# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### FROM THE AWARE WEBINAR

## Held on May 17, 2013

#### **Student Achievement Standards**

**QUESTION**: When you review student achievement from schools, are you looking at students' written assignments? **ANSWER**: If this question is referencing the method of verification for student achievement with respect to out-side class activities; schools can demonstrate compliance via grade sheets. If schools choose to maintain written assignments, a team could accept this as further evidence.

**QUESTION**: For the 2013 CAR, what are the required rates for retention, placement and licensure rates for campuses and programs respectively? We can find different information at the ACICS website. Thank you!!! **ANSWER:** The student achievement standards for the 2013 CAR are listed on the ACICS website and can be accessed by clicking on the "Accreditation" and "Student Achievement" tabs or by clicking this link: <a href="http://www.acics.org/accreditation/content.aspx?id=5022">http://www.acics.org/accreditation/content.aspx?id=5022</a>.

**QUESTION:** Are programs that fell below the standards of placement in the prior year's CAR held to meet the standard for that same CAR year for the following two years or are they now required to meet the 70% standard? **ANSWER:** Programs reported in the 2013 Campus Accountability Report are required to meet the student achievement standards for 2013. The student achievement standards for the 2013 CAR are listed on the ACICS website and can be accessed by clicking on the "Accreditation" and "Student Achievement" tabs or by clicking this link: <a href="http://www.acics.org/accreditation/content.aspx?id=5022">http://www.acics.org/accreditation/content.aspx?id=5022</a>.

#### **Campus Accountability Report**

**QUESTION:** We are having some debate over item 11 in the CAR referring to students that graduated. The statement is "As of the date this report was completed, how many of the students who completed or graduated were"... If a graduate is employed after graduation for a period of 6 months or so, however, at the time the report was completed they are not working do we count them as placed for the period they were working, or, not placed because they are not working on that exact date? Thanks for any clarification you can provide. **ANSWER:** If the graduate obtains a job and works for any amount of time, they are considered as placed.

**QUESTION:** Will graduated international students be counted in placement calculation? Either stay in USA or leave back to their countries? **ANSWER:** Students who are not eligible for placement in the United States because of visa restrictions are given an exemption status and are not calculated in the placement rate.

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#### **Proposed Criteria- Memorandum to the Field**

**QUESTION:** Section 2-2-501: Language about identical new programs offered at multiple campuses and the school's ability to submit a consolidated application has been removed. What is the best method to submit an identical program across multiple campuses now that the language has been removed? **ANSWER:** Logging on as the main campus will provide you with the ability to initiate for the main and any additional locations within that institutional structure. Logging on as the corporate will allow you to initiate applications for any main and additional locations under that corporate structure. If you need further assistance, please contact Ms. Susan Greer at <a href="mailto:sgreer@acics.org">sgreer@acics.org</a>.

**QUESTION:** In the proposed criteria for Distance Ed- Appendix H: what does it mean that "faculty hired to facilitate online instruction must be properly trained"? Is the institution expected to provide training or the faculty can come trained? **ANSWER**: The institution is expected to provide training for the faculty that they employ to teach online courses.

#### **Mitigating Circumstances**

QUESTION: Are programs that fell below the standards of placement in the prior year car held to meet the standard for that same car year for the following two years or are they now required to meet the 70% standard? ANSWER: All programs will be subject to the 2013 placement standards at the level of both the improvement benchmark and the compliance standard. Programs that fell below the 2012 improvement benchmark will have completed their requirements (program improvement plan, etc.) and need only respond to the 2013 standards and related requirements. However, programs that fell below the 2012 compliance standard must come into compliance with the 2012 standard within the established timeframe, as well as respond to any new requirements resulting from application of the 2013 standards. For example, programs at an institution whose longest program is a two-years have 24 months (until 2014) to come into compliance with that 2012 retention standard of 47%. They would then have an additional year (until 2015) to come into compliance with the 2013 standard of 60%.

**QUESTION:** What happens when programmatic accreditations calculate retention placement rates or pass rates differently than the ACICS standards do? **ANSWER:** A program that is accredited by a programmatic accreditor and by ACICS is subject to the standards of both accreditors. Programs that meet the retention or placement standard (or similar standards, however they are calculated) for a programmatic accreditor but fall below the ACICS retention or placement compliance standard, may request a waiver from the application of the ACICS standard by responding to the appropriate question on the CAR and submitting the appropriate documentation.

**QUESTION:** With regard to mitigating circumstances for student achievement, specifically with regard to nursing programs that are not separately accredited by a specialized or programmatic accreditor but are tightly regulated by their respective state Boards of Nursing, will you consider their standards with regard to retention, placement, etc.? For example, most Boards of Nursing expect you to withdraw students who are not "cutting it" and aren't, therefore, concerned with retention, but do expect 100% licensure passage and placement. Therefore, these programs tend to have lower retention but very high licensure and placement rates. **ANSWER:** If a program falls below the ACICS standard for retention because so many students are dropped prior to graduation for reasons which relate to the state board's standards, the school might submit that information for consideration by the Council as the basis for a waiver request under "Other Mitigating Circumstances." The request should be accompanied by a

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program improvement plan that might include consideration of raising entrance standards or providing a trial enrollment program or some other way of avoiding the situation where students are admitted, take out student loans to pay for their education, and then are dropped without having earned a credential necessary to obtain a job to pay off that debt.

**QUESTION:** Retention waiver --for items d, e, f, g in the Memorandum please provide what would be acceptable proof. **ANSWER:** Acceptable documentation that students demonstrate the traits required to be eligible for this retention waiver would include the results of a student survey; or in-person student interviews; or data from a student information system or financial aid database.

**QUESTION:** How is a student who attended a part-time term and a full-time term in the same academic year classified for the purposes of the retention waiver? **ANSWER:** Retention is determined on the basis of the enrollment status of a student at the end of the reporting period. If the student is "still enrolled," regardless of whether that enrollment is full-time or part-time, the student is not counted as a "withdrawal." Only if students officially withdraw are they counted as withdrawals, and only withdrawals will lower the retention rate. If students who withdraw during the reporting period and then re-enroll prior to November 1 are sufficient in numbers that they would raise the school's retention rate above the ACICS standard, then the school would quality for a waiver, regardless of whether these students reenrolled as full-time or part-time.

**QUESTION:** Does ACICS currently publish the one standard deviation range of budget ratios at this time? Where can this information be found? **ANSWER:** ACICS will publish the average and standard deviation of operating (budget) ratios in the 2013 Key Operating Statistics. These statistics will be available for reference by schools that request a particular mitigating circumstance for the second time as part of the 2014 CAR.

**QUESTION:** Mitigating Circumstance #3 states "In addition, the improvement plan for any subsequent year's submission must document that the placement of all students from the previous year is above the ACICS compliance standard." Since this refers to "subsequent" years, this will not be required until the 2014 CAR, correct? **ANSWER:** Yes, the improvement plan for a waiver request from the Placement standard in the 2014 CAR that is based upon a mitigating circumstance which was also cited in the 2013 CAR must document the placement of all graduates and completers from the 2013 CAR.

#### **Placement Verification Program**

**QUESTION:** How can a school become a testing site of the beta testing of the placement verification program? **ANSWER:** Schools interested in volunteering for participation in the beta test program can contact Ms. Sarah Frazier at sfrazier@acics.org.

**QUESTION:** Under the Documentation for nontraditional employment "business licenses" is listed first. Would a DBA (Doing Business As) form suffice for this requirement? Our self-employed populations are artists and they freelance most of the time. There is would be no business license for them to obtain. The "DBA" form is something that they have to file with the state they live in. This is the same as a fictitious name request. **ANSWER:** Yes, a DBA form would provide some verification of self-employment for artists. A description of exhibitions held, shows entered, works sold, etc., would also be helpful documentation.

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**QUESTION:** If you need to contact a student to verify employment what kind of documentation do we as a school need to provide? **ANSWER:** Using the new ACICS definition of placement, a school should verify employment based either on the student's job title, the skills required by the student's job, or the student's attestation of the benefit of the program to obtaining or maintaining a job. The school will be required to provide a standard set of basic data to document each placement. Additional documentation will be useful, but not required, to resolve any discrepancies that arise during the verification process. Information about required and desired documentation will be provided as the Placement Verification Program is designed and developed.

**QUESTION:** Is an employment verification valid if there is no wage information provided by either the student or company? **ANSWER:** The ACICS definition of placement requires a position to be paid. Information about wages, per say, is not required

**QUESTION:** In the statement: "The student attests to the benefit of the training received as a catalyst in obtaining or maintaining the position". Can it be interpreted as obtaining the job AFTER graduation or must it be a job the graduate had prior to graduation? **ANSWER:** A student may attest to the benefit of training in obtaining a position where employment begins after graduation and prior to the end of the reporting period. A student may also attest to the benefit of training in obtaining or maintaining a position where employment begins after enrollment and prior to graduation. Finally, a student may attest to the benefit of training in maintaining a position that was obtained prior to enrollment.

**QUESTION:** Until the independent verification system is implemented, is a student's written attestation - i.e. by email or in a survey response -- that they are employed in a related field sufficient for them to be designated as placed? **ANSWER:** A student attestation that the training in their program benefitted them in obtaining or maintaining employment is sufficient to meet the new definition for purposes of the 2013 CAR. The Placement Verification Program will issue a Student Attestation Template that will be required for use beginning with the start of the new reporting period on July 1, 2013.

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