



**Nonprofit Academic Centers Council
Member Model Overview | Adopted July 31, 2017**

TO: Membership & Accreditation Review Committee
FROM: Task force on Membership Revision (Maureen Emerson Feit, Angela Logan, Rob Fischer)
RE: Revisions to NACC membership
DATE: May 9, 2017 | Distributed and Adopted at NACC Member Meeting, July 31, 2017

I. Purpose: The committee is charged with developing a proposal to revise the current model of NACC membership to include one level of membership.

II. Background: In January of 2016, the NACC board met and discussed the strategic question of how to build programs that attract and give value to members. The board decided that one answer to this question would be to revise the current NACC membership model. The VP of membership wrote up a memo outlining the Board’s concerns that the current model:

- does not adequately distinguish between full, associate and partner members;
- does not reflect the current complexity of nonprofit education;
- emphasizes quantity over quality;

The Board came to consensus that NACC membership needed to be simplified, and that all programs should become “full members” with special designations describing the focus of each member.

In the spring of 2016, the Board agreed that we would hold off on presenting a new model of membership until NACC addressed the question of accreditation. Once several accreditation discussions had been held, the Board asked the committee on accreditation to confer with the committee on membership to identify the issues and opportunities for revising membership as NACC pursues accreditation.

The Membership and Accreditation Review Committee (MARC) met in April, 2016 and identified questions to guide the revisions:

- **Cost to members:** How do we ensure that the cost of accreditation cost does not exclude programs from becoming members?
- **Administrative burden:** How do we ensure that the new membership model does not add a significant administrative burden that may discourage new members? How do we ensure that the membership review process is not too much of a burden on NACC staff and board?
- **Distinction between membership & accreditation:** How do we communicate that accreditation and membership are distinct processes?
- **Quality:** If we transition from three levels of membership to just one, how do we ensure that quality remains a criteria for membership? What level of quality is enough to become a



member? How do we avoid admitting “diploma mills” as members? What if we ask membership applicants to make the case for their programs in terms of the value they bring to nonprofits? What about their value to students? Can we use the indicators of quality?

- **Participation:** How do we refine membership to encourage even greater member participation? How do we build a sense of collegiality, community and exchange among NACC members? What are the responsibilities and privileges of membership?

III. Proposal: The committee proposes that all members of NACC be full members with the same rights and responsibilities.

Cost:

- All NACC members will pay the same annual fee of \$1000.

Application for membership:

- To qualify for membership, programs must meet minimum standards as defined by NACC.
- Current members will be grandfathered into membership.
- New programs will be encouraged to apply by one of two annual deadlines, and applications will be reviewed twice a year.
- The focus of membership will remain on programs with an academic affiliation that can demonstrate a focus on at least two of the three programmatic areas outlined in the bylaws (education, research and community)
- NACC will continue to explore ways to engaging other parts of the sector in the future through some kind of affiliation, but not necessarily membership.

Rights & responsibilities:

- All members will be treated as full members with the same rights, responsibilities and membership fees.

Relationship to accreditation:

- Membership and accreditation are distinct entities and processes. We will be clear that membership in NACC does not equal accreditation in NACC.
- We will require NACC membership before a program can apply for accreditation.

IV. Outstanding questions:

1. Eventually there needs to be a firewall between membership and accreditation. How does the fee structure work? In the year that a program goes up for accreditation, they will need to pay NACC membership dues and accreditation fees. Do we offer a payment plan?
2. How does NACC define the standards for membership that encourage quality? And how do we ensure that the membership applications process is not a “self-study” that requires a heavy



investment of time? The committee continues to debate how much we require programs to document that they already meet the previously established indicators of quality, and how much we use membership to encourage programs to continue to develop their quality over time.

3. How do we foster greater participation and collaboration within the NACC membership? Can we use the website as a site to encourage collaboration and highlight innovation? Do we want a quarterly virtual gathering? What other steps can we take?

NACC Membership Criteria & Process

The committee modified the current language from the Associate level of membership to develop draft language for the revised membership criteria and process:

Nonprofit organizations and voluntary action are critical to the development and strengthening of democracy and civil society throughout the world. Universities are central institutions for understanding and promoting the structures essential for democratic life. University-based programs that perform research, teaching and public service to strengthen nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations, philanthropy, and voluntary action are critical to helping universities and their communities meet this need.

The Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) was founded in 1991 by leaders of university-based nonprofit academic programs who wanted to share information and ideas to strengthen their programs and advance the field of philanthropic and nonprofit sector education within their institutions and beyond. Central to building the field is recognition and support by institutions of higher education that philanthropic and nonprofit sector studies are a vital component of the education, research and community engagement that they undertake. NACC member programs are committed to the advancement of nonprofit and philanthropic studies programs that are recognized by their host institutions as a focal point of nonprofit sector activity.

The mission of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council is to support academic centers or programs devoted to the study of the nonprofit/nongovernmental sector, philanthropy and voluntary action to advance education, research and practice that increases the nonprofit sector's ability to enhance civic engagement, democracy and human welfare.

Three programmatic areas form the foundation for the work of NACC members - education, research, and community engagement:

- **Education:** A systematic program of academic credit studies is a requirement of the education criterion. The program need not take the form of a full degree, but it should be of an academic credit-bearing nature, including concentrations or specializations within full degrees, or academic credit (as opposed to noncredit) certificate programs. If a center or program does not offer credit programs itself, its leadership or staff shall participate in teaching these offerings by other academic units affiliated with the center. Other forms of noncredit education, including



professional seminars, workshops and continuing education noncredit certificates, can be important dimensions of a center's educational programming and offer diverse learning opportunities, but a core of academic, credit-bearing offerings is essential.

- Research: Some ongoing creation of publications by persons directly affiliated with the program is a requirement for the research criterion. We recognize that research in the field of nonprofit, nongovernmental, and philanthropic studies can take a wide variety of forms including: scholarship that yields books, articles, and papers in academic outlets; applied research of immediate application to practitioners in the field whether done under contract and/or disseminated in professional practice publications; knowledge building that yields curriculum and instructional materials and publications; or different products from the "scholarship of engagement." It also consists of disseminating the knowledge created through conferences, symposia, and seminars. All of these research and dissemination activities are valid and encouraged. However, among these activities we consider some on-going activity yielding scholarly and/or professional publications to be essential.
- Community Engagement: The community engagement or service criterion is understood as academically-based activities that go beyond conventional faculty service assignments. This includes an ongoing and intentional program of engagement that attempts to provide direct impact in its nonprofit community to nonprofit organizations and the community at large. These should be substantial and a formal part of the program or center's programming, and may include providing consulting, technical advice or assistance to nonprofit organizations, convenings or workshops, or participating in nonprofit public policy and advocacy activities, to name just a few examples.

To be eligible for membership, a program or center must:

1. Operate within an accredited college or university. If the program or center is located internationally, accreditation will be appropriate to the home institution.
2. Have a primary focus on nonprofit, non-governmental sector management or philanthropic studies (or related areas such as civil society, social economy, and social innovation).
3. Provide evidence of ongoing activity in at least two of the three programmatic areas - education, research, and community engagement - as defined above.
4. Demonstrate a substantial allocation of resources and programming to the programmatic area(s), including:
 - A designated faculty or staff position which has primary responsibility to direct programmatic activities. The title and exact scope and type of responsibilities may vary, and some responsibility can be shared among other faculty, staff or students.
 - Accountability to and association with the academic division of the school, college or university (which can include continuing or professional education), rather than some other area, such as student affairs.
 - Staff support for its activities. No minimum level of staffing is required.