

## 8. Standards of Ethics and Professionalism for Accreditation Participants *(approved for public comment 6/3/11)*

To maintain and preserve the high degree of credibility attached to DETC accreditation, participants in the accreditation process (subject specialists, visiting Committee members, Accrediting Commissioners, consultants, administrative staff, **appeal panel members**, and other Commission representatives) have an obligation to consider whether they have any association with an institution being reviewed for accreditation that would present a conflict of interest, or give the appearance of such a conflict. If they do, then they must refrain from participating in any part of the accreditation process related to that institution.

Examples of conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Having been employed at the institution in the past;
- Currently being employed at the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, as a consultant to the institution;
- Having attended the institution as a student; and
- Having a close personal friend or relative at the institution.

When trying to determine whether they should refrain from becoming involved in a particular part of the accreditation process, participants should be guided by the following principles:

1. **Perceptions Matter.** Perceptions, even when inaccurate, can be as damaging to credibility as fact; participants should be alert to how their acts or relationships, or those of their fellow participants, might appear to others. Participants must call to the others' attention any acts or relationships that have the potential for misinterpretation or could raise questions about the credibility of the accreditation process.
2. **Withdrawal for Financial Relationships.** Where the potential for pecuniary gain or the appearance of it is involved, as in reporting on or evaluating a current or potential direct competitor or partner or an institution in which the participant has a financial interest, the participant must excuse himself or herself from the process.
3. **Projecting Impartiality.** Where the appearance of partiality is involved, as in a situation where the participant's relationship with an institution or its principals is such that evaluations or decisions may appear to be unduly influenced by that relationship, the participant must advise the next higher person in the process and should consider recusing himself or herself. Guidance should be sought in questionable cases from the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission.
4. **Protecting Confidentiality.** Participants should remain mindful that the accreditation process involves peer review by designated individuals, not their agents, and that confidentiality must be preserved in handling information produced during the process. The use of documents and observations directly related to accreditation should be restricted to participants and not shared with or delegated to parties outside the process.

5. Privileged Communications. Participants (excluding DETC staff) will not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for DETC accreditation with the applicant, an institution accredited by DETC, a direct competitor of the applicant, or any other third party except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the participant in the accreditation review. DETC will communicate the results of the Commission’s decision to the applicant and the public as provided in D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report, Institution’s Response and Advising the Institution of the Commission’s Decision.

Participants in the accreditation process (Subject Specialist, visiting Committee members, Accrediting Commissioners, consultants, administrative staff, and other Commission representatives), must not accept gifts, favors, or services from the institution being evaluated. Souvenirs (typically available to the public) are permissible, but should be restricted to inexpensive items representing the institution.

**Further, all participants in the process are required to advise, in writing, the Executive Director, for his/her consideration and final determination, of any perceived or actual conflicts they feel they may have prior to acting in their capacity as a participant in any aspect of the accreditation process. For the purpose of recusals, the participant must ensure the reason(s) for any recusal is handled in the above manner before the fact. Should the Executive Director have need to submit for a recusal or advise of any perceived conflict, he/she must advise, in writing, the Commission Chair before the fact.**

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