



ACICS Executive Directors: A History of Leaders

A Seasoned Higher Education Administrator Brings Opportunity to ACICS

James M. Phillips
AICS Executive Director
1979-1992

“A true Southern gentleman.”

That’s how James “Jim” Phillips has been described by some. Jim served as Executive Director of the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools (AICS) from 1979 until 1992.

Under his leadership, AICS extended its accreditation services to master’s level programs and saw schools begin to expand their program offerings beyond the secretarial and business foundation upon which the agency was launched. Jim led the implementation of standards focused on several key areas, including significant growth in campus locations, new ownership models, and the increased federal funding available to students. He inspired loyalty in his staff through his gentle yet firm management style, recognizing individual potential and providing opportunity for growth.

Jim received a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s degree in education from the University of Kentucky, and later earned his doctorate in higher education administration from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. After four years of service in the Air Force where he worked on military intelligence, Jim returned home to Kentucky to become a reporter for the *Paducah Sun-Democrat*. He then held a number of public affairs positions with the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Highway Department before joining the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as the Director of the Office of Information Services in 1968. Later in his career, Jim worked for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (the predecessor organization to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation) before assuming the Executive Director position with AICS.

After his retirement in 1992, Jim and his wife, Emily, relocated to South Carolina where he resided until his death in 2007.