



## **Eligibility Filing Contents**

*For Eligibility Filings submitted prior to April 2019*

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Institutions that submitted an Eligibility Filing prior to April 2019 should follow the format described in this document when providing updated versions of their filing. Institutions are asked to provide an updated Eligibility Filing during the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy, biennial evaluation and comprehensive evaluation for initial accreditation.

The completed Eligibility Filing introduces the reader to the institution and addresses each eligibility requirement as indicated below. The Eligibility Filing should be submitted as three searchable, **bookmarked** electronic files (PDFs) in accordance with the attached instructions.

- PDF 1: Description of the institution and written statement
- PDF 2: Evaluative narrative addressing the Eligibility Requirements
- PDF 3: Required documentation for the Eligibility Requirements

The institution should include only information that is specified as required documentation in the Eligibility Filing. The institution should submit those documents once, and mark the appropriate sections that refer to the specific Eligibility Requirement.

### **Description of the Institution (PDF 1)**

In the first document, the institution provides a complete description of the entity that is seeking status with the Commission. This description must include information about the institution's corporate structure; governance; credit and non-credit programs; campuses and additional locations; distance delivery, if offered; and any accreditation history with the Commission or other institutional or specialized accrediting agency.

In addition, the description must include information about contractual and consortial arrangements, as well as information on parent or related entities, corporations, or programs, etc., even if those entities, corporations, or programs are not part of the entity seeking Commission status.

Finally, the description must identify any changes in the information provided as preliminary evidence for the pre-application interview with the Commission. Note that the institution must make clear whether it is seeking system accreditation for a multi-corporate structure involving multiple institutions or seeking accreditation for a single corporate structure involving only one institution. The Commission will make the final decision on whether the requested scope of accreditation is appropriate.

The Commission's review and status, if granted, **will encompass** all the institution's academic programs, locations offering instruction, learning modalities, etc. The Commission's review and status, if granted, **will not** encompass auxiliary operations such as hospital, bookstore, alumni foundation, etc., even if such entities are part of the single corporate structure seeking accreditation.

The institution includes with this section a written statement signed by the CEO and the Chair of the Board certifying that all the information is truthful and complete and that the institution will begin to abide by the Obligations of Affiliation as soon as it receives permission to schedule an on-site evaluation.

## **Eligibility Requirements: Evaluative Narrative and Required Documentation**

### **Eligibility Requirement 1. Jurisdiction of the Commission**

The institution falls within the Commission's jurisdiction as defined in the Commission's Bylaws (Article III). The Commission extends accreditation and candidacy for accreditation to higher education institutions that are 1) incorporated in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, or operating under federal authority within these states, and 2) have substantial presence, as defined in Commission policy, within these states.

#### **Definition:**

Related entity - An entity is a related entity relative to the applying institution if (a) the two entities have (i) significant common purposes and substantial common membership or (ii) directly or indirectly substantial common direction or control; or (b) either entity owns (directly or through one or more entities) a 50 percent or greater interest in the capital or profits of the other. For this purpose, entities treated as related entities under the preceding paragraph shall be treated as one entity.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Identify the institution's state of incorporation and other states in which the institution is registered to do business but is not incorporated.
  - 1) If the institution is seeking system accreditation for multiple corporate institutions, identify the state of incorporation for each of those corporations.
  - 2) Identify states in which these corporations are registered to do business but are not incorporated.
- b. Describe any corporate parent, controlling organizations, subsidiaries or other related entities and identify the state of incorporation for all such entities. (See the Definition noted above.)
- c. Complete the [Substantial Presence Worksheet](#), to provide information about where the institution conducts its activities.

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Articles of Incorporation and certificate of registration from the state of incorporation. Evidence of registration to do business in other states where the institution is registered but not incorporated.
- b. Articles of incorporation and certificate of registration for all parent corporations, controlling organizations, subsidiaries, or other entities.

- c. Documentation supporting the institution's claims that it meets the Commission's jurisdictional requirements. Such documentation may include bank statements, tax records, leases or mortgages, bills, letterhead, or other documents that formally establish where certain activities of the institution are taking place.

## **Eligibility Requirement 2. Legal Status**

The institution is appropriately authorized in each of the states, sovereign nations, or jurisdictions in which it operates to award degrees, offer educational programs, or conduct activities as an institution of higher education. At least one of these jurisdictions must be in the HLC region.

### **Commission Commentary:**

All of the Commission's affiliations are built on the foundation that a state or other governmental entity authorizes the institution's educational activity prior to its seeking affiliation with the Commission. To be affiliated with the Commission, an institution providing higher learning must hold all appropriate legal authorizations for its higher education activities. This includes appropriate state authority or, in some cases, authorization from sovereign entities or the federal government, to operate and to offer educational programs and grant degrees. Institutions that operate in multiple states or nations must have appropriate operating authority in each.

### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. List all locations in which the institution conducts educational activities, including distance delivery and other related activity, and provide a brief description of those activities.
- b. Explain the process the institution has employed to assure that each location, program, or activity is operating in accordance with appropriate laws regulating corporations and higher education activities in that state.
- c. For each state in which the institution has sufficient presence to trigger state review, identify the agency or statutory provision that grants the institution legal authority to award degrees, offer programs, or operate as an institution of higher education in each location or by distance delivery. Identify and explain any previous, pending, or final state actions to limit, suspend, or terminate legal status, degree awards, or program or other authority.
- d. Identify the corporate status of the institution as private not-for-profit; public; tribally-controlled; or privately-owned or publicly-traded for-profit.

### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Operating Authority including required location/distance delivery approvals. Documents from those governmental agencies notifying the institution of its authorization to operate at each location. Include documentation of authorization for distance delivery in the state where the institution has its main campus or, for institutions that have no on ground campus or other locations, its principal business office, as well as from other states where the institution is required by state law or regulations to be authorized.
- b. Program Authority. Documents notifying the institution that it holds appropriate legal authorization to offer programs and grant its certificates, diplomas, and degrees at each location. Include documentation of authorization for programs offered by distance delivery in the state where the institution has its main campus or, for institutions that have no on-ground campus or other locations, its principal business office, as well as from other states where the institution is required by state law or regulations to be authorized.
- c. Standing. If any state has limited, suspended, or terminated the institution's legal status or degree-granting authority within the last five years or if such action is or has been pending against the institution, a copy of any state analyses outlining state findings relevant to the action or pending action, and a recent (i.e., no older than 90 days before the submission of the Eligibility Filing) letter from the appropriate state entity providing current information regarding the institution's current status with that entity.

- d. Articles of incorporation or charter and DBA licenses for states in which the institution operates but is not incorporated.

### **Eligibility Requirement 3. Governing Board**

The institution has an independent governing board that possesses and exercises the necessary legal power to establish and review the basic policies that govern the institution.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

As a corporation, an institution of higher learning holds a charter or articles of incorporation from the legal authority specified in the first eligibility requirement. These documents identify the governing body responsible for overseeing the integrity of the corporation. Usually bylaws and other documents created and adopted by the governing body establish the rules by which that body exercises its authority and the institution's structures for internal governance and administration. Effective governance and administrative structures enable an institution of higher learning to realize its mission.

Governance is the process through which broad policies are established by the governing body to ensure the institutional and educational integrity of the corporation. Those who serve on the board protect the institution's integrity by understanding the corporation's role in serving the public good, by honoring the important distinction between governance and administration, and by making informed decisions free from obvious conflict of interest. Moreover, the board meets regularly enough to discharge its responsibilities effectively. The board adheres to binding policies it creates for its own work.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the governing structures of the institution and how they relate to one another. Include an overview of the board, officers, administration, and faculty senate or other faculty body that provides the faculty voice in governance. Outline the process by which these groups work together to make decisions for the institution.
- b. Identify the sections of the bylaws and any other legal documents that give to the board of the institution seeking status authority and provide sufficient autonomy to:
  - exercise the duty of loyalty and the duty of care
  - establish and review basic policies, including those that address conflict of interest among the board and administration
  - ensure the financial integrity of the institution by approving the operating budget and the external financial audit
  - hire, evaluate, and dismiss the chief executive officer
  - meet regularly
  - assure access to information necessary for the board to make sound judgments

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws, and any other legal documents that enumerate the governing board's powers and responsibilities.
- b. Articles of incorporation and bylaws for parent or other related corporations.
- c. Organizational chart showing the governing board's relationship to the administrative structures of the institution and to the governing board(s) of any related corporations.
- d. List of the institution's board members and their terms of office. The list should include brief biographical information for each board member. The list should identify any board member whose involvement with the

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institution includes employment, ownership, familial or contractual relationships, or who is involved in the board of a parent or other related corporation.

- e. A comparable list to that above for members of the board of any parent, subsidiary or other related entity.
- f. Verification (e.g., minutes of board meetings and policy statements) that the board actually fulfills its enumerated responsibilities.
- g. Minutes for the last three meetings of the institution's governing board.

### **Eligibility Requirement 4. Stability**

The institution demonstrates a history of stable operations and consistent control during the two years preceding the submission of the Eligibility Filing (formerly known as the Preliminary Information Form or PIF).

#### **Commission Commentary:**

The Commission expects institutional stability in corporate form, ownership, academic outreach, and finances in the two years immediately preceding the submission of the Eligibility Filing as well as during the visit process through the award of candidate for accreditation status. Once status is granted, institutional changes in such areas require prior review and approval from the Commission.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Provide a history of the institution's ownership during the past two years. Identify whether the institution has undertaken any of the following transactions related to the institution or some or all of its assets or related to a parent or subsidiary of the institution: sale or transfer; merger or consolidation; stock transactions of any kind; change of corporate form (e.g., for-profit to nonprofit, nonprofit to LLC, etc.); or transfer of operational or academic control to third-party. Identify any anticipated changes of this nature.
- b. Explain the nature of the institution's operations during the past two years tracing any growth or expansion in enrollment, academic programs, physical locations, and delivery modalities. Discuss any previous or anticipated move of the main campus or headquarters of the institution and anticipated change or growth in any of the above areas.
- c. Identify and explain any changes in mission during the past two years or anticipated changes in mission.
- d. Provide an overview of the institution's financial situation, including its income and expenses, short-term and long-term debt, and cash flow during the past two years, and its anticipated financial health in the near future.

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. List of degree programs, campuses, and additional locations. Identify the date of initiation for each item, and for campuses and additional locations, identify the address of each item.
- b. Audited financial statements for the previous two academic years.
- c. List of all owners, investors, and officers in the previous two years and their ownership interest.
- d. Contract of merger, sale, or transfer for any transaction identified in the narrative for this Requirement.

### **Eligibility Requirement 5. Mission Statement**

The institution has a statement of mission approved by its governing board and appropriate for a degree-granting

institution of higher education. The mission defines the nature and purpose of the higher learning provided by the institution and the students for whom it is intended.

**Commission Commentary:**

An institution's statements of mission include the mission statement and statements of vision, values, goals, and institutional priorities, as appropriate for the institution's needs and plans. Together, these statements describe the institution of higher learning by defining the institution's character; educational programs and their purposes; students; constituencies; and place in the broader community of higher learning. The institution's board approves these statements of mission. They are available, particularly to current and prospective students, as public documents.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Identify the statements of mission, the dates they were approved by the board, and the means by which they are made public and available to students.
- b. Explain how the statements of mission address:
  - the nature of the higher learning provided by the institution
  - the purposes of that learning
  - the students for whom that learning is intended
  - the constituencies (including geographic area) to be served by the institution
  - the institution's place within the broader higher learning community

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Statements of mission of the institution including, either separately or together:
  - mission statement
  - vision statement
  - values statement
  - goals statement
  - statement of institutional priorities
- b. Statement of how the statements of mission depict the institution's commitment to preparing students for their professional and civic lives.
- b. Minutes of the governing board's meeting(s) in which the statements of mission were formally adopted.
- c. Documents in which the statements of mission are made public. If the documents are published electronically, provide their URLs.

**Eligibility Requirement 6. Educational Programs**

The institution has educational programs that are appropriate for an institution of higher education. The Commission may decline to evaluate an institution for status with the Commission if the institution's mission or educational programs fall outside areas in which the Commission has demonstrated expertise or lacks appropriate standards for meaningful review.

In appropriate proportion, the institution's programs are degree granting and involve coursework provided by the institution, establishing the institution's commitment to degree-granting higher education.

The institution has clearly articulated learning goals for its academic programs and has strategies for assessment in place.

The institution:

- maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (15 semester credits for AAS degrees, 24 for AS or AA degrees, and 30 for bachelor's degrees) or through integrated, embedded, interdisciplinary, or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any exceptions are explained and justified.
- has a program of general education that is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts common knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess. The institution clearly and publicly articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its general education program.
- conforms to commonly accepted minimum program length: 60 semester credits for associate's degrees, 120 semester credits for bachelor's degrees, and 30 semester credits beyond the bachelor's for master's degrees. Any exception to these minima must be explained and justified.
- meets the federal requirements for credit ascription described in the Commission's Federal Compliance Guide.

**Commission Commentary:**

The Commission expects an institution seeking affiliation to focus its attention on its degree programs in fields appropriate for higher education even though it also may offer certificate or diploma programs. In addition, the Commission expects that such an institution will provide the majority of its required or elective coursework itself, rather than outsourcing such coursework to third parties. This requirement does not preclude the institution from accepting transfer courses or granting credit for other documented prior learning the student has gained.

Special purpose institutions or those with programs in very new fields must make clear how their programs relate to existing programs currently offered at institutions of higher education and general acceptance by higher education and by society of the new field or discipline. The Commission may determine that institutions with such programs are outside the scope of its expertise, and may decline to review such institutions on that basis. If the field requires a license to practice and there is no USDE- or CHEA-recognized accreditor for that field, then the field does not meet the Commission's test as a recognized field.

An affiliated institution must ensure that its students have ready access to electronic and/or print documents that define all program requirements. The institution's catalog typically serves this function.

Degree requirements should follow common practice in relation to the credential offered. Required program length is typically expressed either in credits earned or in competencies demonstrated. (NOTE that the Commission cannot act as a gatekeeper accrediting agency for Title IV purposes for institutions that are competency-based only.)

All undergraduate degrees testify to a commonly understood balance between breadth and depth of studies. Breadth of study is characteristically accomplished through general education while depth of study is informed by the academic and professional expectations in the specific field of study.

To contribute to their professional, religious, or civic communities, graduates of an institution of higher learning must acquire breadth of knowledge and when appropriate, skills appropriate to professional practice. They should understand the need for and be capable of life-long learning. They should be prepared to be creative members of societies marked by diversity and change. In undergraduate education, breadth of learning is best achieved through required general education in every degree program.

Required learning outcomes need to be appropriate to the degree level of the program and reflective of the academic and professional expectations of the field. Learning outcomes need to be sufficiently concise to enable the development of sound assessment practices.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the validity of the institution's academic programs in relation to their length, credit hours, content, contact hours, assignments, and learning outcomes.
- b. Explain how the institution's educational programs are in fields that are appropriate for higher education including how they relate to fields of study currently offered in U.S. higher education, whether such fields are generally studied at other institutions of higher education accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and whether such fields are accepted or recognized by employers, state governments, licensing entities, etc.
- c. If the institution outsources any of its academic programs to another entity, provide information about that entity, including whether the entity is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for Title IV purposes; the entity's responsibilities relative to the academic programming (e.g., delivering courses, selecting faculty, recruiting, etc.); and how the institution assures the quality of the services or content provided by the other entity.
- d. Explain the institution's policies and processes, if any, for acceptance of transfer credit and recognition of prior learning; include the percentage of credits students may apply through these processes to any degree or certificate awarded by the institution.
- e. Show how the institution's undergraduate programs integrate effective general education appropriate in length and content as well as appropriate to the institution's mission. Explain the purpose, philosophy, and established framework for the general education, as well as its content and required learning outcomes. If the institution offers only graduate programs, explain how the institution ensures that its matriculants have completed appropriate general education as undergraduates.
- f. Provide the stated, required learning outcomes for each program and explain how they are appropriate and sufficiently rigorous for that program.
- g. Explain how the stated, required learning outcomes ensure that graduates are prepared for their professional and civic lives; explain how the institution assesses whether students are meeting those learning outcomes.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Catalog or other official documents that outline the institution's academic program requirements, course descriptions, and learning outcomes for each academic program. (If the documents are electronic, provide their URLs.)
- b. Documents that demonstrate that the institution's educational programs are in fields that are found among the degree offerings of other accredited institutions of higher education and are widely accepted by employers, state governments, etc.
- c. Documents outlining the institution's program to assess student learning (e.g., advisory committee minutes, program documents, summary of assessment results, etc.).
- d. Documents that demonstrate how the institution understands general education and integrates general education into undergraduate degree programs.
- e. Policies on transfer and recognition of prior learning.
- f. Contracts regarding the outsourcing of some or all of any academic program offered by the institution to another entity.



### **Eligibility Requirement 7. Information to the Public**

The institution makes public its statements of mission, vision, and values; full descriptions of its program requirements; its requirements for admission both to the institution and to particular programs or majors; its policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to degree requirements; clear and accurate information on all student costs, including tuition, fees, training and incidentals, and its policy on refunds; its policies regarding good standing, probation, and dismissal; all residency requirements; and grievance and complaint procedures.

The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its accreditation status with national, specialized, and professional accreditation agencies as well as with the Higher Learning Commission, including a clear distinction between candidate or accredited status and an intention to seek status.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

The Commission requires that an institution's publications—usually the catalog and student handbook—provide reliable information on admissions, credit transfer, costs and refunds, financial aid and the accreditation status of the institution. It is imperative that the documents are clear, accurate, useful, and easily accessible to the reader.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Provide an overview of the institution's procedures to ensure information for current and prospective students and the public is current and complete.
- b. Provide the rationale the institution gives students for its stated policies and procedures on transfer of credit.
- c. Explain any admission requirements, costs, and refund policies that apply only to a specific program or group of programs.
- d. Provide an overview of the institution's academic policies, including policies on academic standing, probation, and dismissal, and an overview of grievance/complaint procedures; explain how these policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated by the institution.

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Current catalog, student handbook, and other relevant materials distributed to prospective and enrolled students or their parents; highlight the required statements. (If these documents are electronic, provide the URLs.)
- b. List of the institution's current affiliations with national, regional, and specialized accrediting bodies and state agencies, including the status of those and any other similar recognitions or relationships during the preceding five years.
- c. Documents that define any unique relationships or restrictions with state or federal financial aid programs.

### **Eligibility Requirement 8. Financial Capacity**

The institution has the financial base to support its operations and sustain them in the future. It demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, including appropriate debt levels.

The institution:

- has a prepared budget for the current year and the capacity to compare it with budgets and actual results of previous years; and
- undergoes external financial audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency. The audit is annual for private institutions; it is at least every two years for public institutions. (Institutions under federal

control are exempted provided that they have other reliable information to document the institution's fiscal resources and management.)

**Commission Commentary:**

Affiliation with the Commission is based, in part, on the institution's longer-term financial stability. Therefore, the Commission carefully weighs the institution's financial capacity when it makes decisions about candidacy and accreditation.

Essential to demonstrating financial capacity is an institution's financial audit. An independent party should conduct this audit on a regular schedule: for private institutions the audit is conducted yearly, for public institutions the audit is conducted at least every other year. The audit provides confirmation that the institution's statement of financial condition is fairly presented. If the institution is a component of a larger entity that has a consolidated audit, that entity's audit must include a section of "Supplemental Information" testifying to the financial activity of the higher learning institution. While an audit may be a useful management tool, it is also a key tool for sharing financial information with the institution's constituencies.

The institution's history of budgeting may also show both financial capacity and a pattern of resource allocation. The budget history should demonstrate adequate financial investment in the institution's educational programs and the services that support them.

Demonstrating future financial capacity is done through evidence of past and current financial capacity and through documentation of sound accounting and management practices. Unreasonable debt loads, significant cash-flow problems, or the use of reserves to balance budgets are common indicators of inadequate financial capacity.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Provide an account of the institution's audit practices and audit history.
- b. Explain the budgeting process at the institution and evaluate the institution's recent history (three years) of budgeting. Compare budgeted income and expenses against actual income and expenses.
- c. Identify the institution's expenditures directly related to the support of the educational programs.
- d. If appropriate, document and explain the resolution of any operating losses in the last three years.
- e. Identify the board's policies on use of reserves and endowment and its practices for reviewing and approving the budget and audit.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Two most recent financial audits for the institution. If the institution is part of a larger corporate entity with a consolidated audit, provide the "Supplemental Information" for the higher learning institution from the audit of the larger corporate entity. The "Supplemental Information" must be sufficiently particularized to evaluate the institution's income, expenses, and allocation of financial support for its major expenditures.
- b. Three years of comparative budgets: the last fiscal year, the current fiscal year, and projections for the next fiscal year. The institution should include relevant notes about basic assumptions underlying the budgets.
- c. Cash-flow analyses for the past two years.
- d. Institution's Primary Reserve Ratio. The Primary Reserve Ratio is calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Expendable Net Assets}}{\text{Total Expenses}}$$

- e. Board policies on fiscal oversight and the use of reserves and endowments.

### **Eligibility Requirement 9. Administration**

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by its governing board.

The institution has governance and administrative structures that enable it to carry out its operations.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

Administration is the process of implementing the broad policies set by the governing board. The board appoints a chief executive officer for the institution and formally grants to that person responsibility for administrative leadership of the institution. In consultation with the governing board or its executive committee, the chief executive officer appoints administrative officers, oversees the administrative structures of the institution, and is accountable for their effectiveness. The administration functions using policies that are regularly reviewed and updated by the institution.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Identify the sections of the bylaws and other legal documents that outline:
  - the duties and responsibilities of the chief executive officer
  - the source of the chief executive officer's authority to implement board policies and administer the daily activities of the institution
  - the accountability of the chief executive officer for effective administration of the institution
- b. Explain the existing working and reporting relationships between the governing board and the administration.
- c. Explain the faculty administrative structures and how the faculty conducts its administrative work.

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Organizational chart that depicts the institution's governance and administrative structures.
- b. Job description for the chief executive officer and for senior administrators, including the provost, chief academic officer, and chief financial officer.
- c. Name and title of the chief executive officer and other senior administrators, brief biographical information for each one, the minutes of the meeting in which the CEO was appointed and the effective date of the appointment.
- d. Administrative policies of the institution.
- e. Faculty constitution or other document that outlines faculty administrative and governance structures.

### **Eligibility Requirement 10. Faculty and Other Academic Personnel**

The institution employs faculty and other academic personnel appropriately qualified and sufficient in number to support its academic programs.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

Qualified academic personnel are those people who, through formal education or through proven experience, know what students must learn to earn the degree the students are seeking. These qualified academic personnel, therefore, hold primary responsibility for curriculum, program development, and instruction. They are responsible for the quality of both content and delivery in all curricular offerings, and the evaluation of learning achieved through them.

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It is important that the academic staff is of sufficient size and capability to create and support learning environments, whether on campus or off, for appropriately rigorous higher learning.

While most institutions find that they achieve the goal of this requirement best through having a core of full-time faculty, other structures for academic personnel may be justified by documenting how they achieve the multiple goals of this requirement.

### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Identify the faculty and academic personnel at the institution, and provide the official definitions of their roles and responsibilities.
- b. Describe the structures and processes through which faculty and academic personnel discharge their academic responsibilities, including setting and reviewing curriculum, teaching, developing assessment strategies and programs, conducting academic program review, and reviewing assessment results.
- c. Describe the process for hiring and reviewing faculty and academic personnel, including the process for establishing faculty and other academic job descriptions and required qualifications and for reviewing performance. Identify by position the individuals involved in those processes.
- d. Describe how academic personnel exercise appropriate oversight over all of the institution's educational offerings regardless of the modality or location of delivery.

### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Faculty handbook, labor contract, faculty constitution, or other appropriate documents in which faculty roles, structures, and processes are outlined.
- b. Job descriptions for faculty and academic positions.
- c. List of all full-time, part-time, and adjunct academic personnel and the credentials or experience that qualify each for her/his responsibilities (include departmental assignment, courses taught, and level of instruction). The list should identify all earned degrees, fields of study, and the institutions that issued them. Documentation of experiential credentials must include evidence of publicly-recognized professional competence.
- d. Current faculty-student ratio by program or department.
- e. Sample of selected minutes of meetings of the faculty structures through which oversight is exercised.
- f. Documents defining the role of academic personnel in distance education and for oversight of off-campus offerings.

## **Eligibility Requirement 11. Learning Resources**

The institution owns or has secured access to the learning resources and support services necessary to support the learning expected of its students (research laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, etc.).

### **Commission Commentary:**

Effective learning calls for access to appropriate learning resources and support services. These may differ according to the nature of diverse programs and the student body. Therefore, how they are made available to enrolled students may vary across types of institutions of higher learning and types of programs provided by those institutions. For example, vocational-technical programs will require access to different types of workshops and laboratories than four-year liberal arts colleges will need for their programs. All institutions must provide access to

appropriate library resources that are broadly defined to include information networks and computer databases as well as print media.

Increasingly, colleges and universities choose to outsource or share some of their learning resources. When the institution does not own these resources and services, it must show how its students have regular and dependable access to them.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the learning resources the institution makes available to its students and how those resources support the curriculum and mission of the institution.
- b. Provide evidence of access to learning resources specific to individual degree programs (e.g., language laboratories, rehearsal halls, computer laboratories, internships, practicums).
- c. Document how the institution assures that students who study at a distance have access to appropriate learning resources.
- d. If a contractual partner provides learning resources, explain how the institution assures the quality of those resources and how well they support the students.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Inventory of learning resources for students.
- b. Documents that explain for students, regardless of their location, the learning resources available to them (i.e., student handbooks, catalog, orientation materials).
- c. Contracts or agreements for outsourced or shared learning.

**Eligibility Requirement 12. Student Support Services**

The institution makes available to its students support services appropriate for its mission, such as advising, academic records, financial aid, and placement.

**Commission Commentary:**

The Commission expects that institutions provide certain support services to all students, including admissions, registration, financial aid, and career counseling, as well as academic advising, although the modes of access to those services will vary. The Commission anticipates that institutions with on ground programs may provide certain other support services, such as housing, student health services, and full meal services. Institutions with online programs will likely offer other types of student support services appropriate to this method of delivery.

Increasingly, colleges and universities may choose to outsource or share some of their support services. When the institution does not own these resources and services, it must show how its students have regular and dependable access to them.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the support services the institution makes available to its students and how these resources support the curriculum and mission of the institution.
- b. Provide evidence of access to services specific to individual degree programs (e.g., language laboratories, rehearsal halls, computer laboratories, internships, practicums).

- c. Provide evidence of how the institution assures access to support services for students who study at a distance.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Inventory of support services for students.
- b. Evidence that the institution provides students, including those studying at a distance, with information about support services available to them (e.g., advising, career counseling, registrar) and how they access those services.
- c. Contracts or agreements for outsourced support services.

**Eligibility Requirement 13. Planning**

The institution demonstrates that it engages in planning with regard to its current and future business and academic operations.

**Commission Commentary:**

Institutions of higher learning exist in a social and economic context of perpetual change. To meet that challenge, planning should be a priority of the governing board and integral to the effective administration of the institution. An institution seeking affiliation with the Commission should also have a good understanding of changes it must successfully implement to achieve and maintain accreditation. Therefore, its plans should give evidence that it has a realistic grasp of the time and resources required to achieve accreditation.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the institution's structures, processes, and schedule(s) for short-term and long-term planning. Include information about strategic planning as well as planning related to business and academic operations.
- b. Explain how planning and goal-setting link to the institution's mission.
- c. Evaluate the institution's record of planning and accomplishment of goals identified in planning.
- d. Explain how the institution utilizes data derived from assessment of student learning and related processes to inform planning.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Basic planning documents for the institution.
- b. Documentation that planning is an ongoing activity (e.g., minutes of planning meetings, formally adopted plans).

**Eligibility Requirement 14. Policies and Procedures**

The institution has appropriate policies and procedures for its students, administrators, faculty, and staff.

**Commission Commentary:**

The internal constituents of the institution should have ready access, through electronic or print media, to all statements of policy, procedure, rights and responsibilities that pertain to them. These statements include, but are not limited to, commitment to freedom of intellectual inquiry; codes of behavior; codes of belief; grading policies; complaint processes; appeals processes; dismissal policies; hiring, promotion, and firing policies; policies on discrimination and harassment; and statements of student and employee rights. Often these statements are compiled

in handbooks or policy books for each constituency. Some, such as honor codes, may require that students indicate that they have read and agree to abide by the codes. In institutions with collective bargaining, the contract might include much of the relevant information.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the processes by which the institution creates and disseminates the policies outlined in this requirement. Identify by position those individuals who are involved in the process for creating new policy or procedure at the institution.
- b. Explain how policy is reviewed and updated on a regular basis and identify the administrator(s) responsible for policy implementation and review.
- c. Explain the institution's methods of tracking and addressing student complaints.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Current copies of the catalog, student handbook, and other relevant materials distributed to prospective and enrolled students and/or their parents, highlighting the required policies. (If these documents are electronic, provide the URLs.)
- b. Current copies of faculty and employee handbooks, highlighting the required policies. (Copies of collective bargaining contracts may also be appropriate documentation.) (If these documents are electronic, provide the URLs.)

**Eligibility Requirement 15. Current Activity**

The institution has students enrolled in its degree programs. (To be granted initial accreditation, the institution must have graduated students from at least one degree program.)

**Commission Commentary:**

The Commission accredits institutions that have degree-granting authority and have actually awarded degrees under that authority. For candidacy, most of the institution's degree programs must have students who are enrolled in them with the intention of earning a degree and who are actively participating in classes. (To achieve accreditation, an institution must have graduated students prior to the date of the action to accredit the institution; a single purpose institution must have graduated students in its principal program.)

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Provide the headcount of students in each degree and credit-bearing certificate program according to matriculation date and corresponding anticipated graduation date.
- b. If the institution has graduated students, provide a statistical summary of those graduates (numbers of students and programs completed) in each academic program.
- c. If some programs currently do not enroll students, provide timelines for expected enrollment.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. A copy of the degree (diploma) the institution will award (or currently awards) its graduates. If the institution has awarded degrees, provide samples of actual student transcripts documenting the award by the institution of degrees and actual degrees provided to students as well as a list of graduates for each of the previous three years.

- b. A list of all academic programs and enrollment information in each of those programs for each of the previous three years.

### **Eligibility Requirement 16. Integrity of Business and Academic Operations**

The institution has no record of inappropriate, unethical, and untruthful dealings with its students, with the business community, or with agencies of government. The institution complies with all legal requirements (in addition to authorization of academic programs) wherever it does business.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

The Commission anticipates that all affiliated institutions will handle their business and academic operations with integrity and will establish processes to ensure that they operate in compliance with the law. Evidence of extensive investigations or suits related to business or academic operations may indicate that the institution is not acting appropriately and ethically in the marketplace.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Outline the institution's processes for ensuring that it remains in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- b. If, at any time in the past ten years, the institution has been investigated by a state agency, the U.S. Department of Education, or other body relative to its dealing with students or other businesses, explain the circumstances and the outcomes of those investigations. If the institution or any current or former employee was charged or convicted in civil or criminal investigations, include that information.

#### **Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. List of lawsuits, investigations, or other activity related to the institution's academic programs, financial aid, recruiting or admissions, business operations, or other action including the official name of the suit or investigation, reviewing court, case number, and other identifying information. Disclose whether the case was settled or a judgment was rendered and the size of that settlement or judgment. Include any documents or pleadings that outline the original allegations in the case and any judicial or other opinions or other documents related to the disposition of the case. If the case is still in process, include documentation related to its current status.

### **Eligibility Requirement 17. Consistency of Description among Agencies**

The institution describes itself consistently to all accrediting and governmental agencies with regard to its mission, programs, governance, and finances.

#### **Commission Commentary:**

The Commission requires that every affiliated institution describe itself to the Commission in the same way that it describes itself to other accreditors. For example, if the institution describes itself as a master's degree-granting institution to another accrediting agency, it cannot seek accreditation with the Commission describing itself as a bachelor's degree-granting institution.

#### **Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the descriptions of institutional structure and operations the institution has provided to other accrediting agencies, to state agencies that have authorized the institution, and to the U.S. Department of Education, if the institution is receiving Title IV or has filed an application for eligibility.



**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Scope of accreditation status provided by any other accreditor that has granted the institution accreditation or any pre-accreditation status; scope of authorization provided by state agencies, as outlined under Eligibility Requirement #2; and descriptive information provided by the institution in its electronic application to the U.S. Department of Education. Account for any differences between the scope of the status and the description provided by the institution in Part 1 of this document.

**Eligibility Requirement 18. Accreditation Record**

The institution has not had its accreditation revoked and has not voluntarily withdrawn under a show-cause order or been under a sanction with another accrediting agency recognized by CHEA or USDE within the five years preceding the initiation of the Eligibility Process.

**Commission Commentary:**

The institution must approach the Commission with a record of good standing with any other accrediting agency with which the institution has or had a relationship.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Describe the relationship between the institution and any recognized accrediting agency. Indicate whether any agency has revoked or withdrawn accreditation or placed the institution on sanction or show-cause in the past five years. Also indicate whether the institution has voluntarily withdrawn or resigned from status with another accrediting agency or withdrawn an application for status and the circumstances of that withdrawal. Describe the accrediting actions or proposed accrediting action of each agency and the reasons for the action as identified by the agency.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. List of current and previous accreditation relationships within the past five years; include applications for status with another accreditor.
- b. If the institution holds institutional accreditation by another recognized accrediting agency, it should provide all materials issued by the other accreditor and the institution for all evaluations for initial or continued status within the past five years related to the action or the proposed action including the action letter, team report, institutional self-study or related document, institutional responses to the agency and letter of resignation if applicable. If the institution holds accreditation by one or more recognized specialized accrediting agencies for its educational programs, it should provide the team report and action letter for all evaluations for initial or continued status within the past five years from each agency. The Commission may choose to ask for additional documentation related to any of these evaluations or decisions.

**Eligibility Requirement 19. Good Faith and Planning to Achieve Accreditation**

The institution's governing board has authorized the institution to seek affiliation with the Commission and has indicated its intention, if affiliated with the Commission, to accept the Obligations of Affiliation.

The institution has a realistic plan for achieving accreditation with the Commission within the period of time set by Commission policy.

- If the institution offers programs that require specialized accreditation or recognition in order for its students to be certified or sit for licensing examinations, it either has the appropriate accreditation or discloses publicly and clearly the consequences of the lack thereof. The institution always makes clear to students the distinction between regional and specialized or program accreditation and the relationships

between licensure and the various types of accreditation.

- If the institution is predominantly or solely a single-purpose institution in fields that require licensure for practice, it demonstrates that it is also accredited by or is actively in the process of applying to a recognized specialized accrediting agency for each field, if such agency exists.

**Commission Commentary:**

An institution seeking candidacy with the Commission must have reasonable plans to gain accreditation within four years of the granting of candidacy by the Commission and the demonstrated capacity to achieve those plans. The institution must also demonstrate that, if affiliated with the Commission, it will abide by the Obligations of Affiliation and will be prepared to report on its compliance.

The Commission does not provide programmatic accreditation and therefore cannot vouch that any specialized or professional program provided by the institution meets professional or specialized expectations related to that discipline. Therefore, single purpose institutions, particularly those institutions in a specific professional field, must demonstrate that they are actively seeking affiliation with the specialized accrediting agency most closely related to the single purpose programs and that agency is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or CHEA.

**Evaluative narrative (PDF 2):**

- a. Explain the institution's planning process to ensure that it meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation in the next four-five years of candidacy.
- b. Identify the institution's status with an appropriate recognized specialized or professional accreditor (single purpose institutions) or explain institutional efforts to achieve such status while the institution is a candidate with the Commission.
- c. If the institution offers programs that require specialized accreditation or recognition in order for its students to be certified or sit for licensing examinations, provide evidence of how this is explained to current and prospective students, including the distinction between regional and specialized or program accreditation and the relationships between licensure and the various types of accreditation. If the institution lacks specialized or professional accreditation necessary for licensure in specific states, explain how students are informed about the requirements in those states.

**Required documentation (PDF 3):**

- a. Copy of the Board minutes where the institution's board acts to authorize the institution to seek status with the Commission.
- b. Plan for achieving accreditation with the Commission within four years.
- c. Disclosures to students explaining consequences of specific programs lacking specialized or professional accreditation.
- d. For single purpose institutions, the name of the specialized accreditor or accreditors most closely associated with the discipline of the programs offered by institution and the institution's status with that agency or plans to achieve status. 🌿