



National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

A voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of distance education

Memorandum

January 25, 2017

To: Interested parties
From: Marshall A. Hill *Marshall A. Hill*
Subject: SARA and institutions accredited by ACICS

Question: Does SARA consider schools currently accredited by ACICS (the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools) to meet the institutional accreditation requirements of SARA?

NC-SARA staff response:

General response: Until ACICS-accredited institutions finish the 18-month grace period provided by federal law, those schools have the same grace period under SARA.

We were first asked the above question in relation to ACICS-accredited institutions *that currently participate in SARA*. We offered the following guidance: SARA schools currently accredited by ACICS meet SARA's accreditation requirements. We suggest that SARA states ask such institutions (during the institution's SARA renewal process or before) to document that the institution is actively seeking accreditation from a recognized accreditor other than ACICS. (Note: There are about a dozen ACICS-accredited SARA schools, and SARA portal entities in the home states of those institutions tell us that all those institutions are actively seeking alternate accreditation from an accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education.)

We were later asked if ACICS-accredited schools *now seeking initial participation* in SARA meet SARA accreditation-related requirements. Our guidance is similar: ACICS-accredited schools *now seeking initial participation* in SARA meet SARA accreditation-related requirements, so long as they can demonstrate to their home state that they are actively seeking alternative accreditation from a recognized accreditor.

Finally, the decision by ED to withdraw recognition of ACICS is under legal review. If ACICS ultimately indeed loses recognition by ED, institutions accredited by ACICS would no longer be able to participate in federal Title IV programs, their students could not obtain federal financial aid, and the institution would no longer satisfy SARA accreditation requirements and could therefore no longer participate in SARA.

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