



August 9, 2017

ID Code 00135778(MC)

VIA E-MAIL AND CERTIFIED MAIL

admin@nWSC.edu

Dr. Mohammed AliNiazee
President
Northwest Suburban College
5999 S. New Wilke Rd., Bldg #400
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

Subject: Withdrawal of Accreditation by Suspension Action

Dear Dr. AliNiazee:

At its August 2017 meeting, the Council considered the institution's response to the report of a quality assurance visit conducted to the institution, the continued show-cause directive outlined in its letter dated April 11, 2017, and the institution's response to an extensive complaint filed by its former librarian.

On February 28, 2017, the institution was directed to show-cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn when the Council received information from the Illinois Board of Higher Education that the institution had been offering bachelor's degree programs without approval from ACICS.

This directive was continued to the Council's April 2017 meeting, and the institution was directed to immediately cease any bachelor's degree activities. In its follow-up response to the Council, dated April 26, 2017, the institution provided documentation and assurance that all academic activities in the bachelor's degree programs in biology and chemistry had indeed ended. Subsequent to that submission, the institution also informed ACICS that it will not be pursuing a renewal of accreditation with ACICS, and instead, will let its grant expire on December 31, 2017. A limited-announced quality assurance visit was conducted on June 6-7, 2017, to determine if the institution had come into compliance with the show-cause directive as well as to ensure ongoing compliance with all Council standards through the expiration of its grant of accreditation. The visit resulted in 15 findings, one of which was the determination that academic activity had not ceased in the unapproved bachelor's degree programs.

While the institution was able to provide documentation that addressed four (4) of the team's findings, the Council found the following based on the *Accreditation Criteria*:

1. The 2017-2018 Campus Effectiveness Plan does not include any reference as to how data have been collected, utilized, or analyzed at either the institutional or programmatic level

for any of the required elements (Section 3-1-111). The institution submitted a current Plan as a revision to the 2013-2014 Plan provided to the team during the visit. The ongoing expectation of ACICS is that the CEP is evaluated at least annually and that it remains current; with a 2013-2014 Plan, it is evident that the institution has not maintained this expectation. Further, the current plan does include baseline data and goals for each outcome, how the data *will be* used to assess each outcome, and an explanation of how the data *will be* used to improve the educational processes; but it does not include any analysis of previous performance and its correlation to future educational goals. Further, the institution did not provide any documentation that the CEP has been fully implemented, that specific activities have been implemented, or that periodic progress reports were completed at least twice during the past academic year (Section 3-1-112). Further, while the plan does list the names and titles of the CEP planning committee, no meeting minutes were provided with signatures and dates, nor was there any explanation of the specific duties of each committee member.

2. Emphasis is not placed upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall administration of the institution (Sections 3-1-202 and 3-1-202(a)). In response to the finding, the institution submitted narrative attempting to explain why students were enrolled in a 300-level course during the visit in June 2017, when they had received a show-cause directive in April 2017 that specified all academic activities related to a bachelor's degree must cease. While some institutional narrative accepted blame for the error, other sections of the narrative blamed former ACICS employees for the error. The team report specifically mentioned concern with the integrity of Ms. Shazia Ilyas, associate dean of academic and student affairs, yet the institution did not provide any type of employee evaluation or job assessment for her. Further, the institution submitted an organizational chart with a number of vacant positions labeled as "To Be Announced" with no indication as to when the positions would be filled or by whom. Finally, the institution submitted a job posting on Indeed.com for an admissions representative dated July 7, 2017, with no evidence anyone had actually been interviewed, hired, and/or trained.
3. There is no evidence that the institution has implemented appropriate grievance procedures for considering student complaints (Section 3-1-202(d)). During the visit, students interviewed stated they never received an institutional catalog and, therefore, knew nothing about institutional grievance policies. The institution submitted documentation of a flyer announcing how students can download the institutional catalog; a 2017-2018 school catalog with grievance policies on pages 44-48; a blank grievance form (to be completed by a school representative); a copy of a letter from Mr. Mohammed Faheem, vice president and chief operating officer, to all students and staff about the institutional grievance policy and student complaints; minutes from a Student Success & Retention committee, which addressed institutional grievance policies; a job posting for a new admissions representative; and a blank Code of Conduct form to be completed by all admissions department personnel. However, the Student Success & Retention committee meeting minutes did not include signatures of attendees; no

documentation was provided that any new admissions staff has been hired; and no documentation was provided that any existing or newly-hired admissions personnel has completed and signed the Code of Conduct for all admissions personnel.

4. Admissions policies are not being followed as written (Section 3-1-411). As previously mentioned, students interviewed during the team visit stated they never received an institutional catalog, and they also never attended a new student orientation. In its response, the institution submitted a copy of a blank enrollment agreement that has been revised to reflect students' acknowledgement of institutional policies and procedures. The institution also stated the former admissions director is being transitioned out of his current role, and also provided a schedule of upcoming orientation sessions for both degree and certificate students. While all submissions reflect what is to be done in the future, no documentation was provided to indicate any implementation of the changes.
5. The institution does not provide evidence that it systematically monitors and evaluates its recruitment activities (Section 3-1-412(a)). Again, the institution responded that the current admissions director is being transitioned out of the department, but no evidence of a new admissions director was provided. Further, the institution did not submit a plan for the systematic monitoring of recruitment activities other than a suggestion (in narrative) that the newly hired director of admissions will conduct such training.
6. There is no evidence that the individual designated to administer student financial aid is competent to serve in that role (Section 3-1-434(a)). In response to this finding, the institution submitted a campus bulletin, naming Dr. Gayathree Raman as the new on-site financial aid representative. However, the institution did not submit a signed job description for Dr. Raman, an updated ACICS Data Sheet, any type of written correspondence from a school administrator to all students and staff with the news of Dr. Raman's new responsibilities, or evidence of his completed training.
7. Employment assistance and career service advisement are not provided for all students (Section 3-1-441). The institution responded that they will be recruiting an advising and career services representative who will be responsible for employment assistance to both degree and certificate students. However, no evidence was submitted of a new hire with a signed job description, ACICS Data Sheet, or résumé.
8. Follow-up studies on graduate satisfaction are not conducted at specific measuring points following placement of the graduate (Section 3-1-441(c)). The institution submitted a copy of a blank alumni survey and a blank employer survey with a plan as to how they will utilize the surveys in the future. However, no completed surveys were included in the submission with any type of analysis or summary of survey results.
9. The institution does not provide sufficient evidence to document attendance at faculty meetings (Section 3-1-544). The institution provided minutes with signatures for one

meeting since the team visit. The title on the signature sheet of the meeting was “NWSC Staff Meeting Sign-In.” The meeting was conducted on June 28, 2017, and lasted for 15 minutes. A careful review of meeting minutes revealed that no meeting items were dedicated to academics or curriculum.

10. The institution does not provide student achievement information to the public (Section 3-1-704 and Appendix C). The institution responded that all public information about the college can be found within the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) website. However, the institution further explained that due to a “lag” in NCES posting of data, there was no data listed for the institution on this website in all actuality. The institution predicted this would be remedied at some point in 2017 or 2018. Further, while the institution has added a new link to their own website entitled Student Achievement Information, only programmatic retention and graduation rates for the allied health certificate programs are displayed. No information is listed for the associate’s degree program in biology, and there are no placement statistics listed for any of the four institutional programs. Further, the information that is provided does not match the retention rates reported on the 2016 Campus Accountability Report (CAR).
11. The institution does not have a professionally trained individual to manage the library resources (Section 3-4-401). In the response to the finding, the institution submitted a copy of a signed agreement, dated June 19, 2017, between the institution’s president, Dr. M. T. AliNiazee, and The Virtual Librarian Service. The consultant for the Virtual Librarian Service, as named in the agreement, is Dr. Melody Hainsworth, whose signature is on the contract. The agreement states that Dr. Hainsworth and her professional librarians will develop appropriate and adequate library resources for the academic programs, provide library reference service, be responsible for written accreditation reports regarding the library, and provide asynchronous seven-day library reference service by e-mail, or web meetings, to all students, administrators, and staff. The institution’s response explained that the Virtual Library Services will be attainable by students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through a Moodle interface, to which every student has access. The institution did not provide a signed job description, an ACICS data sheet, résumé, or academic transcripts for Dr. Melody Hainsworth or any other of the aforementioned professional librarians. Moreover, because the proposed library services are provided through an online-only format, the institution still does not have a professionally trained individual on site who is assigned to oversee and supervise the library and to assist students.

Additionally, the Council also considered a substantive complaint received from the institution’s former librarian, the institution’s response to the complaint, and additional information received from other institutional representatives. Allegations of misrepresentation of the bachelor’s degree program offerings to students and ACICS, mishandling of refunds, and inappropriate disclosures, among others, were not sufficiently refuted by the institution but rather affirmed by other representatives who independently contacted ACICS.

Council Action

Therefore, the Council acted to **withdraw the institution's accreditation by suspension**. In addition to the institution's failure to demonstrate ongoing compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria*, the Council considered its blatant disregard for the Council's directive and subsequent questionable ethics in reporting its compliance as it relates to the bachelor's degree programs, and its inability to satisfactorily refute the substantive allegations identified by the former librarian.

The institution has the right to appeal this decision to the Review Board of Appeals. The Council must be notified, in writing, within ten (10) business days of receipt of this notice if the institution desires to appeal this decision to the Review Board. The appeal notification must include payment in the amount of \$10,000. The Council's decision is final if the appeal notice and appropriate fee are not provided within the ten business days of your receipt of this notice. If the institution elects to appeal this action to the Review Board and remits the appropriate fee by the established deadline, then the institution will remain accredited through the length of the appeal, and more detailed appeal procedures and information will be forwarded to the institution.

If the institution elects not to appeal this action, the institution must submit any comments regarding this decision to the Council office within two weeks of the date of this letter. Should the institution choose to submit any comments, these comments will be included in the summary detailing the reasons for the Council's decision that will be made available to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, and the public through www.acics.org.

Institutional Teach-Out Plan

Further, to ensure that students will receive an appropriate outcome in the event of campus closure, the campus must provide the Council with an Institutional Teach-out Plan, utilizing the **online Request for Institutional Teach-out Plan application** in the Member Center. This Institutional Teach-out Plan must be completed as part of the institution's intent to appeal the withdrawal by suspension action.

The Council expects that the institution will take the appropriate steps to assist its students through any transition to successfully complete their programs in an orderly manner. The institution is advised that Section 2-3-900 of the ACICS *Accreditation Criteria* stipulates that the Council may bar any person or entity from being an owner or senior manager of an ACICS-accredited institution if that person or entity was an owner or manager of an institution that loses its accreditation as a result of a denial or suspension action or that closes without providing a teach-out or refunds to students matriculated at that time of closure.

Dr. Mohammed AliNiazee
August 9, 2017
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Please contact Ms. Katie Morrison at kmorrison@acics.org or (202) 336-6783 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Edwards". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned over a faint, light-colored background that appears to be a watermark or a logo featuring a torch.

Michelle Edwards
President

- c: Ms. Shazia Ilyas, Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Northwest Suburban College (silyas@nwsc.edu)
- Ms. Cathy Sheffield, Accreditation and State Liaison, U.S. Department of Education (aslrecordsmanager@ed.gov)
- Mr. Douglas Parrott, US Department of Education, Chicago/Denver School Participation Team – Regions V & VII (douglas.parrott@ed.gov)
- Dr. Daniel Cullen, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, Illinois Board of Higher Education (cullen@ibhe.org)