

# ACCSCCT Alert!

Information for  
our member schools

**To:** ACCSCT Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties  
**From:** Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director  
**Date:** April 3, 2009  
**Subject:** Announcements, Reminders, and Revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*

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The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (“ACCSCT”) has announcements and revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation* in the following areas:

- *Commission Engages the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems to Undertake a Systematic Program of Review of the Standards of Accreditation, Sends Survey*
- *Grounds for Appeal – Section VIII (C)(2)(b), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*

The full text of the Accreditation Alert is available on the Commission’s website at [www.accsct.org](http://www.accsct.org). Go to “*Accreditation*” and access “*Standards of Accreditation*” and then “*Accreditation Alert*.” Accredited institutions and others maintaining a complete and up-to-date copy of the *Standards of Accreditation* should add this notice to their current standards book under the *Accreditation Alerts* tab. Please check the Commission’s website regularly for announcements and be sure to keep your contact e-mail current using the ACCSCT Annual Report Portal. Beginning in 2009, the Commission will begin to send more correspondence electronically and will rely on the e-mail address provided in each institution’s Annual Report.

The published version of the *Standards of Accreditation* has been revised as of January 1, 2009. The January 1, 2009 *Standards of Accreditation* are available for download from the Commission’s website at [www.accsct.org](http://www.accsct.org). All provisions of the *Standards of Accreditation* are effective as of March 15, 2007 with the exception of applicable grandfather provisions and areas subsequently revised or added. Please consult the previous version of the *Standards of Accreditation* dated February 15, 2006 for earlier requirements. Substantive revisions or additions to the *Standards of Accreditation* made on or after March 15, 2007 are included in the January 1, 2009 version and are identified by the date of revision.

For additional information related to this Accreditation Alert, please contact Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director, at (703) 247-4520 or via email at [mccomis@accsct.org](mailto:mccomis@accsct.org).

### **Systematic Review of Standards of Accreditation**

The Commission is pleased to announce that it has engaged the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (“NCHEMS”) to undertake a Systematic Program of Review of the *Standards of Accreditation*. Dr. Peter Ewell, Vice President of NCHEMS and Karen Paulson, a NCHEMES Senior Associate, are heading the research team that are conducting an external assessment of ACCSCT’s accreditation standards and processes and have begun to undertake the following activities:

1. Conduct and then analyze a survey of accredited institutions, faculty, current students, graduates and employers representing the major occupations for which ACCSCT accredited institutions train students that addresses the application of the *Standards of Accreditation* against the following criteria:
  - a. ACCSCT *Standards of Accreditation* are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions it accredits; and
  - b. ACCSCT *Standards of Accreditation* are relevant to the educational or training needs of students.
2. Conduct a comprehensive examination of the Commission’s system for determining its graduation and employment benchmarks to include a review of ACCSCT’s data collection methodology, its analysis of these data and its development of quantitative standards based upon the collection of student achievement data. NCHEMS will then present recommendations to the Commission’s Ad Hoc Committee for the Review of Student Achievement Benchmarks and Related Standards.

***Please support the Commission’s Systematic Program of review by responding to email surveys distributed by NCHEMS as it assists the Commission with this important project. Your suggestions, comments, and responses to the surveys are critical to this evaluation process and the Commission will consider seriously your contributions.***

The NCHEMS project is an important part of the Commission’s consideration of its graduation and employment benchmarks that have been in place since February 15, 2006. The Commission is devoting particular attention to the manner in which the Commission evaluates how institutions demonstrate successful student achievement that extends beyond the completion of Graduation and Employment Charts. In collaboration with NCHEMS, a special Ad-Hoc Committee of Commissioners is exploring all available strategies that institutions could adopt to demonstrate successful student achievement. Such considerations could include: provisions that institutions show a process for assessing student learning and competency, implementing a monitoring process prior to placing an institution on reporting, and the development of aggregated institutional graduation and employment rates. The Commission is working diligently to assess its current student achievement standards and processes and will continue to keep the membership informed of the status of this project, to include a Call for Comment should changes be deemed appropriate.

### **New Financial Information on Appeal**

The Commission is announcing interpretive guidance that will permit the submission of new financial information on appeal. The Commission is promulgating this interpretive guidance in order to align its appeal procedures with new provisions set forth in *Part H-Program Integrity, Section 495* of the *August 14, 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act*. The new law requires accrediting agencies to consider new financial information from an institution before reaching a final adverse action decision based solely upon concerns related to the institution's financial condition. According to the new law, an institution may seek to present significant financial information that was unavailable prior to the determination of the adverse action and that bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency. This new provision, however, is in conflict with ACCST's "no new evidence rule" under *Section VIII (C)(2)(b) of the Rules of Process and Procedure* that states the following:

Only evidence previously submitted to the Commission may be included in a submission to the Appeals Panel. The Grounds for Appeal may not include information or documentation that was not before the Commission at the time that the adverse action was taken. All information and documentation contained in the Grounds for Appeal must include a reference to where information can be found in the record that was before the Commission when the adverse action was taken.

Revisions to *Part 602, Subpart B*, of the *Code of Federal Regulations* that provide the Education Secretary's criteria for accrediting agency recognition are taking place in Negotiated Rulemaking and should be promulgated in November 2009. Until such time as new regulations are in place in relation to Section 495 of the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, the Commission is issuing the following interpretive guidance for *Section VIII (C)(2)(b)* of the *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* as shown in **bold** and *italic print* below:

***In instances where the Commission has taken action to revoke or deny accreditation based solely upon an institution's failure to meet its standard pertaining to financial soundness (Section I (C)(1), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation), an institution may present financial information at the time it submits its Grounds for Appeal provided that the information is significant, was unavailable prior to the adverse action decision and that it bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Commission. Additional financial information may not be submitted at any other time including during an Appeal Hearing.***