

Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status

(Adopted January 2005; Revised January 2012)

Background

The Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and this Commission policy require that an accredited institution make available to students and prospective students clear and accurate information about itself in all publications that may be disseminated in the name of the institution.

According to federal regulations, the U.S. Department of Education may limit or revoke the institution's eligibility to participate in Title IV, if an institution or any individual representing an institution makes false, erroneous or misleading statements, including statements about an institution's accredited status (34 C.F.R. § 668.71. Misrepresentation).

Policy

All accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

Policy Elements

A. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

Educational programs and services offered shall be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature and recruitment activities, including those presented in electronic formats. All statements and representations, including, but not limited to, conditions for transfer of course credits, conditions for acceptance of course credits, requirements for course completion and licensure examinations, shall be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting documentation should be kept on file and readily available for review.

Catalogs and other official publications shall be readily available and accurately depict:

- official name, address(es), telephone number(s), and website address of the institution;
- institutional mission statement, purposes, and objectives; entrance requirements and procedures;
- basic information on programs and courses with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated;
- degree, certificate, and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate;
- faculty with degrees held and the conferring institution;
- institutional facilities readily available for educational use;
- rules and regulations for conduct;

- the institution’s academic freedom statement;
- tuition, fees, and other program costs;
- opportunities and requirements for financial aid;
- policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment¹;
- policies related to the transfer of credits from other institutions;
- statements of nondiscrimination;
- location or publications where other institutional policies may be found;
- members of the Governing Board; and
- the accredited status of the institution, including any specialized or program accreditation that may be required for licensure or employment in the field, or the lack thereof.

In institutional catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information shall be provided on: national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered; and any unique requirements for career path or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

B. Student Recruitment for Admissions

Student recruitment shall be guided by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

The following practices in student recruitment shall be scrupulously avoided:

- assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified;
- misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates; misrepresenting program costs; misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program;
- offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment.

Awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.

C. Representation of ACCJC Accredited Status²

The term “accreditation” is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by the Commission. Specialized and program accreditation granted by other accreditors should be clearly specified as to the source of the accreditation together with reference to the specific program to which it applies.

¹ See Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges

² See Policy on Representation of Accredited Status

No statement shall be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the Commission. Statements like the following are not permissible: “(Name of Institution) has applied for candidacy with the ACCJC”; “The _____ program is being evaluated by ACCJC, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future.” The phrase “fully accredited” shall be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible from the Commission.

When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it shall be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, which identifies the accrediting body by name in the manner required by the accrediting body.

The accredited status of a program shall not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by the Commission has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited,” are incorrect and misleading.

Institutions offering programs in a single field, e.g., a school of art, engineering, theology, granted accreditation by the Commission shall clearly state that the institutional accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of any program offered.