

ACCSCCT Alert!

Information for
our member schools

To: *ACCSCCT Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties*
From: *Elise Scanlon, Executive Director*
Date: *March 15, 2007*
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 February 15, 2006, September 15, 2006, and December 28, 2006 Call For Comment. The Commission has subsequently voted to adopt the additions and revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation* in the following areas effective immediately:

- *Rules of Process and Procedure & Restructured Standards of Accreditation*
- *Section II (A)(4) – Program Advisory Committee*
- *Section III – Educational Administration and Faculty*
- *Advertising of Accredited Status*
- *Accreditation Fees*

The full text of the Accreditation Alert and the fully revised *Standards of Accreditation* can be found on the Commission's website at: www.accscct.org. Go to "**Accreditation**" and then "**Standards of Accreditation**" and "**Accreditation Alert**." The revised *Standards of Accreditation* dated March 15, 2007 should be used to replace all previous versions. Given that this revision is so extensive, each school may order one new bound hard copy of the *Standards of Accreditation* without charge until June 30, 2007. For additional copies and copies ordered after June 30, 2007, the regular charge of \$25.00 will apply.

Accredited institutions and others maintaining a complete and up-to-date copy 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 approved revisions, please contact Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Associate Executive Director, at (703) 247-4520.

APPROVED REVISIONS TO THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
RULES OF PROCESS AND PROCEDURE AND
RESTRUCTURED STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

Rationale:

Several years ago, the Commission embarked on a very important project to codify its processes and procedures and to include in the *Standards of Accreditation* more detailed operating procedures and definitions pertaining to ACCST operations. The result of this project is a newly codified section of the *Standards of Accreditation* entitled *Rules of Process and Procedure* that will provide a clear set of instructions and the information necessary for institutions to navigate through the Commission's application and other processes.

The *Standards of Accreditation* document is now divided into two chapters. Chapter one contains the *Rules of Process and Procedure* and includes all of the provisions from the previous Introduction, Accreditation Overview, Process and Procedures and Accreditation Reviews sections, policies contained in the previous version of the Standards of Accreditation, and new policies introduced in the February 15, 2006 Call for Comment. Chapter two contains the Commission's standards related to substantive requirements, including for example, management, curriculum, and faculty qualifications in new sections numbered I-VIII. There are five appendices included with chapter two that contain information pertaining to accreditation fees; applications, reports, and forms; grandfathering provisions; graduation and employment rate requirements; and the Commission's transfer of credit resolution. The Commission has also included a separate tab with the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges for reference purposes.

The Commission would like to emphasize that the March 15, 2007 version of the *Standards of Accreditation*, particularly the new chapter containing the *Rules of Process and Procedure*, represents more than a restructuring of the previous version and accordingly, requests that accredited institutions take the time necessary to read through the document giving thoughtful attention to new or modified requirements. In addition, given the scope of this project, technical and conforming amendments may be necessary as the newly codified and restructured *Standards of Accreditation* are put into practice. The Commission requests the cooperation and assistance of accredited members as these changes may occur.

All provisions of the *Standards of Accreditation* are effective as of March 15, 2007 with the exception of applicable grandfather provisions. Please consult the previous version of the Standards of Accreditation dated February 15, 2007 for earlier requirements. Revisions or additions to the *Standards of Accreditation* made on or after March 15, 2007 are clearly identified.

APPROVED REVISIONS TO THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

When the Accrediting Commission adopted its Program Advisory Committee ("PAC") standards in 1993, its intent was, and remains, that the PAC(s) would become an integral component to ensuring that employers—and those active in specific vocational training fields – would assist in structuring and improving the programs offered at ACCST accredited institutions. The Commission views the effective utilization of PACs as a best practice in educational development and improvement. Since its adoption of the PAC standards, the Commission has been pleased to note that many accredited schools have made PACs

central to their institutions' educational development in such areas as curriculum, facilities, and equipment, as well as in ways to improve student achievement outcomes.

The revisions to the Commission's PAC standards serve to clarify and to make more explicit the Commission's expectations for the membership and utilization of PACs. In essence, the Commission re-conceptualized its PAC standards to reflect the following goals:

- Make explicit the idea that PACs can and should be made up of a diverse set of individuals who can all contribute to the validation and improvement of an educational program.
- Allow for a "balance of qualified representatives" on PACs with a minimum number of individuals required to represent the employment community to provide greater flexibility in devising and constructing PAC membership.
- Allow for diverse utilization of PACs and different types of PACs to best meet the school's needs.
- Require PAC review for the general education component of an academic degree program by a qualified individual.
- Program Advisory Committee input is important as a feedback loop for the improvement of a school's program. Accordingly, evidence that a school gives consideration to the PAC's review is a requirement of the standard.

The Commission's new PAC standards can be found in the March 15, 2007 version of the Standards of Accreditation under Chapter 2, Substantive Standards, Section II (A)(4). The Commission expects that all PAC meetings held after July 1, 2007 will conform to the new PAC standards.

APPROVED REVISIONS TO THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION **EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

The Commission has revised its standards related to educational administration and supervision to ensure that the accreditation requirements remain valid and reliable indicators of best practices for quality education in ACCST-accredited institutions. The Commission had seen institutions begin to place a greater reliance upon "corporate" staff, particularly in the area of education administration and the director of education and particularly as a greater number of programs are introduced into a school. The Commission believes that, while corporate staff can be an integral part of the educational administration of a program, in all instances on-site support is necessary in order to ensure that overall proper management and administrative capacity are readily available at a school. These expectations are already expressed in the Commission's general management standards. The Commission took into account the diversity of degree programs being offered by ACCST-accredited institutions and determined that there should not only be appropriate on-site oversight of the school's overall educational operations, usually performed by a director of education, but that program specific administration is also necessary.

The Commission's new educational administrations standards can be found in the March 15, 2007 version of the *Standards of Accreditation* under *Chapter 2, Substantive Standards, Section III (A)*. In making these revisions, the Commission also restructured all of *Section III* creating a section for education administration and a section for faculty qualifications (*Section III (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*). The Commission expects that all schools will conform to the new educational administration standards no later than December 31, 2007.

APPROVED REVISIONS TO THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
ADVERTISING

The ACCSCT School of Distinction Award recognizes ACCSCT member schools that have demonstrated a commitment to the standards, expectations, and rigor of ACCSCT accreditation, as well as a commitment to delivering quality educational programs to the students, graduates, and employers who deserve our best work. Through this award, it has been the Commission's intent to recognize the importance of this significant achievement.

Schools too have recognized the significance of this award and have begun to describe it in their advertising when they have been recipients of the award. The Commission wants to ensure that the scope and meaning of the award are portrayed accurately. For example, annually ACCSCT gives the School of Distinction award to schools that completed renewal of accreditation in the preceding year with a demonstration of full compliance with accrediting standards. Thus, the awards are presented annually to schools from a pool of 100-150 schools, not from the universe of all ACCSCT-accredited institutions. The pool of candidates for the award is one aspect that has been described inaccurately in some advertisements. Accordingly, the purpose of the Commission's addition to the advertising requirements is to ensure that schools describe recognition as an ACCSCT School of Distinction in a manner that this is not misleading.

The Commission's new requirements for advertising the ACCSCT School Distinction Award can be found in the Advertising of Accredited Status form dated March 15, 2007 at www.accsct.org. The Commission expects that all advertising will comply with the requirements set forth in this form immediately.

APPROVED REVISION TO THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
ACCREDITATION FEES

A primary goal of the Commission is to ensure the quality of the peer review process of accreditation. To that end, the Commission is interested in continuing to attract highly-qualified volunteers and in enhancing the resources used in the evaluation process of accreditation. The Commission has found that compensating evaluators is a common practice in the accreditation community as a means of involving highly-qualified volunteers. Thus, the Commission believes that a broader implementation of its "pass-through" fees for stipends paid to volunteer evaluators who participate in the ACCSCT accreditation process will help to ensure the on-going quality of the evaluation process and benefit ACCSCT member institutions. Stipends paid to volunteers are not meant to compensate them fully for their time spent in the evaluation process, but to recognize their efforts and show the appreciation of the Commission and the ACCSCT community.

Previously, the Commission applied a pass-through fee for a stipend paid to each Occupation/Subject Matter Specialist used in the evaluation process. Effective July 1, 2007, the Commission will apply a pass-through fee for stipends to be paid to its volunteer Education Specialists. This stipend will be \$175 per day/review.

In addition, the Commission, from time to time, finds it necessary to utilize Subject Matter Specialists or Education Specialists in the review of an application for accreditation or in the review of an application

for the addition of a program within a school's scope of institutional accreditation. In these cases, the Commission will also apply the pass-through fee to pay stipends to reviewers when necessary.

The Commission's new fee requirements can be found in the March 15, 2007 version of the *Standards of Accreditation* under *Chapter 2, Substantive Standards, Appendix I*. The Commission's new fee structure will take effect for all on-site evaluations conducted after July 1, 2007.