



ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

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1.10.1. Distribution of Institutional Documents to Third Parties

The Commission on Secondary Schools considers institutional documents to be privileged information and the rightful property of CSS and the institution in question. Subject to lawful court order, the records of any present, prospective, or former institutional member of the Commission on Secondary Schools shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed outside the Commission without the prior written consent of the governing authority or the head of the institution concerned or where a Commission has adopted provisions with respect hereto. Information and documents about postsecondary institutions shall, in all cases, however, be shared with the United States Secretary of Education, state education departments, and other accrediting agencies, upon request.

1.10.2. Public Disclosure of Information by CSS About Member Institutions

Certain information will be made available to the public on those institutions that are members, candidates, or have sought membership with the Commission. This information shall be limited to the following:

- name and contact information for the institution
- chief administrative officer of the institution
- membership status, including probationary, limited, or removed accreditation status
- accreditation status; date of initial and date of last accreditation
- general description of Commission on Secondary Schools' actions
- due dates of accreditation maintenance activities
- the date of the next accreditation review

1.10.3. Withholding Information on Member Institutions

Upon advice of legal counsel, the Commission retains the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved.

1.10.4. Advertising and Reporting Candidate and Accredited Status by Member Institutions

All accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, are expected to exhibit integrity and responsibility in the advertising and presentation of candidate and accredited status. If an institution accredited by CSS elects to make public disclosure of its candidate or accredited status, it shall make all necessary efforts to ensure accurate and appropriate reporting as follows:

- Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
- All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current.
- Official publications should be readily available and accurately depict institutional purposes and objectives, admissions requirements and procedures, basic information on educational programs and services, graduation/completion requirements, rules and regulations for conduct, grading system and related policies, tuition, fees, and other program costs,

opportunities and requirements for financial assistance, and other institutional policies of interest to students.

- When accreditation is announced in institutional publications, it is to be accurately stated, including the identification of the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools, giving its name, address, and telephone number and indicating clearly the specific instructional programs and grade levels covered through the grant of accreditation.
- No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the Commission.
- The phrase "fully accredited" is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

1.10.5. Announcements about Accreditation Status

1.10.5.1. Announcements by Secondary Institutions: Any secondary institution that has been granted a term of accreditation is authorized to use the phrase "Accredited for Grades ____ by the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, 215-662-5603," as required by the United States Department of Education, on institutional publications, student transcripts and other advertising until such time as accreditation has either lapsed or been removed.

The following may be used on letterhead: "Accredited for Grades ____ by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools."

1.10.5.2. Announcements by Postsecondary Institutions: Any postsecondary institution that has been granted a term of accreditation is authorized to use the phrase "Accredited for non-degree granting postsecondary programs by the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, 215-662-5603," as required by the United States Department of Education, on institutional publications, student transcripts and other advertising until such time as accreditation has either lapsed or been removed.

The following may be used on letterhead: "Accredited for non-degree granting postsecondary programs by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools."

1.10.6 Announcements about Candidate Status

Any institution that has been granted candidacy is authorized to use the phrase "Candidate for Accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools" on institutional publications, student transcripts and other advertising until such time as the candidacy period has lapsed or the institution has achieved accredited status.

1.10.7. Breach of Institutional Integrity

When the Commission on Secondary Schools is advised that a member or candidate institution has misrepresented its status with the Commission or otherwise engaged in unethical conduct, the Commission shall review the circumstances and provide opportunity for the institution to respond. If the institution in question is determined to have indeed misrepresented its status, then the institution must make public correction of the incorrect or misleading information via a vehicle similar to how the misrepresented status information was first disseminated.

Should the institution continue to misrepresent its status or engage in unethical conduct, a "show cause" action shall be prepared. Failure by the institution to take corrective action after receipt of the "show cause" action shall warrant Commission action to remove accreditation or take other action (See Policy 3.7—Membership Policies: Show Cause Action). If an institution's accreditation is recommended for removal, the institution shall be afforded due process in consideration of such an action.

In the case of postsecondary institutions, any school suspected of being out of compliance with postsecondary responsibilities, committing fraud, or abuse shall be reported immediately to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

1.10.8. Disclosure of Information to the Commission on Secondary Schools

It is the obligation of every candidate or member institution to provide the Commission with access to all aspects of its operation, with due regard for the rights of individual privacy. The institution shall provide complete and accurate information with respect to the institution, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accredited status.

1.10.9. Nonmember Institutions Claiming Accreditation Status

The Commission on Secondary Schools shall exercise the full extent of the law when non-member institutions inaccurately claim accredited or candidate status.

Policy # 1.10.1-1.10.9._____

Initial Adoption Date: April 12, 2003

Last Revision and Adoption Date:

April 12, 2003

October 17, 2003

November 25, 2003 (by Executive Committee under Policy 2.2.11.5)