

# ACCORD EVALUATION 2003 / 2004: SHORT REPORT

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## Executive Summary

The report describes the process and findings of an evaluation of ACCORD carried out between October, 2003 and March, 2004 by members of the UCLA Outreach Evaluation Team. The evaluation aimed at:

- a) supporting ACCORD in documenting its achievements;
- b) revisiting its programming priorities in comparison to its mission;
- c) coming to a better understanding of how and why certain achievements were or were not obtained, in order to give formative feedback on how to adjust program priorities.

Evaluation methods included interviews, participant observation, questionnaires and document analysis. The evaluators can summarize the following findings:

1. What are ACCORD's achievements to date, particularly with regard to supporting the research – policy linkage and fellows' career development?

- Through its annual conferences and its two events in Sacramento, ACCORD has been effectively fostering the building of relationships between its researchers and the policy arena. The conferences are very much appreciated by both junior researchers and attending legislative staff as an opportunity to informally interact with and learn from one another. Fellows frequently mentioned ACCORD's policy brief exercise as a way to effectively share their research findings to inform policy making. ACCORD members have also been at the forefront of activism on educational equity issues (press releases, open letters, testimonies, presentations, publications) (see pp. 6-12 for more details).
- In terms of career development benefits, the conferences not only enable researchers with similar interests and mindsets to network, they are also effective in terms of skill building (learning about the policy process, presenting, receiving substantive feedback on research), mentoring (career choices, job opportunities), and motivation. Likewise, the "Translation Workshop" was a great success in meeting a pronounced need in the academic community for information and skill building regarding the effective communication of research findings for use in policy making. Fellows' careers benefited not only through their participation in ACCORD events and activities, but also due to the funding they received (second most frequently mentioned ACCORD contribution) because it frees up time to concentrate on the relevant research they undertake (see pp. 12-17 for more details).
- A table summarizes ACCORD's achievements (see Appendix A).

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## 2. How do these achievements correspond with ACCORD's mission?

- ACCORD plays three main roles in promoting the delivery of high-quality schooling, as well as supporting college preparation, access, and retention, for *all* students: information catalyst and clearinghouse, capacity builder, and bridging the research – policy gap.
- A wide range of activities relate to the latter two roles, and the evaluation (see findings above) showed the effectiveness of ACCORD in this regard. As for the first role of information catalyst and clearinghouse, we can list some examples (ACCORD publication of research synthesis report, presentation material on the Indicators project), but the emphasis of ACCORD during its first three years of existence seems to have been on filling the other two roles (see pp. 18-19 for more details)

## 3. Why / how have these achievements been obtained?

- The linkages between program inputs/activities, outputs/indicators, and outcomes can best be illustrated in a program logic model (see p. 20; Appendix C). The evaluators offer a draft of such a model to the evaluation user group for discussion and refinement. In the future the model can be used to evaluate (specific parts of) the program based on systematically collected monitoring information.
- The last section of the report outlines such a monitoring system, how it can be updated, and how the information it produces can best feed into continuous program improvement (see pp. 21-23 for more details).

At the end of the report the reader will find a number of recommendations (pp. 23-25). The evaluators offer these comments with the intention to spark discussions among the primary users of the evaluation. The evaluators will be available to facilitate such a discussion so that the users can arrive at a final set of future actions derived from the evaluation.

### Program Logic Model

A paper version was discussed with the ACCORD user group during a working meeting. The following is the amended version:

Inputs / Activities	Outputs / Indicators	Outcomes
Funding / disbursed  ACCORD events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual conferences</li> <li>▪ Sacramento trips</li> <li>▪ Writing workshops</li> </ul> Policy briefs	# fellows supported each year # research projects supported each year  # ACCORD members attended # policy makers attended list of information dissemination products  # completed # disseminated (where, how)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Findings of completed dissertations and research projects disseminated</li> <li>▪ Use and impact of these findings on research and policy making</li> </ul> Fellows' career development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skill building</li> <li>▪ Networking</li> <li>▪ Mentoring</li> <li>▪ Motivation</li> </ul> Research / policy linkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Networking</li> <li>▪ Sharing findings as input to inform decision making</li> <li>▪ Feedback / better translation of research</li> <li>▪ Legislature's knowledge of ACCORD and UC impacts on commitment to sustain programs</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fellows' skill building</li> <li>▪ Impact of findings on decision making</li> <li>▪ Visibility of ACCORD / UC</li> </ul>
High-profile ACCORD members (Executive Board and fellows)	CVs	Fellows' career benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Positions obtained</li> </ul>

Mentoring	# contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publications / presentations (venue, audience)</li> <li>▪ Usefulness of contacts in terms of career advice / support</li> <li>▪ Substantive feedback on research projects</li> </ul>
Publications with ACCORD support	# ACCORD supported publications # information requests met through “customized reports” # hits on ACCORD Internet information resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearinghouse function (dissem., access, use)</li> <li>▪ Impacts on knowledge and attitudes of legislature and public, in turn impacting policy making and public awareness and will</li> <li>▪ Impact on other researchers in terms of their ways to communicate findings</li> </ul>
Activism / mobilizing / informing	# information requests met through “customized reports” # hits on ACCORD Internet information resources # press releases # legislative testimonies # emails containing mobilizing messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearinghouse function (dissem., access, use)</li> <li>▪ Impacts on knowledge and attitudes of audiences (legislature, researchers, and public), in turn impacting policy making and academic and non-academic awareness and will</li> <li>▪ Modeling effect on junior researchers</li> <li>▪ Coordination of efforts</li> </ul>
ACCORD-generated tools	# references to “College Opportunity Ratio” # requested maps / other information material # hits on ACCORD Indicators website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearinghouse function (dissem., access, use)</li> <li>▪ Impacts on knowledge and attitudes of main audiences (legislature and public), in turn impacting policy making &amp; public awareness</li> <li>▪ Impact on other researchers in terms of their ways to communicate findings / data</li> </ul>