

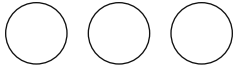
News // Education

# CCSF faculty union files complaint



**Nanette Asimov**

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City College of San Francisco students, faculty and friends attended a rally outside the San Francisco City Hall, protesting budget cuts and accreditation problems Thursday, March 14, 2013, in San Francisco Calif.

Lance Iversen/The Chronicle

The commission that could revoke City College of San Francisco's accreditation this summer should rescind its threat and reform its entire agenda to be more fair to all colleges under scrutiny, says a 298-page complaint from the California Federation of Teachers.

The union representing community college faculty across California filed the formal complaint on Monday with the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges in Novato and with the U.S. Department of Education, which oversees the commission.

Joined by the faculty union at City College, the state group accuses the commission of violating state and federal laws and of engaging in conflicts of interest they say includes the fact that the husband of Barbara Beno, the commission's president, was part of a team evaluating the college in March 2012.

The thick complaint also accuses the commission of violating federal law by applying standards that are not widely accepted and of maintaining a level of secrecy - such as failing to share documents or permit the college to appeal its harsh sanction - in violation of "California common law fair procedure."

The commission is one of the nation's six regional accrediting agencies overseen by the federal government but which are nevertheless private businesses.

Faculty members have pointed fingers at California's regional accrediting commission since last July, when it placed City College on its most severe

sanction, "show cause," and gave the college eight months to show why it should remain accredited. Since then, the college has worked hard to address 14 major deficiencies, mostly in governance and finance, that have led to layoffs and bitter labor negotiations.

The accrediting commission will issue its verdict in late June or early July. If accreditation is revoked, City College would be forced to close.

In their complaint, the faculty unions say the "show cause" sanction was illegal in the first place.

"We want the sanction removed, and (the commission's) behavior opened up to the light of day," said Joshua Pechthalt, president of the California Federation of Teachers.

Beno said she would not comment on the complaint until the commission has formally reviewed it, according to procedure.

The Department of Education has not yet received the complaint, said Sara Gast, a spokeswoman. But she said that when the complaint arrives, the department would investigate its allegations.

As for City College administrators, who might be expected to support a withdrawal of their sanction, that's not the case, said Larry Kamer, their spokesman. In fact, Kamer was livid and called the complaint a distraction from the business of trying to get the college back on its feet.

"The leaders of the (faculty union) must have a death wish for City College," he said. "We are trying to secure accreditation from the very people they are vilifying and roasting in this complaint.

"The bigger point is that while the City College community has been trying to change the college, the leaders of the (union) keep trying to change the subject."

The faculty, meanwhile, say that sort of kowtowing to the commission illustrates their point that the once-collegial accreditation process has become far too intimidating under Beno, its president for about a decade.

Among their claims of conflicts is that Beno's husband, a Laney College instructor named Peter Crabtree, participated in last year's evaluation of City College. A frequent volunteer evaluator of colleges undergoing accreditation reviews, Crabtree was among a couple dozen who looked at City College.

Beno declined to comment.

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Written By

**Nanette Asimov**

Reach Nanette on

Nanette covers California's public universities - the University of California and California State University - as well as community colleges and private universities. She's written about sexual misconduct at UC and Stanford, the precarious state of accreditation at City College of San Francisco, and what happens when the UC Berkeley student government discovers a gay rights opponent in its midst. She has exposed a private art college where students rack up massive levels of debt (one student's topped \$400k), and covered audits peering into UC finances, education lawsuits and countless student protests.

But writing about higher education also means getting a look at the brainy creations of students and faculty: Robotic suits that help paralyzed people walk. Online collections of folk songs going back hundreds of years. And innovations touching on everything from virtual reality to baseball.

Nanette is also covering the COVID-19 pandemic and served as health editor during the first six months of the crisis, which quickly ended her brief tenure as interim investigations editor.

Previously, Nanette covered K-12 education. Her stories led to changes in charter school laws, prompted a ban on Scientology in California public schools, and exposed cheating and censorship in testing.

A past president of the Society of Professional Journalists' Northern California chapter, Nanette has a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University and a B.A. in sociology from Queens College. She speaks English and Spanish.

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