



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

## **ADVERTISING, STUDENT RECRUITMENT, AND REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS**

### **Policy Statement**

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

#### **Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature**

1. Educational programs and services offered by the institution are the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
2. All statements and representations are clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information is kept on file and readily available for review. In the case of programs that are awaiting SACSCOC approval and inclusion in the institution's accreditation, the institution's communication with both external and internal constituencies clearly and consistently represent the program(s) as "pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges."
3. An institution may choose to maintain its official publications electronically. If that is the case, the institution clearly designates the electronic version of these documents as official and develops policies and procedures for revising and archiving these documents.
4. Official publications are readily available and, where appropriate, accurately depict:
  - institutional purposes and goals
  - admission and enrollment requirements and procedures for all types of students (e.g., first-year, transfer students, dual enrollment, transient, etc.) and basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
  - general education requirements demonstrating that the general education component is at the collegiate level and (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. Publications incorporate the specific general education courses included in the three areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics. Publications include student options for selecting general education courses and, in particular, those considered pure humanities/fine arts to assure the courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion

- special programs, including international study, credit by examination or advanced placement
  - institutional facilities readily available for educational use
  - rules and regulations for conduct
  - tuition, fees, and other program costs, including any fees associated with verification of student identity related to distance or correspondence education
  - opportunities and requirements for financial aid
  - policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw
  - current academic calendars and grading policies
5. In official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information is provided on any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

### **Student Recruitment for Admissions**

1. Student recruitment is conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution is clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes are governed by the same principles as institutional employees.
3. Institutions are required to follow federal guidelines regarding compensation for student recruitment and admission activities.
4. Institutions avoid the following recruitment practices in order to comply with the *Principles of Accreditation* and U.S. Department of Education regulations:
  - a. assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified,
  - b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates,
  - c. misrepresenting program costs,
  - d. disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions,
  - e. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program, and
  - f. offering money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

### **Representation of Accredited Status**

1. The term "accreditation" is used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body.
2. No statement is made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible: "(Name of institution) has applied for candidacy with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges;" OR "The (program name) is being evaluated by the National Association of \_\_\_\_\_ and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future."
3. Any reference to state approval is limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.

4. The phrase “fully accredited” is not used, since partial accreditation is not possible.
5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it is stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement. (See Comprehensive Standard 3.14.1 in the *Principles of Accreditation*.)
6. The accredited status of a program is not misrepresented.
  - a. Accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like “this program is accredited,” or “this degree is accredited,” are incorrect and misleading.
  - b. “Free-standing” institutions offering programs in a single field (e.g., a school of art, engineering, or theology) and granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting body alone, clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.

**Document History**

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