



January 31, 2005

*Re: Accrediting Commission Report
December 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 December 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 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 and finalized at the August 2004 Commission meeting. The revised Bylaws present clearer language, a more logical sequence, and simpler format restated to represent contemporary good practices. Upon further consideration, however, two issues arose relative to (1) the potential for disproportionate representation of large multi-school corporations on the Commission, and (2) the lack of sufficient defining elements for public member commissioners to clearly meet the requirements of the HEA. Accordingly, the Commission voted to add language to Section 5.5, relative to the first issue as follows: "There shall be no more than one elected Commissioner from each group of institutions under common ownership, control, or affiliation"; and on the second issue, Section 5.4 is revised to include the following: "A Public Commissioner or any member of his/her immediate family cannot be an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that is accredited by ACCET or applying for ACCET accreditation, or a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with ACCET."

- **Document 11 – Policies and Practices of the Accrediting Commission**

Dating back to the 1998 amendments to the HEA, ACCET maintained the reference to "probation" under Notifications on page 7 of this document, consistent with that stated in federal statute and regulation, and widely recognized as the equivalent of "show cause" status. The Commission's longstanding interpretation and application of this equivalency has now been revised with the explicit reference to show cause.

Call-For-Comment Drafts

- **Document 1 – The Accreditation Plan: Policies and Procedures**

This draft update is the first major re-write since 1990 and is intended to more accurately and clearly reflect current practice, particularly as it relates to the agency's continued evolution from the original non-collegiate continuing education and training of 30 years ago to the present recognition, which includes the associate-level degree. The revisions do not include any changes to the eligibility criteria, although there has been considerable discussion and debate related to inquiries from continuing education departments at colleges and universities, which totaled seven over the past 12 months. Any changes to the eligibility criteria would be sent out to the field for both comment and approval in advance of any adoption.

- **Document 17 – ACCET Continuing Education Unit**

Formerly titled The Validated CEU, the revised document serves to reorient and redefine the CEU as it applies to the ACCET accreditation process. The proposed draft greatly simplifies ACCET's approach to these units of measure within the enhanced context of accredited status.

Further, a few observations and references are offered for consideration:

- The ACCET Standards for Accreditation (Document 2) are scheduled for review and revision in 2005, consistent with the Bylaws, which mandate such a review every five years. There are many feedback elements in our systematic program of review (SPOR), including institutional and team member critiques solicited at the conclusion of on-site evaluations, and a planned survey of institutions, graduates, and employers, all of which will be used to refine the standards in the course of the upcoming review. The anticipated schedule at this juncture is for a subgroup of the Commission, invited guests, and staff to meet sometime in May/June, to analyze, debate and draft a revised Document 2, which will then be routed to the Commission's Standards and Policy Review Committee (SPRC) at the August or December 2005 meeting, depending on the rate of progress. A call-for-comment and approval by the membership will follow until finalized.
- The Commission has approved a policy and procedure, developed over the past year, for conducting a Preliminary Assessment Visit upon request from initial applicant institutions, three of which are scheduled for the current (April 2005) review cycle. The objective is to provide an opportunity for initial review and discussion of an applicant institution's policies and operational practices relative to ACCET standards, policies and procedures. Over the next 12 months, we will be better able to evaluate the patterns of readiness and remedies in judging the effectiveness of this new initiative.
- The tragic events consequential to the earthquake and tsunami that struck Southeast Asia last December 26th were painfully burned into the collective consciousness of the entire world. In the spirit of giving called forth by that suffering and the attendant needs, the Commission approved a donation of \$10,000 in honor of the dedicated member institutions of ACCET.

Finally, the current buzz over the 60 Minutes segment this past Sunday, while focused on a small cross-section of the large corporate schools, has apparently raised enough attention to inspire the scheduling of public hearings before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. None of the institutions cited are accredited by ACCET and while some would try to make that pebble-sized notation look more like a stone being thrown, the observation is extended as a cautionary note, not a self-congratulatory one. For many of us, such news brings painful flashbacks to the late 80's when much of common sense was overrun by hubris, and the backlash against the "bad apples" branded us all with a tarnished name and a demand to step up. It was a particularly big step, at the time, for ACCET and many former member institutions proved unable or unwilling to make it, as a result of which they lost their accreditation. The

safest harbor then and now is simply delivering what you promised to your students to make their lives better. It is a lot easier to sell the dream than to build the foundation under it; and the sale is hollow, indeed harmful, unless we work effectively with our students to produce results. Kudos to all of you who work so hard to deliver and measure your success by that of your students.

Sincerely,

Roger J. Williams

Roger J. Williams
Executive Director