This FAQ is designed to answer recent questions regarding NIC's accreditation status as the college drafts its institutional response to the March 12, 2021 complaint letter from NWCCU.

**QUESTION: What is the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities?**

**ANSWER:** NWCCU is incorporated as a legally established, private 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and accredits institutions of higher education in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and British Columbia, along with other domestic and international geographic areas. NWCCU accredits approximately 175 institutions and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Institutions are evaluated based upon a set of standards that they must meet to receive and/or maintain accreditation.

**QUESTION: What is institutional accreditation and why is this investigation so important for NIC?**

**ANSWER:** The goal of institutional accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. Institutional accrediting agencies develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether the criteria are met. Institutions that meet an agency's criteria are then accredited. The investigation is important for NIC as accreditation is important for the college to remain in operation. Accreditation enables NIC to offer federal financial aid to students, ensure credits earned at NIC transfer to other institutions, and NIC graduates are eligible to sit for licensure examinations.

**QUESTION: Why did NIC receive a letter from NWCCU?**

**ANSWER:** NWCCU received a formal complaint regarding the situation at NIC and its Board of Trustees from the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Bonner County Human Rights Task Force, and Boundary County Human Rights Task Force, alleging violation of three Eligibility Requirements. NWCCU requires institutions certify that they meet Eligibility Requirements in order to remain accredited.

**QUESTION: How will North Idaho College respond?**

**ANSWER:** The letter from NWCCU requires that NIC submit a written response to the alleged violations by providing evidence that we do meet the three Eligibility Requirements.

**QUESTION: Is North Idaho College still accredited?**

**ANSWER:** Yes

**QUESTION: What happens after NIC submits a response to NWCCU?**

**ANSWER:** NIC has 45-days, by June 11, 2021, to respond to the letter. After the response is received the following process is provided by NWCCU in the Complaints Regarding Member or Candidate Institutions Policy:

Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the Response and any Reply, the NWCCU President will make a preliminary decision. If it is determined that the institution is in compliance with NWCCU's eligibility requirements, standards for accreditation, and policies, the complainant and institution will be so notified in writing and the matter will be closed. If, however, the NWCCU
President determines that the institution may be out of compliance, the complainant and institution will receive notice that the matter will be referred to NWCCU for a decision at its next Commission meeting.

Within thirty (30) calendar days following the Commission meeting, the complainant and the institution will be notified of NWCCU’s decision, which may:

- a. dismiss the Complaint;
- b. make recommendations to the institution suggesting areas for improvement; or
- c. determine that the institution is out of compliance with NWCCU’s eligibility requirements, standards for accreditation, and policies and require corrective action within a specified time and/or require a site visit by an ad hoc committee to review areas of non-compliance.

**QUESTION:** What happens if NIC is found to be out of compliance and what are potential responses from NWCCU?

**ANSWER:** It appears that NIC would be afforded an opportunity to address any concerns of NWCCU before a sanction is considered by the NWCCU Commissioners. The first step in this process is the response being prepared by the institution. Should NWCCU decide to impose a sanction on NIC, there are three options:

**Warning:** When the Commission finds that NIC has pursued a course that, if continued, could lead to more serious sanctions, it may issue to the institution a Warning to correct its deficiencies, to refrain from certain activities, or to initiate certain activities within a stated period of time. A Warning is a public sanction and does not affect the accredited status of NIC.

**Probation:** A negative sanction indicating that NIC failed to respond to the concerns (including Warning) communicated by the Commission, or when the college deviates significantly from the Commission’s standards, policies, or eligibility requirements, but not to such an extent as to warrant the issuing of a Show-Cause order or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, NIC may be placed on Probation for a specified period of time.

**Show Cause:** This is the last step prior to removing accreditation. A Show Cause order would be issued requesting that the institution respond to the stated concerns of the Commission within a specified period of time. The burden of proof rests with NIC to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued.

**QUESTION:** As a student, how does the letter from NWCCU impact me?

**ANSWER:** Students should see no impact because of this action. Academic programs, athletics, housing, student life, and college functions will not be affected.

**QUESTION:** As a student, will this impact my financial aid?

**ANSWER:** No, students will be able to access all federal, state, and local financial aid programs as before and their major is not affected.

**QUESTION:** Will my graduation plans be altered?

**ANSWER:** No
QUESTION: Will the college credits I earn at NIC still transfer to other schools?

ANSWER: The action letter does not impact the transferability of NIC courses to other institutions. However, all colleges and universities define their own transfer and admission policies.

QUESTION: Will my degree from NIC still count toward eligibility to sit for certification exams?

ANSWER: Yes

QUESTION: Any idea if NIC will retain its accreditation status after this complaint is addressed?

ANSWER: Colleges and universities are encouraged not to predict the outcome of an NWCCU evaluation. NIC is committed to meeting the eligibility requirements and cooperating with the Commission to retain its accreditation status.