The Value of Accreditation
Best Practices for High Performing Institutions

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The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC)

STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

April 15, 2012

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
SUBSTANTIVE STANDARDS

SECTION 1 - MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
The purpose of this section is to ensure that accredited schools have the capability to meet and exceed accrediting standards on an ongoing basis. This section addresses the requirements schools must meet in regard to management and administrative capacity, qualifications of management and administrative personnel, financial stability, institutional assessment and improvement planning, and physical facilities. A school that lacks adequate management, sufficient administrative capacity, financial resources and physical facilities, or that fails to plan for future improvement cannot provide assurance that it will operate in compliance with accrediting standards, meet its objectives, and fulfill its obligations to students.

A. Management and Administrative Capacity
1. The school must have adequate management and administrative capacity in place that 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;
   d. Appropriate administrative and operational policies and procedures to which the school adheres and reviews and updates as needed.
2. All owners, members of school management, and administrative employees must have past records of integrity that would assure compliance with accrediting standards and applicable federal, state, and local requirements. The Commission will consider an individual's affiliation with a school that has lost or been denied accreditation, entered into bankruptcy, or closed, as well as an individual's involvement in criminal proceedings and any pending or past action in a court or administrative body.
3. Members of school management and administrative employees must participate in ongoing development and training activities that support their particular roles in the school.
4. The continuity of management and administrative capacity is assured through the reasonable retention of management and administrative staff.

B. Institutional Assessment, Improvement, and Planning
1. The school must demonstrate that it engages in ongoing institutional assessment and improvement activities and planning appropriate to the size and scale of the school's operations and that support the management and administration of the school as well as the quality of education provided. Institutional assessment and improvement activities should support and enhance the quality of the education provided using information obtained internally (e.g., staff and faculty development and planning, and student input and feedback) and externally (e.g., Program Advisory Committees, employers, community involvement, school graduates, etc.) to validate the school's educational and administrative practices and to document and improve...
Achieving Institutional Success

Successful Institutions:

- Know Themselves
  - Leadership
  - Differentiate
- Know Their Students
- Are Committed
  - Mission
- Student Success

K.I.S.S.

Keep it Simple, Straightforward
Achieving Institutional Success

Fundamental Pillars:

- Mission, Culture, Values
- Self-Evaluation and Assessment
  - Institutional
  - Individual
- Use Knowledge for Improvement
  - Action
  - On-going
- Commitment
Achieving Institutional Success

Institutional Mission

Key Questions

What is the School’s Mission?
Does the Mission Align with Goals?
What are the Organization’s Values?
Achieving Institutional Success

Strengths and Challenges
Strengths

- **Adaptability / Flexibility**
  - Market Driven
  - Program offerings/New Programs/Program Modifications

- **Accountability**
  - Outcomes (Graduation and Employment Rates)

- **Individualized Attention**
  - Small Class Size
  - Student Services

- **Faculty**
  - Industry Knowledge
Challenges

- **Public Perception**
  - Career College education not as good as traditional college
  - Only in it for the money / not truthful in the recruitment process
  - Transfer of Credit

- **Accountability**
  - Outcomes (Graduation and Employment Rates)

- **Compliance**
  - Accreditation / State / Federal

- **Faculty**
  - Retention, Recruitment
  - Professional Development
Achieving Institutional Success

Areas to Commit to for Achieving Institutional Success:

- Self-Evaluation
- Institutional Assessment & Improvement
- Students
- Community
Self Evaluation & Institutional Assessment

- Provides Clarity of Vision and Direction
- Provided Direction
- Produces Knowledge
- You must know where you have been to better determine where you should be going
- What makes institutional assessment successful?
  - Leadership Matters
  - Commitment
Self Evaluation & Institutional Assessment

- Should be a significant and **on-going** process
  - Endemic
  - Not Episodic
- Should evaluate all factors within the context of an institution’s stated mission.
- Should involve the entire school
- Should involve internal and external validation
- Should combine quantitative measures with qualitative measures
- Should use assessments to gauge success and develop paths to improvement
Achieving Institutional Success

Students:
- Commit to student success
- Enroll “Graduates”
- Know your students
- Understand your students and their needs
  - Educational Programs
  - Student Services
    - Assess and Quantify Needs
  - Give them a Place
Achieving Institutional Success

Community:
- Be a part of your community, be of service
- Give – Show your value
- Mine the value of giving / volunteering
- Understand what is important
  - Students
  - Staff and Faculty
  - The Community
- Show the value of a the school’s education
  - Satisfy the intrinsic and the extrinsic will follow
Start at the Center

The Student
The Student’s Family
The Student’s Community
National Economy
Global Economy
The Role of Accreditation

Accreditation:
- Provides the Blueprints: the “specs”
- Enhances the quality of education provided
- Requires continuous improvement, self-evaluation, and accountability
- Promotes institutional accountability
  - Systematic
  - Comprehensive
  - Evaluative
  - Standards and criteria based
- Partnership & peer review among institutions
Achieving Institutional Success

Student Achievement

Quantitative Assessment

Qualitative Assessment
Student Achievement Outcomes
Graduation Rates 2011-2013

Programs 10-12 Months in Length

Being Good Isn’t Good Enough

Required Rate: 55%
86% Compliance
Student Achievement Outcomes
Employment Rates 2011-2013

All Programs

Being Good Isn’t Good Enough

Required Rate: 68%
78% Compliance
Achieving Institutional Success

Putting it Together
A View From Above

School As A Whole – Educational Leadership and Administrative Capacity

Market Needs
Program Length
Educational Resources
Faculty Qualifications
Admissions
Student Services
Recruitment
Advertising

Student Success
On-going Assessment and Evaluation

On-going Assessment and Evaluation
Achieving Institutional Success

Bringing it Together
Key Elements to Consider

Elements to Consider Going Forward:

- Identification of Mission and Goals
  - Alignment and Congruence
- Identification of Culture and Values
  - Organizational and Personal
- Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches for Student Assessment and Student Achievement
- Continuous Attunement and Assessment
- Leadership Matters – You Matter
How Do You Contribute to the School’s Mission?
Achieving Institutional Success

- You are an important part of your school’s success
  - You represent your school
  - You represent all schools
- You are an important part of each student’s success
  - Students rely on you
  - Students need you
- Be a part of the success and of the future
The Value of Accreditation
Best Practices for High Performing Institutions

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Achieving Institutional Success

Institutional Assessment
A Leadership Challenge
Institutional Assessment & Improvement

Why is Institutional Assessment Necessary?

- Provides Clarity of Mission / Vision
- Provides Direction / Goals
- Produces Knowledge
  - You must know where you have been to better determine where you are going
- What makes institutional assessment successful?
  - Leadership
  - Commitment
Institutional Assessment & Improvement

- Institutional assessment and improvement activities and planning should be:
  - Appropriate to the size and scale of the school’s operations
  - Support the management and administration of the school, student assessment and achievement, and quality of education provided.
Institutional Assessment & Improvement

- Institutional assessment and improvement activities should:
  - Support and enhance the quality of the education and services provided;
  - Use information obtained internally and externally;
  - Validate the school’s educational and administrative practices – student assessment approaches;
  - Improve student learning and achievement; and
    - Evidence
  - Be significant and ongoing experiences in the school.
Institutional Enhancement

- **Evaluate Institutional Effectiveness**
  - Evaluate the infrastructure that supports the delivery of programs as well as educational outcomes including student achievement.
  - Infrastructure refers to those factors contributing to the students’ educational experience at the institution.
  - Faculty, admissions practices, facilities and equipment, library, student assessment approaches, financial and administrative capability, and student services including advising and job placement.
Institutional Enhancement

- Institutional success is dependent upon the quality and impact of the institutions leaders and managers
  - Leadership, management and administrative capacity
  - Professional development of leadership/management team
  - Strategic planning and succession planning

- Student success is dependent upon the quality of teaching and on-going faculty development
  - Faculty qualifications
  - Faculty development and engagement
  - Continuing education and training in myriad areas
  - Teaching skills and knowledge of instructional methods
  - Faculty retention

- The success of an institution is often measured by the success of its students
  - Student success = Institutional success
  - Did students learn what the institution set out to teach them?
  - Graduation and employment success
Self-Evaluation as a Tool

- Self-evaluation should be a significant and ongoing process
- Self-evaluation should evaluate all factors within the context of an institution’s stated mission.
- Self-evaluation should involve the entire school
- Self-evaluation should involve internal and external validation
- Self-evaluation should combine quantitative measures with qualitative measures
- Self-evaluation should use assessments to gauge success and develop paths to improvement
Achieving Institutional Success

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ACCSCT
Best Practices:

Using Accreditation as a Blueprint for Institutional Success
Meaningful things are happening every day at accredited institutions.

• Every single day students are going to class, engaging in labs, studying for exams, researching projects in the school’s library, going on externships, taking licensure exams, graduating with skills needed to gain entry into a vocational field, and ultimately starting on their career path.
Accreditors believe that initiatives like the independent verification of graduate employment, unannounced visits, and regular student achievement reporting is building / reestablishing confidence around the success of schools and the students they serve.
Foundational Thoughts for Today’s Presentation

Demonstrating successful student achievement by maintaining acceptable rates of student graduation and graduate employment in the career field for which the school provided education remains a significant challenge for post-secondary career colleges.

- Economic conditions, state and national employment trends, geographic location, and student population served can adversely impact a school’s ability to meet established benchmark rates for student achievement.

- Accreditors understand that assessment of a school’s performance in these areas requires a broad consideration of all circumstances that affect student learning, satisfactory progress, and student achievement.
155 Total Team Findings in 51 Team Summary Reports
Considered at the February 2015 Commission Meeting

Avg. – Slightly More than 3 Team Findings Per TSR
237 Total Team Findings in 67 Team Summary Reports
Considered at the November 2014 Commission Meeting

Avg. – Slightly More than 3 Team Findings Per TSR
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014:
ACCSC Accredited Institutions on Reporting
Pressure Point:

Increased Federalization of Higher Education
The expectations of accreditors are changing significantly

- Accreditation as we know it today has been subject to increased scrutiny and criticism by a variety of organizations and policy makers who have valid questions about whether or not accreditors are fulfilling their promise.
- What has been known to the accreditation community for some time is that the expectations of accreditors are changing such that accreditors are subject to far greater federal oversight than at any time in the past.
Changing the Dialogue:
From Skepticism to Confidence
Changing the Dialogue: From Skepticism to Confidence

The enterprise of accreditation is evolving and improving.

- A key example of how national accreditors have embraced the challenge of demonstrating that accreditation is both reliable and dependable without increased involvement by the federal government is in the area of student achievement assessment.

- In 2011, ACCSC initiated a new process whereas the Commission subjected the reported rates of student achievement to independent verification:
  - 10% random sample of Annual Report Data.

- In 2014, ACCSC adopted a policy requiring institutions seeking accreditation to engage an independent third-party auditor to verify the most recently reported graduate employment data as a means:
  - to bolster confidence in accreditation and
  - to reinforce a long standing requirement that institutions maintain “verifiable records of initial employment.”

- ACCSC believes that the third party independent audit requirement significantly strengthens accreditation and helps to change the dialogue from skepticism to confidence.
A Snapshot of Institutional Performance in California
ACCSC accredits 86 schools that offer 737 programs in California. 69% of program offerings are at certificate/diploma level.
Top 5 Programs – Student Enrollment

The Top 5 Programs make up 35% of the total students enrolled at ACCSC-accredited institutions in California.

- Medical Assistant – 3,512
- Vocational Nursing – 2,478
- Automotive Technology – 2,244
- Dental Assistant / Dental Hygiene – 1,382
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography - 913
Since 2011, enrollment at ACCSC-accredited institutions in California has decreased **13%**, from 33,996 to 29,646; however between 2012 and 2013, enrollment increased 9% from 32,007 to 35,142.

Students attending ACCSC-accredited institution in CA make up **16%** of all students attending an ACCSC-accredited institution.
Year to Year Enrollment at ACCSC-accredited institutions

8% decrease in enrollment from 2013 to 2014
36% decrease in enrollment from 2010 to 2014.
In 2014, the average institutional graduation rate for all ACCSC-accredited schools was 68%. For ACCSC-accredited schools in CA it was 69%.
Average Institutional Employment Rates in California

In 2014, the average institutional employment rate for all ACCSC-accredited schools was 76%. For ACCSC-accredited schools in CA it was 70%.
Best Practices:

Using Accreditation as a Blueprint for Institutional Success
Understanding the difference between being a compliant institution and a high performing institution.

Accreditation lays a solid foundation with our standards, but high performing institutions implement change and take action not because of a pending accreditation review, but rather, because they have a goal of serving students in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

- The Student Achievement Example

One of the key aspects of accreditation is the assessment of the effectiveness of an institution’s educational programs by evaluating the infrastructure that supports the delivery of programs as well as performance as measured by educational outcomes including student achievement.

- Using accrediting standards to assess infrastructure in admissions, faculty development, program design, and other operational areas.
Engage with your accreditor.

It is crucial that you understand the expectations, and the responsibilities (burden), that come with being an accredited post-secondary school/college

- Not only in the renewal cycle, but year to year.
- Accreditors require the submission of financial statements, sustaining fees, annual reports, et. al.
- Recognize the Deadlines.

Accreditation is changing.

- Keep up to date with changes to accrediting standards and practices.
  - Example: Independent Third-Party Verification of Job Placement

Volunteer

- Not just as a way to support the peer-review enterprise of accreditation, but to gain insight into the accreditation process.

Be known. For the right reasons.
Best Practices:
The Importance of Consistency
Best Practices: The Importance of Consistency

Consistency of Policies and Procedures as it Relates to Students is Equally Important.
Through the accreditation process, accreditors will evaluate the consistent application of a school’s policies and procedures that are student facing, including:

- Refund policies
- Student Services / Advising / Counseling
- Grades and Attendance
- Career Services
- Admissions

Every. Student. Enrolled.

Accreditors will also evaluate the consistent application of a school’s policies and procedures that focus on institutional operations, including:

- Strategic Planning
- Professional Development of Management
- Faculty Development
Best Practices:

Strategic Planning
Accreditation Perspective: A school that lacks adequate management; sufficient administrative capacity; financial resources and physical facilities; or that fails to plan for future improvement cannot provide assurance that it will operate in compliance with accrediting standards, meet its objectives, and fulfill its obligations to students.

- Institutional assessment and improvement activities should support the management and administration of the school and enhance the quality of the education provided

- How does student achievement data and program performance drive strategic planning activities?
- What do employers/graduates say?
- Is the school being realistic?

- Case Study – 3 Campuses, Family Owned. Long History.
  - Allied Health / Trades
  - The Market Changed
Best Practices: Strategic Planning

Several challenges faced by accredited institutions in terms of compliance regarding strategic planning:

- There is no plan.
- It is the same plan from the school’s previous accreditation cycle (dated).
- The plan is vague, unclear, unspecific, and too general.
- The plan is unrealistic / does not align with the school’s mission.
- No documentation exists to demonstrate that the school has implemented any aspects of the strategic plan, including the documentation of faculty professional growth.
- There are no budget allocations to support the plan.

Driving Factor: Scalability
The planning process should be appropriate given the size and scale of the school’s operations.
Encourage (require) Greater Involvement of All School Departments in Creating the Strategic Vision for the Institution.

- Not just a plan handed down from the corporate office/corner office, but one that involved the leadership team of the school.

Establish buy in and participation from your leadership team

- Make it strategic planning a priority
  - Performance Evaluations

Establish of a [Realistic Budget](#) to Ensure that Goals Identified Have the Necessary Fiscal Support

This Strategic Plan is a “Living Document” and should be Updated/Revised/Adapted as needed

- Not simply for accreditation purposes.
- Significant and OnGoing – Not Just Once Every Five Years
- Document, Document, Document
Best Practices:

Programs: Performance and Viability
Best Practices: Program Performance and Viability

• Each program offered by the school is appropriate to enable students to achieve the program objectives and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for initial employment in the field for which training is provided.

• What is the graduation rate for the program?
  • How is that data trending?

• What does the retention data show?
  • Are students dropping out at a particular point in the program?

• Are graduates able to get a job in the field based upon the training they received at your institution?
  • What does the data say?

• What is the pass rate on any certification/licensure exam?
**Best Practices: Program Performance and Viability**

- What are members of the Program Advisory Committee saying?
  - Have employers identified any skill-gaps that can be remedied through a change in the curriculum?
  - Have employers identified any new occupational trends that should be considered as part of a revised curriculum?

- Is there an opportunity for faculty to provide feedback on the delivery of the curriculum in the classroom?

- Do you survey current students, particularly those student on externship?
  - Do they feel prepared to enter the workforce based on practical experience during externship?

- Do you survey graduates?
  - Is there any area of focus they wish they had more time studying/training/practicing?
  - Do graduates feel prepared to enter the workforce based on the training received?
Best Practices:

Advisory Committees
Best Practices: Advisory Committees

The best way to ensure success is to continuously involve advisory committee members with the school on a regular basis.

- Provide a copy of the school newsletter or annual report to PAC members
- Invite PAC members to attend/speak at graduation, serve as a guest lecturer, participate in a career day, judge a student competition, or to be involved in a community service initiative.
- When you meet with VIPs (local community leaders, members of Congress, state legislators), have members of your PAC with you
  - Provides the employer’s voice, underscoring the value the school is adding in terms of job growth and development
Best Practices: Advisory Committees

- Ensure that the PAC member feels valued and part of the fabric of the institution
  - Help them to see the impact of their involvement on the lives of students
  - Provide regular updates on student success

- Provide a tentative agenda to PAC members well in advance of the meeting and ensure that PAC member are encouraged to add agenda items for consideration by the group.
  - Program Performance

- Provide copies of meeting minutes from the previous meeting well in advance of the next scheduled meeting:
  - The Importance of Detailed Minutes
  - Include an action memorandum that highlights the institution’s efforts since the previous meeting well in advance of the meeting.

- Assign a committee liaison from the school’s staff to reach out to each individual PAC member to ensure they have all necessary information for the upcoming PAC meeting.
  - As a bonus, this will develop communication and leadership qualities for junior staff members
Best Practices: Advisory Committees

- Provide a Certificate of Appreciation / Certificate of Dedicated Service to PAC members upon the completion of their term;

- Consider implementing a PAC “Wall of Fame” at the institution, or online, that includes a photo of each participating member and identifies the organization they represent, and a biography outlining professional accomplishments;

- Include the roster of all PAC members, with photos and organization information in the school catalog;

- Provide institutional gifts, such as sweatshirts, hats, or other memorabilia that carries the institution’s name and brand;

- Provide an opportunity for PAC members to have complimentary access to the facilities for their corporate meetings and events; and

- Provide an opportunity for PAC members to audit classes as part of their own professional development.
Best Practices:
Learning Resource System / Libraries
Best Practices:
Learning Resource System / Libraries

Do you have a strategic plan for library improvements?
  - Do you have a realistic budget to support the identified areas of improvement in your library?

Are you examining how technology is impacting how you deliver learning resources?
  - Are you examining how technology is impacting they way your students learn?
  - Do you survey students about how they use the library?

Do you survey faculty inquiring as to what library resources they are using in the classroom?
Do you encourage students to use the library for study groups, as a place to do homework, or is it kept under lock and key?

- What about evening students?
- Examples of student work as part of documentation that curriculum requires LRS use by students.

Do you conduct a usage study to determine what references are being utilized by students, and what references are not?
Best Practices:
Faculty Development
Best Practices: Faculty Development

Accreditors believe that the success of a school is directly related to the quality of its faculty and as such, by hiring and retaining qualified faculty, a school is able to strengthen the quality of its training program.

- Do you have a faculty development plan?
  - Can you document that faculty engaged in professional development activities in a systematic fashion?

- Have you established a **realistic budget** to support the implementation of the faculty development plan?

- Do you customize the plan to meet the individual needs of faculty?
  - A tenured faculty member will have different professional development needs than a brand new instructor.

How do you monitor/evaluate the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom?

Do you have a mentoring/shadowing program?
Best Practices:
Admissions
Best Practices: Admissions

Accreditation seeks to ensure that all students enrolled in the school met the school’s published admissions criteria.

• Admission decisions must be based on fair, effective, and consistently applied criteria that enable the school to make an informed judgment as to an applicant’s ability to achieve the program’s objectives.
• Schools must have ready access to documentation demonstrating that students enrolled met the published admissions criteria.

Do you examine the reported rates of student graduation/retention in relation to your admission standards?

• Who is dropping out?
• When are students dropping out?
  • The first few weeks (typical)?
• Is it a particular “type” (e.g., GED, HS, low admission score) of student?
• The Challenges of Open Enrollment
Best Practices: Admissions

• If you have an admissions test, did those students who just achieved the minimum passing score graduate?
  • At what rate did they graduate?
  • Is it comparable to the rest of students?

• Do you survey students and inquire as to their thoughts on the admissions process?
  • Is there something they wish they would have known earlier in the admission process?
  • Do you get feedback from instructors about any perceived skills gaps?

• Do you talk about motivation?
  • Why did they pick a career college?
  • What are their goals?
  • More specifically, what was it about YOUR institution, YOUR program offerings that attracted them?
Best Practices: Admissions

• Do you talk explicitly about expectations? Or is it perfunctory?
  • In-uniform, on-time, for the next 9 months.
  • Grades, attendance, and attitude (conduct)
  • Typical job opportunities

• Do you talk about any barriers to their success?
  • Transportation, Child Care, Job Responsibilities
    • Are these areas you can ameliorate through the delivery of student services?

• How are you ensuring consistency in admissions?
  • Scripting, Secret Shopping
  • Random, Unannounced, Internal File Review
    • Expectations: Date of Enrollment
Best Practices:
Student Services
Best Practices: Student Services

- What type of student services do you offer?
  - Do you survey students to gain a better understanding of how they use, or if they use these services?
  - Do you survey employers to gain a better understanding of the skill gaps that might exist?
  - Do you survey graduates to gain a better understanding of any areas of weakness they had coming out of the school?

- Have you examined how you communicate with your students?

- The Importance of a Robust Orientation
  - Set the Tone.

- Do you have a realistic budget in place to support student service initiatives?

The Culture of Documentation
Student Enrolls
Admissions, Completed Enrollment Agreement, Catalog (Policies)

Documentation of Student Advising

Academic
Written Notice that Continued Poor Academic Performance will result in Termination

Attendance / Conduct
Written Notice that Continued Poor Attendance will result in Termination.

Tutoring
Documentation of Tutoring Sessions

Termination as Per Stated Policy (Catalog)
Best Practices:

Career Services
Best Practices: Career Services

• View Career Services requires action.

• What are you employers saying?
  • Do you regularly meet with employers to get a better understanding of job market trends?
  • What can they tell you about the graduates they hire?
  • Soft-skill development

• How is career services wielding technology to meet the changing needs of students?
  • How are you communicating with students, graduates, employers?
    • Social Media
  • How often are you communicating with students, graduates, employers?

• When are you talking with your students about career services?
  • Conversations with students on the availability of career services should start on day 1 of orientation.
Best Practices: Career Services

- What does the data say?
  - Retention Data
  - Student Satisfaction Data
  - Licensure Pass Rate Data
  - Graduate Employment Data
  - Employer Satisfaction Data
- Use the data to gain a better understanding of student/graduate performance.
- Ensure that reported placement rates are 100% accurate
  - Internal Audits
    - Job Titles/Responsibilities
Best Practices:

Community Involvement
**Best Practices: Community Involvement**

Do you have a presence in your community?
- Do you participate in community improvement activities like blood drives, clothing drives, food drives, and other charitable activities?
- Are you a leader in your community?

All of these activities will increase the visibility of the school within your local community.
- Most career college students are “local” and stay local after graduation.
- Doesn’t it make sense to put forth the effort to contribute to the betterment of your local community while at the same time boosting your presence?

Be a force of good. Be a resource. Be a leader.
Best Practices:
Independent Third-Party Employment Data Verification
**Best Practices:**
Independent Third-Party Employment Data Verification

- The independent third-party must verify employment records from the employer or graduate *either* verbally or in writing.

- The independent third-party must verify the employment data in a manner *independent from the school*.

- The independent third-party must conduct the verifications *without assistance from the school*, with the exception of the school’s provision of records to be verified.
**Best Practices:**
Independent Third-Party Employment Data Verification

The Report

The **total number of students** in the sample; and

The **number of students** in each of the categories below and the **percentage** in each category:

- **Verified as Correct** (graduate’s employment is verified as listed in the school’s record);
- **Not verified** (unable to verify after all attempts);
- **Verified as Not Correct** (e.g., graduate not found in employer records, position is unpaid/externship, other discrepancies); and
- **Verified but Different** (e.g., different start date, job title, employer, etc.).
First Look – Verification as Part of the Accreditation Process

- 131 Schools with Results
- 10,010 records
- **99%** (130 of 131) **schools** met the required **50%** sample.
  - **10%** (13 of 131) submitted 100% samples.

- The average percentage of records classified as **“Verified as Correct”** is **75%**.
  - **19%** (25 of 131) reported 100% “Verified as Correct”

- The average percentage of records classified as **“Unable to Verify”** is **17%**.

CAPPs
ACCSC
First Look – Cont.:

• The average percentage of records classified as “Verified as Not Correct” is 2%.

• The average percentage of records as “Verified but Different” is 5%.
  • Different title, start date, etc.; but does “verify” employment
Best Practices / Lessons Learned
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

Program Viability and Assessment

Accreditors expect schools to conduct a realistic assessment of the viability of program offerings and the factors impacting student achievement.

In all cases, accreditors expect that a school will take appropriate and responsible action regarding any program offering that is not meeting expectations.

- Schools should make the decision about a program’s continued viability, and should not put this decision into the hands of a regulatory body (state or accreditor).

Some guiding questions include:

- At what rate are students graduating?
- At what rate are graduates passing licensure exams?
- At what rate are graduates getting a job in a training related field?
**Best Practices / Lessons Learned**

**Program Viability and Assessment**

- Are graduation and employment rates getting better?
  - Getting worse?

- Each year, accredited institutions are required to submit student achievement data to their accreditor via an annual report
  - How is the data trending year over year?

- Are there any mitigating factors impacting the school’s ability to demonstrate successful student achievement?
  - Economic Conditions, Unemployment, Student Population Served, etc.

- Did the school examine the rates of student graduation in relation to admissions standards?
  - Is the school “open enrollment?”

- What changes has the school made with respect to the program curriculum or career service initiatives?
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

Working with an Independent Third-Party

To date, ACCSC has received verification results from 21 different independent third-parties
• 9 of which are CPAs.

Keep in mind that the results that are provided by the independent third party should be:

• **Useful** – The report should provide specific details in each of the categories identified that presents the results in an easy to understand format for the school.

• **Usable** – Does the report provide the necessary information, in an organized, detailed fashion to afford the school an opportunity to explore any “unable to verify” or “verified as not correct”?
  • For any graduate found to be “verified as not correct” the report should be specific as to why.
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

• **Sortable** – the school should be able to easily sort through the data, for example by category or by employer, to gain additional information on any trends in the results of the audit.
  • The **school** is responsible for making sure third-party results are submitted on-time and organized in accordance with the guidelines.
  • The **third-party** should be able to meet the institution’s timelines and needs.
    • Be specific with the due date of results as part of the contract with a third-party.
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

Start Early.

- **Real Time Verifications** – Do not wait for six months to begin the verification process.
  - Older employment data proves to be more difficult to verify.

- Verify the employment **AFTER** the graduate started work.
  - This is the **most common reason** for an invalid placement
  - Many times a graduate is offered a position (after externship) and the school counts that student as employed in field; however, the school did not verify that the person actually started.
    - Verify 5, 7, or 14 days after the graduate started, began working, and received pay.
**Best Practices / Lessons Learned**

**Incorporate Third-Party Verification into Regular On-going Processes**

This requires budgetary / financial support

- For programs that have stable/reliable/consistent employment results, consider having an independent third-party conduct a 10% / 25% sampling each year.

Consider having an independent third-party conduct a 50% to 100% sampling every year for programs with:

1. A significant number of self-employed graduates (prove more difficult to verify),
2. Programs that have historically had more challenges with employment, or
3. Programs that have not fared well during a previous verification process (i.e. high number of unable to verify / verified as incorrect)
**Best Practices / Lessons Learned**

**Set Expectations with Students**

Begin on the First Day of Orientation and continue throughout the program.

- Help Students to Understand Their Role in the Accountability Framework
  - Accreditation Resources: New Student Letter / Graduation Letter

Establish protocols for post-graduation activities that can be managed and tracked.
- Admissions Protocols as Template

Have students sign a release form that permits the school to obtain employment information.
- Signed and dated **upon graduation**, not start, as frequently employers that require a signed release want it to be signed within 12 months of the request.
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

Set expectations with Career Services


- Ensure Complete, Descriptive, Clear, Legible, Graduate Employment Records

- Maintain up-to-date employment records in the school’s database or in another centralized manner - Not in individual files or post-it notes
  - “Sloppy” record keeping is another common reason why a record is not verifiable

Include:

- Graduate Name
- Program Name
- Job Title
- Descriptive Job Responsibilities
- Date of Initial Employment
- Employer Email Address
- Employer Contact Person
- Employer Direct Dial
- Graduate Phone Number
- Graduate Email (not the school’s assigned email address)
Best Practices / Lessons Learned

Set expectations with Employers

- Work proactively with Employers
  - Set expectations, Get feedback

- Batching Verification
  - When we contact employers who hire multiple graduates, have the third-party do it as one call/email/fax with the request for multiple graduates.

- Avoid calling employers to “scrub” data in advance of the third-party verification process, only to have your 3rd party call them.
  - Employers and Graduates get frustrated that “they just gave that information”
Maximize Your Relationship with Your Designated Third-Party

- Get weekly reports while the project is underway
- Ask for the option to update incorrect emails or wrong telephone numbers while the project is underway
  - Require the third-party to use the revised contact information
- Ask the third-party about the number of calls/emails and the pacing of outreach as to not frustrate your employers/graduates
Q and A
Best Practices:

Using Accreditation as a Blueprint for Institutional Success