

# Opportunity

for Servicemembers and Veterans

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## To Presidents, Chancellors, and other Academic Decision-Makers

Every two years your institution must renew its membership in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium. The SOC office has mailed your SOC Institutional Representative the details on what needs to be done. In brief, the membership renewal can be met by, first, reviewing of your institution's college information page as it will appear in the 2007-2009 *SOC Consortium Guide* and making all necessary changes to ensure that the information is both current and correct. Second, I am asking each SOC institution to review the following SOC Institutional Operating Guidelines for "College Recruiting, Marketing, and Student Services."

**College Recruiting, Marketing, and Student Services. To facilitate the enrollment process and continued student success of qualified servicemembers in postsecondary education, SOC institutions will:**


- **Outreach to servicemembers using advertising, college recruiting, and admissions information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available. Military students considering course enrollments require adequate time to make informed decisions and consult with education service counselors. High-pressure promotional activities or "limited time only" enrollment discounts are inappropriate recruiting activities by SOC Consortium institutions.**
- **Provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, competency testing, course placement, and counseling.**
- **Ensure that students admitted into college programs possess the requisite knowledge and academic preparation to succeed. Where technology aids (computers, personal digital assistants, or other technology packets) are employed in the program as key instructional components, institutions must provide assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.**
- **Provide adequate, clearly established means for resolving student grievances. In particular, provide transparent due-process procedures related to tuition and financial aid matters, course withdrawals due to unanticipated deployments, lack of consistent computer connectivity, and changes of duty.**

These new guidelines were approved by the SOC Advisory Board in the Fall of 2005 and are included on page 6, *SOC Principles and Criteria 2007-2009*. The guidelines involve good institutional policies and procedures in outreaching to your military students. During 2006, a SOC Task Force further developed standards of good practice and a list "unsatisfactory" practices in the areas of college

marketing, admissions, and student services to amplify and encourage positive administrative policies and procedures when dealing with military students. These guidelines follow below. Your comments would be appreciated.

An administrator with the authority to renew the institution's commitment to SOC membership needs to affirm both that the college information page is correct, and that institutional policies and procedures are in general agreement with the new guidelines on "College Recruiting, Marketing, and Student Services" outlined above.

I urge your institution to renew its SOC membership without delay. If you have questions regarding membership renewal, please call us at the SOC office at 800-368-5622 or 202-667-0079 or e-mail us at [socmail@aascu.org](mailto:socmail@aascu.org).

  
Kathy M. Snead  
President

## Standards of Good Practice for Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges

(Approved by SOC Advisory Board on October 13, 2006, to become a supplement to the *SOC Principles and Criteria*. The SOC Advisory Board also reviewed a removal process for an institution within SOC Consortium that fails to meet the *Standards of Good Practice for Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges*. The removal process is currently undergoing legal review. The approved *Standards of Good Practice for Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges* follow.)

1. Generally, **communications with military members** are clear, comprehensive, and completely truthful. Specifically, an institutional representative:
  - a. provides information on program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, schedules and course delivery formats prior to the collection of personal contact information;
  - b. provides accurate and complete information to prospective students on accreditation status and what programs are covered;
  - c. clearly and truthfully presents prospective students with the prospects for academic degree or credit acceptance;
  - d. accurately describes occupational opportunities for program graduates;
  - e. accurately describes any partnerships with military or government agencies or endorsements or testimonials used in promotional actions; and
  - f. provides *bona fide* scholarship information that is unam-

biguously separate and distinct from any federal monies.

2. **Enrollment and “sales” policies are appropriate to a higher education institution.** Specifically, an institution and its agents or partners:

- a. avoid promotional efforts toward military members that have the effect of coercing or misleading them into enrolling through the use of high pressure sales tactics;
- b. refrain from establishing bogus enrollment deadlines, scholarships that are not genuine, tuition discounts that are not legitimate or other sales tactics that do not serve the best interest of the military or its members;
- c. have complete control over the conduct of any recruiters or other sales representatives or individuals representing it;
- d. refrain from exerting pressure to enroll through follow-up calls to address student questions;
- e. perform telemarketing in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission and other state and federal regulations. Commissioned salespeople are governed by the guidelines outlined in Title IV; and
- f. allow recruiting personnel to only enroll individuals with whom they have a prior appointment; and
- g. follow Department of Defense and military service guidance governing installation access and the use of retiree/dependent ID cards.

3. Generally, **fees charged to military members** are clear and do not give a false, or misleading impression about the costs to either the military member or the military service. Specifically, an institution:

- a. provides to prospective students in written form on Web sites and other media the following minimum information: total cost of enrolling, (including the cost of all instruction), the estimated cost of texts, (whether sold by the institution or a third party), equipment, computers, software, and all other fees, including registration fees, shipping fees, transcript evaluation, or lab fees;
- b. agrees that the total cost of a program is the same or less for military members as that charged to any other student, except for legitimate military enrollment discounts;
- c. demonstrates that any variation in the fees charged to military members is *bona fide*. Scholarships, spouse enrollments, limited time tuition grants, discount offers, special price increases, all occur during a specified period and state a specific date of execution or termination;
- d. applies military discounts to all servicemembers without restrictions unless further defined by specific contract requirements;
- e. avoids the word “free” to describe any item or service that is regularly included as a part of the institution’s program or services. The word “guarantee” is not used at all in promotional literature;
- f. makes clear through a full explanation of what an electronic signature and online enrollment mean and the commitments they represent. There is personnel support and resources available for students who are unsure of what they may be signing and require additional explanation;
- g. refrains from compensating or offering significant incen-

tives or products to military students for providing referrals of other prospective military students; and

- h. confirms that students have read and acknowledge their personal financial obligations and refund protections before they submit their registration.

4. Generally, **admissions policies and practices** ensure appropriate academic screening and proper placement in courses and programs. Specifically, an institution:

- a. clearly states if any course or program prerequisites are needed for successful assimilation of the academic materials;
- b. determines that students have the qualifications necessary to successfully enroll in a course or program, including high school diploma or legitimate equivalent;
- c. avoids automatic renewal with any courses or programs; and
- d. clearly states a cooling off or add/drop period after which the student positively affirms his/her intention to enroll.

5. There is, among the **Student Services** provided, a clearly defined process that includes a point of contact and a phone number for the student to use if timely guidance, instructor support, etc. are not provided.

6. The following **excerpts from Title 16 — Commercial Practices, Chapter I — FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, Part 254**, while not specifically written for all of them, should be borne in mind by academic institutions providing education courses and programs to servicemembers:

§ 254.2 **Deceptive trade or business names.**

- (a) It is deceptive ... to use any trade or business name, label, insignia, or designation which misleads or deceives prospective students as to the nature of the school, its accreditation, programs of instruction, methods of teaching, or any other material fact.
- (b) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent, directly or indirectly, by the use of a trade or business name or in any other manner that: ... It is a part of or connected with a branch, bureau, or agency of the U.S. Government, or of any State, or civil service commission; ...
- (c) If a ... member conducts its instruction by correspondence, or other form of distance education, it is deceptive to fail to clearly and conspicuously disclose that fact in all promotional materials.

§ 254.3 **Misrepresentation of extent or nature of accreditation or approval.**

- (a) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent, directly or indirectly, the extent or nature of any ... accreditation by an accrediting agency or association. For example, a ... member should not:

... Represent, without qualification, that its school is accredited unless all programs of instruction have been accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If an accredited school offers courses or programs of instruction that are not accredited, all advertisements or promotional materials pertaining to those courses or programs, and making reference to the accredi-

tation of the school, should clearly and conspicuously disclose that those particular courses or programs are not accredited. ...

... Misrepresent that students successfully completing a course or program of instruction can transfer the credit to an accredited institution of higher education. ...

#### § 254.4 Misrepresentation of facilities, services, qualifications of staff, status, and employment prospects for students after training.

(a) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent, directly or indirectly, in advertising, promotional materials, or in any other manner, the size, location, services, facilities, or equipment of its school or the number or educational qualifications of its faculty and other personnel. For example, a ... member should not:

... Misrepresent the qualifications, credentials, experience, or educational background of its instructors, sales representatives, or other employees.

... Misrepresent, through statements or pictures, the nature or efficacy of its courses, training devices, methods, or equipment.

... Misrepresent the availability of employment while the student is undergoing instruction or the role of the school in providing or arranging for such employment.

... Misrepresent the availability or nature of any financial assistance available to students. If the cost of training is financed in whole or in part by loans, students should be informed that loans must be repaid whether or not they are successful in completing the program and obtaining employment.

... Misrepresent the nature of any relationship between the school or its personnel and any government agency or that students of the school will receive preferred consideration for employment with any government agency.

... Misrepresent that certain individuals or classes of individuals are members of its faculty or advisory board; have prepared instructional materials; or are otherwise affiliated with the school.

... Misrepresent the nature and extent of any personal instruction, guidance, assistance, or other service, including placement assistance, it will provide students either during or after completion of a course.

(b) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent that it is a nonprofit organization or to misrepresent affiliation or connection with any public institution or private religious or charitable organization. ...

#### § 254.5 Misrepresentations of enrollment qualifications or limitations.

(a) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent the nature or extent of any prerequisites or qualifications for enrollment in a course or program of instruction.

(b) It is deceptive ... to misrepresent that the lack of a high school education or prior training or experience is not

an impediment to successful completion of a course or obtaining employment in the field for which the course provides training.

#### § 254.6 Deceptive use of diplomas, degrees or certificates.

(a) It is deceptive ... to issue a degree, diploma, certificate of completion, or any similar document, that misrepresents, directly or indirectly, the subject matter, substance, or content of the course of study or any other material fact concerning the course for which it was awarded or the accomplishments of the student to whom it was awarded.

(b) It is deceptive ... to offer or confer an academic, professional, or occupational degree, if the award of such degree has not been authorized by the appropriate State educational agency or approved by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, unless it clearly and conspicuously discloses, in all advertising and promotional materials that contain a reference to such degree, that its award has not been authorized or approved by such an agency. ...

#### § 254.7 Deceptive sales practices.

... (b) It is deceptive ... to fail to disclose to a prospective student, prior to enrollment, the total cost of the program and the school's refund policy if the student does not complete the program.

(c) It is deceptive ... to fail to disclose to a prospective student, prior to enrollment, all requirements for successfully completing the course or program and the circumstances that would constitute grounds for terminating the student's enrollment prior to completion of the program.

7. In addition, the **spirit of TITLE 16 — Commercial Practices, CHAPTER I — SUBCHAPTER D — Part 429** — “rule concerning a cooling-off period for sales ...” applies to SOC Standards of Good Practice regarding financial commitments for academic coursework or programs. For SOC Standards of Good Practice, this means:

a. There should be a clearly stated period, no less than 10 days, after commitment to coursework or an academic program during which a student can withdraw the commitment and all financial liability.

b. The process for withdrawal from the commitment must be communicated clearly and plainly without any misrepresentation.

c. A valid notice honoring the withdrawal, accompanied by a full refund if monies were paid, must be issued within ten days of a withdrawal.

### Examples of Unsatisfactory College Marketing, Admissions, and Student Services Practices for use with Military Student Populations

Listed below are practices that the 2006 SOC Task Force on College Marketing, Admissions and Student Services deemed “unsatisfactory.” They were reviewed and approved for inclusion as

a supplement to the *SOC Principles and Criteria* by the SOC Advisory Board in October 2006. Please e-mail any comments or questions that you may have to Joyce Larson, SOCNAV Project Director, at [larsonj@aascu.org](mailto:larsonj@aascu.org) or fax them to SOC, attention Joyce Larson, at 202-667-0622.

### Marketing

- Collection of personal information prior to institution providing basic information (college catalog, tuition cost, course schedules). Basic school information blocked until individual provides personal information.
- High pressure phone sales tactics including unsolicited calls.
- Misleading practices regarding pricing and costs.
- “Free” vs. “no cost” opportunities to entice students. This includes phony scholarship/discount offers where military TA is really paying the cost of artificially inflated tuition, for example. It also includes inappropriate compensation (salary or free tuition) for recruiting additional students.
- Disregard of Service and Department of Defense regulations concerning installation access and use of military IDs for commercial purposes.
- Failure to accurately address the differences between national and regional accreditation and their potential impact on course transferability and students’ future educational goals. Misleading prospects about the transfer of credit or its acceptance by other institutions.
- Not clearly distinguishing between accreditation recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and approval to conduct an education business in a state. One officially recognizes the accrediting body and minimum standards of education quality; the other simply allows for a license to solicit/market for its business.
- Institutions referring students to other institutions in the same corporate family without disclosing the corporate relationship. There are educational groups that provide services under different names. If this is the case, that information should be disclosed to the prospective student by telling the student that Alpha College is a division of the Beta Group.
- Using a facsimile of other Web sites to suggest legitimacy to increase an institution’s/organization’s business when no relationship exists.

### Admissions

- Lack of appropriate academic screening. Placing students at academic levels in which they cannot succeed or not meeting minimal requirements such as a high school diploma or legitimate equivalent.
- Placing students in classes or programs to meet quotas without regard to the qualifications required for success.
- Poor support and lack of clear process when student changes mind about enrolling or withdrawing from a course. Convincing students to remain in a program - not for the good of the student but long enough to officially count the enrollment for tuition or reporting requirements.
- Obligating students to a block of courses spanning more than one academic term, causing the student to be financially obligated for a greater segment of the program than he/she is ac-

tively pursuing (automatically enrolled for the next course).

### Student Services

- Requiring electronic signature for online enrollments with no cooling off or grace period for making changes in enrollment decision without financial obligation/penalty.
- Lack of clear explanation of financial obligations (including cost of compounding interest) and related budget impact - student loan/refund protections.
- Poor student services and administrative support such as slow/no instructor response, non-receipt of course material, lack of timely guidance, no academic adviser.
- Failure to provide online students with adequate means to contact the institution about administrative issues.
- Lack of clearly defined grievance or appeals policies/procedures.

## Special Message for SOC Institutional Representatives and SOC Counselors

The *2007-2009 SOC Consortium Guide* will contain an information page on each of the SOC colleges and universities that are members of the SOC Consortium. You have been designated on those pages as SOC Institutional Representative and/or SOC Counselor for your institution. The *2007-2009 SOC Consortium Guide* is widely distributed among the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard and is maintained on the SOC Web site at <http://www.soc.aascu.org/>. Servicemembers and veterans contact SOC institutional representatives and counselors listed on these pages for information about educational opportunities and academic policies within your college or university. It is important that you who have these collateral duties know your responsibilities and understand and be able to perform the functions. Please read carefully the responsibilities and functions of these assignments. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the SOC Membership Coordinator, Sonja Ferguson at 1-800-368-5622 or at [fergusons@aascu.org](mailto:fergusons@aascu.org).

**SOC Institutional Representative** is responsible for implementing and overseeing institution’s compliance with the *SOC Principles and Criteria 2007-2009*. Duties include:

- Reading and understanding the *SOC Principles and Criteria*;
- Having a working knowledge of the institution’s policies and procedures regarding the award of credit and acceptance in transfer of credit transcribed by other institutions, particularly as shown on the institutional page of the *SOC Consortium Guide*;
- Being able and available to answer inquiries and to market institutional programs and services to servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members who may express interest;
- Serving, in conjunction with the president, chancellor, or chief executive officer, as the institution’s chief advocate of servicemembers’ education and continuously striving within the institution to improve its policies, procedures, programs, and services offered servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members;
- Providing general oversight for institutional participation in specific SOC programs including SOCAD, SOCNAV, SOCMAR, SOCCOAST, SOCGuard, and ConAP;
- Being the institutional point-of-contact for troubleshooting in-

quiries made by the SOC Director and staff;

- Receiving and disseminating, as appropriate within the institution, SOC newsletters, memoranda, and other information regarding education for servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members;
- Keeping the senior institutional leadership informed regarding issues affecting education of servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members; and
- Updating SOC Application for Institutional Membership every two years, ensuring that all information is current and accurate and submit it to SOC by the date requested by SOC.

**SOC Counselor** is responsible for advisement of military students who are participating in programs under the SOC designation. Duties include:

- Reading and understanding the *SOC Principles and Criteria 2007-2009*.
- Being knowledgeable about the institution's policies and procedures regarding the award of credit and acceptance in transfer of credit transcribed by other institutions, particularly as shown on the institutional page of the *SOC Consortium Guide*;
- Being able and available to counsel servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members regarding education programs and services available to them and how these programs and services comply with *SOC Principles and Criteria 2007-2009*; and
- Working with the SOC Institutional Representative; filling in for the SOC Institutional Representative when that individual is not available.

## FY 07 SOC College Workshops

The Fiscal Year 2007 schedule of regional workshops by Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) follows:

- Monday, January 22, 2007, **SOC Degree Network System Workshop** for current SOC Degree Network System institutions—a pre-conference event to the 2007 Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) Symposium, Monterey, CA, focused on implementing the redesign of the SOC Degree Network System.
- Wednesday, February 21, 2007, **SOC College Consortium Workshop SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, San Diego, CA, TBA.
- Thursday, February 22, 2007, **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, San Diego, CA, TBA.
- March 2007, **SOC College Consortium Workshop** and **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, Dallas/Fort Worth, TX, TBA.
- March 2007, **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, Dallas/Fort Worth, TX, TBA.
- Tuesday, April 24, 2007 **SOC College Consortium Workshop**, Marine Corps Base, Kaneohe, HI, hosted by Hawaii Pacific University.
- Wednesday, April 25, 2007, **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, Marine Corps Base, Kaneohe, HI, hosted by Hawaii Pacific University.

- May 2007, **SOC College Consortium Workshop** and **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, Norfolk, VA, TBA.
- June 2007, **SOC College Consortium Workshop** and **SOC Degree Network System Workshop**, SOC Building, 1307 New York Ave., NW, Washington, DC, TBA.

Please check the SOC Web site for the latest information regarding SOC Workshops at <<http://www.soc.aascu.org/>>.

## Special Workshop on Distance Learning in Monterey, California

On Friday, January 26, 2007, immediately following the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) Symposium in Monterey, California, SOC and the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) will sponsor a special “hands on workshop” focused on the proposed Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning for military voluntary education providers. The workshop, developed collaboratively with support of the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, will help participants understand the proposed principles, gain practical experience with applying the standards to case studies, and develop institutional familiarity and responsiveness to the new Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning that were announced last July at the DoD Worldwide Conference in Orlando.

With growth in higher education distance learning averaging over 30% each year, and with the incredible interest on the part of military members in taking online courses, this special Friday workshop aims to allow educators and military counselors to learn how best to apply the principles in real world situations. The theories set out in the principles will be fleshed out and brought to life with practical examples presented by outstanding distance educators and military experts in the field.

These principles were developed by a military-civilian task force appointed by the Chief, DOD Continuing Education Programs within the Educational Opportunities Directorate of the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense to ensure that distance higher education courses and programs for service members, their families, and the Department of Defense (DOD) education community are of high quality and are readily accessible.

The principles are founded on best practices in distance higher education and tailored to the unique needs of the military community. The principles define parameters of excellence; enhance the legitimacy and worth of distance education; and foster dialogue to strengthen and improve the quality of these programs and services. The principles contribute to the continuous improvement of the military voluntary education program by helping to establish benchmarks of quality.

College administrators and faculty heavily involved in distance learning programs for military members will not want to miss this workshop on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Registration materials for this special Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning workshop are available on the SOC Web Site: [www.soc.aascu.org/socgen/SOCWorkshops.html](http://www.soc.aascu.org/socgen/SOCWorkshops.html). Because of the case study format and the need for subject matter experts during the workshop, it is important that individuals register in advance of the session. On-site registrations cannot be accommodated.

**Visit SOC on the Web**  
<http://www.soc.aascu.org/>

## Institutional Advantages and Benefits of SOC Consortium Membership

**By meeting the SOC membership criteria and abiding by SOC institutional operating guidelines, a SOC college or university**

- has the prerogative to serve as a full partner in the consortium of institutions with SOC's "good housekeeping seal of approval," to offer servicemembers programs and services and market itself as a "military friendly" institution;
- receives free favorable publicity from having its page in the *SOC Consortium Guide*, its name in the SOC Consortium brochure and on the SOC Web site, and in other higher education publications and Web sites;
- is eligible to compete in the military market when "SOC Consortium membership" is considered for education contracts and memoranda of understanding;
- has a voice in the partnership that helps set and maintain the policies, principles and criteria for institutions serving servicemembers through the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Program;
- receives consortium communications such as *Opportunity* and *The Military Educator* and
- can leverage SOC Consortium membership with military markets by promoting and marketing your institution's membership in the SOC Consortium in your outreach to potential military students.

The SOC Consortium, a higher education organization funded by

Department of Defense, functions to help the military services meet the voluntary higher education needs of servicemembers within all branches and components. SOC helps maintain an active partnership between higher education and the military services. By becoming a member of the SOC Consortium, a college or university pledges itself to be military friendly by serving in accordance with an established set of institutional operating guidelines. Specifically, a SOC Consortium institution is expected to, as a minimum: (1) have transfer policies and practices designed to help servicemembers minimize loss of credit and avoid duplication of coursework; (2) limit academic residency requirements for active-duty servicemembers to no more than 25 percent of the undergraduate programs with some stipulations that residency can be specified for the major and/or at the upper division, avoiding "final year" or "final semester" residency requirements; (3) recognize and use the *ACE Guide* (Community College of the Air Force transcript for airmen) in determining the value of learning acquired in military service and award credit based on service school recommendation when applicable to a servicemember's degree program; and (4) provide processes to evaluate and award credit through at least one nationally recognized testing programs (CLEP General, CLEP Subject, DSST, ECE).

There is no membership fee assessed to member institutions. All costs for the development, operations, and maintenance of the SOC Consortium are paid by the Department of Defense through a contract with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) that is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). The SOC staff are AASCU employees.



**Opportunity  
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