MEMORANDUM TO THE FIELD

TO: ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties
FROM: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
DATE: February 5, 2018
SUBJECT: The Memorandum to the Field containing Other Information for ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties

Specific areas of the ACICS Accreditation Criteria that had been presented to the Council through its routine systematic review process have been finalized and made effective following the August 2017 meeting. The 2018 systematic review process is currently underway, with proposed areas for revision up for review and discussion at the Council’s February 2018 Policy Meeting. This review process has facilitated feedback from all key stakeholders including state agencies, third-party experts, institutional representatives, and students.

Consequently, at its December 2017 meeting, there were Criteria changes up for proposed or final review. The following section of the Bylaws has been revised and is detailed here for information only. Additionally, the Council has drafted guidelines on graduation rates for the membership’s information and advisement.

Further, additional information and reminders concerning the ACICS Quarterly CAR submission and PVP processes are also provided here for information only.

For Information Only

1. Bylaws Revisions

   The ACICS Board of Directors approved revisions to the bylaws as they relate to Council composition to adapt to our changing number of institutions, selection, terms, and vacancies.

   The following revisions were effective December 6, 2017 (new language is underlined deleted language is struck through):

   **ARTICLE III**

   **Council**

   *Section 1—Composition.* The Council shall consist of the elected and appointed commissioners generally representing member institutions; appointed commissioners-at-large, who are unaffiliated with a member institution; and public representatives formerly employed at a public institution. It shall be comprised of no less than nine (9) and no more than fifteen (15) commissioners, at least thirty (30) percent of whom shall be elected by the membership and the balance of whom shall be appointed by the Council, and it shall include at least two academic representatives and at least two administrative representatives.
Academic representative is defined as someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research. Administrative representative is defined as someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary institutional or programmatic administration. At least forty (40) percent of the appointed commissioners shall be public representatives, not to exceed seven. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an elected commissioner may be replaced by an appointed commissioner for the remainder of the elected commissioner’s term in the event of a vacancy.

Section 2–Powers and Duties. Responsibilities of the Council shall be to:

(a) promulgate standards of accreditation and establish eligibility conditions, policies, and procedures for accreditation;
(b) take final action on initial grants of accreditation;
(c) take final action on denial, suspension, and withdrawal motions;
(d) provide mechanisms for appeals and dispute resolution to ensure due process in resolution of conflicts between members and the Council;
(e) provide to members appropriate accreditation-related services such as consultation, accreditation process workshops, and training opportunities for evaluators;
(f) disseminate information on standards, procedures, and activities;
(g) monitor compliance with the standards;
(h) receive and act on other applications;
(i) issue show-cause directives;
(j) serve as liaison to recognition agencies or bodies;
(k) issue a list of accredited colleges, schools, and organizations;
(l) assess and collect fees from members;
(m) take final action on the strategic plan; and
(n) exercise other powers and duties incidental to the foregoing.

Section 3–Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair of the Council shall be the Vice Chair from the previous year. The Council shall elect the Vice Chair of the Council, who will become Chair in the subsequent year, annually by majority vote of the commissioners present and voting at a duly constituted meeting of the Council.

ARTICLE IV
Elections, Terms, Vacancies, Removal, Resignations, and Compensation

Section 1–Elections. Elections shall be held annually, in years when elected positions must be filled, for the selection of persons each of whom shall serve as elected commissioners on the Council and the Board. No person shall serve as a member of the Council and not of the Board, nor shall any person other than the President serve as a member of the Board and not of the Council.

Section 2–Eligibility for Election and Voting. Any person employed by a member institution in good standing and meeting other eligibility criteria is eligible to run for Council and Board membership. Each main campus is entitled to one Designated Delegate who is authorized to vote in all elections on behalf of
that member institution as well as in all other matters requiring a vote of the members. Appointment of the Designated Delegate is made by the chief executive officer of the institution by notice in writing to ACICS. Multiple campuses under common ownership may be represented by one designated delegate, who shall be empowered to cast votes on behalf of each main campus. Changes of Designated Delegate shall be made in writing at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date of any scheduled election, which becomes the record date for determining eligibility to vote. Results of elections shall be certified by the Executive Committee.

Section 3—Voting Procedures. Specific election procedures concerning candidate qualifications, deadlines for registration, and dates and methods of balloting and absentee balloting shall be developed by the Board and may vary from election to election. Electronic voting, properly secured, shall be allowed. The following general procedures shall apply to all voting:

(a) There shall be no more than two candidates nominated for each elective position by the Nominating Committee;
(b) Nominations by petition for each elective position will be permitted if such petition (i) is received at least 45 days prior to the date of the election, (ii) contains the names and signatures of Designated Delegates representing at least ten percent of the institutions that are members of ACICS, (iii) demonstrates that the petitioner satisfies the eligibility requirements contained in Section 2 of this Article, and (iv) meets any other procedural requirements which may be established by the Board;
(c) Every member, if properly registered and current with financial obligations, shall have the opportunity to vote;
(d) Proxy voting is not permitted in elections;
(e) No more than one person from any institution or group of institutions commonly owned may serve at any one time on the Council;
(f) Voting on behalf of multiple members under common ownership and control by one Designated Delegate may be permitted on membership-wide matters. The multiple members represented by one Designated Delegate must be recorded with the Secretary prior to the vote, and the multiple members represented by a single Designated Delegate shall count toward a quorum;
(g) Only the Designated Delegate of each member is eligible to vote;
(h) Voting shall be by secret ballot, which includes secure electronic balloting;
(i) A majority vote, unless otherwise provided by these Bylaws, shall decide all non-candidate matters; and
(j) A plurality vote shall decide all candidate elections.

Section 4—Assumption of Office. New commissioners shall assume office on January 1 of the calendar year following election or appointment, unless otherwise provided for by the Council. Incumbent commissioners will remain in office until new commissioners are seated.

Section 5—Terms. The term of service as a commissioner shall be five years. A person elected or appointed to fill a term of less than two and one-half years is entitled to apply for nomination and election or appointment to a full term. Upon completion of a commissioner’s term, the commissioner shall not be eligible to serve another full term through election or appointment until three (3) years have elapsed. However, a commissioner appointment to complete a vacated term, in full or part, is not subject to the three-year (3) waiting period. A commissioner who is elected to the Office of Vice Chair in the final year of that commissioner’s term shall have that term extended for one (1) year to allow service as the Chair of the Council to be fulfilled. If nominated, public representatives may serve one additional appointment
without the three-year (3) waiting period.

Section 62—Vacancies. Where a vacancy exists, the Nominating Committee shall review and make recommendations to the Council for its consideration.

Section 74—Resignations. Resignation from service as a commissioner and Director may be voluntarily tendered at any time. The resignation becomes effective upon receipt of written notice by the Chair of the Board and Council or the President. Automatic tendering of resignation is required under the following circumstances or conditions:

(a) denial, suspension, or revocation of accreditation at the institution with which affiliated;
(b) cessation or announced cessation of operations at such institution;
(c) filing for reorganization or bankruptcy by such institution or its parent corporation;
(d) debarment by the U.S. Department of Education from employment at any institution participating in federal student funding programs;
(e) indictment for a criminal offense;
(f) change of control or ownership at the institution with which affiliated;
(g) failure of such institution to meet its financial obligations to ACICS which results in loss of membership;
(h) change in employment status (other than internal); and
(i) change in Designated Delegate status; and
(j) the commissioner is employed by an institution that is deemed to be under sustained and serious scrutiny regarding noncompliance with ACICS standards and requirements.

Not all of the foregoing necessarily will result in acceptance of resignation but must be considered by the Council before service can continue.

Section 85—Removal. A commissioner may also be removed by not less than a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Council for breach of any code, canon, or tenet of ethics formally adopted pursuant to these Bylaws.

Section 96—Compensation. Commissioners shall serve without compensation. Public representatives shall receive honoraria for service in such amounts as the Board shall fix. Commissioners, as well as members of committees, if so provided in advance, shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performance of authorized duties.

2. Graduation Rate Guidelines

The Council, following its analysis of graduation data collected from the 2017 Campus Accountability Report, determined that the data were still preliminary in nature and not reliably sufficient to establish Graduation Rate Standards. However, the Council has determined that the following guidelines are appropriate, based on its review of similar guidelines and research results in the industry, to provide institutions with an initial introduction to the minimum expectations for graduation rate outcomes.
Credential | Recommended Minimum Graduation Rate
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Certificate/Diploma | 50%
Associate’s degree | 45%
Bachelor’s degree | 40%
Master’s degree | 45%

Given that graduation rates is one of the required student achievement outcomes to be evaluated in the campus effectiveness plan (See Section 3-1-111 & Appendix K), the Council will take graduation rates into consideration as it makes accreditation decisions.

3. Placement Verification Program (PVP) Resources

In light of the changes and expectations of the PVP as it impacts the Campus Accountability Report (CAR) and placement outcomes, ACICS has developed a “PVP Resources” section of Member Center to provide all campuses with current information on the program. To access these resources, institutions must log into their accounts and the link will be on the left toolbar.

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If you have any questions about the memorandum to the field, please contact:

Ms. Karly Zeigler
Manager of Institutional Compliance
Kzeigler@acics.org