

# **Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation Manual**

**August 2009**

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission  
for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges*



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## **Introduction**

The purpose of the Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation Manual is to provide institutions with the steps to achieve the voluntary status of accreditation with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Accreditation serves the public interest by certifying that the institution meets or exceeds specific quality standards. The peer-based nature of accreditation helps maintain the values of higher education and is a positive force in sustaining educational quality and improving the effectiveness of accredited institutions.

Institutions offering the Associate's Degree, and located within the geographic region served by the ACCJC may seek Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation from the Commission. The process for each is described in the following pages. All institutions that seek accreditation from the ACCJC must meet the Commission's Eligibility Requirements and Standards of Accreditation. Institutions are therefore referred to the Commission's web site, [www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org), and are advised to become familiar with the Commission and to review the Standards and other Commission policies. (Please see page 16 for General Information about Accreditation.)

## **Steps to Establish Eligibility for Accreditation**

1. The institution makes an inquiry about accreditation to the Commission office. Commission staff will discuss the profile of the institution with the applicant and determine how to proceed.
2. The institution submits five (5) copies of the Eligibility Application and supporting documentation. A payment of \$1,000 must be included. An application will not be processed without the accompanying fee. The cover page should be titled "Eligibility Application" and include the institution's name, address, name of preparer, and submission date. The application must address each Eligibility Requirement. (Please see page 4-13 for Requirements for Establishing Eligibility to Accreditation.)
3. Commission staff will review the Eligibility Application and may arrange a conference call with institutional representatives or visit the institution. Staff may suggest changes to the application.
4. The Commission's Eligibility Committee will review the final Eligibility Application and supporting documentation.
5. The Commission will consider the Eligibility Application and Committee recommendation at its next regular meeting and grant or deny Eligibility.

6. If Eligibility is granted, the Commission notifies the institution in writing and develops a time frame for the institution's self study for Candidacy. (Please see page 13 for Steps to Establish Candidacy Status.)

7. If Eligibility is denied, the Commission will state which Eligibility Requirements the institution has, in its judgment, failed to meet. The institution may submit another Eligibility Application at such time as it believes it can meet the Eligibility Requirements. This latter application will be handled through the same process as the initial application for Eligibility.

8. The institution is permitted to withdraw an Eligibility Application at any time prior to final action by the Commission. If the institution re-files after withdrawing or being denied Eligibility, the \$1,000 application fee is charged with each new submission.

In summary, the definition of an institution that has achieved eligibility status is an institution that has been reviewed and found to meet the Eligibility Requirements of the Commission. Eligibility status is not a formal affiliation with the Commission, and institutions with this designation are not listed in the ACCJC/WASC directories. An eligible institution may proceed to seek Candidacy status and in some instances Initial Accreditation but must not make any representation which claims or implies any relationship with the Accrediting Commission. Please refer to Commission policy on Representation of Accredited Status, [Accreditation Reference Handbook](#).

## **Requirements for Establishing Eligibility for Accreditation**

### **The Eligibility Application**

The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self study so that only institutions which meet the Eligibility Requirements may proceed. The Eligibility Requirements are listed below along with a description of the documentation the institution must provide the Commission.

The institution should also review the Standards of Accreditation and Commission policies as these provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the Eligibility Requirements.

If an institution believes it meets the Eligibility Requirements and eventually the Accreditation Standards, and wishes to begin the process of gaining Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, it must submit an Eligibility Application as the first step. The Eligibility Application explains in detail how the institution meets each of the requirements and provides evidence to support the explanations.

## **1. Authority**

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an educational institution and to award Associate Degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

### *Documentation*

- Degree-granting approval statement, authorization to operate, or certificates from appropriate bodies.
- Articles of incorporation (private institutions).

## **2. Mission**

The institution's educational mission must be clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and be appropriate to an Associate Degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning.

### *Documentation*

- Copy of the mission statement as it appears in a published catalog or other public document.
- Minutes of governing board meeting where the mission statement was adopted.
- Any recent revisions to the mission statement.

## **3. Governing Board**

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being accomplished. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership should be sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy which assures

that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

#### *Documentation*

- Biographical information about governing board members.
- Copy of governing board bylaws.
- Copy of conflict of interest policy.
- Certification that there is no board majority of persons with employment, family, ownership, or personal interest in the institution; this must be signed by the chief executive officer and governing board chair.

### **4. Chief Executive Officer**

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief administrator nor the college chief administrator may serve as the chair of the governing board.

#### *Documentation*

- Name, address, and biographical information about chief executive officer.
- Certification of CEO's full-time responsibility to the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair.

### **5. Administrative Capacity**

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience, to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

#### *Documentation*

- Organizational chart, including names of those in the identified positions.
- Names and biographical information about administrative staff.



## **6. Operational Status**

The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

### *Documentation*

- Enrollment history of institution (most recent three years suggested).
- Enrollments in institutional degree programs by year or cohort, including degrees awarded.
- Current schedule of classes.

## **7. Degrees**

A substantial portion, or majority, of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

### *Documentation*

- List of degrees, course credit requirements, and length of study for each degree program.
- General education courses and requirements for each degree offered.
- Catalog designation of college level courses for which degree credit is granted.
- Data describing student enrollment in each degree program and student enrollment in the institution's non-degree programs.

## **8. Educational Programs**

The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

### *Documentation*

- Names of programs which reflect the mission of the institution, including documentation of at least one degree program of two academic years in length.
- Documentation from catalog or other public document which describes courses and curricular sequence of educational programs.
- Documentation of location(s) of educational programs, including a list of those offered electronically.
- Student learning outcomes for degree programs.

## **9. Academic Credit**

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

### *Documentation*

- Institutional policies on transfer and award of credit (See *Commission Policy on the Award of Credit* and *Policy on Transfer of Credit*).
- Catalog documentation of credits awarded.
- Formula used by the institution to calculate values of units of academic credit, especially for laboratory, clinical, or other learning configurations.

## **10. Student Learning and Achievement**

The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

### *Documentation*

- Catalog statements which establish student learning outcomes for courses, programs and degrees.
- Student learning outcome data from educational program reviews.
- Graduation, transfer, job placement, licensure examination pass rate history, course completion, retention term to term, progression to the next course/level, program completion, as appropriate to the institutional mission.

## **11. General Education**

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See the Accreditation Standards, Standard II.A.3, (Appendix B) for areas of study required for general education.

### *Documentation*

- List of general education courses currently offered, including catalog descriptions and evidence of student learning outcomes, wherever they exist, i.e., course outlines, syllabi, etc.
- Course outlines for language and quantitative reasoning courses.
- Evidence that general education courses are of higher education rigor and quality.

## **12. Academic Freedom**

The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist.

### *Documentation*

- Board approved policy on academic freedom.

## **13. Faculty**

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

### *Documentation*

- Full-time and part-time faculty roster, including degrees and experience (note that faculty degrees must be from US accredited institutions or the equivalent).
- Faculty responsibilities statement or contract outlining faculty responsibilities.
- Current schedule of classes identifying faculty responsible for each class.

## **14. Student Services**

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

### *Documentation*

- Demographic characteristics of students.
- Evidence that the institution assesses student needs for services and provides for them.

- List of student services provided which reflects the mission of the institution.
- Description of programs for special student populations.

## **15. Admissions**

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

### *Documentation*

- Copy of admissions policy from the college catalog or other published statement.
- Copy of enrollment application.
- Statement of student qualifications for admission.
- Statement of roles and expectations of admissions personnel.

## **16. Information and Learning Resources**

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

### *Documentation*

- Profile of holdings and resources, including electronic resources.
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources.

## **17. Financial Resources**

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

### *Documentation*

- Past, current, and proposed budgets and financial statements.
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support.
- Documentation of funding base.

## **18. Financial Accountability**

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit with its Eligibility Application a copy of the budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship

to the institution for its two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide *Audits of Colleges and Universities*, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the Eligibility Application process.

#### *Documentation*

- Past, current, and proposed budgets.
- Certified independent audits, including management letters (most recent three years suggested).
- Financial aid program review/audits, if the institution is a participant.
- Student loan default rates and relevant USDOE reports, if the institution is a participant.

### **19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation**

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes.

The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

#### *Documentation*

- Written, current institutional plans that describe ways in which the institution will achieve its educational goals.
- Evidence of how the results of institutional plans are used to guide resource planning and allocation, facilities plans, and other significant institutional planning efforts and decision making processes.
- Evidence that the institution engages in regular, self-reflective evaluation of its operations and of student learning outcomes, and uses the results of this evaluation to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement for purposes of developing institutional plans.
- Evidence that well-defined decision-making processes and authority serve to facilitate planning and institutional effectiveness.

## **20. Public Information**

The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

### *General Information*

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

### *Requirements*

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

### *Major Policies Affecting Students*

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

Locations or Publications Where Other Policies May be Found.

### *Documentation*

- Catalog or other public document which serves that purpose.
- Recent print or other media advertisements.
- Policies regarding public disclosure.

*Note: The following Eligibility Requirement refers to institutions with Candidacy or Accredited status and must be maintained to continue to have its Candidacy continued or Accreditation reaffirmed.*

## **21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission\***

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

\* This Eligibility Requirement may not be fully realized until Candidacy or Initial Accreditation has been achieved.

### *Documentation*

- Copy of the policy adopted and published by governing board assuring compliance with this criterion.
- List of other accreditations held by institution and information regarding standing with those organizations.
- Copy of directory pages or website which describe the institution's representation by those accrediting bodies.

## **Steps to Establish Candidacy Status**

1. Once eligibility is granted, ACCJC staff develops a time frame for the institution's self study in preparation for the Candidacy review. The institution's president communicates the acceptance of or suggests modifications to the time frame to the ACCJC office. The Commission responds with a formal letter identifying a visit date. The Commission also invites college staff to attend training for institutions undertaking the self study.

2. In preparation for Candidacy, the institution completes and submits a Self Study Report using the Standards of Accreditation, the Self Study Manual, the Guide to Evaluating Institutions, the Accreditation Reference Handbook, and other Commission policies and resources. This Self Study Report is supported by evidence that is retained at the college for review by the Candidacy visiting team. The Report is submitted to the Commission and the visiting team members.

3. The Commission sends a team to visit the college to review the institution's readiness for Candidacy status and verify the evidence submitted in order to determine quality



and verify how well the institution meets or exceeds the Standards of Accreditation. The team provides recommendations to the institution on how to improve or meet the Standards of Accreditation in a team report, and makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission on Candidacy status. The steps for Candidacy remain separate and distinct from the steps to achieve Initial Accreditation. In rare instances, the Commission may grant Initial Accreditation at the same time Candidacy is approved.

Candidacy status: The visiting team report shall identify any perceived deficiencies in meeting Standards of Accreditation and any eligibility deficiencies. The institution will be provided a copy of the draft visiting team report and asked to correct any factual errors. The institution will also be afforded the opportunity (generally at least 15 days) to comment in writing to the Commission on any perceived deficiencies noted in the final visiting team report prior to the Commission's action on the institution.

4. At its next regular meeting, the Commission reviews the institution's Self Study Report, the team report, and the confidential team recommendation. The Commission makes the final determination on whether to grant, deny, or defer Candidacy.
5. If Candidacy is granted, the institution is notified by the Commission and a timetable for Initial Accreditation is arranged. If Candidacy is denied, the institution may reapply for Candidacy by submitting another Self Study Report after two years. If the decision is to defer, the institution is notified regarding the specific items to address.
6. The institution is permitted to withdraw an application for Candidacy at any time prior to the final action by the Commission.

In summary, the definition of an institution which has achieved Candidacy status is an institution that has demonstrated that it minimally meets the Standards of Accreditation and has a limited time (four years total) to fully meet or exceed Standards. Candidacy status is a formal status of affiliation with the Commission; Candidate institutions are listed in the ACCJC/WASC directories and are expected to remain in compliance with the Standards of Accreditation throughout the Candidacy period. Institutions which have achieved Candidacy status may make public representations about their relationship with the Accrediting Commission. Please refer to Commission policy on Representation of Accredited Status, [Accreditation Reference Handbook](#).

## **Steps to Achieve Initial Accreditation Status After Candidacy Status Granted**

If the Commission grants Candidacy, it is awarded for two years. Within this period, an institution must either apply for Initial Accreditation or seek an extension of Candidacy Status beyond the initial two-year period. Under no circumstance may Candidacy status exceed a total of four years.



1. When the Candidate institution wishes to apply for Initial Accreditation, it must submit another Self Study Report using the Standards of Accreditation, the Self Study Manual, the Guide to Evaluating Institutions, the Accreditation Reference Handbook, and other Commission policies and resources. This Self Study Report is supported by evidence that is retained at the college for review by the Initial Accreditation visiting team. The Self Study Report is submitted to the Commission and to the visiting team members.
2. The Commission sends a visiting team to the college. The purposes of the visit are to review existing evidence and determine how well the institution meets the Standards of Accreditation, provide recommendations to the institution on how to improve meeting the Standards of Accreditation in a team report, and make a confidential recommendation to the Commission on whether to grant Initial Accreditation with or without terms (such as a Follow-up Report and visit), extend Candidacy, defer, or deny Initial Accreditation. The visiting team report shall identify any perceived deficiencies in meeting Standards of Accreditation and any eligibility deficiencies. The institution will be provided a copy of the draft visiting team report and asked to correct any factual errors. The institution will also be afforded the opportunity (generally at least 15 days) to comment in writing to the Commission on any perceived deficiencies noted in the final visiting team report prior to the Commission's action on the institution.
3. At its next regular meeting, the Commission reviews the institution's Self Study Report, the team report, and the confidential team recommendation. The Commission makes the final determination on whether to grant Initial Accreditation, defer action, deny Initial Accreditation, or extend Candidacy. The Commission will not extend Candidacy status for an institution that has already been in Candidacy status for four years.
4. If an institution fails to achieve Initial Accreditation after four years in Candidacy status, it must wait two years before submitting a new Eligibility Application to the Commission and begin the process anew. The new application should address all concerns expressed in the team report(s) that were prepared as the institution initially sought Accreditation.

## **After Initial Accreditation Is Granted**

If Initial Accreditation is granted, the institution conducts a self study and applies for reaffirmation every six years thereafter. If the institution is part of a multi-college district, the reaffirmation cycle will be aligned with other colleges in that district. Self Study Reports must demonstrate that the institution meets Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements, and complies with Commission policies.

The periodic self study and comprehensive evaluation by a visiting team is meant to be a peer review of ongoing institutional good practice. An accredited institution is expected to meet or exceed Accreditation Standards and comply with Commission policies at all times. Institutional leadership is therefore urged to carefully review the Accreditation Reference Handbook and other Commission publications and to stay apprised of quality assurance and quality improvement practices in higher education. The ACCJC website provides information about these matters as well as references to other resources.

## **General Information about Accreditation**

### **Definition of Accreditation**

Institutional accreditation is public certification that institutions meet defined standards of quality and effectiveness. It is granted by accrediting associations, which are independent, non-profit, non-governmental organizations formed by educational institutions to provide standards for excellence, a process of quality review and certification, and impetus for institutional and educational improvement. There are three kinds of accrediting associations recognized by the U. S. Department of Education: regional accrediting agencies, national accrediting agencies, and professional and specialized programmatic accrediting bodies. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States. It consists of the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, (ACSCU); the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, (ACCJC), and the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS).

### **Description of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and Its Scope**

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has the responsibility for accrediting degree granting institutions that offer one or more higher education programs of two academic years in length leading to the Associate's Degree. The Commission does not accredit programs or districts/systems. The Commission accredits public and private institutions in California and Hawai'i, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

# Appendix A: Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

## Accrediting Commission For Community And Junior Colleges Western Association of Schools and Colleges

[www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)

*(Adopted June 1995; Revised January 1996,  
January 2004)*

### **Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation**

In order to apply for eligibility, the institution must meet completely all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the criteria is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation. Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

#### **1. Authority**

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

#### **2. Mission**

The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning.

#### **3. Governing Board**

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members has no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy which assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

#### **4. Chief Executive Officer**

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief administrator nor the college chief administrator may serve as the chair of the governing board.

#### **5. Administrative Capacity**

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

#### **6. Operational Status**

The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

#### **7. Degrees**

A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

#### **8. Educational Programs**

The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

#### **9. Academic Credit**

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements must provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

## **10. Student Learning And Achievement**

The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

## **11. General Education**

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See the Accreditation Standards, II.A.3, for areas of study for general education.

## **12. Academic Freedom**

The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist.

## **13. Faculty**

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

## **14. Student Services**

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

## **15. Admissions**

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

## **16. Information and Learning Resources**

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

## **17. Financial Resources**

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

## **18. Financial Accountability**

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit with its Eligibility Application a copy of the budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the institution, for its two most recent fiscal years ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide *Audits of Colleges and Universities*, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the Eligibility Application process.

## **19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation**

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and reevaluation.

## **20. Public Information**

The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

### *General Information*

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

### *Requirements*

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

### *Major Policies Affecting Students*

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

### *Locations or Publications Where Other Policies May be Found*

#### **21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission**

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the eligibility requirements and Accreditation Standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The results of a candidacy or initial accreditation visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation.





## Appendix B: Accreditation Standards

### Accrediting Commission For Community And Junior Colleges Western Association of Schools and Colleges

[www.accjc.org](http://www.accjc.org)  
(Adopted June 2002)

## Introduction to the Accreditation Standards

### Shaping the Dialogue

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution. Although the standards are presented in four parts, they work together to facilitate this dialogue on the institution's effectiveness and on ways in which it may improve. The self study provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning. (Standard I). Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV).

A college-wide dialogue that integrates the elements of the Standards provides the complete view of the institution that is needed to verify integrity and to promote quality and improvement.

### Standard I: Institutional Mission And Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and

externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

### **A. Mission**

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.
2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.
3. Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.
4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.

### **B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness**

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

1. The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.
2. The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.
3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and

systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

4. The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broadbased, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.
5. The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies.
6. The institution assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes by systematically reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, all parts of the cycle, including institutional and other research efforts.
7. The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.

## **Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services**

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

### **A. Instructional Programs**

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.<sup>1</sup>

- a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.
  - b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.
2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.<sup>1, 2</sup>
    - a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.
    - b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.
    - c. High-quality instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning characterize all programs.
    - d. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.<sup>1</sup>
    - e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.
    - f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning

- outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.
- g. If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.
  - h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.
  - i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.
3. The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:
- a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.
  - b. A capability to be a productive individual and life long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.
  - c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.
4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.
5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.

6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies. The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning outcomes consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.
  - a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.<sup>4</sup>
  - b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public, and its personnel through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.<sup>7</sup>
7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or worldviews. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.
  - a. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.
  - b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.
  - c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or worldviews, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.

8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with standards and applicable Commission policies.<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Student Support Services**

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.<sup>1, 2</sup>
2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:
  - a. General Information
    - Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site Address of the Institution Educational Mission
    - Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
    - Academic Calendar and Program Length
    - Academic Freedom Statement
    - Available Student Financial Aid
    - Available Learning Resources
    - Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
    - Names of Governing Board Members
  - b. Requirements
    - Admissions
    - Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
    - Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer
  - c. Major Policies Affecting Students
    - Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
    - Nondiscrimination
    - Acceptance of Transfer Credits
    - Grievance and Complaint Procedures



- Sexual Harassment
  - Refund of Fees
- d. Locations or publications where other policies may be found.
3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.
- a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.
  - c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.
  - d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.
  - e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.
  - f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.
4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

### **C. Library and Learning Support Services**

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning



technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.
  - b. The institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency.
  - c. The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.<sup>1</sup>
  - d. The institution provides effective maintenance and security for its library and other learning support services.
  - e. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible, and utilized. The performance of these services is evaluated on a regular basis. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the reliability of all services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement.
2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

## **Standard III: Resources**

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

### **A. Human Resources**

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services.
  - a. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.<sup>4</sup>
  - b. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.
  - c. Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.
  - d. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.
3. The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.
  - a. The institution establishes and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.
  - b. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.
4. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.
  - a. The institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel.
  - b. The institution regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission.
  - c. The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, staff and students.
5. The institution provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on identified teaching and learning needs.
  - a. The institution plans professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel.
  - b. With the assistance of the participants, the institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

6. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

## **B. Physical Resources**

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services, regardless of location or means of delivery.
  - a. The institution plans, builds, maintains, and upgrades or re places its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services.
  - b. The institution assures that physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.
2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.
  - a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.
  - b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

## **C. Technology Resources**

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.

- a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.
  - b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.
  - c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.
  - d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.
2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.

#### **D. Financial Resources**

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution relies upon its mission and goals as the foundation for financial planning.
  - a. Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.
  - b. Institutional planning reflects realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.
  - c. When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies and plans for payment of liabilities and future obligations.
  - d. The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.

2. To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of its financial resources, the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making.
  - a. Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.
  - b. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution.
  - c. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and realistic plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.
  - d. The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.
  - e. All financial resources, including those from auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
  - f. Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.<sup>5</sup>
  - g. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management processes, and the results of the evaluation are used to improve financial management systems.
3. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

#### **Standard IV: Leadership and Governance**

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

## **A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes**

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.
2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.
  - a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.
  - b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.
3. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.
4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.
5. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decisionmaking structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.



## **B. Board and Administrative Organization**

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.

1. The institution has a governing board that is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or the district/system.
  - a. The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.
  - b. The governing board establishes policies consistent with the mission statement to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services and the resources necessary to support them.
  - c. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity.
  - d. The institution or the governing board publishes the board bylaws and policies specifying the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures.
  - e. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. The board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.
  - f. The governing board has a program for board development and new member orientation. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.
  - g. The governing board's self-evaluation processes for assessing board performance are clearly defined, implemented, and published in its policies or bylaws.
  - h. The governing board has a code of ethics that includes a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.



- i. The governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.
  - j. The governing board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/system chief administrator (most often known as the chancellor) in a multi-college district/system or the college chief administrator (most often known as the president) in the case of a single college. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively. In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.
2. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.
- a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.
  - b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:
    - establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities;
    - ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions;
    - ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes;
    - establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.
  - c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.
  - d. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.
  - e. The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.

3. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system provides primary leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. It establishes clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system and acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board.<sup>6</sup>
  - a. The district/system clearly delineates and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice.
  - b. The district/system provides effective services that support the colleges in their missions and functions.
  - c. The district/system provides fair distribution of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations of the colleges.
  - d. The district/system effectively controls its expenditures.
  - e. The chancellor gives full responsibility and authority to the presidents of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without his/her interference and holds them accountable for the operation of the colleges.
  - f. The district/system acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board. The district/system and the colleges use effective methods of communication, and they exchange information in a timely manner.
  - g. The district/system regularly evaluates district/system role delineation and governance and decision-making structures and processes to assure their integrity and effectiveness in assisting the colleges in meeting educational goals. The district/system widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

## **List of Policies Referenced in the Standards**

<sup>1</sup>Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning

<sup>2</sup>Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education  
Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals

<sup>3</sup>Policy on Closing an Institution

<sup>4</sup>Policy on Transfer of Credit (Adopted January 2005);  
Policy on Award of Credit (Adopted June 2004)

<sup>5</sup>Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations

<sup>6</sup>Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions  
in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems

<sup>7</sup>Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment,  
and Representation of Accredited Status