

# ACCREDITATION REFERENCE HANDBOOK

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission  
for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

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*Edition*

ACCJC/WASC  
10 Commercial Blvd.  
Suite 204  
Novato, CA 94949

Phone: 415-506-0234  
FAX: 415-506-0238  
E-Mail: [accjc@accjc.org](mailto:accjc@accjc.org)  
Website: [www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)



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# Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

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## Introduction to the Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

Eligible institutions offering one or more programs of two academic years leading to the Associate Degree, located in the states of Hawai'i and California, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may apply to the Commission for candidacy.

Prior to making a formal application, an institution wishing to become a Candidate for Accreditation must begin by assessing itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility, stated below. The institution should also review the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, as they will provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the eligibility criteria. The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self study so that only institutions which meet the basic criteria for eligibility may proceed.

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The results of a candidacy, or initial accreditation visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation. Clearly, the history of the applicant institution will have great bearing on the Commission's decision.

## Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

(Adopted June 1995; Revised January 1996, January 2004; Edited June 2011)

In order to *achieve* eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the *Eligibility Requirements* is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every Institutional Self Evaluation process and Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review.

Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their *Institutional Self Evaluation Report* information demonstrating that they continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements.

### 1. Authority

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

### 2. Mission

The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning.

### 3. Governing Board

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

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#### **4. Chief Executive Officer**

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief executive office nor the institutional chief executive officer may serve as the chair of the governing board. The institution informs the Commission immediately when there is a change in the institutional chief executive officer.

#### **5. Administrative Capacity**

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

#### **6. Operational Status**

The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

#### **7. Degrees**

A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

#### **8. Educational Programs**

The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

#### **9. Academic Credit**

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

#### **10. Student Learning and Achievement**

The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

#### **11. General Education**

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be



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consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See the Accreditation Standards, II.A.3, for areas of study for general education.

## **12. Academic Freedom**

The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist.

## **13. Faculty**

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

## **14. Student Services**

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

## **15. Admissions**

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

## **16. Information and Learning Resources**

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

## **17. Financial Resources**

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

## **18. Financial Accountability**

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit with its eligibility application a copy of the budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the institution, for its two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide [Audits of Colleges and Universities](#), published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the eligibility application process.

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## 19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

## 20. Public Information

The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

### General Information

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

### Requirements

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

### Major Policies Affecting Students

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

### Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found

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## 21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

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# Accreditation Standards

## Accreditation Standards

*(Adopted June 2002)*

### Introduction: Shaping the Dialogue

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution. Although the Standards are presented in four parts, they work together to facilitate this dialogue on the institution's effectiveness and on ways in which it may improve. The self study provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

### The Standards

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning (Standard I). Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV).

A college-wide dialogue that integrates the elements of the Standards provides the complete view of the institution that is needed to verify integrity and to promote quality and improvement.

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## Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

### A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.
2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.
3. Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.
4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.

### B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

1. The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.
2. The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.
3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.
4. The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources,

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and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness. The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies.

5. The institution assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes by systematically reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, all parts of the cycle, including institutional and other research efforts.
6. The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.

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## Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

### A. Instructional Programs

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.
  - b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.
2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.<sup>1,2</sup>
  - a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.
  - b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general



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- and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.
- c. High-quality instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning characterize all programs.
  - d. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.<sup>1</sup>
  - e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.
  - f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.
  - g. If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.
  - h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.<sup>4</sup>
  - i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.
3. The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course.

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:

- a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.
  - b. A capability to be a productive individual and life-long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.
  - c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.
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4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.
  5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.
  6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies.<sup>4</sup> The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning outcomes consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.
    - a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.<sup>4</sup>
    - b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.<sup>3</sup>
    - c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public, and its personnel through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.<sup>7</sup>
  7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or world views. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.
    - a. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.
    - b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.
    - c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.
  8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with Standards and applicable Commission policies.<sup>2</sup>
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## B. Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.<sup>1,2</sup>
2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

### a. General Information

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty 6 Names of Governing Board Members

### b. Requirements

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

### c. Major Policies Affecting Students

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

### d. Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found

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3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.
    - a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.<sup>1</sup>
    - b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.
    - c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.
    - d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.
    - e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.
    - f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.
  4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

### **C. Library and Learning Support Services**

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.

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- b. The institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency. The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. The institution provides effective maintenance and security for its library and other learning support services.
  - d. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible, and utilized. The performance of these services is evaluated on a regular basis. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the reliability of all services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement.
2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

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## Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

### A. Human Resources

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.<sup>4</sup>
  - a. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.
  - b. Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.
  - c. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.
2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.

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3. The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.
    - a. The institution establishes and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.
    - b. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.
  4. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.
    - a. The institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel.
    - b. The institution regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission.
    - c. The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, staff and students.
  5. The institution provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on identified teaching and learning needs.
    - a. The institution plans professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel.
    - b. With the assistance of the participants, the institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
  6. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

## **B. Physical Resources**

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services, regardless of location or means of delivery.
    - a. The institution plans, builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services.
    - b. The institution assures that physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.
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2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.
    - a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.
    - b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

### **C. Technology Resources**

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.
  - a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.
  - b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.
  - c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.
  - d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.
2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.

### **D. Financial Resources**

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution relies upon its mission and goals as the foundation for financial planning.
  - a. Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.



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- b. Institutional planning reflects realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.
  - c. When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies and plans for payment of liabilities and future obligations.
  - d. The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.
2. To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of its financial resources, the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making.
    - a. Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.
    - b. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution.
    - c. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and realistic plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.
    - d. The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.
    - e. All financial resources, including those from auxiliary activities, fundraising efforts, and grants are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
    - f. Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.<sup>5</sup>
    - g. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management processes, and the results of the evaluation are used to improve financial management systems.
  3. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

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## Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

### A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.
2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.
  - a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.
  - b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.
3. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.
4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission Standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.
5. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The

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institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

## **B. Board and Administrative Organization**

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.

1. The institution has a governing board that is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or the district/system.
  - a. The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.
  - b. The governing board establishes policies consistent with the mission statement to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services and the resources necessary to support them.
  - c. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity.
  - d. The institution or the governing board publishes the board bylaws and policies specifying the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures.
  - e. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. The board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.
  - f. The governing board has a program for board development and new member orientation. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.
  - g. The governing board's self-evaluation processes for assessing board performance are clearly defined, implemented, and published in its policies or bylaws.
  - h. The governing board has a code of ethics that includes a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.
  - i. The governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.
  - j. The governing board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/ system chief administrator (most often known as the chancellor) in a multi-college district/system or the college chief administrator (most often known as the president) in the case of a single college. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively.

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In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.

2. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.
  - a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.
  - b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:
    - Establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities.
    - Ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions.
    - Ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes.
    - Establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.
  - c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.
  - d. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.
  - e. The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.
3. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system provides primary leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. It establishes clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system and acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board.<sup>6</sup>
  - a. The district/system clearly delineates and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice.
  - b. The district/system provides effective services that support the colleges in their missions and functions.
  - c. The district/system provides fair distribution of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations of the colleges.
  - d. The district/system effectively controls its expenditures.
  - e. The chancellor gives full responsibility and authority to the presidents of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without his/her interference and holds them accountable for the operation of the colleges.

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- f. The district/system acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board. The district/system and the colleges use effective methods of communication, and they exchange information in a timely manner.
  - g. The district/system regularly evaluates district/system role delineation and governance and decision-making structures and processes to assure their integrity and effectiveness in assisting the colleges in meeting educational goals. The district/system widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

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## List of Policies Referenced in the Standards

1. Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education
2. Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals
3. Policy on Closing an Institution
4. Policy on Transfer of Credit; Policy on Award of Credit
5. Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations
6. Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/ Multi-Unit Districts or Systems
7. Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

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# Commission Policies

## Policy on Award of Credit

*(Adopted June 2004)*

### Background

While many institutions rely on the calculation of in-class time to determine the amount of credit awarded for a particular class, Accreditation Standards require that institutions award credit based on student achievement of the course's stated student learning outcomes. The Standards also require that the units awarded be consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms in higher education. (Std. IIA.2.h.) In addition, institutions are increasingly providing more varied educational experiences as a means for students to earn college credits such as distance education, independent study, group project work, study abroad, work-experience, transfer of credits from other institutions, and credit by examination. Institutional policy and practice in award of credit must assure the integrity of credit awarded to all educational experiences.

### Policy

Institutions must maintain policies and procedures that assure award of credit for educational experiences is based on achievement of the course's stated student learning outcomes, comparability of that learning to other institutions in higher education, applicability and appropriateness of that learning experience for the program or degree offered, and generally accepted norms in higher education.

### Policy Elements

In the determinations about the award of credit, institutions have a responsibility to insure that the courses or other educational experiences that are awarded or assigned credit meet the following criteria:

- The courses or other educational experiences have identified student learning outcomes that students must meet at a defined level of performance to receive credit.
- The courses or other educational experiences meet standards of quality as defined by the institution.
- The credits awarded for a course or educational experience are comparable in quantity and nature to credits awarded to other courses at the institution.
- The credits are appropriate for higher education or for pre-collegiate education, and are defined as such.
- The credits are appropriate and applicable to the institution's own educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other defined educational outcomes.

Institutions have a responsibility to assure that work offered for credit is of sufficient quality to produce the student learning outcomes necessary to meet standards of quality in higher



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education of transfer institutions, and of employers, as well as the program and degree requirements of the institution itself.

Institutions have a responsibility to be consistent in award of credit, particularly in the award of credit to learning gained through alternative methods of delivery or by other providers of training and education. Consistency is especially important in assuring a comparable level of student competence and learning for different activities assigned comparable credit.

Institutions have a responsibility to maintain the integrity of award of credit by clearly stating requirements in policies, publishing those policies in documents used by faculty and students, and assuring that the policies are adhered to. The public has a significant interest in higher education student learning outcomes. Public funding and private donations and support are based on expectations that award of credit is directly related to student learning and student competencies.

## Statement on the Benefits of Accreditation

*(Adopted June 200; Revised January 2011)*

### Background

Accreditation is the primary means by which colleges and universities in the United States assure and improve quality. Both accrediting bodies and the institutions they accredit must use the highest standards of professionalism to ensure that accreditation provides value to the institutions themselves, the students, the public, the government, and other institutions of higher education. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is statutorily recognized by the U.S. Department of Education<sup>1</sup> as one of seven (7) regional accrediting commissions.

### Statement

The Commission shall ensure that its accrediting actions sustain and enhance quality and maintain the values of higher education among member institutions. The Commission serves the public interest by providing information on its actions to institutions, the public, and student.

### Statement Elements

The Commission serves to assure a threshold level of quality. When the Commission accredits an institution, it certifies that the institution has an appropriate mission, has the resources necessary to accomplish its mission, has the data and utilizes those data appropriately to demonstrate that it is accomplishing its mission, and gives reasons to believe that it will continue to accomplish its mission.

The Commission functions to reinforce the following core values of higher education: institutional quality and autonomy, academic freedom, commitment to degree education, commitment to general education, and collegial governance. The Commission reinforces the value of institutional autonomy through its emphasis on a mission-based approach to quality review. The Commission values and supports academic freedom for all constituencies. The Commission provides a firm foundation for the value of the academic or career/technical degree and general education by requiring that institutions both grant degrees and offer general education as a component of every degree. The Commission's accreditation process is a collegial *process* of peer review.

The Commission and its accreditation provide to students an assurance that the educational activities of the accredited institution have been found to meet Accreditation Standards and are satisfactory. This accredited status provides students the following benefits: easier transfer of earned academic credits when those credits are appropriate to the receiving institution; the opportunity to access federal financial aid; and greater acceptance of the students' credits, certificates and degrees by employers, licensing agencies, and other institutions of higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Authority is contained in [34 CFR Part 602, Subpart B]

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The Commission provides to its member institutions an incentive for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional improvement through, the institutional self evaluation of educational quality and institutional effectiveness, the first stage of the accreditation process. The Commission provides to member institutions valuable information and recommendations for improvement through the external evaluation process, and through the Commission's action letters, monitoring and follow up evaluations of institutions that may occur. The Commission provides to its member institutions a guard against external encroachment harmful to institutional quality, an enhanced reputation of the accredited institution because of its voluntary participation in peer review, and access to federal programs and private support that aid postsecondary education.

The Commission provides to the public an assurance that through external evaluation the institution conforms to established standards of good practice in higher education, and that its credits, certificates and degrees can be trusted. The Commission provides assurance that an institution of higher education is committed to improving the quality of its educational offerings and an assurance that the institution is operating within legal and fiscal practices of good conduct appropriate to an institution of higher education.

## Policy on Closing an Institution

*(Adopted June 2004; Revised January 2011)*

### Background

A decision to close an educational institution is a serious one that requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency, as fully and as early as possible, about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance.

Additionally, most institutions of higher education are entities established under the provisions of state or national law, and as such may have legal responsibilities (holding title to real property, for example) that may necessitate the continued existence of the organization after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. In most cases an organization's existence and educational activities will not be terminated simultaneously. This policy makes only incidental reference to such organization responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative that a governing board considering closing an institution under its care should be guided not only by the following policy and by the state or appropriate authorizing education authorities, but also by advice of legal counsel.

Before closing, the governing board should consider carefully such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation. As much as possible, the determination to close an institution should involve a consultative process, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the governing board.

The decision to close requires specific plans for appropriate provisions for students, faculty and staff and for the disposition of the institution's assets. Failure to plan adequately will increase the inevitable distress to students, faculty, and staff.

### Policy

This policy complies with § 602.3 Section 496(c)(3) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as Amended.

Before closing an institution, a governing board must fully inform all affected constituents of the potential closure as early as possible, and provide for student completion of programs and the securing of student records. Institutions must develop a Teach-Out Plan and submit it to the Commission for action when the institution, which is closing, provides one hundred percent of instruction in at least one degree program.

Institutions which develop a Teach-Out Plan that involves another institution at which the students will complete their program shall only be approved by the Commission if (1) the agreement is between institutions that are accredited or pre-accredited by a federally recognized accrediting agency, (2) is consistent with applicable standards and regulations, and (3) provides for the equitable treatment of students.

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An institution considering closure must address the following elements, each of which is discussed in more detail below:

- Student completion;
- Disposition of academic records and financial aid transcripts;
- Provisions for faculty and staff;
- Disposition of assets;
- Obligations to creditors;
- Coordination with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges;
- Key governing board obligations.

## Policy Elements

### A. Student Completion

Institutions considering closing must provide for the academic needs of students who have not completed their degrees and educational programs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records must be submitted to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) for approval. Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements must be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and there are available funds that can legally be used to support students while completing degrees and educational programs at other institutions, appropriate agreements must be negotiated. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students must be fully informed. Institutions considering closing must use as their guide the equitable treatment of students by providing for the educational needs of students who have not completed their degrees and educational programs.

When a student has completed 75% of an academic degree and educational program in the closing institution and chooses to continue at another institution, arrangements shall be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree and educational program elsewhere, but to receive the degree and educational program from the closed institution. The receiving institution must provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is closing. Such arrangements should also include provision for continuation of the institution's accreditation by the Commission for this purpose only. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal organization for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangements must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent. The institution that is closing must demonstrate that it shall remain stable, carry out its mission, meet all obligations to existing students, and demonstrate that it can provide students access to the programs and services without

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requiring them to move or travel substantial distances. The institution must provide students information about additional charges and costs, if any.

#### **B. Disposition of Academic Records and Financial Aid Transcripts**

All academic records, financial aid information, and other records must be prepared for permanent filing, including electronic filing. Arrangements must be made with another college or university or with the state archives to preserve the records. Notification must be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the accessibility to those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student's record should also be forwarded to the individual student. The Commission must be notified of the location where student permanent records will be stored.

#### **C. Provisions for Faculty and Staff**

The institution must arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution's work up to and after the closing date. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuinely good faith efforts to assist faculty and staff in finding alternative employment should be made. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.

#### **D. Disposition of Assets**

Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after the basic needs of current students, faculty, and staff are provided. Institutional assets must be used in ways that would honor the intentions of the original providers. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, including those to the Accrediting Commission, the governing board shall investigate what alternatives and protection are available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should consider the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

In the case of a not-for-profit institution, state or national laws regarding the disposition of funds and institutional assets must be meticulously followed. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, the library, special collections, art, or other funds must be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution must discuss with the donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds arrangements to accommodate their wishes.

#### **E. Obligations to Creditors**

The institution must establish a clear understanding with its creditors and all other agencies involved with its activities to assure that their claims and interests will be properly processed. Insofar as possible, the institution shall assure that its final arrangements will not be subject to later legal proceedings which might jeopardize the records or status of its students or faculty. All concerned federal, national and state agencies need to be apprised of the institution's situation, and any obligations relating to estate or governmental funds need to be cleared with the appropriate agencies.

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Every effort shall be made to develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways of achieving this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may help to identify and prioritize possible claims and to set priorities:

1. Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final term, not only in the academic division, but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar's office, counseling, and other essential support services. Staff must be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.
2. Reasonable notice must be given to all employees, explaining the possibility of early termination of contracts and that the reasons for retaining some personnel longer than others are based on satisfying the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.
3. Every effort shall be made to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

#### **F. Coordination with the ACCJC**

The ACCJC and specialized accrediting bodies must be consulted and kept fully apprised of developments as the plan to close an institution progresses. Arrangements must be completed with the ACCJC in advance of closure in order to assure that a legally authorized and accredited institution awards degrees. A final report on the closing must be submitted to the ACCJC for its records. The ACCJC must also be notified of the location where student records will be stored.

#### **G. Key Governing Board Obligations**

The governing board must take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow students to graduate from the institution by completing their degree requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the governing board must take the legal action necessary to permit awarding degrees after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, a formal vote to award a degree is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a degree at another institution and to receive the degree from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified along with a deadline for completion. Also the governing board must identify the person or persons authorized to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied. Arrangements must be completed with the Commission in advance in order to assure that a legally authorized and accredited institution awards degrees.

## 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, November 2008, January 2009; Revised January 2010, January 2011)*

### Policy

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional evidence of student learning and achievement, the institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Report, and documents from previous evaluations to determine whether the institution complies with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission will apply, as it deems appropriate, one of the actions listed in this policy.

In the case that a previously accredited institution cannot demonstrate that it meets the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, the Commission will impose a sanction as defined below. If the institution cannot document that it has come into compliance within a maximum of two years after receiving the initial sanction, the Commission will take adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended the Commission defines adverse actions for accredited institutions as termination of accreditation; denial, or termination for institutions seeking candidacy; and denial for institutions seeking initial accreditation.

### Policy Elements

#### I. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Candidacy or extension of Candidacy

**Grant candidacy.** Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status granted to institutions that have successfully undergone eligibility review as well as a comprehensive evaluation process using the Accreditation Standards, including preparation of an institutional Self Evaluation Report and a review by an evaluation team. Candidacy is granted when the institution demonstrates the ability to meet all the Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, or to fully meet them within the two-year candidate period. Candidacy indicates that an institution has achieved initial association with the Commission and is progressing toward accreditation. During candidacy the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable and complete compliance with Accreditation Standards. This includes an institutional self evaluation report in preparation for initial accreditation. Candidate status may be extended for two years, for a total period not to exceed four years.

**Defer a decision on candidacy.** A Commission decision on candidacy is postponed pending receipt of specified information, as identified by the Commission, from the institution.



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**Extend candidacy.** Candidacy is extended in response to a college request when the Commission determines that a candidate institution has made significant progress toward meeting the Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and anticipates that the institution will meet all Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies if granted additional time to do so. Candidacy can be extended once for a two-year period. Four years in candidate status is the maximum allowable.

**Deny candidacy.** Candidacy is denied when the Commission determines that the institution has demonstrated that it does not meet all of the Eligibility Requirements, and does not meet a significant portion of the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, and therefore cannot be expected to meet all Accreditation Standards and Commission policies within a two-year period. The institution may reapply for candidacy after two years by submitting an Institutional Self Evaluation Report. Denial of candidacy is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

**Termination of candidacy.** Candidacy is terminated when the Commission determines that an institution has not maintained its eligibility for candidacy or has failed to explain or correct deficiencies of which it has been given notice. Termination is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

## **II. Actions on Institutions which are Applicants for Initial Accreditation**

**Grant initial accreditation.** Initial accreditation may be granted after a comprehensive institutional evaluation. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle. The institution must be fully evaluated again within a maximum of six years from the date of the Commission action granting initial accreditation.

**Grant initial accreditation and request a Follow-Up Report and/or visit.** The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Follow-Up Report. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

**Grant initial accreditation and request a Follow-Up Report with a visit.** The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. Based upon the comprehensive institutional evaluation, the Commission has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The institution is also

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required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

**Defer a decision on Initial Accreditation.** A Commission decision on initial accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified information, as identified by the Commission from the institution.

**Extend candidacy.** The Commission may extend candidacy in lieu of granting initial accreditation when the institution has not met the conditions for initial accreditation and has had candidacy. Candidacy can only be extended for a maximum of two years.

**Deny Initial Accreditation.** The Commission denies initial accreditation when an applicant institution no longer meets or fails to meet Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, or Eligibility Requirements within the maximum period allowed for a college to remain in candidacy. A denial is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. If initial accreditation is not granted, the institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least two years.

### **III. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

#### **Actions that Reaffirm Accreditation**

**Reaffirm accreditation.** The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

**Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Follow-Up Report.** The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Follow-Up Report. The Commission will specify the issues to be addressed and the due date of the report. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

**Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Follow-Up Report with a visit.** The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The Commission will identify the issues to be addressed in the report, the due date of the report to be submitted, and specifics of the visit to be made. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The

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institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

**Defer a decision on reaffirmation of accreditation.** A Commission decision on accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct deficiencies and report to the Commission within six months or less. The response from the institution may be followed by a visit addressed primarily to the reasons for the decision. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of deferment.

#### IV. Sanctions

Institutions are advised the U.S. Department of Education requires recognized accrediting bodies to terminate accreditation when an institution found out of compliance with Accreditation Standards fails to come into compliance within a two-year period. Consequently, the Commission will take action to terminate accreditation if deficiencies are not resolved within this period. Under extraordinary circumstances, the institution may be granted additional time when the Commission determines good cause for extension exists.

- A. **Issue Warning.** When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission, it may issue a warning to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve these deficiencies. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If warning is issued as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of warning. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period.
- B. **Impose Probation.** When an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, but not to such an extent as to warrant a Show Cause order or the termination of accreditation, or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning, the institution may be placed on probation. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies. During the probation period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If probation is imposed as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of probation. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period.
- C. **Order Show Cause.** When the Commission finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission, the Commission will require the institution to Show

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Cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period by demonstrating that it has corrected the deficiencies noted by the Commission and is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or Commission policies. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies. If the loss of accreditation will likely cause an institution to close, then during the Show Cause period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission's "Policy on Closing an Institution." While under a Show Cause order, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If Show Cause is ordered as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the Show Cause order. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the Show Cause order.

## V. Actions that Terminate Accreditation

**Terminate Accreditation.** If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, or has taken an action that has placed it significantly out of compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, its accreditation may be terminated. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The accredited status of the institution continues pending completion of any review and appeal process the institution may request. Otherwise, the institution's accreditation ends on the date when the time period permitting such a request expires. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire accreditation process.

## 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, January 2011)*

### Policy

The Commission makes the commitment to follow good practices in its relations with the institutions it accredits.

### Policy Elements

The Commission will fulfill its commitment by adhering to the following practices:

1. Make an initial visit to, or evaluation of, an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution.
2. Revisit an institution only on request by the chief executive officer, or if a visit is initiated by the Commission, after due notice to the institution.
3. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission.
4. Appraise institutions in the light of their own stated purposes so long as these are within the general frame of reference of higher education and consistent with the Standards of the Commission.
5. Use the institution's self evaluation report, the team report, and relevant qualitative and quantitative information in institutional evaluation.
6. Interpret Standards for accreditation in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.
7. Encourage sound educational innovation and assist and stimulate improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.
8. Publish at least twice annually in the Commission newsletter the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluation.
9. Accept relevant third-party comment on the institutions scheduled for evaluation. Such comment must be submitted in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled Commission consideration. The Commission will notify the institution when a third-party report is received by sending a copy of the report to the institution.

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10. Establish reporting systems for annual, midterm, and self evaluation reports which inform the Commission regarding student loan default rates and the standing of the institution with respect to appropriate state agencies, institutional or specialized accrediting agencies, and the institution's compliance with Title IV.
  11. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with Accreditation Standards why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action.
  12. Limit oversight required by federal statute and regulations to issues expressly required by that mandate.
  13. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic program to the extent feasible.
  14. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest.
  15. Arrange consultation during the comprehensive evaluation visit with administration, staff, students, and trustees, and include a publicized opportunity for an open meeting during the visit.
  16. Address performance with regard to student achievement in reviews of institutional effectiveness. Advise team chairs that the team report should make clear those Standards with which the institution does not comply and those areas needing improvement.
  17. Provide to the institution a detailed written report on its review assessing the institution's or program's compliance with the Commission's Standards, including areas needing improvement, and the institution's performance with respect to student achievement and student learning.
  18. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self study and respect the confidentiality of the institutional self evaluation report and evaluation team report. The Commission has the responsibility to require that team members keep confidential all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the team visit and after the Commission acts.
  19. Encourage discussion and use on campus of major team recommendations.
  20. Provide institutions due process<sup>1</sup> concerning accrediting decisions made by the Commission: Institutions are provided an opportunity to respond in writing to draft team reports in order to correct errors of fact; to respond in writing (no less than 15 days in advance of the Commission meeting) to final team reports on issues of substance and to any Accreditation Standard deficiencies noted in the report; and to appear before the Commission when reports are considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Complies with §§ 602.18; 602.23 and 602.25 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as Amended.

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- a. The Commission will notify the institution in writing, through an action letter, as soon as reasonably possible after Commission decisions are made and will include in its action letter the reasons for actions taken.
  - b. If the Commission's action lists any deficiency, which was not noted in the Team Report, before making any decision that includes a sanction, denying or terminating accreditation, or candidacy, the Commission, through its President, will afford the institution additional time to respond in writing to the perceived deficiency before finalizing its action at the next Commission meeting.
  - c. The institution may request a review by the Commission on certain sanctions, as described in the Accreditation Reference Handbook, Policies, Review of Commission Actions, and may request a further appeal hearing, as described in the WASC Constitution if the nature of the action warrants an appeal.
21. Provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others of a non-confidential nature.
  22. Refrain from conditioning candidacy or accreditation upon payment of fees for purposes other than annual fees and evaluation costs.

## Policy on Complaints Against the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

*(Adopted January 1999; Edited August 2007)*

Complaints against the Commission are limited to complaints regarding the agency's Standards, criteria, procedures, or actions of staff or any other Commission representative. In order to be considered a formal complaint against the Commission, a complaint must involve issues broader than a concern about a specific institutional action or a specific evaluation team.

The complaint must be written, and must state clearly the nature of the complaint, and it must be signed. The President, on behalf of the Commission, responds to each complaint made against the Commission within 30 days of receipt of the complaint (if more time than this is required to complete an investigation, the complainant is notified within the initial 30 days); reports the nature and disposition of any complaints to the Chair of the Commission; and compiles annually a list, available to the public on request, which summarizes the nature and disposition of any such complaints. Upon advice of counsel, the Commission retains the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved in the complaint.

If a complaint filed against the Commission under the provisions of this section is not resolved by the President, the Commission chair shall designate one or more persons to review the handling of the complaint. The Commission shall review the report of the designated reviewer(s) and shall notify the complainant and the President of its response.



## Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations

*(Adopted June 2003)*

No postsecondary educational institution accredited by a regional institutional accrediting commission can lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with organizations not so accredited unless it demonstrates adherence to the following principles:

1. The primary purpose of offering such a course or program is educational. (Although the primary purpose of the offering must be educational, what ancillary purposes also provide the foundation for the program or course such as auxiliary services, anticipated income, and public relations?)
2. Any course offered must be consistent with the institution's educational purpose and objectives as they were at the time of the last evaluation. If the institution alters its purpose and objectives, the regional commission must be notified and the policy on substantive change applied. (How does the institution define the specific relationship between the primary and ancillary purposes and the contracted service and how does it demonstrate its capability to attain these purposes?)
3. Courses to be offered and the value and level of their credit must be determined in accordance with established institutional procedures, and under the usual mechanisms of review. (What evidence exists that established institutional procedures have been followed?)
4. Courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution, which exercises ultimate and continuing responsibility for the performance of these functions as reflected in the contract, with provisions to assure that conduct of the courses meets the standards of its regular programs as disclosed fully in the institution's publications, especially as these pertain to:
  - a. Recruitment and counseling of students;
  - b. Admission of students to courses and/or to the sponsoring institution where credit programs are pursued;
  - c. Instruction in the courses;
  - d. Evaluation of student progress;
  - e. Record keeping;
  - f. Tuition and/or fees charged, receipt and disbursement of funds, and refund policy;
  - g. Appointment and validation of credentials of faculty teaching the course;
  - h. Nature and location of courses; and
  - i. Instructional resources, such as the library.

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Additional data needed would include course outlines, syllabi, copies of exams, records of students, and evidence of equivalencies with established programs.

In establishing contractual arrangements with non-regionally accredited organizations, institutions are expected to utilize the following guidelines. The not-for-profit institution should establish that its tax-exempt status, as governed by state or federal regulations, will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

### The Contract

1. Should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institution and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.
2. Should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place.
3. Should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such performance responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provision for review and approval of work performed in each functional area by the contractor.
4. Should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding:
  - a. Indirect costs
  - b. Approval of salaries
  - c. Equipment
  - d. Subcontracts and travel
  - e. Property ownership and accountability
  - f. Inventions and patents
  - g. Publications and copyrights
  - h. Accounting records and audits
  - i. Security
  - j. Termination costs
  - k. Tuition refund
  - l. Student records
  - m. Faculty facilities
  - n. Safety regulations
  - o. Insurance coverage

### Enrollment Agreement

1. The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.
2. The institution should determine that each applicant is fully informed as to the nature of the obligation being entered into and the applicant's responsibilities and rights under the enrollment agreement before the applicant signs it.

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3. No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.

## Tuition Policies

1. Rates
  - a. The total tuition for any specific given course should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.
  - b. Tuition charges in courses should be *bona fide*, effective on specific dates, and applicable to all who enroll thereafter or are presently in school, provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.
  - c. All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be revealed to the prospective student before enrollment.
  - d. The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses is reasonable in the light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.
2. Refunds and Cancellations
  - a. The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.
  - b. The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.
3. Collection Practices
  - a. Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound ethical business practices.
  - b. If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.

## Student Recruitment

1. Advertising and Promotional Literature
  - a. All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.
  - b. All advertising and promotional literature used should clearly indicate that education, and not employment, is being offered.
  - c. All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called "blind" advertisements are considered misleading and unethical.

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## 2. Field Agents

- a. An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons or firms soliciting students), and therefore should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.
- b. It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the areas in which it operates or solicits students, and in particular to see that each of its field representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state or other entity.
- c. If field representatives are authorized to prepare and/or run advertising or to use promotional materials, the institution should accept full responsibility for the materials used and should approve any such in advance of their use.
- d. When field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.
- e. No field representative should use any title, such as "counselor," "advisor," or "registrar," that tends to indicate that his duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.
- f. No field agent should violate orally any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional material.

## Policy on Credit for Prior Experiential Learning in Undergraduate Programs

*(Adopted June 1980; Revised June 1990)*

It is the position of the Commission that the academy has a significant role beyond that of certifying what a student has learned elsewhere. It is within the academy that a student earns academic degrees.

Credit for prior experiential learning is offered only under the conditions enumerated below. This policy is not designed to apply to such practices as CLEP, advanced placement, or ACE evaluated military credit. Questions about this policy should be referred to Commission staff.

In developing and publishing its guidelines and procedures, it is suggested that institutions follow the principles of good practice in assessing experiential learning represented by the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL)\* and the American Council on Education.\*\*

1. Before credit for prior experiential learning becomes part of the student's permanent record, the student completes, at the credit-granting institution, a sufficient number of units to establish evidence of a satisfactory learning pattern.
2. Portfolio-based credit for prior experiential learning is awarded for no more than 30 semester units, or the equivalent, toward the Associate Degree. Credit is awarded only for documented learning which ties the prior experience to the theories and data of the relevant academic field.
3. Credit is awarded only in areas which fall within the regular curricular offerings of the institution and are part of the instructional program the student completes.
4. Institutions using documentation and interviews in lieu of examinations, demonstrate that the documentation provides academic assurances of equivalency to credit earned by traditional means.
5. No assurances are made in advance regarding the number of credits to be awarded.

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\*Willingham, Warren W. "Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning." CAEL, American City Building, Suite 40-3, Columbia, MD 21044, 1977.

\*\*American Council on Education. "Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults." ACE, Publications Department A, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036, 1990.

## Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education

*(Adopted June 2001, Edited August 2004, Revised June 2005, January 2010, June 2011)*

### Background

Recognizing that most accredited institutions are making use of the growing range of modalities for delivery of instructional and educational programs and services, including various electronic means, the Commission has adopted a policy based on principles of good practice to help ensure that distance learning is characterized by the same expectations for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

This policy reflects the federal regulatory requirements regarding distance education and correspondence education.

### Definition of Distance Education

Distance Education means [34 CFR §602.3]:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

- (1) the internet;
- (2) one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- (3) audioconferencing; or
- (4) video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3).

### Definition of Correspondence Education

Correspondence education means [34 CFR §602.3]:

- (1) education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.
- (2) interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.
- (3) correspondence courses are typically self-paced.
- (4) correspondence education is not distance education.

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## Policy

Commission policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by accredited institutions must have equivalent quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, regardless of mode of delivery. This policy provides a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality. Any institution offering courses and programs through distance education or correspondence education is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its courses and programs and at each of its sites.

## Policy Elements

- development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs, including those offered via distance education or correspondence education, must take place within the institution's total educational mission.
- institutions are expected to control development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs offered in their names, including those offered via distance education or correspondence education.
- institutions are expected to have clearly defined and appropriate student learning outcomes for all courses and programs, including those delivered through distance education or correspondence education.
- institutions are expected to provide the resources and structure needed to accomplish these outcomes and to demonstrate that their students achieve these outcomes through application of appropriate assessment.
- institutions are expected to provide the Commission advance notice of intent to initiate a new delivery mode, such as distance education or correspondence education, through the Substantive Change process.
- institutions are expected to provide the Commission advance notice of intent to offer a program, degree or certificate in which 50% or more of the courses are via distance education or correspondence education, through the Substantive Change process. For purposes of this requirement, the institution is responsible for calculating the percentage of courses that may be offered through distance or correspondence education.
- institutions which offer distance education or correspondence education must have processes in place through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence course or program is the same person who participates every time in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit<sup>1</sup>. This requirement will be met if the institution verifies the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the institution's discretion, such methods as a secure log-in and password, proctored examinations, other technologies and/or practices that are developed and effective in verifying each student's identification. The institution must also publish policies that ensure the protection of student privacy and will notify students at the time of class registration of any charges associated with verification of student identity [34 CFR§602.17g].

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<sup>1</sup> See Addendum: WCET Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education Version 2.0, June 2009.



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## Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education

Version 2.0, June 2009

This list of best practice strategies is based on "Institutional Policies/Practices and Course Design Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education," produced by WCET in February 2009 and updated in April 2009. In May 2009, the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) surveyed its membership to invite feedback and additional strategies to enhance the WCET work. This June 2009 document reflects the combined contributions of WCET, the UT TeleCampus of the University of Texas System, and ITC. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States license.

### INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND COMMITMENT

1. Establish a campus-wide policy on academic integrity that articulates faculty and student responsibilities.
2. Demonstrate an institutional commitment to enforcing the policy and in supporting faculty and staff in the handling of academic integrity matters.
3. Make information on academic integrity easy to find on the campus Web site, library Web site, department Web site, course, within the syllabus and within specific assignments.
4. Include ethics instruction within the core curriculum and/or area-specific within degree plans.
5. Address academic integrity at student orientation programs and events.
6. Encourage faculty to report every suspected violation and act upon it.
7. Secure student logins and password to access online courses and related resources, discussions, assignments and assessments.

### CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. State the academic integrity/academic honesty policy within the online learning environment and discuss it early in the course.
2. Require student engagement with the academic integrity policy. For example:
  - a. Ask students for their input on how to create a community of integrity at the start of the course. This establishes the students as stakeholders in the community and the process of its formation.
  - b. Develop and ask students to commit to a class honor code.
  - c. Require students to read and sign an agreement to the campus academic integrity policy.
  - d. Write a letter to students about integrity and post it in the course.
  - e. Ask students to restate the academic integrity policy (this can also be used as a writing sample to use when grading and reviewing student work).
  - f. Ask students to reflect on the academic integrity policy in the discussion board.
  - g. Include a lesson on avoiding plagiarism.
3. Have assignments and activities in which appropriate sharing and collaboration is essential to successful completion. Foster a community of integrity by choosing authentic learning tasks that require group cohesiveness and effort. For example, focus assignments on distinctive, individual, and non-duplicative tasks or on what individual students self-identify as their personal learning needs.
4. Provide students with a course or course lesson on research and/or study skills. Work with library staff to design assignments and prepare materials on plagiarism and research techniques.



5. Include a statement that the instructor reserves the right to require alternative forms and/or locations of assessments (e.g., proctoring).
6. Ask students follow-up questions to assignments such as, "expand upon this statement you made," "tell me why you chose this phrase, description or reference," and "expand upon the ideas behind this reference."
7. Select one or two difficult concepts from the paper and ask the student to restate/rewrite the information.
8. Require students to share key learning from references for a paper or self-reflection on an assignment in the discussion board.
9. Include an ethical decision-making case study within the course.

#### FACULTY SUPPORT<sup>1</sup>

1. Incorporate academic integrity strategies into professional development and faculty training offerings.
2. Publish academic integrity strategies and policies in faculty handbook and Web-based faculty resources.
3. Publish guidelines for handling/reporting individual student infractions.
4. Assign a department academic integrity liaison to support faculty.
5. Use a plagiarism detection service.
6. Use Google to search for a unique text string or unique phrase from the paper.
7. Keep student papers filed in the department by topic for reference.

#### STUDENT SUPPORT

1. Define academic integrity and cheating and clearly explain what is considered dishonest and unacceptable behavior.
2. Provide information and examples to help students understand the difference between collaboration on assignments and cheating, and identify plagiarism. Teach the proper use of citations.
3. State how much collaboration is permissible on each assignment.
4. State what the instructor's expectations are for the students and explain what they should expect from the instructor. For example:

- a. Include a statement in the syllabus encouraging honest work.
  - b. Repeat the campus academic integrity statement and provide a link to campus policies.
  - c. Describe academic dishonesty.
  - d. Describe the repercussions for academic dishonesty.
  - e. Describe permissible and impermissible collaboration.
  - f. Include outside links to information on plagiarism, self-tests and examples.
  - g. Include information on acceptable sources.
  - h. Include information about the college's writing center, library or other support.
5. Provide a writing style sheet or handbook with information on plagiarism and campus policies.
  6. Indicate assessments may require follow-up documentation, questions or assignments.
  7. State expectations for the time needed to complete coursework.
  8. State whether the instructor/college will use a plagiarism detection service.

#### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

1. Provide rubrics, or detailed grading criteria, for every assignment at the beginning of the course so students understand how they will be graded.
2. Train faculty on ways to use the settings on the college's learning management system to reduce cheating:
  - a. Use a test bank with more questions than will be used on any particular test and have the learning management system pull a smaller number of questions from the test bank
  - b. Randomize the order of answers for multiple test questions so for example, the correct answer for a particular question might be "a" for one student and "b" for another.
  - c. Require forced completion on exams so students cannot re-enter a test.
  - d. Set a short window for testing completion, i.e. one or two days to take an exam rather than a whole week. Setting a completion time reduces a student's ability to access the test, look up the answer, and re-enter the test.

<sup>1</sup> The ACCJC recommends the use of any appropriate search engine.

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- Most test-taking software applications keep track of time on the server, not on the student's computer.
- e. Password protect exams.
  - f. Show questions one at a time (makes more difficult for students to copy and paste the test in order to give it to someone else).
  - g. Use a Web browser lock-down service during testing.
  - h. Check the computer "properties" for the "creation date" and "author" for essay or term paper submissions if students are suspected of submitting work created by someone else.
3. Clarify that students with disabilities and requesting testing accommodations (extended time for completion of examinations and quizzes) must identify themselves to the college's office of disabilities and provide appropriate documentation.
  4. Change test items and assignment topics each semester.
  5. Emphasize assignments that require written work and problem solving (e.g., essays, papers, online discussions).
  6. Use a variety of assessment strategies (quizzes, short and long papers, test questions that require the application of a theory or concept).
  7. Adopt the following practices to encourage authentic written work:
    - a. Require students to turn in copies of reference articles with cited text highlighted.
    - b. Require annotated bibliographies.
    - c. Do not allow last minute changes in assignment topics.
    - d. Require specific references be used (this might be the course text).
    - e. Require an abstract.
    - f. Give narrow assignment topics (tied into class experience) and require thesis statements prior to topic approval.
    - g. Require students to turn in a draft, and their bibliography or references prior to the paper's due date.
    - h. Require students to write a concept paper and project plan prior to completing an assignment.
  8. Evaluate the research process and the product.
  9. After an assignment is due, have students post in the discussion board, describing the assignment and the research method used, a summary of conclusions and an abstract (a meta-learning essay).
  10. When evaluating student written work, consider following these practices:
    - a. Be wary of student writing that reads like an encyclopedia, newspaper article or expert in the field.
    - b. Look for whether a paper reflects the assignment, has changes in tense, includes odd sentences within a well-written paper, is based on references older than three years, refers to past events as current, or uses jargon.
    - c. Compare student writing on the discussion board with that on assignments and papers. A writing sample collected at the start of the semester can be helpful.
    - d. Compare the writing at the beginning and end of the paper with that in the middle of the paper -- language, sentence length and reading level.
    - e. Check references; compare quotations with cited sources; look for the same author in multiple references.
    - f. Read all papers on the same topic together.
  11. Make assignments cumulative (students turn in parts of a project or paper throughout the semester).
  12. Give open book exams.
  13. Other than grades, do not provide students feedback on tests until all of the students in the class have completed them.
  14. Use proctored test sites where appropriate.
  15. Faculty should use a robust user name and password to protect their computer-based grade book and keep a printed copy in a secure place in case students are able to hack into the computer system.
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## SOURCES

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"101 Ways to Maintain Academic Integrity in an Online Course," by Michael Anderson and Lori McNabb, UT TeleCampus, The University of Texas System. Handout for faculty development program.

McNabb, L., & Olmstead, A. "Communities of Integrity in Online Courses: Faculty Member Beliefs and Strategies." *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching* 5, no.2 (June 2009), 208-221. Retrieved from [http://jolt.merlot.org/vol5no2/mcnabb\\_0609.htm](http://jolt.merlot.org/vol5no2/mcnabb_0609.htm).

WCET Survey on Academic Integrity and Student Verification, August 2008.

"Institutional Policies/Practices and Course Design Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education," by WCET Working Group on Academic Integrity and Student Verification. February 2009 and revised April 2009.

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## Statement on Diversity

*(Adopted January 1994)*

How an institution deals with diversity is an important indicator of its integrity and effectiveness. Institutions accredited by the Commission consider diversity issues in a thorough and professional manner. Every institution affiliated with the Commission is expected to provide and sustain an environment in which all persons in the college community can interact on a basis of accepting differences, respecting each individual, and valuing diversity. Each institution is responsible for assessing the quality and diversity of its campus environment and for demonstrating how diversity is served by the goals and mission of the college and district. In addition, institutions must identify the processes that actively promote diversity in the everyday environment and the academic programs of the college. Accreditation teams will evaluate the condition of institutional diversity during the site visits and include findings and recommendations in written reports to the Accrediting Commission.

The Commission Statement on Diversity is designed to guide institutions and evaluation teams in the self study and site visit process and to indicate how institution-wide reviews of issues of diversity should be documented in the self study and visiting team reports. The Accrediting Commission, taking into account the mission of the institution and the entirety of the self study and peer review processes, will evaluate the institution's effectiveness in addressing issues of diversity.

## Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems

*(Adopted June 1999; Revised January 2004, January 2009, June 2011)*

### Background

Almost half of the member institutions are part of larger systems, either by being part of a multi-college district/system or by being owned by a larger corporate entity. Institutions must work closely with the district/system to ensure that Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies are met and quality is sustained. The district/system's role is to facilitate and support the successful implementation of the institutional mission and institutional effectiveness. This necessitates dialogue between the institutions and district/system and among the institutions within the district/system.

The Commission evaluates based on the Standards regardless of organizational structure. In single-college districts/systems all functions are carried out by the same entity. For multi-college districts/systems, key functions that relate to the Standards may be distributed among the institutions and the district/system in various patterns. In order for the Commission to evaluate institutions in single-college and multi-college organizations fairly, institutions must inform the Commission about their functional organization and involve district/system and college personnel responsible for the functions in accreditation activities.

The integrity of the district/system programs and services falls within the scope of the institution's accreditation. The district/system auxiliary programs and services are subject to review if the program or service is executed in the name of the district/system or institution, or if the district/system administers or the board authorizes the program or service. The delineation and distribution of responsibilities among the district/system and the institution must be articulated clearly.

### Policy

The Commission assures the equitable evaluation of all institutions regardless of organizational structures and clarifies the Commission's expectations regarding the conduct and outcomes of educational quality and institutional effectiveness reviews in multi-college districts/systems.

### Policy Elements

1. While the Commission accredits individual institutions, the district/system holds a fundamental role and responsibility in the analysis and evaluation of district/system structures and how these structures assist the institutions to achieve and adhere to all the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies and gain and sustain accredited status.
2. Institutions have the responsibility to describe and delineate clearly the particular way functions are distributed in their unique multi-college organization. The distribution of

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these functions is to be evaluated. There must be evidence of ongoing communication between the institution and the district/system regarding the distribution of these functions. The Commission will use this evidence to identify the locus of responsibility for the institution's ability to meet Accreditation Standards.

3. When serious inadequacies in a district/system function are verified, such deficiencies could jeopardize the accreditation of one, some, or all of the district/system institutions. Both the district/system and the institution in question are responsible for correcting these deficiencies.
4. The Commission reserves the right to initiate direct interaction with district/system officers regarding the ability of institutions to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Standards. When district/system officers are contacted regarding an institution, the institution(s) will receive the same communication.
5. A district/system may make a special request to evaluate the effectiveness of its central functions in conjunction with scheduled educational quality and institutional effectiveness reviews (formerly comprehensive reviews). This activity is limited to issues related to the ability of institutions to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Standards. The outcome of this activity does not result in any "accredited" status for the district/system.

## **Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems**

### **A. Institutional Self Evaluation**

1. As part of the institutional self evaluation process (formerly self study process) and in consultation with the district/system, the institution must specify through an organizational "map," which is a description of the delineation of district/system and college functions, whether the institution or district level holds the primary responsibility for all or parts of a specific function.

Moreover, the Commission recognizes that institutions in a multi-college system may have lateral relationships with other institutions in the district/system which should be included in the map. For example, police services may be a district/system service for all institutions in a multi-college district/system, yet located at one institution in the district/system.

2. Responsible individuals at the institution or in the district/system, must be actively involved in developing the Institutional Self Evaluation Report based upon who has responsibility for the institutional function(s) addressed in the Standards. As a result, close cooperation between and among the institutions and the district/system office is expected as a part of the preparation of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report.
3. In the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, institutions are expected to include a discussion of how the identified district/system functions and decisions affect the institutions' ability to meet the Standards. For example, the governing board's role in adopting the institutional mission statement is addressed in the Standard dealing with

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mission; the district/system office responsibility for personnel is discussed in the Standard appropriate to faculty and staff; the district/system financial allocation system should be included in the Standard in which financial resources are addressed. The organizational map will provide guidance for this discussion. The effectiveness of the map's delineation of functions includes analysis, evaluation, and subsequent planning for organizational improvement.

4. The district/system chief executive officer and governing board are expected to be involved in the process of developing the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. The governing board must review the final Institutional Self Evaluation Report and certify its involvement in the institutional self evaluation process.

## **B. Evaluation Team Composition**

Just as for institutions in single-college districts, evaluation team composition for institutions in multi-college districts/systems is shaped by the institution being accredited. Evaluation teams visiting institutions in multi-college districts/systems will have the range of expertise appropriate for the institution and also individuals with multi-college district/system perspectives.

## **C. District/System Evaluation Team Visit Organization**

The Commission organizes site visits to institutions in multi-college districts/systems simultaneously or in clusters of institutions.

Prior to simultaneous site visits taking place in the institutions of a district/system, the Commission President will name a coordinating chair. This coordinating chair, in consultation with institutional evaluation team chairs, will form a small district/system evaluation team which may be drawn from all of the evaluation teams visiting the institutions. It will consist of all of the evaluation team chairs and such members of the respective evaluation teams as are needed to address the district/system issues identified in the Institutional Self Evaluation Reports and by the evaluation teams.

The purposes of the coordinating chair and district/system evaluation team are to:

- evaluate the evidence provided in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report to confirm that the functions provided by the district/system enable the institutions to meet the Standards,
- identify issues pertaining to the Standards that are related to district/system functions,
- ensure commonality and comparability of evaluation team recommendations across External Evaluation Reports (formerly Team Reports) when accreditation issues have district/system implications, and
- support the work of the teams evaluating each institution.

This evaluation team will meet with the district/system administration before the site visit to discuss prior district recommendations and will review evidence to evaluate adherence to the Standards.

The coordinating chair may have a separate evaluation team assistant available to him/her solely for the purpose of supporting the district/system evaluation team and for

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performing organizational tasks related to this part of the evaluation visits. Evaluation team chairs on the special district/system evaluation team will receive the Institutional Self Evaluation Reports, the previous External Evaluation Reports, and Commission action letters from every institution involved and will make the materials available to institutional evaluation team members on the district/system evaluation team.

#### **D. Reports by the Institutional Evaluation Teams and the District/System Evaluation Team**

The district/system evaluation team will develop conclusions about any major issues pertaining to the district/system. Recognizing that some district/system observations may pertain to all institutions, and others only to particular institutions, the institutional evaluation team chair, working in conjunction with the coordinating chair and the members of the district/system evaluation team, will incorporate appropriate conclusions within the Standards in the individual institutional External Evaluation Reports. When the district/system evaluation team determines that a recommendation, that pertains to the district/system as a whole is in order, that same recommendation will appear in each of the Institutional External Evaluation Reports.

At the end of each site visit, the evaluation team chair meets with the college chief executive officer to discuss major findings. The evaluation team chair will then make a presentation of the evaluation process and findings at a meeting open to the entire college community. The coordinating chair shall meet separately with the district chief executive officer and with the college chief executive officer and present district findings. This discussion is limited to the district/system functions identified in the organizational map and the issues related to them which are identified in the Institutional Self Evaluation Reports and the findings of the institutional evaluation teams.

Although the district/system policies may affect the accredited status of the institution(s), the district/system evaluation team will not make recommendations on the accredited status of the institutions. Confidential recommendations, submitted to the Commission, on the accredited status of the institutions will come from each of the institutional evaluation teams.

#### **E. Commission Actions and Public Disclosure**

The Commission will receive the following items from each institution in preparation for Commission action: the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Report, the catalog, and other pertinent documents. The Commission, using its reader system, will consider each institution separately in relation to the district/system and take the appropriate action for each institution.

The Commission will discuss the district/system and develop a consensus on any matters to be communicated to the district/system chief executive officer. In its action letters to the institutions, the Commission will comment on important district/system matters that significantly enhance or impinge on institutional quality.

In a case where one or more accreditation concerns, relating to the district/system are identified, the Commission may request a written response from the district/system itself



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and may also specify a site visit, by Commission representatives, to evaluate any such response.

The Commission will make clear that significant inadequacies in district/system functions can jeopardize the accreditation of one, some, or all of the district/system institutions. When correspondence is sent to the district/system chief executive officer, copies will be sent to the appropriate institution(s).

Should the Commission decide that a district/system response and site visit are in order, the district/system evaluation team will normally include the coordinating chair, a member of the Commission, and additional persons with special expertise, as needed. The purpose of the site visit is to evaluate the response from the district/system. This response could be the basis for subsequent Commission action, relative to the accredited status of one or more of the institutions, in the district/system.

#### **F. Follow-up Activities**

The district/system chief executive officer is required to share the External Evaluation Report and Commission Action letter of any site visit related to district/system functions with the governing board and appropriate staff at the district/system and at the institutions.

The Commission may issue special communications to college chief executive officers on particular leadership issues. When the institution involved is a member of a district/system, the district/system chief executive officer will be copied on this correspondence.

#### **G. Cost**

The costs associated with the additional activities of a district/system site visit may be billed directly to the district/system involved on an actual cost basis.

## Policy on Governing Boards for Military Institutions

*(Adopted June 2009)*

### Background

The Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements require that colleges have a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and insure that the mission is carried-out.

### Policy

A military institution, with a chain of command structure, authorized and operated by the federal government and which awards degrees has a public board or steering committee. Neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military/Department of Defense or active/retired military. Members should represent diverse backgrounds and experiences in which neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military/Department of Defense or active/retired military. The board has broad and significant responsibilities to recommend policy, identify the educational, personnel, and financial requirements of the institution, and validates the assignment of the chief executive officer designated as the commander or commandant of the institution.

The presiding officer and a majority of the members have no contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

## Policy on Insider Trading

*(Adopted June 2011)*

### Background

Federal laws prohibit persons with so called "insider" information about a for-profit company from trading in the stock of that company. These prohibitions are generally known as the SEC insider trading rules. The Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges ("ACCJC") has determined, on advice of legal counsel, that the insider trading rules, under certain circumstances, may have applicability to persons associated with the Commission, who gain access to confidential information about for-profit educational institutions and their related systems. This policy has been developed in order to minimize the legal risk that is thereby created.

### Policy

No person who is serving as a member of the Commission, as a volunteer or paid member of a committee or visiting team, or as a staff member of the Commission may buy or sell (trade in) the stock (or other form of security) of any member institution (as defined) while that person is serving in one of the capacities described in a., b., c., or d. below, unless one of the Exceptions to this Policy, explained below, applies. For purposes of this Policy, an "ACCJC Institution" is any for-profit educational institution that is either an applicant for candidacy or accreditation before the Commission, an institution that enjoys candidate or accredited status with the Commission, or any entity affiliated with such educational institution, such as a parent holding company. The period of time in which this policy prohibits the trading of stock is referred to as the "Trading Freeze."

### Specific Situations

- a. Committee membership: With respect to a member of a standing or special committee, the Trading Freeze shall only apply when that person's committee duties involve reviewing an ACCJC Institution and thereafter until the Commission publicly announces the action on this ACCJC Institution which relates to the committee's report.
- b. Team membership: With respect to a member of a visiting team, the Trading Freeze shall apply only if the team member has been assigned to review an ACCJC Institution. The Trading Freeze shall begin at the time of the team member's assignment to the team and last until the Commission publicly announces its action on the ACCJC Institution which relates to the team's report.
- c. Commission membership: With respect to Commission members, the Trading Freeze shall apply to those Commission members who are involved in a Commission action involving an ACCJC Institution. Except in instances where the entire Commission is taking action on an ACCJC Institution, the Trading Freeze will only affect readers and members of the Commission panel assigned to review the ACCJC Institution. Such trading freeze will begin at such time as the affected Commission member

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receives non-public information about the ACCJC Institution and will end two weeks after the Commission makes public the action taken on the ACCJC Institution.

- d. Commission Staff: With respect to Commission Staff, the Trading Freeze shall apply to all staff members who have access to any non-public information concerning ACCJC Institutions, and the Trading Freeze shall apply during the entire employment of all such Commission staff members.

## Exceptions

- a. The above Policy shall not apply to any person who certifies in a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement to the Commission that:
  - (i) he or she received stock in a particular ACCJC Institution by virtue of his or her employment with that ACCJC Institution; and
  - (ii) he or she is aware of and will abide by rules established by that ACCJC Institution designed to protect against violations of SEC trading rules.
- b. The above Policy shall not apply if the investment is in a mutual fund that includes the stock of an ACCJC Institution as one of its holdings.
- c. The above Policy shall not restrict any person from owning and holding stock in any ACCJC Institution if that person does not trade (i.e., buy or sell) that stock, or exercise any options or puts for that stock, at any time during that person's service for the Commission.

## Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

*(Adopted January 2005)*

### Background

The Accreditation Standards require that colleges make available to students and prospective students clear and accurate information about their respective institutions in all publications that may be disseminated in the name of the institution.

### Policy

All ACCJC accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

### Policy Elements

#### A. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

Educational programs and services offered shall be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature and recruitment activities, including those presented in electronic formats. All statements and representations shall be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

Catalogs and other official publications shall be readily available and accurately depict: official name, address(es), telephone number(s), and website address of the institution; institutional mission statement, purposes, and objectives; entrance requirements and procedures; basic information on programs and courses with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated; degree, certificate, and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate; faculty (full and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution; institutional facilities readily available for educational use; rules and regulations for conduct; the college's academic freedom statement; tuition, fees, and other program costs; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment (See Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges); policies related to the transfer of credits from other institutions; statements of nondiscrimination; location or publications where other institutional policies may be found; members of the Governing Board; and the accredited status of the institution.

In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information shall be provided on: national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered; and any unique requirements for career path or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

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## **B. Student Recruitment for Admissions**

Student recruitment shall be guided by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

The following practices in student recruitment shall be scrupulously avoided: assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified; misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates; misrepresenting program costs; misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program; offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. Awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.

## **C. Representation of ACCJC Accredited Status**

The term "accreditation" is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by ACCJC. Specialized and program accreditation granted by other accreditors should be clearly specified as to the source of the accreditation.

No statement shall be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by ACCJC. Statements like the following are not permissible; "(Name of Institution) has applied for candidacy with the ACCJC"; "The \_\_\_\_\_ program is being evaluated by ACCJC, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future." The phrase "fully accredited" shall be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible from ACCJC.

When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it shall be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, which identifies the accrediting body by name in the manner required by the accrediting body.

The accredited status of a program shall not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by the ACCJC has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like "this program is accredited" or "this degree is accredited," are incorrect and misleading.

Institutions offering programs in a single field, e.g., a school of art, engineering, theology, granted accreditation by the ACCJC shall clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the program offered.

## Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV

*(Adopted June 2011)*

### Background

In order to comply with federal regulations regarding Institutional Compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) [34 CFR §602.16], the Commission is required to provide the following information it has available germane to an accredited or candidate institution's program responsibilities or eligibility to participate under Title IV of the HEA.

### Notification of the Secretary of Fraud or Abuse

The Commission shall provide the U.S. Secretary of Education notice of the name of any institution it has reason to believe is engaged in fraud or abuse or is failing to meet its responsibilities under Title IV of the HEA, and the reasons for such concern. The Commission shall notify the institution if its name is submitted to the U.S. Secretary under this provision.

### Default Rates

Institutions participating in the Title IV programs under the HEA and designating the Commission as their gate-keeping agency must be able to demonstrate diligence in keeping loan default rates at an acceptably low level and must also comply with program responsibilities defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Institutions that have a default rate requiring a default reduction plan should provide a copy of their plan to the Commission. Commission staff shall review the plan to determine its appropriateness, and to determine if any follow-up action is needed. Excessive default rates in the student loan program may be cause for a special report or evaluation.

### Compliance with Title IV

During the course of the Eligibility Review, there will be a review of loan default rates and negative actions taken by the U.S. Department of Education regarding compliance of the institution with the requirements of Title IV of the HEA. In addition, the Commission will review information provided by the U.S. Secretary of Education when notified of negative action taken by the U.S. Department of Education regarding responsibilities under Title IV of the HEA. The Commission will determine if the information calls into question compliance with its Accreditation Standards and wherever any follow-up action is needed. Excessive default rates in the student loan program may be cause for a special report or site visit.

## Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics

*(Adopted June 2011)*

### Background

In accordance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, the Commission expects each member institution to exhibit integrity and to subscribe to and advocate high ethical standards. Recognition by the U.S. Department of Education requires the Commission to monitor an accredited institution's compliance with the institution's Title IV program responsibilities and the institution's responsibility to ensure that no false, erroneous, or misleading statements or misrepresentation are made about it [34 CFR 602.16(a)(1)(x)].

### Policy

Accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and subscribe to and advocate high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and all of its activities dealing with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, including the Commission, and the general public.

### Policy Elements

1. An accredited institution will uphold and protect the integrity of its practices.
2. An institution applying for eligibility, candidacy or extension of candidacy, accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation, or responding to Commission requests for information or reporting requirements, such as the annual reports, provides the Commission with information that is readily available, current, complete, and accurate, including reports of other accrediting agencies, licensing and auditing agencies. This includes any information on matters that may affect an institution's integrity.
3. The institution assures the clarity, accuracy and availability of information provided to all persons or organizations and related to its mission statement; its educational programs; its admissions requirements; its student services; its tuition and other fees and costs; its financial aid programs; its policies related to transcripts, transfer of credit and refunds of tuition and fees. The institution reports accurately to the public its accreditation status.
4. The institution has policies to ensure academic honesty, policies to assure integrity in the hiring processes, and policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest throughout the organization, including governing board decision-making and contracting, and policies that provide due process protections. Such policies are reviewed regularly and are widely available to institutional staff, students, governing board members and the public. The institution is able to provide evidence that it upholds its policies.
5. The institution demonstrates integrity and honesty in interactions with students and prospective students in all academic, student support and administrative functions and



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services as well as statements and other information provided about its accredited status, its transfer of credit policies, and whether successful completion of its courses qualify students to receive, to apply, and/or to take licensure examinations or non-governmental certification.

6. The institution establishes and publicizes policies ensuring institutional integrity that contain clear statements of responsibility for assuring integrity and describe how violations of integrity are to be resolved.
7. The institution, in its relationship with the Commission, cooperates in preparation for site visits, receives evaluation teams or Commission representatives in a spirit of collegiality, and complies with the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies. The institution maintains an openness and commitment to external evaluation and assists peer evaluators in performing their duties.

The institution establishes a governance process and policies to receive and address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices, operational activity which is a violation of applicable law, rules, and regulations, or questionable activities which may indicate potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse. The process shall allow for the confidential and anonymous submission of complaints.

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ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ACCREDITING COMMISSIONS  
*(Developed in cooperation with)*

## Policy on Institutions with Related Entities

*(Adopted June 2007)*

### Background

At some applicant, candidate, or accredited institutions, the institution's governing board shares decision-making responsibility with one or more non-accredited "related" entities concerning some functions and operations such as those involving finances, planning, governance, budget and approval processes, recruitment, information systems, or employee compensation. This policy is intended to ensure that accreditors receive appropriate assurances and sufficient information and documentation to determine whether such institutions comply with Commission Standards and policies.

A related entity may be a corporate parent, system administration or board, religious sponsor, military sponsor, funding sponsor (which, in some cases, may include an equity or investment fund), or other entity that can affect decisions related to accreditation (herein "Related Entities"). Related entities may include institutional or corporate layers or groups. Ordinarily, local, county, and state legislatures, other accreditors, local advisory boards, and government agencies are not related entities. The scope of this policy does not include "contractual relationships" in which the accredited entity contracts for services; these are governed by a separate Commission policy.

### Policy

When an institution shares certain functions with a related entity, the institution is responsible to the Commission for presenting, explaining, and evaluating all significant matters and relationships involving related entities that may affect accreditation requirements and decisions at the time of application, candidacy, review for initial accreditation, comprehensive or interim evaluation, and all other times deemed relevant by the Commission. Although a related entity may affect an institution's ongoing compliance with Accreditation Standards, the Commission will review and hold only the applicant, candidate, or accredited institution responsible for compliance with Accreditation Standards. The Commission will protect the confidential nature of all information submitted by institutions or by related entities, except as otherwise required by law. Failure of an institution to provide the required certification, guarantee, or other information regarding the institution or related entity requested by the Commission will be addressed as provided in the Commission's policies.

### Procedures

#### A. General

If an institution is part of a system with shared facilities or processes (e.g., library) or centralized information (e.g., strategic plan), it may use the same documents prepared by the system for other institutions or for other purposes.

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If information submitted by an institution, on behalf of itself or a Related Entity, proves to be substantively different from the actual or projected institutional information, the Commission may reconsider its action or take other action. The institution will inform the Commission, through the substantive change process, of any change in the related entity's financial status, ownership, governance, or other development that might significantly affect the institution.

The institution will provide certification from the related entity(ies) in the certification form attached, and other information requested by the Commission at the time of application, candidacy, review for initial accreditation, comprehensive or interim evaluation, and all other times deemed relevant by the Commission. The Commission may ask for a guarantee or different form of certification. The Commission may modify provisions of this policy under appropriate circumstances.

#### **B. Applicant and Candidate Institutions and Applicants for Change of Ownership**

The applicant or candidate will provide the following information in addition to information required by the Commission's Related Entities, Substantive Change, or other policies, unless waived by the Commission:

- 1. Financial Statements:** Audited financial statements with management letters for the applicant/candidate and related entities designated by the Commission.
- 2. Planning and Budgeting:** The financial plan for the current and succeeding years covered by the applicant/candidate's strategic plan, including enrollment projections for the period covered by its financial plan, and an analytical narrative that reconciles the financial plan to the operating plan.
- 3. Risk Analysis:** An analysis of financial information that assesses the institution's capacity and risk factors and includes, where appropriate, the flow of funding to or from the accredited affiliated institution from the related entity; bond ratings and analyses; debt; consideration of metrics such as revenue, market capitalization, earnings per share, earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, measurement of liquidity, price/earnings ratio, debt/equity ratio, and U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and 10K filings for publicly traded proprietary institutions.
- 4.** The applicant/candidate will obtain from the related entity and include in its reports relevant information from all sources, such as legislative staff funding analyses, review by or of the related entity, SEC 10K, and other filings. Relevant information is only information that relates to the accredited institution's compliance with Commission requirements, Standards, and policies.

#### **C. Additional Substantive Change Provisions for Change of Ownership**

Change of ownership will continue to be handled in accordance with the substantive change policy of the Commission. In addition to the requirements in the preceding section and of the Commission's Substantive Change Policy, procedures for evaluating a change of ownership application will include submission of the following:

- 1. Acquisition Plan:** The agreement, relevant filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (if applicable), and a detailed plan for the acquisition by the new owner that demonstrates how the institution, under the new owner, will meet or continue to meet

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all Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The principals of the acquiring entity must demonstrate the experience and expertise necessary to operate the institution, and if they operate other institutions, that they are in full compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

2. **New Initiatives:** Description of any new educational, growth, or other initiatives by the related entity or others anticipated to be planned within 12 months of the substantive change application that could materially affect the plans and/or operations of the institution (such as restructuring management or increasing enrollment). If such anticipated changes would constitute substantive changes (such as change of mission or addition of new locations), the change of ownership application should address these changes.
3. **Finances:** Description of how the financial viability of the related entity and the institution are affected by the change of ownership, giving both entities the continuing capacity to meet changing financial needs of the institution.

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### Certification Form for Related Entities

**Certification:** "The related entity has reviewed the materials submitted by the institution regarding the relationship between the related entity and institution, and certifies that the materials are complete and correct to the best of its knowledge."

\_\_\_\_\_ represents that it controls \_\_\_\_\_ either directly or through  
(Related entity) (the institution)

one or more intermediate entities. It certifies that it recognizes the Commission's compliance requirements for \_\_\_\_\_ and will ensure that \_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities  
(the institution) (the institution's)

that relate to areas controlled or influenced by \_\_\_\_\_ are fulfilled.  
(related entity)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of the CEO of the Related Entity) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of the CEO of the Institution) (Date)

## Policy on Interregional Policies on the Accreditation of Institutions Operating Across Regions

*(Adopted June 2000; Revised June 2003)*

### Preamble

The purpose of these policies is to establish and define the respective roles of the regional higher education accrediting commissions in assuring quality and encouraging the improvement of affiliated institutions operating interregionally. Developed by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), they are designed to address concerns arising from differences that may exist among regional commission criteria and their application in off-campus operations. The interregional policies encompass only those colleges and universities which have physical presence, appropriate state authorization, and offer instruction equivalent to 50% or more of a degree program in another (host) region(s) than their home region where they hold accreditation. Once adopted, however modified, these policies will encompass all regionally accredited institutions and will establish a common framework for the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

These policies are based upon the following fundamental premises:

- The home region should be demonstrably accountable for its accreditation decisions affecting institutions operating in host regions.
- The host region has a legitimate interest in the quality of institutions from other regions operating within its jurisdiction.
- The home and host regions, while honoring these policies and the procedures designed to implement them, have flexibility in defining the host region's role in the evaluation of instructional sites operating in its region.
- The eight regional commissions, building on their commonality of tradition and long-standing mutual respect, will work cooperatively, together with affected institutions, to implement these policies toward the fulfillment of their quality assurance responsibilities in the review of transregional programming while honoring institutional autonomy and integrity.

These policies represent a departure from past practice. Their continued efficacy rests upon the commitment of the involved commissions to assess their effectiveness and otherwise determine their impact on their member institutions, making modifications as are necessary. For that reason, CRAC has recommended that these policies be implemented on a three-year (2000-2003) pilot basis. While it is expected that once in force the policies will materially affect the evaluation of institutions operating across regional boundaries, it is also understood that first experiences will likely result in the need for corrections and adjustments in their content. For that reason, CRAC is committed to undertake in 2003 a basic review of the effectiveness of the policies in achieving their purposes.

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## Policy Statement on the Evaluation of Institutions Operating Interregionally

To preserve the values and practices of peer review and regional accreditation, the evaluation of institutions that deliver education at a physical site(s) in another region(s) will be undertaken with the participation of the host regional accrediting commission(s). This will include the joint (home/host) review of off-campus sites in a host region against the Accreditation Standards of that region.

Procedures for the evaluation of colleges and universities operating interregionally will honor these basic principles:

- The mission of the institution will be respected throughout the evaluation process.
- The design and implementation of the strategy fashioned to evaluate its host region instructional sites will be developed collaboratively by the participating regional commissions together with the affected institution.
- The home region's evaluation processes will serve as the basis for the joint evaluations and the home region will take the leadership role in initiating and overseeing the process.
- The home region will be solely responsible for final accrediting actions, but will respond to issues brought to its attention by the host commission as identified through its involvement in the institutional review.
- Host commission participation in an interregional accrediting process shall not constitute accreditation of the institution by that commission.
- The host region retains the discretion to determine its involvement in the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

## Exchanging Information

To assure that each commission is adequately apprised of the instructional activities of out-of-region institutions in its region, the following information will be exchanged as specified:

- A. Annually, each commission will notify the other affected commissions of any of its institutions operating interregionally. The information provided will include: location(s), levels of degree offerings, and number of students enrolled. It is understood here as elsewhere, that notice need only be provided regarding those locations where 50% or more of a degree program are offered.
- B. Each commission will notify other relevant commissions when one of its institutions intends to establish a new out-of-region instructional site. In such cases, the home commission in consultation with the host region together with the institution, will determine if the new site(s) constitute a substantive change and thus be subject to review under the interregional accrediting processes.

## Procedures for the Interregional Accrediting Process

### *Notice to Host Region of Planned Evaluations*

The home region will provide timely notice to the host region(s) of:

- A. scheduled comprehensive evaluations of institutions with instructional sites in the host region;

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- B. any focused visits which include the review of sites in the host region or includes issues related to off-campus programming;
  - C. any other evaluations of new sites in the host region.

## Procedures for Evaluations

### A. Standards to be Applied

The Standards of both the home and host region will be applied at host region sites using a "home standards plus" model. That is, the Standards of the home region will be used as the basis for the evaluation as supplemented by any criteria of the host region identified in the design process for the evaluation.

### B. Evaluation Protocol

Well in advance of the comprehensive visit, the home and host commissions, in consultation with the institution, will develop a protocol for the evaluation of host region sites to include: 1) the scope of the review; 2) which sites are to be reviewed, with the final decision remaining with the home region; 3) the content of the self-study report(s) for the sites to be visited with particular attention to how identified host region Standards are to be addressed; and 4) any other matters of agreement relevant to the evaluation, including issues of possible public disclosure.

### C. Site Team Composition

The size and composition of the team visiting host region sites will be jointly determined, with the host region being afforded the opportunity to appoint up to 50% of the team's membership. The host region may appoint a vice or co-chair as agreed upon by the home region. Teams will otherwise be appointed in keeping with home region procedures. It is understood that the host region's conflict of interest policy will apply for the team members it appoints.

### D. Costs

The costs for the evaluation of host region sites will be billed in keeping with the home region's policies. The home region will otherwise administer reimbursement of evaluator expense also in keeping with its policies.

## Procedures for Evaluation Reports

- A. A single evaluation report will be prepared for each of the sites visited within the host region, as agreed upon by the commissions involved.
- B. The evaluation report will include a review of the site under the home region's Standards, and as appropriate, findings regarding the host region's Standards as previously identified and any topics included in the evaluation under prior agreement. Recommendations to the home region can be made by both home and host sub-groups on the team.
- C. Site team reports are provided to the host region by the home region upon receipt. In cases of comprehensive evaluations, the home region's institutional evaluation report is also forwarded to the host region.
- D. The host region is responsible for establishing processes for the timely review of site-specific evaluation reports prior to their being considered by the home regional



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commission so as to provide any comments it believes should be taken into consideration as the institution's case is reviewed.

F. The policy of confidentiality for team recommendations of the home region will apply.

### **Procedures for Decisions and Notification**

- A. The home region's decision-making processes will ensure that the institution has the opportunity to respond to the team report and any comments from the host region before a final decision is made.
- B. The home region takes the final accrediting action and is responsible for providing notification of that action to all relevant parties, including the host region.
- C. When the final action differs from the recommendation and comments of the host region, if any, a rationale for the action will be sent upon request by the home to the host region.
- D. The home region is responsible for addressing any misrepresentation of the interregional evaluation on the institution's accreditation status.

### **Policy Statement on Separately Accreditable Institutions**

In an effort to be consistent and equitable to all institutions, the following criteria for identifying separately accreditable institutions will be applied by each of the regional accrediting commissions.

An instructional site located in a region other than that of its home campus must seek separate accreditation in the region it exists if it functions independent of operational control of the parent college or university. An instructional site will be deemed operationally independent and accreditable by the host region when it meets these criteria:

The instructional site:

- 1. has, under board policy, substantial financial and administrative independence from the home institution including matters related to personnel;
- 2. has a full time chief administrative officer;
- 3. is empowered, under board policy, to initiate and sustain its own academic programs;
- 4. has degree-granting authority in the state or jurisdiction in which it is located.

Each regional commission, upon the adoption of this policy, will determine if any of its affiliated institutions have instructional sites that appear to be separately accreditable. Following consultation with the host commission and the institution, and upon learning from the host region the site's potential to meet its Eligibility Requirements, the home region will make the determination as to the status of such sites that meet these criteria. The host region agrees to take deliberate steps toward reviewing any instructional sites identified as operationally independent in keeping with its policies and procedures for applying institutions. An institution identified as separately accreditable will continue to be included in the accreditation of the parent college or university until it achieves separate accreditation.

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Off-campus instructional sites, regardless of location, not found to be operationally independent are included in the accreditation of the home campus. The operational independence of such sites is periodically reviewed under this policy.

Nothing in this policy is intended to require the home region to accredit a separately accreditable instructional site in another region.

## Policy Regarding Matters Under Litigation

*(Adopted January 1989; Revised June 1996, January 2001)*

The Commission's concerns are to determine whether an institution is in compliance with Commission Standards and policies and to assist institutions, through established procedures, in the improvement of quality.

To this end, the Commission takes appropriate action on credible evidence received from any reliable source, including the courts, that calls into question the ability of an institution to meet Commission Standards and policies. It is the policy of the Accrediting Commission not to become involved in litigation within an institution. The Commission is not an adjudicatory agency, and it is not the role or function of the Commission to arrive at any determination regarding the merits of any aspect of pending litigation.

Because of the sensitivities created when litigation is pending during a site visit by an evaluation team, the Commission has developed the following guidelines.

### **Responsibility of the Institution**

It is the responsibility of the institution to inform the Commission staff, prior to a visit, of any pending litigation against the institution. The staff will consult with the liaison officer to determine if any special advice will need to be provided to the team chair.

### **Responsibility of Visiting Teams**

Visiting teams should not comment on pending litigation in such a way as to express an opinion about the merits of the lawsuit or its outcome. Team members are not precluded from meeting with individuals involved in litigation and hearing from them regarding the litigation. If such a meeting is held or if the subject of the litigation arises during the course of interviews, the institution will be informed. Team members are cautioned against saying or writing anything which may be used by either party in support of their positions in the lawsuit.

If questions arise prior to, during, or after a visit, Commission staff should be consulted.

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ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ACCREDITING COMMISSIONS  
*(Developed in cooperation with)*

## **Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals**

*(Adopted February 1990; Edited October 2006, January 2007)*

### **Preface**

The Presidents/ Executive Directors of the regional institutional accrediting bodies of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions subscribe to the following principles of good practice in overseas international education programs for non-U.S. nationals. Each regional institutional accrediting body will apply these principles consistent with its own accrediting standards.

### **Principles of Good Practice**

#### **Institutional Mission**

1. The international program is rooted in the U.S. institution's stated mission and purposes and reflects any special social, religious, and ethical elements of that mission.
2. The faculty, administration, and governing board of the U.S. institution understand the relationship of the international program to the institution's stated mission and purposes.

#### **Authorization**

3. The international program has received all appropriate internal approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.
4. The international program has received all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.
5. The U.S. institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

#### **Instructional Program**

6. The U.S. institution specifies the educational needs to be met by its international program.
7. The content of the international educational program is subject to review by the U.S. institution's faculty.

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8. The international education program reflects the educational emphasis of the U.S. institution, including a commitment to general education when appropriate.
  9. The educational program is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies whose credentials have been reviewed by the U.S. institution.
  10. The standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the U.S. campus.
  11. The international educational program where possible and appropriate is adapted to the culture of the host country.

#### **Resources**

12. The institution currently uses and assures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international educational program, including classrooms, offices, libraries, and laboratories, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.
13. The U.S. institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the U.S. campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

#### **Admissions and Records**

14. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the U.S. campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.
15. The U.S. institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.
16. All international students admitted to the U.S. program are recognized as students of the U.S. institution.
17. All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the U.S. institution.
18. The U.S. institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.
19. The official transcript of record issued by the U.S. institution follows the institution's practices in identifying by site or through course numbering the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

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## Students

20. The U.S. institution assures that its institutional program provides a supportive environment for student development, consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting.
21. Students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

## Control and Administration

22. The international program is controlled by the U.S. institution.
23. The teaching and administrative staff abroad responsible for the educational quality of the international program are accountable to a resident administrator of the U.S. institution.
24. The U.S. institution formally and regularly reviews all faculty and staff associated with its international program.
25. The U.S. institution assesses its international program on a regular basis in light of institutional goals and incorporates these outcomes into its regular planning process.

## Ethics and Public Disclosure

26. The U.S. institution can provide to its accrediting agencies upon request a full accounting of the financing of its international program, including an accounting of funds designated for third parties within any contractual relationship.
27. The U.S. institution assures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair, and accurate.
28. The U.S. institution's primary catalog describes its international program.
29. The U.S. institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.
30. The U.S. institution assures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflects the reality of U.S. practice.
31. The U.S. institution assures that if U.S. accreditation is mentioned in materials related to the international program, the role and purpose of U.S. accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

## Contractual Arrangements

32. The official contract is in English and the primary language of the contracting institution.
33. The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution controls the international program in conformity with these guidelines and the requirements of the U.S. institution's accreditations.

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34. The U.S. institution confirms that the foreign party to the contract is legally qualified to enter into the contract.
  35. The contract clearly states the legal jurisdiction under which its provisions will be interpreted will be that of the U.S. institution.
  36. Conditions for program termination specified in the contract include appropriate protection for enrolled students.
  37. All contractual arrangements must be consistent with the regional commissions' document, "Contractual Relationships With Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations."

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*Adopted February 12, 1990 by the Executive Directors  
of the Regional Institutional Accrediting Bodies:*

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of  
Schools and Colleges

Higher Learning Commission of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Northwest  
Commission on Colleges and Universities

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges,  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities,  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges



## Policy on Public Disclosure

*(Adopted June 1999; Edited June 2002; Revised January 2003; Edited June 2005;  
Revised January 2006; Edited October 2007; Revised January 2010)*

### Background

The Commission believes that the two major responsibilities of institutional accreditation are quality assurance to the public and continuous improvement of member institutions. Accreditation systematically accomplishes these purposes through standards of good practice, institutional self study, external peer review and recommendations, Commission actions, and institutional follow-up. The purpose of this policy is to strengthen the ability of institutions and the Commission to fulfill mutual obligations to inform, to educate, and to enhance the level of public confidence in higher education institutions in voluntary, non-governmental accreditation, within the region and across regions. Specifically, the goals are:

1. To make a meaningful contribution to the body of information available to consumers of higher education services and to facilitate easier access to such information;
2. To provide institutions with a way to communicate with their multiple publics regarding accreditation matters; and
3. To enhance public understanding of accreditation, and thereby to enhance public confidence in institutions of higher education through peer review, self regulation, and institutional improvement.

### Policy

The Commission adheres to certain principles. These are:

1. Both the Commission and the institution have responsibilities to provide information about institutional quality to the public;
2. The Commission and the institution should maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality during the various stages of the accreditation process that lead to the Commission's decision. The accreditation process must occur within a context of trust and confidentiality if it is to result in an accurate appraisal of institutional quality. The efficacy of the accreditation process requires that institutions provide accurate information, candid self-analysis, and evidence of the degree to which they meet Standards. It also requires that the Team Report provide candid and targeted analysis and recommendations for improvement;
3. Institutions themselves should regularly disclose information about their effectiveness, thereby taking responsibility for major elements of public disclosure;
4. The Commission should utilize consistent disclosure approaches for all member institutions;

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5. The Commission accredits institutions rather than programs. The information it supplies to the public is limited to matters of institutional quality as defined in the Accreditation Standards. The Commission does not provide information about the quality of specific programs within an institution;
  6. The Commission recognizes and promotes the diversity of institutions as a strength of our society. Consistent with the principle that the Commission evaluates each institution on the basis of its own mission, the Commission refrains from making public comparisons of institutions; and
  7. The accreditation process uses standards of quality in higher education to evaluate institutional processes and outcomes. Public disclosure of accreditation information about an institution by the Commission is limited to matters addressed in Commission Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, policies, and related actions on institutions.

## Policy Elements

### ACCJC's Responsibilities

#### I. Information for the General Public about the Accredited Status of Individual Institutions

##### A. Commission Actions

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional documents, the institutional self study report, the evaluation team report, and documents from previous evaluations. The Commission makes a determination about the accredited status of the institution, using its Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions.

In accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act §602.27(c), the Commission also discloses in its Accreditation Reference Handbook, the Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation Manual, or other appropriate publications, each type of accreditation and candidacy granted by the Commission, the procedures for applying for eligibility, candidacy, or initial accreditation, the criteria and procedures used by the Commission in determining whether to grant, reaffirm, deny, or take any other action related to the accredited status of institutions; the names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the Commission and principal staff; the institutions the Commission currently accredits or recognizes in candidacy status; and the date when the Commission will next review or consider the accreditation or candidacy of each institution. Other matters of public interest are the domain of the institution.

Under the provisions of the U.S. Secretary's Procedures and Criteria for the Recognition of Accrediting Agencies (§602.2), only denial, or termination of accreditation or candidacy are defined as adverse actions by the Commission.

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Appeals of denial or termination are governed by the provisions of the WASC Constitution.

**B. WASC Directory Information**

Membership information is published on the ACCJC website and includes the name of the institution and location, the chief executive officer, the form of control, each type of accreditation or pre-accreditation (candidacy) held by the institution, the date of initial accreditation, and the date of the next comprehensive review.

**C. Statement of Accredited Status**

The Commission has adopted a set of basic information elements that will be made available in Commission publications, or on request, about the accredited status of individual institutions. This information will be recorded and disseminated in a common format. A *Statement of Accredited Status* will be prepared for each member institution. A *Statement of Accredited Status* will also be available to the public on request. The Statement includes information about the nature of the institution and its scope, its accredited status, the nature of Commission actions regarding the institution, a definition of the meaning of the accredited status, and a discussion of any terms that might require explanation.

**D. Commission Responsibilities to the Institution**

The Commission will prepare information for the institution which outlines the reasons for the action, the follow-up and the monitoring activities which will be required, and the time frame within which the institution must remedy the conditions which led to the action.

If an institution cannot document that it is in compliance with the Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and policies within a maximum of two years after the initial action, the Commission will take an adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the Commission defines adverse action as only denial, or termination of accreditation or candidacy. If the Commission determines that there is good cause, the Commission may extend the time allowed for the institution to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and policies.

**E. Disclosure of Commission Actions on the Accredited Status of Institutions**

Actions of the Commission regarding the accredited status of institutions as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions are public actions. The Commission publishes the status of each institution in appropriate publications such as Commission Newsletters, and the ACCJC website. The Commission also provides written notification to the Secretary of Education, appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies and accrediting bodies, and the public no later than 30 days after it makes a decision on the accreditation status of an institution, as required by the Higher Education Act. In cases where the Commission has taken final action to terminate, deny or accept the withdrawal of accreditation or to terminate, deny or accept the withdrawal of candidacy or to place an institution on warning, probation or show cause, the Commission provides written notification

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to the Secretary of Education, appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies and accrediting bodies at the same time the institution is notified of such a final action.

If a specific inquiry is made about an institution which has been warned, placed on probation, or issued a show cause order, the college president shall inform the inquirer that such action has been taken and the reasons therefore.

If an institution so conducts its affairs that it becomes a matter of public concern, misrepresents a Commission action, or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission may announce, through the President, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to it.

## **II. Information about the Application of the Accreditation Processes at a Particular Institution**

- A. The Commission publishes the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive review annually in the Commission newsletter. This notice also includes an invitation for third-party comment and information regarding how, and to whom, that comment should be delivered. The institutional evaluation schedule is available to the public upon request.
- B. The Commission provides each institution under review with a roster of the team members, including their positions and institutional affiliations. Institutions may object to a proposed team member for cause. These rosters are updated regularly as team membership is adjusted.
- C. The Commission requires the college to make public the institutional self study report, the team report, and the Commission action letter. The Commission itself neither makes public the self study report, the team report nor the Commission action letter, unless the institution has misrepresented the findings of the team report, or failed to make the team report, Commission action letter or self study report public. Should the institution or others issue selective and biased releases or use the public forum to take issue with Commission actions, the Commission and its staff will be free to make all the documents public. In the event of such misrepresentation, or failure to disclose, the Commission is free to disclose the reports and provide accurate statements about the institution's accredited status.
- D. The Commission does not disclose information about an institution's potential accredited status before a Commission action is taken. Information about actions under review or appeal (denial of candidacy or initial accreditation, or termination of accreditation) will not be disclosed until a final decision is rendered, unless required by federal regulation. Review and Appeal procedures are found in the Policy on Review of Commission Actions.
- E. The institutional file in the Commission office is part of the private relationship with the institution and is therefore not available to the public. Upon request, the Commission will disclose the number of complaints received about the institution

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since the last comprehensive evaluation, the general nature of those complaints, and their resolution or status. In accordance with its policy on Student and Public Complaints against Institutions (*Accreditation Reference Handbook*), the Commission will only include in that disclosure formal, signed complaints that are within the Commission's jurisdiction and which have been referred to the institution. Multiple complaints about a single issue will be assessed to determine how those complaints should be recorded. The Commission informs the institution when such an inquiry is received.

- F. In order to assure the accuracy and appropriateness of institutional information which is made public, the Commission expects team members to keep confidential all institutional information read or heard before, during, and after the team visit. Except in the context of Commission work, team members are limited in their discussion to information contained in the public reports. Sources of information that should remain confidential include previous college and team reports; the current self study report; interviews and written communication with campus personnel, students, trustees, and community members; and team discussions.

### III. Information about the Commission and its Processes

- A. The Commission newsletter is published at least twice yearly to provide timely information about accreditation. The newsletter includes a review of major accreditation issues in the region, a list of Commission actions, and the list of colleges scheduled for comprehensive visits, and updates of Commission policies. The newsletter is distributed to all member institutions, other accreditors, and appropriate higher education and government associations and agencies. The newsletter is available to the public on request;
- B. The Commission publishes handbooks, manuals, and other materials which describe the Commission and its processes; these are distributed to all member institutions and to the public on request. These materials are free to members and other accreditors and are available for a nominal charge to others;
- C. The Commission maintains a website which informs members and the public about the Commission and its activities ([www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)).
- D. The Commission and Commission staff make presentations before organizations within higher education, government, and the public at large. The Commission and its staff participate in regional and national forums on subjects related to quality assurance and institutional improvement; and
- F. The Commission regularly renews its commitment to the principles expressed in its policies through a process of review by the Commission. When new issues in the field of higher education or changes in the United States Department of Education emerge, policies may be created, revised or eliminated. First reading policies are sent to the field for review and comment, followed by submission to the Commission for second reading and adoption.

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## Member Institution's Responsibilities

Institutions, as well as accrediting agencies, are accountable for honest and open communication with the public on institution-related issues in which there is a legitimate public interest. Honesty, openness, and concern for its constituents are indicators of the integrity with which the institution conducts its interactions and communications with its public. Ultimately, this institutional integrity is one indicator of institutional quality and effectiveness, and the Commission includes these matters in its evaluation of institutions. The Commission relies on member institutions to conduct themselves in accordance with these principles of institutional responsibility.

### I. Institutional Self Study and other Accreditation Reports

#### A. Self Studies

The Commission relies on the strong sense of collegiality, mutual respect, and trust in its relations with member institutions. The privilege of self-regulation requires openness with the public as well.

The self study report is the property of the institution which developed it, but the self study report should receive wide distribution within the institution. The Commission recognizes that some institutions may be governed by public disclosure statutes and expects that institutions will conduct themselves in accord with those laws and regulations.

#### B. Team Reports

The Commission requires that institutions share the findings and recommendations that result from the team visit and accreditation process widely throughout the institution, especially with those that contributed to the self study. Once an on-site evaluation is complete, institutions are required to make the report public and readily available through a wide distribution. The institution is required to publicize the location of the team reports. Any excerpting of team reports for use by those outside the institution must be accompanied by explanatory information which discusses the complete context of accreditation. Any use of the team reports which misquotes, misleads, or misrepresents findings or recommendations is grounds for Commission release of the complete team report.

### II. On-Site Evaluation

The Commission requires that the chief executive officer notify the campus community of the date and purpose of each comprehensive evaluation and any follow-up activity or reports requested by the Commission. Key elements in that notification to the campus community should include the following:

1. Notice of the opportunity for submission of third-party comments by the public and the process for doing so;
2. Information regarding where and how the Commission's Accreditation Standards may be accessed at the institution;

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3. Information regarding the implementation of the institutional self study, the development of the self study report, and a call for widespread participation;
  4. Information regarding the team visit, team composition, dates of the visit, and team schedule and activities. Institutions are expected to publicize times and locations during the visit when team members will be available to meet informally with any member of the campus community on any accreditation issue.

### **III. Dissemination of Information within Individual Institutions Regarding Commission Actions**

The Commission delegates the primary responsibility for communicating information about its accreditation status to the institution. However, the Commission action letter to the chief executive officer requires that there be broad and timely dissemination of the team report and the Commission action letter within the institution, especially to those who were signatories to the self study report. The Chair of the institutional Board and system or district Chancellor (where applicable) also receive a copy of the action letter and the team report.

### **IV. Representation of Eligibility, Candidacy, or Accredited Status**

- A. The institution is required to describe its accredited status using the language prescribed in the Commission Policy on Representation of Accredited Status, and to avoid expanding that representation to include other matters such as transfer of credit. The address and telephone number of the Commission office should be included when the college references its accredited status, including catalogs and recruiting materials. Institutions must send a copy of the institutional catalog to the Commission office as each iteration is published.
- B. The chief executive officer of the institution is responsible for informing the campus community of the accreditation action taken by the Commission and the reasons for the action. This communication should be coordinated with district or system officers as appropriate. If the accreditation action includes any special status, the institution is obligated to provide that information to all current and prospective students and staff in a timely manner.
- C. When the institution refers to its accredited status in any publications or advertisements during a period in which its accreditation may be subject to special scrutiny, the institution must disclose that information.

## Policy on Refund of Student Charges

*(Adopted June 2005)*

### Background

National attention has for some time focused on the matter of fair and equitable refund of student charges and fees. Since 1976, federal law has required that all institutions receiving federal student-aid funds have equitable refund policies. This policy summarizes elements of fair and equitable refund of tuition, room, board and other charges for students who withdraw from their studies or otherwise discontinue their use of an institution's services before the end of an academic term. It offers a balanced approach to issues related to refunds, including the financial commitments incurred by the institution and the responsibility to treat both withdrawing and continuing students fairly. Overall, it requires institutions to ensure that their students' rights to fair and equitable treatment are fully recognized.

### Policy

Institutions shall publish a current schedule of all student charges including a statement of the purpose for such charges and a list of optional or non-refundable charges and deposits. Institutions shall also develop, make public, and adhere to policies and procedures for the fair and equitable refund of all charges made to students except those that are clearly identified as "non-refundable."

### Policy Elements

The institution's refund policy should be consistent with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) guidelines, accepted by the United States Department of Education to meet the 1976 federal law requirements, and include:

- Adoption by the governing board and wide dissemination.
- A clear distinction between those charges and deposits that are refundable and those that are not.
- A reasonable sliding scale of refund amounts or percentages of fees, deposits, and charges that is tied to specific dates within the academic term. A notification that withdrawal and requests for refunds must be made in writing and addressed to designated college officials.
- An appeal process for students who feel that individual circumstances warrant exceptions from published policy which includes the name, title, and address of the official responsible.
- A timely schedule of repayment or credit of refunds which considers the time required to process a formal student request for refund, to process a check if required, and to allow for mail delivery when necessary.



## Policy on Representation of Accredited Status

*(Adopted June 1998; Revised January 1999; Edited June 2003, August 2006)*

The following statements govern representations which can be made by an institution during three types of accreditation status. In addition, institutions on probation, show cause, or termination status must disclose that information to students and prospective students and in any publication where the institution makes reference to its accredited status.

### A. Representation of Status by Institutions Preparing, Submitting, or Completing Eligibility Reviews

An institution which is preparing, has submitted, or completed an Eligibility Review has no formal relationship with the Commission. An institution that has completed an Eligibility Review may not make any representation which claims or implies any relationship with the Accrediting Commission.

During the period in which the college prepares its self study, the institution does not have a publicly recognized relationship with the Accrediting Commission and cannot represent itself to current or prospective students, the public, governmental agencies, other accrediting bodies, or any other parties as having an affiliated status with the Commission.

No formal or informal statements should be made about possible future accreditation, status, or qualification which is not yet conferred by the Commission.

Representations should be limited to the following statement:

At its (date of meeting), the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges reviewed and accepted the Eligibility Report submitted by (name of institution). Under Commission rules, acceptance of an Eligibility Report does not establish a formal relationship between the Commission and the college. Inquiries about accreditation should be made to the Commission office: ACCJC/WASC, 10 Commercial, Ste. 204, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 506-0234.

### B. Representation of Status by Candidate Institutions

Institutions that have achieved candidacy status should use the following language in public representations about their relationship with the Accrediting Commission. Note that both paragraphs are required.

(Name of institution) is a candidate for accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 10 Commercial, Ste. 204, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 506-0234, an institutional accrediting

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body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

Candidate for Accreditation is a status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission initially awarded for up to two years. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not assure eventual accreditation.

**C. Representation of Status by Accredited Institutions**

Representations of accredited status should be limited to the following statement. Additional modifiers such as “fully accredited” are not appropriate since no partial accreditation is possible.

(Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 10 Commercial, Ste. 204, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 506-0234, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

## Policy on Review of Commission Actions

*(Adopted January 1977; Revised January 1979, June 1998; Edited June 2002,  
August 2006, January 2008)*

Institutions that are denied candidacy or initial accreditation, or whose candidacy or accredited status is terminated by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges may request a review of the Commission's decisions. Other Commission actions are not subject to review. For purposes of compliance with §602.25(c) of the Higher Education Act, these actions are considered to be adverse actions. Such a review must be requested prior to filing of an appeal by the institution to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The following procedures will govern the conduct of the Commission's review:

1. If the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges decides to take any of the actions listed above, its President will notify the institution concerned of the decision by certified mail, return receipt requested, within approximately seven calendar days of the Commission's decision. Said notification shall contain a succinct statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision.
2. If the institution wishes a review by the Commission, it shall file with the President a request for such a review under the policies and procedures of the Commission. This request should be submitted by the chief executive officer of the institution and co-signed by the Chairperson of the governing board. Requests for review by an institution in a multi-college system shall be co-signed by the chief executive officer of the system. This request must be received by certified mail, return receipt requested, within twenty-eight calendar days of the date of the mailing of the Commission's notification of its decision to the institution. The fee for review shall accompany the request.
3. Within twenty-one calendar days after the date of its request for a review, the institution, through its chief administrative officer, must submit a written statement of the reasons why, in the institution's opinion, a review of the Commission's decision is warranted. As a general rule, this written statement should respond only to the reasons cited by the Commission in its decision and to the evidence that was before the Commission at the time of its decision. In so doing, the institution shall identify the basis for its request for review in one or more of the following areas: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (3) the evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision which is being appealed was materially in error; or (4) the decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

It is the responsibility of the institution to identify in its statement of reasons any specific information that was not considered, or was improperly considered, by the

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visiting team. The institution must accompany its statement of reasons with all written documents that the institution desires that the review committee consider.

The statement of reasons will be reviewed by Commission staff for compliance with this provision. If, in the judgment of Commission staff, the statement of reasons is deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission Chairperson. No review committee will be appointed should the Commission Chairperson concur.

If the statement of reasons is returned, the institution will be provided the opportunity to revise the statement within 21 days from the date the notice of return is sent to the institution. Should the institution resubmit its statement of reasons within the prescribed time period, the revised statement will be reviewed by Commission staff. If the revised statement is still found deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission Chairperson. Should the Commission Chairperson concur that the revised statement is deficient, no review committee will be appointed. This action is final and is not subject to the WASC appeals process.

4. On acceptance of the institution's written statement of reasons referred to in paragraph 3, the Commission staff will select a review committee of three or more persons. A roster of the review committee will be sent to the institution normally within twenty-one calendar days of the date of the Commission's receipt and acceptance of the institution's statement of reasons. No person who has served as a member of the visiting team whose report is subject to review shall be eligible to serve on the review committee. The institution will be provided the opportunity to object for cause to any of the proposed review committee members. After giving the institution notice of this opportunity, the Commission staff will finalize the membership of the review committee.
5. Within a reasonable period of time after the review committee has been selected, the President will schedule a meeting of the review committee at a location separate from the institution and Commission offices. No assurance can be made that the review committee process will take place so that action on the request for review will be able to be scheduled on the agenda of the next Commission meeting.
6. Prior to the meeting of the review committee, a Chairperson will be appointed and the review committee will review available information. If additional information is needed at any time during the review by the review committee, the Chairperson of the review committee may request such information from the chief executive officer of the institution, Commission staff, or the prior team.
7. The review will be investigative and designed to determine if the grounds for review, cited by the institution, have been met.
8. The committee will open and close its meeting with the chief executive officer or other institutional representatives, by attempting to ascertain whether the institution has any complaints about any aspect of the review process. The review committee is allowed to consider only evidence that was available to or known by the Commission at the time of its taking action. New evidence or information relating to actions or events subsequent to the date of the Commission action shall not be presented or considered by the review committee.

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9. The committee will prepare a report that states the reasons for the Commission action, identifies each reason advanced by the institution in its request for review, and, for each reason, evaluates the evidence which the institution has presented in support of its request for review. In addition, the review committee may evaluate additional evidence that, in its opinion, is relevant to its recommendation to the Commission and was before the Commission at the time it rendered its decision. The report shall state only findings of fact, and not consider or cite any evidence relating to facts or events occurring after the date of the Commission's decision.
  10. The Chairperson of the review committee will submit a copy of the committee's report which is referred to in paragraph 9 to the chief executive officer of the institution, the Chairperson of the institution's governing board, and the President of the Commission, normally within twenty-one calendar days of the end of the review committee's deliberations, via certified mail or other means that provide a receipt of delivery.
  11. Within fourteen calendar days of the institution's receipt of the review committee's report, via certified mail or other means that provide a receipt of delivery, the chief executive officer may submit a written response to the President of the Commission, with a copy to the Chairperson of the review committee. Failure of the institution to submit a response shall constitute an acceptance by the institution of the review committee's report.
  12. In a confidential letter to the Commission, the review committee shall recommend whether the decision of the Commission under review should be affirmed, reversed, or modified. The recommendation of the review committee to the Commission will not be disclosed to the institution being reviewed. The recommendation is not binding on the Commission.
  13. In making its decision on the institution's status, the Commission will consider the evidence available to it and then reach a final decision to (a) reaffirm its original decision; (b) modify it; or (c) reverse it. As soon after the meeting as practicable, the President will notify the chief executive officer of the institution by certified mail or other means that provide a receipt of delivery, of the Commission's decision.
  14. The decision of the Commission, referred to in paragraph 15, shall be final as far as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is concerned. However, if the decision has affirmed the denial of candidacy or termination of accreditation, the institution may file an appeal with the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges through the President of the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Article VI of the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
  15. An institution retains its accredited or candidate status until the review process of the Commission is completed. If the institution files a subsequent appeal with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, its status remains unchanged until that appeal has been resolved.
  16. The cost of the review will be borne by the institution. The request for a review must be accompanied by a deposit set by the Commission. If the actual cost is less than this amount, the excess will be refunded. If it is greater, the institution will be billed for the difference.
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## Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process

*(Adopted January 2005; Edited August 2007, October 2007; Revised June 2011)*

### Background

Students, the public, higher education bodies, and various levels of government need assurance that an accredited institution is of high quality and possesses integrity. American higher education has chosen to use a voluntary, non-governmental, self-regulatory process to provide this assurance. Such a process must balance institutional autonomy, independence, and freedom with an institution's responsibilities to its various constituencies. Therefore, the process must carefully delineate the rights and responsibilities of both the accrediting bodies and the institutions they accredit. Mutual understanding and respect for the rights and responsibilities of each party will assure that higher education remains fundamentally sound, responsible, responsive, and effective, so that the public may have confidence in the integrity and quality of educational institutions with a minimum need for government regulations.

### Policy

The Commission is committed to partnering with a member institution in a voluntary non-governmental accreditation process that results in a mutual commitment to self-regulation, quality assurance to the public, and continuous institutional improvement. The Commission and its member institutions share rights and responsibilities to develop and promulgate Accreditation Standards and an agreed-upon accrediting process for educational quality and institutional effectiveness review (formerly comprehensive review). The institutional chief executive officer is the chief representative of the institution to the Commission. The Commission communicates to the institution primarily through the chief executive officer.

### Policy Elements

#### A. Development and Promulgation of Standards

The Commission has the responsibility to: develop Standards which are consistent with the purposes of accreditation, which are sufficiently flexible to allow diversity and effective program development, and which allow and encourage institutional/programmatic freedom and autonomy, and allow the institution to exercise its rights within a reasonable set of parameters relevant to the quality of education.

The Commission has the responsibility to provide opportunities for broad participation of affected constituencies in the development and acceptance of the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies, and to permit institutional input on new or revised policies by providing for an opportunity for review at public meetings of the Commission and to consider such input from a member institution when making changes to the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies.

A member institution has the responsibility to participate in development of the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies and in the Commission's periodic

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reviews. The Commission has the responsibility to develop and promulgate Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and policies that meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education regarding a member institution's eligibility for Title IV. The institutional chief executive officer and the accreditation liaison officer have the responsibility to communicate and promulgate information about the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and policies, and any changes to them, and the institution's plans for any changes needed to comply with new Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies, to their institutional constituencies. A member institution has the responsibility to communicate directly to the Commission any comments on or concerns about the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and policies.

## **B. Institutional Records of Accreditation**

The Commission has the responsibility to provide, when requested, copies of correspondence pertaining to that institution to the Chief Executive Officer and, where appropriate, to the Accreditation Liaison Officer.

A member institution has the responsibility to develop an effective mechanism to ensure the internal coordination of accreditation activities. A member institution has the responsibility to maintain all correspondence and records on the accreditation history of the institution, and on substantive change applications and the outcomes of the application.

A member institution has the responsibility to share records of the institution's accreditation history, as appropriate, within the campus community.

## **C. Information Collection**

The Commission has the responsibility to specify items to be addressed in all reports to the Commission, require only information that is relevant to the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies, and respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accreditation process.

A member institution has the responsibility to: determine how to design and conduct the Institutional Self Evaluation process (formerly self study process), involve broad and appropriate constituent groups in the preparation and process of the Institutional Self Evaluation, disclose to the Commission all information which is required to carry out the Commission evaluation and accreditation functions and respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accreditation process.

A member institution has the responsibility to maintain records of formal student complaints and grievances between each review cycle, and make them available to the Commission and evaluation team upon request, in accord with federal regulations. A member institution must submit substantive change proposals for approval by the Commission before such substantive changes are implemented.

## **D. Site Visits and Reviews**

The Commission has the right to: conduct site visits as required under the Commission's adopted accreditation processes; exercise its discretion whether or not to conduct joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits when requested by an institution; and note in its accreditation documents any attempt by professional organizations,

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collective bargaining groups, or special interest groups to impede or interfere with participation in the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review process and visit.

A member institution has the right to request the Commission to hold joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits; and review the list of proposed evaluation team members in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

The Commission has the responsibility to select evaluation team members, who are competent by virtue of experience, training, and orientation, and are sensitive to the unique mission of the institution. Prior to the selection of the evaluation team, the Commission will consult with the institution to determine any special needs or concerns. The Commission has the responsibility to assure that evaluation team members are impartial, objective, and without conflict of interest and that the evaluation team is of an appropriate size and composition for the purposes of the site visit. The institution has the right and responsibility to review the evaluation team members and report any conflicts of interest or concerns to the Commission before the team composition is finalized. The Commission has the responsibility to assure that evaluation team members keep confidential all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the site visit. The Commission has the responsibility to set the length of a site visit, ordinarily three days for a review and one or more days, as needed, for a follow-up or any other special visit. The Commission has the responsibility to set the dates of the site visit in consultation with the institution.

The Commission also has the responsibility to communicate its findings derived from the site visit to the institution; ensure that the External Evaluation Report (formerly team report) identifies and distinguishes clearly between statements directly related to meeting the Standards and those representing suggestions for quality improvement; provide the chief executive officer of the institution with an opportunity to correct all factual errors in the draft team report; and provide supplemental materials pertinent to the facts and conclusions in the External Evaluation Report before it takes action on the Institutional Self Evaluation and External Evaluation Report.

A member institution has the responsibility to provide maximum opportunity for communication between all relevant constituencies and the evaluation team; and ensure that professional organizations, collective bargaining groups, or special interest groups not impede or interfere with reports, visits, and reviews. A member institution also has the responsibility to make the External Evaluation Report available to the public. A member institution has the responsibility to acknowledge that specialized accrediting agency recognition, local governmental requirements and/or collective bargaining agreements, in and of themselves, do not abrogate or substitute institutional and employee obligations to comply with the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies.

## E. Commission Actions on Institutions

A member institution has the right to withdraw a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request. A member institution also has the right to appeal an accreditation decision to deny accreditation or to terminate accreditation in accordance with the policies of the Commission and to maintain accredited status during the appeal. A member institution has the right to withdraw from Commission membership



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by sending a written notice to the Commission of the intent to withdraw as of the end of the institutional semester or term. Ordinarily, the notice must be sent with adequate time for the Commission to approve the request at its next scheduled meeting<sup>1</sup> prior to anticipated date of withdrawal of accreditation.

The Commission has the responsibility to: permit the withdrawal of a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request; require an institution voluntarily withdrawing from Commission membership to take appropriate steps to notify its student body, the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state/governmental licensing and authorizing agencies, and the public, and where appropriate to follow the Commission's "Policy on Closing an Institution"; make decisions solely on the basis of published Standards, policies, and procedures using information available and made known to the institution; avoid conflicts of interest in the decision-making process; and ensure the confidentiality of the deliberations in which accreditation decisions are made, and observe due process in all deliberations.

The Commission also has the responsibility to: notify institutions promptly in writing of accreditation decisions and give reasons for the actions; ensure that the communication of the final accreditation decision identifies and clearly distinguishes between statements directly related to meeting the Standards and those representing suggestions for quality improvement; publish accrediting decisions, both affirmative and negative, except for initial denial of candidacy or eligibility (which are not made public); maintain the confidentiality of the team report; and require that corrective action be taken if an institution releases information misrepresenting or distorting any accreditation action taken by the Commission or the status of its affiliation with the Commission. If the institution is not prompt in taking corrective action, the Commission may release a public statement providing the correct information.

A member institution has the responsibility to accept the Commission's action after availing itself of its due process rights afforded in Commission policy, and to make public the Commission's action letter and the External Evaluation Report as well as the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. A member institution has the responsibility to uphold the credibility and integrity of the accreditation process by accurately portraying the Commission's actions and helping institutional constituencies to understand the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies pertinent to an accreditation action taken on an institution. A member institution has a responsibility to respond to evaluation team or Commission recommendations within the time parameters set by the Commission.

## **F. Follow-Up**

The Commission has the right to take action to assure that a member institution meets its responsibilities and to request periodic reports, special reports, annual reports, additional visits, and consultative activities relevant to the institution's accreditation status. The Commission has the right to request the reevaluation of an institution at any time as a means for monitoring specific developments within an institution between comprehensive evaluations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission meets in January and June of each calendar year to take actions on institutions.

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The Commission has the responsibility to provide written notice to the institution of the action taken in relation to a special report or visit, support improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution, and work with the institution to identify appropriate assistance.

## Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions

*(Adopted June 1972, Revised January 1984, January 1993; Edited October 1997;  
Revised June 2001; Edited August 2007)*

Accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is an expression of confidence that an institution is satisfactorily achieving its objectives, and that it meets or exceeds the Commission's Standards and abides by Commission policies. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with Commission Standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution's compliance with the Standards expected of an accredited institution.

The Commission does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and individual institutions. The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure and dismissals or similar matters.

Complaints are considered only when made in writing, when the complainant is clearly identified, and the complainant's address is included. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the Commission's Standards and policies. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The Commission requires that each affiliated institution have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with Commission Standards and policies. If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution and/or to the visiting team next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding, consistent with Commission policy. If Commission investigation yields credible evidence that indicates a systemic problem that calls into question the institution's ability to meet Commission Standards and policies, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.

### Procedures

1. Within ten days of the receipt of a complaint it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

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It is the complainant's responsibility to do the following:

- a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
  - b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
  - c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeals, hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant should describe what has been done in this regard.
  - d. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the president of the institution.
  - e. Include name and address.
  - f. Sign the complaint.
2. If the President or designee finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.
  3. If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive, who will be asked to respond to the President within thirty days. The President will send a copy of the complaint and correspondence to the chairperson of the Accrediting Commission.
  4. The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution's president, and will determine one of the following:
    - a. That the complaint will not be processed further. The complainant will be so notified within ten days.
    - b. That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation (which may include referral to the Commission). The Commission may request information of the institution and may visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding. If Commission investigation reveals credible evidence that the institution is not meeting Commission Standards and policies, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy. In the event of further investigation, the complainant will be so notified within ten days.

Although every effort will be made to expedite a final decision, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed. If further investigation is warranted, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

5. The complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the review of the complaint.
  - a. If the complaint is investigated further, as in 4.b above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within ten days.

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Prior to the Commission's disposition of the complaint, the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation. The complainant and the institution involved will be notified of the decision. The decision as communicated by the President is final.

- b. If the complaint was referred to ACCJC by another agency, that agency will receive copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint within ten days.
6. The Commission will keep a record of student and public complaints against member institutions. Commission staff will report to the Commission annually regarding the status and resolution of student and public complaints against member institutions. At the time of an institution's comprehensive evaluation, a summary of any complaints will be provided to the team chair for consideration by the evaluation team.

## Policy on Substantive Change

*(Adopted October 1972; Revised January 1978, June 1991, June 1996; Edited October 1997; Revised January 2002; Edited June 2002, August 2004; Revised June 2011)*

### Background

The U.S. Department of Education regulations require that accrediting agencies have adequate policies and procedures to ensure that any substantive changes to the educational mission, or programs of an institution, maintain the capacity of the institution to continue to meet Accreditation Standards. Federal law mandates that accrediting agencies require institutions to obtain accreditor approval of a substantive change before the change is included in the scope of the accreditation granted to the institution. The scope of an institution's accreditation covers all activities conducted in its name.

### Policy

The Commission, through its substantive change process, ensures that institutions continue to meet the Standards. The substantive change process requires evidence of institutional planning, resource commitment to the proposed change, and evidence that following the change the institution continues to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies.

It is the institution's responsibility to demonstrate the effect of a substantive change on the quality, integrity, capacity and effectiveness of the total institution. Substantive changes must be approved by the Commission prior to implementation [34 CFR, § 602.22].

The Commission publishes a Substantive Change Manual that describes the approval process. The institution's accreditation will be extended to areas affected by the change upon review and approval by the Commission. Major substantive changes or the area potentially affected by the substantive change may cause the Commission to decide whether an educational quality and institutional effectiveness review (formerly comprehensive review) or site visit is required to make a determination regarding the substantive change.

Institutions may not submit a Substantive Change Proposal in the six-month period preceding the site visit. The Commission may defer consideration of a substantive change request if an institution is on a sanction such as Warning, Probation, or Show Cause until the conditions that caused the Commission to defer a decision or to impose a sanction have been resolved and the Commission has reaffirmed accreditation.

Substantive Changes include, but are not limited to, the following:

### Change in Mission, Objectives, Scope, or Name of the Institution

- a change in the mission or character of the institution; if the mission or character of the institution becomes dramatically different, the Commission reserves the right to require the institution to complete the eligibility, candidacy, and initial accreditation process

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- a change in the degree level from that which was previously offered by the institution, i.e., offering a degree at a level higher than the accredited institution offers currently
  - any change in the official name of the institution
  - a merger of two separately-accredited ACCJC institutions into a single accreditable institution
  - a reduction of programs to an extent that the institution's mission cannot be accomplished

### **Change in the Nature of the Constituency Served**

- a change in the intended student population
- closure of an institution
- closure of a location geographically apart from the main campus at which students can complete at least 50% of an educational program
- courses or programs offered outside the geographic region currently served

### **Change in the Location or Geographic Area Served**

An institution that moves to a new location or opens a new location geographically apart from the main campus where students can complete 50% or more of a program constitutes a substantive change. The Commission will determine if an institution applying for substantive change for a new location requires a site visit. The Commission will determine if an institution may be exempted from the requirement of a site visit if the following conditions are met:

- An institution has successfully completed at least one cycle of accreditation of maximum length offered by the Commission (six years) and one renewal or has been accredited for at least ten years and has three additional locations already approved by the Commission through the Substantive Change process.
- The institution has demonstrated sufficient capacity to add additional locations without individual prior approvals, including at a minimum satisfactory evidence of a system to ensure quality across a distributed enterprise that includes: clearly identified academic control; regular evaluation of the locations; adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems; financial stability; and long-range planning for expansion.

The Commission must determine the institution's fiscal and administrative capacity to operate the additional location. In addition, the Commission shall arrange a visit, within six months of review, to each additional location the institution establishes if the institution has a total of 3 or fewer additional locations, has not demonstrated to the Commission's satisfaction that it has a proven record of effective educational oversight of additional locations or has been placed on sanction by the Commission. The purpose of the site visits is to verify that the additional location(s) has the personnel, facilities, and resources the institution claimed to have in its application to the Commission for approval of the additional location(s).

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The Commission may not approve an institution's addition of locations after the institution undergoes a change in ownership resulting in a change of control as defined in Title 34 CFR 600.31 of the U.S. Department of Education until the institution demonstrates that it meets the conditions for the agency to pre-approve additional locations described in U.S. Department of Education §602.22 Section (3) (B-D).

### **Change in the Control or Legal Status of the Institution**

- any change in the form of control, legal status, or ownership of the institution
- a merger with another institution<sup>1</sup>;
- the separation of one unit of the institution into separate institutions, dividing an institution into two or more separately controlled and accredited units
- the acquisition of any other institution or program or location of another institution, and/or the addition of a permanent location at the site of a teach-out the institution is conducting
- contracting for the delivery of courses or programs in the name of the institution with a non regionally-accredited organization
- a change by a parent institution of one of its off-campus sites into a separate institution

### **Change in Courses or Programs or their Mode of Delivery that Represents a Significant Departure from Current Practice**

- a change in the mode or location of delivery when the courses constitute 50% or more of a program, degree or certificate and/or are offered at a new or different location or through distance education or correspondence education for the total amount of credits awarded for courses or programs; addition of courses that constitute 50% or more of a program or 50% of the institution's courses offered through a mode of distance or electronic delivery
- the addition of courses or new programs that represent a significant departure from existing offerings of educational programs or methods of delivery from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or preaccreditation

### **A Change in Credit Awarded**

- a substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for the successful completion of a program
- a change from clock hours to credit hours
- a change in rigor of the credit hour

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<sup>1</sup> See also Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations



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## **A Contractual Relationship with a Non Regionally-Accredited Organization**

A contractual relationship with a non regionally-accredited organization is considered a substantive change when more than 25 percent of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs is offered by the non regionally-accredited organization (34 CFR Title 34 §602.22 Section 2. vii).

## Policy on Transfer of Credit

*(Adopted January 2005; Revised January 2010)*

### Background

Students experience transfer of credit as an issue critical to the successful completion of their educational goals. The majority of students attending two-year and community colleges typically attend more than one institution before completing their degree or certificate program. In addition, a large proportion of students seeking degrees or certificates will desire to pursue higher education at some time in the future.

Many factors contribute to student attendance at multiple institutions of higher learning;

- Economic, geographic and employment mobility;
- Desire to transfer distance learning credits to site-based institutions;
- Desire to transfer credit for experiences gained from employer training programs;
- Desire to transfer credits from foreign institutions.

These situations necessitate clear institutional policies on how academic credit is awarded and on how students can transfer academic credit. Institutions need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to facilitating transfer of credit to benefit students.

ACCJC is committed to:

- Enhancing educational opportunity by facilitating student mobility;
- Helping institutions to develop effective transfer of credit practices;
- Assuring that institutional transfer of credit practices are consistent with Accreditation Standards and policies;
- Maintaining effective communication between the Commission and member institutions in order to facilitate institutional adherence to Standards and policies and support improvement of transfer of credit between institutions.

### Policy

Accredited institutions have a responsibility to provide for effective transfer of credit that minimizes student difficulties in moving between institutions while assuring the high quality of their education. Each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit including transfer of credits from non-accredited institutions. Institutions shall establish policies on the transfer of credit that are clearly stated and that function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. At the same time, institutions shall be responsible for careful evaluation of credits that students wish to transfer. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students' preferences about transfer of credit and institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees, certificates, or other credentials that the receiving institution awards.

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## Policy Elements

Institutions considering transfer of credit from another institution must evaluate and ensure that:

- There is a balanced approach to decisions about whether to accept transfer of credit. Clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer of credit must be developed, followed, and maintained. Sound mechanisms for ongoing review and updating of policies and procedures must be established. The policy must include a statement of criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education<sup>1</sup>;
- The educational quality of the sending institution is the primary consideration. Receiving institutions must ensure that decisions are based on a fair assessment of the institution's educational quality and may include the regional, specialized and national accredited status of an institution, along with other factors as appropriate. Institutions should be flexible and open in considering alternative or innovative forms of educational delivery that may characterize the institution where the student received the credits proposed for transfer;
- There is assurance that the institution from which a student desires to transfer credit is a legitimate institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body or that the institution, if in another country, is approved by the legitimate accreditation or quality assurance agencies that operate in that country;
- There is assurance that transcripts and other credentials provided for purposes of transfer of credit are legitimate and, if validated by a third party foreign credential services, that the credential service agency is valid<sup>2</sup>;
- The nature, content, associated student learning outcomes, and level of credit(s) earned at the sending institution are comparable to those of the credit(s) offered at the receiving institution;
- The credit(s) earned for the programs offered by the sending institution, in light of the student's educational goals, are appropriate and applicable to the credits the student seeks to transfer to the receiving institution's program;
- The receiving institution acts consistently and fairly in its review of the courses that students propose to transfer for credit. Students must be treated equitably as they seek to transfer credit, and institutions must consider all requests to transfer credit carefully before making decisions; and,
- College publications used to inform or recruit students provide accurate and timely information about transfer of credit policies and procedures to students, the public, and sending institutions. The information should include clearly defined procedures, deadlines, and documents needed from sending institutions when attempting transfer of credit as well as essential academic factors that are involved in transfer of credit decisions (such as existing course equivalencies, content and/or student learning outcomes, grades, course level and applicability toward a degree, certificate, or program prerequisite). These policies must be publically disclosed.

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<sup>1</sup> Required by the Higher Opportunities Education Act as amended.

<sup>2</sup> ACCJC recommends that AACRAO services be used.

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Effective public communication is maintained through an ongoing exchange with students and the public about transfer of credit opportunities and limitations through catalogues, counseling and advising, and websites. Ongoing contact and information exchange among institutions that routinely send and receive transfer students must be sustained. Information to students and the public about special circumstances that may affect the ease or difficulty of transfer of credit shall be provided.

Where software or a website is used to offer customized transfer of credit information or information on articulation agreements to students, it is accurate and current. Where provision is made for electronic transfer of credit, application for transcript analysis, or other key functions, it is confidential, secure, accurate and current.

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# Commission Operational Policies

## Policy on Access to Commission Meetings

*(Adopted June 1978; Revised January 2000; Edited June 2005; Revised January 2006)*

### Background

The ACCJC holds meetings of the Commission for two purposes: to decide the accredited status of applicant and member institutions and to consider such organizational and policy matters as may come before it. When deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals or institutions, the Commission meets in Executive Session. When deliberating or acting upon informational, organizational, or policy matters, the Commission meets in Public Session.

### Policy

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges supports and encourages the presence of members of the public at its meetings. The Commission also recognizes that it has the responsibility to consider actions on the accredited status of institutions and matters such as personnel actions in a confidential manner.

### Policy Elements

#### I. Public Sessions of the Commission Meeting

The President mails a preliminary agenda 30 days before each regular meeting of the Commission to the chief executive officer and accreditation liaison officer of all applicant, candidate, and accredited institutions with the request that the agenda be posted or otherwise publicized. The preliminary agenda is also posted on the Commission web page.

Observers will be seated at the public sessions of Commission meetings as space allows. Anyone wishing to make a presentation or address the Commission must give advance notice to the President as outlined below and identify the agenda item that they wish to address. No reference to specific individuals or institutions shall be made in Public Session.

Participation by observers at Commission meetings is limited to the following:

- A. **Statements which address the Commission's agenda and which have been noted by the President in the agenda at the appropriate places.** A written copy of all prepared remarks should be given to the President prior to the presentation. Requests to make statements should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting.
- B. **Requests to bring items to the attention of the Commission.** Such requests should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting.

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- C. **Brief comments on specific points in the Public Session agenda.** These may be made at the end of the Commission discussion of the same topic upon recognition from the Chair. The Chair may invite participation at other times at his/her discretion.

In all cases, observers' statements shall be limited to five minutes but may be extended at the discretion of the chair or vote of the Commission.

## II. Executive Sessions of the Commission

- A. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern an institution, it will invite the chief executive officer of the institution to meet with the Commission in Executive Session. There is no requirement that the chief executive officer attend the Commission meeting. If the Commission is considering institutional action as a result of an evaluation team visit and the chief executive officer of the institution accepts the invitation to attend, the Chair of the evaluation team or designee is also invited to attend.

The institutional representative will be invited to make a brief presentation followed by questions by Commissioners. The Commission reserves the right to establish a time limit on and procedures for such presentations. If the institution wants to bring written material to the Commission's attention it should be submitted to the Commission no less than 15 days before the meeting. After the institutional representative is excused the evaluation Team Chair will be asked to respond to Commission questions. The Team Chair is then excused, and the Commission deliberations and decision are conducted in Executive Session.

- B. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals, the Commission meets in Executive Session. Requests to meet with members of the Commission in Executive Session should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting. Whenever possible, the President will arrange for a subcommittee of Commissioners to meet with the individuals preceding the Executive Session of the Commission to discuss the matters of concern. These Commissioners will report to the Commission as a whole and may recommend a presentation before the full Commission at an appropriate time.

## Bylaws for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

*(Adopted June 1998; Revised January 1999, January 2001, January 2002, June 2002;  
Edited January 2004, October 2007; Amended January 2011)*

### ARTICLE I, PURPOSE

#### Section 1. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It shall be referred to throughout these bylaws as the "Commission."

#### Section 2. Purpose

The purposes of the Commission shall be the evaluation of member institutions to assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to higher education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets Accreditation Standards. The Commission encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through an institutional self evaluation using the Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements and Policies, as well as Midterm, Follow-Up, and Special Reports, and periodic evaluation of institutional quality by qualified peer professionals.

### ARTICLE II, ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

#### Section 1. Member Institutions

The member institutions of the Commission shall consist of all of the institutions accredited by the Commission. In the event an institution loses its accreditation for any reason, its membership status shall cease immediately.

#### Section 2. Scope

The Commission accredits associate degree granting institutions in California, Hawaii, the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.



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## ARTICLE III, COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1. Membership

The Commission consists of nineteen members, all of whom are elected by the member institutions, as described in Article VI. One Commission member shall be from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and shall be selected from among the nominees provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor. One Commission member shall be from the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges and shall be selected from among the nominees provided by the University of Hawai'i Community College Vice President for Community Colleges. In addition, one Commission member shall be selected from among the nominees provided by each of the other WASC Commissions to represent the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Schools in accordance with the WASC Constitution. At least five of the Commission members shall be faculty; at least three (the precise number of whom shall at all times represent at least one seventh of the total membership of the Commission) shall be "representatives of the public", meeting the definition under the federal regulations [as defined in 34 CFR §602.3]; a maximum of two who meet the definition of an Affiliate Member; at least three members shall be two-year college administrators, at least one member shall represent independent institutions; and at least one member shall represent institutions in the American Affiliated Pacific Islands. An Affiliate Member shall be a person who does not qualify under any of the other categories enumerated in the preceding sentence but who shall nonetheless be deemed to have expertise or skills that will add meaningfully to the Commission.

### Section 2. Election of Commissioners

Commissioners are elected for staggered three-year terms. Appointments are limited to two three-year terms unless the person is elected an officer for a term which extends beyond a sixth year, in which case an additional three-year term or a term of the length necessary to complete service as an officer may be served. Regular appointments are effective on July 1 of the first year and end on June 30 of the last year of a Commissioner's term.

A Commissioner elected to a membership category defined by position or status is expected to maintain that status for the entire term. If the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which elected, the Commissioner shall notify the Commission's chair or President in a timely manner. A Commissioner whose status has so changed is considered to have completed the term on the date that the new status is actually assumed, except that a Commissioner who holds an administrative or faculty position on the Commission and elects to retire will, upon review and approval of the Commission Chair, be permitted to complete the academic year of service as a Commissioner.

### Section 3. Commission Vacancies

Commission vacancies will be filled through the Commissioner Election Process described in Article IV of these Bylaws. Anticipated vacancies will be announced at the winter meeting for Commission terms due to expire at the end of the following June. Notice of Commission vacancies will be sent to the chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and academic senate presidents of all member institutions, districts and systems; major organizations; and individuals known to have expressed interest. The notice will include the positions open for election, the Commissioners eligible for election, and the deadline for

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receipt of applications. Institutional and organizational representatives may submit nominations. Individuals may also submit applications. Applications are considered to be in effect for one year.

All individuals that wish to be considered will complete application materials required by the Commission. All applicants and nominees, including Commissioners seeking re-election, will be asked to submit the following:

- a. A letter of application stating the basis for interest in the Commission.
- b. A completed ACCJC data/biographical form. (Service as a Commissioner will be considered for Commissioners seeking a second term.)

Individuals who are seeking initial appointment to the Commission will be asked to submit a resume and two letters of recommendation.

#### **Section 4. Officers**

Commission officers shall consist of the chair, the vice chair, and the chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee.

The position of Commission chair is filled by the succession of the vice chair. The Commission vice chair is elected by the Commission and succeeds to the office of chair when that office becomes vacant. He or she then serves a two-year term as chair. No member of the Commission may serve as its chair for longer than three consecutive years. Thus, the vice chair may succeed to no more than twelve months of an unexpired term, followed by his or her two-year term. When a vacancy occurs in the vice chair position, an election to fill that office must occur within 45 days of the position becoming vacant.

Nominations for vice chair are normally solicited from the Commissioners before the winter meeting prior to the end of the chair's term. Nominees for the position shall represent a different membership category from that of the incoming chair. Four weeks prior to the scheduled vote, each nominee must submit a 200-word statement explaining why he or she is seeking the office. The statement is distributed to the full Commission prior to the vote. Voting is conducted through a secret ballot submitted to the Commission executive staff. The results are announced to Commission members within one week. Vacancies occurring outside normal term conclusions are filled through a similar process.

Commission officers are expected to serve in several ex-officio capacities. The Commission chair serves as an ex-officio, voting member of the Budget and Personnel Committee and of the Policy Committee, and as chair of the Executive Committee. The Commission chair also serves on the WASC Board. The Commission vice chair serves as an ex-officio voting member of the Executive Committee, and the Committee on Substantive Change, and may serve as the Substantive Change Committee's chair. The chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee serves as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee of the Commission.

#### **Section 5. Removal of a Commission Member**

Commissioners may be removed by two-thirds vote of the Commission for failure to exercise their responsibilities in accordance with the Commission policy on Professional and Ethical

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Responsibilities of Commission Members or for conduct which is detrimental to the purposes of the Commission.

## ARTICLE IV, COMMISSIONER ELECTION PROCESS

### Section 1. Nominating Committee

There shall be a Nominating Committee, the purpose of which shall be to nominate persons to serve on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The Nominating Committee shall consist of eight (8) persons, and shall serve for two years. The Commission Executive Committee shall appoint four Commissioners and four individuals from member institutions to the Nominating Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission may not serve on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will be chosen to represent the broad interests of the Commission's member institutions. At least one such appointment shall be a current or former public member (§602.3) of the Commission. The Executive Committee shall select the Chair of the Nominating Committee. The names of individuals appointed to the Nominating Committee shall be reported to the member institutions by the Commission.

### Section 2. Solicitation of Commission Applicants

The Commission shall notify the members of the Nominating Committee of the number and types of Commissioners to be selected and of any special considerations pertaining to such vacancies. The Nominating Committee shall write to all of the Presidents/Chancellors of the Commission's member institutions, the President of the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) and the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS), the chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and academic senate presidents of all member institutions, districts and systems, and major organizations; and individuals known to have expressed interest, listing the number and nature of any positions to be filled and soliciting nominees for the projected vacancies. To be considered the nominations must be returned by the date and time established by the Commission. Members of the Nominating Committee are ineligible for nomination to the Commission while serving on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall review the nominees' qualifications, and shall prepare a slate of candidates, with one candidate being recommended for each position. In preparing such a slate, the Nominating Committee shall consider the need to meet the membership requirements of the Commission as outlined in Article III of the Bylaws, as well as the following:

- Representatives from the entire area served by the ACCJC, including California, Hawai`i, Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.
- Diversity in institutional characteristics such as mission, size, geography, and location; personal characteristics such as ethnicity and gender.

### Section 3. Nominations At Large

The notice to the Presidents/Chancellors informing them of the slate of the Nominating Committee shall also include a notice of the right of the Presidents/Chancellors to nominate

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candidates on an at-large basis for the vacant positions on the Commission within the time frame established by the Commission. To be added as an at-large candidate, a candidate must have the written endorsement of ten (10) or more Presidents/Chancellors.

#### **Section 4. Election**

The Commission shall send a ballot to the President/Chancellor of each member institution which shall include the slate of the Nominating Committee and any candidates at-large. Each President/Chancellor shall be asked to vote for or against the slate, or for any at-large candidates nominated by the process described in Section 3 in lieu of those individuals on the Nominating Committee's slate. To be considered, ballots must be returned to the Commission offices within the time frame established by the Commission. Ballots received after the cutoff date will not be counted. Ballots shall be handled by the Commission executive staff in a manner to preserve, insofar as practicable, the privacy of persons voting and the institutions they represent. Measures shall be taken by the executive staff to assure the validity of all ballots. The executive staff shall be responsible for the preservation of ballots and tally sheets, which shall be preserved for a period of one hundred eighty (180) days after the election is announced, absent a challenge to an election, in which case the ballots shall be preserved until the challenge is resolved. A challenge to the election results can be brought by any President/Chancellor of a member institution. Any challenge to the election results must be received by the Chair of the Commission within fourteen days after the announcement of the election results. The Chair shall refer the challenge to the Nominating Committee which shall have the authority to take whatever steps it considers appropriate to make a final decision on the matter.

#### **Section 5. Counting the Ballots**

The counting of the ballots shall take place at the Commission offices and shall be conducted by the executive staff. The persons receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected to the Commission. In the event of a tie which prevents the seating of one or more vacant positions there shall be a runoff of those persons who tied. All persons receiving more votes than those who tied shall be considered seated and shall not participate in the runoff. The runoff shall be by electronic means or mail and shall be conducted according to time frames established by the Commission. The results of the election shall be announced as soon as practicable thereafter. Every effort shall be made to complete the process by mid May.

#### **Section 6. Vacancies**

If the position of a Commissioner becomes vacant, whether through resignation, separation from his/her institutional affiliation, death, removal or otherwise, the Nominating Committee shall be promptly notified. The Nominating Committee shall, at its sole discretion, either select a person to serve out the remainder of the term of the position vacated or shall have the position filled at the next regularly scheduled election as described in this Article IV. In selecting a person to fill a vacancy, the Nominating Committee should consider, but not be limited by, the list of those persons previously proposed by the presidents of constituent institutions.

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## ARTICLE V, COMMISSION MEETINGS

### Section 1. The Time and Place

The Commission shall meet in regular session twice each year to consider the accredited status of institutions evaluated since the previous meeting and to address such policy and organizational business as shall come before it. Written notice of the time and place of meetings, and a preliminary agenda shall be mailed to the chief executive officer of each member institution, normally 45 days prior to the date of each meeting. At its discretion, the Commission may schedule such additional meetings as it deems necessary.

### Section 2. The Agenda

Consideration of the accredited status of institutions will occur in executive session as will all personnel matters. Any matter where it has been deemed necessary to consult with legal counsel will be discussed in Executive Session.

All policy language being considered for Commission approval as first or second readings, and all language revising Accreditation Standards, shall be considered in public session. All changes to Bylaws and the WASC Constitution shall be considered in public session. Observers are provided the opportunity to address the Commission in accordance with the Commission Policy on Access to Commission Meetings.

### Section 3. Minutes

The Commission shall maintain minutes of all of its meetings. The Commission Chair, in consultation with the President, shall designate those subjects which are to be discussed in executive and public session.

### Section 4. Commission Actions

At the call of the Commission Chair, and subject to prior consent setting forth such action by two-thirds of the Commission then in office, executed in writing, FAX, e-mail, telephone, or other electronic means, actions required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Commission may be taken without a meeting. Such consent, the reasons therefore, and the substance of the Commission action is filed with the minutes of proceedings of the Commission.

## ARTICLE VI, COMMITTEES

The Executive Committee of the Commission shall be comprised of the Commission chair, the vice chair, and the chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee. For purposes of continuity of leadership, an individual who has completed a two-year period as Commission chair and who remains on the Commission to complete a term will also serve on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall serve as council to the President between Commission meetings and is authorized to act for the Commission between meetings of the Commission on all matters that would appropriately come before the Commission and where action prior to the next Commission meeting is necessary. All actions taken by the Executive Committee shall be reported to the Commission at its next meeting.

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The Commission shall be served by such standing and *ad hoc* committees as it creates. *Ad hoc* committees may be created at the discretion of the Commission chair, but their creation, functions, and authority must be ratified by a simple majority of the Commission membership at the first Commission meeting following the creation of the *ad hoc* committee.

Standing committees shall be authorized by a simple majority of the Commission and may be dissolved by the same margin of the Commission. The Commission may charge a standing committee with authority to act on its behalf. No Standing Committee membership may be comprised of a majority of the Commission. Members and chairs of standing committees are appointed by the Commission chair and serve two-year terms. Current standing committees of the Commission are the Audit Committee, the Budget and Personnel Committee, the Committee on Substantive Change, the Policy Committee, and the Evaluation and Planning Committee. The Commissioner Nominating Committee is constituted at regular intervals as described in Article IV, above.

## **ARTICLE VII, STANDING RULES**

The Commission shall govern itself by Robert's Rules of Order except in the case where it has adopted standing rules. All standing rules of the Commission take precedence over Robert's Rules of Order, but they may be suspended temporarily by the provisions of Robert's Rules of Order.

## **ARTICLE VIII, AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended by a simple majority vote of the Commission after the proposed amendments have been circulated among the Commission members at least two weeks before the meeting at which the vote is taken. In those instances where time is of the essence, the Commission may employ telephone, mail, or electronic ballot processes.

## **Policy on Conflict of Interest for Commissioners, Evaluators, Consultants, Administrative Staff, and Other Agency Representatives**

*(Adopted June 1997; Revised June 1999, March 2001; Edited June 2005;  
Revised January 2006)*

### **Background**

The Accrediting Commission believes that those who engage in accreditation activities must make every effort to protect the integrity of accrediting processes and outcomes. The intent of the Commission is to:

- Maintain the credibility of the accreditation process and confidence in its decisions;
- Assure that decisions are made with fairness and impartiality;
- Avoid allegations of undue influence; relationships which might bias deliberations, decisions, or actions; and situations which could inhibit an individual's capacity to make objective decisions;
- Make all of its decisions in an atmosphere which avoids even the appearance of conflict of interest;
- Provide the means to disclose any existing or apparent conflict of interest.

### **Policy**

The Commission will not knowingly invite or assign participation in the evaluation of an institution anyone who has a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof.

### **Policy Elements**

1. The Commission relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to guard against conflict of interest, or the appearance of conflict of interest, by refusing any assignment where the potential for conflict of interest exists. Any individuals representing the Commission, who have had contact of the types listed below with an institution/district/system, normally within the last five years, will not participate in the evaluation of that institution.
  - a. Any current or prior employment at the institution/district being evaluated;
  - b. Candidacy for employment at the institution/district being evaluated;
  - c. Any current or prior service as a paid consultant or other business relationship with the institution/district/system being evaluated;
  - d. Any written agreement with an institution/district/system that may create a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest with the institution/district/system;
  - e. Personal or financial interest in the ownership or operation of the institution/district/system;

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- f. Close personal or familial relationships with a member of the institution/district;
  - g. Other personal or professional connections that would create either a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest;
  - h. Receipt of any remuneration, honoraria, honorary degrees, honors or other awards from the institution/district/system.

Notwithstanding the above list defining what is considered to be a conflict or potential conflict of interest, a conflict of interest arising from one of the relationships described above does not go into perpetuity, but expires five years after the relationship ends. Nevertheless, the individual is expected to ask him/herself whether the existence of such relationship would in any way interfere with his/her objectivity, and, if the answer is in the affirmative, he/she is expected to refuse the assignment.

- 2. A Commissioner is expected to recuse him/herself from any deliberation or vote on decisions regarding individual institutions where any of the above conditions exist. A Commissioner who served on the most recent evaluation team of the institution being considered may participate in the discussion, but does not vote. Any such potential conflict of interest shall be reported to the Commission in advance of the deliberation and action and shall be recorded in the Commission minutes.

The following connections have been determined to be of the type that do not constitute a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof. It is recognized that it is the nature of the academy to engender collegial, professional relationships among and between members of institutions. Those professional and collegial relationships are generally considered innocuous. Examples of relationships that do not create a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest include:

- a. Attending meetings or cultural events on a campus;
- b. Having infrequent social contact with members of Institutions/districts/systems;
- c. Making a presentation at an institution on a one-time, unpaid basis, with no sustained relationship with the institution;
- d. Fulfilling a professional assignment with members of an institution on an issue not related to the institution's accreditation.

A Commissioner whose connections with the institution/district/system are limited solely to connections of this nature need not disclose them or recuse him/herself.

The purpose of this list is to reduce the burden on the Commission to disclose every relationship for discussion by the Commission. A Commissioner who is uncertain regarding a possible conflict of interest may recuse him/herself, in which case there is no requirement to disclose the nature of the contact(s) for review by the Commission. Alternatively, the Commissioner may disclose the nature of the contact for review by the Commission. The Commission shall then determine in all such cases by majority vote whether the connections raise a conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest. Commission decisions regarding any issue raised relating to conflict of interest shall be noted in the minutes. Commissioners should be especially sensitive to the newly



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emerging possibilities of conflict of interest created by inter-institutional collaborations such as distance education or international education projects.

3. During the period of Commission employment, Commission staff members are expected to refrain from connections and relationships with candidate or member institutions which could represent a conflict of interest. Commission staff may not engage in private consulting or employment with, nor accept honoraria, or honorary degrees from ACCJC member institutions. Commission staff may engage in such arrangements with outside organizations or institutions other than ACCJC members only with the approval of the President. The President may engage in such arrangements only with the approval of the Commission Chair. At no time during their appointment as Commissioners, should Commissioners consult with institutions on matters of accreditation for compensation.
4. Each Commissioner, evaluator, consultant, and member of the Commission administrative staff is asked to review the Conflict of Interest Policy for Commissioners, Evaluators, Consultants, Administrative Staff, and Other Agency Representatives, and consider potential conflicts of interest in his/her proposed assignments. Institutions being evaluated also review the prospective evaluation team for potential conflict of interest. The President should be notified immediately if there are conflicts of interest or any concerns that there might be conflicts of interest.
5. During the period in which the visit is occurring and Commission action is pending, evaluation team chairs and team members are expected to refrain from any paid relationship with an institution for which they have been an evaluator.

## Coordinating Guidelines for the WASC Accrediting Commissions

*(Revised July 2002)*

### 1. Commission of Jurisdiction

- For an institution which offers a combination of secondary and lower division college programs, the Commission on Schools and the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges will conduct a joint accreditation review of the institution. ACS will be responsible for accrediting secondary programs. ACCJC will be responsible for accrediting lower-division college-level programs.
- Normally, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will assume jurisdiction, consulting with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, for an institution which offers lower division programs but is adding one or more upper division baccalaureate degree programs and/or any graduate level work. However, under special circumstances, an institution which offers lower division or community college programs but is adding a single baccalaureate degree program may be eligible for joint accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities.
- ACCJC will retain jurisdiction of institutions offering the associate degree and limited upper division work which does not lead to a baccalaureate degree.

### 2. Policy Elements

- When an institution has been accredited or recognized as a candidate by the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and moves to a higher level, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will conduct an evaluation in cooperation with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The Senior Commission Standards and procedures will be used by the institution and the accrediting team.
- The institution will continue to be listed under the original level. At such time as the total institution qualifies for recognition by a higher commission, it will come under that commission's jurisdiction. Generally, the institution has three years in which to effect a transfer.

## Policy on Professionalism and Ethical Responsibilities of Commission Members

*(Adopted January 2001; Edited June 2001, June 2003, June 2005)*

### Purposes of Accreditation

The Commission expects its members to accept and subscribe to the defined purposes of accreditation. The purposes of the Commission shall be the evaluation of member institutions to assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to higher education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets Commission Standards. The Commission encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through self study and periodic evaluation by qualified peer professionals<sup>1</sup>.

### Commission Responsibilities

The Commission as a whole:

- Establishes and periodically reviews Accreditation Standards, policies, and practices for member institutions;
- Serves as the primary decision-maker on accredited status of member institutions;
- Evaluates institutions in terms of their own stated purposes;
- Strives for consistency in determining accredited status of institutions;
- Assists in interpreting accreditation issues to the various publics served by the Commission.

### Professional Responsibilities of Commission Members

A Commissioner:

- Participates in all Commission meetings and attends them for their entire duration;
- Studies documents as assigned prior to the meetings;
- Serves as an in depth reader of evaluation visit materials as assigned;
- Votes according to his or her best professional judgment in the light of existing policy and Standards;
- Participates on Commission committees and in activities representing the Commission's interests as assigned;
- Attends and actively participates in Commission activities such as evaluation team visits and retreats;

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<sup>1</sup> ACCJC Bylaws

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- Participates in self study and evaluation of the Commission;
  - Participates in Commission planning efforts;
  - Ensures that all functions of the Commission are executed responsibly through the Executive Director;
  - Participates in the evaluation of the Executive Director;
  - Notifies the Commission chairperson or Executive Director in a timely manner if the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which appointed.

## **Ethical Responsibilities of Commission Members**

A Commissioner:

- Respects the confidentiality of relationships between the Commission and the institutions it accredits.
- Avoids conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest.
- Is familiar with and adheres to established bylaws and policies.

## Policy on Relations with Accrediting Agencies

*(Adopted January 1998; Revised June 1998; Edited June 2002)*

It is the policy of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to maintain a working relationship with other accrediting agencies where a community of interest exists. Elements of the relationship shall include, but not be limited to:

- Active participation in meetings of executive staff and Commission leadership
- Routine open sharing of publications and policy documents
- Timely submission of information on accrediting decisions taken at Commission meetings
- Cooperating in the evaluation of institutions that operate in more than one accrediting association region
- Recommending persons for evaluation team and Commission service, and receiving such recommendations from other agencies
- Participation in common ventures of policy development and advocacy for institutional accreditation
- Systematically monitoring the status of ACCJC/WASC institutions with other accrediting agencies
- Consideration of actions taken by other recognized agencies when undertaking actions of initial candidacy or accreditation, or renewal of candidacy or accreditation of institutions that may be accredited by those other agencies
- Handling and forwarding of dues collected from member institutions on behalf of national affiliates such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Upon receipt of information regarding interim or final adverse actions against a member institution by another recognized accrediting agency (or state agency), Commission staff will seek further information from the agency involved, and the Commission shall determine whether a review of the accredited status of the institution will be required.

The Commission will not renew the accreditation or preaccreditation of any institution during a period that the institution is the subject of an interim action by a recognized institutional accreditation agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation, or the institution has been notified of a threatened loss of accreditation and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed [§602.28(b)]. If the Commission grants accreditation or preaccreditation notwithstanding these actions, the Commission will provide to the U.S. Secretary a thorough explanation consistent with its Accreditation Standards, why the previous action does not preclude the agency's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation [§602.28(c)].

In the event that the Commission grants initial accreditation, reaffirmation, or candidacy to an institution that is subject to adverse action by another recognized institutional accrediting

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agency, the bases for the decision will be explained and communicated to that agency and to the Secretary of Education as appropriate to each case.

The Commission is affiliated with other regional agencies through the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). It should be noted that the Commission has been an active participant in the community of accrediting agencies since the establishment of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, first with the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions in Higher Education (FRACHE), then the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and the Commission on Recognition in Higher Education Accreditation (CORPA) and the National Policy Board on Higher Education Accreditation.

The primary community of interest is clearly with the other regional institutional accrediting agencies. The Commission shares significant concerns with national agencies that accredit institutions, and to a lesser extent, with specialized accreditors. (Note policy, "Relationship Between General and Specialized Agencies.")

## Policy on Relations with Government Agencies

*(Adopted June 1996; Revised January 1998; Edited June 2002, August 2007)*

The Commission has sought recognition and periodically seeks renewal of recognition by the Secretary of Education, in order that member institutions achieve and maintain eligibility to participate in programs such as HEA Title IV student financial aid. The Commission provides, upon request from the Secretary, any information sought regarding institutional compliance with HEA Title IV regulations.

The Commission notifies the Department of Education and relevant state agencies of all institutional actions, within 30 days of the Commission's decision. If the Commission's final decision is to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate the accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution or to put an institution on probation or show cause, the Commission will notify the Secretary and the public of that decision within 24 hours of notice to the institution.

No later than 60 days after a decision to take adverse action on an institution, the Commission will make available to the Secretary, the appropriate licensing or authorizing agency, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the Commission's decision, and the comments, if any, that the affected institution may wish to make with regard to that decision.

Copies of publications such as the Commission Newsletter are routinely sent to the state and federal agencies with which the Commission communicates. The WASC Directory, which is updated annually, is available on the ACCJC website.

The Commission maintains regular communication with the Department of Education and relevant state agencies. It responds to inquiries from government agencies and forwards responses to complaints against institutions that have been routed to the Commission by those agencies.

In the event clear evidence of Title IV fraud and abuse is obtained by the Commission, that information is forwarded to the Department of Education.

Institutions are notified and asked to respond if complaints or allegations of fraud and abuse are communicated to the Commission by the Department of Education.

The Commission submits to the Secretary any proposed changes in policy and procedures, or Accreditation Standards that might alter its scope of recognition or its compliance with appropriate federal regulation [§602.27(d)].

The Commission will not, except where exceptional circumstances exist, renew the accreditation or preaccreditation of any institution that is subject to adverse action by any other recognized institutional accrediting agency or state agency.

## **Policy on Joint Accreditation by Regional and Specialized Accreditors**

*(Adopted October 1964; Revised January 1978; Revised June 2007)*

Each institution must be free to decide for itself whether or not to seek accreditation by any particular agency. If an institution desires both regional institutional accreditation and specialized program accreditation, the ACCJC may, at its discretion, collaborate with the specialized accrediting agency in arranging joint visitations or exchange of information.

A specialized institution may apply for regional accreditation through ACCJC if it meets the Commission's Eligibility Requirements. The institution should note that included in the Eligibility Requirements is the expectation that the institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component must include demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education must have comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education.



## Policy on Review of Accreditation Standards

*(Adopted June 1996; Revised June 1998, January 1999, June 2001, January 2007;  
Edited October 2007)*

The Accrediting Commission conducts systematic and comprehensive study of the utility, effectiveness, relevance, and consistency of its Standards and practices.

The Commission assesses its Standards normally every six years. Independent review is commissioned prior to each cycle so that the revision may be informed by the findings of that research.

The process for review of Accreditation Standards:

1. Examines whether the Standards are adequate to evaluate educational quality;
2. Focuses on the relationship of the Standards to the quality of educational/training programs and their relevance to student needs;
3. Examines each standard and the Standards as a whole; and
4. Involves all of the agency's relevant constituencies.

Each such review solicits comments from member institutions and participants in the processes of accreditation. The process seeks to incorporate state of the art institutional evaluation, as practiced by academic quality assurance and accrediting agencies, and by business and industry into Standards revisions. Information is sought to measure:

1. Institutional perceptions about validity and utility of Standards;
2. Consistency of application of Standards;
3. Consistency of application of the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions;
4. Degree of confidence in the processes used by the evaluation teams and the Commission; and
5. Effects of Commission actions and team recommendations on institutional practices.

Constituencies and other interested parties are notified of proposed changes to Standards and are given an opportunity to comment. These comments are taken into account during revisions of the Standards.

If the Commission identifies a need to change the Standards between reviews the process for ensuring constituent participation in those revisions is consistent with that occurring during six-year standard reviews.

When the Commission identifies a need to change the Standards, it will initiate action within twelve months. The process for drafting and approving new Standards normally will be completed within two years. However, the Commission allows time for institutions to adopt any necessary new practices before enforcing new Standards.

## Western Association of Schools and Colleges Constitution

### ARTICLE I.

#### Name and Purpose

This organization shall be named WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (the "Association"). Its purpose is to promote the welfare, interests, and development of elementary, secondary, and higher education through (1) improvement of educational programs, (2) close cooperation among the schools, colleges, and universities within the territory it undertakes to serve, (3) certification of accreditation or candidacy status, and (4) effective working relationships with other educational organizations and accrediting agencies.

### ARTICLE II.

#### Accrediting Region and Certification

Section 1: Accrediting Region. The accrediting region of the Association consists of the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific Basin, and East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia where American/ International schools or colleges may apply, and such other areas as may apply to it for service, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Section 2: Certification. Any university, college, or school shall be certified by the Board of Directors as a candidate or accredited institution upon report of action taken by the appropriate Accrediting Commission. Any such certification shall cease whenever an institution resigns, is dropped from the accredited or candidate list of the Association, or fails to pay its annual fees by the date set by the appropriate Accrediting Commission for payment.

### ARTICLE III.

#### Organization

Section 1: Constituency. The Board of Directors shall consist of nine persons, three to be selected for staggered three-year terms from and by each of the three Accrediting Commissions hereinafter named and described. One of each Commission's appointees shall be its Chair or Assistant/Vice Chair. The Board shall elect its Chair from among its members for a one-year term. The Chair may be re-elected for one additional one-year term. The Chair of the Board shall be the President of the Association. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Association shall be selected by the Board.

Section 2: Meetings. The Board of Directors shall meet annually at such time as may be determined by the Board, and may hold other meetings at the call of the Chair or on the request of any three members of the Board of Directors.

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Section 3: Commissions. There shall be three Accrediting Commissions, as follows:

*1. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities*

This Commission shall consist of up to twenty-five (25) members, but no less than eighteen (18) members, with the exact number set by the Commission from time to time. Commission members shall serve overlapping three-(3) year terms, with a maximum of two terms (plus any partial term served as the result of the member being selected to fill a vacancy), as established by the Commission.

The Commission shall elect one of its members to serve as Chair for a three-(3) year term and one of its members to serve as Vice Chair for a one-(1) year term. In the event the Chair has served for the maximum two terms on the Commission prior to the expiration of his or her term as Chair, the Chair shall continue to serve on the Commission until his or her term as Chair shall have expired. Commission members shall be elected by the presidents of the institutions accredited by the Commission according to Bylaws approved by the Commission.

Members of the Commission shall be allowed to complete their terms upon retirement from their institutions. Non-public Commissioners who lose their institutional base for any reason shall be ineligible to serve beyond the end of the academic year.

*2. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges<sup>1</sup>*

This Commission shall consist of nineteen members. One Commission member shall be from each of the following: (1) the California Community Colleges; (2) the University of Hawaii Community Colleges; (3) the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities; and (4) the Accrediting Commission for Schools. At least five of the Commission members shall be faculty: at least three (the precise number of whom shall at all times represent at least one seventh of the total membership of the Commission) shall be "representatives of the public", meeting the definition under the federal regulations [as defined in 34 CFR §602.3]; a maximum of two who meet the definition of an Affiliate Member; at least three members shall be two-year college administrators, at least one member shall represent independent institutions, and at least one member shall represent institutions in the American Affiliated Pacific Islands (AAPI). Commission representatives shall serve staggered three year terms. An Affiliate Member shall be a person who does not qualify under any of the other categories enumerated in the preceding sentence but who shall nonetheless be deemed to have expertise or skills that will add meaningfully to the Commission.

Commission members shall be elected by the member institutions according to the process described in the Bylaws approved by the Commission. Commission officers shall be selected by the Commission according to Bylaws approved by the Commission.

Commission officers shall be selected by the Commission according to Bylaws approved by the Commission.

*3. Accrediting Commission for Schools*

This Commission shall consist of up to thirty-two persons selected by the Commission's Nomination Review Committee from candidates nominated by member organizations or the

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<sup>1</sup> Pending ratification from WASC Board in September 2011.

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Commission. Not less than one-seventh of the persons selected shall be public members. Appointment shall be for staggered three-year terms. Representatives shall be nominated as follows:

- seven by the Association of California School Administrators;
- one by the California Teachers' Association;
- one by the California Federation of Teachers;
- one by the Hawaii Government Employees' Association;
- one by the California Association of Independent Schools;
- one by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools;
- one by the Association of Christian Schools International;
- one by the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools;
- four by the Western Catholic Educational Association, one of whom must be a practicing classroom teacher and one of whom must be an Elementary Commissioner;
- one by the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists;
- one practicing classroom teacher on a rotational basis from the Hawaii public and private schools;
- one practicing classroom teacher from the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO);
- one school board member by the California School Boards' Association;
- one parent by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers;
- one postsecondary teacher;
- non-school public members from business, community, or public organizations, one of whom to be a Hawaii public member.

The California Department of Education and the Hawaii Department of Education will each have an ex officio seat on the Commission. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members, and which shall be represented by non-voting ex officio members.

If a change of status, which affects eligibility for constituency appointments of any of the above appointees occurs during the term of office, the individual may at the discretion of the appointing agency, serve the remainder of the term or may be replaced. A person completing a term after a change of status may not be re-appointed.

Section 4: Commission Executive Staff. Each Accrediting Commission shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer, who in turn will be responsible for selecting the rest of the staff of each Accrediting Commission.

Section 5: Changes in Commissions Composition. The title of each Chief Executive Officer shall be determined by the affected Commission, subject to the Board ratification. Changes in the size and composition of each Accrediting Commission may be made by the Commission with the approval of the Board of Directors. The composition of each Accrediting Commission shall be published in the annual Directory of the Association, and any material changes shall be reflected in appropriate changes to this Constitution.

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Section 6: Delegation to Commissions. Recognizing that the Board of Directors retains ultimate authority over administrative structures, budgets, fiscal policies, contracts and leases, including those entered into by the Accrediting Commissions, the Board will delegate actual management over such matters, including the actual review and approval of such matters, to the Commissions to the extent it deems prudent.

Section 7: Commission Sanctions. Action taken by any Accrediting Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy shall be reported in writing to the WASC Board at its annual meeting.

#### ARTICLE IV. Criteria for Certification

Section 1: Commission Standards. Each of the Accrediting Commissions shall adopt its own standards and criteria, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors of the Association. The standards and criteria shall provide for the evaluation of each institution on the basis of the degree to which it is accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of objectives, and on the appropriateness of those purposes and functions for an institution of its type.

Section 2: Commission Actions. The actions by each Accrediting Commission, subject to its review procedures and the appeals procedures provided for in Article VI, shall be final and shall be certified by the Board of Directors.

#### ARTICLE V. Duties of Officers

Section 1: Chair and President. The Chair of the Board of Directors shall preside at all meetings of the Board and shall have the right to vote on all issues that come before the Board for decision. As President of the Association, he/she shall be the official spokesperson for the Association, representing the Association in accord with policies established by each of the three Accrediting Commissions and the Board.

Section 2: Secretary-Treasurer. The Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as the Secretary of the Board of Directors and shall maintain a complete file of Minutes and Board decisions. He/She shall receive from the Directors of the three Accrediting Commissions the lists of accredited and candidate institutions and shall provide for the publication of a total Association list of accredited and candidate institutions at least once each year.

Section 3: Chief Executive Officer. The Director of each of the three Accrediting Commissions shall maintain a careful record of the actions and decisions of the Commission, shall be responsible under the Commission's direction for the scheduling of accreditation visits, appointment of visiting committees, distribution of necessary accreditation materials, and for such other matters as the Commission may delegate to the Director for the effective administration of the accreditation program.

Following each meeting of the Accrediting Commission at which accreditation decisions are made, the Chief Executive Officer shall promptly notify the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board

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of Directors of all changes in the list of accredited and candidate institutions. At its annual meeting the Board of Directors shall certify the list of accredited and candidate institutions submitted by each Accrediting Commission.

## ARTICLE VI. Appeals

Section 1: Right to Appeal. If an institution, after availing itself of any review or appeal procedures of its Accrediting Commission, still believes itself aggrieved by that Accrediting Commission's denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, its governing board, through formal authorization to its chair, may appeal such action within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of notice thereof of the final Accrediting Commission action by filing an appropriate notice of appeal to the President of the Association through the affected Accrediting Commission's Chief Executive Officer. During the period up to and including the appeal, the institution's status with the affected Accrediting Commission shall remain the same as it was prior to the decision being appealed. The form and content of the institution's notice of appeal are contained in the Association's Hearing and Appeal Procedures Manual, described in Section 4 below.

Section 2: Administering the Appeal. The task of coordinating the appeal will ordinarily be the task of the Accrediting Commission which is providing the current staff support for WASC's corporate activities. This task shifts periodically among the various Accrediting Commissions since WASC maintains no staff support independently of the three Accrediting Commissions. In the event the institution is appealing a decision of the Accrediting Commission that is providing staff support at that time for WASC corporate activities, the task or coordinating the appeal will be shifted by the President of the Association to one of the other Accrediting Commissions. The tasks assigned to the President and to the Secretary/Treasurer in this process will similarly be re-assigned by the President to a President or Secretary pro-tempore in the event such individuals are associated with the Accrediting Commission that made the decision that is being appealed.

Section 3: Hearing Panel and Hearing Board. The Association's Board of Directors shall elect annually a Hearing Panel from which shall be selected a Hearing Board established for the purpose of deciding appeals by any institution against the decision of any of the Accrediting Commissions denying or withdrawing accreditation or candidacy.

The Hearing Panel shall consist of twenty persons as follows: (1) five from elementary/secondary schools; (2) five from junior or community colleges; (3) five from senior colleges and universities; and (4) five lay members of governing boards. None of the twenty shall be a current member of an Accrediting Commission.

The Hearing Board shall consist of five persons, including at least one person from each of the above categories, selected on random basis from the Hearing Panel and appointed, after such selection, by the Association's Secretary/Treasurer. None of those selected shall have been involved in the accreditation process which resulted in the appeal. The Hearing Board shall elect its Chair from its own membership. Each member, including the Chair, shall have one vote.

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Hearing Board members to replace those who are absent or have a conflict of interest shall be selected on the same random basis and appointed by the WASC Secretary/Treasurer from the remaining members of the Hearing Panel.

Section 4: Appeal Procedures Manual. The Association's Board of Directors shall establish an appeals manual, which may be revised from time-to-time, referred to as the "WASC Appeals Procedures Manual." The WASC Appeals Procedures Manual will set forth more fully the procedures for conducting the appeal. A copy of the WASC Appeals Procedures Manual will be provided to the institution when the institution receives notice of an appealable Commission decision.

Section 5: Costs. An institution bringing an appeal shall reimburse the Association for all of the incremental costs in conducting the appellate hearing, including the costs of the Commission that coordinates the appeal, any legal fees of the Hearing Board, and other costs enumerated in the WASC Appeals Procedures Manual. For this reason, an institution making an appeal will be required to include an initial deposit to cover the costs of the appeal. The Association's Board of Directors will establish the amount of the deposit and modify it from time to time at its discretion. In the event the actual costs exceed the amount of the deposit, the institution shall be responsible for the balance and may be required, during the appeal, to supplement the deposit. In the event the deposit exceeds the necessary costs, the institution shall receive a refund of the difference.

Section 6: New Financial Evidence. On one occasion only and not later than thirty (30) days prior to the date the Hearing Board is scheduled to meet and only in the event the only remaining issues following completion of the Commission review process relate to deficiencies or failure to meet Commission Standards regarding the institution's finances, the appealing institution may file in writing with the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission whose action is being appealed (the "affected Accrediting Commission"), information which, in the opinion of the institution's chief executive officer, constitutes New Financial Evidence. Such application shall be co-signed by the chair of the institution's governing board. New Financial Evidence is evidence that (1) was unavailable to the institution until after the date upon which the Commission's policies permitted the institution to submit evidence that was considered in connection with the action being appealed (and is therefore timely), and (2) bears materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies identified by the affected Accrediting Commission. Evidence shall be deemed to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies only if such evidence is of sufficient gravity that, if proven, would be likely to cause the Commission to reverse the decision being appealed.

Upon receipt of the New Financial Evidence, the affected Accrediting Commission's Chair shall form a committee of no fewer than three (3) Commissioners from the affected Commission (the New Financial Evidence Committee) to review the New Financial Evidence. The membership of the New Financial Evidence Committee may include Commissioners who have acted as readers or for other reasons are familiar with the issues affecting the institution, but may not consist of any Commissioners who have a conflict of interest with respect to the institution as defined by the Commission's conflict of interest policy. The New Financial Evidence Committee shall conclude prior to the date the appeal hearing is scheduled to commence. The decision of the New Financial Evidence Committee shall be communicated in writing to the appealing institution, to the Chief Executive Officer of the affected Accrediting Commission, and to the President of the Association. The decision of the New Financial

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Evidence Committee shall not be subject to any further review or appeal, except as herein provided. If, in the sole judgment and discretion of the New Financial Evidence Committee, acting by majority vote, the New Financial Evidence is found not to have been raised in a timely manner or is found not to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies of the appealing institution, the appeal hearing shall continue without interruption, and the New Financial Evidence shall not become part of the record on appeal.

If, in the sole judgment and discretion of the New Financial Evidence Committee, the New Financial Evidence is found to have been raised in a timely manner and to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies which served as the basis of the affected Accrediting Commission's action, the President of the Association shall immediately postpone the hearing until after the date of the next affected Accrediting Commission meeting at which time the affected Accrediting Commission will reconsider the decision being appealed. The affected Accrediting Commission shall independently review the New Financial Evidence and make its own determination regarding whether such evidence was timely and was significant and material. If, in the sole discretion of the affected Accrediting Commission, the New Financial Evidence is found to have been raised in a timely manner and to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies which served as the basis of the decision that is being appealed, the affected Accrediting Commission shall render a new decision which shall act to remove the previous sanction of termination or denial of candidacy or accreditation, as the case may be. It may, in its sole discretion, impose any other lesser sanction and conditions which it deems appropriate, and the affected institution shall not be able to seek further appeal or review from such lesser sanction, if any is imposed. In such instance, the affected Accrediting Commission shall instruct the President of the Association to dismiss the appeal.

If, in the sole discretion of the affected Accrediting Commission, the New Financial Evidence is not found to have been raised in a timely manner or if it is found not to bear materially and significantly on the financial deficiencies which served as the basis of the decision that is being appealed, such Commission shall instruct the President of the Association to take the necessary steps to resume the appeal hearing. In all events, the decision of the affected Accrediting Commission shall include findings on the timeliness, materiality and significance of the New Financial Evidence. Such decision shall not be subject to consideration by the Hearing Board. Such decision in all instances shall be communicated in writing to the appealing institution, to the President of the Association, and to the Hearing Board's Chair.

#### Section 7: The Appellate Hearing.

The President of the Association shall arrange the appellate hearing at the earliest practicable date. Those testifying shall not be placed under oath. The Accrediting Commission whose decision is being appealed will ordinarily have legal counsel present, and the institution may, but is not required, to have legal counsel present. The institution will be expected to notify the Association of its selection of its legal counsel as soon as possible, ordinarily, at the time the institution files its notice of appeal.

At least sixty (60) calendar days before the time set for the appellate hearing of such an appeal, the President (or Secretary-Treasurer) of the Association shall cause notice of the time and place of the appellate hearing to be delivered, by a means that will assure a written receipt, to the Chair or to the President of the governing board of the institution with a copy to its chief executive.

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Section 8: Grounds for Appeal. The grounds for appeal shall be limited to the following: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Accrediting Commission which materially affected the Accrediting Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Accrediting Commission which materially affected the Accrediting Commission's decision; (3) the evidence before the Accrediting Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision which is being appealed was materially in error; or (4) the decision of the Accrediting Commission was not supported by substantial evidence. The "decision" referred to in this Section refers to the Accrediting Commission's action which served as the basis for the appeal and any modification to that action that might have occurred as the result of the review or appeal process afforded by the Accrediting Commission. The appellate hearing is designed as a review of the record of the previous actions of the institution and the Accrediting Commission. Accordingly, except as may be permitted under the WASC Appeals Procedures Manual, an institution may not raise any ground or site any reason in support of that ground unless the institution raised the same ground and the same issue before the Accrediting Commission as part of the Accrediting Commission's review or appeal process prior to noticing its appeal to WASC. When the term "materially" is used in this section it means that the issue to which it relates, either signally or with other issues, is of sufficient gravity that it could reasonably be said to cause a reversal of the decision being appealed.

Section 9: Decision of the Hearing Board. The Hearing Board shall make its decision by a vote of the majority on the basis of the admissible evidence and arguments presented to it at the hearing. The Hearing Board's decision may act to affirm, modify, or reverse the decision being appealed and the reasons that were cited in its support. The Hearing Board shall issue its decision and the reasons therefore within thirty (30) calendar days and will inform the President of the Association, the chair or president of the governing board of the institution, and the Chief Executive Officer of the affected Accrediting Commission of such decision. Such decision shall not be subject to any further appeal.

If the Hearing Board finds for the institution on one or more of grounds (1) through (4) of Section 8 above, the Hearing Board's decision will have the effect of reversing the denial or termination of the candidacy or accreditation of the institution. Its decision may recommend, but shall not dictate, any terms or conditions to be imposed on the accreditation or candidacy of the institution by the affected Accrediting Commission when it implements the Hearing Board's decision. The affected Accrediting Commission shall thereafter implement the Hearing Board's decision and, in doing so, shall retain the discretion to impose conditions, including a sanction which is less than the denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, on the candidacy or accreditation of the institution. The affected Accrediting Commission's implementation action shall be consistent with the Hearing Board's decision. Such implementation action by the affected Accrediting Commission will be communicated to the institution and shall not be subject to further review or appeal.

If the Hearing Board finds against the institution on any of the four grounds in Section 8 above, it shall deny that portion of the appeal which is based on that ground. If the Hearing Board finds against the institution on all grounds appealed, its decision shall act to affirm the decision of the affected Accrediting Commission which was appealed.

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ARTICLE VII.  
Financing

Financial support for the work of the Board of Directors of the Association shall be obtained by equal assessment on each of the three Accrediting Commissions.

ARTICLE VIII.  
Amendments

Proposed amendments to this Constitution may originate with any of the Accrediting Commissions or with the Board of Directors. Such proposed amendments, except those relating to the size and composition of an Accrediting Commission (See Article III, Section 4), shall become effective upon approval by a two-thirds vote of each of the three Accrediting Commissions and of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IX.  
Indemnification

The Association does hereby grant indemnification to any officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, or former officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, including but not limited to the Association's employees and team members, for claims or actions asserted against said person arising out of acts or omissions alleged to have occurred in connection with, or as a result of his or her activities as an officer, director, commissioner, or agent, of this Association, to the fullest extent permitted by law; provided, however, as follows:

- a. If any claim or action is asserted or threatened to be asserted, as described in such statutes, the person requesting indemnification must give timely notice thereof to the President of the Association;
- b. If the person requesting indemnification is not successful on the merits of the action, the Board of Directors, the members, or the court must determine that the person acted in good faith, in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in the best interests of the corporation, and without reason to believe his or her conduct was unlawful; and
- c. Indemnification shall be provided herein only to the extent that valid and collectible insurance coverage under all existing policies of insurance held by the Association has been exhausted.

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## PROCEDURES AND INTERNAL POLICIES

### I. Oversight by the WASC Board Over Commission Activities

Recognizing that the Association's Board of Directors (the "Board") retains the ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the corporation while at the same time recognizing the wide latitude which has been historically granted to the three Accrediting Commissions, the Board establishes the following rules with respect to its oversight responsibilities. These rules are not intended to preclude the Board from taking further actions as it deems necessary in a particular instance to discharge its responsibility to govern the affairs of the corporation:

1. Each Accrediting Commission shall be audited annually by an outside certified public accountant of the Accrediting Commission's choice. Copies of the full audit report, including any "management letter" shall be provided by each Accrediting Commission to the Board.
2. Each Accrediting Commission shall annually develop and adopt an operating and, when necessary, capital budget. The budgets shall be reported to, reviewed by, and ratified by the Association's Board. Prior ratification shall not be necessary in order for an Accrediting Commission to begin to implement its budget. Significant variances in expenses or revenues from the budget shall also be reported to the Board.
3. All Accrediting Commission Manuals, Handbooks, Policies and amendments thereto shall be presented to the Board by the respective Commission for ratification. Prior ratification shall not be necessary in order for an Accrediting Commission to begin to implement any policy, Manual, or Handbook.
4. Each Accrediting Commission shall present for prior approval of the Association's Board any proposed capital expenditure larger than the reserves of that Commission.

### II. Meeting by Conference Call

A special meeting of the Board may be requested for any reason by the chairs of at least two (2) of the Commissions of the Association. The Board may also meet and act by a meeting conducted by conference call.

### III. Satisfying Extraordinary Litigation Expense

The Association recognizes the possibility that the organization may at some time in the future incur substantial costs rising from litigation against the Association. Such costs might involve substantial legal defense expenses or an adverse judgment with resulting damages, or both. The Association maintains liability insurance to protect the Association and its Accrediting Commissions from such a possibility. However, defense costs might be incurred or an adverse judgment might occur which would not be covered by insurance. This might occur if: (1) insurance becomes unavailable in the future; (2) the adverse judgment or defense costs are in excess of insurance limits; or (3) the nature of the liability precludes coverage from the insurance policy. In such an instance, the Association would have to depend on its own internal financial resources to satisfy all or part of the defense costs or judgment. The purpose of this Policy is to set forth the manner in which the assets of the Association and its

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Accrediting Commissions would be made available in this event.

1. The Accrediting Commission responsible for the action giving rise to the litigation would be responsible to pay for all costs of defense, including legal expenses, and to satisfy the judgment through whatever means it might have at its disposal.
2. To the extent that the assets of the affected Accrediting Commission were insufficient to satisfy the Accrediting Commission's obligation under paragraph 1 above, the assets of the remaining Accrediting Commissions would be available on an equal basis to cover these costs. To the extent that the assets of the three Accrediting Commissions were insufficient to pay for these costs, any assets controlled by the Association's Board would become available.
3. To the extent that the assets of the Accrediting Commissions not responsible for the adverse decision or of the Association's Board were employed as described of Association's insurance in paragraph 2 above, the Accrediting Commission responsible for the adverse judgment would be responsible to reimburse the other Accrediting Commissions and the Association's Board of Directors for all such costs. Such reimbursement will be made as soon as practicable and according to a schedule developed by the Accrediting Commissions and approved by the WASC Board.

#### IV. Term of the Chair of the Board

At its annual meeting, the Board of Directors shall elect its Chair from among its members for a one-year term. The Chair may be re-elected for one additional one-year term. The Chair's term will run from August 1 to July 31.

#### V. Conflict of Interest

WASC, a non-profit public benefit corporation organized under the laws of the State of California and tax exempt under section 510(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, enacts the following policy to in order to assure that the decisions of the WASC Board, its three Commissions, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and their staffs are free from conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest.

1. Each of WASC's three Commissions shall at all times maintain in effect a conflict of interest policy which shall have been approved by this Board. Any material changes in a Commission's conflict of interest policy shall be presented to this Board for approval. The Commission's conflict of interest policies shall deal with conflicts of interest on the part of Commission members, volunteers that assist the Commissions, such as visiting team members, and members of the Commissions' staffs, including but not limited to any Commission staff members meeting the IRS definition of a "key employee."
2. The members of this Board and the Officers, its President, Treasurer, and Secretary, shall comply with the following conflict of interest rules:

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- A. New Board members and officers shall complete the Conflict of Interest Statement which is attached to this Policy, as Exhibit A, prior to commencing their duties; annually thereafter, each Board member and officer shall update the statement. Copies of all such statements shall be maintained by the Sec. in the books and records of WASC.
- B. Board members and Officers will strive to avoid any activity or involvement which is in conflict with their duties as Directors and Officers.
- C. In the event a Director or Officer identifies a matter which such Director or Officer believes presents a conflict of interest involving either that Director or Officer or another Director or Officer, such Director or Officer shall disclose such conflict by bringing it to the attention of the Chair of the Board and the Secretary as soon as possible.
- D. Depending on the nature of the conflict of interest, the Director or Officer presented with the conflict of interest may be asked to refrain from voting on a matter, recuse himself or herself from deliberations on the matter, or even, under rare circumstances, resign from the Director or Officer position. Ordinarily, the appropriate conduct will be decided by the Chair of the Commission who may check with WASC legal counsel before making a decision. The Director or Officer who presents a possible conflict of interest may always appeal the matter to the full Board which shall have the authority to make a final decision (without the vote of any Director in potential conflict being counted). Conflicts involving the Chair shall be decided by the remainder of the Board members.
- E. Examples of conflicts of interest shall include, but are not necessarily be limited to the following:
1. *Having a material financial interest in a matter before WASC.* A Director or Officer will have a material financial interest in a transaction before WASC, including matters before the Board, if such Director or Officer has a 5% or greater equity interest in, or a salary, stipend, or other form of compensation from the other organization involved in the transaction. For example, if a Director owns 10% of the stock in a bank, and WASC is considering commencing a business relationship with that bank, that Director has a material financial interest in any transaction involving WASC and that bank.
  2. *Holding a position of influence, with or without compensation, such as a directorship or officer position, with another organization that is involved in a potential transaction before WASC.* In addition, owning a membership interest in a non-profit organization, which affords the Director or Officer 5% or more of the voting power in that organization, presents a conflict if WASC is considering a transaction involving that organization.
- F. Most members of the Board and Officers will be associated with an institution that is a candidate or accredited by WASC. From time to time, the Board will be

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asked to ratify actions of the Commissions which will have made accreditation or candidacy decisions involving an institution with which a Board member will be associated. A Board member's association with an institution means that he will be considered an "interested director" within the meaning of this Policy but does not, in and of itself present a conflict of interest that will prevent such Director or Officer from voting to ratify the decisions of the appropriate Commission that concern the candidacy or accreditation of such institution; however, such association shall be disclosed and noted on the minutes of the Board meeting when a vote is taken, and there must have been, at all times, a sufficient number of affirmative votes, not counting the vote of the interested Director, to carry the motion or resolution as it applies to that institution, without counting the vote of the interested Director; so that, if, for example, all five Board members are present and voting; one Board member is associated with Institution A, and Institution A is on a list of institutions which the Board is being asked by the responsible Commission to ratify in a single consent action; all five Board members, including the interested Board member, vote to ratify the Commission's actions. The association of the interested Board member will be noted on the minutes of the Board meeting, and the minutes will record that all five Board members voted affirmatively to ratify the entire list of institutions, including Institution A. The vote to ratify is appropriate since the affirmative vote of four votes (not counting the vote of the interested Director) was sufficient to pass the motion as to Institution A.

3. WASC does not employ a staff separate from the staffs that are employed by its three Commissions, and, for that reason, WASC addresses the issue of having a Conflict of Interest Policy cover "key employees," as the IRS defines that term, by requiring its Commissions to maintain in effect conflict of interest policies that include all members of their paid staffs, including but not limited to their "key employees."

*Adopted June 30, 2009*

## VI. Executive Compensation

This Policy applies to the procedures by which WASC and its Commissions will follow in establishing the compensation of WASC's Executive Staff. All WASC Executive Staff members are to be paid at compensation levels that are reasonable and consistent with those in comparable positions throughout the accreditation, nonprofit, and education communities. Each of WASC's three Commissions shall be delegated the authority to function as a compensation committee for the WASC Board for the purpose of reviewing and approving the compensation of all Executive Staff that work for that Commission. Each Commission may serve as a compensation committee of the whole or, at its discretion, may form a committee, which must consist entirely of Commission members, to serve this function. In approving such compensation, each Commission (or a committee thereof) shall, to the extent feasible, review and rely on comparable external data in order to assure that compensation paid to Executive Staff is consistent with compensation being paid to positions of comparable responsibility within the accreditation, nonprofit and educational communities. The compensation decisions and the reasons for such decisions shall be documented

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contemporaneously in the minutes of the Commission (or a committee thereof). The Commissions shall each assure that all Commission members involved in reviewing and approving compensation decisions for Executive Staff are "independent" and without conflict of interest within applicable IRS regulations and guidelines.

The approval of compensation decisions for Executive Staff positions shall be made, to the extent feasible, (1) in advance of the hiring of a new member of the Executive Staff or the creation of a new employee position that will result in the hiring of a new member of the Executive Staff, and (2) in advance of changes in the compensation of current members of the Executive Staff. Approval of compensation for an individual or a position may be at a fixed level or may include a range of compensation. Changes in the level of compensation of existing members of the Executive Staff require approval of the Commission (or a committee thereof). Changes occur when the compensation levels of members of the Executive Staff or positions that will be filled by Executive Staff members are adjusted in a manner which falls outside of the compensation level or range that has previously been approved for that person or position. Adjustments that are automatic, as in the case of a multi-year employment agreement that includes annual preset increases in compensation, do not have to be separately approved, provided the terms of the original employment agreement was approved.

At the annual meeting of the WASC Board, each Commission shall report to the WASC Board, substantiating its compliance with this Policy. The WASC Board shall accept the Commissions' reports and ratify the actions of the Commissions that were taken in accordance with this Policy.

*Adopted June 30, 2009*

## VII. Gift Acceptance

WASC, a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of California and tax exempt under 510(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, encourages the solicitation and acceptance of gifts and grants to WASC and to its Commissions for purposes that will help WASC further and fulfill its mission. The following policy governs acceptance of gifts and grants made to WASC and to its Commissions.

The mission of WASC, as stated in its Articles of Incorporation, encompasses the promotion of the welfare, interests, and development of elementary, secondary, and higher education through (1) improvement of educational programs, (2) close cooperation among the schools, colleges, and universities within the territory it undertakes to serve, (3) certification of accreditation or candidacy status, and (4) effective working relationships with other educational organizations and accrediting agencies.

The Board of Directors of WASC and its staff, and each of WASC's Commissions may solicit current and deferred gifts from individuals and other entities and grants from foundations in order to assist WASC in fulfilling its mission. These policies and guidelines govern the acceptance of gifts and grants by WASC and provide guidance to prospective donors and their advisors when making gifts to WASC. The provisions of these policies shall apply to all gifts and grants received by WASC and by any of its Commissions.

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All gifts and grants must be accepted either by the WASC Board (or its delegate) or by the Commission to which the gift is intended (or its delegate) in accordance with this Policy. By resolution, the WASC Board may delegate authority to accept gifts to any corporate officer, and, by resolution, a Commission may delegate acceptance of gifts to that Commission to its chief executive officer. WASC or the Commission receiving the gift or grant shall be responsible for maintaining an accurate record of the gift or grant. No gift or grant may be accepted which includes restrictions that appear to be inconsistent with WASC's stated mission, nor impose restrictions which are deemed too restrictive or too burdensome by the WASC Board or by the Commission to which the gift or grant is intended. All gifts and grants that have not been formally approved by the WASC Board prior to their acceptance shall be ratified by the WASC Board following their acceptance.

Gifts and grants are generally divided into "standard" and "non-standard." A non-standard gift or grant may only be accepted by the WASC Board after consultation with legal counsel. Non-standard gifts and grants include,

- Closely held stock transfers that are subject to restrictions or buy-sell agreements;
- Documents naming WASC or any of its Commissions as Trustee;
- Gifts involving contracts, such as bargain sales or other documents requiring WASC or any Commission to assume an obligation;
- Transactions with potential conflict of interest that may invoke IRS sanctions;
- Gifts of more than \$100 in value that are in a form other than in cash;
- Any other instance in which the Board of Directors deems the nature of the gift to require approval as a non-standard gift or grant.

All gifts and grants that are within WASC's mission and do not fit within the above definition of "non-standard gifts and grants" are considered "standard gifts and grants" under this Policy. Standard gifts and grants are accepted and administered as follows: The WASC Board will accept and administer all standard gifts and grants, restricted and unrestricted, that are directed only to WASC and not to one of its Commissions. Standard gifts and grants, unrestricted and restricted, that are directed to a Commission shall be accepted and administered by that Commission.

*Adopted June 30, 2009*

#### VIII. Whistleblower Policy

Each Commission shall incorporate this Whistleblower Policy into its Employee Manual, which shall provide as follows:

WASC requires its employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of WASC, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable federal and state laws. WASC encourages its employees to report a good faith suspicion or credible information regarding a violation of federal or state law.

No employee who in good faith makes such a report shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence. An employee who retaliates against someone who has



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reported a violation of federal or state law in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the WASC organization prior to seeking resolution outside the organization.

Employees should share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, the Commission's President or Executive Director is in the best position to address an area of concern. If the area of concern involves a President or Executive Director, the employee should report the matter to the relevant Commissions' Chair.

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant or may be submitted anonymously. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

The Commission's President or Executive Director is responsible for investigating and resolving all reported complaints and allegations covered by this Whistleblower Policy and, at their discretion, shall advise the respective Commission's Chair or the Board of Directors of WASC.

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

*Adopted June 30, 2009*

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