



September 24, 2004

*Re: Accrediting Commission Report
August 2004 Meeting*

Dear ACCET and Other Colleagues:

This letter and the accompanying enclosures are presented as an update on the actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at the August 2004 meeting. A summary of all final actions, referenced by institution, a summary of statistics for all actions relative to the various classifications of review, and the policy/documentation revisions in process or finalized, can be viewed and/or downloaded from the ACCET website (www.accet.org) along with this report under **Commission Report** and the **Documents and Forms** links. The following synopsis of issues and events is offered for your review.

Finalized Policy Documents



Document 13 – Bylaws

The revisions to the document were subject to a call-for-comment from the field following the April 2004 Commission meeting. The revised Bylaws present clearer language, more logical sequence and simpler format, incorporating appropriate changes consistent with Virginia statutes (ACCET's venue of incorporation), and restated to represent contemporary good practices. No further changes were proposed in the responses to the call-for-comment and the document is now finalized.



Document 11 – Policies and Practices of the Accrediting Commission

The document has been reviewed in accordance with the Commission's five-year schedule of review. Revisions have been made to reflect consistency of language and definitive statements regarding current policies and practices, e.g., 1) General Policies of the Accrediting Commission, item 8 has been added to indicate that state representatives are invited to attend on-site evaluations conducted at state licensed institutions seeking ACCET accreditation or reaccreditation; 2) Applicants for Renewal of Accreditation, Item 3, Show Cause has been expanded to include not only that a show cause directive may cover the entire institution but also specific program(s) or course(s) offered by the institution. In the first case, institutions must demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn; in the latter case, why approval to offer a specific program(s) or

course(s) should not be withdrawn; 3) Debarment section has been expanded to allow the Commission to debar an individual if that person is accused and found guilty of fraudulent, criminal or unethical behavior.



Document 29.1 – Enrollment Agreement Checklist

The document has been reviewed in accordance with the Commission's five-year schedule of review. Minor revisions were made to reflect a new document number (from 29.2 to 29.1), a more logical sequence of the items presented, and additional information for clarification of practice, e.g., information was added to the instructions and to items 10 and 11. The Buyer's Right to Cancel statement has been clarified to include specific reference to the Federal Trade Commission; and the refund policy statement specifies that the institution, consistent with ACCET Document 31, must indicate that both state and ACCET policies are utilized, with the one more lenient to the student, relative to the time-specific application of those policies, being applied.



Document 34 – Policy on Contracting Out Education Delivery

The document has been reviewed in accordance with the Commission's five-year schedule of review. The most significant change is that pertaining to the percentage of the program being contracted out and corresponding requirements. The previously stipulated percentage restrictions applied separately to contracting out with ACCET accredited institutions or those accredited by other USDE recognized agencies have been merged to allow greater flexibility.



Document 48 – Policy on Adverse Actions by Other Agencies

The document has been reviewed in accordance with the Commission's five-year schedule of review. Minor revisions were made; most notably, the list and descriptions of adverse actions are more detailed for clarification.



Document 50I – On-site F-1 Immigration Compliance Checklist/Guidelines

This policy document has been utilized for the past year to serve as a guide for ACCET accredited institutions and on-site evaluation teams in assuring basic compliance with the regulatory requirements established under the U. S. Department of Homeland Security/Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. As a result of feedback from the field and the increased depth of direct experience relative to the SEVIS requirements, an additional file review element was added. Specifically, item #3 has been added to Section V, wherein on-site teams request a print-out from the SEVIS database for comparative review with class rosters and attendance records.



Commission Resolution on Qualifications of Instructors/Faculty

There has been an increased focus recently of media stories highlighting the proliferation of “diploma mills,” along with Congressional hearings that raised serious questions about the credentials of some high level public officials who “attend” such institutions. The Commission shares the growing concern over this issue and, in reviewing the ACCET Standards for Accreditation, Document 2, Standard VIB- Qualifications of Instructional Personnel, with this in mind, passed the referenced resolution to clarify its interpretation as follows:

Some programs of study, such as Intensive English Program and Occupational Associate Degrees as indicated in ACCET field-specific criteria (ACCET Documents 3.ESL/Combined and 3.OAD) require instructional personnel to have degrees. Other programs may also require degrees based upon industry requirements. In such cases, the institution must ensure that the degrees are awarded from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or, for non-U.S. institutions, an accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the International Handbook of Universities.

As a closing note, a few additional references and/or observations are offered:

-  We hope you will visit the ACCET website frequently, as we have made considerable progress toward an electronic and, largely, web-based approach to communications and documentation flow. As you are aware, all of the ACCET documents are on the website for reference and/or download (PDF format), and many are now provided as fillable documents to facilitate the submission. Over the next few months we will be developing web linkages to our database to streamline the submission, receipt and review of Document 12 – Annual Report & Enrollment Statistics and Document 28.1 - Completion Placement Statistics. Your feedback and ideas for future enhancements to the ACCET website (www.accet.org) are welcomed.
-  The 30th Anniversary and annual conference will be celebrated shortly in New Orleans on October 13-15, following the Accreditation Workshop and Team Evaluation Workshop held just prior to that event. It may be too late to reserve a hotel room as our room block was sold out weeks ago and we’ve resorted to pleading for additional guestroom allocations; however, it’s not too late to register for the conference at the ACCET website, where you will also find the program brochure to inspire your interest. This one will be in the record books and we hope you will join us to share the occasion.
-  A recently passed law in California is expected to be signed shortly by the Governor which will permit the program review and approval processes of five specifically listed “national” accrediting agencies, including ACCET, to serve, under specified conditions, as a substitute for the state regulatory (BPPVE) approval process. AB711 establishes a significant precedent for parity with regional accreditation, which previously prevailed in a Bill last year exempting their institutions from BPPVE program approval. Neither the final signature nor any regulatory details are in place at this time but we will keep you apprised of any significant developments as they come to our attention.



In a significant development, relevant to the Intensive English Programs (IEPs) in particular, a meeting was recently held at the ACCET office attended by five BICE officials, including the incoming head of SEVIS, Susan Geary. The discussion was very open ended, including a tutorial on ACCET accreditation, a review of some IEP specific policy documents, and agreement on the communication contacts and protocols for Commission action letter routing. A representative from the meeting will be presenting at a session of our upcoming annual conference in New Orleans.

There are a multitude of issues either in-play or on the horizon that impact our work together. At the Business Meeting on October 13th, in addition to offering a fond farewell to our outgoing Commissioner, Alexis Johnson, and a rousing welcome to our incoming Commissioner Beata Schmid, we will have a chance for a more detailed update and discussion on current events and future possibilities. Some food for thought to consider in advance is the issue of ACCET's scope; specifically, whether we should allow applications from college and university continuing education divisions/departments. In the interim, we extend our best regards and look forward to seeing you in a few weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger J. Williams".

Roger J. Williams
Executive Director