



District of Columbia
**HIGHER EDUCATION
LICENSURE COMMISSION**

FY2020-2021 Biennial Report



helc.osse.dc.gov

  @OSSEDC

 @osse.dc

 (202) 727-6436

WE ARE
WASHINGTON *** GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

WHO WE ARE

MISSION

The mission of the Higher Education Licensure Commission (the Commission) is to ensure that quality postsecondary education and training exist in the District of Columbia.

VISION

The Commission strives to be a national leader in licensing, compliance monitoring, enforcement, and outreach that ensures students are protected and approved postsecondary institutions provide quality education and training programs.

VALUES

- **Accountability** – The Commission is accountable to the residents of the District of Columbia and will operate with transparency and encourage public participation.
- **Integrity** – The Commission will be honest, fair, and respectful in making unbiased and impartial decisions.
- **Consistency** – The Commission will strive to apply the laws and regulations under its jurisdiction accurately and consistently.
- **Professionalism** – The Commission will strive to recruit, train, and retain qualified, effective, dedicated, and skilled staff with a strong commitment to public service.

WHAT WE DO

The Commission's work includes the following key activities:

- Maintain a list of active and inactive institutions that students and families may refer to at: helc.osse.dc.gov.
- Hold public meetings to determine if and how postsecondary educational institutions may operate in DC.
- Hold working sessions to discuss or review emerging trends and strategic initiatives in higher education.
- Conduct site visits and evaluations where Commissioners and/or independent evaluators visit institutions and complete a written assessment to document findings.
- Conduct research and identify best practices to address postsecondary education needs in DC.
- Update and manage information for institutions that are approved to participate in the GI Bill® benefit program.
- Coordinate State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) to regulate the *interstate* offering of postsecondary education via distance learning (online coursework).
- Consult with DC's professional licensing agencies (such as the board of nursing), national counterparts charged with regulating higher education, accrediting agencies, and the US Department of Education.
- Maintain student records such as transcripts and financial aid records for closed institutions that do not make other arrangements to store these items.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

A letter from Angela H. Lee and Mary E. Dilworth, Ed.D.

3 ABOUT THE COMMISSION

Learn more about the Commission's current members, its history, and commissioner updates

5 2020 & 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

A look at key projects such as the Student Advisory Committee, COVID-19 Response, NC-SARA renewal, new workshops, and technology enhancements

9 INSTITUTION PROFILE

A snapshot of programs, students, institutions, staff, and financial aid

10 COMMISSION ACTIONS

A high-level overview of Commission actions and profile of the institutions the Commission serves

12 STATE APPROVING AGENCY FOR VETERANS EDUCATION & TRAINING

Learn about student and institution eligibility for veterans education and training through the State Approving Agency

14 Q&A FOR STUDENTS & RESIDENTS

Highlights of new questions and answers about higher education for students and residents of DC

15 CONNECT WITH THE COMMISSION

See options for students, community members, and institutions to connect with the Commission

16 CONTACT INFORMATION & STAFF

How to get in touch with the Commission and learn more about Commission staff

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

This year, the Commission celebrates 45 years of service to the District of Columbia! Since 1976, the Commission has fulfilled its role as a consumer protection body by serving two primary audiences: (1) current and potential postsecondary students in DC; and (2) postsecondary educational institutions serving residents of the District of Columbia (either through a physical presence in DC or by offering online educational opportunities to DC residents).

The Commission's mission is directly related to its legally established purpose, which is to provide for the protection, education, and welfare of the residents of the District of Columbia and its students enrolled in postsecondary training and education.

This report spotlights the Commission's key areas of work and accomplishments in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. These two years offer a window into a particular era in the Commission's customer protection role, because at this time our primary goal was to ensure that students and institutions could operate successfully in distance or hybrid environments in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Beginning in March 2020, the Commission and staff worked diligently to implement operational changes necessary to limit the interruption to student learning. We are proud that we were able to move to an entirely virtual operation while maintaining high standards for the licensure process. We offer details about this work in the [2020 & 2021 Highlights](#) section in addition to information about the formation of a Student Advisory Committee.

In the [Commission Actions](#) section, you will see data points that illustrate our work and the institutions we serve. Over two years, the Commission approved 138 postsecondary institutions, processed 1,234 transcript and verification requests, responded to 25 complaints against postsecondary institutions, and completed 1,047 program approval actions as the State Approving Agency.

The Commission continues to support DC residents, their families, and our community by providing information regarding veterans education ([page 12](#)), and ways to connect with the Commission. You can help us in this effort by sharing the information with any DC resident who would like to know more about veterans education benefits or what to look for in a college, university, or other training program (including online classes).

In this period, we also celebrated the work and contribution of two long-serving members as they transitioned off the Commission and welcomed two new members.

While the past two years will be remembered as challenging for many reasons, we believe this Biennial Report illustrates the many ways the Commission and staff persevered and evolved in order to maintain excellence in our customer service, operations, and community support in the face of those challenges. We look forward to continuing many of the innovations adopted this year into the future.



Angela H. Lee
Executive Director



Mary E. Dilworth, Ed.D.
Commission Chairperson

ABOUT THE COMMISSION



Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments November 2019 Boards and Commission Convocation (L to R: Mary Dilworth, Anita Bellamy Shelton, Mayor Bowser, and Estell Mathis-Lloyd)

The Commission is a group of five commissioners that the Mayor appoints to fill a necessary consumer protection role for DC residents by establishing standards for postsecondary educational institutions in areas of ethical business practices, fiscal responsibility, health, and safety. The Commission regularly reviews applications from institutions and programs to make sure programs meet the standards.

This work is important for DC residents and their families because, when they verify that a program or institution has a license from the Commission, they can be sure that both the courses and degrees offered meet certain baseline standards and that institutions accurately represent the opportunities they offer.

In addition to licensing institutions, the Commission is charged with advising the Mayor and DC Council about the postsecondary educational needs of the District. The Commission has other functions which include enforcing postsecondary laws and regulations, maintaining the student records of institutions that close and have no other depository, issuing certified academic transcripts, and investigating complaints against educational institutions under its jurisdiction.

COMMISSIONERS

Mary E. Dilworth, Ed.D. | Chair
Ward 7 (appointed Oct. 12, 2014)

Harriet Segar, Esq. | Vice Chair
Ward 4 (appointed Nov. 6, 2020)

Estell Mathis-Lloyd, M. Ed. | Secretary
Ward 4 (appointed April 15, 2019)

Anita Bellamy Shelton, MSW
Ward 1 (appointed Oct. 25, 2017)

Elaine Crider, D.H.Sc.
Ward 8 (appointed Feb. 16, 2021)

KEY EVENTS

1976

Established under the Education Licensure Commission Act of 1976 ([DC Law 1-104](#))

2000

Transferred Commission functions from the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) under the State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000 ([DC Law 13-176](#))

- Updated the name to Higher Education Licensure Commission, extended the Commission's authority over distance education, and authorized alternative sanctions for violations under the Higher Education Licensure Commission Amendment Act of 2015 ([DC Law 21-74](#))
- Joined the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)
- Resumed role as State Approving Agency

2016

2021

Celebrated 45 years of service to the District

IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

During their terms of service, **Dr. Joyner** and **Mr. Cross** ensured that Commission actions supported the availability of high-quality higher education options for the residents of the District of Columbia and its students enrolled in postsecondary training and education. They are true assets to the Commission's work.



Commissioner JoAnne Joyner (Ward 4) was appointed in 2014 and completed two terms in December 2020. JoAnne served as Secretary from 2016 to 2020.

Dr. Joyner was the Commission's resident health expert. Her service to the Commission has been invaluable, especially when it comes to helping us all understand the intricacies of the nursing and health related postsecondary educational programs that are presented to the Commission for approval.



Commissioner John M. Cross (Ward 6) was first appointed in 2017. He retired at the end of March 2021.

John served as the Vice Chair of the Commission from 2016 until his retirement in March 2021.

Mr. Cross' expertise in finances and communications were essential to helping ensure that the Commission approved applicants who demonstrated fiscal stability.

John is also credited with providing the inspiration for the design of the Commission's first official logo.

WELCOME TO THE COMMISSION

The Commission and staff are excited about the expertise that two new members, **Ms. Harriet Segar** and **Dr. Elaine Crider**, offer in service to the residents of the District of Columbia.



In Nov. 2020, **Commissioner Harriet Segar** (Ward 4) was appointed for her first term.

Harriet Segar, Esq. has served in DC government for approximately 25 years. Prior to this, Ms. Segar was an Attorney-Advisor with the Federal Labor

Relations Authority (FLRA).

Ms. Segar received a Juris Doctor from New England School of Law, Boston, Massachusetts. Currently, she is licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia. Ms. Segar graduated from Cornell University, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

Ms. Segar has a strong interest in African art and is a volunteer docent with the National Museum of African Art (NMAA) providing informational tours to school age groups and adults for exhibits which change on an on-going basis. She attends classes on African art at NMAA.



Commissioner Elaine Crider (Ward 8) was appointed in April 2021 as the newest member of the Commission. Dr. Crider has a wealth of experience in Clinical Nursing and health care policy development.

Among her numerous accomplishments, she served as an associate professor with expertise in issues surrounding public health and healthcare administration at Southeastern University. Dr. Crider has also served on the University of the District of Columbia's Board of Trustees.

Dr. Crider possesses a Doctor of Health Science from NOVA Southeastern University, a Master of Science in of Health Administration from Central Michigan University, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Maryland.

This section offers highlights from the Commission’s work in 2020 and 2021. Each of these activities and operational shifts served the residents of the District of Columbia in this uncertain time and will continue to guide the Commission’s work in the future.

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Student Advisory Committee is a volunteer committee that partners with the Commission to share information and direction about improving postsecondary education in DC. The committee includes DC students and/or recent graduates of postsecondary institutions in DC (preference is given to residents of DC). Committee members agree to serve for at least one year.

At the conclusion of their term, the first student advisory committee created an end of year report. Two recommendations from the report were to increase the number of student advisors and recruit individuals who represent the certificate programs and career and technical programs.

The Commission wishes to thank and acknowledge the members of the inaugural Student Advisory Committee. Each member is commended for their willingness to be among the first to serve in this role and the foundation they laid for the members that will follow in their footsteps.

“
This committee lends
an authentic and
critical voice to issues
that students face
when pursuing a quality
education in the
District of Columbia.”

~ Commissioner Mary Dilworth



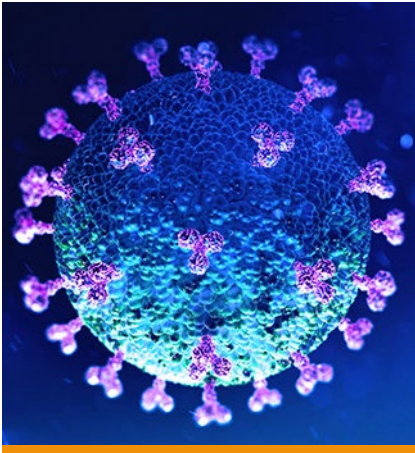
(pictured left to right Shallum Atkinson, Hannah Cundey, Elizabeth Fadl, and Quincy Jallah)

The Commission is pleased to introduce the 2021-22 Student Advisory Committee. Congratulations to (from left to right) to Jordan Bond (not pictured), Armani Eady, Oral Grant, and Joseph Rideaux.



The Commission continues to accept new members on a rolling basis. Prospective applicants should review the information provided on the Commission’s [website](#).

COVID-19 RESPONSE



The District of Columbia Government began modifying its operations on Monday, March 16, 2020 in support of efforts to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The Commission and staff used this change in operating status as an opportunity to envision fulfilling its mandates in an entirely virtual setting. Since that time, the Commission:

- transitioned all public, executive and work meetings, new applicant workshops, and administrative hearings to web-based platforms;
- began accepting and processing licensure applications in a fully virtual environment; and
- added functionality for institutions and programs to submit payments via credit cards.

Further, the Commission responded to requests from institutions and schools that were also shifting to distance education and online coursework models. In the third quarter of fiscal year 2020 (FY20), 35 institutions were granted permission to temporarily change operational modality to distance education for a limited time synchronous with the Mayor Bower's Stay-At-Home Order. This was a one-time effort to address time sensitive needs related to the public health emergency.

The Commission also partnered with OSSE's Health and Wellness division to develop guidance for institutions related to public health information and planning for a return to in-person instruction. The memos are available for review on the Commission's [website](#).

In FY21, the Commission conducted 79 remote site visits, including two site evaluations. While aspects of this transition were challenging, benefits such as reduced travel time and easing access to public meetings via virtual platforms will continue in the future.

Additionally, 17 entities in DC received federal relief through the Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, and the American Rescue Plan. Awards totaled \$255,969,317, and as of August 2021 \$135,064,824 (52.8 percent) has been spent. You can read more about these funds [here](#).

RENEWED PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROcity AGREEMENTS (NC-SARA)

The Commission also submitted its application for continued participation in NC-SARA, which was approved in June 2020 for a two-year period. This is the fourth year that the District has participated in this compact. Higher education is experiencing the expansion of distance education models, and the Commission's participation will "help protect students and provide benefits to both states and institutions carrying out distance education in multiple states."

NC-SARA is a voluntary agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for the authorization of interstate postsecondary distance education. Thirteen of the degree granting institutions domiciled in DC participate in NC-SARA. In 2019 there were more than 5,100 District residents enrolled in 469 NC-SARA member institutions, and in 2020, there were more than 11,700 District residents enrolled in more than 640 NC-SARA member institutions. To read more about the data that NC SARA collects regarding distance education enrollments, out-of-state learning placements and student complaints related to NC-SARA visit nc-sara.org.

NEW WORKSHOPS LAUNCHED

The Commission launched a new training program in June 2021. Institutions currently licensed by the Commission are invited to participate in these two-hour sessions to review the licensure renewal or veterans affairs education benefits application processes. Initially, all sessions are being offered as webinars.

Licensure Renewal Training

The Licensure Renewal training is highly recommended for institutional representatives who are new to the administrative team at licensed institutions and is designed to assist with preparing to submit the licensure renewal application. The webinar will review required documentation for application, program amendments, and the renewal application timeline. This webinar is being offered at no charge to institutions and participation is voluntary. This training may also serve as an alternative sanction for institutions who have not demonstrated an ability to fully comply with the licensure standards, prior to the more severe consequence of licensure revocation, suspension or denial.

Veterans Affairs Education Benefits Webinar

In its role as the State Approving Agency, the Commission began offering the Veterans Affairs Education Benefits webinar for institutions that desire to allow veterans and their dependents to use their GI Bill® Education Benefits while matriculating at the respective institution. In this training, attendees will learn about program and application requirements. Organizations deemed as Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) or Non-College Degree (NCD) programs and have been licensed and in good standing with the Commission and have demonstrated consecutive enrollment for 24 months will be invited to attend this session.

*Note: Participation in a New Applicant Workshop continues to be **required** for all new applicants, while the Licensure Renewal and Veterans Affairs Workshops are optional.*



TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

New Logo and Website Reveal!

In April 2021, the Commission launched its new and improved website and logo. Come for a visit: helc.osse.dc.gov. The logo builds upon the foundation of the previous logo.



2016

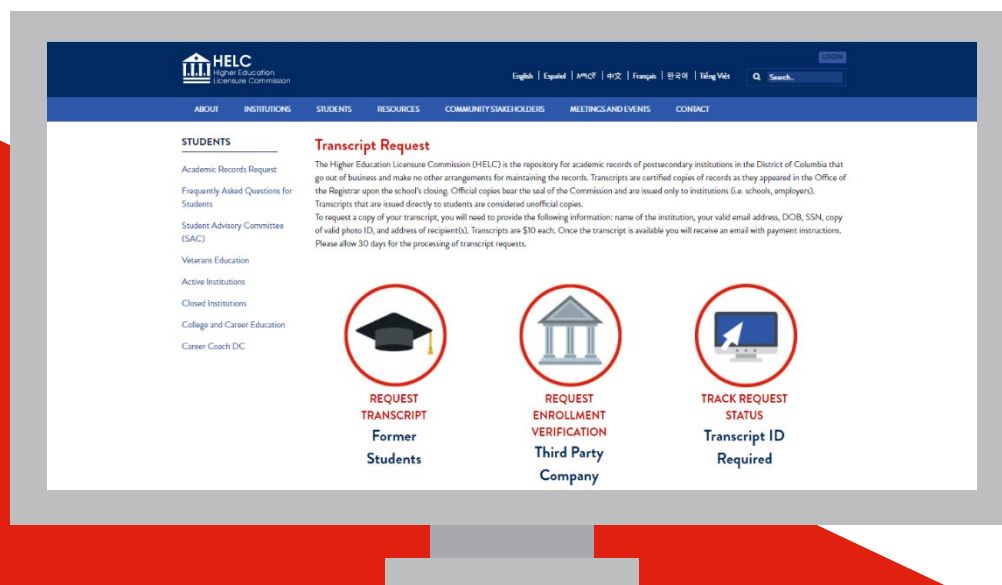


2021

Student Transcript Request Portal Overhaul

The Commission surveyed customers regarding their experience with the transcript request process. The results, along with staff recommendations, informed the redesign of the Commission's academic records request process this year. Enhancements include:

- Integrating verification request process into the electronic format;
- Optional text message alerts to help keep customers informed about the status of their requests;
- Allowing customers to make edits to requests up until payment is remitted;
- Enhancing workflow; and
- Improving reporting capabilities.



INSTITUTION PROFILE: FY20-21

This page offers a snapshot¹ of the wide variety of programs, schools, colleges, and universities that serve DC students and students who come to DC for additional education opportunities. Please note values represent both years combined, unless otherwise indicated.

The Commission serves a wide range of postsecondary educational institutions

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|
| 4 | 40 | 46 | 26 | 13 |
| Two-year (degree-granting) | Four-year (degree-granting) | Vocational (non-degree) | Out-of-state offering internship/clinical experiences in DC (non SARA) | DC institutions participating in NC-SARA ² |

Outputs & Observations³

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 243,916 | 243,459 | 5,044 | 4,849 | 121,146 | 108,201 |
| 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| TOTAL STUDENTS ENROLLED | | VETERAN STUDENTS ENROLLED | | EMPLOYEES (FACULTY AND STAFF) | |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 85,332 | 8,635 | 63,036 | 6,511 |
| D | ND | D | ND |
| 2020 | | 2021 | |
| GRADUATES, BY INSTITUTION TYPE ⁴ | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--|-----------------|
| \$1.47 B | \$1.81 M | \$889 M | \$2 M | \$32,885 | \$14,732 |
| D | ND | D | ND | 2020 | 2021 |
| FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID RECEIVED | | | | ANNUAL COST OF TWO-YEAR DEGREE-GRANTING PROGRAM | |

1 The Commission collects institutional data annually, and the information on this page represents 118 responses for FY20 and 120 responses for FY21. The Commission seeks to gather information in the following areas: institutional characteristics, institutional human and fiscal resources, institutional prices, accreditation, enrollment, degrees and certificates conferred, student retention and financial aid. The submission of this data is a condition of continued approval to operate postsecondary educational programs in the District. In FY20, there was a 90.1 percent response rate and in FY21 there was an 88.9 percent response rate.

2 The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA) manages a voluntary, national initiative which seeks to establish comparable standards for the interstate offer of postsecondary distance education courses and programs among regional compacts and member states.

3 Please note: The University of the District of Columbia and the University of the District of Columbia Community College are not among the respondents to this survey.

4 D indicates degree-granting and ND indicates vocational, non-degree-granting programs.

COMMISSION ACTIONS

The Commission’s work in fiscal years 2020 (Oct. 1, 2019-Sept. 30, 2020) and 2021 (Oct. 1, 2020-Sept. 30, 2021) is illustrated by these key numbers and activities.

COMBINED APPROVALS IN FY20 & FY21

Number of approved postsecondary institutions, by location:

| LOCATION | DEGREE | | NON-DEGREE | | STATE APPROVING AGENCY (CERTIFICATES) | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| Ward 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| Ward 2 | 39 | 36 | 11 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| Ward 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Ward 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ward 5 | 10 | 3 | 12 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| Ward 6 | 16 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| Ward 7 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Ward 8 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| No physical presence* | 1 | 13 | n/a | n/a | 0 | 0 |
| 100% online | 7 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 89 | 78 | 49 | 48 | 6 | 2 |

*Institutions with a conditional exemption

42 VA approved institutions (a subset of the approved institutions)

COMMISSION EVENTS

- Held **32** meetings (public/work/executive) and **6** hearings
- Hosted **162** participants at **15** workshops (new applicant, renewal, VA)

COMMISSION ACTIONS IN FY20 & FY21

| 20 | | 152 | | 445 | | 53 | | 26 | |
|-------------|------|---------|------|------------|------|------------------------|------|------|------|
| 11 | 9↓ | 69 | 83↑ | 226 | 219↓ | 25 | 28↑ | 13 | 13 |
| 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| PROVISIONAL | | RENEWAL | | AMENDMENTS | | CONDITIONAL EXEMPTIONS | | SARA | |

| 5 | | 8 | | 4 | | 4 | | 11 | |
|-----------------------|------|----------|------|---------------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| 5 | 0↓ | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1↓ | 7 | 4↓ |
| 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| INITIAL NAME APPROVAL | | CLOSURES | | REINSTATEMENT | | REVISIONS | | AGENT | |

The number of applications processed may differ from the number of approved institutions because some institutions do not renew annually and because institutions may submit multiple applications during one year (e.g., renewal and amendment).

The table below lists Commission actions for schools and institutions that opened or closed by fiscal year.

| FY20 | FY21 |
|---|--|
| PROVISIONAL | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of California-Davis (D, W1) • Lambda School (ND, Online) • Claremont Lincoln University (D, Online) • National University (D, Online) • Texas A&M University-The Bush School of Government and Public Service (D, W2) • Cornell University (D, W2) • Time for Change (ND, W8) • Cornerstone Institute for Anointing (ND, W2) • Hands on Dental Assistant Training, LLC (ND, W2) • Boston University (D, W2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBG Trains (ND, W6) • Windsor University (D, W6) • Medcerts, LLC (ND, Online) • Pacific College of Health and Science (D, Online) • TIS Foundation (ND, W6) • Battle’s Transportation, Inc. Commercial Driving Training School (ND, W5) • NewU University (D, W2) • Congress Heights Community Development and Training Corp.* (ND, W8) |
| CLOSURES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Morgan Graduate School of Education (D, W2) • Universidad Ana G. Mendez-Carolina Campus (D, W5) • Aveda Arts & Sciences Institute (ND, W2) • Excel Automotive (ND, W7) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaplan International Centers (ND, W2) • EC English (ND, W2) • Nursing Assistant Academy (improper closure) (ND, W6) • Intellect Health Institute (ND, W7) |

Notes:

- Provisional actions may include first-time licensees or applicants required to reapply as new (the later are indicated with an *)
- D – Degree-granting institution, ND – Vocational, non-degree-granting institution, W – Ward

DEFINITIONS

- Degree-granting: postsecondary degree-granting educational institutions which offer instruction that results in credit toward a postsecondary or college degree.
- Non-degree-granting (professional program): private postsecondary non-degree schools operating or incorporated in the District, which offer instruction that does not result in credit toward a college degree.
- New applicants: First-time applicants for review by the Commission.
- Renewals: Returning applicants seeking license renewal.
- State Approving Agency: The Commission serves as the State Approving Agency for veteran educational benefits in DC (see [page 12](#) for additional details).

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

- Agents: Applicants are representatives of postsecondary institutions located outside DC who seek to recruit DC students.
- Amendments: Applicants for an amendment are licensed institutions that wish to change their licenses before required by the license renewal date. Examples include changes of address or adding and dropping programs.
- Exemptions: Applicants that are seeking an exemption to standard licensure requirements based on a limited scope of service delivery, as defined in DCMR 38-1301.

STATE APPROVING AGENCY FOR VETERANS EDUCATION & TRAINING

In DC, the Commission approves and monitors institutions of higher learning (IHL) and non-college degree (NCD) programs that serve veterans and their dependents, including private and public colleges and universities, private career colleges, high schools, and on-the-job training/apprenticeship programs. This is because the Commission serves as the State Approving Agency for veteran educational benefits in DC.

The DC State Approving Agency has five key areas of work: program approval, visits to schools and training establishments⁵, technical assistance, outreach, and liaison activities.



In addition to the actions identified in the tables above the DC State Approving Agency was engaged in activities including:

- Liaison work such as quarterly calls with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Liaison Representative;
- Regional meetings with the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA); and
- Collaborative meetings with other State Approving Agencies and agencies within DC government including the Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) and DC Office of Apprenticeship.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Servicemembers and their dependents should [apply](#) through the VA to determine which education benefits they may be eligible for based on their service. The VA maintains a [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#), which provides information about college affordability and value so beneficiaries can choose the best education program for their needs.

- Follow this link to VA’s Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS) to search for approved facilities: [USDVA’s WEAMS Institution Search Site](#).
- Follow this link to find School Comparison Tools on the [GI Bill® website at GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#).

INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Institutional participation in veteran education and training benefits programs is voluntary; however, in order for a veteran, reservist, or dependent to use their GI Bill® benefits at an institution, the program must be approved by the State Approving Agency.

The approval process includes the submission of an application and includes a site visit to the educational institution or training establishment. Attend the Veterans Affairs Education Benefits Webinar to learn more. Register [here](#).

⁵ In-person visits were suspended starting March 2020, but virtual compliance was implemented, and the DC State Approving Agency completed all assigned compliance surveys.



The Commission offers a set of detailed Questions & Answers on this [webpage](#). The selection below highlights new Q&As for students and residents of DC.

1 What is the best way to choose my college or postsecondary program?

When completing the college search process, or reviewing financial aid offers, there are many things to consider. Ask yourself questions about personal preferences on important aspects of school and program quality and talk with a college/career counselor or mentor. The resources on this consumer education page under ["Choosing a College"](#) are also useful decision making tools.

2 How can I tell if a school has a good distance education/online program?

If your school has shifted to a distance education model or online program, they should be able to explain to you what has changed and what will be the same. Instruction and instructional supports are examples of aspects that were important to your success in-person and that will be necessary online. Additional questions you can ask your school to determine if their program will meet your needs include: Are the teachers still certified to teach the subject? What supports will the school offer to distance education students? How will you access books and journals, or student supports like the writing center? You can read more [here](#).

3 Is the school licensed?

Licensure and accreditation matter because they can impact whether a school can offer federal financial aid, and whether the degrees offered will allow graduates to find a job. The Commission Active Institution [page](#) shows when a school or program is licensed in DC.

4 Why does accreditation matter? What kind of accreditation should I look for?

There are many reasons that accreditation matters for students including the ability to access federal loans and grants (if the school or program can help students get student loans and aid, such as Pell Grants), the potential to receive transfer credit, and the potential to attain professional licensing. You can read more [here](#).

5 My college closed - How do I obtain my student records/transcript?

Transcripts are certified copies of the records as they appeared in the Office of the Registrar when a school closes. You can request copies of your transcripts from the Commission by submitting a completed [Transcript Request Form](#).

6 What happens if my school closes?

If your school closes without notice, please call to notify the Commission of the situation as soon as possible. A licensed school may close for any number of reasons. A school must give the Commission a minimum of 90 days advanced notice and receive approval from the Commission prior to closing. [This page](#) offers additional information about specific school closures in DC.

STUDENTS

Request a Transcript or Student Verification

The Commission keeps academic records from postsecondary institutions in DC (programs, schools, colleges, and universities) that go out of business and do not have a way to maintain these records. Individuals who attended one of these institutions can request transcripts [here](#).

Serve on the Student Advisory Committee

If you are a student or recent graduate of a postsecondary institution in DC, please consider joining the Student Advisory Committee. Interested students should review the information provided [here](#) prior to applying for the Committee. Preference will be given to residents of DC.

Submit a Complaint

To initiate a complaint about a postsecondary educational institution in the Commission's jurisdiction, please visit the [Public Complaints](#) page and access the Complaint form in the language of your choice. Please note, complaints are made available to the institution/alleged violator so that they may file a response to the allegations. The Commission cannot respond to anonymous complaints.

COMMUNITY

Serve on the Commission

Persons interested in serving on the Commission must be DC residents age 18 or older with knowledge regarding the operation of postsecondary institutions. For general information about District Boards and Commissions, please visit the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointment [website](#).

Participate as a Site Evaluator

The Commission seeks individuals to serve as evaluators for postsecondary institution site evaluations and is establishing a pool of neutral, qualified professionals who have knowledge, skills or expertise in one or more of the following areas: postsecondary education, academic administration, accreditation, or compliance. Evaluators must be able to devote two or three full business days to the completion of site evaluations. Site evaluation criteria are available [here](#).



INSTITUTIONS

Attend a Workshop

- **New Applicant Workshop**

The first step in the process to become a licensed postsecondary institution in the District of Columbia is attendance at the New Applicant Workshop. Registration is required. The registration fee is \$200 for this workshop. Register [here](#).

- **Renewal Applicant Workshop**

This optional workshop is highly recommended for representatives from licensed institutions who are new to the administrative team who wish to become better familiar with required documentation for renewal applications, license amendments, and processing timelines. Register [here](#).

- **Veterans Affairs Education Benefit Webinar**

This optional workshop is for institutions who wish to learn more about how veterans and their eligible dependents can use their earned VA education benefit at your institution. Register [here](#).

Apply for State Approving Agency Approval

Participation in veterans education and training benefits programs is voluntary for institutions. However, in order for a veteran, reservist, or dependent to use their GI Bill® benefits at an institution the program must be approved by the State Approving Agency. To request an application, visit the [Veterans Education page](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION & STAFF

WELCOME TO THE COMMISSION

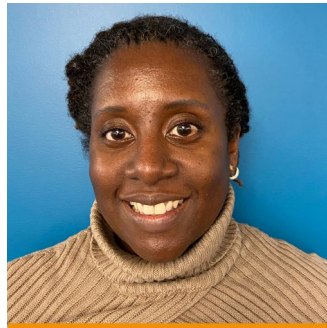
In FY20, the Commission welcomed two new staff, **Terasita Edwards**, deputy director, and **Chasity Cook**, State Approving Agency compliance specialist.

Commission Staff as of Nov. 6, 2021



Angela H. Lee
Executive Director

Angela.Lee@dc.gov



Terasita Edwards
Deputy Director

Terasita.Edwards@dc.gov

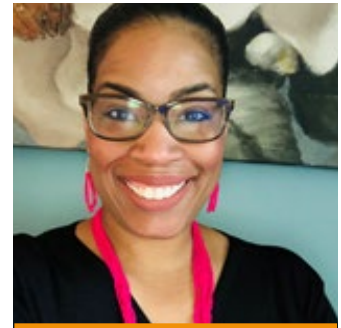
Complaints, Unlicensed Activity, Administrative Hearings



Chasity Cook
SAA Compliance Specialist

Chasity.Cook@dc.gov

SAA-Veterans Education Benefits



Jocelyn Harris
Education Compliance Specialist

Jocelyn.Harris3@dc.gov

Site Evaluations, SARA



Alesia Henry
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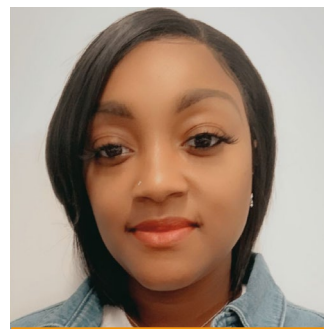
Application Process, Student Advisory Committee



Dorothy Thomas
Education Compliance Specialist

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New Applicant Workshop, Annual Data Survey



Maia Turner
Staff Assistant

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Student Transcripts or Verifications of Enrollment



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The Commission is located in the
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Washington, DC 20002

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