

ACCSC ACCREDITATION ALERT

To: ACCSC Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties
From: Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director
Date: July 1, 2016
Subject: Announcements and Revisions to the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation*

Announcements/Reminders:

- New ACCSC Commissioners – Appointment and Election Results
- Reminder – Call for Nominating Committee Nominations
- Call for ACCSC Commissioners
- Skills USA Scholarship Award Winner
- Reminder – Schools Offering Distance Education

Revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*:

The Commission has republished the *Standards of Accreditation* which is now dated July 1, 2016 and replaces the July 1, 2015 version. The July 1, 2016 *Standards of Accreditation* are available for download at www.accsc.org.

Part I – Revisions from the May 19, 2016 Call for Comment:

Part II – Other Clarifications and Revisions to the *Rules of Process and Procedure*:

Part III – Student Achievement Rate Revisions

Part IV – Accreditation Fee Revisions: In addition to the revisions above, the Commission has increased some user fees as set forth under *Appendix I – Accreditation Fees, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

All revisions are effective July 1, 2016 unless otherwise stated in this Alert. For additional information related to this *Accreditation Alert*, please contact Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director, at 703.247.4520 or mccomis@accsc.org.

Announcements and Reminders

New ACCSC Commissioners – Appointment and Election Results

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) is pleased to announce the following new additions to the Commission:

School Commissioners – Elected:

Mary Kelly
Chief Executive Officer
StrataTech Educational Group
Phoenix, Arizona
4-year term: July 1, 2016-June 30, 2020

Patricia Thomas
Regional Director of Operations
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Virginia Beach, Virginia
4-year term: July 1, 2016-June 30, 2020

School Commissioner – Appointed:

Alfred Medro
Vice President / School Director
Platt College San Diego
San Diego, California
4-year term: July 1, 2016-June 30, 2020

Reminder – Call for Nominating Committee Nominations

On behalf of the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) and in accordance with the organization's *Bylaws*, ACCSC seeks the nomination of individuals from its membership of accredited institutions to stand for election to the Nominating Committee. The Commission is currently seeking to fill one open seat on the Nominating Committee for a two-year term ending June 30, 2018.

The ACCSC Nominating Committee plays an important role in vetting and recommending candidates for appointment and election to serve as an ACCSC Commissioner. Nominating Committee members must have a working knowledge of the ACCSC accreditation standards and process and a sense of the kind of traits and experiences that nominees must possess in order to fulfill the role of Commissioner/Board member and to best serve the needs of ACCSC and its accredited institutions.

Individuals interested in standing for election to the ACCSC Nominating Committee should complete the [Call for Nomination Form](#) and return it to the Commission office no later than **July 6, 2016**.

Call for ACCSC Commissioners

On behalf of the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) and in accordance with the organization's *Bylaws*, the ACCSC Nominating Committee seeks nominations of potential candidates for election to serve on the ACCSC Board of Directors as a Commissioner.

During this nomination cycle, the ACCSC Nominating Committee is charged with filling three (3) vacancies on the Commission to serve the following terms:

- Two Elected School Commissioners to each serve a four year term beginning on July 1, 2017 and ending on June 30, 2022, and

- One appointed Public Commissioner to serve a four-year term to begin on July 1, 2017 and to end on June 30, 2021.

Individuals interested in serving as an ACCSC Commissioner should review the Commissioner eligibility requirements and submit a [Call for Nomination Form](#), Parts I & II to the Commission office **no later than October 15, 2016**.

SkillsUSA Scholarship Award Winner

ACCSC is pleased to announce the recipient of its newly established annual SkillsUSA Scholarship that has helped the student to attend the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC). This year ACCSC awarded the SkillsUSA Scholarship to **Matthew John Gardner** who is enrolled in the Automotive & Diesel Technology Program at **Automotive Training Center** in Exton, Pennsylvania. In his scholarship application, Matthew told the Commission the following:

I dreamt of being a technician, since I was five, when my dad gave me my first tool set and a lawn mower to fix. Ever since then I have enjoyed working with my hands and fixing anything mechanical. So far in my auto/diesel career I have taken advantage of all the training and competitions that I could. I started out by attending tech school half a day during high school my sophomore through senior years. My senior year is when I started attending competitions. I competed with the Automotive Dealer Association of Greater Philadelphia where I placed 3rd and in the SkillsUSA Automotive Technology district competition where I also placed 3rd. I moved on to attend Automotive Training Center-Exton Campus to further my automotive education. I just recently got interested in being a diesel technician; once I learned more about their power and the technology involved in making them so eco-friendly. That technology was what reignited my interest in diesel powered vehicles and put me on the path to become a diesel technician and join the diesel program here. I got another opportunity to participate in SkillsUSA, but on the post-secondary level and was chosen to attend the SkillsUSA competition for Diesel Equipment Technology. I placed 1st in both the regional and state competitions, so now I will be attending the national conference. It will be my first time out of the North East, my first time on a plane, and my first time competing at the national level. I am the current Vice President and former Treasurer of SkillsUSA for our chapter. I am on the road to being inducted into National Technical Honor Society on the post-secondary level as I am in the top percentage of students at the school with perfect attendance and a 3.96 GPA; furthermore I was the top student in my diesel class. I am a Cat 7 Safety Inspector and I am SP2 certified. I am honored to have been chosen as the recipient of this scholarship and I hope I represent ACCSC schools and the skilled trades well at the National Competition. See you in Louisville!

The scholarship is awarded based on the student's commitment to excellence in technical skills, work ethic, and leadership as well as how the student will use the opportunity to compete at the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference to be an ambassador for the skilled trades and workforce development. Matthew embodies all of these qualities at a high level and the Commission is truly very proud of Matthew and knows that he will use his SkillsUSA experiences to achieve even greater success when he finishes school.

It is the Commission's hope that the SkillsUSA scholarship will help to encourage more schools to join SkillsUSA for the benefit of students as well as faculty, staff, and their vocational communities. Annually, ACCSC will award a \$1,500 scholarship to help pay for a student's travel expenses to attend

and compete at the SkillsUSA competition in Louisville, Kentucky. The ACCSC SkillsUSA scholarship eligibility requirements, application form, and procedures are available on the Commission's website.

If your institution does not currently participate in SkillsUSA, the Commission strongly encourages institutions to explore the possibilities and benefits of membership. Here's what one ACCSC school faculty member has said about SkillsUSA:

SkillsUSA created opportunities for my students that went beyond the academic scope. It is the only national organization designed exclusively for students preparing for technical, skilled, health, and service careers. By offering opportunities for leadership, competitive events, and awards from the local to international levels, this organization will unite your school in a common bond and create an opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to develop technical, academic, and employability skills geared toward the workforce. - Paul Amigh - SkillsUSA Advisor & Lead Faculty, YTI Career Institute

About SkillsUSA



SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry representatives working together to ensure that America has a skilled workforce to help each student to excel. SkillsUSA is a national organization serving teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in technical, skilled, and service occupations in a wide array of fields from healthcare occupations to welding. Timothy W. Lawrence, Executive Director of SkillsUSA gave the Keynote Address at ACCSC's 2015 Professional Development Conference and made a compelling case that every institution that offers vocational programs can benefit from working with SkillsUSA. SkillsUSA along with advocates such as ACCSC's 2014 Key Note Speaker Mike Rowe and hundreds of employers from small businesses and major corporations, is taking employability skills training and development to new levels.

For information on getting started with SkillsUSA, go to www.skillsusa.org or call 844.875.4557.

Reminder – Schools Offering Distance Education

ACCSC requires that each school must have all necessary authorizations from the state(s) in which it operates and be in compliance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements (*Section I (B)(2)(a)(ii), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*). In instances where a school is approved to offer and deliver programs or courses via distance education, the school must demonstrate compliance with all applicable laws and regulations for **all states** in which students enrolled in the school's distance education programs reside, including those outside the home state in which the school resides and is licensed to operate. Schools offering distance education programs are required to document compliance with any applicable state authorizations during the course of accreditation review and/or new program reviews as well as at any time as the Commission may request.

Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation

The Commission has republished the *Standards of Accreditation* which is now dated July 1, 2016 and replaces the July 1, 2015 version.

Part I – Revisions from the May 19, 2016 Call for Comment:

The Commission has promulgated each of the revisions as set forth in the May 19, 2016 Call for Comment in the following sections:

- **Rules of Process and Procedure**
 - **Section I (C)(5) & (9) – Summary of the Accreditation Process**
 - **Section III (B)(1) – Categories of On-site Evaluations**
 - **Section III (K) – Response to the Team Summary Report**
 - **Section IV (E)(2)(j) – Change of Control/Ownership**
 - **Section VII (D)(5-6) – Commission Consideration of Third-Party Information**
 - **Section VII (K)(7) – Warning**
 - **Section VII (P)(5) & O(5) – Withdrawal of Accreditation & Voluntary Withdrawal/Closure**
- **Substantive Standards**
 - **Section I (A)(2) – Management and Administrative Capacity**
 - **Section I (F) – Institutional Name and Facilities**
 - **Section II (A-C) – Program Requirements**
 - **Section III (B)(6, 8, & 9) – Faculty Qualifications**
 - **Section IV (B) – Advertising, Promotion, Statements, and Claims**

In the exception of two areas, the language promulgated in the sections listed above is as proposed in the Call for Comment. The two areas where the Commission modified its revision include the requirement for programmatic accreditation under *Section II (A)(1)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* and the qualification requirement for faculty teaching academic general education in a non-degree program under *Section III (B)(8), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

Several commenters indicated that, based on their experiences, achieving programmatic/specialty accreditation within a two-year timeframe can pose some difficulty and suggested that a four-year timeframe would be more appropriate and reasonable. As such, the Commission has changed its proposed revision and promulgated the new standard as follows:

Section II – Program Requirements

A. General Program Requirements

1. Approval and Programmatic Accreditation
 - b. Upon approval by the Commission, if specialty/programmatic accreditation of the program is a condition for employment or licensure,¹ the school must immediately apply with the appropriate specialty/programmatic accreditor. The school must obtain the specialty/programmatic accreditation within four years of the date of the Commission's approval.

¹ This requirement applies if programmatic accreditation is a condition of employment or licensure in the state in which the school is located or in any state from which the school enrolls students in the specific program. See *Section IV (C)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for ACCSC's programmatic accreditation disclosure requirements.

The Commission also made a slight revision to the faculty requirement for faculty teaching academic general education in a non-degree program and promulgated the standard as follows:

Section III – Educational Administration & Faculty Qualifications

B. Faculty Qualifications

8. Faculty teaching academic general education courses in a degree program or in a non-degree program that articulates to a degree program must have, at a minimum, a master's degree with appropriate academic coursework and preparation in the subject area(s) taught. Faculty teaching academic general education courses in a terminal non-degree program must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree with appropriate academic coursework and preparation in the subject area(s) taught.

Part II – Other Clarifications and Revisions to the Rules of Process and Procedure:

In addition to the revisions described above, the Commission has also revised several sections of the *Rules of Process and Procedure* in order to set forth process, provide clarity, or align with federal requirements.

- **Section I (A)(2) – Definition of a Public Member:** This revision aligns to the federal definition of a “Representative of the Public” established in 34 CFR §602.3 as the U.S. Department of Education had requested that ACCSC include this definition in its *Rules* as part of ACCSC's Petition for Re-Recognition by the Secretary of Education.
- **Section I (B)(1)(e)(i) – Legal and Disclosure Requirements:** This conforming revision aligns with past revisions to the *Rules of Process and Procedure* with regard to the eligibility of public institutions for ACCSC accreditation.
- **Section I (B)(1)(h) – Institutional Eligibility Requirements:** The Commission has clarified that ACCSC is under no obligation to accept any application that it receives.
- **Section I (B)(2)(a)(ii) – Institutional Eligibility Requirements:** The Commission has set forth that schools under investigation or sanction by a local, state, or federal agency may be deemed ineligible to apply for initial accreditation with ACCSC.
- **Section I (C)(1) – Summary of the Accreditation Process & Section II (A)(1) – Application for Initial Accreditation:** The Commission has added a Pre-Application stage to the initial accreditation process.
- **Section III (D) – On-site Evaluators:** This revision aligns to the federal regulation in 34 CFR §602.15(a)(3) which states that an agency must have academic and administrative personnel on its evaluation bodies. The U.S. Department of Education required ACCSC to include this expectation in its *Rules* as part of ACCSC's Petition for Re-Recognition by the Secretary of Education.
- **Section VIII (D)(2)(d) & (3) – Appeals Panel:** This revision aligns to the federal regulation in 34 CFR §602.15(a)(3) which states that an agency must have academic and administrative personnel on its decision-making bodies. The U.S. Department of Education required ACCSC to include this expectation in its *Rules* as part of ACCSC's Petition for Re-Recognition by the Secretary of Education.

- **Section X (A)(2) – Scope of Public Information:** The Commission will not release any records that may contain student personally identifiable information which would violate any state or federal law or regulation.
- **Section X (G) – Authorized Disclosure of Information:** The Commission may decline to release information at its discretion and will not release any records that may contain student personally identifiable information which would violate any state or federal law or regulation.

Part III – Student Achievement Rate Revisions

As part of its ongoing commitment to assessing student achievement in its accredited schools and the tools used to do so, the Commission conducted an 11-year longitudinal study of the graduation and employment rates report from 2005 to 2015 in the ACCSC Annual Report. In so doing, the Commission hoped to discern the stability, predictability, and reliability of the rates used in establishing ACCSC's benchmark rates. The Commission was particularly interested in whether there were significant year-over-year variations in the data reported. The longitudinal study applied the same formula to the 11-year data set as it has applied to the three-year data sets used to establish ACCSC's benchmark student achievement rates.

Overall, the Commission found that the data collected and the resulting benchmarking established from that data is both stable and reliable. In fact, there is little variation from ACCSC's current benchmarks compared to the results of the 11-year longitudinal study. Also, as part of its systematic program of review, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems reviewed ACCSC's student achievement standards, practices, and the longitudinal study and found 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."

Previously, the Commission has re-calculated student achievement benchmark rates every three years using a rolling average. Because the longitudinal data and study show no significant variation from the current benchmarks (with one exception), the Commission has established the results of the 11-year longitudinal study as the basis for its new student achievement rates. These rates are semi-permanent meaning that while the Commission will continue to study and assess the reported rates of student achievement regularly, the Commission does not intend to adjust the rates unless the data suggest that an adjustment is warranted.

The one exception is in programs 24 months in length or longer. This group of programs exhibits the largest variability and range of graduation rate outcomes. Once that variability was controlled for, the rate stabilized at 40%, which the Commission believes is an appropriate trigger for further monitoring in these longer programs. However, the Commission does realize that increasing the graduation rate by 4% for this group of programs may have a significant impact. Therefore, the Commission is providing a two-year grace period – July 1, 2016-June 30, 2018 – for programs 24 months in length or longer to achieve the minimum 40% graduation rate. The Commission will not subject programs 24 months in length or longer that report a graduation rate between 36% and 39% during the two-year grace period to Reporting.

With regard to the employment rate, the Commission's 11-year longitudinal data and study yielded a 70% benchmark, which the Commission adopted. The Commission reminds schools that the employment rate for all programs was previously 70% and was only lowered due to the impact of the economic recession. The data show that employment rates overall have risen and thus found resetting the employment rate benchmark at 70% to be appropriate. Again, however, the Commission does realize that a 2% increase is impactful and as such is providing a one-year grace period – July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017 – for programs to

achieve the minimum employment rate of 70%. The Commission will not subject programs that report a graduate employment rate of 68%-69% to Reporting during the one-year grace period.

Student Achievement Rates in effect for Graduation and Employment Charts using a July 2016 Report Date and later:

Established Benchmark Graduation Rates			
Program Length in Months	Average Rates of Graduation	Standard Deviation	Established Benchmark Graduation Rates*
1-3	92%	8%	84%
4-6	84%	11%	73%
7-9	72%	12%	60%
10-12	69%	14%	55%
13-15	64%	14%	50%
16-18	62%	15%	47%
19-23	61%	18%	43%
24+	53%	13%	40%

Established Benchmark Employment Rate			
	Average Rate of Employment	Standard Deviation	Established Benchmark Employment Rate*
All Programs	78%	8%	70%

* If a school reports a lower employment rate for a program, that program will be subject to additional monitoring or reporting as deemed appropriate. Prolonged failure to meet a benchmark rate will result in a programmatic or institutional action as deemed appropriate by the Commission (see *Section VII (B)(2)(a-c), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*).

Part IV – Accreditation Fee Revisions:

In addition to the revisions above, the Commission has increased some user fees as set forth under *Appendix I – Accreditation Fees, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. The adjusted fees are as follows:

Application and Report Fees:

<u>Activity / Application / Report</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Accreditation Workshops	
• Non-member	
• 1 st Non-Member.....	\$650
Annual Report Processing Fee ¹	\$150
Application for a Branch Campus-Part II.....	\$2,000

¹ To be paid with a school's Sustaining Fee.

Application for a Change of Mission or Educational Objectives.....	\$1,000
Application for a Change of Ownership	
• Part I Transactions \$5 million or Less	
• Main School.....	\$4,000
• Branch Campus.....	\$2,500
• Part I Transactions Greater than \$5 million	
• Main School.....	\$6,000
• Branch Campus.....	\$2,500
Application for a Distance Education Facility.....	\$1,000
Application for a New Non-Degree Program	
• Related Program.....	\$1,250
• Unrelated Program.....	\$1,250
Application for a New Non-Degree Program-Affiliated Schools	
• Related Program	
• 1 st School.....	\$1,250
• Each Affiliated School.....	\$750
• Unrelated Program	
• 1 st School.....	\$1,250
• Each Affiliated School.....	\$750
Application for a Satellite Location.....	\$1,000
Application for a Substantive Program Modification.....	\$750
Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Addition of a Concentration.....	\$750
Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Affiliated Schools.....	\$750*
Facility Expansion Report.....	\$500
Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes.....	\$250
Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes-Affiliated Schools.....	\$250*
Request for Good Cause Showing.....	\$250
Request for a Waiver of a Standard or Policy.....	\$250

*Each School/Each Program

Fees Related to Commission Actions:

At the Commission’s discretion, the fees set forth below will be assessed for the processing of the following types of Commission actions:

Probation.....	\$1,000
Warning.....	\$500
Reporting.....	\$250

Fees Related to On-site Evaluations:

On-Site Evaluation Fees:

The Commission assesses a fee for required on-site evaluations as follows:

- Team Leader, Education Specialist, and Commission Representative: \$1,500 per evaluator for the first day and \$450 per evaluator for each day thereafter.
- Occupation/Subject Matter Specialist:

- Local: \$200 per day.
- Non-local: \$1,500 for the first day and \$450 per day thereafter.

Unannounced On-site Evaluation Fees:

The Commission assesses a fee for an unannounced on-site evaluation as follows:

- Regular Unannounced: \$2,500.00 for the first day and \$450.00 for each day thereafter.
- Commission Directed Unannounced:
 - First Assigned Evaluator: \$2,500.00 for the first day and \$450.00 for each day thereafter.
 - Each Subsequent Assigned Evaluator: \$1,500 per evaluator for the first day and \$450 per evaluator for each day thereafter.