Code of Ethics

An overview of the standards and operating philosophy of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools

2020
Message from Michelle Edwards, President and CEO

For over 107 years, ACICS has demonstrated its strong commitment to student success by supporting member institutions in their efforts to provide quality educational experiences and outcomes. As a national accrediting organization, we are committed to offering a thorough accreditation process of quality assurance and enhancement as well as ethical business and educational practices.

The ACICS Code of Ethics represents that commitment to all our stakeholders, illustrating who we are, how we work, what we stand for, and why we will continue to live up to our values and principles. All of our actions, decisions, strategies, and services are founded in the application of this code, which ensures that our ethical standards, policies, and procedures are attained (see “Working Documents” on final page of this document).

I am hopeful that every stakeholder in the educational process will review our Code of Ethics and help us continually improve our methods of serving and supporting students, employees, and schools. Our commitment to this Code is our pledge that ACICS will follow the path of integrity, transparency, and quality in supporting our institutions and the students that they serve. Together, we must work to effectively address the challenges and opportunities of 21st century education. With this Code of Ethics as our guide, I am excited about our future and continuing legacy in higher education.

Michelle Edwards
Mission

The mission of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools 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.

Purpose

Our purpose is to support and hold accountable our member schools in the delivery of quality educational experiences and services that prepare students for successful professional, technical, or occupational careers.

Commitment

Our commitment to student success drives our actions to provide:
- Quality, rigorous, and relevant standards
- Exceptional service and support
- Up-to-date training opportunities
- Fair evaluation processes
- Timely communication and feedback
Core Values
~A Foundation for Everything We Do~

Our core values support our mission, services, and operations. They serve as a foundation for everything we do and are integrated in all accreditation processes and actions.

**Student Success**
We feel that the ultimate goal in education is to provide quality, relevant, timely experiences that prepare students for the 21st century workforce. Therefore, we value standards, practices, and services that support student achievement in attaining professional goals.

**Respect and Inclusion**
We value diversity in background, culture, gender, education, talents, and experiences. All stakeholders in the accreditation process must be respected for the unique perspectives and knowledge they bring to the educational experience. This includes our members, employees, students, administrators, evaluators, and the public.

**Quality**
Maintaining quality in education demands continual efforts and updates to meet the demands of a changing workforce. We strive to provide quality products, training, and services that support schools in their efforts to ensure student success.

**Accountability**
We accept our responsibility to assess compliance with published administrative and academic standards and to seek continuous improvement at our accredited institutions. To this end, we provide appropriate accrediting criteria and enhancement services, promote quality standards, adhere to ethical business practices, and accept the outcomes of our actions.

**Transparency**
Our success in the accreditation process depends on our being readily understood. It is paramount that we make information of all operations (standards, goals, direction, decisions) accessible to our stakeholders in a timely manner. Transparency in all we do supports a collaborative effort to ensure that students receive a quality educational experience.
Code of Ethics

To support our mission and our core values, ACICS has created the following Code of Ethics that is reflected in various working documents used throughout the agency.

Honesty

We are committed to being truthful and to adhering to facts. Our decisions are supported by data and evidence that maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Fairness

We are committed to applying rules, regulations, and expectations fairly across our entire operation (school to school, team to team, employee to employee). We recognize that fairness is critical to building trust, cooperation, and effective collaboration.

Confidentiality

We are committed to safeguarding the confidentiality of institutional information as permitted by the Accreditation Criteria and federal and state laws and regulations. To protect the integrity of the accreditation process, we will ensure that written policies and procedures preventing unauthorized disclosures are actively implemented.

Impartiality

We are committed first and foremost to fulfilling our official responsibilities as trusted members in the accreditation process. Conflicts of interest (personal or business) must be disclosed to ensure that all decisions and/or processes are fair and not unduly influenced by outside interests.

Compliance

We are committed to conducting our operations in full compliance with applicable USDE rules and regulations. We assume responsibility for understanding the legal and regulatory requirements that apply to our activities and work with the USDE and state governments to comply with relevant laws, policies, procedures, and mandates.

Integrity

We are committed to firmly adhering to our ethical principles and values by being open and honest, regardless of circumstances or consequences. We do what is right because it is the right thing to do.
ACICS Current Working Documents

- Code of Ethics – Evaluators
- Code of Ethics – IRC
- Code of Ethics – Commissioners
- Code of Ethics – Review Board
- Code of Ethics – ACICS Staff

Reporting Suspected Ethical Violations
If you wish to report a violation of the ACICS Code of Ethics or have questions, complaints, or suggestions, please do the following:

1. Ensure that you can provide background information regarding your concern, complaint, or suggestion. For incident reports, ensure that your information includes who was involved, what occurred, and where and when the incident took place.
2. Contact the ACICS staff member or the ACICS manager in charge. Incidents may also be reported anonymously by calling the ACICS office at 202-336-6780 or via the ACICS website at https://www.acics.org/reporting-suspected-ethical-violations.

ACICS Ethics Review Committee

- Mr. Gregory Ferguson – Public Representative
- Ms. Jin-Hwa Frazier – Public Representative
- Mr. Matthew Johnston – Member Institution
- Dr. Judee Timm – Commissioner/Public Representative

For more information contact:

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