TO: ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools

DATE: January 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Final Criteria, Proposed Criteria, and Other Information

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I. FINAL CRITERIA REVISIONS

At its December 2004 meeting, the Council reviewed specific areas of the ACICS Accreditation Criteria outlined in sections I, II, and III below. The language contained in section I represents language that was previously reviewed by ACICS constituents or represents a clarification and was adopted without comment because the change makes clear Council expectations. Section II represents the language that was reviewed by ACICS constituents and interested parties as a result of the August 2004 Council Meeting. This language appeared in the August 2004 Memorandum to the Field and has been adopted as final criteria by the Council. Section III represents proposed criteria changes as a result of the December Meeting. The changes appearing in section I are final, effective immediately. The language contained in section II does not go into effect until January 1, 2006, and, as a result, institutions are reminded that policies or procedures with regard to these matters should not be implemented until that time.

Because of the recent changes to the Accreditation Criteria, the Council has updated the respective sections of the standards on the ACICS Web site. To obtain a current copy (effective date 1/1/05) of the Accreditation Criteria, please visit our Web site at www.acics.org and access the publications section of the site and connect to the Accreditation Criteria. All of the changes to the standards as amended by the final criteria revisions reported below are included in this most recent version of the standards contained on the ACICS Web site.

I. FINAL CRITERIA – EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

A. Staff Member on Visit

Occasionally, there is a need for the use of contractors on visits to supplement ACICS staff members. This is a current practice that has been met with minimal discontent. The use of contractors on visits allows ACICS to evaluate all institutions that need to be evaluated during a given travel cycle without having to delay visits to a subsequent cycle. The Council adopted the revised language, effective immediately (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 2-1-403. Staff Member on Visit

A member of the ACICS staff accompanies teams on all visits. In the event that an ACICS staff member is unable to accompany a team on a visit, the use of a qualified contractor may be used as the ACICS staff representative on the visit. The ACICS staff member representative is responsible for assuring that comparability is achieved from visit to visit and from institution to institution. The same ACICS staff member representative who accompanies a team also is present available when ACICS deliberates and may be asked questions about what was observed and reported by the team during the visit.

B. Termination of Programs

During the April 2004 meeting, the Council reviewed the matter of inactive programs at accredited institutions. The Council agreed that institutions must have current enrollment in each respective program so that ACICS may properly assess the educational effectiveness. The language identified below was electronically posted to the Council’s Web site for comment; all respondents supported the proposed changes to Section 2-2-504, Termination of Programs, of the Accreditation Criteria. The Council adopted the following language as final criteria, effective January 1, 2005 (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):
Section 2-2-504. Termination of Programs.

A decision by an institution to terminate any program voluntarily must be appropriately communicated to all interested publics. These publics include, but are not limited to, students, governmental agencies, the local community, and ACICS.

New students may not be enrolled in any program which cannot be completed prior to the termination date for which public notice has been given. Moreover, the institution is obligated to continue to offer appropriate courses, including prerequisites, so that currently enrolled students will be able to complete the program and receive the credential which was their designated educational objective. For this purpose, the period of time need not extend beyond sufficient time for students already enrolled and maintaining normal academic progress to complete the program.

To maintain approval, an institution must maintain enrollment in each program of study. If an approved program is inactive for at least three years, the program will be considered discontinued and will be removed from the institution’s list of approved programs. To reinstate the program, the institution must submit an ACICS New Program Application.

C. Stability

The Commission reviewed the proposed changes to the criterion related to faculty stability as proposed at the April 2004 meeting and that was forwarded to the field for comment. The field comments did not warrant any negative commentary; therefore, the Council adopted the following language as final criteria, effective January 1, 2005 (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 3-3-304. Stability.

The proportion of faculty employed on a full-time basis shall be sufficient. There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty proportion of full-time faculty and the faculty’s average length of service to the institution allow ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

D. Library, Instructional Resources, and Technology - Staff

The Council determined that the existing criterion required clarification as to the qualifications and availability of library personnel at institutions offering master degree programs; specifically, what constitutes a “professionally trained” individual and when the assigned individual should be available to assist students. The Council reviewed existing criteria at other accrediting agencies and proposed the following changes to the master’s degree criteria which was included in the August 2004 Memo to the Field. There were no comments regarding the proposed change to the Section 3-6-701. Therefore, the Council acted to adopt the new language as final criteria, effective immediately (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):
A professionally trained librarian individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained librarian individual is one who holds a B.L.S. or a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. A librarian with special qualifications to aid students in research shall be available to students. The librarian professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a professionally trained individual on duty for sufficient hours, as published by the institution, to support the programs and to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions and research. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources available in the library.

E. Library, Instructional Resources, and Technology - Staff

Following a review of the Accreditation Criteria at the master’s degree level as to the qualifications and availability of library personnel, the Council proposed a change in the title “librarian” to be replaced by the use of the title “individual” to describe library personnel in the associate’s, bachelor’s, and doctorate degree level criteria. The adopted the following language, effective immediately (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 3-4-401. Staff.

A professionally trained librarian individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained librarian individual is one who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. The librarian professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a trained individual on duty to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources available in the library.

Section 3-5-401. Staff.

A professionally trained librarian individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained librarian individual is one who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. The librarian professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a trained individual on duty at all times to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions. This individual shall be
Section 3-7-701. Staff.

A professionally trained librarian individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained librarian individual is one who holds a B.L.S. or a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. A librarian with special qualifications to aid students in research shall be available to students. The librarian professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a professionally trained individual on duty for sufficient hours, as published by the institution, to support the programs and to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions and research. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources available in the library.

II. FINAL CRITERIA – EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2006

A. Integrity

During the August and December 2004, meeting the Council discussed whether the Criteria should be revised to address an institution’s responsibility to conduct and maintain written evaluations of its staff. Specifically at issue is the fact that many institutions evaluate staff through an informal process that is not
documented. The following language was adopted as final criteria, effective January 1, 2006 (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 3-1-202 (b). Integrity.

*The institution must maintain written evidence that faculty and staff members clearly understand their duties and responsibilities, know the person to whom they report, and understand the standards by which the success of their work is measured. A copy of the document describing these terms and conditions shall be given to the faculty and staff member and a copy maintained by the institution. The administration must maintain documentation of the evaluation of the faculty and staff.*

B. Faculty Preparation

The Council discussed the need to verify faculty credentials and preparation. As a result of visits and a review of Criteria, the Council decided there was a need to expand the criterion to include faculty who are graduates of unaccredited institutions or institutions not recognized by the governments in the countries in which they operate. The Council adopted the following language as final criteria, effective January 1, 2006 (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 3-1-541. Faculty Preparation.

*Preparation of faculty members shall be academically and experientially appropriate to the subject matter they teach. Faculty members shall be competent to teach the subject matter offered and shall have reasonable latitude in their choice of teaching methods. The institution must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of accredited institutions recognized by the United States Department of Education. Faculty who are graduates from institutions outside the United States must be graduates of institutions recognized by their government and their transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States.*

III. PROPOSED CRITERIA REVISIONS – COMMENT REQUESTED

A. General Education for Occupational Associate’s Degrees

Following a review of criteria and clarification of the Criteria, the Council discussed the definition of general education courses in occupational associate degree programs. Based upon discussion the following language was adopted as proposed criteria (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):
Section 3-3-202. Education Requirements

There shall be a minimum of 10 semester hours, 15 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education or applied general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the general education requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

In occupational associate’s degree programs, general education is defined as courses in applied mathematics, communications, natural sciences, social sciences, technology, humanities, and the arts which enhance the ability of a graduate to apply occupational skills in the workplace. The Council’s expectations for general education and applied general education, humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and social sciences are outlined in the Glossary section.

Glossary

Applied General Education:
Applied general education is defined as courses that involve the application of principles and concepts in communications, humanities and fine arts, mathematics, natural and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and technology to the practical affairs of a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Applied general education courses enhance the ability of an individual to apply academic and occupational skills in the workplace. Examples of applied general education courses include technical writing, business writing, business statistics, business mathematics, organizational behavior, and human relations.

B. Termination of Programs

The Council has observed that low institutional retention and/or placement rates reported on the Annual Institutional Report (AIR) are frequently caused by one or two programs which have chronically low enrollment or no enrollment. Some institutions with adequate retention and/or placement rates also may have individual programs with low retention and/or placement rates, but because of the strength of the institutions other programs, these programs with low retention and/or placement do not adversely affect the institutional retention and/or placement rates. Based upon discussion the Council adopted the following language as proposed criteria (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 2-2-504. Termination of Programs.

A decision by an institution to terminate any program voluntarily must be appropriately communicated to all interested publics. These publics include, but are not limited to, students, governmental agencies, the local community, and ACICS.

New students may not be enrolled in any program which cannot be completed prior to the termination date for which public notice has been given. Moreover, the institution is obligated to continue to offer appropriate courses, including prerequisites, so that currently enrolled students will be able to complete the program and receive the credential which was their designated educational objective. For this purpose, the period of time need not extend beyond sufficient time for students already enrolled and maintaining normal academic progress to complete the program.
To maintain approval, an institution must maintain enrollment in each program of study. If an approved program is inactive for at least three years, the program will be considered discontinued and will be removed from the institution’s list of approved programs. To reinstate the program, the institution must submit an ACICS New Program Application.

If an institution is on retention or placement reporting for two consecutive AIR reporting years, the institution may be required to show cause why programs with chronically low retention or placement rates respectively should not be terminated.

An institution with individual program offerings with chronically low placement rates for two consecutive AIR reporting years, may be required to show cause why the programs should not be terminated.

C. Retention and Placement

The Council has observed that low institutional retention or placement rates reported on the AIR are frequently caused by one or more programs which have chronically low enrollment or no enrollment. Some institutions with adequate retention and/or placement rates also may have individual programs with low retention and/or placement rates, but because of the strength of the institutions other programs, these programs with low retention and/or placement do not adversely affect the institutional retention and/or placement rates. Based upon discussion the Council adopted the following language as proposed criteria (new language is underlined; deleted language struck):

Section 2-1-809. Retention and Placement.

ACICS will determine average retention and placement rates annually for institutions based on information collected in the Annual Institutional Reports and will provide these data to all accredited institutions. An institution with retention or placement rates that are not in keeping with the expectations of ACICS may require a consultation between ACICS and the institution, the submission of a corrective action plan, undergo an on-site evaluation, or be issued a show-cause directive, a deferral or denial action related to the institution's application for a new or initial grant of accreditation, or directed another appropriate action.

If an institution is on retention or placement reporting for two consecutive AIR reporting years, the institution may be required to show cause why programs with chronically low retention or placement rates respectively should not be terminated.

An institution with individual program offerings with chronically low placement rates for two consecutive AIR reporting years, may be required to show cause why the programs should not be terminated.
III. FOR INFORMATION ONLY

A. ACICS Web Site

The ACICS Web site, ACICS Online, continues to be updated based on Council activities. The site contains revised and detailed information about accreditation, publications, workshops and special events, applications, accredited institutions, and hot topics of current events and activities. You are encouraged to visit the Web site at www.acics.org.

B. Annual Meeting

The 2005 ACICS Annual Meeting will be taking place June 19-22, 2005 in conjunction with the Annual Career College Association (CCA) Convention and Exposition. This year’s event will be held at the Bellagio
Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The ACICS Annual Meeting is the forum to learn about the current Council activities, as well as to vote for new commissioners for calendar year 2006. ACICS’s Annual Meeting provides the opportunity for attendees to network with peers and colleagues from institutions around the country. In addition, ACICS school representatives will be afforded the opportunity to participate in accreditation-related workshops and activities. The CCA Convention and Exposition gives attendees the chance to learn more about the products and services available to help them meet the needs of their college or school. Institutional personnel are encouraged to attend both events. Additional information regarding these events will be electronically posted on the ACICS web site.

C. **Spring Workshop Announcement**

ACICS would like to announce upcoming workshops to be offered Spring 2005:

- Initial Applicant Workshop, February 10, 2005 in Washington, DC
- Accreditation Workshop, February 11, 2005 in Washington, DC
- Accreditation Workshop, February 25, 2005 in New Orleans, LA

Workshop and registration information is now available on the ACICS Web site.

D. **ACICS Fellowships and National Institute for Career Colleges (NICC) Cohort**

ACICS is currently seeking applicants for the 2005 National Institute for Career Colleges (NICC) cohort. Please visit the ACICS Web site for further information.
IV. COMMENT FORM – PROPOSED CRITERIA REVISIONS

ACICS ID Code: ______________________ Date: ________________________________

Name of Organization: _______________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________

Please check (as appropriate):

Proposed Accreditation Criteria revisions:

A. General Education for Occupational Associate’s Degrees [ ]
B. Termination of Programs [ ]
C. Retention and Placement [ ]

[ ] Accept as Written [ ] Modify (explain below)

Prepared by: ______________________________________________________________

Title: ___________________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Please respond by February 25, 2004, to:

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