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March 29, 2017

MEAC MEMBER SCHOOLS LETTER #19: IMPORTANT REVISION TO I.C1 RETENTION AND I.C2 COMPLETION BENCHMARKS

Dear Member Schools,

On March, 2, 2017, the MEAC Board of Directors approved updates to benchmarks I.C1 Retention and I.C2 Completion.

Previous I.C1

Student Retention: At least sixty percent of matriculating students, (averaged over the past three calendar years for which complete retention data are available), have either completed the program or are still enrolled. *Complete retention data - only the data on students who have reached the program average.*

Updated I.C1

Student Retention: At least 60% of first-year matriculated students return for the second year or have graduated by their second year. Programs failing to meet this criterion develop an improvement plan to bring the retention rate to 60%.*

**The percentage of matriculated first-year students who are still enrolled on day 30 of year two of the program. Retention data should be calculated for the most recent five-year period available in order to examine trends.*

NOTE: This includes students who are on a leave of absence and are expected to return to the program. This should exclude students who are deceased; permanently disabled; have joined the armed forces; or are in other active governmental service or official church mission.

Previous I.C2

Student Completion: At least forty percent of matriculating students, averaged over the past three calendar years for which complete completion data are available, complete the program, including the required clinical materials. *Complete completion data - only the data on students who have reached the program's stated maximum timeframe is included in the calculation of the three year average.*

Updated I.C2

Student Completion: At least 40% of matriculated students complete the program within 150% of the program's normal time for completion. Programs failing to meet this criterion develop an improvement plan to bring the completion rate to 40%.*

**The percentage of matriculated full-time and part-time students, calculated separately, who completed the program within 150% of the program's normal time for completion.*

Completion data should be calculated for the most recent five year period in order to examine trends. This should exclude students who are deceased; permanently disabled; have joined the armed forces; or are in other active governmental service or official church mission.

In addition, the Board updated the demonstration to these benchmarks accordingly. Please see revised benchmarks and demonstration in the MEAC Accreditation Handbook, available on the MEAC website:

<http://meacschools.org/handbook/>

Background

I.C1 Retention and I.C2 Completion were first revised with the 2013 Standards updates. In late 2015, MEAC identified a technical issue in how retention and completion data were being calculated with respect to Standard I, Benchmark C1 and C2, which made it difficult to assess the accuracy of the data, and the meaningfulness of retention/completion benchmarks.

The primary approach to methodological changes in the updated benchmarks was to ensure alignment of retention/completion calculations with standard Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definitions.

In accordance with MEAC policy and procedure, stakeholder feedback was elicited on proposed revisions via a publicized survey for 30 days, beginning 12/16/2016 through 1/18/2017. Revisions to the original proposal were then made and approved by the MEAC Board of Directors.

Implementation of Revisions to Benchmarks

MEAC will begin monitoring Member School compliance with revised I.C1 Retention and I.C2 Completion upon receipt of the 2016 Annual Report materials. Please see revised Key Indicators 8 (Retention) and 9 (Completion) in the enclosed *MEAC 2016 Annual Reporting Key Indicators ADOPTED Revised*. No other changes have been made to the key indicators at this time.

All Member Schools must submit the updated Student Completion and Retention worksheet, as previously required. However, Member Schools should note that the automated retention and completion calculations are no longer applicable. The MEAC Board of Directors will review student data in accordance with the revised benchmarks.

Prior and New Findings of Non-Compliance

Institutions/Programs that were:

- 1) out of compliance with I.C1 and/or I.C2 prior to the updates, and
- 2) had reached the Expected Compliance Date *prior to adoption* of the I.C1 and I.C2 benchmark updates are held to the previous version of the benchmarks. MEAC will take adverse action in all instances of non-compliance, in accordance with our policies and procedures.

Institutions/Programs that were:

- 1) out of compliance with I.C1 and/or I.C2 prior to the updates, but
- 2) had not yet reached the Expected Compliance Date *prior to adoption* of the I.C1 and I.C2 benchmark updates will now have their compliance measured against the updated benchmarks.
 - a. If the Institution/Program is found to be non-compliant under the updated benchmark(s), this Institution/Program's Expected Compliance Date will be based upon the initial finding of noncompliance with the previous benchmarks, not the updated benchmarks. The Institution/Program is considered out of compliance with both the previous and updated benchmark(s) and, thus, enforcement will be based upon the original finding of non-compliance.

Institutions/Programs that were:

- 1) in compliance with I.C1 and/or I.C2 prior to the updates but
- 2) are found to be out of compliance with updated I.C1 and/or I.C2 will be assigned an Expected Compliance Date and expected to come into compliance with updated I.C1 and I.C2, in accordance with MEAC policies and procedures.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these updates, please contact Julia Reid, Training and Accreditation Coordinator, at 360-466-2080 ext. 3 or by email Julia@meacschools.org.

Sincerely,

Nichole Reding

Nichole Reding
President