MEMORANDUM TO THE FIELD
March 2023

TO: ACICS-Accredited Institutions
FROM: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
DATE: March 14, 2023

This Memorandum to the Field contains proposed criteria changes to the Accreditation Criteria from the Council’s January 2023 meeting, along with other information for ACICS-accredited institutions and interested parties.

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ACICS Orderly Dissolution

As previously noted, on September 6, 2022 the Board of Directors announced its intention to begin an orderly dissolution of the corporation. While ACICS is no longer recognized by the Department, it will continue to provide oversight and quality assurance, including monitoring financial stability and student achievement, to these institutions until they either find another accreditor and/or voluntarily withdraw from ACICS prior to the wind-down. ACICS will conclude accreditation operations no later than March 1, 2024.

The full announcement can be found here.

Final Criteria Revisions

At its January 2023 Council Meeting, the Council finalized minor changes to the Bylaws. The ACICS Accreditation Criteria has been updated to reflect all revisions with a publication date of February 1, 2023. To review the revised copy of the Accreditation Criteria please visit the ACICS website at www.acics.org. > Accreditation > Criteria.

The following criteria have been accepted by the Council as final, effective immediately (new language is underlined and deleted language is struck).

Board Composition and Nomenclature

Explanation of Final Changes
The following areas for revision were to capture the change to the previous Officer position of “Chair-Elect” to “Vice Chair.” Additionally, outdated language regarding different areas of representation and the existence of a nominating committee were removed from the Bylaws to reflect the changes in operations leading up to the dissolution of the corporation.

Appendix A – Bylaws

Article I: General Provisions and Definitions

Section 1–Name. The name of the corporation shall be the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, which corporation also is referred to herein as “ACICS” or “the Corporation.”

Section 2–Board of Directors. The governance and administration of the affairs of the Corporation shall be vested in a Board of Directors (sometimes referred to herein as the “Board”). The Board shall be constituted as provided in Article II.

Section 3–Council. The Council shall consist of elected and appointed commissioners.

Section 4–Recognition. ACICS shall be the body holding recognition from appropriate recognition bodies.

Section 5–Directors. Directors are those persons serving on the Board of Directors.
Section 6−Commissioners. Commissioners are those persons elected by their peers or appointed by the Council to serve designated terms on the Council.

... Article II: Board of Directors

Section 1−Composition. The Board of Directors shall be composed of the commissioners and the President. The President shall serve ex officio as a member of the Board and shall have no vote.

Section 2−Powers and Duties. Except as otherwise provided by law or in these Bylaws, the Board of Directors shall have the right and responsibility to manage and direct the affairs and exercise the powers of the Corporation. Responsibilities of the Board shall be to:

... Section 3−Officers of the Board and Officers of the Council. The officers of the Board of Directors shall be: Chair; Chair Elect Vice Chair; Secretary, and Treasurer. The officers of the Council shall be: Chair and Chair Elect Vice Chair.

(a) Chair. The Chair of the Council shall serve also as the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Chair shall preside over all meetings of the Board and of the Council and is responsible for seeing that policies established and actions taken by those bodies are carried out. The Chair will represent the Board and the Council in their dealings with governmental bodies, the press, and the public, and may sign or approve correspondence and other instruments.

(b) Chair Elect Vice Chair. The Chair Elect Vice Chair of the Council shall serve also as Chair Elect Vice Chair of the Board. The Chair Elect Vice Chair assumes responsibilities as delegated by the Board; in the absence of the Chair, shall serve as Chair of the Board and of the Council; serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee; and shall serve as Chair of the Board and Council in the subsequent year.

... Article III: Council

Section 1−Composition. The Council shall consist of commissioners representing member institutions; commissioners-at-large, and public representatives. It shall comprise no more than 15 commissioners, and it shall include at least 2 academic representatives and at least 2 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 40 percent of the commissioners shall be public representatives.

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.

Article IV: Terms, Vacancies, Removal, Resignations, and Compensation

Section 1—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 2—Terms. The term of service as a commissioner shall be five years. A person appointed to fill a term of less than two and one-half years is entitled to apply for appointment to a full term. Upon completion of a commissioner’s term, the commissioner shall not be eligible to serve another full term until three years have elapsed. However, a commissioner appointment to complete a vacated term, in full or part, is not subject to the three-year waiting period. If nominated, public representatives may serve one additional appointment without the three-year waiting period as assigned by the Council.

Section 3—Vacancies. Where a vacancy exists, the Nominating Committee Council shall review and make recommendations to the Council for its consideration appoint new commissioners as it deems necessary.

Article V: Committees

Section 1—Standing Committees of the Council. There shall be the following standing committees of the Council:

(a) Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for the screening of nominees and the selection of candidates for election as commissioners. It also shall identify persons qualified to be appointed as commissioners and recommend them to the Council for appointment. The Nominating Committee shall seek to maintain a Council that is generally representative of the types of member institutions.

(i) Composition. The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Council and shall consist of five members, at least four of whom are current commissioners. Members representing both nondegree and degree-granting institutions are encouraged. There shall be two representatives from the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and one person from an ACICS-accredited institution who may or may not be a member of the Council. The Chair-Elect of the Council and Board automatically serves as the Chair of the Nominating Committee.
(ii) Procedures. The membership of ACICS shall be notified of the composition of the committee and invited to submit to it names of qualified nominees. The committee in its selection of candidates shall be mindful of diversity of programs, size and types of institutions, and geographic representation. It shall develop and publish eligibility criteria, permissible campaign practices by candidates, and any special voting procedures. Interviews of nominees by the committee are permitted.

Section 2—Standing Committees of the Board of Directors. There shall be the following standing committees of the Board:

(a) Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair of the Board of Directors, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee; the Chair Elect Vice Chair of the Board, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee in the absence of the Chair of the Board; the Secretary; the Treasurer; and additional Directors as the Chair deems necessary, which are elected annually by majority vote of the Board. The Executive Committee shall consist of persons serving as academic, administrative, and public representatives. The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Board and/or Council during the periods between Board and Council meetings. Accurate minutes of each Executive Committee meeting shall be maintained and shall be provided to the Board of Directors and/or Council at the next subsequent meeting of the Board of Directors or the Council. The Executive Committee’s responsibilities shall be: between meetings of the Board and/or Council, act on issues requiring the timely attention of the Board or Council and assume such other duties as the Board of Directors or Council may from time to time delegate to the Executive Committee.

Article VIII: Miscellaneous

Section 1—Liability. No applicant, member, or former member shall be liable for the debts of ACICS in any amount except to the extent of the fees required of each member pursuant to Article VI, Sections 3 and 8, hereof.

Section 2—Corporate Seal. The corporate seal shall be in such form as may be approved by the Board of Directors.

Section 3—Checks, Notes, Contracts. The Board of Directors shall determine the persons who will be authorized on the Corporation’s behalf to sign checks, drafts, or other orders for payment of money; to sign acceptances, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness; to enter into contracts; or to execute and deliver other documents and instruments. These persons (positions) will be designated in the Board approved Governance Policy Document. The Board of Directors shall, at its discretion, require officers, agents, employees, and other persons so authorized pursuant to this Section to give security for the faithful performance of their duties.

Section 4—Books and Records. The Corporation shall keep at its office correct and complete books and records of the accounts and transactions of the Corporation and a current list of the members, directors, and officers of the Corporation. Such books and records may be in written form or in any other form capable of ready conversion to written form.
For Information Only

Transition Plans
Notice was sent to institutions via email on March 8, 2023, regarding the required submission of a Transition Plan for all ACICS institutions. The zero-fee application will be due on July 1, 2023 and will include updates on critical areas of operation for the institution. The Transition Plan will be available to institutions for completion in Member Center in the coming weeks. The notice can be reviewed here.

Sustaining Fees
ACICS will not collect Sustaining Fees for the final period marked July 1, 2023 – March 24, 2024, to allow institutions to allocate these funds towards attaining accreditation elsewhere and providing further resources to their students.

Semi – Annual Campus Accountability Report
As a reminder, the semi-annual CAR will open on April 3 and is due by May 1. The annual report will open on October 1 to be submitted by November 1. Questions can be emailed to Ms. Michelle Edwards at CAR@acics.org.

For any other questions please contact:

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