



# THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

## MEMORANDUM

To: Chancellors, Provosts

From: Dr. David English, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: March 28, 2024

Subject: Accreditation RFI Responses and Next Steps

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As covered in a previous memo (01-11-2024), [Session Law 2023-132](#) prohibits UNC constituent institutions and North Carolina community colleges from receiving accreditation by an accrediting agency for consecutive accreditation cycles unless the institution does not receive candidacy status at least three years prior to the expiration of its current accreditation. This law, coupled with U.S. Department of Education (ED) regulatory changes that removed geographic boundaries of regional accreditors, creates an opportunity for institutions to seek accreditation from agencies aligned with their mission and goals.

As such, the UNC System Office in conjunction with the NC Community Colleges System Office, issued a joint [Request for Information](#) (RFI) to regional accrediting agencies to determine whether these agencies are willing to accredit North Carolina's institutions of higher education at this time.

This memo and its accompanying attachments serve to inform you of the accrediting agencies' responses. As you can see in the attached Summary of Accreditation RFI Responses document, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Middle States) both indicated that they are willing to accept accreditation applications from North Carolina's institutions of higher education. Their detailed responses to our RFI are attached. The other regional accreditation agencies specified the conditions that would need to be met for them to consider North Carolina institutions in the future.

Before switching accrediting agencies, institutions must first submit to the U.S. Department of Education all materials relating to the prior accreditation and materials demonstrating reasonable cause for the change. Institutions must also indicate the proposed new accrediting agency and include a rationale for their selection. Institutions must receive approval from the United States Department of Education prior to submitting an application to the new accrediting agency.



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Attached, please find the following documents that will assist with that process:

- The Higher Learning Commission Response to RFI
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education Response to RFI
- Summary of Accreditation RFI Responses
- ED letter to accreditors regarding voluntary requirements
- ED letter (GEN-22-10) Guidance for Institutions Seeking to Change or Add Accrediting Agencies
- ED letter (GEN-22-11) Procedures for Institutions Seeking Approval of a Request to Change and Add Accrediting Agencies (Updated Sept. 26, 2022)

Next Steps:

- Review the RFI responses and begin to identify which agency best aligns with institutional missions and goals.
- In order to monitor statutory compliance, please provide me with a status update by June 30, 2024, indicating your institution's preferred agency and your timeline for requesting approval from U.S. Department of Education. When applicable, please provide copies of this correspondence.
- When identifying the timeline for requesting approval, institutions should map backward the amount of time it will take to receive U.S. Department of Education approval and achieve candidacy with their preferred accrediting agency. This may require institutions to submit applications more than 60 months, minimally, prior to the end of their reaffirmation cycle. Please provide me with a copy of your application following submission.

As always, please let me know if you need any assistance or if you have any questions.