

ACICS Announces Hiatus on New Members, Other Reforms to Strengthen Student Protection and Quality Standards

Reform Measures will Improve Institutional Effectiveness and Oversight of Accredited Schools

WASHINGTON – JUNE 6, 2016 - ACICS today announced the first in a series of reforms to strengthen the accrediting organization's effectiveness and its oversight of member institutions. The reforms include a series of quality assurance enhancements to ACICS' accreditation criteria, and an Executive Directive that will temporarily halt ACICS from accepting new applications for initial grants of accreditation.

"The ACICS Board of Directors is determined to restore trust and confidence in the accreditation process, strengthen ACICS' oversight of member institutions, and ensure that students are receiving a quality education that will put them on a path to employment," said Anthony S. Bieda, ACICS' Executive. "As we assess the content, structure and effectiveness of all policies and resources, no stone will be left unturned. Every aspect of the agency must be re-evaluated, fortified and enhanced."

The hiatus on accepting new applications for initial grants of accreditation is effective immediately. "It will remain in effect until the leadership of ACICS is satisfied that its program of assessment and review protects student interests, enforces high standards of quality and contributes to the public good," Bieda said.

The executive directive requires redevelopment of the volunteer evaluator cadre in order to assure strong and effective peer review during all campus site visits and reviews. Also, the directive orders an immediate inventory of all ACICS-accredited colleges and schools that enroll international students, and a review of their compliance with federal immigration requirements. ACICS has initiated formal inquiries of member institutions that have faced public scrutiny for their participation in the federal student and exchange visitor program. The ACICS Council also announced a series of reforms adopted and publicly disclosed on its website that strengthen the review of member institutions and fortify the principles of transparency and ethical conduct:

- Ethics Review Board to directly act on potential conflicts of interest. The Ethics Review Board has the authority to remove an ACICS Council/Board member affiliated with institutions that are under scrutiny, subject to controversy, or not meeting ACICS standards.
- Ensure greater accuracy of student achievement data. The new data integrity standard gives ACICS greater explicit authority to sanction programs and institutions that misrepresent their performance through self-reported retention, placement and licensure data.
- Fortify the review of ethical recruitment practices. ACICS will review the institutions' written plans for recruiting and admitting students and test the degree to

which the plan meets ACICS requirements and is being followed in practice.

- Provide greater public disclosure and enforcement of probation standards. ACICS has strengthened enforcement activities by removing administrative barriers that inhibited ACICS from applying more timely and direct sanctions against underperforming schools.
- Increase student protections and transparency. ACICS requires each campus to provide reliable student achievement data to the public and to prominently place on its website reliable, accurate and up-to-date student achievement information.
- Increase frequency, intensity of interim on-site evaluations. ACICS requires member institutions to meeting accreditation standards every day, not just during the re-accreditation cycle.

“These reforms are necessary to better protect students, reinforce adherence to ethical standards, and strengthen ACICS’ accreditation requirements to ensure a quality education for students,” said Bieda. “ACICS takes seriously the concerns raised by external stakeholders. We have listened to those concerns and are prepared to take decisive actions to strengthen the organization’s effectiveness. We also recognize that this is only a first step, as the accreditation process must be continuously evaluated and modified to reflect the changing dynamics in education and workforce development,” Bieda added. “We look forward to working with policymakers, educators and other stakeholders to better protect and serve students, and ensure they receive a quality education that will lead to a better career path.”

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About ACICS

Founded in 1912, ACICS is the largest national accrediting organization of degree-granting institutions. ACICS accredits professional, technical and occupational programs, and is one of only two national accreditors recognized by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The mission of ACICS is to advance educational excellence at independent, nonpublic career schools, colleges and organizations in the United States and abroad. This is achieved through a deliberate and thorough accreditation process of quality assurance and enhancement, as well as ethical business and educational practices.