STATEMENT ON MARKETING PRACTICES AT FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has reviewed the report of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO on “For-Profit Colleges: Undercover Testing Finds Colleges Encouraged Fraud and Engaged in Deceptive and Questionable Marketing Practices.” The Commission applauds governmental exposure of deviation from ethical practice as well as fraud and abuse. Such governmental action forms a basis upon which the Commission may act with regard to its criteria for institutional integrity. Accordingly, the Commission has begun a process to determine the impact of this information on the accreditation status of those institutions identified in the report that are accredited by the HLC. Any actions resulting from this process will be posted on the Commission's Web site.

Integrity is a stated core value of the Commission and is central to quality in higher education. We expect that accredited institutions will uphold and protect the integrity of their practices, and our standards require that they assure the clarity, accuracy, and availability of information related to their mission statements; their educational programs; their admissions requirements; their accreditation status; their student services; their tuition and other costs; their financial aid programs; and their policies related to transcripts, transfer of credit, and refunds.

In light of the recent rapid and dramatic changes in higher education, the Commission has been evaluating its policies and processes for ensuring institutional integrity and quality at all of its affiliated institutions. Some policy changes have been implemented over the past two years and others are anticipated in the year to come. Comments and questions can be directed to president@hlcommission.org.