

Date: April 23, 2025

Memo to: Chancellors, Superintendents, Presidents, and Accreditation Liaison Officers of ACCJC Member Institutions; Other Interested Parties

From: ACCJC President Mac Powell

Subject: Executive Order on Accreditation and Implications for Member Institutions

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to inform you of recent federal developments that could significantly impact the accreditation landscape and, by extension, our member institutions and the 2.5 million students we collectively serve.

President Trump today signed an Executive Order targeting federally recognized institutional accreditors. This action, which follows campaign statements about “firing the Radical Left accreditors,” raises critical questions about the future of accreditation, institutional autonomy, and access to federal financial aid.

Why This Matters

As the federally recognized gatekeeper for 138 member institutions, ACCJC plays a vital role in channeling Pell Grants, student loans, and research funding to eligible institutions. ACCJC accreditation ensures institutions meet rigorous academic standards and protects students and taxpayers from fraud and low-quality education.

The Executive Order includes efforts to:

- Streamline processes for institutions to change accreditors.
- Recognize new accreditors with potentially fewer safeguards.
- Remove barriers to innovation.
- Promote student achievement.
- Challenge diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) standards embedded in some accreditor standards and policies.

While we support innovation and thoughtful reform, any changes must preserve the essential protections accreditation provides to students, institutions, and the public.

Key Considerations

Recognizing New Accreditors:

We welcome the idea of increased options for institutions, provided all accreditors are held to consistent standards under the Higher Education Act. New entrants must demonstrate a commitment to quality, continuous improvement, and student protection.

Changing Accreditors

ACCJC and the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) have called for a more streamlined, transparent process for institutions in good standing wishing to change accreditors. However, reforms must not erode the safeguards that ensure quality and accountability.

DEI Standards

No accreditor mandates actions that conflict with federal or state law. ACCJC's Policy Committee has already begun a review of its Standards, Policies, and practices to align with evolving legal guidance, offering flexibility while maintaining institutional mission fidelity.

Accrediting New Institutions

ACCJC supports the growth of new institutions, provided they meet rigorous benchmarks. The current five-year pathway from candidacy to accreditation ensures new institutions can operate effectively and responsibly before receiving full recognition; in the past five years, ACCJC has accredited or granted candidacy to one rural public institution, one tribal institution, and two new faith-based institutions. We remain open to innovation and new members.

Institutional Accountability and Student Success

Contrary to claims of lax oversight, ACCJC has taken necessary action against institutions that fail to meet ACCJC Standards and has seen continued improvements across the membership in financial stability, completion rates, and compliance with ACCJC Eligibility Requirements.

ACCJC's rigorous Annual Monitoring of institutional performance across a number of critical student achievement and financial metrics highlights our commitment to supporting institutional and student success. Reporting requirements include graduation and retention rates, transfer performance, licensure passage rates, and other leading indicators of student success. The metrics are analyzed and reviewed via dynamic data dashboards, which provide transparent insights into how well ACCJC member institutions are serving students and where improvement may be needed.

In addition, we monitor key fiscal health indicators, including liquidity, reserves, and institutional stability measures, to ensure that member institutions are positioned to serve students well over time. This process not only supports our commitment to continuous improvement but also ensures timely engagement and accountability where needed—allowing ACCJC to uphold both public trust and the long-term viability of our institutions.

As part of its *Transparency, Storytelling, and Value Literacy Project*, ACCJC is engaged in the development of a student return on investment (ROI) and social mobility metric that can be used in accreditation processes and highlight the significant value ACCJC institutions provide to students and the public. In fall 2024, we published a white paper, [Navigating the Value Landscape for Accreditation](#), offering a summary and analysis of current initiatives that evaluate the value of college education and its long-term return on investment for students, and recommending a set of metrics and potential enhancements to existing metrics for use by ACCJC member institutions.

Our Commitment

ACCJC is committed to working collaboratively with the administration and Congress to ensure any reforms strengthen — not weaken — higher education. We advocate for:

- Negotiated rulemaking that brings multiple viewpoints to the table.
- Data-informed innovations that improve return on investment and reduce bureaucracy.
- Continued recognition of the accreditation system’s role in supporting quality and accountability.

We will continue to monitor developments and engage federal partners to maintain stability in the accreditation process and continued access to critical financial aid programs.

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