



**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 27, 2025**

**Department of Consumer Affairs
Hearing Room
1625 North Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834**

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance

Kansen Chu
Leigh Ferrin
Joseph Holt
Tess Kraiker
Kevin Powers
Robyn Smith
Tracy Tambascia
Michael Zimmerman

Committee Members Absent

Robert Boykin
Melanie Delgado
Senator Angelique Ashby

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (Bureau) and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Staff in Attendance

Deborah Cochrane, Bureau Chief
Linh Nguyen, DCA Legal Counsel
Elizabeth Elias, Deputy Bureau Chief
Manila Vongmany, Deputy Bureau Chief
Yan Cao, Office of Student Assistance and Relief Chief
Daniel Rangel, Bureau Enforcement Chief
Ebony Santee, Bureau Education Administrator
Yvette Johnson, Bureau Administration Chief
Erik Casida, Bureau Compliance Chief
Renee Walters, Bureau Discipline Manager
Brian Vest, Office of Student Assistance and Relief Manager
Parker Strohmeier, Bureau Legislative/Regulation Specialist

Agenda #1 - Welcome, Introductions, and Establishment of a Quorum

Leigh Ferrin, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order.

Agenda #2 - Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

No public comment.

Agenda #3 - Review and Approval of May 28, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Michael Zimmerman moved to approve the May 28, 2025, meeting minutes; Robyn Smith seconded the motion.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Vote

(Tess Kraiker: Aye; Kansen Chu: Aye; Joseph Holt: Aye; Tracy Tambascia: Aye; Michael Zimmerman: Aye; Robyn Smith: Aye; Leigh Ferrin: Aye)

The motion passed.

Agenda #4 - Remarks by Representative of the Department of Consumer Affairs

Judie Bucciarelli, DCA Board and Bureau Relations, provided an update on the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #5 – Bureau Operations Update and Discussion

Update on the Bureau's IT System Project

Jason Piccione, DCA Chief Information Officer, provided an update on the Bureau's IT system project. He reported that, as of July 2025, data from the legacy IT system has been converted to the Connect platform. He added that following the migration of 25 years' worth of data into

Connect, the project is now in a stabilization phase. He noted that this phase consists of improvements and fixes to the system. He added that maintenance to the system will continue indefinitely.

Mr. Holt asked about the mechanisms in place for gathering stakeholder feedback from system end-users. Mr. Piccione responded that, from an internal operational perspective, the stabilization phase contains an automatic and implicit feedback loop, as operational challenges are addressed on a weekly basis. He continued that once more features become available to external users, there will be efforts to gather targeted feedback from institution populations.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Complaint and Investigation Report

Daniel Rangel, Bureau Enforcement Chief for Complaints and Investigations, reported on the Complaint and Investigation Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(f).

Robyn Smith asked if students who file complaints against closed schools are referred to the Office of Student Assistance and Relief (OSAR). Mr. Rangel responded that students in those cases are referred to OSAR.

Tess Kraiker suggested adding fiscal year totals to the Complaints Received and Complaints Closed charts in the meeting materials.

Mr. Holt asked about the increase in non-jurisdictional complaints received. Mr. Rangel indicated that he reviewed the increase and found no trend in the rise.

Ms. Smith requested that the next meeting include additional information explaining what qualifies as insufficient evidence.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Licensing Report

Manila Vongmany, Bureau Deputy Chief, reported on the Licensing Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(b).

Mr. Holt asked if Connect makes it possible to better analyze licensing application timeframes. He asked if the new IT system tracks when a licensing application is pending with an institution or with the Bureau. Ms. Cochrane responded that staff are still analyzing licensing application data manually but expect to begin using data from Connect in the future.

Mr. Holt asked if institutions may request to meet with Bureau staff for assistance in completing a licensing application. Ms. Vongmany replied that institutions can request assistance and noted that Bureau staff have met with institutions to help them complete their licensing applications.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Quality of Education Report

Ebony Santee, Bureau Education Administrator, reported on the Quality of Education Unit (QEU). She outlined Attachment 5(c).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Compliance and Annual Report Update

Erik Casida, Bureau Compliance Chief, reported on the Annual Report Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(d).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Discipline Report

Renee Walters, Bureau Discipline Manager, reported on the Discipline Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(e).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Office of Student Assistance and Relief (OSAR) Report

Ms. Cochrane introduced Yan Cao as the new Chief of OSAR. Ms. Cao provided an introduction of herself.

Brian Vest, OSAR Manager, reported on the OSAR Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(g).

Ms. Smith requested that future meetings include a report on the number of school closures and the number of students affected. She also asked if the closure of the federal Education Department (ED) San Francisco regional office has impacted the Bureau and if additional resources are needed. Ms. Cao stated that staff will work on a report indicating school closures and the number of students impacted. She added that the reduction of staff at ED has impacted the work at the Bureau. Ms. Cochrane responded that the loss of the San Francisco regional office has significantly impacted multiple units and operations within the Bureau. She noted that, even with additional resources, the Bureau could not compensate for the loss. Ms. Smith expressed concern about the timeliness of the ED establishing official closed school dates, as that is contingent upon students filing for student loan discharges.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF) Report

Yvette Johnson, Bureau Administration Chief, provided a report on STRF. She covered Attachment 5(h).

Mr. Holt requested that future meetings include a breakdown of how long STRF claim applications remain at each stage of the process.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda Item #6 - Status Updates and Discussion on Regulatory Proposals

Parker Strohmeyer, Bureau Legislative/Regulation Specialist, provided a status update on Bureau regulatory matters. He outlined the Bureau Regulations Tracker in the meeting materials.

6a. Proposed Text for Approval by Means of Accreditation (ABMA) Applications (California Education Code (CEC) section 94890; Title 5, California Code of Regulations (5 CCR) sections 71390 and 71480)

Ms. Vongmany provided some background on approval by means of accreditation applications. She explained that letters provided by accreditors on behalf of institutions do not always include the full information the Bureau needs. She added that this process requires staff to repeatedly exchange information with institutions and accreditors to obtain the necessary details, which can delay approval times. She stated that, to address this issue, the Bureau is proposing regulatory changes. She concluded that the proposed regulatory changes will ensure the Bureau has the information needed to uphold state laws and will make the process more efficient.

Mr. Strohmeyer provided an outline of the proposed changes to 5 CCR sections 71390 and 71480. He asked the members for any comments or feedback.

Mr. Zimmerman suggested adding ownership percentage thresholds to avoid placing an excessive burden on institutions with many shareholders who each own only a small percentage. He also questioned the need to differentiate between diplomas and certificates. He noted that the two terms are often used interchangeably and that his institution and accreditor instead simply differentiate degree and non-degree programs. Mr. Strohmeyer agreed that the terms are used interchangeably and stated that both were included in the proposed language because some institutions and accreditors use only one term or the other.

Mr. Holt asked which accreditors the Bureau worked with when drafting the proposed language. Mr. Strohmeyer stated that the Bureau communicated with the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC), Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), National Accrediting Commission of Career Arts and Sciences (NACCAS), and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Mr. Holt expressed appreciation for the effort Bureau staff made to collaborate with accreditors in this process.

Mr. Holt suggested that the Bureau create a template that institutions can provide to accreditors requesting all the required information. Ms. Ferrin added that it could also be helpful to create other templates that include fields for required information that must be provided.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #7 – Future Agenda Items

Mr. Holt requested that the Bureau provide an organizational chart at a future meeting.

Public Comment

One member of the public provided a comment.

Agenda #8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.