Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

Accreditation Workshop

July 16-17, 2015
San Diego California

Workshop Materials
** Accreditation Workshop  
** July 15-17, 2015  
** San Diego, California  

### Wednesday, July 15, 2015

| 4:00 PM - 6:30 PM | **Registration for Renewals**  
| :--- | :---  
| Please stop by the registration desk to sign in for the Accreditation Workshop, receive your name badge, copy of the Standards of Accreditation, as well as all other information required for the accreditation workshop. Registration will re-open at 8:00am on Thursday, July 16.  

| 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM | **Welcome Reception**  
| :--- | :---  
| The Welcome Reception provides a unique opportunity for participants attending the Initial / Renewal Accreditation Workshops and ACCSC Volunteer Team Leaders in Training to meet with ACCSC staff in an inviting social setting at the Omni San Diego. Participants must check in with ACCSC registration to receive a name badge prior to attending the reception.  

### Thursday, July 16, 2015

| 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM | **Registration and Check In**  
| :--- | :---  
| Please stop by the registration desk to sign in for the Accreditation Workshop, receive your name badge, copy of the Standards of Accreditation, as well as all other information required for the accreditation workshop.  

| 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM | **Session A: Welcome and Update from the Commission**  
| :--- | :---  
| Introduction / Welcome  
| Review Workshop Objectives  
| State of the Commission  
| Overview of Strategic Initiatives  

| 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM | **Session B: The Standards of Accreditation - A Blueprint for Success, Pt. 1**  
| :--- | :---  
| ACCSC's Standards of Accreditation describes the accreditation process and sets forth the base of essentials against which a school studies and evaluates itself. This session will cover the following:  
| Strengths and Challenges: Small Group Exercise  
| A Holistic Approach to Quality Assurance  
| A Review of Most Common Team Findings  
| Student Achievement Benchmarks  

| 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM | **Lunch**  
| :--- | :---  
| Join ACCSC for a networking lunch with representatives from schools seeking initial and renewal accreditation. Please note that lunch is included for all registered workshop attendees.  

| 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM | **Session B: The Standards of Accreditation - A Blueprint for Success, Pt. 2**  
| :--- | :---  
| Small Group Work: Key Sections to the Standards of Accreditation  

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<td>Join ACCSC for breakfast before Day 2 of the Accreditation Workshop starts!</td>
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ACCSC Workshop Team

Lisa Miles
Senior Manager of Accreditation

Corey Rosso
Director of Accreditation

Christopher Lambert
Associate Executive Director

Michelle Ragnetti
Conference and Events Coordinator
The Accreditation Workshop is designed to provide an opportunity for participants to develop an understanding of:

- The ACCSC organization, its mission, values, and strategic initiatives;
- The *Standards of Accreditation* as a set of best practices;
- The principle steps of the ACCSC accreditation process, including on-site evaluation activities;
- The possible outcomes of a school’s application for accreditation (Commission Actions).
Workshop Objectives

During the Accreditation Workshop, participants will have an opportunity to:

• To engage in a conversation about the evolving role of accreditation

• Identify Strength and Challenges in the career college sector

• Actively participate in group discussion regarding best practices in career education
Overview of the Renewal of Accreditation Workshop

Overview Session A
Standards of Accreditation Session B
Application and SER Session C
Onsite Evaluation Session D
TSR and Response Session E
Commission Action Session E
Overview of the Renewal of Accreditation Process (*approximate timelines)

Resources:

Click here to learn more about the accreditation process.
Click here to learn more about frequently asked questions regarding the accreditation process.
Mission and Alignment
Ensure that ACCSC as an organization represents its member institutions; recognizes challenges, trends and innovations; and continually meets its mission, vision, and values.

Excellence
Ensure that ACCSC’s Standards and Processes reflect best practices in higher education and training and support self-evaluation, innovation, and continuous improvement by its member institutions.

Membership Support
Position ACCSC as a driving force that supports institutional and student success.

Leadership
Position ACCSC as a leading resource on accreditation, accountability, education assessment, and oversight.
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.
The expectations of accreditors are changing significantly.

More broadly, the current regulatory environment is having a significant impact on the higher education landscape.

- Senate: White Papers / Full Committee Hearing
- House: HEA Reauthorization Activities
- NACIQI: Policy Recommendations
- CHEA: Accreditor Summit

Uniform Premise: Need to strengthen/reform accreditation to ensure it fulfills its obligations as a gatekeeper to Title IV funding.
Gatekeepers of Educational Quality: A Shared Responsibility

Policy Goals
• Clarify and articulate common understandings about the responsibilities of each member of the triad.
• Coordinate and increase communication among actors to achieve greater commonality across the quality assurance/eligibility enterprise
8% decrease in enrollment from 2013 to 2014
36% decrease in enrollment from 2010 to 2014.
Number of ACCSC Accredited Institutions
Institution Size By Student Enrollment - All Schools

- 300 or Less Students: 71%
- 301-600 Students: 21%
- 601-900 Students: 6%
- 901 + Students: 3%

Average Enrollment as of June 30, 2012: 303
Average Enrollment as of June 30, 2013: 276
Average Enrollment as of June 30, 2014: 262
Distribution of Enrollment by Program Area

- Allied Health
- Building and Industrial Trades
- Automotive
- Business
- Information Tech
- Beauty

Distribution of Programs By Credential

- Certificate / Diploma: 69%
- [CATEGORY NAME]: 23%
- [CATEGORY NAME]: 7%
- [CATEGORY NAME]: 1%

Total Percentage of Degree Programs = 31%
Distribution of Student Enrollment By Program Credential

- **Non-Degree**: 126,011 students
- **Associate of Occupational Studies (AOS, OAD, SAD)**: 15,059 students
- **Associate of Applied Science**: 14,481 students
- **Associate of Science**: 10,654 students
- **Associate of Specialized Technology**: 4,173 students
- **Associate of Arts**: 806 students
- **Associate of Applied or Specialized Business**: 1,894 students
- **Bachelor of Science (BS, BSN, BHS)**: 20,614 students
- **Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA, BGA)**: 1,929 students
- **Bachelor of Arts**: 1,121 students
- **Bachelor of Applied Science**: 607 students
- **Bachelor of Professional Studies**: 0 students
- **Master of Public Health**: 2 students
- **Master of Science**: 2,026 students
- **Master of Business Administration**: 453 students
- **Master of Fine Arts**: 166 students
- **Master of Arts**: 117 students

Based on 5,389 Total Reported Programs
229,953 Students
Strategic Initiatives:

- Examine Standards and Processes in Key Areas
- Enhance Member Services
Extended Term of Accreditation – 6th Year of Accreditation for Schools of Excellence

- The Commission is interested in rewarding outstanding achievement and in incentivizing schools to strive toward achieving above-minimum results in relation to compliance with accrediting standards, particularly in the area of student achievement outcomes.

- As a result, the Commission has created a process to extend the normal maximum five-year grant of accreditation by one year in exceptional cases and for outstanding performance.

- The additional sixth year of accreditation will only be available to those schools that achieve the status of School of Excellence.
Licensure / Certification Pass Rates

- The Commission collects licensure/certification examination pass rate data through the Annual Report.

- ACCSC will now require schools to demonstrate **a minimum 70% pass rate on licensure/certification examinations** for those programs where a governmental entity requires students to pass the examination as a condition of employment:
  - e.g., state nursing boards, Department of Motor Vehicles, cosmetology and massage therapy boards, Federal Aviation Administration, etc.

- If another entity or agency requires a higher examination pass rate, the higher standard shall apply and the Commission will take into consideration any action taken by another entity or agency with regard to a school’s failure to meet an examination pass rate requirement.
July 1, 2015 Accreditation Alert

Non-Substantive Revisions to the Standards

• Rules of Process and Procedure
• Substantive Standards

Accreditation Fee Changes

• Accreditation Workshop
• Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision
• Application for Initial/Renewal Accreditation
• Late Fee
School Submission Center

- Schools are now required to electronically upload applications, responses, and reports directly to ACCSC’s College 360 Database via the School Submission Center.
  - The password to access the School Submission Center in the College 360 Database is the same as that used to access the Annual Report Portal.

- Once a document is uploaded, the school will receive an e-mail confirmation that the file has been received within 24 hours of the submission.

- If a fee is required for the processing of an application, please mail a check in the required amount directly to ACCSC for processing along with a statement identifying the specific application corresponding to that payment.
  - Developing Payment Gateway
2014 Key Revisions to the Standards

- Admissions
  - Documentation Prior to Enrollment

- Bylaws Revisions
  - Additional School Appointment
  - Flexibility in Board Composition

- Removal of Term Private
  - Increase in Number Public Institutions Seeking Accreditation from ACCSC

- Student Achievement
  - Accountability - Revised Student Achievement Rates as of 7.1.14
  - Independent 3rd Party Verification

- Transparency Initiative
  - Probation and Withdrawal Letters on ACCSC’s website
The electronic submission of the 2015 ACCSC Annual Report is required for all ACCSC-accredited institutions (Main School and Branch) that received accreditation prior to July 1, 2015 and is due on or before October 8, 2015.

Please note that the passwords utilized by institutions to access the 2014 Annual Report are still in effect and should be used to access the 2015 Annual Report.
2015 Professional Development Conference
Key Note Address

Timothy W. Lawrence, Executive Director of SkillsUSA

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce.

- SkillsUSA serves more than 300,000 students and instructors annually.
- The organization has 13,000 school chapters in 54 state and territorial associations.

Pre-Conference Workshops

- How to Design an Effective Faculty Development Plan
- Faculty and Student Readiness in Online Programs
- Developing and Implementing a Financial Literacy Program
- Expanding and Enhancing Career Services
- Taking Faculty from the Workplace to the Classroom
Conference Break-Out Sessions – School Driven / Student Focused

• Trends and Innovations
  • From Crisis to Calm: Innovative Leadership
  • Bringing the Cloud to the Classroom

• Career and Student Services
  • Five Easy Steps for Better Student Achievement
  • Best Practices in Improving Students’ Credentialing Rates

• Faculty and Staff Development
  • The Fundamentals of Classroom Instruction
  • Transitioning Students from the Classroom to the Workplace

• Best Practices in Assessment and Accreditation
  • Preparing for an On-Site Evaluation: A Small School Perspective
  • Setting You Students Up for Success
Resources / Member Services
Strategic Initiatives – Enhance Member Services

• Blueprints for Success - 2014
  • First Module: Preparing a Response for Commission Consideration
  • Second Module: Organizing an Effective Electronic Submission

• RelIssue of Monograph Series –August 2014
  • Learning Resource Systems
  • Program Advisory Committees
  • Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning
  • Self Evaluation: Best Practice
  • Faculty Improvement Planning
Strategic Initiatives – Enhance Member Service

- Faculty Development Workshop Series
  (No Fees for ACCSC Institutions)
  - February 11, 2015 – Arlington, Texas
  - Workshops #2: May 13, 2015 – Pittsburgh, PA
  - Workshop #3: July 8, 2015 – Springfield, MA
  - Workshop #4: October 20, 2015 – Orlando, FL
  - Workshop #5: November 18, 2015 – Torrance, CA

- Administrator Workshop: Best Practices in Accreditation
  (No Fees for ACCSC Institutions)
  - May 13, 2015 – Pittsburgh, PA
  - July 15, 2015 – San Diego, CA

- Launch of ACCSC Online Training Portal – September 2014
Strengths and Challenges
Strengths and Challenges

In small groups, identify significant strengths and potential challenges for the career college sector/ACCSCC accredited institutions.

• 3 Strengths
• 3 Challenges
July 16-17, 2015
Accreditation Workshop
San Diego, California
The Standards of Accreditation

Session B
The Standards of Accreditation

- Describes the accreditation process (*Rules of Process and Procedure*)
- Sets forth the base of essentials (i.e., standards of best practices) against which an institution evaluates itself
- Each institution determines its own educational objectives (appropriate for postsecondary education)
- Each institution is evaluated based on how well it accomplishes its announced objectives, in accordance with the *Standards of Accreditation*
The Standards of Accreditation

- The *Standards of Accreditation* ensure that each institution properly prepares students for employment in their chosen field.

- ACCSC emphasizes educational quality by focusing on outcomes:
  - Student Graduation Rates
  - Rates of Graduate Employment
  - Licensure / Certification Pass Rates

- Through the Standards, ACCSC assesses the effectiveness of an institution’s educational programs by evaluating the infrastructure that supports the delivery of programs.
Goals of the Accreditation Process

• To evaluate each institution’s compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*
  Ensure appropriate accountability for such compliance.

• To ensure *consistency* in institutional operations
  Systematic application of institutional process and procedures
  • All students have a comparable education experience
  • All students have comparable access to services

• To provide for *public accountability*
  ACCSC embraces the important role that accreditation plays to help ensure:
  • the quality of education provided by its member institutions for students,
  and
  • the continued integrity of the Title IV federal student financial aid program.
Accreditation: A Student Centered Approach to Quality Assurance

- Program Design and Development
- Admissions and Recruitment
- Student Services
- Educational Resources and Faculty

- State, Federal, Licensure Requirements
- Management and Administrative Operations
- Institutional Assessment, Improvement, and Planning
- Financial Stability and Responsibility
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:

205 Commission Actions: Renewal of Accreditation
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014:

ACCSC Accredited Institutions on Reporting (Commission Level Actions)
Program Viability and Assessment
The Commission expects schools to conduct a realistic assessment of the viability of program offerings and the factors impacting student achievement.

In all cases, the Commission expects that a school will take appropriate and responsible action regarding any program offering that is not meeting expectations. 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?
Program Viability and Assessment

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

• Are there any mitigating factors impacting the school’s ability to demonstrate successful student achievement?

• Did the school examine the rates of student graduation in relation to admissions standards?

• What changes has the school made with respect to the program curriculum or career service initiatives?

• What do the members of the school’s Program Advisory Committee say about employment opportunities?
Independent Third-Party Verification of Employment Data
In 2011 ACCSC began engaging an independent third-party to verify the employment data submitted by schools selected as part of the annual random sample of the Annual Reports, which has been a successful monitoring mechanism.

- 4,000 Records in 2011
- 2,800 Records in 2012
- 3,390 Records in 2013

The purpose of the requirement is

a) to assess the school’s compliance with Section VII (B)(1)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation and whether the school has “verifiable” records of employment and

b) to ensure that the institution’s records can be relied upon in making decisions about a school’s compliance with the Commission’s student achievement standards and benchmarks.
The Commission has always required its accredited member schools to submit verifiable records of initial employment.

• A high level of reliance is placed upon information, data, and statements provided to the Commission by a school.

• Moreover, the Commission’s deliberations and decisions are made on the basis of the written record of an accreditation review.

• A school must supply the Commission with complete documentation of the school’s compliance with all accrediting standards if it is to be granted and to maintain accreditation.

• ACCSC will provide an additional overview of this process during Session C.
Group Exercise

- Program Design and Development
- Admissions and Recruitment
- Educational Resources and Faculty
- Student Services
- Institutional Assessment, Improvement, and Planning
- Management and Administrative Operations
- Financial Stability and Responsibility
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section II
Program Requirements
This section identifies various program elements that enable a school to meet its objectives and, thus, achieve and maintain accreditation.

Such elements include:

• appropriate program length;
• comprehensive course outlines;
• learning objectives;
• instructional materials and equipment;
• the availability, accessibility and integration of adequate learning resource materials; and
• processes that prepare students for employment.
Keys to Success: Ready Access

Curriculum and lesson plans for all program offerings
- Provides meaningful job related training opportunities
- Documentation of the integration of the LRS into the curriculum.
  - Example Student Work

Program Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
- Review and Assessment of curriculum, equipment, student achievement, etc.
  - 2 Per year / At Least 3 Employers or Practitioners from the field

Equipment for each program offered by the school
- Does the school’s equipment reflect current occupational trends and practices?
  - Properly Maintained / Safety Devices
  - Sufficient in Quantity

Learning Resource System
- Documentation of LRS Improvement Activities
- Accessible

Copies of the school’s externship plan
- Documentation of externship activities
Section II (A)(5), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation

Program Advisory Committees (PACs)
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section III
Educational Administration & Faculty Qualifications
Section III – Educational Administration & Faculty Qualifications

• This section addresses the requirements a school must meet in regard to its faculty.

• The purpose of this section is to require schools to retain a strong and experienced faculty that is continually attentive to the needs of the students, interested in strengthening the curricula, and obligated to continued self-improvement.

• A school must ensure that its faculty are appropriate, suitable and sufficient in number for the instructional programs offered by the school.

• By hiring and retaining qualified faculty, a school is able to strengthen the quality of its training program.
Keys to Success

School success is dependent on the quality of its faculty

- Professional Development Plans for ALL faculty
- Documentation of Activities

Schools must retain a strong and experienced faculty that is continually attentive to the needs of the students

- Prior Work Experience / Education Verification
  - Personnel File Review
- Retention Data on Faculty
- Survey of Students

Faculty are sufficient in number for the instructional programs offered by the school.

- Classroom Observations
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section IV
Student Recruitment
Section IV – Student Recruitment, Advertising & Disclosures

- The purpose of this section is to require schools to describe themselves to prospective students fully and accurately and to follow practices that permit prospective students to make informed and considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure.

- The school’s recruitment efforts must attract students who are qualified and likely to complete and benefit from the education and training provided by the school and not simply to obtain enrollments.

- Recruitment means engaging in activities or using promotional materials or presentations to attract and enroll students.

- These standards apply to school personnel primarily involved in any way in those activities.
Recruitment in relation to student success

Ethical practices / Accurate portrayals

• Copies of All Advertisements
• Copies of Signed Codes of Conduct for Recruiters

Permit prospective students to make informed and considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure

• Catalog and Enrollment Agreement
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section V
Admission Policies and Practices
• The purpose of this section is to ensure that schools only admit those students who are capable of successfully completing the training offered.

• 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.
Keys to Success

Consistency in Admissions Decisions
- Admission decisions are based upon consistently applied criteria
- Documentation that Every Student Enrolled met the school’s admissions criteria prior to enrollment

Student, Graduate, Withdrawal Files
- Ready Access
  - Copies of HS / GED
  - International HS: Translated and Verified as Equivalent
  - Entrance Exam Results
  - Completed Enrollment Agreement
    - Signed by the Student / Accepted by the School Prior to Start of Class
- Denial of Admissions File
  - Going Back Five Years
Example of the results from an on-site evaluation team’s review of documentation to support the systematic application of a school’s admissions policy:
Example School Policy:

In order to enroll into the Medical Assistant program:

• All applicants must have earned a high school diploma; or a GED;

• All applicants must pass the entrance examination by scoring 15 or higher;

• All applicants must take a blood test;

• All applicants must sign an enrollment agreement.
Documentation:

The on-site evaluation team will review current student and graduate files to determine if documentation exists which demonstrates that the school is applying its admissions standard in a systematic fashion.

The following is an example of the results from an evaluation of our fictitious school:
Based on a review of 10 current student files

Doe, J. XXX-XX-1234; Missing copy of GED

Smith, J. XXX-XX-2345; Missing copy of signed Enrollment Agreement

Smythe, J. XXX-XX-2345; Missing copy of high school diploma

Jones, M. XXX-XX-2345; Missing copy of blood test

Poppins, M. XXX-XX-2345; Missing copy of entrance exam results
In this example, 50% (5 of 10) of current student files reviewed by the on-site evaluation team did not include all required elements outlined in the school’s admissions policy.

Accordingly, based on this example, the school has not demonstrated compliance with Section V, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.

Consistency in the Admissions Process as Supported by Documentation Available in Student Files.
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section VI
Student Services
Section VI – Student Services

• The purpose of this section is to ensure that schools remain attentive to their students’ educational and other needs.

• This section requires that schools meet minimum requirements in regard to:
  • advising and counseling,
  • record maintenance,
  • graduate employment assistance, and
  • procedures for handling student complaints.
Keys to Success

Advising and Counseling
• Coordinated by individual with appropriate professional and educational qualifications
• Documentation of advising sessions

Student Records
• Must be securely maintained and protected
  • May be electronic

Maintain a transcript for all formerly enrolled students
• Official transcript must be made available to student upon request and in accordance with school policies
• Must be maintained indefinitely

Maintain financial records related to financial aid, tuition, fee payments, and tuition refunds for a period of 5 years.
Keys to Success

Graduate Employment Assistance and Records
• Available as claimed by the school
• Public notice includes a notice on graduation population base and timeframe
• Maintain verifiable records of initial employment for 5 years

Student Complaints
• Compliant policy and procedures published in school catalog
• Must include ACCSC Student Complaint Procedure
• Must maintain complete record of all written student complaints for at least the last five years
Consistent Application of Student Services

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)
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
Section VII
Student Progress
Section VII – Student Progress

• A school must establish processes, policies, and procedures in the areas of student assessment and achievement and demonstrate:
  • that a high proportion of its students attend class,
  • successfully progress through and complete their program of study, and
  • obtain employment in the field for which trained.

• A school must establish and consistently apply criteria that provide an objective evaluation of the student’s learning and progress toward attaining the program’s specific educational objectives.

• 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.
Keys to Success

Student Attendance
• Good student attendance is evident
  • The school publishes and enforces an attendance policy
    • Documentation

Leave of Absence Policies
• May not exceed 180 days within any 12 month period
• Must have signed request by student on file
• School must apply its refund policy if the student does not return following a LOA
  • Bona Fide LOAs
Keys to Success

Satisfactory Progress

Written policy for assessing satisfactory student progress related to grades and attendance
• Grading criteria to assess a student’s academic progress that is reported at regular intervals
  • Students must achieve a 2.0 upon graduation
• Training must be completed within 1.5 times the normal duration of the program (or 1.5 the credit hours required for credit hour institutions)

Define and publish a probation policy, the effect of course incompletions, withdrawals, and course repetitions
• Systematic Application of Policies via Documentation in Student Files
How does this standard benefit students?

As an accredited school, what is the most challenging aspect of meeting this standard?

What strategies have you employed to overcome this challenge?
The Standards of Accreditation

Session B
The Accreditation Process

• The accreditation process is the cornerstone of ACCSC’s ability to continually ensure the high quality of education in accredited member institutions.

• The accreditation process provides an opportunity for an institution to conduct a comprehensive review of all academic and ancillary activities and resources that support an institution’s mission and educational objectives.

• While ACCSC employs its own fact-finding methods to determine an institution’s compliance with accrediting standards, the burden rests with the institution to establish that it is meeting ACCSC’s standards.
Attend Accreditation Workshop  

**July 16-17, 2015**

Upload a single PDF version of the Application for Renewal Accreditation, with all attachments, to College 360,

- Mail $2,250 Processing Fee (+45 days):

**August 31, 2015**

Upon receipt of the Application Acceptance letter, upload the revised Application for Renewal Accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report

- Mail in the on-site evaluation fee (total amount identified in acceptance letter) (+6 months)

**January 13, 2016**
Disclosures & Material Events
Has any owner or manager been directly or indirectly employed or affiliated with any school which has **lost or been denied accreditation** by any accrediting agency during that individual’s period of employment or affiliation?

Has any owner or manager been directly or indirectly employed or affiliated with any school which has **closed or entered into bankruptcy** during that individual’s period of employment or affiliation?

Is any **action pending** (e.g. court action, audit, inquiry, review, administrative action), or has action been taken, by any court or administrative body (e.g. federal or state court, grand jury, special investigator, U.S. Department of Education, or any state agency), as to any owner or manager, or any school with which an owner or manager has been directly or indirectly employed or affiliated, in a civil or criminal forum or proceeding that is not otherwise disclosed in this application?
Notifications to the Commission

Each school must notify ACCSC of any material event or circumstance that could affect the school’s operations, policies, staff, curricula, reputation, approval status or authority to operate as a legal entity, or financial status.

Such notification must be in writing, made within 10 calendar days of the event’s occurrence.

Examples:

• Filings of petitions for bankruptcy or reorganization;
• Destruction of the school or a significant part of its facilities;
• Any limitation, sanction (e.g., probationary status), suspension, or revocation of a school’s license or right to operate;
• Cessation of teaching;
• Any grant of accreditation by another accrediting agency or Show Cause Order, imposition of probationary status, or denial or withdrawal of accreditation by another accrediting agency;
Other Deadlines and Requirements
Financial Statements

• No later than six months following the end of the school’s fiscal year,
  • June 30, 2015 Year End – Due No later than December 31, 2015
  • December 31, 2015 Year End - Due No Later than June 30, 2016

• Prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) by an independent certified public accountant licensed by the state to perform such services.
  • Accrual basis of accounting (not cash basis);
  • Presented using a comparative format showing side by side information for two most recently concluded fiscal years;
  • Audited and include a balance sheet, an income statement, statement of cash flows, and all notes as appropriate.
Deadlines and Requirements

A school is responsible for monitoring when appropriate applications, reports, and forms need to be filed and for ensuring that applicable instructions are followed.

**Sustaining Fees**
- Calculated by the institution via the ACCSC Sustaining Fee Calculation Sheet
- Due each year with the submission of the school’s fiscal year-end financial statements

**ACCSC Annual Report**
The electronic submission of the 2015 ACCSC Annual Report is required for all ACCSC-accredited institutions (Main School and Branch) that received accreditation prior to July 1, 2015
- Due date will be established for October 2015.
Significant Changes to the Application
The Application for Renewal Accreditation: Significant Changes

**Independent Third Party Verification of Employment**
The school must engage an independent third-party to verify the employment data in the G&E Chart(s) submitted in the most recently submitted Annual Report at the time of the due date of the SER.

**Personnel Reports**
- Faculty Personnel Reports are no longer required
  - Matrix of Faculty (by program) with Responsibilities
  - Organizational Chart of all Staff

**Substantive Changes:**
- Chronological List of all substantive changes during the last cycle of accreditation.

**Catalog**
- Transfer of Credit Policy
The Importance of Consistency
Consistency of Information Disclosed to the Commission is Crucial.

When describing programs in the Application for Renewal Accreditation an institution should ensure the consistent disclosure of programs, program names, program length, clock hours, credit hours as reported on:

- Application and SER
- State license
- Advertising
- Catalogs
- Enrollment Agreements
Consistency of Policies and Procedures as it Relates to Students is Equally Important.

Through this process ACCSC will evaluate the consistent application of the school’s policies and procedures as reported to the Commission:

- Refund policies
- Student Services
- Career Services
- Admissions

Underscores the importance of documentation to demonstrate the systematic application of the school’s established policies and procedures.

- Verified through the onsite evaluation process
- Every. Student. Enrolled.
Application Attachments
Application Attachments

1. Application for Accreditation Processing Fee
   • $2250

2. Accreditation Workshop Participation Documentation

3. Owner(s) of the School
   • 10% or more

4. Corporate Affiliations

5. Organizational Chart

6. Listing of Faculty by Program

7. Listing of PAC members by program area
Application Attachments

8. State License(s)

9. State Approvals for Programs

10. State Clock/Credit Hour Approvals

11. Clock/Credit Hour Conversion and Notice

12. Notice of additional accreditations

13. Chronological list of substantive changes

14. Notices of Discontinuation
Application Attachments

15. Program Chart

16. Advertisements

17. Separate Facility Ownership Statement

18. Separate Facility Disclosure

19. Catalog

20. Enrollment Agreement

21. Fire/Safety/Sanitation

22. Certificate(s) of Insurance

23. Attestation of 3rd Party Requirement
Accreditation Workshop
Homework Assignment
1. **Review Institutional Contact Information**
   - If contact information needs to be updated, go to the ACCSC Annual Report Portal and make change
   - Can make changes to contact at any time throughout the year.
   - Each school is provided with three fields to enter official contacts (receive updates from ACCSC)

II. **Review Program Information (name, clock hours, credit hours)**
   - The program listed on the directory are pulled directly from the ACCSC program database.
   - If this information is not correct, contact ACCSC to explore issue.
Why is Self-Evaluation and Institutional Enhancement Important?
Self Evaluation: Purpose and Focus

• Assessment of the Complete School
  • The self-evaluation process should involve the entire school

• Internal & External Evaluation
  • Faculty, Students, Administrators (I)
  • Employers, PAC Members, Graduates (E)

• Improvements due to internal efforts
  • Improvements within a school should be due primarily to its internal efforts rather than an on-site evaluation by an outside team.

• Significant and on-going process
  • A permanent part of the institution’s operation.
An Accreditation Perspective

- Institutional Success is Dependent upon the Quality of Educational Administration
  - Leadership
  - Professional Development of Management Team
  - Succession Planning
  - Strategic Planning

- Student Success is Dependent upon Quality of Teaching and Ongoing Faculty Development
  - Faculty Development Plans
  - Continuing Education and Training
  - Faculty Retention

- The Success of an Institution is often measured by the Success of its Students
  - Student Success = Institutional Success
Guiding Questions: Self Evaluation Process

Ask the following questions:

• Does the SER response answer the question being asked?

• Is the SER complete and clear?

• Is the SER realistic to reflect day-to-day operations?

• Is necessary documentation available to support the response?

• Is any supporting documentation complete, clear, and concise?
Appendices:

- Occupation Specialists – A & C
- Visit Preparation Checklist - B
Occupation Specialist
An individual who represents a specific industry/trade, holds the required credential to legally work in the field, and has a work history that supports an independent “expert” representation of their occupational specialty.

Appendix A: Occupation Specialist Information Package
The school must prepare a separate electronic Occupation Specialist CD for each of these program areas, which is labeled “Occupation Specialist Information” and indicates the program name or area of concentration on the cover.

Appendix C: Occupation Specialist Candidates
Provide the requested contact information for three (3) to five (5) local individuals per training program/group of related programs who meet the required criteria outlined in Appendix C
• must meet tests to be considered an “independent” evaluator;
• five years of hands-on work experience in the field/industry.
Appendix B: Preparing for the Renewal of Accreditation Onsite Evaluation

Be READY for the onsite evaluation.

Examples from the Checklist

• Set aside a separate secure room for the Commission team.
• Have students in regular attendance avoiding scheduled breaks, special exams, and field trips.
• Have as many instructional and administrative staff present as possible.
• Have driving directions and parking information available for the team prior to arrival.
  • If parking is limited, please have spots available for the on-site evaluation team.

Please have the following available in the team room upon arrival:

• One set of educational materials currently in use for each training program offered, including curricula, lesson plans, textbooks, handouts, and instructor guidebooks
• A list of all current students separated by program of study, start date, day/evening cohorts, and full/part-time cohorts (include overall totals per program)
• A list of all graduates within the last 24 months
Group Questions:

What is the biggest challenge in preparing the Self-Evaluation Report?

What is the best tip you have for a school beginning to prepare for the Self-Evaluation Process?
Focus on Student Achievement

- Graduation and Employment Charts
- Guidelines for Employment Classification
- Independent Third-Party Verification of Placement
The Graduation and Employment Chart
The Graduation and Employment Chart

Cohort Reporting

• Individual Students By Program By Start Date

You must submit a Graduation and Employment Chart for each educational program offered at your school.
• If a program is offered both full time and part time, a separate chart will be required for each.
• The reporting periods will differ among individual programs with different program lengths.

For the purposes of seeking renewal of accreditation, ACCSC Accredited Institutions may submit the Graduation and Employment Charts as provided in the 2015 ACCSC Annual Report.
Student Achievement

Demonstration successful student achievement through the reported rates of student graduation and graduate employment

- Graduation and Employment Chart for Every Program
  - Program by Program
  - Line by Line
  - Student by Student
  - Graduate by Graduate.

The reported rates of graduate employment are unassailable.

- Internal Audits
- Third-Party Verification
- Employer, Job Title, Job Responsibilities – Related to the Field
  - Organized by Program; By Start Date
- Sustainable Employment
  - Not one day / two days of employment
Program Viability

• Take **definitive** action
• Enrollment limitation
  • For how long?
  • How many students?
• What are you hoping to achieve?

Program Cessation

• If a program is continuing to fail to meet expectation, take action.
  • The question may become, why are you continuing to offer this program that fails to meet expectations?
  • This is not a decision that the state regulatory or ACCSC should make, this is a decision the school should make.
  • **Due Process**
Independent Third-Party Verification of Employment
Independent Third-Party Verification of Employment Results

- The school must engage an independent third-party to verify the employment data in the Graduation and Employment (“G&E”) Chart(s) submitted in the most recently submitted Annual Report at the time of the due date of the SER.

- The independent third-party must select minimally a 50% sample of employed graduates and report the results from that sample.

  - Once the 50% sample has been selected by the independent third-party, for the purposes of this application, the independent third-party may not alter the sample in an effort to get better results.
Independent Third-Party Verification of Employment Results

Please note: If an institution wishes to present an updated G&E Chart or a G&E Chart using a more recent Report Date than that which was submitted in the school’s Annual Report, the updated G&E Chart must be verified using the same methodology and reported on separately in order to be considered by the Commission in making an accreditation decision.
Independent Third-Party Verification of Employment Results

• 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.

• The school must be prepared to provide the on-site evaluation team supporting documentation of the independent third-party’s findings including a list of the students in the sample, the results for each student, and the reasons for those results.
The school must provide the following as part of this SER:

Documentation demonstrating that the third-party procured by the school for this project meets the Commission’s tests to be considered an “Independent” Third-Party as follows:

a. If the independent third-party is identified by ACCSC in the July 1, 2013 Accreditation Alert, the school only needs to provide the name of that verification company; or

b. If the school chooses another independent third-party the school must provide the following:
If the school chooses another independent third-party the school must provide the following:

A signed attestation from the independent third-party that the independent third-party
1) is not affiliated with the school or share any part ownership in the school or its affiliated schools;
2) is one that does not provide any other services to the school;
3) will only report accurate findings through work conducted in an independent manner.

• A description of the methodology that the verification agency will use for the selection of the 50% sample.

• A description of the methodology that the verification agency will use for the verification process.
The school must provide the following as part of this SER:

A summary of results for each G&E Chart that includes the following (at a minimum):

a. The total number of students in the sample; and
b. 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.).

Any additional information or response the school deems appropriate regarding the above results.
Resources:

The Independent Third-Party Employment Verification FAQ is available for download by clicking here.

The tests that an independent third-party employment verification auditor must meet is available by clicking here.
First Look

- 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%**.
  - The median is **79%** for the same category.
- 19% (25 of 131) reported 100% "**Verified as Correct**"
- The average percentage of records classified as "**Unable to Verify**" is **17%**.
  - The median for the same category is **10.5%**.
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
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.

- **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.
Lessons Learned / Reminders
Lessons Learned

• **Start Early.**
  - Real Time Verifications

• **Incorporate** third-party verification into regular on-going process – at least for the SER data.

• **Set expectations** with students upon enrollment and throughout their program.
  - Establish protocols for post-graduation activities that can be managed and tracked.

• **Work proactively with Employers** – set expectations, get feedback (such as batching verification calls).
Reminders

- The **on-site evaluation** team will still review the school’s G & E backup documentation as usual.

- The **school** is responsible for making sure your third-party results are on time and organized.

- Your **vendor** should be able to meet your institution’s timelines and needs.
Guidelines for Employment Classification
Guidelines for Employment Classification

- What constitutes an employed graduate in a training related field?
- How does a school justify that classification?
- The school is responsible for justifying, with documentation, every graduate classified as employed.
  - The burden of compliance rests with the institution.

In addition to these guidelines, the Commission expects that schools will regularly gather information from employers as a means to assess the preparedness of graduates for employment and make program modifications as may be necessary based on that feedback.
Guidelines for Employment Classification

The school must be able to justify the classification of each graduate as employed using the following guidelines:

The employment classification is appropriate and reasonable based on the educational objectives of the program.

The employment is
- for a reasonable period of time,
- is based on program objectives, and
- can be considered sustainable (e.g., not a single day of employment).

The employment is directly related to the program from which the individual graduated, aligns with a majority of the educational and training objectives of the program, and is a paid position.
Regular Employment

i. The school secures written documentation from the employer verifying the employment; or

i. The school secures written documentation from the graduate verifying the employment; or

ii. In cases where a school can show diligent efforts have been made to secure such documentation without success, employment verification records that include
   a) the graduate’s and employer’s name and contact information,
   b) a signature of school staff attesting to verbal employment verification with the employer and the graduate, and
   c) the date(s) of verification are acceptable.
Self-Employment

The self-employed graduate signs a statement – which includes the graduate’s name and contact information – acknowledging that the self-employment is

i. aligned with the individual’s employment goals,

ii. is vocational,

iii. is based on the education and training received, and

iv. that the graduate is earning training related income.

i. The school secures some form of written documentation to demonstrate that the self-employment is valid such as a state license or certificate authorizing such employment.
Career Advancement

i. The school shows with written documentation from the employer or the graduate that the training allowed the graduate to maintain the employment position due to the training provided by the school; or

ii. The school shows with written documentation from the employer or the graduate that the training supported the graduate’s ability to be eligible or qualified for advancement due to the training provided by the school.
Resources
Online Resources: Blueprints for Success

The ACCSC Blueprints for Success highlight best practices of high performing institutions and provide guidance on some of the more technical areas of ACCSC-accreditation.

Module I: Preparing a Comprehensive Response for Commission Consideration
- Keys to a Successful Response
- Effective Response Models
- Documentation Strategies
- Case Studies: An Overview of Best Practices in Preparing a Response

Module II: Organizing an Effective Electronic Submission
- Converting Documents to PDF
- Creating Bookmarks and Hyperlinks
- Inserting Pages/Exhibits
These brochures are designed to provide guidance to ACCSC-accredited institutions in the cycle of continuous performance improvement, self-evaluation, and self-improvement processes and practices.

- Maximizing Program Advisory Committees
- Learning Resource Systems
- Faculty Improvement Planning/Implementation
- Self Evaluation Processes and Practices
- Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning/Implementation
Online Resources: **Webinars**

Updates on Polices, Standards, Initiatives and Activities

- A Conversation with the Executive Director

**Focused Training**

- Preparing a Comprehensive Response for Commission Consideration
- Maximizing Program Advisory Committees
- Best Practices in Accreditation
- Preparing for the Onsite Evaluation
- The Graduation and Employment Chart
The Application Process

Session C
The On-Site Evaluation
Session D
Deadlines for Schools Seeking Renewal of Accreditation

Attend Accreditation Workshop

July 16-17, 2015

Upload the Application for Renewal Accreditation, with all attachments (+45 days):

• Send Processing fee ($2250) via mail

August 31, 2015

Upload revised Application for Renewal Accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report, and submit on-site evaluation fee and OS packet[s] (+6 months):

January 13, 2016
This session will provide an overview of the critical areas involved in the on-site evaluation process including:

- Understanding the Purpose of the On-Site Evaluation
- Identifying the Roles and Areas of Focus for the On-Site Evaluation Team Members
- Communication Strategies: Interacting with the On-Site Evaluation Team
- Document Preparation, Organization of Materials, and Record Maintenance
Understanding the Purpose of the On-Site Evaluation
For schools seeking accreditation, the purpose of the on-site evaluation is to:

- Verify data in the school’s reports, applications, responses, and any other information
- Develop an understanding and perform an assessment of how well the school meets its objectives and the *Standards of Accreditation.*

The TSR is a factual report and summary of the on-site evaluation team’s findings as to the school’s compliance with accrediting standards.

- The TSR serves as the official record of the onsite evaluation.
Understanding the Purpose of the On-Site Evaluation

The school will be evaluated according to all available information, including:

- Documentation included in the school’s reports, applications, responses, and any other information
- Information provided by the school to demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards
- Interviews and surveys of the administration, instructors, other school officials, students, graduates, and employers of graduates
- Observations of classes, management, and administration of the school
- Documentation of the student achievement data
Preparing for the On-Site Evaluation

Documentation
Preparing for the On-Site Evaluation

Clear tentative date for the On-Site Evaluation

• Typically a 2 day on-site evaluation
• Regular “School Day”
  • Not Exam Week
  • Majority of Students in Class

Assemble On-Site Evaluation Team.

• Team Leader\Management Specialist *(administration /management)*
• Education Specialist *(education delivery / curriculum / faculty qualifications)*
• ACCSC Staff Member *(technical assistance / interpretation of Standards)*
• Occupation Specialist *(equipment / facilities )*
• Distance Education Specialist *(if required)*
• State Observer *(invited)*

Conflict of Interest – Clearing the Team
The following preparations will assist the team in conducting an efficient, effective evaluation of your institution.

Be aware that there may be additional items and/or information requested by team members at the time of the on-site evaluation.

- Set aside a separate secure room for the Commission team.
- Have students in regular attendance avoiding scheduled breaks, special exams, and field trips.
- Have as many instructional and administrative staff present as possible.
- Have driving directions and parking information available for the team prior to arrival.
  - If parking is limited, please have spots available for the on-site evaluation team.
Please have the following available in the team room upon arrival:

- Internet access including any required access codes
- Adequate outlets/extension cords
- Basic office supplies such as a stapler, binder clips, and pens
- One printed copy of the school’s Application for Accreditation and one physical copy of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) with exhibits
- One set of educational materials currently in use for each training program offered, including curricula, lesson plans, textbooks, handouts, and instructor guidebooks
- A list of all current students separated by program of study, start date, day/evening cohorts, and full/part-time cohorts (include overall totals per program)
- A list of all graduates within the last 24 months
Preparing for the On-Site Evaluation

Documentation Preparation for “day of”...

- **Separate Educational Materials**
  - Texts, resources – organize by program

- **Files**
  - Management
  - Faculty (Full- and part-time)
  - Student (Academic and Financial)

- **Graduation and Employment Charts (Annual Report)**
  - Sample Back-up Documentation
  - Organized by Start Date
    - Include Transcripts to support Graduation Rate
    - Include Initial Employment Records to support Employment Rate
  - Ensure that the documentation is clear and legible
  - Ensure that the documentation shows compliance!
Preparing for the On-Site Evaluation

Documentation Preparation for “day of” (continued)...

- Student Refunds - Refund Calculation, Front and Back of Check, EFT
- Faculty Development
  - On-going and documented for all faculty
- Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning
  - On-Going and documented
- Learning Resource System – On-going improvements, budget
- Student Services – Written policies and procedures
- Program Advisory Committee – Meeting minutes
- Revised Forms/Licenses
  - Updated and Most Currently Available
Preparing for the On-Site Evaluation

Communication During the On-site Evaluation...

- Two-way Conversation
  - Open and Transparent
- Timely Exchange
  - Keep everyone informed
  - To the point! Do not give more (or less) than requested
  - Explain if you experience challenges with information/documentation
- Ask Questions
  - Inquire to understand what the team is requesting
Preparing for the ACCSC On-site Evaluation

Team Perspective & Team Activities
On-Site Evaluation Activities

Day 1

Typically 9:00 am arrival

• **Orientation Breakfast**
  - Working Business Breakfast for Team

• **Arrival at the School (9:00 am)**
  - Initial Tour of Facility
  - Team situated in designated working space (conference room or office)

• **School Evaluation**
  Student Surveys, Student/Graduate File Review, Class Observations, Meetings with School Officials, Staff Interviews, Outcomes Verification, Equipment Review, Facility Review, Curriculum Review

• Is the school able to document the systematic application of its processes and procedures?
• Is the school is compliance with the requirements outlined in the *Standards of Accreditation*?
On-Site Evaluation Activities

Day 1 (continued)

• Afternoon Activities on the First Day of the On-Site Evaluation

  • Occupation Specialists are typically finished with their portion of the evaluation
  • Discussions with school officials on the team’s progress with its evaluation are on-going

• Evening Activities

  • If the school offers evening programs, the team will be on-site to conduct student surveys & staff interviews
  • The team is looking to ensure that students in the evening programs have comparable access to student services, the LRS, career services, etc.
Open Communication: An ACCSC Core Value

The team will discuss its findings with school officials as the on-site evaluation progresses.

If the school cannot provide documentation to demonstrate that it is in compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*, the team will include a finding in the report under Team Findings.

If school officials do not agree with the team’s finding, the response to the TSR would serve as the mechanism to demonstrate compliance (Commission level action).
On-Site Evaluation Activities

Day 2 (9:00 am arrival)

• Core Team Remains
  • Commission Representative, Team Leader, Education Specialist

• Discussion with school officials on the team’s progress
  • Identification of areas of focus for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} day

• Preparation for the Exit Interview
The Team Summary Report

On-Site Evaluation Overview and Summary
- On-Site Evaluation Information
- Institutional Information
- Student Population
- Program Information
- Cohort Default Rates
- Accreditation and Substantive Change History

Team Review and Observations
- On-Site Evaluation Review Notes
- Student Survey Overview
The Team Summary Report

Findings
• Team Findings Identified During the Onsite Evaluation
• Each Team Finding is Anchored to an Accrediting Standard
• The School Must Response to Each Team Finding and Demonstrate Compliance with supporting documentation

Additional Information Required (AIR)
• The School Must Provide a Response to each AIR item to complete the record

Financial Review
• The Commission will evaluate the institution’s financial structure to ensure that the school maintains resources sufficient for proper operation of the school and discharge of obligations to students.
The On-Site Evaluation

Session D
Preparing an Effective Response for Commission Consideration / Commission Actions

Session E
Keys to a Successful Response
Many times the difference between a full five-year grant of accreditation and a short cycle grant of accreditation is the clarity, precision, and comprehensive nature of the school’s response to a Team Summary Report or Commission Action Letter.

Fundamentally, an institution’s response must demonstrate, with supporting documentation, how its policies, procedures, and related operations demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards.
Keys to a Successful Response

Understanding the Expectations
- In order to be successful, an institution must make certain it understands the specific requirements identified in a particular accreditation standard.

Refer to the Standards of Accreditation
- By referring to pertinent elements of the specific standard cited as a potential area of non-compliance, an institution is able to demonstrate to the Commission that it has identified and understands the requirements for compliance.
Keys to a Successful Response

Provide an Overview of the Response
Set the Commission up for success by including an introductory statement, a narrative explanation regarding the overall response, and then address and outline the institution’s approach to addressing specific compliance findings.

Document, Document, Document
In all cases, provide appropriate, supporting documentation to demonstrate corrective action has been taken. For example, if the school established a new policy or procedure, demonstrate to the Commission, via supporting documentation, the impact of this new policy on the school’s compliance initiatives.
Past-Present-Future Response Model
In formulating a response to a compliance finding, an institution’s response should:

• Explain the circumstances that impacted the school’s ability to demonstrate compliance with a specific accrediting standard (Past)
• Demonstrate to the Commission that the school has taken corrective action and include documentation available to support that position (Present)
• Identify the school’s plan to ensure that this area of non-compliance will not be a repeat finding going forward through the school’s term of accreditation (Future)

• More on this response model later...
Keys to a Successful Response

ACCSC as a Resource

• Each institution seeking accreditation from ACCSC is assigned a designated accreditation liaison from the members of the ACCSC staff.

• If there is any confusion about a compliance finding as captured on an ACCSC letter or report, or the requirements identified in the Standards of Accreditation, school representatives should contact their designated ACCSC staff representative in order to seek guidance.
Dos and Don’ts

Do's

Don'ts

Effective Response
Keys to a Successful Response

Do’s

- Plan ahead in preparing the school’s response.
- Include an introductive and narrative summary of the school’s response.
- Give a serious, thorough description of the school’s compliance efforts.
- Reference applicable accreditation standards in the school’s narrative response.
- Explain how the documentation demonstrates the school’s compliance with accrediting standards.
Keys to a Successful Response

Do’s

• Take copious notes during the Exit Interview

• Contact your designated ACCSC staff liaison when needed.

• Review the ACCSC Webinar on Electronic Submissions.

• Ensure that your electronic response is intuitively organized.
Keys to a Successful Response

DON’Ts

• Don’t overwhelm the Commission by including miscellaneous documents that do not address the concern or support the school’s position.

• If you disagree with a compliance finding, do not provide a cavalier response.

• Don’t just provide exhibits with no narrative to explain what the exhibits are intended to demonstrate.
Keys to a Successful Response

DON’Ts

• Don’t simply provide copies of newly created blank forms. Blank forms do not show implementation of the form.

• Don’t simply respond with a “will do” response that promises future action; answer with a “have done” response that demonstrates compliance.

• Don’t simply hire a consultant to put together a response if it does not realistically reflect day to day practices at the institution.
Precision in Documentation
When responding to a compliance finding, a school should **always provide documentation** that shows consistency in the school’s compliance initiatives.

- The school should avoid just submitting an example of a completed form, but rather, submit documentation that demonstrates systematic compliance over a period of time identified by the school.

- If the school has created a new policy, the school’s response should demonstrate the systematic implementation of the new policy through completed copies of newly created forms over a period of time.
Example: Student Recruitment

The on-site evaluation team cites the school for not having signed codes of conduct for each admissions representative as required by accrediting standards.

• If the school’s response simply provides three signed codes of conduct, the Commission has no way to know whether a code of conduct is included for every admissions representative, because there is no roster of admissions representatives included to compare.

• The school should have provided a roster, or perhaps an organizational chart, which identifies all of the school’s admissions representatives along with copies of signed codes of conduct.
Example: Faculty Training

If there is a question whether the school engages in ongoing faculty assessment and professional development activities, the school should avoid simply submitting a sample of trainings completed by various staff.

Rather, the school’s response should include:

• A copy of the school’s current (revised), faculty professional development plan;
• A roster of all currently faculty by program offering; and
• Sample documentation to demonstrate that each member of the school’s faculty engages in activities such as teaching skill development, instructional methodology development, or continuing education in the subject taught.
Past, Present, Future Response Model
Team Finding

The team is concerned that the school did not have two (2) Program Advisory Committee meetings in 2013 as required by Section II (A)(5), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation. Specifically, based on a review of the minutes from the school’s PAC meetings in 2014, and as confirmed via conversations with the school’s staff, the school only hosted one meeting for the Culinary PAC in 2014.
Past

- The school is aware of the requirements regarding Program Advisory Committees as outlined in *Section II (A)(5), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

- The school agrees with the team’s finding in this regard, and noted that there were a number of scheduling complications that prevented the school from having two meetings for the Culinary PAC in 2014.

- Additionally, upon further examination, school officials noted that there was no internal policy regarding the requirements for PAC meetings, which lead to some confusion among staff and resulted in a shortfall in the required number of meetings for the Culinary program.
Present

Since the on-site evaluation, the school:
• Established a new internal policy regarding Program Advisory Committees
  • See Exhibit A for a copy of this policy
• Created a new administrative position that is responsible for the coordination of all PAC meetings on a go-forward basis
  • See Exhibit B for a position description.
• On January 2, 2015, the school hired Jane Jones to serve in this capacity.
  • See Exhibit C for a copy of the resume ( &SPR) for Jane Jones).
Present

The school also hosted a Program Advisory Committee for the Culinary program on January 5, 2015. Attached are copies of the minutes from that meeting which include a description of each member in attendance (i.e., titles and affiliations) the date, time, and location of the meeting; comprehensive and clear description of the review of and commentary made by the PAC members on all areas outlined in Section II (A)(5), Substantive Standards; and evidence the school gives consideration to PAC input

• See Exhibit D.

The school also reviewed the Commission’s webinar on Maximizing Program Advisory Committees
Future

We scheduled the next two meetings for the Culinary PAC to ensure that the school maintains compliance with accrediting standards on a go forward basis.

• See Exhibit E for tentative agendas for the next Culinary PAC meeting that is scheduled for April 10, 2015, and December 1, 2015, respectively.

In addition attached is an updated copy of the school assessment and improvement plan which shows that the school is continuing to assess and improve on the new policy on PACs and new position which coordinates all PAC meetings. This plan is used to ensure that the school continues to manage PACs in accordance with accrediting standards.

• See Exhibit F
Commission Actions
2014 Revisions
ACCSC began to reexamine the definitions and terms relied upon by the Commission in reaching decisions on a school’s accredited status, taking into account the recent developments regarding transparency and public notice of accreditation actions.

Related to ACCSC’s own internal assessment, on April 9, 2014, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), which represents all of the regional accrediting commissions recognized by the United States Department of Education, announced the adoption of a common framework and understanding of terms for key actions regarding accredited institutions.
As part of its rationale for adopting this common framework, C-RAC referenced:

- More institutions are operating on a national scale and current terms have, at times, resulted in confusion among students and the general public in cases when actions have been taken; and

- C-RAC’s effort demonstrates how the higher education community is able to come together to address issues rather than relying on a legislative or regulatory solution.

ACCSC agrees and determined that participating in the common framework would aid in the effort to bring great clarity across the range of actions taken by accreditors.
Commission Actions

As an example of an elevating scale, the common framework is outlined as follows:

1. Accredit
2. Deferral
3. Warning [formerly Show Cause]
4. Probation
5. Withdrawal [formerly revocation]
Commission Actions

**Accept Reports / Accredit the Institution**
Applicants for renewal/initial accreditation that are found to be in compliance with accreditation standards and requirements will be granted accreditation.

- (5) Years for Renewal / (3) Years for Initial

**AR/Accept with Stipulation(s)**
The Commission may require a school to submit a response to one or more stipulations when there is evidence that there are deficiencies in the school’s compliance with accreditation standards or requirements.

- Stipulations are generally those items that can be corrected within a relatively short period of time.
- All stipulations must be met before a Commission decision to grant initial or renewal of accreditation becomes effective.
Accredit with Reporting

• The Commission may require a school to submit a Report (e.g., financial, refund, graduation, employment, etc.) in accordance with Section V, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation.

• A school required to submit a Report to the Commission must do so conforming to format requirements and covering exact time frames as directed by the Commission.
  • The school may provide additional data that serves to amplify and strengthen the school’s report.

• The Commission will not accept any submission by a school of a Report that does not conform to the required format.

• The Commission reserves the right to verify the information contained in the Report.
Deferral

The Commission may defer any action on an application for accreditation (initial or renewal) or substantive change if additional information is required for the school to demonstrate compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation* or other accreditation requirements.

Generally, in reaching a decision to defer action, the Commission will consider:

- The extent to which the school can make significant progress toward accreditation within a short period of time;
- Whether there is insufficient information about the school; and
- Whether the necessary information for the Commission to render a decision is lacking.
In cases where the Commission has reason to believe that a school is not in compliance with accreditation standards and other requirements, the Commission may at its discretion, place the school on Warning.

A school that receives a Warning will be required to demonstrate corrective action and compliance with accrediting standards.

The Commission will not consider substantive changes, a change of location/relocation, or additions (i.e., separate facilities, new programs) to a school or its separate facilities while the school is under a Warning.

Warning Status
(formerly Show Cause)
Probation

In cases where the Commission has significant concerns regarding a school’s compliance with accrediting standards and other requirements or has made a determination that a school is out of compliance with one or more standards, the Commission may, at its discretion, place a school on probation.

As part of the Probation Order, the Commission may, at its discretion, direct the school to show cause as to why the school’s accreditation should not be withdrawn.

- The Commission will not consider substantive changes, a change of location/relocation, or additions to a school or its separate facilities while the school is on Probation.

- A summary of the Probation Order is made public in accordance with Section X, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation.

- A school subject to a Probation Order must inform current and prospective students in writing that the school has been placed on probation.
Withdrawal of Accreditation

The Commission may, at its discretion, deny an application for accreditation (initial or renewal), deny the transfer of accreditation in conjunction with a change of ownership application, or withdraw a school’s accreditation and remove the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools without first issuing a Show Cause Order Warning or Probation Order.

This action is subject to appeal.
Parting Thoughts...
Parting Thoughts

Recognize the Deadlines
• Application for Renewal of Accreditation
• Self-Evaluation Report
• Annual Report (Every Year)
• Financial Statements & Sustaining Fees (Every Year)

Establish a Realistic Plan
• Make Staff Assignments
• Establish Realistic Deadlines
  • Keep the Work Moving Forward
• Take Advantage of Every Opportunity to Show Your Success

Engage in the Accreditation Process
• Reference the Standards of Accreditation
• Contact Your Designated Staff Liaison
• Be Realistic, Be Ready
Accreditation: A Student Centered Approach to Quality Assurance

- Program Design and Development
- Admissions and Recruitment
- Educational Resources and Faculty
- Student Services

- State, Federal, Licensure Requirements
- Management and Administrative Operations
- Institutional Assessment, Improvement, and Planning
- Financial Stability and Responsibility
Preparing an Effective Response for Commission Consideration / Commission Actions