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## Information

### *Professional Services Committee*

#### Update on Initial Institutional Approval

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**Executive Summary:** Last November an agenda item reviewed the policies and procedures for granting initial accreditation and summarized prior Commission actions regarding institutions receiving a temporary waiver of the regional accreditation requirement. This agenda item provides an update about an institution for which a waiver had been granted.

**Recommended Action:** For information only

**Presenter:** Lawrence Birch, Director,  
Professional Services Division

**Strategic Plan Goal: 1**

**Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs

August 2009



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# Update on Initial Institutional Approval

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## Introduction

At the November 2008 Commission meeting, staff provided information about the regional accreditation requirement for earning initial institutional approval and reported on prior Commission actions regarding institutions requesting a waiver of the Commission's regional accreditation requirement (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2008-11/2008-11-2F.pdf>). The item reviewed the policies and procedures for granting initial accreditation, provided information about WASC accreditation procedures, and summarized prior Commission actions regarding institutions requesting a temporary waiver of the regional accreditation requirement. InterAmerican College was one of the institutions granted the temporary waiver. This information item reports on the change in accreditation status for InterAmerican College.

## Background

For institutions based in California, the regional accrediting body is the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). For out-of-state institutions, the Commission will accept regional accreditation conferred by any of the six federally-recognized regional accrediting bodies.

The purpose of requiring regional accreditation for initial institutional approval from the Commission is to establish an institution's viability to develop, implement, and sustain one or more programs of professional preparation in California. Therefore, WASC or other regional accreditation assures the Commission that an institution of higher education meets certain standards in relation to educational effectiveness, student learning, and institutional capacity. Regional accreditation status allows the Commission the ability to focus on the educator preparation unit and its approved credential programs.

## Policies for Initial Eligibility of Institutions and Accreditation of Programs

Pursuant to the California Education Code, the Commission has the authority to determine the eligibility of institutions to offer educator preparation programs and to recommend issuance of credentials to candidates completing preparation programs. This authority also applies to other program sponsors such as school districts.

Education Code § 44227 (a) states that "The Commission may approve any institution of higher education whose teacher education program meets the standards prescribed by the Commission, to recommend to the Commission the issuance of credentials to persons who have successfully completed a teacher education program of the institution if the program meets the standards approved by the Commission." Further, Education Code § 44372 (c) states that the powers and duties of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing shall include the following: ". . . rule on the eligibility of an applicant for accreditation when the applying institution has not previously prepared educators for state certification in California, pursuant to subdivision (a) of § 44227." Pursuant to the Education Code, the Committee on Accreditation (COA) makes decisions about the accreditation of programs. Education Code § 44373 (c) (1-5) outlines the powers and duties

of the Committee on Accreditation. Sections 44373 (1) and (2) read as follows: “The committee shall do, but shall not be limited to doing, all of the following:

- (1) Make decisions about the accreditation of educator preparation. The committee’s decision making process shall be in accordance with the accreditation framework.
- (2) Make decisions about the initial accreditation of new programs of educator preparation in accordance with procedures established by the committee.”

### **Initial Institutional Approval and Initial Program Accreditation in the Commission’s Accreditation System**

The Commission’s accreditation system makes a distinction between “initial approval of institutions” and “initial approval of programs.” A prospective program sponsor that wishes to offer a credential program in California and that has not previously been declared eligible to offer a credential preparation program must undergo a two-stage initial approval process: 1) initial institutional approval; and 2) initial accreditation of programs as described below. The steps for both processes are as follows:

- (1) *Initial Institutional Approval*: The institution (program sponsor) that has not previously been declared eligible to offer credential preparation programs must submit an application to the Commission for initial institutional approval. The institution prepares a complete program proposal that responds to all Preconditions, Common Standards and appropriate Program Standards. The application is reviewed first for compliance with the appropriate preconditions (e.g., regional accreditation [or governing board approval], identification of the position responsible for oversight, non-discrimination procedures, completion of a needs assessment, involvement of practitioners in the design of the program, and agreement to provide information to the Commission) and for appropriate responses to the Common Standards relating to capacity to offer a preparation program. Once the first stage of the review has been accomplished and all responses have been found satisfactory, a recommendation is brought before the Commission for *initial institutional approval*. This stage of the process determines only an institution’s *eligibility* to offer an approved program.
- (2) *Initial Accreditation of Programs*: Once the Commission acts favorably on institutional approval, the *program proposal* is forwarded to the Committee on Accreditation for action. The program sponsor is required to respond to the appropriate credential program standards for each program the institution wishes to offer. These responses are reviewed by a panel of expert advisors, or in some cases, Commission staff, to determine the adequacy and quality of the responses with respect to the applicable program standards. Once it is determined that the program proposal meets the Commission’s program standards, the program sponsor is recommended to the Committee on Accreditation for *initial program approval*.

Once granted initial program approval, the institution is given authority to begin the program and will then come under the Commission’s continuing accreditation procedures.

### **Waiver of the Regional Accreditation Requirement**

It is within the Commission's authority to temporarily waive the regional accreditation requirement when appropriate. Under the provisions of Education Code §44225 (m) that grants the Commission waiver authority, waivers can be given to postsecondary institutions. One of the reasons given for granting waivers listed in § 44225 is to "provide other temporary exceptions when deemed to be appropriate by the Commission." In the past, the Commission has granted waivers with the understanding that

- these waivers are temporary;
- they enable educational institutions to meet the goals established by the state;
- they provide significant help in addressing identified critical needs of schools and school children; and
- there are accompanying mechanisms for assuring that Commission standards are not lowered and the quality of preparation is maintained under the waiver provisions.

During the past eighteen years, the Commission has taken action to waive the WASC accreditation requirement for five California institutions. Institutions for which waivers were granted were developing institutions that have taken from three to ten years to complete the steps within the WASC process.

Four of the five institutions granted waivers have completed the regional accreditation process and have been granted accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. As of the November 2008 agenda item, InterAmerican College was the only institution that had not yet completed the WASC accreditation process.

### **InterAmerican College**

InterAmerican College (IAC) was founded in 1997. In December 1999, the institution was granted Eligibility by the WASC for a term of three years. By achieving Eligibility, the institution completed the first step toward the process of accreditation. Because the institution had not yet achieved WASC accreditation, the institution asked the Commission for a waiver of the WASC accreditation requirement so that they might gain initial institutional approval. The waiver included an acceptance of baccalaureate degrees awarded by the institution for credential purposes, the eligibility to submit one or more subject matter preparation programs and the eligibility to submit one or more professional preparation programs. The waiver was granted in September 2000. The institution was scheduled for a COA accreditation site visit in Spring 2003. However, when the Commission acted to suspend state accreditation site visits, the visit was not held. The institution has continued its work toward regional accreditation and was given an extension of two years by WASC in order to earn Candidacy. In June 2005, WASC Candidacy was awarded for a period of four years.

Once the Commission resumed accreditation site visits, InterAmerican College was scheduled for a site visit the first year, in spring 2008. In March 2008, the site visit was held and the team determined that all standards were met for both the Multiple and Single Subject Bilingual Emphasis credential programs. The institution was granted the status of "Accreditation" by the Committee on Accreditation with the requirement that staff provide an update on the outcome of the WASC review when completed. In 2008-2009 Inter-American College was in the final year of its Candidacy with WASC and hosted the WASC Capacity Review Site Visit in the fall and

the Effectiveness Review Site Visit in the spring. At its June 2009 meeting, the WASC Accreditation Commission reviewed the accreditation reports and granted initial accreditation to InterAmerican College. The decision by WASC was then reported to the Committee on Accreditation at its June 2009 meeting.

Given that InterAmerican College is in good standing with both WASC and the Commission, the institution will be expected to continue participating in the Commission's regular cycle of accreditation activities.