

# Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools

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## *ACCREDITATION MANUAL*

**Approved by the Accreditation Commission**

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*Revisions December 2001*

Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a national accrediting agency for Christian postsecondary institutions that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees, including distance learning.

*Enhancing Quality Christian Education Since 1979*

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# INTRODUCTION

The *Accreditation Manual* is designed to convey all standards and evaluative criteria that have been established by the Accreditation Commission to guide institutions through candidate and accredited status.

The manual is intended for institutions requesting initial candidacy status and accredited status as well as for institutions seeking reaffirmation of accredited status. Questions regarding the accreditation process (policies, procedures, standards, or evaluative criteria) should be directed to the TRACS office.

The accreditation standards may be modified by the Accreditation Commission, but only after opportunities for comment on any proposed changes have been provided to all parties and institutions significantly affected.

## Purpose

The principal purpose of TRACS is to provide an accreditation program for postsecondary institutions, e.g., Christian liberal arts, colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes, that offer a certificate, diploma, or degree (Associate, Baccalaureate, or graduate) at both accredited and pre-accredited (candidacy) level to ensure their academic quality, financial stability, and student support services, which will allow the institution and their students the benefits of participating in federally-funded programs.

The Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization of Christian postsecondary institutions. TRACS is recognized as a national institutional accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and is a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). TRACS was established by a group of educators in 1979, the purpose of which was to promote the welfare, interests, and development of quality Christian postsecondary institutions whose mission is characterized by a distinctively Christian orientation. While TRACS encourages each affiliated institution to develop its own distinctives, TRACS expects institutions to provide quality postsecondary education within the context of Christian values, with emphasis on high academic standards, integrity, practical application, and spiritual development. The governing boards of these institutions have voluntarily applied to TRACS and have been approved by the Accreditation Commission after having met the established requirements for affiliation at either accredited or candidacy level as described below.

The required criteria includes both FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS assuring the institution's constituents and the public of its biblical, purpose and objectives, philosophical, ethical and moral values, and OPERATIONAL STANDARDS providing assurance of educational and financial integrity.

The Accreditation Commission is solely responsible to carry out all accreditation activities and has final authority regarding all accreditation actions. It formulates and implements all policies, procedures, standards, and evaluative criteria used in the accreditation process. The Accreditation Commission consists of nine to eighteen (9-18) commissioners, including three (3) but not more than one-third public representatives.

## Aims:

- To foster excellence and quality in Christian postsecondary education through the development of policies, procedures, and standards for assessing educational effectiveness leading to enhanced educational quality.
- To provide accredited and pre-accredited (candidate) institutions the opportunity to participate in federal programs authorized under Title IV and other government programs.
- To develop an accreditation process that requires continuous institutional self-study and assessment.
- To serve as an accrediting agency that recognizes institutions demonstrating quality through compliance with the standards at a candidate or accredited level.

- To provide counsel and assistance to both established and developing institutions.
- To assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution evaluated by TRACS 1) has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives and outcomes, 2) has established conditions under which educational outcomes are being achieved at an acceptable level with reference to the TRACS standards, and 3) is so organized, staffed and supported that it can be expected to continue to offer quality education in the foreseeable future.
- To establish and encourage cooperative relationships among its institutions that promote common interests both nationally and internationally.

## **The Role and Value of Accreditation**

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that meets or exceeds the Standards and evaluative Criteria and the policies and procedures established by the Accreditation Commission and validated by the membership for educational quality. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and is conferred by independent, autonomous bodies. Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation, as practiced by TRACS and other recognized accrediting agencies, is uniquely characteristic of American education. In other countries, the development, maintenance, control, and supervision of educational standards is a governmental function.

Principal concerns of accreditation are the improvement of educational quality and the assurance to the public that affiliated institutions meet established standards. While no institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, the benefits leading to both self-improvement and self-enhancement provide strong motivation for most institutions to do so. Other recognized advantages include reciprocity in the transfer of credit from one accredited institution to another. In addition, a contributing factor in accreditation for many institutions is the fact that governmental and other agencies rely on accredited or candidate status in a recognized accrediting agency as a qualification for financial support and grants to students.

For purposes of determining eligibility for federal government assistance under certain legislation, the United States Department of Education (USDE) is required to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that it determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of training offered by educational institutions after initial recognition. Criteria for recognition and guidelines have been established by the U.S. Secretary of Education to be used in recognition of accrediting agencies. The Accrediting Agency Evaluation Branch (AAEB) staff of the Office of Postsecondary Education reviews the policies and performance of nationally recognized accrediting agencies approximately every four years to determine whether they should be included on the Secretary's list.

The accreditation process of all recognized accrediting agencies follows a common pattern. Standards and evaluative Criteria, as well as procedures to be followed in the accreditation process, are developed by those involved in the work of an accrediting agency and used in evaluating an institution to determine its educational effectiveness in fulfilling its stated mission. The established standards and evaluative criteria are designed to guide institutions through all stages of affiliation (accredited or candidacy) from initial application through reaffirmation as a result of an institutional self-study program. The process requires a self-study by the institution, followed by an on-site visit by an evaluation team, and a subsequent review and decision by the Accreditation Commission. The basic purpose of the accrediting agencies, including TRACS, is to attest to the fact that an institution is achieving its stated goals and objectives and is meeting the Standards.

One of the goals of the process is to foster on-going assessment and planning at the institution. What happens on a continuous basis after the Accreditation Commission has finished its immediate work is as important as the aspects of accountability and short-range improvement. Compliance with the requirements is expected to be continuous and is validated periodically, normally as part of every comprehensive evaluation following institutional self-study. While accreditation indicates an acceptable level of overall quality, even the best institution is capable of improvement, which must come from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The advice and counsel provided by an on-site peer evaluation team comprised of experienced

educators drawn primarily from other accredited institutions encourages improvement. Finally, publications and staff visits by the accrediting agency enhance improvement.

TRACS has established a review schedule for standards, evaluative criteria, policies, and procedures under the guidance of a Standards Review Committee. After such review, appropriate changes are made in the light of ensuing recommendations, but only after opportunity for comments on any proposed change has been provided to all parties significantly affected. Recommendations for improvements in the standards, policies, and procedures are encouraged and welcomed by the Accreditation Commission.

As stated above, two fundamental purposes of the accreditation process are (1) to assure the quality of an institution and (2) to assist in the improvement of an institution. Accreditation by an accrediting agency indicates that the institution:

- has appropriate purposes.
- has in the organization all human and physical resources needed to accomplish its purposes.
- can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes.
- gives reason to believe it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Recognition by a recognized accrediting agency assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has a clearly defined educational purpose appropriate to higher education and consistent with the accrediting agency's standards, has established conditions under which achievement of these objectives can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, and is so organized, staffed and financed that it can be expected to continue to provide a quality program. The accrediting process fosters both integrity and excellence in affiliated educational institutions that use the standards for assessing educational effectiveness. The requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations results in its identifying what it does well, in determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and in developing plans for improvement. Periodic evaluation by qualified professionals who serve on evaluation teams assures the institution's self-study is realistic. The process confirms honesty and integrity in institutional relations with students and other consumers, thus supplementing state agency protection for the educational consumer. An institution has the obligation to offer its students a sound education leading to a recognized certificate or degree.

## Scope

**Types and Categories.** TRACS serves Christian postsecondary institutions (e.g., liberal arts colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes) that offer either a certificate, diploma or degree (associate, bachelor, or graduate). TRACS accredits the total institution.

Institutions are classified according to the degrees offered. The following is the official classification for TRACS' institutions:

- Category I -institutions offering Certificates, Diplomas, Associate degrees;**
- Category II- institutions offering Bachelor's degrees;**
- Category III - institutions offering Master's degrees;**
- Category IV - institutions offering Specialist's degrees and Doctorate degrees.**

Institutions will be listed by the category approved by the Accreditation Commission.

Institutions that are initially awarded candidate status by the Accreditation Commission at specific categories (I, II, III, IV), may only move to another category by filing for a substantive change. The move (substantive change) must be approved by the Accreditation Commission at its next scheduled meeting.

**Geographical Territory.** The geographic territory of TRACS currently consists of the United States and its territories, plus other locations as determined by the Accreditation Commission.

## AFFILIATION: CANDIDACY AND ACCREDITED

There are two formal levels of affiliation with TRACS—candidacy and accredited. Institutions that are able to demonstrate that the Standards and Criteria are substantially met may apply for accredited status. This level of recognition attests that the institution is in substantial compliance with the Standards and Criteria. Candidacy is for those institutions that demonstrate basic compliance with most Standards and Criteria at their particular stages of development, and their development is on a level and at a pace that would indicate a strong probability of achieving accredited status within the five-year time frame. The *Benchmarks* may serve as an indicator of the performance level for each of the Standards.

### Candidate Status

Candidacy (pre-accredited) indicates that the institution meets the Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs), is in basic compliance with the Standards, has been evaluated by an on-site peer team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, the institution provides quality instruction and student services.

Candidacy offers institutions the opportunity to establish an initial, formal, and publicly recognized pre-accredited relationship with TRACS. An institution applying for candidacy must provide evidence of sound planning, have adequate resources to implement these plans, and appear to have the potential to attain its goals within a reasonable time. While candidacy indicates that an institution appears to have the potential to achieve accreditation and that it is progressing toward accreditation, this level of recognition does not guarantee the institution will become accredited.

A candidate institution must submit its annual fees and file two reports by October 31 each year (Annual Report, Financial Report, and certified external audit) and a status report addressing the progress of the institution in the recommendations and the concerns of the Commission. The reports are reviewed by the staff. An institutional profile is prepared and submitted to the Accreditation Commission for the Spring meeting. The Commission may take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the report and recommend to continue candidate status.
2. Request the Executive Director to provide additional information.
3. Request the Executive Director to notify the institution that sufficient progress has not been made, and require a report at the next Accreditation Commission meeting on the corrective action taken and future plans to achieve compliance with the Standards and Criteria within the time limit.
4. Require the Executive Director to notify the institution that sufficient progress in working towards compliance with the Standards and Criteria has not been demonstrated and that the institution will be scheduled for review at the next Commission meeting and will be deleted from the candidate listing. The institution may appeal the decision following the established Appeals Policy and Procedure.

The maximum time period for candidacy is five years. An institution that does not achieve accreditation within the five-year period will be deleted from the list of candidates and must wait a minimum of one year before reapplying for candidate status. Extensions beyond the fifth year require special consideration and action by the Accreditation Commission and must be justified. Institutions claiming exempt status must attain non-exempt status within the five- (5) year candidacy period.

An institution that has been deferred to candidacy status may reapply when it can demonstrate that it has substantially improved by correcting major deficiencies identified in the evaluation process and as set forth by the Accreditation Commission.

### Procedures for Candidacy

Institutions that are able to demonstrate that all Institutional Eligibility Requirements are met and are in basic compliance with the Standards and Criteria may be considered for candidacy. The candidacy period enables an

institution to organize its operations, establish sound policies, procedures and management information systems, improve quality and demonstrate compliance with the TRACS standards. The president of the institution seeking affiliation must notify the Executive Director of TRACS of its intentions to seek candidacy, provide verification of Board approval, and request a TRACS' staff visit to review the IERs and Self-Study procedure.

**Prerequisites: Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs).** An institution seeking candidacy must minimally meet the following Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) and through self study determine an acceptable level of compliance with the Standards and Criteria for consideration by the Accreditation Commission.

1. A charter and/or formal authority from the appropriate governmental agency to operate legally and to award a certificate, diploma, or degree within the state it is located.
2. A governing board that has the authority to carry out the mission of the institution and that includes representation reflecting the public interest, and whose members do not have contractual, employment, or personal financial interests with the institution.
3. A chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution and who possesses the authority needed to manage the affairs of the institution.
4. A clearly defined and published statement of mission, formally adopted by the governing board, which demonstrates that the fundamental purposes of the institution are educational, appropriate to a degree-granting institution, and appropriate to the needs of the constituencies it seeks to serve.
5. A comprehensive, clearly-written, published Biblical Foundations statement that is in harmony with the TRACS Biblical Foundations statement.
6. One or more postsecondary educational programs of at least one academic year and consistent with its mission, with clearly defined and published educational objectives appropriate to higher education in level, quality, and standards—as well as a clear statement of its means for achieving a degree (associate, bachelor, master, doctorate).
7. A program of general education required for all associate and bachelor degrees.
8. Clearly defined and published objectives for each of its educational programs that are appropriate for higher education in level, quality, and the means for achieving them, including a designated course of studies acceptable for meeting degree requirements, plus adequate guidance to degree candidates in the satisfaction of requirements and adequate grading or evaluation procedures.
9. Learning resources, including a library, that adequately support the educational programs offered, plus appropriate learning equipment and materials.
10. Faculty sufficient in number to support the educational programs offered including:
  - a. A minimum of one full-time faculty, with appropriate earned credentials, for each educational program offered.
  - b. Sufficient additional full and part-time faculty, with appropriate earned credentials to teach the courses offered for the number of students served.
11. Students enrolled in and pursuing degrees.
12. A master plan that addresses its financial, physical, and educational development, as well as procedures for program review and institutional improvement through an effectiveness/outcomes assessment mechanism.
13. An approved set of admissions policies compatible with its stated mission and objectives.
14. An adequate financial base of documented funding commitments that demonstrate the institution's ability to carry on its stated purposes. (Submit a copy of current budget and prior year's audited financial statement prepared by an independent public accountant who has no other relationship to the institution.)

15. A published policy and procedure, in keeping with generally accepted practices, for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment.
16. A catalog and/or other comparable official publication available to students and the public that fairly and accurately sets forth pertinent information such as the following items:
  - a. Mission and objectives
  - b. Entrance requirements and procedures
  - c. Rules and regulations for conduct
  - d. Programs, courses, and objectives
  - e. Degree completion requirements
  - f. Full and part-time faculty, degrees held, with institution granting the degree
  - g. Costs
  - h. Other items relative to attending the institution or withdrawing from it.

**Steps: Application Through Evaluation Team Visit.** The sequential steps involved in the candidacy process are as follows:

1. The corresponding institution requests application materials from the TRACS office.
2. The corresponding institution completes the *Institutional Profile* (with all enclosures) plus the *Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERS) Checklist* and sends all materials to the TRACS office along with the required processing fee.
3. A Review Committee completes an initial review of the *Institutional Profile* and all support materials including the *Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERS)*. A written evaluation is sent to the corresponding institution:
  - a. **Approving the corresponding institution as an applicant.**
    - (1) The institution is notified of approval as applicant and staff visit is scheduled.
    - (2) Following staff visit, a report is submitted to the institution and screening committee containing recommendations of the staff visit.
    - (3) The institution responds to the staff report recommendations in writing.
    - (4) All materials including the *Institutional Profile*, staff report, and the institutional response are submitted to the candidate screening committee for review at its next scheduled meeting.
    - (5) The Executive Director informs the institution of the screening committee's decision either to:
      - Proceed toward submitting a Self-Study Proposal.
      - Delay Self-Study Proposal submission/furnish reasons.
  - b. **Deferring the corresponding institution as applicant with recommendations.**
  - c. **Rejecting the corresponding institution as applicant with rationale.**
4. Upon approval of the Self-Study Proposal and Timeline, the institution (now an active applicant) is notified and may begin the self-study process for candidacy (pre-accredited).
  - a. A tentative date is approved for the Evaluation Team Visit.
  - b. An on-site evaluation team will be assembled in proximity to the scheduled visit.
5. The institution, after successfully completing the Self-Study Report, sends the following to the TRACS office **three months prior to the scheduled on-site visit.**
  - a. Two copies of the Self-Study Report following *Self-Study Guidelines, Preparations and Procedures*, (available from the TRACS office) demonstrating the extent to which the institution complies with the Standards and Criteria and one copy of the following supporting documents:

- 1) Letter/Certificate of state authority to grant diplomas or degrees
- 2) Current catalog
- 3) Current financial audit prepared by an independent, certified public accountant, including a management letter.

***Audit required according to "General Accepted Accounting Principles" (GAAP) prior to scheduling an on-site visit.***

- 4) Charter or articles of incorporation
  - 5) Bylaws of governing board
  - 6) Planning document including assessment plan.
- b. A letter from the chairman of the governing board or president requesting that the institution be considered for candidacy.
  - c. The application fee, calculated according to the current Fee Structure Chart available from the TRACS office. (*Institutions requiring additional team visits consisting of two or more persons will be required to pay the change of status fee prior to each visit.*)
6. The institution sends each team member a copy of the Self-Study Report with the documentation **when the team roster is received from the TRACS office**. Prior to the team visit, the visiting team chair may visit the campus to review the institution's preparation for the team visit.
  7. The evaluation team must visit the institution **at least three (3) months prior to the November Accreditation Commission meeting**. (Team visits later than three months will not provide sufficient time for the Accreditation Commission to act on the evaluation at the Accreditation Commission meeting.) All costs of the visit will be borne by the institution, including travel, lodging, meals, in-town transportation, and team member honorarium.
  8. Following the team visit exit interview, the chairman of the evaluation team files a draft copy of the Evaluation Team Report with the institution and with the TRACS staff representative, who submits it to the TRACS office.
  9. The TRACS office receives any modifications to the Evaluation Team Report from the team chair and team members.
  10. A revised copy of the Evaluation Team Report, including corrections from the chair and team, is submitted to the institutional CEO, along with a letter requesting a written response to any **errors of fact** in the Evaluation Team Report. The institution's written response must be mailed to the TRACS office with a copy to the team chair within ten (10) working days after receiving the Team Report .
  11. **At least two (2) months prior to the November Accreditation Commission Meeting**, the institution must file a written Response to Recommendations and Suggestions in the Evaluation Team Report.
  12. Upon receipt of the institution's Response to the Report, the TRACS Office schedules the institution for review by the Accreditation Commission, notifies the institution that its application has been placed on the agenda, and requests that institutional representatives attend the meeting.

**Accreditation Commission Action.** When the Evaluation Team Report, the team recommendation and the formal institutional response have been received, these documents along with the application materials are forwarded to the Accreditation Commission for action. The Commission, after review and discussion, may move:

1. To grant pre-accredited status without condition.
2. To grant pre-accredited status with conditions. The Accreditation Commission will list specific reasons that led to this decision.

3. To defer a decision on pre-accredited status to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time, with the Commission specifying the nature, purpose and scope of the information to be submitted. The Accreditation Commission will list specific reasons that led to this decision.
4. To deny pre-accredited status. The Chair will list specific reasons that led to this decision.

**Communication of the Accreditation Commission Decision.** The Executive Director or Associate Executive Director will formally communicate in writing the decision of the Accreditation Commission along with any explanatory information deemed appropriate to the chief executive officer and list the specific standards which led to the Accreditation Commission's decision within 30 days of the Accreditation Commission's decision.

**Denial of Candidate Status.** An institution not admitted to candidate status may reapply when it has substantially improved those aspects of its operation identified in the Commission decision as major areas of concern, but ordinarily not sooner than one year.

**Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision.** In the event that the institution is denied candidacy, it may appeal the decision by following the steps described in the "Appeals Procedure" in the *Policies and Procedures Manual* that will be sent to the institution when the decision is forwarded.

**Reference to Candidate Status in Institutional Publications.** Institutions granted the status of candidacy must follow the guidelines contained in the document "Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status" if they wish to describe that status publicly or internally in any form, written or orally as follows. This statement must be printed following any reference to the institution's candidate status with TRACS:

" (Institution's Name) is a candidate for accreditation with TRACS which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but is not assured of, accreditation. It has provided evidence of sound planning and the resources to implement its plans and appears to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time."

*Note: When the institution prints the TRACS' name, the TRACS' address, telephone number, and degree level authorized must also be listed.*

**Withdrawal of Application.** At any time after an application has been submitted, either prior to or subsequent to an evaluation team visit, an institution may withdraw its application voluntarily.

## **Accredited Status**

Accreditation indicates that the institution is in substantive compliance with the Standards and Criteria, has been peer evaluated after completing a self study, and in the professional judgment of the on-site evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, the institution provides quality instruction, student services, and is financially stable.

Accreditation offers institutions the opportunity to continue an ongoing formal and publicly-recognized professional relationship with TRACS as a member institution. Accredited institutions have achieved this level of recognition through continuous self study. They have provided evidence that they are accomplishing their mission and are providing quality educational programs.

Institutions that have already achieved candidate or accredited status with an accrediting association recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and that apply for TRACS recognition will be evaluated on both the FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS and OPERATIONAL STANDARDS. It is understood that the self-study data compiled for the nationally recognized accrediting agency can be used without unnecessary duplication of effort; however, the data must be presented using the TRACS format. A staff and team visit are required to verify the contents of the documents submitted.

## Procedure

Institutions that have been state evaluated and approved, can demonstrate substantive compliance with the Standards and Criteria and have addressed all previous team recommendations satisfactorily may be considered for Accredited status by the Accreditation Commission upon completion of a self study and an on-site evaluation team visit.

**Steps: Application Through Evaluation Team Visit.** The sequential steps involved in the accreditation process are as follows:

1. The TRACS office notifies the institution two (2) years in advance of its accreditation deadline. However, the institution is responsible for its periodic review time.
2. The president of an institution notifies TRACS in writing of the institution's intention to seek accreditation. The TRACS office acknowledges by letter within two weeks the institution's request and provides change of status materials.
3. The completed materials are received and reviewed, the institution is notified and a staff visit may be required.
4. Following the staff visit, if required, the institution must submit a Self-Study Proposal with Timeline, based on *Self-Study Guidelines, Preparations and Procedures*, to the TRACS Office for approval prior to self-study initiation.

**(THE INSTITUTION MUST SUBMIT A SELF-STUDY PROPOSAL PRIOR TO INITIATING A SELF STUDY.)**

5. Upon approval of the Self-Study Proposal and Timeline:
  - a. A tentative date is approved for the Evaluation Team Visit.
  - b. The institution is notified and may begin the self-study process.
  - c. An on-site evaluation team is assembled in proximity to the scheduled visit.
6. The institution, after successfully completing the Self-Study Report, sends the following to the TRACS office **at least three months prior to the scheduled on-site visit:**
  - a. Two copies of the Self-Study Report following *Self-Study Guidelines, Preparations and Procedures*, (available from the TRACS office) demonstrating the extent to which the institution complies with the Standards and Criteria and one copy of the following supporting documents:
    - 1) Letter/Certificate of state authority to grant diplomas or degrees
    - 2) Current catalog
    - 3) Current financial audit prepared by an independent, certified public accountant, including a management letter.  
  
*Audit Required according to "General Accepted Accounting Principles" (GAAP) prior to scheduling an on-site visit.*
    - 4) Charter or articles of incorporation
    - 5) Bylaws of governing board
    - 6) Planning document including assessment plan.
  - b. A letter from the chairman of the governing board or president requesting the institution be considered for accreditation.

- c. A statement, signed by the chief executive officer, asserting that the Self-Study Report is accurate.
  - d. The application fee, calculated according to the current Fee Structure Chart available from the TRACS office. (*Institutions requiring additional team visits consisting of two or more persons will be required to pay the application fee prior to each visit.*)
7. The institution sends each team member a copy of the Self-Study Report with the documentation **when the team roster is received from the TRACS office**. Prior to the team visit, the visiting team chair may visit the campus to review the institution's preparation for the team visit.
  8. The evaluation team must visit the institution **at least three (3) months prior to the November Accreditation Commission meeting**. (Team visits later than three months will not provide sufficient time for the Accreditation Commission to act on the evaluation at the Accreditation Commission meeting.) All costs of the visit will be borne by the institution, including travel, lodging, meals, in-town transportation, and team member honorarium.
  9. Following the team visit exit interview, the chairman of the evaluation team files a draft copy of the Evaluation Team Report with the institution and with the TRACS staff representative, who submits it to the TRACS office.
  10. The TRACS office receives any modifications to the Evaluation Team Report from the team chair and team members.
  11. A revised copy of the Evaluation Team Report, including corrections from the chair and team, is submitted to the institutional CEO, along with a letter requesting a written response to any **errors of fact** in the Evaluation Team Report. The institution's written response must be mailed to the TRACS office with a copy to the team chair within ten (10) working days after receiving the Team Report.
  12. **At least two (2) months prior to the November Accreditation Commission Meeting**, the institution must file a written Response to Recommendations and Suggestions in the Evaluation Team Report.
  13. Upon receipt of the institution's Response to the Report, the TRACS Office schedules the institution for review by the Accreditation Commission, notifies the institution that its application has been placed on the agenda, and requests that institutional representatives attend the meeting.

**Accreditation Commission Action.** When the Evaluation Team Report, the team recommendation, and the formal institutional response have been received, these documents along with the application materials are forwarded to the Accreditation Commission for action. The Commission, after review and discussion, takes action:

1. To grant accredited status without conditions.
2. To grant accredited status with conditions. The Commission will list specific reasons that led to this decision.
3. To defer a decision on accredited status to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time, with the Commission's specifying the nature, purpose and scope of the information to be submitted. The Commission will list specific reasons that led to this decision.
4. To deny accredited status. The Commission will list specific reasons that led to this decision.

When a determination is made that the institution is not ready for that level of recognition, the Accreditation Commission, considering the recommendation of the evaluation team, may recommend that the institution reapply for accredited status including a written agreement to address the team's recommendations in a written report to be submitted at least forty-five (45) days before the next meeting of the Accreditation Commission. The Accreditation Commission may award accredited status provided that the recommendations cited by the evaluation team are addressed in a satisfactory manner.

**Communication of the Accreditation Commission Decision.** The Executive Director will communicate the decision of the Accreditation Commission along with any explanatory information deemed appropriate to the chief executive officer and list the specific standards that led to the Accreditation Commission's decision within 30 days after the Accreditation Commission's decision.

**Denial of Accredited Status.** An institution not awarded accredited status may reapply when it has substantially improved those aspects of its operation identified in the Commission decision as major areas of concern, but ordinarily not sooner than one year. The Executive Director should be consulted before a re-application process is begun.

**Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision.** In the event that the institution is denied accredited status, it may appeal the decision by following the procedure described in the "Appeals Procedure" in the *Policies and Procedures Manual* that will be sent to the institution when the decision is forwarded.

**Reference to Accredited Status in Institutional Publications.** Institutions granted accredited status must follow the guidelines contained in the document "Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status" in the *Policies and Procedures Manual* if they wish to describe that status publicly. Further, the institution should indicate the effective date (month and year) status was granted.

*Note: When the institution prints the TRACS' name, the TRACS' address, telephone number, and degree level authorized must also be listed.*

**Withdrawal of Application.** At any time after an application has been submitted, either prior to or subsequent to an evaluation team visit, an institution may withdraw its application voluntarily.

## **Accredited and Candidate Status**

### **Revocation of Status**

Accreditation is revoked only for cause and after due process is followed. An institution whose status has been revoked may reapply as soon as it has corrected the deficiencies (but not sooner than one year) noted by the Accreditation Commission after consultation with the Executive Director. In such a case, the institution must complete the entire accreditation process to qualify for candidacy or accredited status. The same process will be followed by institutions that have voluntarily withdrawn and wish to be reinstated.

### **Annual Reporting**

Each accredited and candidate institution is required to complete and submit an Annual Operational Report along with an Annual Financial Report and including a certified (CPA) external audit. These Reports, issued by the TRACS office, provide statistical data related to such matters as enrollment, finances, and information about any significant developments at the institution in the past year that may have a bearing on its recognized status. Each affiliated institution must file the reports by October 31 with the TRACS office. In addition to the completed Reports, the following items must be included:

1. A letter from the governing board that includes detailed explanations for any changes in the original application materials not included in the content of the Annual Report pertaining to government authorization, constitution and bylaws, location of administrative office, chief executive officers, Foundational Standards and/or Operational Standards. If no changes have occurred other than those reported in the annual report, the institution should note this.
2. One copy of the certified external audit of the above financial report.

3. One copy of the current budget.
4. One copy of the current catalog or similar document, with all changes in administrative officers, faculty, and courses appropriately noted.
5. A check for the current annual dues as listed in the current TRACS Fee Structure Chart available from the TRACS office.
6. A notarized statement, signed by the president, asserting that all the information included in the annual report materials is accurate.
7. All Progress Reports due (including progress reports addressing all team visit recommendations, if applicable) that were not submitted January 15th.

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When an institution undergoes substantive change as defined by the policy on substantive change or if its educational effectiveness is questioned at any time, the Accreditation Commission will take appropriate action. The Accreditation Commission reserves the right to review an institution at any time that circumstances require. See Adverse Action policy in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*.

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### Periodic Review

Accreditation is viewed by the Accreditation Commission as a continuing status that, once conferred, is removed only for cause and then with careful observance of due process. A responsible accrediting program necessarily includes periodic review of accredited institutions both for their benefit and for the fulfillment of the Accreditation Commission's accountability to the academic community and to the public.

During the five-year period following initial recognition, an accredited institution is expected to submit a self-study proposal, begin an institutional self-study process and submit a self-study report. This will be followed by an evaluation team visit, with accreditation action taken at the Fall meeting of the Accreditation Commission. The Periodic Review fee is calculated according to the current Fee Structure Chart available from the TRACS office.

Accreditation will then be granted for a **ten-year period** with a required Status Report to be filed the **fifth year** within the ten-year period. The Status Report is to be submitted along with the supporting documentation sixty **(60) days prior to the November Accreditation Commission Meeting**. No later than the **November meeting of the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year**, the institution must meet with the Accreditation Commission in its review of reaffirmation of accreditation. The Status Report should focus on data evidence from the outcomes assessment mechanism which demonstrates that the institution is accomplishing its stated mission. Every **tenth year, a self-study process** must be completed. The institution may propose an alternative model as described on page 16.

The actions the Accreditation Commission may take regarding reaffirmation are noted below. All actions by the Commission are subject to appeal in accord with due process as specified in the policy entitled "Appeal Procedure Policy" in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*. The Accreditation Commission, after review of the self-study report, the evaluation team report, and the evaluation team recommendation, will take the appropriate action listed below:

1. To reaffirm accredited status without conditions.
2. To reaffirm, with a request for a follow-up report to be submitted by a specified date and/or a staff visit to be completed by a certain date.
3. To defer a decision to permit an institution time to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time.
4. To require an institution to show cause, within a limited period, as to why its accreditation should not be removed. A show cause order requires an institution to present its case for continued accreditation

by means of substantive report and another on-site evaluation. The Accreditation Commission will specify the nature, purpose and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The institution retains its accreditation during the period of a show cause or any ensuing appeal.

5. In a case where an institution no longer meets the eligibility requirements, to remove an institution from the list of accredited institutions holding affiliation with TRACS.

## Self Study

Self study is an opportunity for institutional reappraisal and analysis of the entire program (everything the institution is doing in every way) and to demonstrate how effective the institution is in achieving its mission following an established self-study process. Institutional self study is intended to be an integral and ongoing activity of every institution, only indirectly related to calendars and accreditation but strongly emphasizing the natural relationship between self-study and educational planning.

The self study for institutional reaffirmation should be an institutional assessment of its strong points, areas of success and achievement—especially in the area of student development and learning. In a sense, it is a “state-of-the-institution” report with data to support the report conclusions and outcomes.

It is important to submit a proposal for the self study to be submitted to TRACS for review and comment prior to entering the self-study process.

Here are some of the main points for the self-study development.

1. The self-study is to be directed by the faculty.
  - a. Establish a steering committee including:
    - 1) Faculty representation
    - 2) Student representation
    - 3) Board representation
    - 4) Administration representation
  - b. Appoint a faculty member as general chairman.
  - c. Appoint an editor.
  - d. Establish a time line for completion.
  - e. Set up appropriate committees.
    - 1) Faculty, student body and trustees must be represented.
    - 2) Administrative personnel should generally serve as resource consultants for the study.
    - 3) List the duties of each committee.
    - 4) Examine every aspect of the institutional operation.
    - 5) Report institutional deficiencies in relationship to the standards.
    - 6) Submit a plan to correct deficiencies.
  - f. Submit a full self-study report document following *Suggested Self-Study Guidelines, Preparation, and Procedures* (available from the TRACS Office).
2. The self-study report including the master plan should become a MAP FOR PLANNING.

## Self Study Alternatives for the Accredited Institution in Good Standing

An accredited institution wishing to undertake a self-study approach other than the comprehensive approach, must note this in the Self-Study Proposal for approval by the Executive Director.

**Comprehensive:** Normal comprehensive self study guided by and addressing the Standards, with documentation.

**Performance Based:** Effectiveness oriented study of the institution regarding special themes or a special nature

of which the institution wishes to show effective outcomes demonstrating achievements(s). This is a more research-based study giving results and conclusions as to the accomplishment of the institutional mission.

**Special Emphasis:** Comprehensive in nature but with a special focus or emphasis on special selected areas for which the institution may wish to be known.

**Selected Topics:** Opening institutional overview and summary of progress and accomplishments, with emphasis on special areas moving into an in-depth coverage of selected areas—historical in nature, largely.

### **Annual Institutional Review**

Each year, the TRACS staff develops a profile on each accredited and candidate institution. The profile is based on critical data provided by each institution in its Annual Operational Report and Annual Financial Report. The institutional profile serves to identify strengths as well as problem areas in advance and is instrumental in the annual institutional review process by the staff and Accreditation Commission.

**TRACS subscribes to  
the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Statement:**

*Good Practices and Shared Responsibility in the Conduct of  
Specialized and Professional Accreditation Review.*

# ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

## Introduction

The accreditation standards by which an institution is measured have been developed for use in evaluating its educational effectiveness. These standards are organized under two headings, as follows: **FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS** and **OPERATIONAL STANDARDS**. The standards are designed to guide institutions from initial application through the periodic reassessment process required of accredited institutions.

The **Foundational Standards** section and the **Operational Standards** section provide the substantive issues that **must** be specifically and thoroughly addressed in the institution's *Self-Study Report* to certify compliance.

It should be noted that BOTH the opening descriptive statements AND the standards and evaluative criteria themselves are to serve as the basis of the institution's self-study process and are to be addressed in the self-study report.

## I. FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS

This section describes the foundational accreditation standards which address the nature and purpose of the institution, namely: (A) Biblical Foundations, (B) Purpose and Objectives, (C) Philosophy of Education, (D) Ethical Values and Standards. Institutions should ensure that these statements are consistent and that together they clearly define their educational identity. Each begins with a general descriptive statement that will serve as a beginning point in assessment and is followed by the Standards and Evaluative Criteria Statement.

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### A. Biblical Foundations

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The Biblical Foundations Statement of an institution defines its Christian nature by affirming those doctrinal matters to be true which identify it as part of the evangelical tradition in education. It must be written so as to conform to the historic creeds and statements of Christianity, and thus reflect a careful and precise theological statement, but also accurately state the current position of the institution as set down by the board and administration. In addition, it must be written lucidly in order to inform prospective students, faculty, administrators and board members, as well as external constituencies, regarding the religious identity of the institution.

This statement provides the context from which the other three foundational statements must logically follow. It may be referred to by different titles, depending on the institution's tradition, such as Biblical Foundations Statement, Doctrinal Statement, Theological Position, Statement of Faith, et al. It may be supplied to the institution by its sponsoring or affiliated denomination or church, or it may be individually and originally composed by the institution.

Biblical Foundations Statements may also differ in length and comprehensiveness. It may be very brief, covering the most essential items and allowing for broad evangelical application, or it may be lengthy and very specific to a particular tradition. In either case, it must be comprehensive enough to include all affirmations which are, in fact, expected for faculty and others, but also concise enough that it does not include matters which are actually overlooked, not enforced, or regarded as nonessential.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 1.1 The institution must have a Biblical Foundations Statement that includes affirmations of tenets such as the following:
  - 1.1.1 the trinitarian nature of God;

- 1.1.2 the full deity and humanity of Christ;
  - 1.1.3 the inerrancy and historicity of the Bible;
  - 1.1.4 the divine work of non-evolutionary creation including persons in God's image;
  - 1.1.5 the redemptive work of Jesus through his death and resurrection;
  - 1.1.6 salvation by grace through faith;
  - 1.1.7 the Second Coming of Christ;
  - 1.1.8 the reality of heaven and hell;
  - 1.1.9 the existence of Satan.
- 1.2 The Biblical Foundations Statement of the institution must be readily available and included in appropriate official publications.
  - 1.3 Students must be required to read and respect the institution's Biblical Foundations Statement and be provided with the means to understand it.
  - 1.4 Board members, administrators, and faculty must be in agreement with the Biblical Foundations Statement of the institution.
  - 1.5 The Board must approve the Biblical Foundations Statement, and official documents must include a policy regarding its assessment and measures by which it can be revised.

In the institution's Biblical Foundations Statement, the TRACS Biblical Foundations Statement should be affirmed as a general model, but it is not expected to be used verbatim. TRACS offers the following tenets:

**The Bible.** The unique divine inspiration of all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as originally given, so that they are infallibly and uniquely authoritative and free from error of any sort in all matters with which they deal, scientific, historical, moral, and theological.

**The Trinity.** The triune, Godhead—one eternal, transcendent, omnipotent, personal God existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**The Father.** God the Father, the first person of the Divine Trinity, is infinite Spirit—sovereign, eternal, and unchangeable in all His attributes. He is worthy of honor, adoration, and obedience.

**The Son.** The Perfect, sinless humanity and the absolute, full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, indissolubly united in one divine-human person since His unique incarnation by miraculous conception and virgin birth.

**Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead who convicts, regenerates, indwells, seals all believers in Christ, and fills those who yield to Him. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers; however, the manifestation of any particular gift is not required as evidence of salvation.

**Historicity.** The full historicity and perspicuity of the biblical record of primeval history, including the literal existence of Adam and Eve as the progenitors of all people, the literal fall and resultant divine curse on the creation, the worldwide cataclysmic deluge, and the origin of nations and languages at the tower of Babel.

**Redemption.** The substitutionary and redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sin of the world, through His literal physical death, burial, and resurrection, followed by His bodily ascension into heaven.

**Salvation.** Personal salvation from the eternal penalty of sin provided solely by the grace of God on the basis of the atoning death and resurrection of Christ, to be received only through personal faith in His person and work.

**Last Things.** The future, personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth to judge and purge sin, to establish His eternal Kingdom, and to consummate and fulfill His purposes in the works of creation and redemption with eternal rewards and punishments.

**Biblical Creation.** Special creation of the existing space-time universe and all its basic systems and kinds of organisms in the six literal days of the creation week.

**Satan.** The existence of a personal, malevolent being called Satan who acts as tempter and accuser, for whom the place of eternal punishment was prepared, where all who die outside of Christ shall be confined in conscious torment for eternity.

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## **B. Purpose and Objectives**

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The institution must state clearly and concisely its specific mission and purpose, one which is appropriate for Christian higher education within the general scope of postsecondary education. The statement of purpose evolving from the mission defines the distinctive role and intention of the institution and provides the basis on which students are received and for which they are educated. The purpose statement must be used as a basic guide in planning, development, evaluation, policy-making, and all other institutional functions.

The mission and purpose must set forth the specific educational role of the institution with regard to its intended target groups. Educational goals are to be formulated which are (1) consistent with and imply the institution's philosophical and ethical stance; (2) consistent with its academic level and the nature of post secondary education, and (3) consistent with and following from its Biblical Foundations Statement. There are certain general objectives that characterize higher education. The following are examples of such general objectives, framed in broad terms:

- To increase the student's interest in intellectual and social values.
- To discover, preserve, advance and transmit knowledge.
- To develop students who exhibit sound character, effective citizenship and professional competence.
- To encourage the pursuit of life-long learning.

There are certain objectives of distinctly Christian education that must also be addressed in the purpose statement. These include: (1) Worship is central in the life of the institution and its members. (2) Christian education, when prudently achieved, results in the internalization of Christian values (beyond rote and mechanistic compliance with set rules)—resulting in a life of

prayer, of faith, of sound character and of spiritual values including study of the Word of God, personal piety, and devotion; (3) Christian education will clearly result in dedicated, caring Christian service extended toward other persons, especially those who are socio-economically, physically, and spiritually oppressed or disadvantaged—a loving reach to others. Christian institutions must seek to develop these kinds of dedicated, responsible, and caring persons. (4) Christian institutions will seek to incorporate within their curriculum an integrated body of knowledge that appropriately includes the content of scripture, justifies its inclusion, and places knowledge within a Christian worldview.

The institutional purpose statement serves as a frame of reference for decision-making in determining operational policies. Educational programs and all other operations of an institution are to be clearly related to the purpose of the institution. Specific objectives are adopted to implement the stated purpose of the institution. A program of outcomes assessment must be developed to allow the institution to measure and demonstrate how effectively the purposes are being accomplished. Purpose and objectives must give direction to all the institution's educational activities and to its admission policies, selection of faculty, allocation of resources, and overall planning. Human, financial, and physical resources must be adequate to ensure that the purpose is being achieved.

TRACS requires member institutions to pursue their established educational purpose. An institution is, therefore, evaluated in terms of the achievement of stated purpose and objectives. The integrity of the institution is

measured by its demonstrated progress toward fulfilling its purpose. Appropriate publications must accurately communicate the purpose and mission. It is important that the institution review its statement of purpose periodically to ensure that it continues to provide an accurate portrayal of the institution and describes goals that are attainable to a reasonable degree. Evaluation and assessment processes must be designed to demonstrate that its purpose is being fulfilled.

Traditional institutions that utilize selected non-traditional formats or delivery systems must carefully describe the distinctives in their non-traditional programs with careful reference to (1) educational purpose, (2) financial procedures, (3) student body (recruitment, admission, student profile), (4) degree offerings and (5) any adaptive measures in governance, organizational structure, resource allocation, faculty component, or other areas of the institution that may be necessitated by the presence of a non-traditional format. Appropriate publications must accurately describe the purpose and objectives (and the academic requirements, procedures and distinctives) of any non-traditional program offered. The Accreditation Commission will in most cases consider non-traditional programs only as a part of a campus-based program.

Finally, the name of an institution must be accurate, descriptive, and appropriate to its stated purpose. The use of "institute," "college," "university," "seminary," "theological school," "graduate school," et al., must be in keeping with the general and national use of such nomenclature (and appropriate to the programs offered) in order to enable a consumer to correctly understand the scope and nature of the institution.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 2.1 The institution must have a written mission/ purpose statement that has been approved by the governing board and that reflects its Biblical Foundations Statement.
- 2.2 The institution must have clearly defined objectives.
  - a. They are available in writing.
  - b. They are consistent with written institutional purposes.
  - c. They are clearly stated in measurable terms.
  - d. They have been approved by the governing board.
- 2.3 The statement of mission/ purpose with the objectives of the institution must be set forth in all official publications.
- 2.4 The faculty, administration, and governing board must be aware of the stated purpose and objectives of the institution and be able to relate to them.
- 2.5 The learning experiences must clearly relate to the mission/ purpose and objectives of the institution.
- 2.6 There must be a regular review of the purpose and objectives and assessment of actual outcomes.
  - a. There is a written review process.
  - b. Governing board and other official minutes indicate appropriate reviews.
- 2.7 The name of the institution must be appropriate.
  - a. The name reflects the purpose of the institution.
  - b. The name, with reference to the programs offered, is consistent with national norms in naming an educational institution.

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## **C. Philosophy of Education**

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The institution must be operating within a specifically Christian philosophy of education. Practices and methods emanate from that underlying philosophy of education.

A philosophy of education consists of a set of basic principles regarding God, persons, truth, values, and their relationships, expressed in a way that defines an institution's understanding of the teaching/learning process. A Christian philosophy holds that all truth has God as its source and hence is consistent, and can be known by persons who are in God's image as they properly relate to Him.

Both administrators and faculty must be involved in the development, implementation, and continuing assessment of a philosophy of education.

The institution must consciously develop its courses, curricula, and other education/research/service programs within a framework and from a perspective consistent with God's revealed truth. Such a philosophy results in integration of biblical principles throughout the curriculum.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 3.1 The institution must have a Christian philosophy of education statement.
  - a. It is available in writing in the institution's catalog and other appropriate publications.
  - b. It is in agreement with and flows from the Biblical Foundations Statement.
  - c. It is approved by the governing board.
- 3.2 The Christian philosophy must be manifested in the curriculum and operations of the institution.
- 3.3 Faculty and students must indicate understanding of the philosophy.
- 3.4 There must be periodic assessment of the philosophy statement.

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## **D. Ethical Values and Standards**

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Christian institutions define themselves by a set of values which are central to its purpose, educational philosophy and mission. These values govern every aspect of the operations and spell out the nature of the character the institution sees itself as instilling in its students—and all of its constituencies. These values result in standards of conduct, expectations, or guidelines for board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Their goal is to shape character by personal discipline resulting in a lifestyle that respects other persons equally, provides caring service and outreach, and exemplifies integrity.

Institutions may have a single and comprehensive statement of values and standards. They may have several statements of values and standards for students, faculty, board members and others, but each of these must clearly reflect the same core values.

While a Christian institution's values are principally Biblically based, they must also reflect and enhance social and professional standards. Christian institutions as well as their graduates should endeavor to be models of virtuous character and exemplary service in their churches, their communities and in their professions.

Institutions must periodically and regularly assess their statements to ensure that they are current, clearly understood, and achieving their purposes.

## **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 4.1 The institution must have a statement of ethical values and standards
  - a. It is clearly written.
  - b. It is comprehensive
  - c. It is approved by the governing board.
- 4.2 The statement must be published in all appropriate publications.
- 4.3 Board members, administration, faculty, staff, and students must indicate their intent to adhere to the standards.
- 4.4 The values and standards must be in agreement with Biblical principles and consistent with the purpose statement.
- 4.5 There must be periodic assessment of the statement of values and standards.

## II. OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

This section describes accreditation standards related to the OPERATION and the educational outcomes of the institution. There are twelve areas included under this heading. Each begins with a descriptive statement that will serve as a beginning point in analysis and deliberation related to use of the area in the self-study process. This section (II) includes standards related to the following: (A) Infrastructure: The Organizational Structure: (B) Publications, Policies and Procedures, (C) The Educational Program, (D) The Faculty, (E) Student Development, (F) Financial Resources, (G) Institutional Advancement, (H) Institutional Effectiveness, (I) Instructional Support, (J) Physical Plant, (K) Campus Security, and (L) Intercollegiate Athletics.

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### A. Infrastructure: The Organizational Structure

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The organizational structure of an institution includes the following components: the governing board, the administrative staff, and the support staff. The organizational structure will differ among institutions, but there must be an appropriately organized and functioning board of control; an administrative staff or leadership team adequate in number, function/ title and competence to manage the institution effectively and efficiently; an organized and effectively functioning faculty organization and sufficient support staff to provide needed service functions for the administrative and academic functions of the institution.

All components of the organization must be set forth in a detailed, written organization chart which is readily available. The goal of an effectively functioning infrastructure is to ensure the integrity, stability and effectiveness of the institution. In doing so, the institution at all levels engages in regular, systematic assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and prescribes measures for maintaining quality in its total operation and outcomes.

It should be noted that BOTH the descriptive statements AND the Standards and Evaluative Criteria are to serve as the basis for the institution's self-study process and are to be addressed thoroughly in the institution's self-study document.

The three components of the infrastructure are addressed in detail below. The faculty organization is included under Faculty.

#### 1. The Governing Board

The governing board must be a well defined, legally constituted body responsible for establishing broad policy, appointing and evaluating the chief executive officer, establishing and maintaining financial stability and oversight of the effective pursuit of the stated purpose and objectives of the institution.

The duties, responsibilities, powers, authority, number of members, membership qualifications, method of selection, length of service, organization, frequency of meetings, and procedures of the board must be clearly described in a written constitution and/or bylaws which have been legally approved—and adhered to without exception.

Board members must be free of any conflict of interest in their relationship with the institution and therefore are not involved in any manner with a business or other enterprise that does business with the institution.

The board must have a minimum of five voting members, with no more than one of these members being a paid employee of the institution. In addition, the chair of the board cannot, nor can the president of the institution, have as voting members on the board any member of their immediate or an in-law family. The president of the institution cannot serve as the chair of the governing board or its executive or nominating committees.

A copy of the authorization from the appropriate governmental agency (if required by the state) to operate as an educational institution and grant degrees, certificates, and diplomas, must be filed with TRACS as a part of the institution's initial eligibility requirements.

It is important to follow the procedure of governing board approval prior to any substantive change. In addition, the president or CEO must inform TRACS of any intent to implement a substantive change in the institution (providing documentation of governing board approval) *prior* to the advertising or implementation of such substantive change—with formal TRACS approval of the substantive change secured *prior* to the advertising or implementation of such substantive change.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 5.1. The institution must have a legally constituted governing board that holds the institution in trust and has final authority in matters of policy, operation and evaluation.
  - a. There is a governing board legally established and functioning.
  - b. The institution has legal authorization from the state government to operate and has filed a copy of that authorization with TRACS.
- 5.2. The board must formulate and maintain a written long-range plan for the institution.
  - a. The board receives input from all relevant sources such as the administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and public interests.
  - b. The long-range plan addresses every area of the institution and its operation (e.g., facilities, curriculum, degree programs, financial position, library and other support areas, faculty, student population).
  - c. The plan includes timetables and enabling objectives to reach each goal in each area of the institution.
- 5.3. The board must approve the institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy, and must review these regularly to ensure that they are being pursued faithfully.
  - a. It has an established process for review of these areas.
  - b. It reviews these areas and makes decisions regarding them.
- 5.4. The board must ensure academic freedom within the framework of the institution's biblical foundations, purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
  - a. It has approved a general policy regarding academic freedom.
  - b. It reviews any alleged breach of academic freedom.
  - c. It demonstrates support and commitment to academic freedom.
- 5.5. The board must approve all substantive changes in the institution's purposes, policies, and programs prior to the implementation of any such changes. (This includes changes in institutional name, degree programs, purpose, organizational structure, and any other initiatives that would by national norms in higher education be considered as substantive.)
  - a. Board minutes indicate that all proposed substantive changes (additions, deletions, or modifications) were reviewed *prior* to their implementation.
  - b. The board makes final decisions regarding such proposed substantive changes.
  - c. Minutes indicating such changes have been considered and approved by the governing board.
  - d. Any proposed substantive change is submitted to TRACS for approval prior to its advertisement and implementation (along with documentation that the governing board has approved the proposed substantive change).
- 5.6. The board must function within the parameters established in writing—normally in a constitution, bylaws, and governing board manual or handbook which includes:
  - a. duties and responsibilities.
  - b. number of members.
  - c. qualifications/representation/method of selection of members.
  - d. organizational structure—such as officers and their selection (only the CEO sits on board from the administration and does not function as the chair or officer of the board nor as chair of the executive committee or nominating committee).
  - e. length of service of members and officers.
  - f. frequency of meetings.

- g. procedures.
  - h. board self-evaluation procedures.
- 5.7. The board must approve the institution's annual operating budget with documentation recorded in the board minutes.
- 5.8. The board must be responsible for the financial stability of the institution as indicated in board minutes.
- 5.9. The board must be responsible for the quality and integrity of operations as indicated in the board minutes.
- 5.10. The board must establish written and published policies.
- 5.11. The board must appoint and regularly review a chief executive officer.
- a. There is a process for the retention and annual evaluation of the president or CEO.
  - b. Minutes indicate that this process has been implemented.
- 5.12. The board must approve the appointment of all administrative staff members as indicated in the minutes.
- 5.13. The board must have an official board manual or handbook.
- a. The written handbook or manual is available.
  - b. Board members indicate that they have read the manual or handbook.
- 5.14. The board must approve salary schedules and benefit packages as indicated in the board minutes.
- 5.15. The board must regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its own function.
- a. A process for evaluation of the board exists and the results of the evaluation are available in writing.
  - b. The process is contained in the board manual or handbook.
- 5.16. The board must arrange for the recording, preservation, and appropriate dissemination of accurate and complete minutes of all board meetings and proceedings.
- a. A policy statement regarding the process is contained in the board manual.
  - b. A comprehensive review of the minutes indicates that the minutes accurately reflect the proceedings of the board.
- 5.17. The board must meet a *minimum* of two times annually in plenary, regular sessions.
- a. Minutes indicate that these regular meetings do occur.
  - b. Board members indicate that these sessions do occur.
  - c. Minutes indicate that the board exercises its responsibilities.
- 5.18. The board chair and/or the CEO must prepare a printed agenda and must arrange for the distribution of reports and related documents that are included with the minutes of each meeting.
- 5.19. The board must provide a thorough orientation for new board members, using the board manual or handbook, providing a complete understanding of their role on the board.
- a. There is a process and a responsible person identified for this orientation function.
  - b. These sessions are indicated on the official institutional calendar.
- 5.20. The board executive committee must act on behalf of the board between the regular meetings.
- a. Minutes indicate that the executive committee meets as required.
  - b. Minutes indicate that the actions of the executive committee are reviewed by the board in regular session in the regularly scheduled meeting that immediately follows the meeting(s) of the executive committee.

## 2. The Administration

An administrative or leadership team must be in place, adequate in number, appropriate by title, function, appropriately degreed, and competent to administer the institution effectively and efficiently. Administrators must possess credentials, experience, and demonstrated competence appropriate to their areas of responsibilities. The administration must be headed by a full-time chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board—normally a president. In addition, there must be a qualified chief academic officer who is responsible for the academic operations of the institution and is granted the authority to pursue quality academic outcomes. The term, “full-time,” is interpreted here as one who is not contracted full time by another college or professional institution or does not hold any other full-time position.

Further, there must be a clear understanding and cooperative working relationship among administrators—with reference to their respective duties, responsibilities, and authority. There must be a detailed job description for each position which is (a) appropriate to the position, (b) compatible with the purpose/objectives of the institution and the organizational chart, (c) provided to the employee, and (d) utilized as the basis for setting the performance goals for each position and the regular, systematic evaluation of the performance of each administrator.

The administration or leadership team of the institution has responsibility for identifying and bringing together the various resources and allocating them effectively in order to accomplish institutional goals.

The administrative organization must reflect the purpose and philosophy of the institution and establish a process by which the administrative team convenes regularly for the purpose of planning, deliberating, and communicating—which may take the form of an administrative cabinet.

An organizational chart must clearly delineate all administrative positions depicting lines of responsibilities.

A program of periodic evaluation of effectiveness must be developed and utilized for all administrators of the institution.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 6.1. The chief executive officer must be responsible for carrying out published board policies and procedures.
  - a. The constitution and bylaws give the CEO the necessary authority.
  - b. Written records, including the CEO’s reports to the board, reflect what the CEO has achieved.
  - c. These policies and procedures exist in written form.
  - d. Interviews with representative members from within the institution verify that policies and procedures are followed.
  - e. An organizational chart clearly depicts lines of administrative responsibility.
- 6.2. Each staff position must have a detailed job description.
  - a. The job description is written clearly.
  - b. The staff member has a copy.
  - c. The job description has been reviewed and updated where needed within the past twelve months.
  - d. The job description is used as a basis for the annual evaluation of each staff member.
- 6.3. There must be a chief academic officer chosen by the board who has the credentials, experience, and competence to provide leadership to the institution and to guide the institution toward quality outcomes.
  - a. The officer holds appropriate graduate degrees from institutions that are accredited by a USDE-approved accrediting agency.
  - b. Evaluations indicate that the officer is functioning in a competent and effective manner.
  - c. The officer’s full-time responsibility is to the institution.
  - d. The officer is vested with the authority to manage the institutional academic program.

- 6.4. There must be other administrative or leadership team members sufficient in number and competence to give direction to the major operational areas of the institution.
  - a. There are job descriptions for each functional area of the institution.
  - b. Administrative positions have incumbents who have appropriate experience and academic degrees and whose evaluations indicate that they are functioning in a competent and effective manner.
- 6.5. A system of evaluation for the administration must exist and be in use.
  - a. The system is described in written form.
  - b. There is written evidence that the system is in use (existence of completed evaluation forms, employee response and feedback to the evaluation(s), etc.).

### 3. The Support Staff

The support staff members are an integral part of the institution. They provide important service functions for both the administrative and academic entities of the institution. Policies and procedures are to be developed, codified, and disseminated which will provide the needed guidelines for the support staff, including job descriptions for each position.

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 7.1. There must be a support staff sufficient in number and competence to adequately support the administrative and academic functions of the institution.
  - a. Basic services are provided to students, faculty, and administrators.
  - b. Interviews with members of the institution indicate that an adequate support staff is in place and functioning efficiently.
  - c. Current technology such as computers is provided for staff to support administration service functions of the institution.

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## B. Publications, Policies and Procedures

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The institution must develop publications, policies, and procedures which are necessary to its effective operation, consistent with accepted principles and procedures for postsecondary Christian education and with the institution's purpose and objectives, and contain accurate information. The institution must state the accredited status with TRACS in compliance with the official TRACS guidelines at least in the catalog and on the web site home page.

### 1. Publications

Among the official publications that are required of a postsecondary institution are the following: faculty handbook, student handbook, and catalog. Additional publications include policies manual, library guide, governing board manual, and recruiting or promotional material.

Policies and procedures must be developed and implemented to evaluate and revise all publications regularly in order to maintain current and accurate information. The institution must portray its programs, services, and activities in all publications, advertisements, and all other communication in language that is accurate, supportable, clear, unambiguous, and in a manner which is not misleading. All publications, including any web sites, must be consistent.

The publications must be approved by appropriate administrative personnel and by the governing board. (Also see the section entitled "Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status" in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*.)

- a. **Student Handbook.** The institution must publish and make available to appropriate institutional personnel and to all students a comprehensive student handbook. This handbook must include the

expectations for students with regard to their academic, social and spiritual life, and conduct.

The handbook must include the institution's purpose statement, with an explanation of the institution's purpose, objectives, values, and philosophy. The general goals and objectives for student development, within the framework of the institution's purpose, must be clearly identified.

The student handbook must give an overview of academic regulations including the following: (1) procedures for dropping/adding courses, policies for grading, withdrawal from the institution; (2) information regarding academic advising, library services and provisions for learning assistance, and coverage of the Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1994.

Further, the student handbook must include information regarding student life, including the following: (1) a general purpose statement for the student affairs unit of the institution, (2) policies and regulations regarding student conduct (including the Code of Conduct)—including such issues as sexual harassment, AIDS and other transmittable diseases, campus safety, hazing, immorality and due process, (3) opportunities for religious and social outreach/services by students, (4) the purpose, organization and function of student government and a description of other student clubs and organizations which are available, (5) a section on resident life and commuter life must provide information regarding these dimensions of campus community life (including the use of automobiles), (6) health services and insurance, (7) campus emergency and crisis procedures, (8) a listing of key administration and staff members with their location and office phone number, (9) a listing of cultural, educational and religious opportunities in the geographical area, and (10) any other student services which may be available.

The student handbook is an essential document for the efficient organization and purposeful function of student life in a collegiate institution.

- b. **Faculty Handbook.** The faculty handbook must list and clearly describe the rights and responsibilities of the faculty. The handbook will include a description of policies regarding (1) the faculty organization, (2) job descriptions, (3) academic advising, (4) office hours, (5) course syllabi, (6) textbook adoption and management, (7) attendance, (8) grading, (9) contractual issues, (10) due process, (11) outside work, (12) copyrights, (13) faculty rank, (14) academic freedom, (15) promotion and tenure, (16) procurement of equipment and supplies, (17) departmental and institutional protocol, (18) provisions for faculty development, (19) remuneration and fringe benefits, (20) an administration job summary which lists each member of the institution's administration with a brief description of the scope and area of the responsibility of each, and (21) all other issues that may relate to faculty rights and responsibilities.
- c. **Catalog.** The institution's catalog must be readily available and must accurately reflect the academic program, faculty and facilities provided. The catalog must be current, with a two-year published revision being the normal cycle. The following is a list of information normally addressed in the institutional catalog:
  - 1) Institutional mission/purpose(s) and objectives.
  - 2) President's introductory statement
  - 3) Doctrinal statement
  - 4) Academic calendar.
  - 5) Comprehensive grading policies.
  - 6) Entrance requirements and procedures.
  - 7) Basic information on academic programs and courses, with required scope, sequence and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated. The scope shall include, where appropriate, required general education.
  - 8) Degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion and number of credit hours required.
  - 9) Faculty listing (full-time and part-time or adjunct listed separately) with degrees held, the conferring institutions, and the subject area(s) in which they teach.

- 10) Administration members with their degrees and the conferring institution.
- 11) Members of the governing board.
- 12) Institutional facilities readily available for educational use, with a campus map.
- 13) Rules and regulations for conduct.
- 14) Tuition, fees, and other program costs.
- 15) Opportunities and requirements for financial aid.
- 16) Policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment.
- 17) Clear statement of accreditation status.
- 18) Statement on nondiscrimination.
- 19) Student credit transfer policy.
- 20) Other information appropriate to the institution.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 8.1. The institution must develop and publish information regarding faculty, students, and the academic program.
  - a. A Faculty Handbook is available.
  - b. A Student Handbook is available.
  - c. A Catalog is available.
- 8.2. The information in all institutional publications must be consistent, clear, factually accurate, current, and consistent with the institutional purpose and objectives.
  - a. The purpose statement is clearly stated.
  - b. The academic program is clearly consistent with the institutional purpose and Christian philosophy.
  - c. The policies and procedures are consistent with the institutional purpose and Christian philosophy.
  - d. The student is given a clear expectation for behavior and provisions for due process.
  - e. The catalog includes the information normally expected and required in a collegiate catalog.
  - f. The contents of all publications are consistent with minutes and information found in other documents and are consistent with the institutional purpose.
- 8.3. All publications must clearly reflect the accreditation status as required by TRACS.
  - a. The catalog includes the appropriate statement of accreditation status with the full TRACS identification.
  - b. The web site home page includes the appropriate statement of accreditation status with the full TRACS identification.
- 8.4. There must be a written procedure for evaluating, revising, and approving all publications.
  - a. Policies and procedures are in place to evaluate, revise and approve the publications for factual accuracy, clarity, and integrity.
  - b. Minutes of approving body reflect the approval of each of the publications.
- 8.5. The code of conduct explaining student behavior and responsibilities must be clearly stated in the Student Handbook.
- 8.6. Emergency and crisis procedures must be clearly outlined and displayed/published.
- 8.7. Faculty rights and responsibilities must be clearly stated in the Faculty Handbook.
- 8.8. Academic policies and procedures that are current, accurate, and clearly stated must be printed in the Faculty Handbook and the Catalog.
- 8.9. There must be written provision for faculty development, academic freedom, remuneration, and fringe benefits.
  - a. Information on each is provided in the faculty handbook.
  - b. Faculty development plans are available.

- 8.10. There must be published provisions providing faculty members with sufficient time for adequate class preparation, as well as personal and spiritual development.
  - a. The workload reports verify that this standard is met.
  - b. The faculty are in agreement with this policy.
- 8.11. Faculty guidelines for continued employment and promotion must be available and implemented.
  - a. Policies and procedures are available for faculty employment and retention.
  - b. Written records indicate that the guidelines are being followed.
- 8.12. The institution must include a written statement of its policy on nondiscrimination including (but not necessarily limited to) race, sex, and national origin, based on biblical standards, that govern the admission of students and the selection, retention, and advancement of personnel.
  - a. The policy is in writing and printed in appropriate publications.
  - b. The policy is achieved without exception.

## 2. Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures must be developed, appropriately approved, codified and disseminated for administrative operations, financial practices, academic procedures, and student development. They must be consistent with the institution's purpose and administratively feasible.

The specific procedures for the development of institutional policies and procedures must be placed in appropriate handbooks such as: personnel manual, faculty handbook, student handbook, catalog, governing board handbook, and other publications. Further, the date of approval by the appropriate body, normally the governing board, must be recorded for each policy and procedure in the minutes of the approving body(ies). Official documents and publications are to be available which contain, but are not limited to, the following information:

- Organizational Structure
- Job Descriptions
- Personnel Policies
- Recruiting Policies
- Enrollment Policies
- Academic Policies
- Graduation Policies
- Financial Policies
- Due Process Provisions
- Standards of Conduct
- Transfer of Credit

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 9.1. The institution must have a policies and procedures manual.
  - a. Policies and procedures are available in written form.
  - b. Policies and procedures are comprehensive in scope.
- 9.2. The policies must be administratively feasible.
  - a. Each policy is achieved within the institution's structures and resources.
  - b. Each policy is evaluated.
- 9.3. The policies and procedures must be approved by the appropriate body and the minutes must indicate the date of approval.

9.4. The policies and procedures must be in agreement with the institutional purpose.

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### **C. Educational Program.**

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**NO DEGREE PROGRAM, UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, OR POSTGRADUATE WILL BE ACCEPTED BY TRACS THAT FAILS TO MEET QUALITATIVE STANDARDS COMMONLY HELD AS THE NORM IN THE POSTSECONDARY ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND AS PUBLISHED IN THE TRACS ACCREDITATION MANUAL.**

The educational environment of the institution must be conducive and supportive of academic study. Educational support must be in evidence including adequate facilities, learning materials, and support services including academic counseling. A sufficient number of qualified full-time faculty is required. The minimum is one full-time faculty for each program /major offered.

An educational calendar is an essential element of college organization. While there are various patterns, a major premise in the calendar and curricula is that there is a direct relationship between in-class time and the teaching/ learning process. The national norm is an academic school year composed of thirty weeks of classes excluding registration, holidays, and vacations. While TRACS does not recommend a specific calendar, the Accreditation Commission does recognize institutional calendars that demonstrate the thirty weeks of class meeting time, composed of two semesters or an equivalency.

Recruiting and registration practices must be ethical and in keeping with the purpose of the institution.

The institution must be able to support the educational programs offered through adequate student enrollment and financial and educational resources.

In summary, every postsecondary institution that becomes affiliated with TRACS must exhibit in its educational program certain essential broad characteristics that tend to define the program and further serve as the umbrella for the Standards and Criteria. These are summarized as follows:

- The principal focus of the institution's educational program is the education and academic preparation of students within a distinctly and clearly Christian context that is reflected in its admission policies and academic practice.
- Educational programs offered by the institution are derived from recognized fields of study normally found at the postsecondary level.
- Educational programs offered by the institution are composed of designated courses of study with clearly outlined procedures for completing the programs successfully.
- The institution offers at least one academic program that is of one or more academic years or the equivalent at the postsecondary level.
- All educational offerings and admission practices are clearly set forth in a published, up-to-date catalog. An important index of an institution's caliber is the appropriateness of its admission policy as evidenced in requirements, standards, and procedures. It shows that only those are admitted who will, in all likelihood, complete the program chosen. Possible ways to determine if students have the ability to benefit might include pre-admission testing or evaluations. Qualitative and quantitative admission requirements must be stated specifically in the catalog.
- The institution offers a diploma, certificate, or degree upon successful completion of an educational program of study that is clearly and accurately outlined, course-by-course, in appropriate college-published materials.

- The institution provides an educational environment conducive to and supportive of academic study including essential facilities, educational materials, qualified faculty, and academic support services.
- The institution has legal authority to offer its programs and to confer degrees stipulated within the state that the institute resides.
- The recruiting practices of the institution are ethical and in keeping with the philosophy of the institution.
- A course syllabus is prepared for each course and is distributed to each student at the beginning of the course. This syllabus for each course includes course requirements, the nature of the course contents, its objectives, and the methods of student evaluation.
  - a. There is a clearly defined process of curriculum development (in writing) including how the curriculum is established, reviewed, evaluated, and modified. The curriculum is developed with regular input from the faculty. The curriculum is under constant evaluation by the faculty in order to assure that needed modifications are completed as needed.
- All academic policies are clearly defined and stated—such as academic warning, probation, suspension, dismissal, and re-admission—and are included in appropriate publications.
- There is, in writing and in use, an ongoing system for evaluating the total academic program including curriculum, teaching, research, instructional materials and equipment, facilities, and all other matters related to the program.
  - b. **DEGREE NOMENCLATURE.** It is required that institutions name the academic degrees awarded for completion of academic programs. The degrees are consistent with accepted standards in higher education in the United States—in reference to the propriety of the degree for the content, nature and level of the program offered. In addition, it is required that the institution will not confer an honorary degree upon any individual that is normally considered an *earned* degree (such as Ph.D., Th.D., Ed.D., *et al*).

## 1. Undergraduate Education.

Undergraduate programs must be defined by semesters or quarters and encompass four years or the equivalent for a full-time student (a total of 120 to 128 semester credit hours is normally expected or 180 to 192 quarter hours). Associate degrees encompass two academic years and approximately 60 to 64 semester credit hours or 90-96 quarter hours. The general education core must include a minimum of three semester hours in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/social sciences, communications, and natural sciences/math. A minimum of 44 semester hours or the equivalent quarter hours is required for the bachelor's degree program of the liberal arts college. Thirty-six (36) semester hours or the equivalent quarter hours are required for the bachelor's degree program of the Bible college. Associate degree programs must meet one-half of the semester/quarter hour requirements of the appropriate bachelor's degree program. One and two year certificate programs are exempt from general education requirements.

Bachelor's degree programs must show evidence that the general education requirements have been met by the student upon graduation. This will include the credits in general education which were transferred into the home institution and those taken on the home campus.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria (Undergraduate)

- 10.1. The curriculum must clearly relate to the purpose, objectives, and philosophy of the institution.
  - a. The institution has a written document that describes the relationship of the institutional purpose and the academic program.
  - b. Relationship between the curriculum and institutional purpose is annually reviewed as part of the Assessment Program.

- 10.2. There must be in place an established faculty curriculum process for the development and assessment of the educational program.
  - a. Policies and procedures have been established to develop, evaluate, and modify the academic programs.
  - b. Minutes of academic committees and official meetings indicate that members of the faculty are actively involved in curriculum matters.
- 10.3. The curriculum must have as its central focus the education of students.
  - a. Course objectives are written in reference to measurable learning outcomes.
  - b. Course objectives/outcomes are assessed through student achievement and competency.
  - c. The grading system for rewarding and evaluating academic progress is published and designed to provide incentive, reward achievement, and assist in identifying student problems.
  - d. The grading system is the same throughout the institution and grades are reported numerically (4.0,3.0, 2.0, 1.0, etc.), by letter (A, B, C, D, etc.), or possibly in some instances for specific courses as P-F.
- 10.4. The curriculum must be appropriate for the educational level and must be consistent with national norms.
  - a. The academic program is comparable with similar institutions.
  - b. The educational experiences are appropriate for educational level.
- 10.5. The curriculum must have a logical and appropriate scope sequence.
  - a. Programs and courses are designed by competent professionals (faculty).
  - b. Courses are arranged numerically to order learning experiences and levels.
- 10.6. The curriculum must progressively lead to student competency and learning.
- 10.7. The curriculum must be systematically and regularly evaluated, using established processes.
  - a. Policies and procedures indicate a systematic process for curriculum evaluation.
  - b. Minutes of appropriate academic committees reflect regular and systematic curriculum review.
- 10.8. Degrees, majors, and minors must be specifically defined according to minimum and maximum credit hour requirements in all institutional materials such as catalogs and brochures.
- 10.9. The curriculum must be adequately supported by the institution.
  - a. An adequate number of faculty with appropriate credentials are employed.
  - b. The budget reflects adequate funding, and actual expenditures must reflect adequate financial support.
  - c. The facilities and equipment are adequate to support the curriculum.
  - d. There are policies and procedures for evaluating the educational programs.
  - e. An adequate number of students enrolled in each program offered.
- 10.10. Curriculum and program proliferation/duplication must be controlled.
  - a. The minutes show evidence of the monitoring of course-program duplication and proliferation.
  - b. A review of the catalog reflects no strong duplication.
- 10.11. Academic policies, including entrance and exit requirements and student transfer of credits, must be published and disseminated.
  - a. The institutional catalogs, brochures, status sheets, and other printed materials are periodically reviewed and revised in order to provide valid and reliable student information regarding current policies and program requirements.
  - b. These publications contain all pertinent academic policies written in a clear manner.
- 10.12. Appropriate academic records must be regularly maintained and retained by the appropriate academic office.
  - a. The institution maintains an office of the registrar/admissions or other such office within the academic area that keeps the official student records in a fireproof, secured area—with a duplicate set at another location (perhaps on

- microfiche).
  - b. The office of the registrar/admissions serves to maintain the privacy and accuracy of all student records.
  - c. The institution makes student records available in a timely manner in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.
- 10.13. Innovative curricular activities must be supported by clear and explicit objectives and must be consistent with the institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
- a. Experimental and pilot programs and courses such as those offered by telelearning, distance learning, and other methods, are processed through the regular curriculum procedures, must be campus based, and must be congruent with institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
  - b. Innovative and experimental learning activities are in concert with the total academic process, policies, and requirements.
- 10.14. All degree programs offered must include an appropriate general education core.
- a. The liberal arts college's bachelor's degree programs include a minimum of 44 semester hours/quarter hours equivalent, with a minimum of 3 semester hours/quarter hours equivalent, in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/social sciences, communications, and natural sciences/math. The general education curriculum may be separate subjects or integrated.
  - b. The Bible college's bachelor's degree programs include a minimum of 36 semester hours/quarter hours equivalent, with a minimum of 3 semester hours/quarter hours equivalent, in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/social sciences, communications, and natural science/math.
  - c. Associate degree programs meet one-half of the minimum semester hour requirements/quarter hours equivalent, of the appropriate bachelors degree programs.
- 10.15. Admissions requirements must be clearly specified for all curricula and are current and in keeping with accepted practice.
- a. An office or unit for administering admission policies is identified.
  - b. Institutional catalogs and other such printed materials clearly state admission policies and are made available to students and the public.
  - c. A process for the evaluation of all admission policies is in place.
  - d. The educational purpose of the institution is congruent with the admission policies.
  - e. The admission policies of the institution set forth both qualitative and quantitative requirements aimed at admitting students who demonstrate reasonable ability for success.
  - f. The admission policies provide remedial support for specially admitted students who may lack adequate readiness for college work.
  - g. The admission policies require the high school diploma, GED or other relevant experiences that may indicate and support their ability to succeed in college work toward the degree.
  - h. Admission policies contain a policy on accepting transfer credit, which includes work earned from accredited institutions, equivalency of course content, and an established minimum grade level achieved. Transfer records include transcripts (official) of all previous higher education credits, student standing, and admission status of the student.
  - i. The admission policies include residency requirements for transfer students.
  - j. The admission policies include published information on student dismissal, suspension, and readmission.
  - k. The admission policies include general and special admission requirements.
  - l. The admission policies demonstrate that students are admitted whose interests and abilities are congruent with the current admission policies.
  - m. The admission policies require that all advance placement, certificate, and non-collegiate credit be documented in student files.
  - n. Admissions policies are reviewed and approved by the governing board.
  - o. Admissions policies reflect the purpose and objectives of the institution.
  - p. Admissions policies govern the recruitment of students and assure integrity in presenting the institution to all prospective students, parents, and other interested publics.
  - q. The admission policy includes a student transfer of credit policy that is fair and equitable.
  - r. The institutional catalog, as an official institutional marketing, recruitment, admissions and academic instrument, sets forth clearly and specifically: program and institutional objectives/purposes, rules for student conduct, financial information, faculty rosters and degrees held for full and part-time instructors, degree completion requirements and withdrawal procedures, and general education requirements. (See also the "Publications, Policies, and Procedures" section of the standards.)
- 10.16. The institution must have in place a uniform and standard student evaluation and reporting procedure that

- provides students with detailed and specific periodic reports as to academic progress.
- a. The institutional student evaluative-progress report provides grades indicative of academic achievement for all classes for which students enrolled.
- b. The institutional student evaluative-progress report provides a semester cumulative average for all students plus an overall cumulative average for all coursework.
- c. The institution provides for faculty advising-counseling of all students.

10.17. Ability-to-benefit criteria must exist and be in use.

- a. An admission policy is in place related to ability-to-benefit students.
- b. A system to monitor ability-to-benefit admissions is established and must be followed.
- c. Services are provided to assist ability-to-benefit students.
- d. Records are kept on all ability-to-benefit students.
- e. Follow-up is evident (e.g., grades, longitudinal studies, etc.)

10.18. The granting of credit for prior experience and learning must be done in compliance with national norms and within the guidelines of the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). This must include such elements as follows:

- a. A documented portfolio
- b. A maximum number of credit hours accepted
- c. A requirement that the granting of such credit hours is predicated upon the matriculation and full enrollment of the student at the granting institution and the completion of residence requirements

## 2. Graduate Education

Graduate programs must have a curriculum and resources substantially beyond those provided for an undergraduate program. Graduate study must provide for advanced levels of scholarship and competence in an area of specialization. This, in turn, requires a significant level of individual mentoring of students by faculty, and a sufficient number of students to provide for an interactive learning community. It is important that the institution demonstrate that it maintains a substantial difference in appropriate library, faculty, and other resources between undergraduate and graduate instruction. Graduate programs (both masters and doctorates) are expected to require appropriate graduate hours, higher level requirements such as research, writing (synthesis and evaluation), and organization, comparable to norms in accredited graduate institutions.

The Graduate calendar, while somewhat more flexible in terms of research courses, individual projects, reading courses, etc., is still normally based upon two semesters or thirty weeks of in-class meeting time or its equivalent. In lieu of in-class lecture or discussion at the graduate level, out-of-class assignments, research, and readings are usually equated to the required in-class time. In fact, some out-of-class assignments are usually, at this high level, in excess of the thirty-hour norm, which may be considered a minimum benchmark. In terms of starting and ending academic year dates, the graduate calendar should parallel the overall school calendar.

**Planning Graduate Programs.** Serious institutional consideration must be given to offering graduate programs. The questions to be studied may be summarized as follows:

- a. In what fields should the institution offer graduate work?
- b. Does the institution have the financial and physical resources to conduct graduate programs without impairing the quality of undergraduate programs?
- c. Has long-range projection of the institution's future been developed to determine future financial obligations resulting from the offering of graduate programs including extra costs for faculty, having lighter teaching loads, recruitment of research-oriented faculty members, fellowships, and added facilities, such as an expanded library?
- d. What faculty or committees will approve the graduate programs and recommend the degrees to be

offered?

- e. What changes in the academic organization are essential if graduate programs are to be offered, and can the institution make these changes?
- f. Is there competition with other institutions in the local, state, or regional area?
- g. How will the requirements of accreditation be met?
- h. Has the institution determined genuine need for a graduate program?
- i. Has a long-range program budget been developed?

The institution offering graduate programs must clearly distinguish in its curricula a clear and specific difference in the coursework for the masters and doctoral degrees.

- a. **Doctoral degrees** are normally based upon three years (or the equivalent) of full-time graduate study. Full-time study may be defined in the residency requirements of the institutions, which is normally one full year or the equivalent. However, the doctoral program that is offered in part off-campus, must demonstrate that it meets the normal minimum residency requirement. The off-campus work must clearly be shown by the institution to be the equivalent of on-campus work in such areas as time-on-task, reading, research, writing, and interaction with both faculty and students. It should be noted, however, that research-based doctoral programs, Ph.D., Ed.D., etc., consist of the following:
  - 1) Stringent admission prerequisites which require at least a "B" average in prior academic work, a satisfactory score on their graduate record exam, and letters of recommendation are usually required.
  - 2) A qualifying examination taken early to determine the capacity of the student to do doctoral-level work, especially research.
  - 3) A list of prescribed and cognate courses which must be completed.
  - 4) A specified residency requirement of normally one academic year or its equivalency.
  - 5) A specific requirement such as foreign language, computer, statistical, or other skill in which the student must demonstrate competency in order to do research in the field.
  - 6) A comprehensive exam in which the student must demonstrate competency in knowledge and skills in a given area or field of concentration(s).
  - 7) A dissertation and defense in which the student must demonstrate his/her ability to pursue independent research and to interpret the results of the research orally and in writing before at least three graduate faculty members (graduate committee), usually one from another area of study and two from the major field of concentration.
  - 8) A specified time limit for completing the degree, usually five to seven years.
- b. **Master's Degrees.** The M.S. and M.A. normally consist of a minimum of one year (30-36 semester hours or the equivalent), of full-time graduate study. Many professional master's degrees, such as the M.B.A, M.F.A., and M.S.W., are two-year (45-48 hour) programs. Those master's degrees offered in part off campus must demonstrate that the normal minimum of thirty in-class yearly hours have been met in equivalent fashion through the equating of off-campus work in research, reading, writing, interaction, etc., to on-campus courses or work. All off-campus work must be documented in such a

manner that the equivalency may be clearly seen and verified. The elements of the master's degree normally consist of prescribed coursework, written/oral proficiency, and a thesis that may or may not be required as well as a final screening exam.

Because of the wide range of master's degrees, it is difficult to define the specific requirements. However, the normal master's program consists of the following:

- 1) Stringent admission prerequisites, much as in the doctoral program, but with some exceptions as to the "B" grade requirements and interview.
  - 2) A list of prescribed and cognate courses that must be completed.
  - 3) An identification in the course list of those key courses in which the student must demonstrate proficiency and competency as indicated by a specific grade requirement or other special skill, or general written/oral exam.
  - 4) A thesis or equivalent summative learning experience must be completed. In some cases, this occurs through one or more courses.
- c. **Seminary Degrees.** Seminaries are professional graduate schools with narrowly defined missions related to church ministry and typically serving a particular ecclesiastical or theological constituency. Some are freestanding while others are part of larger institutions such as universities. These factors will have a bearing on the structure, content, and range of degrees offered.
- 1) The Master of Divinity (M.Div.) is the standard seminary degree for training pastors. It has the following characteristics.
    - a. A focus in admission requirements on pastoral aptitude and less on academic requirements.
    - b. It presumes a bachelor's degree (not more than 10% of the total enrollment may be exceptions).
    - c. A minimum of three years of full-time course work is required (normally 90 hours).
    - d. It may culminate in an internship and/or comprehensives.
  - 2) Other Master's degrees in specialized ministry areas may also be offered.
    - a. They should have similar admission requirements as the M.Div.
    - b. They will consist of two years of full-time course work.
    - c. Institutions should follow established patterns of nomenclature.
  - 3) The Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) is an advanced and culminating degree in preparation for ministry.
    - a. Admission requires the M.Div., subsequent pastoral experience and usually a present ministry involvement that provides the context for advanced preparation and application.
    - b. A minimum of 36 credit hours of coursework is required.
    - c. A dissertation project applicable to ministry involvement is required.
  - 4) Seminaries may offer other professional master's level and doctoral degrees. Institutions should follow accepted nomenclature and requirements.
  - 5) General considerations:
    - a. Programs often overlap. When they do, at least 50% of the coursework must be unique to each degree and not transferable to another degree.

- b. Each degree must include sufficient students to provide a learning community.
- c. Professional degrees must provide an ample experiential component, e.g., internships, practicums that include administrative skills.
- d. Programs must include growth in spiritual maturity and leadership.
- e. Schools should always follow accepted practices in admissions, distinctive resources, content, duration, and graduation requirements.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria (Graduate)

- 11.1. The graduate curriculum must relate to the purpose and objectives of the institution.
  - a. Course content and learning experiences are congruent with institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
  - b. Course content and learning experiences are clearly equal to institutional, national, and state norms.
- 11.2. There must be an established curriculum process for curriculum development, modification, and assessment in place.
  - a. Faculty are actively involved in the development, approval, and modification of the curriculum in a procedural process.
  - b. The curricular process involves the administration, board and others as needed.
  - c. Faculty meeting minutes indicate appropriate faculty involvement.
- 11.3. Each graduate program offered by the institution must have as its central focus the imparting of a common core of knowledge, predicated on undergraduate studies, that will enhance the individual educationally and/or vocationally—and that is compatible with such programs in accredited postsecondary institutions.
  - a. Course objectives are written in reference to student performance.
  - b. Learning experiences are relevant to graduate student needs.
  - c. Course objectives/outcomes combine theory and practice, as appropriate to the norm.
  - d. Course objectives/outcomes can be assessed through measurable student achievement and competency.
  - e. A distinction exists between the academic and professional degrees.
- 11.4. The programs (curriculum) of the institution must be at a post-baccalaureate level that reflects and extends the intellectual maturity of the students. There must be a clear distinction between graduate entry level master's degrees and advanced and doctoral degrees.
  - a. Learning levels include knowledge, understanding, skills, application, syntheses, and evaluation in the cognitive area. Attitudes and values in the affective area are normally geared to the graduate level.
  - b. Practical application of theory is evident.
- 11.5. The graduate program(s) must include a common core of introductory courses appropriate to the discipline or field of study, such as foundations, theory, or research methods and reflect course organization that allows for diversity in student learning, yet generally and logically leads to the internalization and application of information.
- 11.6. The graduate program(s) must include courses to provide specific skills in areas such as technology and new methodology.
- 11.7. The graduate program(s) must include integrative experiences to translate theory into practice such as application, syntheses, and evaluations
- 11.8. The graduate program(s) must include summative experience to measure student achievement, competency or cognitive growth such as final projects, papers, tests or practicums of a comprehensive nature.
- 11.9. Graduate admission requirements for all programs must be clearly specified in graduate catalogs, brochures and other printed materials.
- 11.10. Graduate programs must be adequately supported by the institution in the key areas of finances, physical facilities, materials, students enrolled, and faculty.

- 11.11. Individual courses, seminars, etc., within graduate programs must evidence a process for the evaluation of stated objectives and/or student outcomes and competencies through objectives which can be assessed and evaluated through student performances/learning experiences at critical periods.
- 11.12. Graduate academic policies must be clearly and specifically published in handbooks, catalogs, and other college publications.
- 11.13. Graduate academic and personal records must be regularly maintained and retained by the appropriate academic office.
  - a. The institution has an office of the registrar/admissions or other office in the academic area which keeps official graduate student records securely.
  - b. The graduate registrar/admissions office serves to maintain the privacy and accuracy of all records.
  - c. The graduate office of the registrar/admissions is headed by a duly authorized person under the supervision of the academic dean, academic vice-president or other such administrative head.
- 11.14. The graduate degree(s) offered must clearly specify the requirements in terms of specific course credits, competencies, etc.
  - a. The graduate degrees offered are identified specifically.
  - b. The minimum time of full-time graduate study or its equivalent part-time work, minimum semester or credit hours required, personal pre-requisites and/or learning experiences, GPA, as well as test score requirements are clearly stated.
- 11.15. A procedure for the transfer of credit for graduate programs must be in place.
  - a. The transfer of graduate student credits is processed through an appropriate academic office.
  - b. The procedure includes appropriate staff, faculty, and offices of departments, schools, colleges and committees.
- 11.16. Graduate admission requirements for all degree programs must be clearly specified in writing.
  - a. Institutional graduate catalogs, brochures and other printed materials clearly state entrance requirements for each degree offered.
  - b. The admission requirements give evidence that only students who demonstrate educational preparation and personal potential for success at the graduate level are admitted.
  - c. The graduate admission requirements document all exceptions for regular admission deviations. An approved and official process is followed for these students.
  - d. All transfer work is officially documented prior to admission.
  - e. The admission requirements are established through faculty who are teaching in particular graduate programs.
  - f. Conditional admission, probation and special status of graduate students is clearly defined in writing.
- 11.17. The Graduate Calendar must be in line with the regularly published school calendar and reflect the equivalency of the thirty weeks of in-class meeting time normally required.
  - a. Institutional graduate catalogs, brochures, and other printed materials clearly lay out the starting and ending academic year dates
  - b. Class meeting times are clearly shown
- 11.18. The institution must have in place a uniform and standard student evaluation and reporting procedure that provides students with detailed and specific periodic reports as to academic progress.

### **Experiential Learning.**

No experience credit may be granted at the graduate level. The granting of undergraduate credit only for prior experience and learning is to be done in compliance with the guidelines of the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). This must include such elements as follows:

- A documented portfolio.
- A maximum number of credit hours accepted.
- A requirement that the granting of such credit hours is predicated upon the matriculation and full enrollment of the student at the granting institution and the completion of residence requirements.

- A policy that credit must be awarded in lieu of specific courses within a specific degree program.
- The faculty establishes internal and external evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of the program.
- The administrator maintains accurate records for evaluation and audit purposes.

### 3. Distance Learning

Special attention is given by TRACS to distance learning offerings. The undertaking of these types of programs requires purpose, methods, and resources that significantly differ from on-campus offerings and should be undertaken only when the faculty, administration, and governing board have considered the unique requirements for successful programming in these delivery methods.

Institutions that make extensive use of distance learning modes (external, non-residential) of education must present evidence that these are appropriate to higher education, consistent with institutional objectives, and effective (though alternative) means for achieving the intent of the TRACS standards. The institution must demonstrate that students completing these programs have the opportunity to acquire the same levels of knowledge and competencies as those students completing its regular on-campus programs. Therefore, it is essential that there be regular, systematic evaluation of all distance learning education to assess the appropriateness to the purpose of the institution. It is expected that these programs maintain the academic integrity of the institution.

Examples of distance learning for this purpose are external degree programs, off-campus extension programs, independent study programs, conferences/institutes (short courses/ workshops), study abroad, and life-long learning opportunities. Degree credit may be awarded for travel abroad only when planned learning activities and evaluation of student learning are included such that the course requirements are equivalent to regular courses, and meet nationally accepted levels of performance.

Distance learning courses may be electronic, such as television and on-line, videotape, audiotape, or print and mail based.

The following are guidelines to follow in the development of distance learning/education program(s):

Clear, explicit goals must be formulated.

Effectiveness in achieving the goals must be demonstrated.

Provision must be made for:

- adequate administrative support.
- sound financial base.
- regular access to competent faculty.
- appropriate support services.
- adequate facilities.
- necessary resources to assure that courses receive the same level of support as that given to equivalent on-campus courses; e.g., library materials.
- faculty with an appropriate graduate degree from an accredited institution must design/develop each course and must conduct each course with adequate, regular contact with each student.

In an effort to serve new populations of students as well as the traditional student population, many of today's institutions have introduced new teacher-student relationships that differ from relationships that have been employed traditionally. In some instances these relationships differ according to the ratio of students to teachers (independent study), and the frequency, length, or mode of contact (external degree programs), while in other instances differences pertain to the mode in which the student interacts with the subject matter (experiential learning).

- a. **Distance Degree Programs.** In contemporary postsecondary education, many institutions have developed external degree programs with varying types of innovations. TRACS will carefully evaluate all such programs to ensure quality.

The standards are not intended to limit innovation but simply to provide a framework in which to look critically at the product and determine if the program is, in fact, of sufficient quality to justify approval.

Historically, distance (non-residential) learning has been, and continues to be, a viable system to provide educational opportunities for individuals who are unable to participate in an on-campus program. In the late 1960's and 70's, the off-campus program expanded in several ways: a) the territory of many institutions greatly expanded; b) total programs have been transported so that residency requirements are not required for graduation; and c) a variety of innovative delivery systems have been employed to assist students in receiving the knowledge and skills required. However, the vast majority evolved from institutions having quality on-campus programs.

**As a result of these educational trends, it is necessary to establish basic GUIDELINES IN EVALUATING DISTANCE PROGRAMS. The following considerations are employed in the TRACS evaluation. These Guidelines must be adhered to by an institution accredited by TRACS, either offering or considering the offering of any type of distance learning program(s):**

1) Determining programs to be offered.

- a) A need for the program is demonstrated.
- b) The institution is capable of offering the program.
- c) The program is within the purpose or mission of the institution.
- d) The program is part of the organized, regular on-campus program.
- e) The quality of the program is equal to that of the on-campus program.f) Students are able to transfer from the external program to the on-campus program without losing academic credit, providing they remain in the same curricular area.
- f) Special courses developed are consistent with the institution's purpose, resources, and expertise and must be approved by regular campus procedures.
- \*g) **Written state authorization must be received for course(s) and/or program(s) planned.**
- \*h) **All proposed distance learning activities must be submitted to TRACS for approval prior to implementation.**

2) Curriculum.

- a) The content of external courses is the same as on-campus courses although special consideration may be given to different age groups.
- b) The credit for external courses are the same as credit for on-campus courses using the same course number.
- c) The same course admission standards are applied to off-campus programs as to those applied to on-campus programs.
- d) The standards for grades are consistent on and off campus.
- e) Special consideration for completing a degree is specified to ensure that all students are fully aware of degree requirements.
- f) The actual extent and quality of academic work to complete a course for an off-campus program is equal to that which would be expected for an on-campus course, although the actual format may vary.
- g) Course syllabi clearly describe the objectives of the course and the requirements to pass the course successfully.
- h) Regular curriculum review procedures are adopted to maintain acceptable content in all courses.
- i) Courses required for the degrees offered by distance learning programs are consistent with the national norm for these degrees in higher education.
- j) Learning experiences required within each course are equal in scope and rigor to similar courses at that level in American higher education. This is especially the case with graduate courses which require an appropriate rigorous academic and scholarly level of student learning.

3) Faculty.

- a) The use of regular faculty does not overload the faculty member to the point that it affects the on-campus program.
- b) Faculty evaluations similar to those on campus are employed to evaluate teaching-effectiveness in all off-campus programs.

- c) Faculty with an appropriate graduate degree from an accredited institution design/develop each course and must conduct each course, with adequate, regular contact with each student.
- 4) Administering the program.
- a) The institution has appropriate and competent administrative personnel that are directly responsible for all extended or distance learning programs.
  - b) The administrative personnel are capable of providing instructional guidance and evaluative procedures for all programs.
  - c) The administrator periodically evaluates the entire program to determine if it is still within the institution's purpose and capability to provide—in concert with members of the faculty.
  - d) Sufficient staff is provided to ensure all educational services common to those on campus.
- 5) Student services.
- a) Academic advising services are available to all students.
  - b) Information is provided all students regarding academic policies, admissions procedures, financial aid, graduation requirements, personal conduct, and special requirements unique to the institution.
- 6) Student learning:
- a) The institution has a process for measuring student learning outcomes.
- 7) Educational resources.
- a) Library services are available for all students adequate for the level of education offered.
  - b) Laboratories required are available to meet curricular needs.
  - c) Computer services necessary for curricular requirements are available.
  - d) Adequate classroom facilities are available with proper equipment, ventilation and lighting as appropriate.
  - e) Facilities are accessible.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria for Distance Learning

- 12.1. For quality assurance of distance learning offerings, the institution must demonstrate
- a. that it meets all of the Guidelines for Distance Learning.
  - b. that an outcomes assessment mechanism is in place to provide feedback, especially for student learning.
  - c. that the institution is honest in representing its program(s) to the public and to TRACS.
  - d. that ethical practices are followed.
  - e. that a regular internal review process is in place.
  - f. that a budget process and funding evidences a financial commitment.
  - g. that a policies/procedures manual is in use.
  - h. that course transferability is secure.
  - i. that all state and federal criteria are met.

## 4. Branch Campuses

Those institutions that operate branch campuses are expected to maintain the same quality as on-campus, without exception. The institution must establish clear, written policies regarding the purpose of programs, and operation of such branch campus programs that have been approved by the academic officer, including the faculty, administration, and governing board.

TRACS extends accreditation to the branch campus only after evaluating the business plan and taking other necessary actions to determine that the branch campus has sufficient educational, financial, management, and physical resources to satisfy the accrediting agency's standards for accreditation and quality assurance.

TRACS undertakes a site visit of the branch campus as soon as possible, but no later than six months after the establishment of that branch campus.

A branch campus is defined as a location at which an institution offers 50% or more of an educational program(s). In cases where an accredited institution opens or aspires to open a branch campus, such location would be deemed as an integral part of the institution and must meet the TRACS Standards and Criteria as a separate entity.

The following determining factors are used by the Accreditation Commission in determining if the entity is, in fact, a separate branch campus of the home institution:

- The entity is geographically and physically located away from the home campus and maintains a separate facility.
- Control of the entity, including its educational program policies, administrative and business policies, etc., is largely vested in the home entity.
- Students enrolled at the facility may complete at least one-half or more of their degree requirements at the entity location.
- The entity provides all the necessary academic support services and systems.

In defining the term “branch campus,” it is essential to understand that a branch campus is an extension by an institution of its on-campus offerings to another geographic location constituting a separate entity.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

13.1. The institution must have appropriate written policies and procedures including a business plan for each branch campus.

- a. The policies and procedures are approved by the governing board.
- b. The branch campus plan meets any applicable state guidelines.
- c. The branch campus plan is clearly spelled out and includes the following:
  - 1) Description of the facility
  - 2) The location of the facility
  - 3) A list and description of programs to be offered at the facility
  - 4) The number of students to be served at the facility
  - 5) The physical resources at the facility
  - 6) The business operation and management of the facility
  - 7) Projected revenues of the facility along with expenditures and cash flow
  - 8) A listing of the faculty and their credentials available to serve the program
- d. The institution must submit a written business plan for the facility six (6) months prior to the official opening of a new or proposed branch campus.
- e. The institution must schedule a TRACS site visit within six (6) months of the official opening of a new branch campus.
- f. The policies and procedures are codified and presented in a policies and procedures manual.

### **5. Non-Degree Granting Programs**

While accreditation standards for non-degree granting programs may differ somewhat from those designed for degree granting, the program objectives and learning outcomes must be equivalent. Courses and programs must be transferable to accredited institutions.

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## **D. Faculty**

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Postsecondary institutions that become affiliated with TRACS must employ a dedicated and qualified faculty

who not only possess high academic and professional qualities, but who are spiritually mature and who provide a personal and professional Christian role model.

The faculty is integral to the educational quality of the institution. Therefore, the institution must employ, develop and support a faculty that is:

- Sufficient in number to provide for the curricular and student needs of the institution.
- In agreement with purpose, objectives, and philosophy of the institution.
- Cognizant of its role and responsibility in total institutional success.
- Academically qualified for the institution's educational level and goals.

Specifically, the fundamental contribution of the faculty is to provide effective instruction and advisement and to do so in a manner that makes the curriculum vital with reference to the purpose, objectives and philosophy of the institution. The institution must therefore employ faculty with academic credentials commensurate with their teaching and research tasks and with the Christian commitment to advance the purpose of the institution in their beliefs and their activities. It is imperative that faculty members have an adequate academic background in their respective teaching field.

The institution must have a rationale for the number of faculty and staff it retains with reference to the size and level of its educational program, and for its full-time and part-time faculty ratio. Sixty percent of all instruction should ideally be done by full-time qualified faculty. Degrees from non-accredited institutions must be justified through professional activities such as extended experience, serious publishing, and professional service.

An institution's educational level and objectives determine the kind of faculty it needs—their educational background, religious commitment, professional experience, diversity, personal qualities and commitments. Academic requirements for employment will be determined by the kind and level of academic programs offered. Minimal academic qualifications are as follows:

- **Associate degree programs.** A faculty member teaching in an associate program must hold at minimum a master's degree from an accredited institution and have earned at least 18 graduate hours in his/her teaching field. Any exceptions must be justified.
- Non-degree diploma or certificate courses, sometimes transferred for college credit, must be taught by faculty with at least a bachelor's degree and competence gained through work experience in the teaching field. Work experience and degree must become part of the faculty file.
- **Bachelor's programs.** A faculty member teaching in a bachelor's program must hold a master's degree from an accredited institution including at least 18 graduate hours in his/her teaching field. At least thirty per cent (30%) of a teaching faculty must possess earned doctorates from an accredited institution in their teaching fields. For each undergraduate major, at least twenty-five (25%) of the faculty must hold terminal degrees from accredited institutions in their teaching fields. Faculty members who teach in physical education activities or in remedial programs **must** hold a bachelor's degree in a discipline related to their teaching assignment and have either experience in a discipline related to their teaching assignment or specialized training.
- **Graduate programs.** It is understood that there must be a high level of faculty competence that is confirmed by all faculty holding the terminal degrees in their disciplines.

Complete faculty files must be maintained in a designated office (usually the academic dean's office) that contain official transcripts for all academic work and degrees earned. The file must also include agreements on employment, renewal of contracts, evidence of regular evaluation, and other pertinent information.

Policies and procedures related to faculty must be set forth in a faculty handbook. It is recognized that faculty security is important for the optimal performance of any faculty member; therefore, the institution needs to include in its faculty handbook the provisions faculty need including remuneration and benefits such as medical, hospitalization, and retirement.

The faculty organization must be delineated. No duty of the faculty outside of instruction ranks higher than intelligent participation in the formation of educational policies and programs. The effectiveness of such activities as committee involvement and the frequency and purpose of faculty meetings are important.

It is expected that an institution be aware of its opportunities to enhance the total educational experience by faculty development programs. For example, in-service sessions can be arranged featuring relevant topics such as evaluation, test construction, college teaching, and other topics.

Periodic evaluation of faculty performance is necessary in each institution using standard forms—and must be described in the self-study report.

Self-study provides an opportunity for thoughtful analysis of the faculty. Useful data for this analysis must include distribution by rank (if ranking is used), by earned degrees (including sources), by length of service and by listing of relevant professional activities and achievements. All such data, and any other items that the institution wishes to enumerate to show the strength of the faculty, must be presented in the self-study report along with any implications the study indicates.

## 1. Undergraduate Faculty

The undergraduate faculty composes the largest body of professionals because most institutions of higher learning offer more undergraduate than graduate programs. Therefore, a quality full-time undergraduate faculty, sufficient in number and who are academically and spiritually qualified, is essential.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 14.1. There must be one full-time, contracted, academically and spiritually qualified faculty for each major/program offered, including general education, to teach and provide teaching-related duties, such as advising and curricular oversight needed for the institution to fulfill its purpose. The term, “full-time contracted,” as applied here is interpreted as being a faculty member who is not contracted full-time by another college or institution, and whose job responsibilities are specifically spelled out in the contract and a job description.
- 14.2. There must be a faculty of sufficient size to exercise the duties expected of a faculty and to provide the instruction needed for the institution to fulfill its purpose.
- 14.3. Faculty members must know, understand, and respect the purpose, objectives and philosophy of the institution.
  - a. The purpose, objectives, and philosophy of the institution are clearly set forth in written form for all faculty members in a published handbook.
  - b. Faculty hired by the institution sign a standard contract that is on file and that reflects or sets forth the institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
  - c. Faculty sign a written doctrinal statement.
- 14.4. The faculty must possess the appropriate academic credentials and experiences for their teaching assignments.
  - a. Faculty hold at least the master’s degree in their teaching field from an accredited institution in order to teach at the associate or bachelor’s level, including 18 graduate hours in the field of his or her teaching assignment.\*

\*All references to “from an accredited institution” specifically refer to an institution that is accredited by an accrediting agency approved by the U. S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting body.

- 14.5. The required percentage of full-time faculty must possess an earned accredited degree from an accredited institution.

- a. At least thirty percent (30%) of all faculty possess the doctorate in their teaching area—from an accredited institution.
  - b. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of all faculty hold the doctorate in their teaching field for each major offered.
- 14.6. The full-time faculty must represent a good mix of maturity and teaching experience.
- a. A goal should be to develop a faculty with academic and experiential stability.
  - b. Teaching experience should average to approximately ten years in postsecondary institutions.
- 14.7. Full and part-time faculty employed by the institution must have, on file, official personal and professional information in the appropriate institutional office such as contracts, evaluations, transcripts, and other pertinent data.
- 14.8. The institution must have policies regarding faculty appointment, retention, advancement, and dismissal.
- a. These policies are in writing and are made available to all faculty.
  - b. The policies have been approved by appropriate bodies *including* the governing board and indicated in official minutes.
- 14.9. Faculty retirement and insurance plans must be described and published.
- a. The benefit package is approved by the board of control.
  - b. The benefit package is printed in an appropriate publication (faculty handbook, personnel manuals).
- 14.10. Policies must be established and published concerning teaching loads, advising, committee assignments and other required assignments.
- a. General faculty responsibilities are approved by the appropriate bodies and published in an appropriate publication.
  - b. Specific responsibilities are listed in the individual's contract or in personal interviews with department supervisor.
- 14.11. A policy for faculty academic freedom and responsibility must be set forth in published form by the institution.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such publication of the institution contains the policy on faculty academic freedom and responsibility. It is clear and specific.
- 14.12. Policy and procedures must be in evidence and practiced evaluating faculty performance .
- a. The faculty handbook or other such publication of the institution sets forth policies and procedures for faculty evaluation.
  - b. The faculty evaluation process is geared toward development of the faculty member as a professional—and includes the use of a standard form used in evaluation of faculty.
- 14.13. Policies and procedures must provide opportunities for the professional and spiritual growth of the faculty.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such publication of the institution sets forth faculty development policy and opportunities clearly and specifically and is available for faculty.
  - b. The policy is in practice.
  - c. Faculty indicates that policy and its program for faculty development are satisfactory.
- 14.14. A policy regarding the duties and supervision of part-time faculty must be published and followed by the institution.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such institutional publication clearly sets forth all of the duties and responsibilities of part-time faculty and explain their rights as professionals.
- 14.15. The institution must have a formal, written procedure for the hiring of faculty.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such institutional publication outlines the regular procedure followed in the hiring of all faculty.

- b. The procedure is approved by the governing board.
- 14.16. The institution must have adopted a policy regarding a ratio of full to part-time faculty to be employed. Normally, at least 60% of the instruction should be by full-time faculty.
- a. The full to part-time/adjunct faculty ratio is written and published by the institution and allows for equitable distribution of faculty duties, provides for on-campus advising, committee work, and the usual day-to-day business and academic duties of the institution which are normally assumed by full-time faculty.
  - b. The policy is approved by the governing board.
- 14.17. A grievance policy must be published and followed by the institution for all faculty that guarantees due process.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such institutional publication clearly and specifically outlines the fair and just policy including reasonable and appropriate procedures for faculty.
  - b. The policy is approved by the governing board.
  - c. The policy is practiced by the institution.
- 14.18. Faculty contracts must be clearly written and specific as to assignment, compensation, and time frame.
- a. The institution has adopted a standard contract that is signed by all faculty hired and contains the specific assignment(s), the compensation, time frame, and other relevant information required by the institution.
  - b. The contracts are approved by the governing board.
- 14.19. Faculty rights and responsibilities must be clearly spelled out in a faculty handbook or other such publication by the institution.
- a. The faculty handbook or other such institutional publication sets forth in a comprehensive manner a listing or narrative concerning all faculty rights and responsibilities.
  - b. Faculty are given an exit interview that becomes part of the personnel file when dismissed or leaving the institution.

## 2. Graduate Faculty

Membership in the graduate faculty must be based upon such criteria as possession of the earned doctorate degree in the appropriate field, considerable teaching and research experience, publishing, and/or other academic endeavors and participation in relevant professional societies.

The teaching load, due to thesis and dissertation advising, research, and other graduate-related responsibilities, should be considerably lighter for full-time graduate faculty. When a faculty member teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses, the teaching load must be adjusted to allow adequate time for instructional preparation, advising, and research. Faculty development policies must allow for the increased need of graduate faculty to be active in professional societies. There must be at least one full-time contracted, academically qualified faculty for each major offered.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 15.1. Faculty involved in teaching and curricular-advising assignments at the master's and doctoral levels must be academically and professionally qualified.
- a. The institution employs only faculty for graduate assignments who possess the earned terminal degree in their teaching assignment from institutions accredited by an agency recognized by the USDE.
  - b. An appropriate number of full-time faculty are contracted to teach and oversee each program, degree and concentration.
  - c. The institution employs only graduate faculty who have expertise in teaching.
  - d. The institution employs only graduate faculty who demonstrate research ability.
  - e. The institution employs only graduate faculty who demonstrate skills in advising, writing, and supervision of thesis and dissertation projects.
- 15.2. Faculty involved in graduate teaching must regularly be evaluated by the institution through an established process.

- a. The evaluation process is approved by faculty and administration.
  - b. The evaluation policy is published in the faculty handbook.
  - c. The evaluation process is developmental for all faculty.
- 15.3. The institution must have established policies and procedures for graduate faculty recruitment and selection.
- 15.4. The institution must maintain in the appropriate academic office up-to-date graduate faculty files containing official transcripts, contracts, evaluations, development data, and other such materials.
- 15.5. The institution must provide a clear, written, graduate-level faculty advising process.
- 15.6. The graduate faculty must know, understand, and support the purpose, objectives, and philosophy of the institution.
- a. The purpose and philosophy of the institution is clearly set forth in a published handbook.
  - b. Contracted faculty sign a standard contract that is on file and that sets forth the institutional purpose, objectives, and philosophy.
- 15.7. The institution must have written policies regarding graduate faculty appointment, retention, advancement, and dismissal.
- a. Written policies are made available in the faculty handbook.
  - b. All policies are approved by the board, as revealed in official minutes.
- 15.8. Retirement and insurance plans must be published and evidenced.
- a. Benefit packages are board approved.
  - b. Benefit packages are published in the faculty handbook or personnel manual.
- 15.9. A policy for academic freedom and responsibility must be published and practiced.
- a. The faculty handbook or other publication contain this policy.
  - b. The policy is board approved.
- 15.10. Policies and procedures must provide adequate opportunities for the spiritual and professional growth of the graduate faculty and be in practice.
- a. The policy is set forth in the faculty handbook.
  - b. The policy is satisfactory to all faculty.
- 15.11. A policy regarding the duties of full-time and part-time faculty must be published in the handbook.
- 15.12. A graduate faculty must provide a personal and professional role model.

### 3. The Faculty Organization

The faculty must be organized into a functioning body of the institution, guided by a set of regulations, led by elected officers, and meeting regularly.

The primary function of the faculty is to participate with the administration and board in the formulation of educational and academic policies involving such matters as curriculum, admissions, academic standards, advising, graduation, student life, and faculty growth and welfare.

- 16.1. The institution must have an organized, functioning faculty organization.
- a. There is a written document such as a handbook that describes the faculty organization, its duties, responsibilities, and privileges.
  - b. There are regular meetings of the faculty organization.

- c. There are functioning faculty committees identified.
  - d. There are written minutes of the faculty committee meetings on file.
- 16.2 The Faculty Organization must be chaired by elected officers or the Dean of Faculty.
- 16.3 There must be evidence that the faculty are appropriately involved in the formulation of curricular and academic matters, including faculty policies.

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## **E. Student Development**

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Each institution must provide a variety of appropriate student services that will effectively support the educational purpose—services that enhance the educational, social, spiritual, moral, and physical development of the student. In order to achieve this program of development of the whole person, the institution must have a working plan for this purpose.

This plan must be based on the studied needs of its student body—based on a plenary profile of entering and current students. The profile is to include the academic, moral, physical, and social development of entering and current students, along with other factors such as demographics, religious affiliation, age, race, sex, handicapped status, national origin, and personal preferences regarding development activities within each dimension of the total person.

Although institutions vary, a TRACS accredited institution must provide support services adequate for the prudent development of the student in all his or her physical, social, moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. Some of the student services that may be present are: security and health, housing, food, bookstore, mailroom, computing, intramurals, intercollegiate athletics, student government sponsorship, orientation, financial aid services, academic and other records, code of conduct, counseling (personal, academic, vocational placement, spiritual/moral), and opportunities for spiritual ministry and community service.

An administrator must function as the director and coordinator of student development services and function in an office that has that function chiefly as its purpose.

TRACS accredited institutions or candidates must keep written and filed records of student complaints. Each TRACS institution must make available to students the TRACS mailing address and telephone number.

Institutions must develop and publish a clear statement of their policies and practices regarding transfer of credit. The policy usually includes information helpful to the students transferring both from another institution and to another institution. The policy should be available to students and to the public.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 17.1. There must be an organized and functioning program of student development services.
- a. These services are headed by a qualified person who supervises them from an office set up for that purpose.
  - b. Services are appropriate in number and kind in reference to the student body profile.
  - c. Services are appropriate in number and kind with regard to the purpose and objectives of the institution.
- 17.2. The programs must be beneficial and well received by the student body.
- a. Students are aware of the services available and participate at a beneficial level.
  - b. Students approve of the scope and effectiveness of the services available.
  - c. There is evidence of efficacy in the program.
- 17.3. There must be a student financial assistance service headed by a qualified person skilled in student loans, grants and other assistance.
- a. There is a clearly worded agreement, signed and dated, disclosing any obligation for repayment, including the

- date (and amount) that payments will begin.
- b. The institution abides by all state and federal laws and regulations.
- c. Records are kept.

17.4. There must be a written code of conduct.

- a. Students receive a copy prior to their enrollment.
- b. Students sign the code of conduct agreement.
- c. There is a system of due process for appealing academic status.

17.5. There must be a thorough orientation program for all incoming students that covers major student issues needed by students prior to registration.

17.6. There must be a program for student health and safety.

17.7. There must be a program providing students with opportunities for spiritual development and the opportunity for ministry and community service.

- a. Students are provided opportunities for spiritual development through chapel services, Bible studies, prayer groups, special seminars, and other programs.
- b. Students are provided information regarding the opportunities available for ministry and community service.

17.8. There must be an experienced and competent person to provide academic, career, personal and spiritual counseling to students.

- a. Students are advised by an academic counselor or teacher regarding course and other curriculum decisions upon enrolling and throughout their academic program as needed.
- b. Students are able to seek spiritual guidance and counseling through their professor, the campus pastor or other qualified individuals.
- c. Professional counseling or referrals are available to the students.

17.9. The student services functions must have been approved by the governing board.

- a. The governing board minutes indicate approval of the services provided to students.
- b. Services are administered in accordance to the stated plan.

17.10. There must be an organized and functioning student government and other appropriate co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

- a. A student government plan is available.
- b. The student government program operates according to the plan.

17.11. There must be career counseling services for students.

- a. Students are provided career guidance.
- b. Students are provided career testing to assist in selecting professional goals.
- c. Assistance in job placement is available.

17.12. Student support services personnel must have adequate training and the experience necessary to be effective.

- a. These required personnel qualities are written into the job description(s).
- b. These requirements are used in the selection and promotion of personnel.

17.13. Facilities must be adequate for student services support functions.

17.14. Equipment must be available and in working order.

- a. Equipment adequate to support student service functions and activities is provided.
- b. This equipment is maintained or replaced as needed.

- 17.15. There must be a food service, a mailroom and a bookstore providing normally expected services to students in each of these areas.
- Resident students are provided food service.
  - A bookstore is available to provide textbooks and supplies needed.
  - A post office for students' incoming mail and services is available.
- 17.16. There must be computer labs or other arrangements for computing services of a scope appropriate to support the curriculum and meet student needs.
- The labs are available to students.
  - The labs are equipped and maintained for efficient use.
- 17.17. The institution must have a legally approved, clearly stated, and published student complaint policy.
- The policy is approved by the governing board.
  - The policy is clearly stated.
  - The plan provides for equitable student input and includes:
    - the address and phone number of TRACS.
    - a process which allows for confidential student input.
    - an appropriate office for collecting and filing of all student complaints.
- 17.18. Student records are carefully maintained by the institution.
- In a fireproof, secured area—with a duplicate set at another location.
  - The institution makes student records available in a timely manner in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.
- 17.19. The institution must have and make publicly available clearly stated policies and procedures governing both the consideration and acceptance of transfer credit, as well as transferring credits.
- The policy is equally applied.
  - The policy considers the quality of the offering, timeliness of the work, student performance (grade requirements) and the comparability and appropriateness to the courses and programs offered.
  - The policy considers the accredited status of the institution as a major factor, but not the sole determinate of the transfer decision.
  - The policy informs students of any special situations students may face in transferring credits earned.
  - The policy includes reasons for refusal of acceptance of transfer credits.
  - The policy includes information on student responsibilities.
  - The policy provides students with accurate and realistic information, plus guidance concerning the likelihood of transfer of the institution's credits.
    - Agreements with other institutions, accreditation status, etc.
  - The policy includes counseling and print or electronic assistance for students considering transferring to another institution.

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## **F. Financial Operations**

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Financial stability and integrity are major factors in determining the viability of any institution of higher education. Its financial resources must be adequate to carry out its purpose and support its programs and activities for the foreseeable future.

An institution of higher learning must give evidence of financial stability and integrity with enough monetary support to assure the continuity of the essential operations beyond the date when current students, who maintaining continuous enrollment, would complete their degree programs. The leadership must maintain a justified reputation for honesty and efficiency in the community at large.

The institution has a moral and ethical responsibility to establish a tuition and fee structure that is consistent with the length of the program, services provided, instructional system employed, and the degree granted. The institution must develop budget policy to address these issues to demonstrate that the tuition and fee structure are not inconsistent with provisions provided by tuition and the positions the graduates are prepared to fill. The

strategy should include comparative data from other accredited institutions with similar support services and delivery systems.

Institutions which depend on support from an external body, such as a church or other private entity, should determine with the external body the amount to be budgeted, indicating the categories and amount for which the support is provided. The external body must not, through line-item control, determine in detail how the support monies are to be spent. This is the function of the institution's governing board and administration.

## 1. Basic Areas

- a. **Organization.** The chief financial officer must report to the CEO/president. The chief financial officer must be recommended by the president and approved by the governing board. The size of the financial/accounting administration will depend on the number and complexity of transactions performed which will depend in part on the size of the student body. The chief financial officer must establish and supervise an adequate system of accounting. He must regularly provide current financial reports adequate for decision-making to the president, governing board, and other personnel designated by the president.
- b. **Audit.** All accredited and candidate institutions must obtain and provide a certified external audit of the financial statements annually. The audit must be in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and federal guidelines. Those professionals providing the audit must not be inappropriately involved with the institution (i.e., not be members of the governing board, not on the staff, not be involved in the decision-making activity, etc.).

Institutions are to explain and interpret their financial information so that all audiences will be provided with a clear understanding of their fiscal affairs. Budgets for the past, present, and future should be displayed to present a valid perspective of the institution's financial stability.

A deficit for three of the most recent five years or a significant deficit in any one year that results in a reduction in programs or services or increases in operating debt, will require a special review by the Accreditation Commission. Note that even though the "Total Changes in Net Assets" at the bottom of the Statement of Activities is positive, if the positive position was achieved as a result of borrowed funds or pledges for future funds which are included in current income, the "Total Changes in Net Assets" will still be considered a deficit. The institution will be required to file a special report with the Executive Director as directed by the Accreditation Commission. This will result in a special review by the Accreditation Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting.

- c. **Accounting System.** An institution must adopt an accounting system that is in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). GAAP is found in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) document, Audit and Accounting Guide; Not-for-Profit Organizations, June 1, 1996, or later edition.

While "fund accounting" is encouraged for internal and special reporting purposes, the "Net Asset" model, as found in the AICPA material denoted in the paragraph above, is required for formal financial statements and for external reporting (i.e., for certified audits).

Restricted or designated funds must be kept separate and used only for the purpose(s) for which they have been received. Restricted or designated funds may not be used even temporarily for goals other than for their restricted or designated intentions. A record of each restricted or designated fund cash balance must be maintained to assure that none of the funds are used for other than their intended purpose. No amounts may be borrowed from the funds for any reason.

Reference should also be made to the publications of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO).

d. **Management of Funds.** Policies and procedures must be employed to ensure that all funds which belong to the institution are recorded and deposited. This includes funds taken in from athletic events, plays, fund-raising efforts by student groups, etc. All funds should be brought into the institution's accounts and then disbursed as authorized and requested by the internal organizations. Cash monies should not be used for the payment of bills or expenses before they have been taken into the accounting books of the institution. All monies received should be taken into the institution and then disbursed by the cashier through the normal request and authorization procedures. No group should have its own cash cache, except for small amounts of petty cash that are recorded in the general ledger, but all cash should be dispensed through the bursar or equivalent. An accounting record should be maintained in the general ledger by way of subsidiary accounts.

All persons handling funds must be bonded to provide adequate safeguards against financial loss.

e. **Institutional Insurance.** An institution must provide insurance policies and procedures that would protect the institution against any loss that seriously impairs the institutional program. The protection must include replacement costs for buildings and equipment, liabilities to the institution, and whatever is necessary to enable the institution to continue operations at a viable level.

f. **Investment Management.** Investment policies and procedures must be prepared in writing and approved by the governing board. The policies must indicate who is responsible for making and managing the investments. The policies are to make clear the manager's role and duties in assuring that investments are secure (i.e., investments must be insured accounts, government guaranteed instruments, or in the highest rated industrial instruments). There must be no conflicts of interest.

g. **Refund Policy.** The institution must develop and publish a refund policy and the procedures for changes in or withdrawal from a program. The refund policy must provide for a clear, fair, and equitable refund of at least the larger of the following guidelines:

- 1) The requirements of applicable state law;
- 2) The specific refund standards established by the accrediting agency;
- 3) A prorated refund amount for those whose withdrawal date is on or before the forty percent (40%) point in the period of enrollment.

h. **Purchasing and Inventory Control.** Purchasing should be centrally controlled in order to achieve the benefits of efficiency. A system of inventory control should be maintained and be coordinated with the purchasing activity. The purchasing officer must avoid any conflicts of interest among himself, the suppliers, and the institution.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 18.1. The chief financial officer must report to the president as shown in the job description and organizational chart.
- 18.2. Accurate and timely financial reports must be provided to the president, governing board, and other designated persons.
  - a. The reports are consistent with the audit reports.
  - b. The reports are consistent with the educational system accounting policies.
- 18.3. Income must be reported as less than, equal to, or greater than expenditures as shown in the record keeping process.
- 18.4. Finances must adequately support the institutional purpose and programs.

- a. Programs must be adequately staffed. Facilities, equipment, and materials must be available in accordance with normal operating practices.
- 18.5. There must be consistent and continuous records for debt retirement, capital acquisitions, and cash flow, as shown in budget projections which indicate consistent debt retirement and sufficient cash flow for operating expenses.
- 18.6. A credit line with a financial institution or a segregated contingency reserve must be in place and must equal at least 10% of the operational budget.
- 18.7. The institution must provide an insurance plan that is adequate for its size and purpose, and must ensure continued operations.
- 18.8. Investment policies must be in place to protect the institution against conflicts of interest or the mishandling of funds, and must be approved by the governing board and the experienced personnel supervising the investments.
- 18.9. The institution must give evidence that the finances will continue to support the programs for the current students and provide the resources for them to complete their degree programs.
  - a. Long-range plans and contingency plans must reflect positive cash flows and positive budget outcomes.
  - b. The long-range plan must be realistic.
- 18.10. A written refund policy must be developed and followed that reflects appropriate prorations and pertinent time frames.
- 18.11. Any personnel handling funds must be bonded.
- 18.12. The financial staff must be sufficiently large to handle the necessary transactions.
  - a. Records are current.  
Reports are provided to each cost center and to designated persons in a timely fashion.
- 18.13. A certified external audit of the financial statements must be provided for each fiscal year.
  - a. The audit is available.
  - b. Management reports (i.e., reports that recommend actions for improvement of the operations) provided by the auditors must be available.
- 18.14. The institution must use the “net asset” model of accounting consistent with the policies and procedures provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) in its document, Audit and Accounting Guide: Not-for Profit Organizations: June 1, 1996, or later.
  - a. The “net asset” model must be in place and evidenced on the financial statements.
  - b. The three financial statements, 1) the Statement of Financial Position, 2) the Statement of Activities, and 3) the Statement of Cash Flow, must be present in the audited financial statements.

## 2. Budget

An annual budget prepared in appropriate detail is essential to the proper operation of a college. A budget is a statement of estimated income and expenditures for a fixed period of time (fiscal year).

The preparation and execution of a budget is expected to be preceded by sound educational planning. There needs to be a budget process in place that allows input from grassroots personnel, including the faculty. The budget must be approved by the governing board prior to its effective date.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 19.1. A budget process must exist and must be in use.
  - a. A written description exists that includes timetables, personnel, and procedures.
  - b. It is approved by the board.
  - c. It is in operation.
- 19.2. The budget process must involve grassroots personnel.
  - a. The description contains provision for input from grassroots personnel.
  - b. The description contains explicit statements about the nature of their input and the channel the input follows.
  - c. Grassroots personnel report that their input was so solicited.
- 19.3. The process must involve the governing board as the final authority.
  - a. The description contains provision for the board to review, revise, and/or reject the budget.
  - b. There is verbal agreement that the board possesses and exercises this authority.
  - c. There is actual written evidence that the board has exercised its authority.
- 19.4. The budget must give priority to learning experiences needs.
  - a. A written statement to this effect appears in this description.
  - b. There is verbal agreement that this priority is honored.
  - c. There is actual evidence that this priority has been honored.
- 19.5. The budget must follow a generally accepted format which conforms to the guidelines expressed.
- 19.6. The budget must be reflected in the long-range plan.
  - a. The institution has a written plan.
  - b. The plan is reviewed and updated each year.

### 3. Financial Aid Programs

An institution must maintain and provide accurate records of institutional, state, and federal financial aid programs. Institutional financial aid is any assistance given by the institution itself, church, para-church organization, denomination, endowment, or personal scholarship. State financial aid is in the form of subsidiary programs of Tuition Aid Grants (TAG). Federal financial aid is in the form of Pell Grants, Federal College Work Study, FEOG, or Federal Student Loan programs.

The institution must manage its financial aid program in an efficient manner that is in compliance with all federal, state, and any other regulations.

Each institution participating in federal financial assistance programs must have adequate staff dedicated to the process. The number of staff shall depend upon the institution's enrollment and number of Title IV participants. In addition, if the institution elects to manage the Title IV programs without the assistance of a third party service the financial aid staff member must be full time. If the institution uses a third party service to assist in managing its federal programs, there must be an institutional employee dedicated to working with students and communicating with third party service.

Persons working with the federal programs, regardless of the third party usage, must attend eight hours of student financial assistance in-service education training each year. The in-service education may be provided by a state, regional, or national financial aid organization, U.S. Department of Education or third party service.

Each institution must provide evidence that there is a clear separation between the financial aid staff and the business office. The same person may not both award aid and receive and handle the funds received. Therefore, each institution's business office must maintain a student account record indicating students' charges and the

receipt and source of funds received.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 20.1. The CEO must have final responsibility for all affairs related to the financial aid office and must have delegated this function to appropriately trained and competent personnel.
- 20.2. Letters of authorization must be on file from relevant agencies indicating certification of eligibility.
- 20.3. Records of institutional, state, and federal aid must be available.
- 20.4. Audits must be available.
- 20.5. Policies and procedures must have been developed and implemented for networking among the Financial Aid office, the Business office, the Academic office, and the Registrar's office.
  - a. There is a system of checks and balances in place. For example, Authorizer is not the same office as Disburser.
  - b. Policies and procedures are stated and are strictly adhered to regarding the priority of scheduled disbursements for items such as tuition, fees, room, board, and books.
  - c. Records indicate that federal financial aid guidelines are being followed.
  - d. Policies and procedures are clearly stated and are adhered to for making application and receiving assistance.
  - e. Records indicate that refunds are executed accurately and in a timely manner.

## 4. Notification Related to Eligibility for Title IV Participation

An accredited or candidate institution must notify Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools when eligibility is granted by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in any Title IV program by forwarding a copy of the approval letter to TRACS within thirty (30) days of the notification by the U.S. Department of Education. In a cover letter, an institution that is accredited by another nationally recognized accrediting agency must inform TRACS which of the accrediting agencies is designated as the primary accrediting agency for monitoring the Title IV programs. Adverse actions taken against the institution by either the State education office or the U.S. Department of Education must be reported to TRACS within thirty (30) days of the official notification.

TRACS will officially notify the U.S. Secretary of Education and appropriate state and accrediting agencies of any adverse action taken by the TRACS Accreditation Commission due to non-compliance, including fraud. This will be done at the same time the Executive Director notifies the president of the institution under consideration.

Starting in the 1995-96 annual report, an institution must report what Title IV programs are in place for that academic year.

## 5. Title IV Compliance

Each institution participating in Title IV programs must be in compliance with the program responsibilities of the Higher Education Amendments. Failure to comply with the Title IV responsibilities will be considered when an institution is evaluated for initial recognition or renewal of recognition. In evaluating an institution's compliance with Title IV program responsibilities, the Accreditation Commission will rely on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Institutions approved for Title IV programs must submit a compliance audit to the TRACS office. If the audit indicates that the institution is not in compliance, the institution must submit a plan of action it has taken to correct the non-compliance issues within 30 days of officially receiving notification.

- a. **Specific items related to Title IV compliance.** Although the following areas are included generally in the standards and evaluative criteria, specific expectations are cited here for emphasis.

- **Calendar, clock hours, credit hours.** An institution must demonstrate that program length, course length—clock hours or credit hours—are appropriate for the degrees (associate, bachelor, master, doctorate) it offers.
- **Charges.** An institution must demonstrate that fees charged are appropriate for the degrees (associate, bachelor, master, doctorate) it offers.
- **Evaluation.** The institution must evaluate its success with respect to student achievement in relation to purpose, including—as appropriate consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.
- **Grading policies.** An institution must publish its grading policies, and its grading practice must be consistent with the policies.

## 6. Institutional Default Rate

TRACS addresses the institutional default rate in relation to the institution's overall ability to continue to meet TRACS standards and criteria. If the institutional default rate equals or exceeds 25% or has increased significantly within one year, this calls for a TRACS review of the institution to ascertain if the institution is meeting TRACS standards. Follow-up action as appropriate is in order. A 25% default rate for the reporting year will result in institutional probation for one year. The institution must submit a report listing the action taken to reduce the default rate. TRACS will review the academic program during the probationary period and submit a comprehensive report to the Accreditation Commission. The Accreditation Commission will take appropriate action and notify the U. S. Secretary of Education.

A 20% default rate for the reporting year will result in the accredited institution being placed on Warning for one year, and Show Cause for the candidate institution.

A 15% default rate for the reporting year will require a TRACS staff visit and an institutional plan to reduce the default rate.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

21.1. The institution must have a legally approved and published default policy which is in effect.

- a. The policy is approved by the governing board.
- b. The policy is clearly and precisely stated
- c. The policy which is in practice at the institution takes into consideration:
  - 1) admission and recruiting policies and procedures that are congruent with institutional goals, purposes, and philosophy.
  - 2) ability to benefit policy and process.
  - 3) exit interview of students who may leave the institution prior to graduation.
  - 4) follow-up processes for graduates including questionnaires, etc.
  - 5) retention policies and processes.
  - 6) graduation rates.
  - 7) career counseling, testing processes, and services.
- d. The institution maintains accurate and precise default rate files on students and gathers data for regular reporting and institutional effectiveness purposes.

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## G. Institutional Advancement

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The development of effective relations with its publics and expanded financial resources are major issues in a viable collegiate institution. It is therefore important that an institution demonstrate a sound program that provides integrity, good public relations, active fund-raising initiatives, and sound business practices to ensure institutional stability and advancement.

## 1. Financial Development

The institution must develop policies and procedures that govern fund-raising activities in order to ensure ethical practices in soliciting funds and integrity in the use of the funds. Although TRACS does not require a specific financial development program for accreditation, it strongly recommends that the institution include in the planning document a development plan that is both consistent with the purpose and the program needs of the institution, is consistent with biblical principles, and provides for institutional continuity.

## 2. Marketing and Public Relations

Marketing and public relations materials (including student recruitment materials) must accurately reflect the institution's programs, facilities, and resources. All promotional claims must clearly specify educational and licensing requirements. The institution's accredited status must be stated in accordance with the TRACS Standards.

## 3. Alumni Relations

The quality of an institution is measured by its alumni. The institution's growth and development is to some degree related to the alumni's interest in assisting the institution financially, in recruitment of students, and in evaluation of its programs. The institution must maintain a positive relationship with the alumni through publications and programs that generate support and draw the alumni to the campus. Periodic surveys of the alumni are to be completed for the planning and assessment process. An effort is to be made to keep up-to-date records of all the alumni listing address, phone number, employment, and family information.

## 4. Investment Management

Investment policies and procedures must be prepared in writing and approved by the governing board. The policies must indicate who is responsible for making and managing the investments. The policies are to make clear the manager's role and duties in assuring that investments are secure (i.e., investments must be insured accounts, government guaranteed instruments, or be in the highest rated industrial instruments). There must be no conflicts of interest.

## 5. Student Recruitment

Recruitment policies and practices have become more aggressive. It is essential, therefore, that policies and procedures be developed and approved by the faculty and governing board regarding student recruiting and admissions.

Students recruited must be fully informed of the institution's programs and requirements. All promotional material must be accurate. Students must be able to benefit from the educational program. Students accepted that do not meet admission standards must be fully informed of the conditions of their acceptance. A fair and reasonable written credit transfer is essential for students and the institution in the admissions/recruitment process.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 22.1. The policies and practices employed in fund-raising must be ethical and consistent with biblical principles.
  - a. Policies and procedures are developed.
  - b. The policies and procedures clearly embody the highest standards of biblical and moral integrity.
- 22.2. The fund-raising policies must be consistent with the institutional purpose and be approved by the governing board.
  - a. Reports are submitted to the board.

- b. Minutes of board verify approval of policies.
- 22.3. The marketing material must accurately reflect the institution's program, facilities, and resources.
- a. Publications contain only materials which accurately reflect the program, facilities, and resources of the institution.
- 22.4. The institution must maintain correspondence with the alumni and must request feedback on the value of the educational program received to meet professional goals.
- a. Survey instruments and information received are present.
  - b. Alumni files indicate that meaningful contact is maintained.
- 22.5. Investment management must follow established guidelines approved by the governing board.
- a. Records indicate that this is the case.
  - b. Governing board minutes indicate that review, compliance, and approval has been an ongoing process.
- 22.6. Student recruitment must be consistent with established institutional admission standards.
- a. Applications and other documents so indicate.
  - b. Promotional materials so indicate.
- 22.7. Recruitment materials must provide potential students with a clear and accurate description of programs and include the admission transfer policies.

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## **H. Institutional Effectiveness**

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### **1. Research and Planning**

A key element in the success of any postsecondary educational institution is research and planning. It is normally expected that an institution will research the current practices of other institutions to ensure comparable educational outcomes. An institution must develop by intentional design, not merely in response to external or internal variables.

It is important, first, to identify a planning process and assign planning responsibilities. Planning needs to be all-inclusive in nature: programs, enrollment, staffing projections (administrators, faculty, support staff), finances (including budget summaries and estimated income and expenditures for each year in the long-range plan), facilities, equipment, policies and procedures for operation, and evaluation. Sources of revenue must be included, along with enrollment projections. Future projections must be developed on a sound historical base and any changes must be adequately justified by appropriate data.

Both short-range and long-range planning is necessary for balanced development. It is commonly accepted that a minimal long-range plan covering five years is needed to provide adequate direction for an institution. It is understood, also, that the plan is to be updated annually. The plan should list goals in the areas of administrative affairs. The process must identify priorities, set time limits with target dates for action, and a component of ongoing evaluation. Such planning is simply an exercise in responsible stewardship. Cost expectations are to be included. All segments of the institution need to be included in the development of the plan that is to be finally approved by the governing board. A description of the planning function within the institution is an integral part of the self-study process. The master plan must include projections related to the development, maintenance, and care of the physical campus. The plan must be consistent with the stated purpose of the institution as well as the institution's financial capabilities.

Long-range planning is a highly effective procedure for any institution because it helps planners to identify external and internal factors which may have an impact on the future of the institution. Further, it helps planners make contingency plans which will soften the blow of adverse factors and assist the institution to make maximum advantage of congenial factors. Lack of knowledge of potential influential factors and responses to them will reduce the institution's effectiveness in responding to these factors.

An annual or short-range plan is normally for one to three years and specifies goals, objectives, needed resources and methods evaluation this period.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 23.1. An approved long-range planning process must exist and must be in use.
  - a. A written description exists that includes timetables, personnel and procedures.
  - b. The long-range plan is approved by the governing board. (In many cases a member(s) of the governing board may participate in the formulation of the long-range plans.)
  - c. It is in operation.
- 23.2. The short-range and long-range plans must list goals in priority order for each area of the institution, such as academic, financial, administrative, etc.
- 23.3. The planning process must take into account both income and expenditure categories beyond the current year.
  - a. The description contains provisions for these categories.
  - b. The description indicates explicit statements about these categories for at least five years
  - c. The latest long-range plan contains these categories for at least five years.
- 23.4. The planning process must take into account both internal and external factors.
  - a. The description specifies the internal and external factors that will be taken into account.
  - b. The latest long-range plans contain these factors.
- 23.5. The latest long-range plan must have been widely distributed.
  - a. The description tells how the plan will be used in decision-making.
  - b. It is made available to all appropriate parties within the institution.
- 23.6. The planning document must have been developed on sound research data by the faculty, staff, and administration.
  - a. Historical data is collected and separated.
  - b. An analysis of the data is reflected in the plan.
  - c. Minutes of departmental and committee meetings are maintained.

## 2. Evaluation and Outcomes Assessment

One of the most crucial responsibilities of any institution is to determine how well its mission is being accomplished and to ensure that each phase of its operation is optimally effective and efficient. While there are many partial, imprecise ways of assessing performance levels, by far the most productive is a comprehensive, systematic, continuous evaluation of the entire institution—resources, administration, financial management, student development, faculty, academic programs and student learning.

- **Administration** - Administrative personnel must have job descriptions and performance criteria that are consistent with the position and the institutional purpose and objectives. The individual administrative performance may be evaluated against normal performance criteria and additional criteria developed between the individual and his/her superior. In addition to the individual performance assessment, the operation must be assessed to determine if services are being provided and required quality controls are being maintained.
  - a. **Student Development** - The student development personnel must establish and publish a set of goals and objectives for the development of students socially, morally, and physically. The objectives are to be written in terms so that the outcome can actually be evaluated. The institution must demonstrate

that the system employed provides data for assessing the student development program and supports any changes made to improve the program.

- b. **Academic** - The evaluation of educational quality and effectiveness requires careful analysis and professional judgment. Although, there are many evaluation systems, it is important that the institution regularly assess the fulfillment of its purpose and objectives by systematic studies of the institution's impact on students and graduates. Normally the assessment will cover curriculum, faculty, students, learning experiences, educational equipment, and materials.

The curriculum must be evaluated on a regular rotating schedule so that each course and major is assessed every three or five years depending on the changes required to remain current. Such things as program viability and need must be incorporated in the study. The outcome of the assessment is to answer questions on the curriculum quality such as:

1. Is the curriculum content sequenced to enable students to move from the basic to the complex?
2. Is the content appropriate for the degree level?
3. Is the curriculum designed to provide the students needed skills required for the profession for advances in educational preparation?
4. Are the resources adequate to support the curriculum effectively?

The faculty must be part of the evaluation process. This may include educational qualifications, experiences, and teaching skills. An institution must keep on record the faculty member's educational and experience qualifications. A system for measuring teaching proficiency must be developed and evaluated annually. The goals of the assessment must be to improve instruction. The assessment may be accomplished through peer review, student survey, administration evaluation, or a combination of these and other systems that will enable the faculty to develop and improve professional skills.

- c. **Student Learning** - The evaluation of student learning normally is derived from an accumulation of test scores for each course and the grade point average for all the courses completed. Many of these evaluations may be based on outcome assessment of specific objectives for a course or program. In addition, students might be evaluated through themes, essays, or thesis, projects, review of student folios, or assessment of achievement through standardized tests. To the greatest extent possible, the institution must endeavor to describe explicit achievements expected of its students and to adopt reliable procedures for assessing those achievements. Outcomes assessment is designed to measure institutional effectiveness. This means that procedures for evaluating the extent to which educational goals are being achieved must be established. Strict attention must be given to course and graduation completion rate as well as the percentage of graduates placed in graduate programs or work directly related to their studies. A high percentage dropout or a low placement rate will require institutions to take appropriate action.

Each institution must provide a systematic evaluation of the learning experiences. A comprehensive approach to accreditation takes into account not only the resources and processes of education (such as faculty, physical plant, fiscal resources and other areas addressed in the accreditation criteria), but also the evaluation of the results of education and plans for the improvement of the institution's programs.

The type of program developed to assess learning outcomes is a function of the nature of the institution and its goals for instruction; therefore, an institution must establish its own unique assessment program. Evaluating institutional effectiveness will usually require a variety of procedures. Possible approaches in evaluating instructional programs may include some of the following:

- Peer evaluation of educational programs.
- Structured interviews with students and graduates.
- Changes in students' values as measured by standard instruments or self-reported behavior patterns.
- Course and graduation completion rate.

- Pre- and post-testing of students.
- Surveys of recent graduates.
- Surveys of employers of graduates.
- Student scores on standardized examinations or locally constructed examinations.
- Performance of graduates in graduate schools.
- Performance of graduates of professional programs on licensure examinations.
- The placement of graduates of occupational programs in positions related to their fields of preparation.
- Survey and analysis of grade distribution.

Follow-up studies will indicate how well an institution is achieving its objectives. Graduates are an especially strategic group in outcomes studies. There could be follow-up studies that determine the success of graduates in advanced studies or in employment. It is also important to obtain the views of graduates about the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation over time. Follow-up studies require careful preparation and are to embrace the institution's entire constituency.

To the fullest extent possible, academic evaluation should focus on the outcomes of the educational program and their implications for the programs and processes concerned. In this way the evidence of institutional effectiveness can be used to improve the institution's programs and procedures. The institution must use results of evaluations in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process. It must be demonstrated that the results of outcomes assessment are being used in the planning process to improve institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

During the self-study process an institution must examine the procedures it uses for year-by-year development of its educational effectiveness. All institutions must engage in continuing study, analysis and appraisal of their purposes, policies, procedures and programs. It is necessary to assign responsibilities and allocate adequate resources to make evaluation possible.

Evidence must be sought that co-curricular activities contribute to attaining the institution's objectives through the evaluation process.

## **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

24.1. The institution must have developed and implemented an assessment plan.

- a. The assessment plan is in writing.
- b. Minutes of meetings indicate that the institution is using the assessment data for revising the planning document.

24.2. The assessment plan must provide a systematic evaluation of indicators of student achievement.

- a. The process is described in writing.
- b. The process measures program completion rates.
- c. The process measures job placement rates for graduates.
- d. The process measures student success rates on state or other licensing exams.
- e. The process measures overall institutional and program retention rates.
- f. The process measures graduation rates.
- g. Data are used for institutional planning.

24.3. The assessment plan must provide a systematic evaluation of the curriculum.

- a. The process is described in writing.
- b. Results confirm evaluation.
- c. The results are used in program modifications.

24.4. The assessment plan must provide a systematic evaluation of learning experience personnel.

- a. The process is described in writing.
- b. The plan makes provision for evaluating performance in all phases of faculty responsibility.

- c. The plan is in use and the results are used for institutional planning.
- 24.5. The assessment plan must provide a systematic evaluation of the management and financial operation.
- a. The evaluation process is described in writing.
  - b. It makes provision for collection of actual outcome data (senior and alumni follow-up).
  - c. It makes provision for comparison of data with purpose, goals, and objectives.
- 24.6. The assessment plan must provide a systematic evaluation of institutional purposes, goals, and objectives in terms of actual outcomes.
- a. The evaluation process is described in writing.
  - b. It makes provision for collection of data.
  - c. It is actually in use with the results used for institutional planning.
- 24.7. The assessment outcomes must be used in program changes.
- a. Revision of the curriculum is based on assessment outcomes.
  - b. Changes in the planning document are based on assessment data.

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## I. Instructional Support

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### 1. Library

Libraries are central to the educational process in institutions of higher learning. Convenience to users is a primary concern in its physical location. Materials and services are to be such as to encourage faculty members and students to develop spiritually, intellectually and culturally.

It is the responsibility of the institution to see that adequate library and learning resources are accessible to undergird the academic programs.

It is recognized that TRACS member schools will vary in the number of students, programs and degree levels—which will have a direct effect on library needs. It is also recognized that the latest technology will have a major effect on the need to store many of the volumes in one place; however, there are eight basic guidelines by which all libraries will be evaluated.

In addition to assistance provided students concerning the use of on-site library and research resources, all students must be instructed to use current innovative research tools and give evidence of required usage of these resources.

- a. **Purpose.** The library must have a manual that details its purpose and policies, including staff responsibilities, services to the academic community it serves, design of its facilities, and financial and budgetary obligations. The purpose statement must be in concert with the overall purpose, objectives and philosophy of the institution.
- b. **Holdings.** A library committee representing the total campus community must develop policies that will ensure that the educational and services needs are met. At least an annual growth rate of two percent (2%) of the existing collection is to be maintained to develop a quality library or learning resource center.
- c. **Systematizing of Materials.** Materials must be systematically and comprehensively organized so that they can be speedily accessed. A catalog of all the holdings of the library without regard to location must be created. It must show author, title and subject of each item according to international cataloging regulations. Continued editing will be necessary to keep the catalog up-to-date. An adequate number of catalogs or terminals must be available to meet the needs of the patrons.
- d. **Personnel.** Library professional staff must have the responsibility of leadership in library develop-

ment and operations—such as reference, collection development, information services, bibliographic control of materials, and administration. Librarians must have a minimum of a master's degree from a library school accredited by the American Library Association. One professional librarian must be appointed for every 500 FTE students. Adequate support staff must be provided and must have written job descriptions.

- e. **Services.** The library staff must provide efficient services to patrons. They must also serve on curriculum committees and work with the faculty to strengthen the collection. The staff is to assist the patrons to become familiar with material, usage, and functions of the library. This would include traditional references, bibliographic instruction, computerized systems of access and retrieval of information when available, plus non-book holdings. Orientation either in classroom settings or by tailored programs must be provided.
- f. **Buildings.** The buildings must be secure and specifically designed or adapted for library use. The library is to be commodious, having an environment and atmosphere conducive to study.

The facility must have built into its structure the potential for any needed future expansion. There must be adaptations provided for the handicapped. The capacity for two hundred pounds a square foot is essential for stack and heavy equipment areas.

The size of the building must be determined by the size of the student body, the housing of staff members, the number of volumes in the collection, and the location of non-print materials. Where appropriate, rooms need to be built for bibliographic instruction groups, the arrangement of computers and terminals for networks, seminar rooms, language laboratories, and storing of microforms. A residential campus must require the optimum of one seat for four FTE students. Where possible, the total collection and all the functions of the library must be housed in one adequate and functional building.

- g. **Management.** The library director must report to the chief academic officer and is responsible for personnel, material, functions, and services of the library. The librarian is responsible to assess the library staff, the holdings, and the services provided. The head librarian, as all library staff members, must have a detailed job description.
- h. **Finances.** The library director must be responsible for developing a budget that will provide sufficient funds for services and adequate holdings. It is suggested that the library be funded at approximately six percent (6%) of the educational and general budget of the institution. Where the library is deficient, the institution may need to allocate additional funds. Elements that determine the requirements for financial support include curriculum needs, improvement in collection, student enrollment, services offered, the extent of networking, and audiovisual requirements. Normally, approximately forty percent (40%) of the library budget is allocated to materials and sixty percent (60%) to personnel.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 25.1. The library must have a printed manual that is available and outlines its purpose, policies, and staff responsibilities.
- 25.2. Library holdings and acquisition must be adequate to support the curriculum, faculty, and number of students served.
- 25.3. The library materials must be standardized and systematically organized for speedy access.
- 25.4. Library staff must be professionally qualified and led by a full-time head librarian with at least an MLS degree or equivalent.
- 25.5. The building must be adequate, providing space for holdings and servicing of students including study

space.

- 25.6. The librarian must report to the chief academic officer and must have access to the chief financial officer.
- 25.7. Finances must equal or exceed the recommended percentage of E&G (Education and General) budget.
- 25.8. The students must give evidence that they can and have used library resources.

## **2. Laboratories**

An institution must provide appropriate lab facilities required by course content and objectives. The labs must be designed and maintained to ensure a safe and efficient learning facility. Safety rules are to be displayed and followed. Proper handling of hazardous materials or dangerous equipment must be required. Lab equipment must be current technology. If lab fees are charged, the institution must demonstrate that all materials and services covered by the lab fees are provided.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 26.1. All required labs must be provided as needed to support the curriculum.
- 26.2. The labs must be well designed and safety precautions must be provided for use of equipment and materials.
- 26.3. The labs must be adequately equipped for this purpose.

## **3. Learning Materials and Equipment**

Of particular importance to the accomplishment of instructional objectives is the availability of adequate materials which support and enhance learning experiences. These materials may be books, professional journals, audio and/or videotapes, and other forms of information. In addition, basic supplies are needed (such as pens, pencils, paper clips, rubber bands). Budgeting for materials must be considered for acquisition, upkeep and replacement.

In today's environment, it is increasingly important that educational institutions provide students access to current equipment. Especially in those programs that require students to be skilled in the use of specific equipment, the institution must provide the equipment or make provision for the students to have access. Budgeting for equipment must be considered for acquisition, upkeep, and replacement. Learning resource centers are common.

It is recommended that provisions be made to incorporate use of the computer into the curriculum where it is appropriate. The faculty must be encouraged to use the computer and computer-related equipment where appropriate for instruction. Students must be provided computer access in courses normally requiring computer use. It is also recommended that computer literacy be part of the general education requirements. Student must be notified prior to enrollment if they will be required to own or rent a computer.

Equally important is the use of the computer systems for financial and student records. Normally these records must be filed with state and federal education offices and accrediting agencies. The volume of information and the accuracy requires specialized computer capability designed for use in an educational institution. In addition, the marketing, recruiting, and institutional records are normally computer based. Budgeting for computers must be considered for acquisition, maintenance and replacement.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 27.1. The institution must have developed policies and procedures to provide student and faculty access to institutional equipment and materials.

- a. The policy and procedures are in writing.
  - b. Student and faculty satisfaction is indicated
- 27.2. The institution must have given appropriate consideration in the budget preparation for the acquisition, maintenance and replacement of equipment to support educational programs offered.
- 27.3. The institution must provide current materials and equipment as required for programs offered.
- a. Adequate materials and equipment are present, available, and sufficiently used by teachers and students.
  - b. Student and faculty satisfaction is indicated.
- 27.4. The institution must use computers in the learning process.
- a. Students and faculty are encouraged to become computer literate.
  - b. Computers are available for instructional purpose.

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## **J. Physical Plant**

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Physical facilities must be adequate to serve the institutional purpose and programs, must meet all state and local requirements, and provide an atmosphere for safe and effective learning.

The institution's master plan must include projections related to the development, maintenance and care of the physical campus. A comprehensive record should be logged in all maintenance work.

The physical plant and the academic plan must be coordinated with any long-range master plan. It must be consistent with the stated institutional purpose and financial capabilities.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 28.1. The facilities must be approved in writing by the appropriate state and local agencies.
- 28.2. The scheduling and use of the facilities must be controlled by the institution.
- 28.3. The facilities must be designed to be appropriate for effective educational experiences.
- 28.4. The facilities must be adequate for all learning activities.
- 28.5. The facilities must be efficiently used.
  - a. The facilities are in use between fifty and eighty percent (50 and 80%) of the normal schedule.
  - b. Published facilities schedules guide the actual usage.
- 28.6. The facilities must be maintained satisfactorily.
- 28.7. The facilities plan must be included (along with the academic plan and others) in the master plan of the institution.
- 28.8. There must be provisions for appropriate handicap access and use.
  - a. There is a written policy/plan for this.
  - b. The policy/plan is implemented.

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## **K. Health and Security**

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The institution must provide a system of campus security that affords a safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and others who are present on the campus. This includes security personnel/services, a system of safe and controlled entrances, and a system to monitor buildings (especially residence halls), open spaces such as parking lots, adequate lighting, and related safety measures—as appropriate to the institutional setting. All crimes are to be reported to local authorities.

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## **L. Intercollegiate Athletics**

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Institutions that engage in intercollegiate athletics must have guidelines, an annual budget and appropriate arrangements for the health and academic welfare of the student athlete.

The institution must describe its affiliation with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA.), the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) or other athletic association, if applicable.

In addition, a list and description of all the sports sponsored and the availability of scholarships for each sponsored sport shall be provided in the Self-Study Report.

### **Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 29.1. There must be a written board-approved plan and rationale for the intercollegiate athletic program, with specific attention given to the purpose of such a program with reference to the institution's stated purpose, objectives and philosophy.