

## Discussion of Processes and Procedures Regarding Denial of Accreditation February 2012

### Overview of this Report

This item discusses the possibility of changing the Commission's policies and processes related to denying accreditation after an accreditation site visit. Staff seeks COA direction on this topic.

### Staff Recommendation

This is an information item only.

### Background

Section 44374 (d) of the Education Code states:

(d) The Committee on Accreditation shall make a single decision to accredit, to accredit with stipulations, or to deny accreditation to an institution's credential programs, pursuant to Section 44373 and the Accreditation Framework.

Section 5 of the *Accreditation Framework* clearly states that the COA may make a decision to deny accreditation to any institution or program sponsor. It states:

**Accreditation Decisions.** After reviewing the recommendation of an accreditation site visit team the Committee on Accreditation makes a decision about the accreditation of educator preparation at the institution/program sponsor. The Committee makes one of three decisions pertaining to each institution: *Accreditation*, *Accreditation with Stipulations*, or *Denial of Accreditation*. The Committee's Annual Accreditation Reports summarize these decisions.

Historically, however, the COA's process and procedures have been that no program sponsor undergoing continuing accreditation be denied accreditation immediately after an initial site visit. The way in which the policy has been implemented to date is that each institution receiving stipulations, regardless of the severity of the level of stipulations, is given an opportunity to address the stipulations. Only after the institution has been given that opportunity to address the stipulations would denial of accreditation be used by the COA.

Chapter 8 of the *Accreditation Handbook* outlines the procedures as they relate to a decision of Denial of Accreditation. The most pertinent section of that Chapter is replicated below:

#### ***Denial of Accreditation***

The COA would deny accreditation only if an accreditation team, upon conducting a revisit to an institution that received major or probationary stipulations, finds that the stipulations have not been adequately addressed or remediated, or determines that significant and sufficient progress has not been made towards addressing the stipulations. If an accreditation team finds that: (a) sufficient progress has been made, and/or (b) special circumstances described by the institution justify a delay,

the COA may, if requested by the institution, permit an additional period of time for the institution to remedy its severe deficiencies. If the COA votes to deny accreditation, all credential programs must close at the end of the semester or quarter in which the decision has taken place. In addition, the institution's institutional approval ceases to be valid at that time and the institution will no longer be a CTC approved program sponsor.

### Operational Implications

An institution receiving *Denial of Accreditation* **must**:

- Take immediate steps to close all credential programs at the end of the semester or quarter in which the COA decision occurs.
- Announce that it has had its accreditation for educator preparation denied. All students enrolled in all credential programs must be notified that accreditation has been denied and that all programs will end at the end of the semester, quarter, or within 3 months of when the COA decision occurs.
- File a plan of discontinuation within 90 days of the COA's decision. The plan must give information and assurances regarding the institution's efforts to place currently enrolled students in other programs or to provide adequate assistance to permit students to complete their particular programs.
- Upon the effective date of the closure of credential programs, as determined by the COA, remove from all institutional materials and website any statements that indicate that its programs are accredited by the CTC.

The revisit report of the team, the action of the COA, and the new accreditation decision will be posted on the CTC's website.

Furthermore, an institution receiving a *Denial of Accreditation* would be enjoined from re-applying for institutional approval for a minimum of two years.

### **Possible Considerations for Changing the *Accreditation Handbook***

As the new accreditation system has begun to mature, questions have been raised about when it is appropriate for the COA to deny accreditation to an institution where the violations of Commission standards have been determined to be especially egregious. Both COA members and others have questioned the current policy in the *Accreditation Handbook* noting that there may be situations that are so serious in which Denial of Accreditation would be the most responsible course of action for an agency responsible for oversight of educator preparation programs. Therefore staff believes that a focused discussion with COA on this topic is warranted. Among the questions that need to be discussed by COA are:

- 1) Does the COA believe the *Accreditation Handbook* needs to be changed to allow teams to recommend denial of accreditation as a result of an accreditation site visit?
- 2) Does the COA believe it should change the *Accreditation Handbook* to allow the COA the ability to deny accreditation to an institution as a result of an accreditation site visit?

If the answers to the questions above are yes, then additional considerations are necessary. Among the topics needing to be discussed by COA will be the following:

- 1) What language would be included in the *Accreditation Handbook* that would help guide teams to determine when to recommend Denial of Accreditation after an initial visit?
- 2) What opportunities for correction of deficiencies, if any, would be allowed to prevent Denial of Accreditation?
- 3) What process would be put in place to ensure that the team's findings were without error? Would there be a rejoinder process?
- 4) Given the permanent nature of Denial of Accreditation, what other processes need to be put in place to ensure that the COA has done its due diligence in gathering all evidence and documentation to justify a Denial of Accreditation decision after an initial visit?
- 5) What provisions should/must be made for program candidates enrolled in the program whose continued enrollment would be impacted by the Denial of Accreditation? What about students already admitted for future enrollment?

### **Next Steps**

Based on COA discussion at this meeting, staff will bring back another agenda item reflecting the COA's discussion for further consideration. Draft language for adoption by the COA and inclusion in the *Accreditation Handbook* may also be appropriate.