



Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

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## Press Release

### ACCSC Systematic Program of Review of the *Standards of Accreditation* – Our Results Reflect Your Success

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As a recognized accrediting commission whose mission is to serve as a reliable authority on educational quality, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) is committed to the on-going review of its standards. One method used to fulfill this goal, among several others, is ACCSC's Systematic Program of Review which includes a comprehensive **Validity and Reliability Study** every five years. The Commission has recently completed its most recent **Validity and Reliability Study** and is proud and excited to share the results.

In 2009, ACCSC contracted with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems ("NCHEMS"),<sup>1</sup> an independent research firm, to provide an external evaluation of the *Standards of Accreditation* and the Commission's Student Achievement benchmarks. The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree key constituents believe that the *Standards of Accreditation* are relevant to student learning and adequate for the purpose of assessing quality education. NCHEMS surveyed each ACCSC-accredited institution as well as a sampling of faculty members, students, graduates, and employers and requested an assessment of the Commission's *Standards* in these critical areas.

The Commission is pleased to report that the results from these surveys were overwhelmingly positive. The NCHEMS report indicates that:

*"ACCSC has developed standards and criteria which it can be proud of [and that] the design of ACCSC's Standards and associated review process follows established practice in institutional accreditation. The ACCSC Standards are notable for setting an appropriate level of specificity with respect to capacity or performance. This stance allows flexible application to a wide range of differing institutional circumstances while at the same time providing enough guidance for teams to recognize whether or not an institution is in compliance with the Standards."*

With regard to student achievement outcomes, NCHEMS noted that the Commission's use of specific student achievement thresholds or benchmark rates and clearly defined exclusions for graduation and employment are "commendable features" by which the Commission is able to make comparisons among the membership for programs with similar lengths. Overall NCHEMS reported that the current student achievement outcomes standards are appropriate and that, "[t]aken together, these features provide considerable confidence in the soundness and appropriateness of ACCSC's general approach to establishing quantitative performance criteria on selected student outcomes measures."

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<sup>1</sup> More information on NCHEMS can be found online at <http://www.nchems.org/>.

Of significant importance, the NCHEMS Report noted that, "ACCSC Standards are exemplary" in the following areas:

- *Strict adherence to quantitative standards of performance with respect to degree completion and employment placement;*
- *The provision for granting institutions due process should they take issue with an adverse decision made by the Commission;*
- *Mandatory workshops for new candidates which signals the importance of knowing ACCSC's accreditation procedures and requirements; and*
- *The Pilot Project initiative which allows institutions to suspend particular standards or certain aspects of their self-evaluation in favor of innovative studies that can benefit them and career education more generally.*

Through an examination of the survey results, the Commission was pleased to learn that membership feedback reinforced these findings. In addition, the membership survey results show that:

*"The ACCSC accreditation standards overwhelmingly meet the designated federal criteria: the standards are both relevant and allow ACCSC to evaluate the quality of education and training provided by an institution. Surveys conducted with other constituents including current students, graduates, faculty, and employers provide additional support that ACCSC's Standards are achieving their goals in terms of institutional behavior and student outcomes."*

The study found widespread agreement with the relevance and importance of the *Standards* and that only six areas received "low agreement" in the survey results. The Commission intends to review these areas and the results of the surveys in order to determine if improvements can be made.

The Commission appreciates the exceptional level of participation and ongoing support for its Systematic Program of Review process. The Commission considers the positive survey results to not only reinforce that ACCSC is meeting its mission and is an outstanding quality assurance and accountability agent, but also to be reflective of the overwhelming support and commitment given by ACCSC-accrediting institutions to the Commission's efforts and to the overall success of students.

An overall summary of the study is available on the ACCSC website at [www.accsc.org](http://www.accsc.org) or by [clicking here](#). For additional information on the results of the NCHEMS Study, please contact Michale McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director at [mccomis@accsc.org](mailto:mccomis@accsc.org) or at 703.247.4520, or Thomas J. Cornacchia, Director of Accreditation at [tcornacchia@accsc.org](mailto:tcornacchia@accsc.org) or at 703.247.4507.