SECTION 14: Transparency and Institutional Representation

14.1 **The institution (a) accurately represents its accreditation status and publishes the name, address, telephone number, and website address of SACSCOC in accordance with SACSCOC's requirements and federal policy; and (b) ensures all its branch campuses include the name of that institution and make it clear that their accreditation depends on the continued accreditation of the parent campus.** *(Publication of accreditation status)*

Rationale and Notes

An institution is responsible for representing accurately to the public its status and relationship with SACSCOC; reporting accurately to the public its status with state and federal government if receiving funding from either or both; maintaining openness in all accreditation-related activities; ensuring the availability of institutional policies to students and the public; and publishing appropriate information with respect to student achievement. SACSCOC's philosophy of accreditation precludes removal from or denial of membership or candidacy to a degree-granting institution of higher education on any ground other than an institution's failure to meet the standards of the membership as determined by the professional judgment of peer reviewers, or failure to comply with SACSCOC policies and procedures.

Providing information on accreditation status makes it possible for anyone to inquire about the accreditation status of the institution, to ask questions about the accreditation process, or to pursue procedures for filing complaints against an institution. The information indicated in the standard should be clearly stated so that the constituent understands that the statement is published exclusively for accreditation-related purposes and not to inquire regarding the admissions or general educational policies and practices of an institution.

The accreditation status of a branch campus is strictly based on its relationship with the parent campus. If the branch campus cannot be clearly identified as a part of the parent institution, it can cause confusion and even misrepresentation of status.

Typically the required accreditation statement is located in official institutional publications such as a catalog or handbook (or the website equivalent). The institution should use the publication of accreditation status that is cited in the *Principles*. The SACSCOC policy statement on Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure contains the appropriate language for this statement. This policy also contains important guidance on how not to represent an institution's accreditation status.

NOTES

It is acceptable to reference accreditation by SACSCOC in flyers and other recruiting materials without the full statement found in the Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure policy. However, the full statement must appear in official publications such as the catalog, handbooks, or website pages where accreditation information is provided. Care must be taken in recruitment materials when referring to SACSCOC to ensure that accreditation status is

not misrepresented, as discussed in the above-referenced policy. Institutions may also wish to use the "Stamp" of accreditation with their statements of accreditation; appropriate use of that "Stamp" is outlined in the SACSOC policy Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure.

It is never appropriate for an institution that is not *either a SACSCOC member institution (i.e., accredited by SACSCOC) or a candidate for membership to imply any status with SACSCOC. For example, it would be inappropriate to claim to be "applying for membership."*

Questions to Consider

- Where does the institution publish its required accreditation status information?
- Is the information accurate and consistent with SACSCOC policy?
- If the status is published in multiple places, is the information consistent across publications?
- Are degrees represented appropriately to make clear that SACSCOC accreditation is institutional in nature, not accreditation of specific degrees or programs?
- Are there other publications that are not "official" where the representation of accreditation status is incorrect or inconsistent?
- If the institution has a branch campus or branch campuses:
  - Do they include the name of the parent institution as at least part of the name of the branch?
  - Is it clear the accreditation of the branch is dependent on the accreditation of the parent institution?

Sample Documentation

- Catalog, handbook, and web pages where accreditation status is referenced.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC policies: Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure

Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

CR 1.1. *(Integrity)*

Standard 14.4 *(Representation to Other Agencies)*