

ACCSCCT Alert!

Information for
our member schools

To: *ACCSCCT Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties*
From: *Elise Scanlon, Executive Director*
Date: *July 1, 2005*
Subject: *Amendments to the Standards of Accreditation*

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology has reviewed all written comments submitted by accredited institutions and other interested parties regarding the revisions to the Standards of Accreditation as proposed in the Commission's March 17, 2005 Call For Comment. The Commission has subsequently voted to adopt the additions and revisions to the Standards of Accreditation in the following area effective immediately:

- *Section X and Accreditation Reviews – Separate Facility Standards*
- *Section VIII – Management Standards*
- *Accreditation Process and Procedures – Maximum First Term Grant of Accreditation*

The Accreditation Alert can also be found on the Commission's website at: www.accscct.org. Go to "*Staying Accredited*" and then "*Accreditation Alert*."

In addition to the revised sections stated above, the Commission has made appropriate conforming changes as well as format changes to the Standards of Accreditation and its forms. The revisions and additions have been incorporated into the Standards of Accreditation, a revised copy of which can be found on the Commission's website by going to "*Staying Accredited*" and then "*Standards of Accreditation*." The revised Standards of Accreditation dated July 1, 2005 should be used to replace all previous versions.

Accredited institutions and interested parties maintaining complete, up-to-date copies of the Standards of Accreditation should add this notice to their current standards book under the Accreditation Alerts tab. For additional information related to these adopted revisions, please contact Michale S. McComis, Associate Executive Director, at (703) 247-4520.

Approved Revisions
Separate Facilities – Policies and Substantive Standards

On December 14, 2004 and March 17, 2005 the Commission released a Call for Comment proposing several revisions to the Commission's separate facility standards as a means to take into account emerging trends in the education marketplace and to better serve the needs and interests of students. After reviewing the comments received from the membership in response to those proposed revisions, the Commission opted to accept the revisions.

Under the revised standards, the restriction that not more than 90 percent of a program's curriculum can be offered at a satellite location is eliminated. The Commission will now assess the effectiveness of a satellite location as an educational facility by focusing on management and oversight and through a new requirement for segregated student achievement data for students taking more than 50% of a program at a satellite location.

The Commission maintains its expectation that students attending a satellite location will have full access to all necessary educational resources and student services. The Commission will require a main school or branch to demonstrate that a satellite location is within a reasonable commuting distance. It is the responsibility of the school seeking to establish a satellite location to demonstrate, with documentation, the reasonableness of the commuting distance accounting for geography, setting (e.g., rural, urban, etc.), and other relevant considerations. The Commission will limit the number of satellite locations that a main school or branch campus can establish to one per 12 month period unless good cause is shown for additional satellite locations within a shorter timeframe.

Currently approved satellite locations will have six months to do one of the following: a) come into compliance with the newly established requirements; b) apply for and achieve branch campus accreditation; or c) establish a teach-out plan for students enrolled in the satellite location. Main schools and branch campuses with currently approved satellite locations must report to the Commission no later than December 31, 2005 and demonstrate that one of the three options stated above has been achieved.

Other changes found in the revisions include clarifying language regarding the processes for applying for a branch campus or satellite location and an extension of the timeframe within which an on-site evaluation to a branch campus or satellite location will occur after approval is granted. The revisions do not disturb the current approval process for the expansion of a main school or branch campus as long as the expansion is within one mile of the existing facility. Any facility expansion beyond one mile will be considered a separate facility.

The Commission's new separate facility standards can be found in the July 1, 2005 Standards of Accreditation in the Accreditation Reviews section on pages 10-11 and in Section X on pages 49-51.

Approved Revisions
Section VIII - Management

The Commission's standards emphasize the importance of a school's management and administrative capacity in ensuring the effectiveness of an institution and the delivery of educational programs and student services. The standards also stress the importance of planning and the improvement process. Due to the importance of these concepts and in light of the changing educational marketplace, the Commission

conducted an in-depth review of its management standards (Section VIII) and found the need to clarify requirements in the areas of management personnel, institutional improvement planning, financial soundness, tuition policies, and physical facilities.

One area which the Commission revised substantially is in management personnel qualifications and administrative capacity. The new requirements state that the school must have adequate management and administrative capacity in place which includes:

- a. Full-time on-site supervision by an individual or team with the appropriate combination of education, experience and demonstrated ability to lead and manage a post-secondary educational institution;
- b. owners, members of school management, and administrative employees who are qualified for their particular roles and who possess the appropriate education, training and experience commensurate with the level of their responsibilities;
- c. a sufficient number of managers and administrative employees necessary to support the school's operations, student services and educational programs; and
- d. appropriate administrative and operational policies and procedures to which the school adheres and reviews and updates as needed.

Other additions and revisions in this area include an explicit statement that members of school management and administrative employees must participate in on-going development and training activities which support their particular roles in the school and that schools ensure the continuity of management and administrative capacity through the reasonable retention of management and administrative staff.

The Commission's inclusion of a team dynamic in school management recognizes that several individuals working together with varied backgrounds, skills, and experiences may be as effective in providing school oversight as a single individual. The evaluation of adequate on-site management contemplated in Section VIII (A)(1)(a) relates to on-site personnel. While the Commission supports the notion that external support such as that received from corporate systems and consultants can enhance management at the school level, the evaluation of adequate on-site management does not extend to external management or oversight support which a school may receive.

The Commission has also greatly expanded the explanation of requirements for institutional assessment and improvement planning. The intent here is provide more than just a requirement that schools engage in assessment and improvement activities but also to provide specific guidelines which will assist schools in accomplishing this requirement.

Lastly, the Commission has provided some clarifying language and added some requirements to the Financial Stability and Responsibility; Tuition Policies; and Physical Facilities subsections. Prominent among these include a requirement for a budget and budget monitoring process; clarifying language regarding scholarships; a requirements for the "identical" disclosure of a school's refund policy in the catalog and enrollment agreement; and a requirement that school facilities be sufficient in size to create an effective and suitable learning environment.

The Commission's new management standards can be found in Section VIII of the July 1, 2005 Standards of Accreditation on pages 46-48.

Approved Revisions
Process and Procedures

Over the past several years the Commission has studied accreditation actions for schools within their first term of accreditation as a measure of the effectiveness of these institutions and the Commission's standards and process. The Commission's research has shown that a disproportionate number of negative school actions (i.e., deferral, show cause, probation, denial, and revocation) are taken with respect to schools operating within their first term of accreditation.

The Commission has found through its research that schools often change substantially after receiving an initial grant of accreditation and at times, do so without the necessary management and infrastructure support. The lack of necessary support affects their ability to remain in compliance with accrediting standards. The Commission has also found that that granting shorter periods for the first term of accreditation allows for an opportunity to identify and correct accreditation problem areas sooner as schools will have the benefit of the Commission's Accreditation Workshop and the self-evaluation process which prepares the school for accreditation review.

Accordingly, the Commission has revised the Process and Procedures section of the Standards of Accreditation to state that "[t]he term of accreditation for schools seeking an initial grant of accreditation is a maximum of three years, but may be less at the discretion of the Commission." The Commission's new language in this regard can be found in the Process and Procedures section of the July 1, 2005 Standards of Accreditation on page 6.