Date: November 30, 2020
To: Commission and Other Interested Parties
From: Barbara Dunsheath, Policy Committee Chair
Gohar Momjian, ACCJC Vice President
Subject: Policy Changes for Consideration - January 2021 Commission Meeting

The Policy Committee oversees the development of new policies and changes to existing policies. Commission procedures generally provide that proposed policy changes and/or new policies be considered by the Commission in a two-meeting process. At the first meeting, new policies/policy changes are discussed, and modifications are made as appropriate (first reading). These policies are then widely circulated to ACCJC’s member institutions and other interested parties for review and comment before presentation at the next scheduled Commission meeting for second reading and adoption. The Policy Committee will forward relevant comments to the Commission for deliberation during the policy’s second-read, and prior to Commission adoption.

When changes are needed in order to align with federal regulations, or for other extenuating circumstances, policy changes can be made by the Commission outside the normal two-meeting process. If these changes are made by Commission action between regularly scheduled meetings, the changes are communicated to the field, including the reason for immediate action by the Commission.

**Items for Second Reading**

The Policy Committee moved to forward the following policies to the Commission for its Second Read.

i. **Revision: Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality**
The proposed modifications align to changes in federal regulations clarifying the timelines for disclosing Commission actions to the institution, public, and to the Secretary of Education. There are no changes since the Commission’s June 2020 First Read.

ii. **Revision: Policy on Accreditation of Baccalaureate Degrees**
The proposed modifications acknowledge ACCJC’s expanded scope of recognition to accredit institutions that are primarily two-year degree granting institutions and which may offer more than one baccalaureate degree. There are no changes since the Commission’s June 2020 First Read.
iii. **Revision: Policy on Substantive Change**
The proposed modifications align to changes in federal regulations clarifying substantive changes requiring ACCJC approval or notification, in areas such as change in location, credit awarded, and direct assessment. Since the Commission’s June 2020 First Read, language was added to further clarify substantive change includes the change of an accredited institution into an off-campus site or branch campus.

iv. **Revision: Policy on Institutional Appeals**
The proposed modifications conform the appeals policy to changes in federal regulations clarifying that an appeal panel may affirm, remand, or amend adverse actions, rather than reverse them. Since the Commission’s June 2020 First Read, language was added in accordance with new regulations requiring an institution to submit any dispute involving the final denial, withdrawal, or termination of accreditation to initial arbitration prior to any other legal action.

**Items for First Reading**

The Policy Committee moved to forward the following policies to the Commission for its First Read.

i. **Revision: Policy on Social Justice**
The proposed policy replaces the 1994 Statement on Diversity and strongly affirms the Commission’s commitment to social justice by implementing actions for increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in ACCJC’s operations. Headings delineate policy applicability to the Commission, Representatives of Commission, and Member Institutions. The policy specifies the Accreditation Standards which require institutions to ground their work in equity, diversity, and inclusion.

ii. **Revision: Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions**
The proposed policy revisions conform to the changes and parameters set in new federal regulations that allow ACCJC to realign actions to reflect a three-year rule (instead of the current two-year rule) to come into compliance prior to taking adverse action; updates and adds policy language in accordance with new regulations on the conditions for granting a Good Cause Extension; removes the status of Restoration and all associated conditions for granting Restoration status since it is in violation of the new federal regulations; differentiates actions on institutions applying for Candidacy and for Initial Accreditation; clarifies and updates definitions in alignment with ACCJC’s values and current practices.

The Commission will remove the statement entitled *Two Year Rule and Extension for Good Cause* from its website after the Commission’s second read in June 2021.

iii. **Revision: Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education**
The recommended policy revisions conform to forthcoming changes in federal regulations, including updated definitions for distance education and correspondence education, and language which defines regular and substantive interaction in distance education.
iv. **Revision: Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions**

The recommended policy revisions provide further clarity to the mutual expectations of the Commission and Member Institutions by organizing the information to address each policy element for each entity; modifies language regarding site visits to provide flexibility to the Commission to improve its review processes per the formative summative peer review process; adds new language indicating the parameters for a CEO's appearance during closed session, as well as required notice by the Commission for visits to an institution.

As part of the Commission’s second read in June 2021, the Commission will simultaneously propose deletion of the *Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions* since this policy is a redundant set statements contained primarily within the *Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions* and other policies and manuals. This will ensure a more streamlined compilation of Commission policies to provide clear guidance for the Commission and Member Institutions.

v. **New: Policy on Teach Out Plans and Agreements**

The proposed policy conforms to new federal regulations which revise the definitions and requirements for teach-out plans and agreements. The policy specifies the conditions which require an institution to submit a teach-out plan, and if applicable, teach-out agreement, as well as provides parameters for the Commission's review and approval of teach-out plans and agreements through substantive change procedures.