



December 12, 2016

Dear Colleague,

Today, the Secretary affirmed the Department's earlier determination that Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) is no longer recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. You can find a link to more information about the Department's decision and the Secretary's appeal ruling [here](#).

Institutions that have been using ACICS accreditation to establish eligibility for Title IV, student financial aid programs, are advised that the Secretary will continue their eligibility, with conditions, to participate in the programs for a period not to exceed 18 months from the date of the loss of recognition. By statute, as a result of ACICS's loss of recognition, all affected institutions will be placed on provisional certification until such time as they gain accreditation by another federally recognized accreditor, or the expiration of the 18-month period. Institutions that fail to meet the statutory deadline will lose Title IV eligibility. Even for schools that are in the process of obtaining another federally recognized accreditor, the Department reserves the right to end an institution's Title IV participation sooner, or to impose additional conditions, based on institution-specific characteristics, including financial responsibility and administrative capability.

The Department recognizes that an institution's obtaining new accreditation is a time consuming process. In the coming days, the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) will send all ACICS-accredited institutions a provisional program participation agreement (PPA) along with an Addendum of additional conditions for continued Title IV eligibility. These conditions serve to protect students and taxpayers in the absence of a federally recognized accreditor. Institutions will be required to send back the executed provisional PPA within 10 calendar days of receiving it to continue participating in Title IV. Please note that institutions must comply with some conditions within 30 calendar days of the Secretary's decision. You are strongly encouraged to view the summary of conditions that apply to all ACICS-accredited institutions seeking continued Title IV participation, available [here](#).

The longer an institution operates without oversight from a federally recognized accreditor, the greater the risk that institution presents to students and taxpayers. As such, as outlined in the conditions referenced above, FSA will track your institution's progress toward securing federally recognized accreditation. FSA will require your institution to meet additional conditions for Title IV participation in the event your institution does not meet certain milestones along the way, the first of which is having an In-Process Application with a federally-recognized accreditor within 90 calendar days of the Secretary's decision.

If you have any questions, or if you have started the process of seeking federally recognized accreditation and have not yet notified FSA of your intended accreditor, please contact your regional FSA representative. Institutions must notify FSA within 7 calendar days of submitting a letter of interest or intent, or a pre-workshop application, to a recognized accrediting agency.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn B. Muehl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Acting Assistant Secretary
for Postsecondary Education