

# The Evaluator

Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools

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Winter 2011

## Student Surveys

As of Winter 2011, ACICS will be implementing a Student Survey as a new tool to supplement the student interview process. The Student Survey is a single page (front and back) of questions divided into six categories. A number of questions have been taken from the Evaluation Procedures and Guidelines manual. Others are intended to garner key information, particularly in the area of the school's admission procedures. Evaluators should implement this tool into their visit procedures using the following steps:

- Step 1: Obtain sufficient copies of the survey for each student attending the student interview(s) or classroom observations;
- Step 2: Allow sufficient time for students to complete the survey in its entirety (approx. 10-15 minutes);
- Step 3: Collect all forms and ask any subsequent questions;
- Step 4: Tally the results in the visit room using the ACICS Tabulation Summary Sheet and share results with the team;
- Step 5: Use the results of the survey as a guide to further inquiries into potential areas of concern or non-compliance;
- Step 6: Give all copies of the completed surveys to the ACICS staff coordinator.

The form (as shown below) will be found on our Web site under the Evaluator tab/Evaluator Resources. Staff are available to assist in the implementation of this new procedure. We anticipate this tool will assist in obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of student concerns, but we recognize the possibility of additional time, on the part of the evaluator, to tally the results. We are working to get this document web-based. Once that is accomplished the results will be available instantaneously and won't require manual tabulation. We will keep you posted!

Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools  
750 First Street, NE - Suite 980, Washington DC 20002  
202-336-6780 (ph) 202-642-2593 (fax)

ACICS ON-SITE STUDENT SURVEY Revised: Dec 2010

INSTITUTION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ID:000 \_\_\_\_\_

*Please take a moment to complete the following survey. Your responses are anonymous and will be evaluated by the ACICS on-site visit team. (use the General Comments at the end of each section to respond to any "NO")*

	N/A	YES	NO
<b>1. Educational Background</b>			
1.1. Did you have other postsecondary education?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2. Did your admission's representative describe the transfer of credit policies and procedures accurately? [3-1-413]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3. GENERAL COMMENTS:			
<b>2. Enrollment/Admissions</b>			
2.1. Did your admissions representative accurately state the enrollment process regarding the following? [3-1-412]		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1.1. Courses and programs		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1.2. Services		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1.3. Tuition and fees		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1.4. Terms		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1.5. Operating policies		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2. Did you receive a catalog during the admissions process? [3-1-430(b)/3-1-434]		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3. Did the catalog accurately portray the institution?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4. Did you sign an enrollment agreement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5. Was there an orientation program?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6. Did you attend an orientation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7. Have you received any marketing communications for employment offers/promises since enrolling that did not include the institution's name?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Reimbursement Update and Reminders

**DIRECT DEPOSIT** - In an effort to continuously improve the Evaluator Reimbursement Process, ACICS has initiated a procedure which allows evaluators to receive their reimbursements through direct deposit. In order to enroll in this enhancement, please fill out the Direct Deposit Agreement Form to be posted on our website under the Evaluator tab/Evaluator Resources. This form should be returned to the unique fax number on the form to ensure maximum security with your personal information.

**ORIGINAL RECEIPTS REQUIRED** - ACICS also requests your assistance in expediting the reimbursement process. Please be sure to include original receipts for all expense items that must be substantiated. This includes meals at the hotel restaurant or room service, airplane baggage fees, taxi fare, personal car mileage (which must include a copy of the "map-it" with mileage), etc. Remember: only tips up to \$20 and printed materials up to \$25 may be unsubstantiated and do not require receipts.

**HONORARIUM** - In addition, please remember to include the correct amount of honorarium for each visit. The current amount for a chair is \$350/each institution visit day; and for a non-chair is \$250/each institution visit day.

**EXPENSES MUST BE ENTERED IN CONCUR** - Each cycle, ACICS strives to accelerate the reimbursement process for all evaluators. Please assist us in this objective by providing accurate information through our expense system, Concur. If you have any questions about a visit or a reimbursement, please first contact the travel staff member who conducted the visit. You may also contact Ms. Tabitha Harley, Accounting Assistant, at [tharley@acics.org](mailto:tharley@acics.org) or Ms. Susan Greer, Senior Manager—Operations, at [sgreer@acics.org](mailto:sgreer@acics.org) if you have any concerns or questions about the process.

ACICS appreciates any feedback in this regard. Please know that it is our utmost concern to reimburse our diligent and tireless evaluators fairly, equitably, and in a timely manner. Thank you for your service to ACICS.

## Message from the Executive Director

ACICS is excited to announce through this publication two new enhancements for our pool of evaluators. The first enhancement is the newly produced and implemented student survey form. The form will allow on-site evaluation teams to effectively interview students on a selected set of important questions; and collect verifiable documentation regarding this interaction. Evaluators will have the opportunity to assess the data provided on the surveys while on site in order to make informative conclusions about student feedback. The second enhancement ACICS has re-

cently implemented is the availability of direct deposit for evaluators. This new procedure will further accelerate and streamline the evaluator reimbursement process allowing funds to be sent directly to your account rather than through standard mail in a paper check. For more details on these advancements, please review the articles in this newsletter as well as visit our Web site.

Sincerely,

*AL*

## New Accreditation Coordinators

"I enjoy working at ACICS because I see how, through applying the *Accreditation Criteria*, we positively impact the education of students. I also have greatly enjoyed working with, and learning from our pool of evaluators. As I progress with ACICS, I look forward to gaining a better appreciation of the environment in which our member institutions operate."



Joe Hye  
Accreditation Coordinator



Sarah Sober  
Senior Research Coordinator, Institutional Finance

"I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a dynamic group of professionals with the common goal of improving the quality of the educational experience at our institutions. I am looking forward to working with everyone more and learning from your experience and expertise."

"I've always enjoyed being a part of the field of education as a former teacher; and now I am excited to be a part of a whole new aspect of the field. Knowing that I will be assisting in providing students a higher quality of education is very rewarding. Add to that, traveling to new places and working with all kinds of professionals in various fields and what could be better?! I look forward to all that I will learn and experience here at ACICS."



Karly Smith  
Accreditation Coordinator



Kortne Edogun  
Accreditation Coordinator

"I am most excited about the opportunity to further explore the higher education realm. As a former K-12 policy advisor, I believe my future experiences at ACICS will provide me with a more well-rounded perspective on education. This position will allow me to connect the dots on the K-16 spectrum and I look forward to learning more about the intricacies of providing high quality higher education. Particularly as a new travel staff member, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to visit our diverse institutions and work with so many experts in the education field."

## Evaluating the Evaluator

By Billie Joy Langston

At the end of every travel cycle, ACICS travel staff coordinators, also affectionately known as "The Road Warriors," are tasked with the responsibility to evaluate each evaluator they have worked with during each visit of the travel cycle. The evaluation of evaluators provides substantive feedback to assess the strengths and identify areas of improvement for future visits. All evaluators undergo the evaluation process.

ACICS has developed a tool to capture the qualities required of a successful evaluator. There are 10 specific areas that categorically relate to evaluator knowledge, skills, and performance while conducting visits. These areas include: 1) Preparation/Timeliness; 2) Organizational Skills; 3) Knowledge and Familiarity with Technology; 4) Interaction with the Team; 5) Interaction with the Institution; 6) Writing Skills; 7) Knowledge of Criteria; 8) Ethics; 9) Strength of Expertise; and 10) Adherence to Travel and Reimbursement Policies. Evaluators are assessed based on a score received for each category on the scale of one (lowest) to five (highest).

The evaluation also includes recommendations for nominees to serve in the role of chair. (Note: Those evaluators recommended for the role of chair must meet the qualifications and apply for the position as stated on the ACICS Web site). Staff recommendations are also used to determine the distinguished recipients of Evaluator of the Year, Student Relations Evaluator of the Year, and Chair of the Year awards. A staff committee is charged with the responsibility to review all evaluator evaluations. For any that indicate a need for re-training, appropriate

measures are taken. All data received is collected and maintained in a confidential manner.

As a national accreditor, ACICS is progressive in its efforts to assess each facet of the accreditation review process, which includes a fair and unbiased method to evaluate the evaluators. In doing so, our agency maintains the highest standards of excellence in further developing, fostering, and nurturing experts in the field to actively participate in a peer review process.

In addition, we encourage transparency of the review process at every level. It is our belief that evaluation systems continue to provide the best evidence of the strength of our existence on the dawn of our centennial anniversary.

We appreciate your service to ACICS in the evaluator role. Together, we make a critical difference in preserving the quality of higher education globally.

## Call for Candidates: Board, Council Membership

The ACICS nominating committee invites the submission of qualified candidates to fill two ACICS member commissioner positions on the Board and Council with terms through December 31, 2015. A special election will be held in March, 2011. Any person employed by a member in good standing and registered as a "Designated Delegate" of that member is eligible to run for election or appointment to the Council and Board. The powers, duties and responsibilities of the Board and Council are listed in Articles II and III respectively of the

ACICS Bylaws which can be accessed on the Web site. Commissioners are expected to attend at least three accreditation action meetings each year, each approximately 3.5 to 4 days in duration. Attendance at an annual policy planning meeting and the ACICS Annual Meeting are required as well. Members of the 2011 ACICS Nominating Committee are Chairman Roger Swartzwelder, Gary Carlson, Jill DeAtley, Fran Giglio and Brian Stewart. Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to the executive director, Dr. Al Gray, by January 28, 2011.

## Accreditation Criteria Changes

The following criteria have been recently reviewed and have been accepted as final by the Council: (The underlined portions are newly added language and the ~~struck through~~ portions are deleted language).

### APPENDIX C - STATEMENT OF ACCREDITATION

An institution is not permitted to use such statements as “fully accredited” or “accredited” without including the name of ACICS. An institution will not use or publicize the term “accredited” unless it is in fact accredited by ACICS or another recognized agency, or it has affirmative authority under state law. Any reference to stated authority for status as “registered”, “approved”, or “accredited” must include the name of the state extending the approval and must accurately identify the state agency. An applicant for ACICS accreditation may not disclose this fact in any manner, ~~that implies that accreditation is imminent or guaranteed.~~

### APPENDIX D - STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

**Requirement #11** ...If a student is not making satisfactory academic

progress, the institution may place the student in an extended enrollment status. A student placed in an extended enrollment status is not eligible for financial aid. However, all credits attempted count toward the 150% of the normal program length even if the student is on extended enrollment. Grades may be replaced if that is the institution’s written policy. At the discretion of the institution, a student with an approved appeal who ~~In no case can a student exceed~~s one and one-half times the standard time frame as defined by the institution either as a regular student or in an extended enrollment status ~~and may~~ receive the original academic credential for which he or she enrolled, provided that there are no additional financial obligations to the student.

The updated *Accreditation Criteria* is available on the Web site. The subsequent version of *The Evaluator* will include criteria accepted as final and effective before May 1, 2011. Please review the Memorandum to the Field posted on our Web site to gather further explanation on all changes to the Criteria. For any questions, you may contact a member of the travel staff, or Ms. Terron King at [tking@acics.org](mailto:tking@acics.org).

## Impartiality on a Visit

By Sarah Parsons

As all of you know, ACICS visits are based on the concept of peer review. A team is comprised of evaluators from member and non-member institutions, from the public and private sectors and, generally speaking, from all types of backgrounds. One important notion that every evaluator must remember on a visit is the concept of improving the educational processes for students. After all, the students are who our schools and, ultimately, ACICS serve. We know that sometimes it is difficult to separate your duties and responsibilities at your own institutions from your mission as an evaluator. Nevertheless, this is a necessary component of our review process and one that must not be forgotten, no matter the circumstances. It does not take much effort to point out areas where an institution does things differently from what we know. This is most likely the case at almost every institution we visit. The hard part is recognizing that while it might be different, it is not necessarily falling short of ACICS standards. With that in mind, we at ACICS urge every evaluator in our pool to remember that just because

an institution does something differently than your institution, does not make it out of compliance with our *Criteria*. As an accrediting body, we are here to provide the guidelines for our institutions to help them offer the highest possible standards of education. As evaluation teams, we are seeing first-hand, our institutions in action and their ability to uphold the guidelines set forth for them. We encourage everyone to go into visits with open minds and the ability to appreciate (and learn something from) the different approaches many schools take to the same guidelines.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “...differences are often a healthy sign of progress.” We are always looking for positive progress and forward motion—with our minds and eyes open, appreciating and often learning from our many differences. Keeping a positive attitude and an open mind during evaluation visits will allow for better interactions, more accurate observations, and a spirit of understanding that is necessary to performing all of our jobs to the best of our abilities. Finally, we should strive to always show each other the same level of respect during visits whether we are travel staff member, evaluator, institution, or otherwise. Respect begets respect and it is paramount to our success as an organization.

## Request for Evaluator Referrals

ACICS is continually searching for new, talented evaluators to bolster its pool of experts, specifically in a number of “high-need” specialty areas. As discussed in the fall 2010 issue of *The Evaluator*, ACICS requests your assistance in recruiting such evaluators. Please send any and all referrals to the address: [evaluatormanager@acics.org](mailto:evaluatormanager@acics.org). The particular areas for which ACICS is in need will be updated periodically on the ACICS Web site at <http://www.acics.org/evaluators/areasofneed>.

## Benefit for our Evaluators

Evaluators can now view the specialty fields for which they have been vetted on their ACICS account under the MY ACCOUNT / MY ACCREDITED PROGRAMS tab. You are not capable of viewing your areas of expertise (distance education, educational activities, student relations) but you can see your program subject areas. Remember we require five years experience and education in each field, so it is unlikely someone would immediately qualify for an additional subject area upon receiving additional education, but please take ownership of this information and let us know if it needs to be updated.

## Title IV Fraud or the Appearance of Fraud

If any evaluator, during the course of an ACICS accreditation visit, suspects the school being visited of Title IV fraud or the appearance of fraud, they are obligated to report this information immediately to the ACICS staff coordinator ONLY. This information is not to be shared with school personnel or other team members.

## Last Minute Cancellations

Last minute cancellations task ACICS staff, cost the schools, and place a great burden on the others in the evaluator pool to make last minute arrangements. If you are unsure as to whether or not you can conduct a visit when invited, please do not say “Yes” until you are absolutely sure. Thanks!

## Stories from the Road

*The Evaluator* is pleased to once again bring you our “Stories from the Road” segment.

### 7pm Cab

By Sarah Parsons

My team and I were headed to dinner in Portland, Oregon last cycle when this little “miscommunication” happened. When we arrived, one of the team members needed to depart dinner a little earlier than the rest and he politely asked the hostess to request a cab for him at 7pm. At approximately 7pm, our waiter came over to our table, sat a glass down in front of him, and poured him a glass of red wine. As he started to walk away, the manager spotted us all sharing a confused look and came over to see what the problem might be. When the manager came over, he asked “sir, didn’t you order a cab for 7pm?” The evaluator said yes, and the manager indicated that the waiter had, in fact, brought a “cab” to the table at the requested time of 7pm. The only thing was—the evaluator wanted a taxi cab, not a

glass of ‘cab’ernet! Talk about a miscommunication!

### It Could Happen to You

By Alfonso Hernandez

You’ve just flown into town from your respective city, you’ve checked into your hotel, and now you’re on your way to the pre-visit meeting followed by dinner. This could be your very first or your one-hundredth time performing this ritual as you pile into the elite soccer mom van with your fellow team members. Soon you find yourself riding off into the early evening to experience the unknown city’s cuisine in all of its glory.

Upon entering the restaurant everyone sits down at the table and prepares for a feast. Usually at the head of the table he lurks, listens, and waits as he decides who at the table will receive the unexpected disruption this evening. Then the unthinkable happens abruptly which causes an infectious, uncontrolled, and unforeseen enjoyment in everyone who is gathered around the table.



Be advised that you might fall prey to the infamous “Surprise Birthday” celebration. It may happen when you least suspect it so be prepared for a free slice of cake or ice cream, and definitely a classic rendition of “Happy Birthday to You....” courtesy of the restaurant and your Accreditation Coordinator, Alfonso Hernández.

This article relies on submissions from staff and evaluators. If you wish, please share one of your “stories from the road” with our Evaluator Management Team for possible inclusion in the next newsletter. Please send any submissions to [iharazduk@acics.org](mailto:iharazduk@acics.org).

## Jennifer Gwatkin’s Departure

Dear Evaluators,

As many of you now know, I have left Suite 980 to pursue a new adventure with Kaplan Higher Education in Chicago. In 2006, when I accepted the position of Accreditation Coordinator, I sensed it was a special opportunity. Twelve travel cycles (a million airline miles and Marriott points) later, I can express with certainty and sincerity that I have grown immeasurably, professionally as well as personally. Thank you, friends and colleagues, for all that we have shared – including, but not limited to, laughs in locales I would never have visited had it not been for ACICS.

No “goodbye” here because I plan on saying “hello” again. In the words of Garrison Keillor, “Be well, do good work, and keep in touch.”

All my best,  
Jennifer  
Manager, Institutional Quality Assurance  
[jagwatkin@gmail.com](mailto:jagwatkin@gmail.com)



## Evaluator Training Workshop Participants

ACICS has successfully completed one more online Evaluator Training Workshops. The workshop consists of three pre-recorded modules and one live two-hour webinar. The live webinar is reserved for new evaluators who have completed the first three modules and is by invitation only. Please remember that the three pre-recorded sessions may be viewed by any and all evaluators. They are divided into separate sections that consist of 1) ACICS overview; 2) visit responsibilities; and 3) visit activities and exercises. Please take a gander at these modules on the ACICS Website under the **Events/Workshops** tab and the **Webinars** link. ACICS would also like to acknowledge the following new evaluators. These individuals attended an Evaluator Training Workshop since our last issue. Thank you.

Lori Cadotte

Kevin Davies

Betty Demers

Cariee Gibson

Roderick Harding

Stanley Hartgraves

Teresa Hottle

Juan Lopez

Candice Null

Raenalda Palmer

Sonya Phipps

Jamie Polovchena

Karlene Richardson

Laura Siegmann

Goran Trajkovski

Sheila Vandebush

*The Evaluator staff thanks all those who provide editorial and contextual feedback. We would like to pay special thanks to those who have contributed articles for this issue. The Evaluator is primarily maintained by Ian Harazduk, Senior Accreditation Coordinator, any questions or concerns about the publication may be directed to him at [iharazduk@acics.org](mailto:iharazduk@acics.org) or (202) 336-6795.*