May 6, 2015

Re: Accrediting Commission Report
April 2015 Meeting
(via email distribution)

Dear ACCET Members and Other Colleagues:

This letter provides information regarding actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at its April 2015 meeting. Specific reports relative to the April 2015 Commission meeting are available on the ACCET website under the "Commission" tab, including: (1) Final Actions Taken by the Commission (referenced by institution), (2) Summary Statistics of Actions Taken by the Commission, and (3) a copy of this Accrediting Commission Report, which describes new and/or revised ACCET policy documents considered by the Commission for final approval or sent out for comment, including a call for comment on proposed revisions to ACCET Document 2 – Standards for Accreditation. Also available on the website is a request for written comments relative to institutions scheduled for consideration of accreditation at the Commission's August and December 2015 meetings.

A synopsis of the Commission's actions on ACCET policies undertaken at the April 2015 meetings is included as follows: (1) final documents approved by the Commission (available on the ACCET website under "Documents and Forms"), (2) call for comment on proposed revisions to policy documents, and (3) the five-year review of ACCET Standards for Accreditation.

As a reminder, the Commission's Standards and Policy Review Committee (SPRC) conducts an ongoing review of each ACCET policy document at least every five years. Additionally, SPRC considers specific policy documents for review and revision to address governmental regulatory requirements, arising issues of concern, and/or the need for additional policy guidance. Member institutions and other interested parties are invited and encouraged to submit their written comments to proposed changes to ACCET policies and standards (available on the ACCET website under "News").

Final Approval

1. **Document 1 – The Accreditation Process**

    Changes were made to provide additional clarity regarding the accreditation of organizational entities, within larger institutions, offering continuing education as clearly identified objectives, including: (a) corporate training divisions, (b) continuing education departments/divisions of colleges and/or universities, and (c) Intensive English Programs owned and operated by colleges

or universities. These organizational entities may be eligible for accreditation provided that they are discrete units with distinct management, budgets, and clear responsibility for the promotion and delivery of the education offered, including but not limited to enrollment, curriculum, faculty, student outcomes, and refunds, as applicable.

2. **Document 1.1 - Initial Accreditation Process**

Changes were made to: (a) clarify that any program that cannot be reviewed at the time of an on-site visit due to lack of enrollment will <u>not</u> be included in the subsequent grant of initial accreditation, consistent with ACCET Document 25 – <u>Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses,</u> (b) specify that failure to submit a timely response to the Team Report is considered by ACCET to be a self-executed withdrawal of the application for accreditation by the institution, and (c) clarity that initial applicants may voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process at any time prior to the Commission meeting in which the institution is scheduled for consideration of accreditation by the Commission, with written notice of withdrawal required to be received by ACCET prior to the first day of the meeting.

3. **Document 16 - Transfer of Credit Policy**

No substantive changes were made as a result of the five-year review of this document. The only changes were to the format of the document.

4. **Document 34 - Policy on Contracting for Educational Delivery**

No substantive changes were made as a result of the five-year review of this document.

Call for Comment

1. **Document 25 – Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses**

Proposed are changes to: (a) establish a definition for e-learning (which has limited instructor-student interaction) and an approval process for e-learning delivered by ACCET-accredited avocational institutions, (b) update the description of interactive distance learning, (c) eliminate the 25% limit on IDL enrollments for institutions with initial approval to offer IDL, but specify that documented evidence of successful student outcomes must be provided before obtaining approval for subsequent IDL programs.

2. **Document 25.E-learning – Application for E-learning Program/Course**

Proposed is a new application for e-learning modeled after the application for interactive distance learning.

3. **Document 3.E-learning – E-learning Template**

Proposed is the establishment of an e-learning template with Specific Field Criteria modeled after the template for interactive distance learning.

4. **Document 3.IDL – <u>Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) Template</u>**

Proposes are changes to the introductory section of the template to: (a) update the description for interactive distance learning and (b) eliminate reference to the 25% limit on IDL enrollments for institutions with initial approval to offer IDL, but specify that documented evidence of successful student outcomes must be provided, before obtaining approval for subsequent IDL programs. Changes are also proposed to the questions/statements for IDL, including questions pertaining to: (a) the use of learning management systems, (b) a retention strategy for IDL programs/courses, and (c) the tracking and monitoring of student academic progress.

5. **Document 28 – <u>Completion and Placement Policy</u>**

Changes are proposed, including to: (a) clearly identify definitions for completion and completion rates, (b) specify that higher-than-benchmark placement rates may provide an off-set for lower-than-benchmark completion rates, (c) reorganize the document to have a section on placement for vocational programs, (d) reduce the number of types of placements by eliminating "temporary employment" and "self-assessment progress as a placement factor", (e) simplify and standardize placement attestations, (f) merge Document 28 and Document 28.1 – <u>Completion and Placement Statistics Definitions</u>, (g) expand the instructions for transfers, and (h) specify that waivers that exceed the 15% limit will be factored into the adjusted waiver and placement rates.

6. **Document 33 – <u>Definitions</u>**

Changes are proposed to update: (a) the definitions for branch campus, auxiliary classroom, and temporary avocational classroom to be consistent with the newly revised definitions in Document 26 – <u>Review and Approval of Additional Locations</u> and (b) the definitions for interactive distance learning and e-learning, consistent with the definitions found in Document 25 – <u>Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses.</u>

<u>Five-Year Review of ACCET Standards for Accreditation</u>

1. **<u>Proposed Schedule and Timeline for Standards Review:</u>**

<u>November 2014</u>: SPRC drafted revisions to the <u>Standards for Accreditation</u>, based on extensive input received from member institutions, students, and other interested parties, including comments from the following sources:
- <u>Focus Group:</u> Members from 12 vocational and avocational institutions met on November 2, 2014 to identify areas of proposed change to the ACCET standards;
- <u>Standards Advisory Committee:</u> Members from 15 vocational and avocational institutions participated in teleconference calls on October 23 and 28, 2014 to identify standards in need of further clarity and/or revision;

- Standards Survey: This survey was completed on SurveyMonkey by 136 respondents, including Commissioners, member institutions, staff, and other interested parties. Respondents provided written comments and rated each of ACCET's 33 standards relative to three criteria: (1) relevancy, (2) adequacy, and (3) clarity.
- Student Surveys and Focus Groups: Over 700 students at member institutions (vocational and avocational) provided feedback through a written survey and/or focus groups. Student rated the importance of individual ACCET standards to them.

December 2014: The Commission reviewed the comments/ratings received on the current standards and approved proposed initial revisions to the Standards for Accreditation to go out for comment.

April 2015: SPRC and the Commission reviewed and revised, as Standards for Accreditation, based on comments received from the membership and other interested parties, including comments resulting from teleconference calls in February 2015 by the Standards Advisory Committee. The Commission approved the revised draft to go out for additional comment.

August 2015: SPRC and the Commission will review/revise Standards for Accreditation based on comments received from the membership and other interested parties. The Commission will approve proposed revisions to the standards for subsequent consideration and approval by the membership at the ACCET Annual Conference.

October 2015: The membership will vote on proposed revisions to the Standards for Accreditation at the ACCET Annual Conference.

2. **Call for Comment: Document 2 - Standards for Accreditation:**

Based on comments received during the comment period following the December 2014 Commission Meeting, additional changes are proposed to ACCET's Standards for Accreditation for further review and comment by the membership and other interested parties. The Commission noted that comments received were primarily positive, including proposed changes to: (a) emphasize ACCET's commitment to institutional integrity, program quality, and successful student outcomes; (b) specify that ACCET's Standards for Accreditation and approved policies provide the criteria for the evaluation of institutions seeking to obtain or maintain accreditation; (c) modify the titles of the standards to more accurately reflect their content (e.g. Standard I – Mission, Goals, and Planning and Standard III – Financial Capacity and Responsibility); (d) reorganize the 33 standards to create a new Standard VIII – Student Assessment and Achievement (comprised of Performance Measurements, Attendance, and Student Progress) and Standard IX – Institutional Effectiveness (comprised of Student Satisfaction, Employer/Sponsor Satisfaction, Certification and Licensing, and Completion and Placement)**.**

Thank you for your continued commitment and responsiveness to our ongoing efforts to refine and strengthen the ACCET standards, policies, and practices. We extend special thanks to those who completed the Standards Survey and to those member institutions who solicited valuable feedback from their students through the Student Survey and/or Student Focus Groups. Your contributions to this Partnership for Quality® are the foundation on which our combined accomplishments are measured. Thank you.

Sincerely,
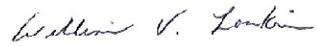
William V. Larkin, Ed.D.
Executive Director