

The two postsecondary commissions will offer four workshops throughout the region this fall and next spring.

Watch the ACCJC website (www.accjc.org) for announcements about these events and registration information.

Assessment Level I - September 24 - 25, 2009 Southern California
Assessment Level II - October 22 - 24, 2009 Northern California
Assessment Level II - January 28 - 30, 2010 Hawai‘i
Assessment Level I - February 4 - 5, 2010 Northern California

2009 Strengthening Student Success Conference

ACCJC is co-sponsoring the 2009 Strengthening Student Success Conference presented by the RP Group. The Conference will explore using evidence to improve practice, as well as the integration of curriculum with basic skills, student services, career technical education and college institutional effectiveness structures. The goals are to:

- Enable practitioners to engage in analysis and problem-solving grounded in the implementation of the student learning assessment cycle;
- Disseminate examples of effective student success efforts, how assessment findings can be used to continually refine pedagogy and practice to enhance student success, and how a culture of inquiry can be nurtured;
- Catalyze cross-conversations among communities of practice on building institutional effectiveness for student learning;
- Provide new information about key issues that shape student learning, student success, and assessment efforts.

In keeping with the lean budget times, the Conference has kept registration and hotel accommodations as low as possible. The Leadership Intensives include an SLO Coordinators Workshop, a Basic Skills Initiative Workshop, a Faculty Inquiry Workshop and a Data Analysis Workshop.

For further information, see the Research and Planning Group conference web site at: http://www.rpgroup.org/events/sss09.html

Strengthening Student Success Conference
Learning from Assessment
October 7-9, 2009, San Francisco Airport Marriott
Representatives from many ACCJC member colleges attended the April 15-18 Academic Resource Conference in Hollywood hosted by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU). The theme was “Showcasing Solutions, Producing Results.” Nine ACCJC colleges made 13 presentations on topics including assessment, increasing institutional effectiveness, bringing about change, program review, student engagement, faculty development, and K-graduate school partnerships. The chart below shows the broad attendance from our region. In addition, 11 presidents and chancellors attended the new CEO Seminar and Reception hosted by ACCJC.

Next year’s joint ACCJC/ACSCU ARC conference will be held April 21-23, 2010 in Long Beach. The theme will be Sustainability: A Vision for Higher Education. Watch the ACCJC website (www.accjc.org) for announcements about this event and registration information.

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>59</strong></td>
</tr>
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¹. Barstow, Butte, Chaffey, Fresno City, Imperial Valley, Long Beach City, Marin, MiraCosta, Mt. San Antonio, Saddleback, Santa Rosa, Sequoias, Taft, West Hills Lemoore, and Victor Valley.
². Honolulu and Maui.

Accreditation Essentials: A Workshop for Newly-Appointed Presidents

Commission President Dr. Barbara Beno and Vice President Dr. Steve Maradian presented a workshop for newly-appointed presidents at the Academic Resource Conference in Hollywood on April 15. Eleven new presidents attended the workshop and had the opportunity to discuss student success, institutional assessment and quality improvement, and the essentials of accreditation. Participants also discussed the pivotal role presidents and district/system chief executives play in organizational leadership to meet Standards and sustain quality. Presidents brought with them questions and concerns reflective of colleges across the ACCJC membership.

The group discussed the difficult challenges colleges face, including reduced resources, the pressure to transfer more students to senior colleges, and greater demands for work force development programs while providing basic skills instruction fundamental to student success.

The Commission will continue to offer this workshop annually at its Academic Resource Conference.
At its meeting, June 9-11, 2009, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, took the following actions on institutional accreditation:

**Reaffirmed Accreditation**
- Butte College
- Berkeley City College
- College of the Marshall Islands
- Laney College
- Santa Rosa Junior College

**Placed on Warning**
- College of Alameda
- College of the Redwoods
- East Los Angeles College
- Feather River College
- Merritt College
- Palomar College
- Pasadena City College

**Placed on Probation**
- Los Angeles City College
- Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

**Continued on Warning**
- Copper Mountain College
- El Camino College
- Lassen College
- Mission College

**Removed from Show Cause and Reaffirmed Accreditation**
- Northern Marianas College

**Removed from Show Cause and Placed on Probation**
- Solano Community College

**Removed from Warning and Reaffirmed Accreditation**
- Ohlone College

**Removed from Probation and Reaffirmed Accreditation**
- San Joaquin Delta College

**Removed from Warning**
- Cerritos College
- MiraCosta College
- Orange Coast College
- Shasta College

**Removed from Probation**
- Los Angeles Southwest College

The Commission also took action to accept or reject the following institutional reports:

**Accepted Follow-Up Report**
- Coastline Community College
- College of Marin
- College of Micronesia-FSM
- College of the Desert
- Golden West College
- Hartnell College
- Los Angeles Harbor College
- Los Angeles Mission College
- Los Angeles Pierce College
- Los Angeles Valley College
- Mendocino College
- West Hills Lemoore College
- West Valley College
- Windward Community College
- Woodland Community College

**Accepted Focused Midterm Report**
- Barstow Community College
- City College of San Francisco
- Heald College

**Accepted Midterm Report**
- Defense Language Institute
- Guam Community College
- Hawai`i Tokai International College
- Lake Tahoe Community College
- Los Angeles Harbor College
- Los Angeles Southwest College
- West Los Angeles College
At its meeting, June 9-11, 2009, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, took the following policy actions:

**POLICIES ADOPTED AFTER SECOND READING:**

- Policy on Governing Boards for Military Institutions

**STANDARD EDIT APPROVED FOR FIRST READING:**

- Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services - The Commission uses “student learning outcomes” in all documents; however, this Standard contained an error and used the word “objectives.” The change aligns this Standard with other Commission documents.

**POLICIES APPROVED FOR FIRST READING:**

- Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions (Adopted January 1977; Revised January 1979, January 1991, June 1998; Edited July 2002; Revised June 2003; Edited August 2004, January 2006, August 2006; Edited November 2008, January 2009) - The current policy allows the Commission to defer action only if the reaffirmation of accreditation was before the Commission. It has been recommended that the policy be expanded to allow the Commission to defer action on institutions at the time of a Follow-Up Report. The proposed change adds new language to provide for this action in policy.

- Policy on Distance Learning (Adopted June 2001; Edited August 2004; Revised June 2005) - The Higher Education Act, as amended last year, requires colleges and universities offering distance learning to have procedures in place to authenticate that the student who enrolls in the distance education course is the person doing the work and receiving the grade. Language has been added to the existing policy to comply with that regulation as well as delete “electronically mediated learning” in the title.

- Policy on Public Disclosure (Adopted June 1999; Edited June 2002; Revised January 2003; Edited June 2005; Revised January 2006, Edited October 2007) - The Commission no longer has a printed directory, and this policy has not been updated since October 2007. As part of the update, many editorial changes were made.

- Policy on the Transfer of Credit (Adopted January 2005) - The Higher Education Act, as amended last year, requires colleges and universities to have policies in place with regard to the transfer and award of credit from non-accredited institutions or from foreign institutions. Such policies must be publicly disclosed. Language has been added to the existing policy to comply with that regulation.

- Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process (Adopted January 2005; Edited August 2007 and October 2007) - The Higher Education Act, as amended last year, requires additional language clarifying due process and the rights of institutions to submit materials to the Commission.

- Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions (Adopted June 1980; Revised June 1996; Edited October 1997; Revised January 1999, January 2001, January 2006) - The Higher Education Act, as amended last year, requires additional language clarifying due process and the rights of institutions from the Commission’s responsibilities and requirements. It is a companion policy to the Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process.
Future Comprehensive Visits

Under current U.S. Department of Education regulations, ACCJC must provide opportunity for third-party comment regarding the institutional qualifications for accreditation. The institutions noted below are scheduled to undergo comprehensive visits in the fall of 2009, the spring of 2010, and the fall of 2010 and review by the Commission at its January 2010, June 2010, and January 2011 meetings. Third-party comment on these institutions should be made to the ACCJC President, Dr. Barbara A. Beno, at 10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949. For consideration, such comment must be made in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled Commission meeting.

FALL 2009
(for January 2010 Commission Review)

American River College
Chabot College
Citrus College
Cosumnes River College
Folsom Lake College
Las Positas College
Moreno Valley Campus *
Napa Valley College
National Polytechnic College of Science
Norco Campus *
Sacramento City College
Santa Barbara City College
Southwestern College
Taft College

* Initial Accreditation

FALL 2010
(for January 2011 Commission Review)

Antelope Valley College
College of Marin
Evergreen Valley College
Irvine Valley College
Mount San Antonio College
Oxnard College
Saddleback College
San Diego City College
San Diego Mesa College
San Diego Miramar College
San Jose City College
Ventura College

SPRING 2010
(for June 2010 Commission Review)

Allan Hancock College
Chaffey College
College of Micronesia - FSM
College of the Siskiyous
Glendale Community College
MiraCosta College
Monterey Peninsula College
Palau Community College
Santa Monica College

Substantive Change: 2009-2010

With new federally funded initiatives on the horizon there will be opportunities for member institutions to develop new programs, new partnerships with business and industry, new locations or expansion of distance learning and courses/programs. These may require Substantive Change proposals to the Commission for quality assurance and to maintain Title IV financial aid funds for students of the institution. A Substantive Change proposal will also be required if a student is able to earn more than 50 percent of a program, degree, or certificate, including general education requirements, through a mode of distance or a mode of electronic delivery.

Dates of scheduled meetings for the ACCJC Committee on Substantive Change for the 2009-2010 year are September 17, October 16 and November 20, 2009; February 19, March 12, April 16, May 7 and May 21, 2010.

Commission resources include:

- Substantive Change Policy;
- Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically Mediated Learning;
- Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations, Institutions with Related Entities; and,
- Interregional Policies on the Accreditation of Institutions Operating Across Regions.

In addition, the ACCJC Substantive Change Manual is designed to assist institutions as they consider substantive changes and to guide the institution in developing proposals demonstrating evidence that the institution will continue to meet Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The ACCJC Distance Learning Manual provides additional assistance with substantive changes related to distance learning and electronically mediated instruction. ACCJC Staff assigned to facilitate and assist with the substantive change process is Dr. Susan B. Clifford, sclifford@accjc.org. For a complete list of substantive change actions ratified at the June, 2009 Commission meeting, please visit our web site at www.accjc.org.
Changes in Commissioners

NEW COMMISSIONERS

Dr. Frank P. Gornick - Dr. Gornick was selected to serve as an administrative member of the Commission. He is the Chancellor of the West Hills Community College District, a position he has held since 2001. He joined the district in 1994 as Superintendent/President. Prior to joining West Hills, Dr. Gornick served for nine years as the Dean of Student Services at Bakersfield College. Dr. Gornick received an Associate of Arts degree from Coalinga College, a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Science in Counseling from CSU, Sacramento; and his Ph.D. in Curriculum from St. Louis University. Dr. Gornick has chaired three accreditation evaluation teams, and served on several others. He also has the distinction of successfully overseeing the process that led to the opening of the second campus in his district, West Hills College Lemoore. Dr. Gornick’s term began July 1, 2009.

Ms. Virginia May - Ms. May was selected to serve as a faculty member of the Commission. She is a Mathematics and Statistics professor at Sacramento City College. Ms. May has a Bachelors and Masters degree in Pure Mathematics from CSU Sacramento. She has taught Mathematics and Statistics (including distance education courses) at Sacramento City College since 1994. She has served as Chair of the Distance Education Subcommittee, and currently serves as Faculty Co-Chair of the Curriculum Committee and as a member of the Academic Senate. Ms. May’s term began on July 1, 2009.

COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO A SECOND TERM

Ms. Eileen Tejada - Ms. Tejada, a faculty member of the Commission from Napa Valley College, was reappointed for a second term.

COMMISSIONERS’ TERMS EXPIRED

Ms. Tess Hansen - Ms. Hansen, a faculty member of the Commission from Foothill College, served two terms on the Commission beginning in 2003. Ms. Hansen has served on five comprehensive evaluation teams and on the Commission’s Evaluation and Planning Committee, Eligibility Committee, and the Commission’s Sub-committee on General Education.

Dr. E. Jan Kehoe - Dr. Kehoe, was an administrative member of the Commission since her term began in 2001. Dr. Kehoe was formerly the President of Long Beach City College and the President and CEO of the Community College Leadership and Development Initiative (CCLDI/CCLDIF). Dr. Kehoe served as chair of numerous comprehensive evaluation and follow-up teams while on the Commission and on the Commission’s Policy Committee (as Chair in 2003 and 2004), Budget and Personnel Committee, Eligibility Committee, Substantive Change Committee (as Chair in 2004 and 2005), and the WASC Board of Directors. She also served as Commission Vice Chair from July 2004 to June 2006 and Commission Chair from July 2006 to June 2008.