



November 15, 2024

Res Helfer, Executive Director
Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training
1722 N St NW
Washington, DC 20036
Via email

RE: California Institute of Arts & Technology (1643), Albuquerque, NM (vocational/non-title IV)

Dear Res Helfer,

We write in response to your Solicitation of Commentary regarding the California Institute of Arts & Technology, Albuquerque, NM (“CIAT”) (now known as California Institute of Applied Technology¹), which is under consideration for a grant of initial accreditation by ACCET.² Our organization works on a bipartisan basis to advance higher education success for veterans, service members, and military families, and to protect the integrity and promise of the GI Bill® and other federal education programs.

We are concerned that CIAT may be misrepresenting itself to prospective students by presenting itself as eligible to participate in the federal student aid program. Providing misinformation for recruitment purposes is a violation of ACCET’s standard that all representations and communications to prospective students, including web content, be “justifiable,” “provable,” “ethical, honest, and consistent with ACCET policies.”³ Before granting CIAT accreditation, we urge you to review CIAT’s representations and communications to prospective students to determine whether it is complying with ACCET’s standards.

CIAT has stated on its webpage that it is “pursuing ACCET accreditation” and “**is approved to offer Federal Student Aid by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED)**”⁴ (emphasis added). It even has assured prospective students, “We’ll guide you step-by-step through the process of submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online to apply for federal student aid grants and loans and match you with our eligible programs.”⁵

¹ “CIAT Changes Name to California Institute of Applied Technology”

<https://www.ciat.edu/blog/ciat-california-institute-applied-technology/>

² ACCET Memo (Sept. 6, 2024) listing “California Institute of Arts & Technology (1643), Albuquerque, NM (vocational/non-title IV)”

https://s3.amazonaws.com/docs.accet.org/downloads/SolicitationCommentary_Institutions_December_2024.pdf

³ ACCET Standard VII(A.), ACCET Document 2 - Standards for Accreditation (Rev. Aug. 2023),

https://s3.amazonaws.com/docs.accet.org/downloads/Doc_2.pdf

⁴ California Institute of Applied Technology Albuquerque Campus, Accreditation & Approvals

<https://www.ciat.edu/campus-locations/albuquerque-campus/>

⁵ *Id.*

Accreditation & Approvals



California Institute of Applied Technology is pursuing ACCET accreditation. The Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) is a nonprofit accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. It evaluates and accredits private vocational training providers, English language programs, and non-collegiate continuing education institutions through a peer review focused on educational quality and integrity.



California Institute of Applied Technology is approved to offer Federal Student Aid by the New Mexico Higher of Education Department (NMHED). We'll guide you step-by-step through the process of submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online to apply for federal student aid grants and loans and match you with our eligible programs.

(screenshot from webpage titled California Institute of Applied Technology Albuquerque Campus, captured on November 7, 2024)

As you know, students cannot access Title IV federal student aid if their private postsecondary institution is not accredited.⁶ CIAT in Albuquerque, NM, is **not** on the Department of Education's list of accredited institutions,⁷ and seems to be seeking ACCET accreditation as a non-title IV institution. Moreover, the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) is not an accrediting agency and does not accredit private institutions for purposes of receiving federal student aid. It authorizes schools to operate in New Mexico.⁸

In preparing this letter, we contacted the NMHED with questions about CIAT's federal student aid representations on the webpage. Following our outreach, we understand the NMHED staff asked the school to correct the representations, and those representations have now been removed. While correcting the website is appropriate, deleting a misrepresentation after an oversight agency discovers it does not necessarily demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards.

⁶ 2024-2025 Federal Student Aid Handbook, Volume 2, School Eligibility and Operations https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/2024-2025/vol2/ch1-institutional-eligibility#pid_1431525

⁷ U.S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs shows CIAT located in California as an accredited institution but it does not include a location in New Mexico. The ACCET letter in the database includes only a main campus in San Diego and a branch campus in National City, CA. <https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/institution-profile/237738>

⁸ New Mexico Higher Education Department FAQs <https://hed.nm.gov/resources-for-schools/private-post-secondary-schools/faq>; see also, U.S. Department of Education's list of recognized institutional accrediting agencies <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/higher-education-laws-and-policy/college-accreditation/college-accreditation-united-states/college-accreditation-in-the-united-states--pg-3#RegionalInstitutional#RegionalInstitutional>

For these reasons, we urge you to thoroughly evaluate whether CIAT meets ACCET's standards for recruitment materials and communications to prospective students before making an accreditation determination.

Sincerely,

Della M. Justice

Della M. Justice
Vice President for Legal Affairs

Allison Muth

Allison Muth
Senior Attorney

cc: New Mexico Higher Education Department