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Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

INTEGRITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

COMMUNITY

Preparing an Application for a Degree Program

ACCSC Commissioner Dr. Julie Basler

Monday, February 9, 2015

- Strategic Pillar Number 3
  - Membership Support: Position ACCSC as a driving force that supports institutional and student success.

- Degree Committee
  - A team of peer reviewers who initially review a degree application once Commission staff has reviewed the completed application after corresponding with member schools.
  - Committee objective to hold a webinar to aid member schools seeking an initial degree or a new degree area

- Commission Review
  - Final review, discussion, and approval status

■ **Today's Agenda**

- Considering All the Parts of a Complete Application for a Degree Program

    – Justification of a Degree Program

    – Program Design, Development, & Organization

    – Program Evaluation

    – Learning Resource

    – Faculty Qualifications

    – Management and Administration

    – Draft Catalog

    – Externship (if Applicable)

- **Today's Agenda**
  - Helpful Tips for Completing a Thorough, Well-Designed Degree Program

  - Putting it All Together

  - An Average Timeline Example

☆**What does the star mean?**

The comments denoted by the star are tips that other schools and/or committee members have shared in the past to make degree program applications successful.

- **Four Types of Degree Applications**
  - Academic Associate Degree
  - Occupation Associate Degree
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree

- Schools must have each degree program reviewed and approved by the Commission before the program is offered.

- **Some Common Elements Between All Degree Program Applications**
  - Application Fee
  - 13 Elements to Explain Regarding the Addition of the Degree
  - State Requirements-some states have specific requirements and time frames, make sure to check

    (Note: ACCSC defers to the state requirements; in other words-for example, if you must have ACCSC approval first, the Commission may request documentation to demonstrate that requirement.)

- **Justification of the Program**
  - Why is the program being implemented? And how it's relevant to the school?
    - Curriculum
    - Goals and Mission of the School

  - Assessment of Program Viability
    - Program meets the need of students and employers
    - Analysis of demand for graduates (need for training, socioeconomic factors)

- **Justification of the Program**

☆Tip: What helps make a thorough viability study:

1. Clearly evaluate the market demand in your area
2. Determine which of your current program offerings have been successful and why
3. Clearly articulate how a new program meets student needs, graduate needs, and employer needs in your area (PAC/outside involvement)
4. Identify competitors for the program: are they successful? What makes them successful?
5. Clearly articulate the potential success of the program in your application

- **Enhancing the Infrastructure**
  - Where are changes being made, additions put into place: supported fiscally, physically, and emotionally?
  - For first Baccalaureate Degree Programs
    - Student services
    - Learning Resource System
    - Faculty Qualifications
    - Faculty/Student Interaction
    - Director of Education
    - Admission Requirements
    - Administrative Support Staff

☆**Tip:** Planning can NOT occur in an administrative vacuum. Involve the people at your school. Take the application statements and consider writing them into interrogatives. Example: Describe how the school…. Into How does XYZ school prove that…..

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- **Enhancing the Infrastructure**
  - The role of a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) is crucial in the planning of a new degree program.
  - Input on the front end of creating a program is crucial to the success of the program
  - PAC commentary prior to the implementation of the program should include: review of the proposed curricula, instructional-related program materials, equipment and facilities, and student achievement outcomes
  - Don't forget to use general education (and distance education input-if applicable)

Don't forget about the Monograph Series at your fingertips:
- Maximizing Program Advisory Committees

- **Baccalaureate Versus Completion Program**

  - Which route is best for my school?
    - Bachelor's Degree or Bachelor's Completion Program

    - Points to Consider: (1) the school and program history, the proposed program, (2) which program helps make students employable, (3) what programs are accepted in your area

☆ Tip: If you are building your degree curriculum based on a non-degree program or an associate's degree program, perhaps a completion program is the way to go. If not, the question becomes-why are you using an existing program to build a new one?

- **Program Design, Development, and Organization**
  - Outline of Degree Program
  - School's process for design and development:
    - Courses, materials, curricula, student learning outcomes, student assessment including internal and external resources used

☆Tip: What are examples of internal and external resources used?

- Internal: Individuals from the subject/program area that perhaps work at the school and are knowledgeable about the needed courses, training, students' course feedback

- External: Subject-matter specialists, technicians, employers, independent PAC members, professional societies, trade associations, alumni, state regulators

- **Program Design, Development, and Organization**

  - Breakdown and explanation of credit/clock hours
    - Technical courses, general education courses, labs, and externships
    - The length of the program should enable students to achieve program objectives (knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for employment)

☆ Tip: Fight the temptation to take existing courses "as is" from a diploma program and reuse them in original form. Make sure if courses are used from diploma program, they are recreated to meet degree level standards- (i.e. Consider why a course needs to be a certain length? Why the student needs the course to be successful in a degree program? Again, employers comments and review of competing programs with applicable courses helps.)

- **Program Design, Development, and Organization**
  - Process Used to Determine Outside Work Expected
    - Technical courses, general education courses, labs, and externships
    - Programs that do not have an out-of-class work component are considered clock hour programs
  - Make sure to write in detail how the length of the proposed program is appropriate for students to achieve the program objectives.

☆ Tip: In order to consider determine outside work expectations, the estimated number of hours awarded per course must conform to generally accepted practice in higher education.

- **Program Evaluation**
  - Provide a systematic and evidence-based process to evaluate curriculum: coursework and program viability

☆ Tip: A systematic and evidence-based process for evaluation is up to the school. Here are some headers that might help a school consider how to evaluate:

  ☆ What's being measured?

  ☆ What method is being used?

  ☆ When should component be measured?

  ☆ Initiated by?

  ☆ Benchmark or expected level of achievement?

  ☆ Documentation and then the findings

Don't forget about the Monograph Series at your fingertips:

- Self Evaluation Processes and Practices

- Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning/Implementation

- **Program Evaluation**
  - Assessment Process, according to the Commission, needs to be (valid, reliable, fair, and flexible)

☆ Tip: A systematic and evidence-based process for evaluation is up to the school. Here are some headers that might help a school consider how to evaluate:

  ☆ What's being measured?

  ☆ What method is being used?

  ☆ When done?

  ☆ How often is it done?

  ☆ Initiated by?

  ☆ Benchmark or expected level of achievement?

  ☆ Documentation and then the findings (action, implementation results)

- **Program Evaluation**

  - Details and Documentation for future budget allocations and facilities

  - PAC and instructional aids: including supplies, equipment, textbooks, etc.

  - PAC comments are a great tool from the industry: remember to consider PAC comments and demonstrate that your school discussed the comments/suggestions and either acted upon them or elected not to implement with rationale.

☆ Tip: Clearly articulated PAC minutes with thorough review and comments about the proposed degree: objectives, content, length, and general education (if applicable) is a must.

- **Learning Resource System**
    - Materials (a list is not enough) commensurate with the level of provided education needed-the key here is the educational objectives must be met.
    - LRS Supervisor-if not available, hiring criteria may be used.
    - Enhancement of the LRS to support new degree program

☆ Tip: Schools sometimes make the mistake of supplying a list of LRS materials that are available, but they fail to mention how the LRS was enhanced to meet the requirements of a degree program, how the LRS adequately serves the student body. A good rule of thumb to remember is to begin a narrative with, "The LRS was enhanced to meet the objectives of the proposed in the following ways….."

Don't forget about the Monograph Series at your fingertips:

- Learning Resource Systems

- **Faculty Qualifications**
  - Faculty Qualifications are demonstrated in a chart given by the Commission

    – Technical courses: Academic Associate or Baccalaureate degree program-minimum of four years of related work experience in the subject area

    – Technical courses: Occupational Associate degree program-minimum of three years of related work experience in the subject area

Don't forget about the Monograph Series at your fingertips:
- Faculty Improvement Planning/Implementation

- **Faculty Qualifications**
  - Faculty Qualifications are demonstrated in a chart given by the Commission
    - Applied General Education must have a baccalaureate degree with appropriate course work in the subject area or 8 yrs related practical work experience and college level course work in the subject area

    - Academic General Education must have a minimum of a master's degree with appropriate academic coursework

    - Graduate Faculty (at least 50% of graduate level courses) must be taught by faculty members who a possess a minimum of 4 yrs of related practical work experience and an earned doctorate degree or terminal degree in related field of study

- **Faculty Qualifications**

☆ Tip: Sometimes schools complete the application for an occupational associates degree, but yet their general education is academic in nature-which rule applies?

  ☆ Regardless if general education is offered in an occupational associates or an academic associates, if the general education courses are academic in nature, then the faculty rules for academic general education applies.

  ☆ If faculty information is not available, then clear hiring criteria must be submitted. Tip-don't forget to include the hiring timeline for faculty. Often schools will copy the Commission language for the hiring criteria but forget to include the timeline.

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- **Faculty Qualifications**

☆ Tip: The Commission makes it clear:

☆ **"**Appropriate coursework and preparation"
☆ "College level coursework"
☆ "Appropriate academic coursework and preparation"

☆ All equals:

☆ A minimum of 15 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) in related subject areas that support the curriculum content

Remember-A school cannot determine that faculty members are qualified based on education "in progress" nor will future actions, i.e., "plans to enroll in the next semester the graduate program is offered…" help to determine to compliance. If the faculty member does not meet the minimum requirements, then s/he cannot teach in the program without a faculty waiver.

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- **Management and Administration**
  - Management and Administration are demonstrated in a chart given by the Commission
    - The purpose of this standard in the application is to ensure that the school has sufficient educational administration to support the proposed degree program specific to:
      » The Director of Education
      » The Degree Program Head
      » Lead Faculty
      » Department Chair, etc.

☆Tip: Consider this…..will the program you are applying for be eligible for programmatic accreditation in the future with an additional agency? If so, consider that agency's hiring criteria as well as part of your program strategic vision for the future.

- **Draft Catalog**
  - Presentation of the proposed degree program as it will appear in the applicable sections of the catalog
    - Only the relevant items

☆Tip: Schools sometimes believe that they need to submit the entire catalog. Only submit the relevant pieces requested. Less is really more for this one! This is a good time to triple check your catalog against the catalog checklist before and after the proposed program is added.

■ **Externship (If Applicable)**

- Written Training Plan is a Must
    - Written training plan = course syllabus that identifies students' goals as well as the applications and experiences to be accomplished.

    - On-site evaluation criteria must be clearly defined to ensure the training objectives of the externship are met

    - If externship is more than 1/3 of the total program length-external validation is a must

    - Coordinator of Externship

■ **Helpful Overall Tips**

- What makes a successful application?
  - "The List" of common factors that successful applications have
    - » The narrative answers the question: it's called concise writing-begin with the questions stem as the answer.
  - Example: Explain in detail the reason or basis for the implementation of the proposed degree program.
  - Begin: There are four documented reasons for the implementation of the Medical Assistant Associate Program.
    - » Reason One: with narrative
    - » Reason Two: with narrative, etc.

■ **Helpful Overall Tips**

- What makes a successful application?
  - "The List" of common factors that successful applications have
    - » Only applicable, relevant information is given
    - » An application is not the place to question the application itself
    - » The KISS principle: Keep It Simple Stupid
    - » Application is a community effort, not written by one person in an office

■ **Helpful Overall Tips**

- What makes a successful application?
  - Always think ahead: the end product
    - » Employability
    - » Your School's Reputation
    - » $$ put in and $$ coming out
    - » Programmatic Accreditation a possibility?

- Don't forget to review the *Blueprints for Success Series* (Available at ACCSC.org)
  - Organizing an Effective Electronic Submission
  - Preparing a Comprehensive Response for Commission Consideration

Putting it All Together

- What is the role of the Commission Staff?
  - The Commission Staff is ALWAYS available to help throughout the process

    » Interpretation of the Application
    » How to Navigate Certain Parts of the Application
    » The Timeline Behind the Process
    » Other Forms of Support: Blueprint for Success, Monograph Series
    » Other Things to Consider: Third Party Verification, Outcomes Reporting, Programmatic Accreditation (if applicable), other regulatory requirements (i.e. state, etc.) webinars, workshops, and the ACCSC Professional Development Conference held annually across the US in September.

- **Timeline and Actions**
  - What is a standard timeline for applications? And what are the actions that can be implemented regarding my application submission?
    - Actions:
      - » Approve
      - » Approve with onsite evaluation
          (all first time and unrelated degree programs)
      - » Approve with stipulations
      - » Approve with program implementation enclosure
      - » Defer
      - » Deny
    - Timelines: Schools should have their degree applications in at LEAST 60 days prior to the desired implementation date, as staff usually requests additional info, and the Commission's review and approval process for unrelated degree programs may take additional time.

Thank You!

Time for Questions and Answers