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NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release:
March 3, 2025*

Updates from DEAC

The DEAC is announcing several important updates, including details on the 99th Annual Business Meeting, Board of Director Elections, and a Call for Nominations to Serve on the Standards Committee.

Annual Business Meeting Announced

In accordance with Article III, Section 3 of the *Bylaws*, notice is given to all members that the Annual Business Meeting will take place at 4:00 PM MST on Monday, April 7, 2025 at the Omni Tucson National Hotel in Tucson, Arizona. All DEAC members are encouraged to attend the Annual Business Meeting. Important information and reports will be provided about the organization's activities from the Chair, Executive Director, and Treasurer.

(Please Note: Attendance at the Annual Business Meeting is limited to representatives from institutions currently accredited by DEAC.)

Board of Director Elections to Commence at Annual Business Meeting

The DEAC Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the following candidates for the DEAC Board of Directors:

Robyn Burrell
*Director, Education
Compliance & Financial Aid,
Gemological Institute of
America*

Susanne Thompson
President, Moreland University

The Nominating Committee has worked closely with the Board of Directors to review and recommend candidates for the DEAC Board of Directors to serve as an institution representative. Throughout its deliberations, the Nominating Committee took into consideration the appropriate involvement of DEAC's communities of interest as well as the diversity of DEAC's membership and stakeholder.

An electronic ballot will be accessible to all DEAC-accredited members starting Monday, April 7, 2025, immediately following the conclusion of the 99th Annual Business Meeting, and will remain open until 6:00 PM Mountain Time on April 8, 2025. Each DEAC-accredited institution is entitled to one vote. Participation in the Annual Business Meeting and the election process allows institutional representatives to contribute to the continuity and orderly succession of DEAC's leadership, reinforcing our commitment to good governance. Background information on the candidates for the Board of Directors can be found [at the end of this announcement](#).

DEAC Announces Call for Nominations to Serve on the Standards Committee

The DEAC Nominating Committee is currently seeking nominations for potential candidates to join the DEAC Standards Committee. The nomination period is now open and will close on May 25, 2025. We encourage interested candidates to submit their credentials for consideration through DEAC's online submission form.

The Nominating Committee will review all submissions and present its recommendations to the DEAC Board of Directors during the June 2025 Commission Meeting. The Board will announce the appointed members of the Standards Committee shortly after this meeting. For more information about the DEAC Standards Committee, please refer to the description provided at the end of this announcement.

Please contact Leah Matthews, DEAC's Executive Director, via email with any questions about these announcements.

ABOUT DEAC

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1926 that operates as a national accreditor of distance education institutions. DEAC's goal is to ensure a high standard of educational quality in the distance education institutions it accredits and a quality education for the more than two million students who annually study at its accredited institutions.

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Susanne Thompson

Candidate – Institution Member
DEAC Board of Directors



It is an honor to introduce myself and reaffirm my commitment to DEAC's mission and the critical role of accreditation ensuring quality distance education. As President of Moreland University, I lead a dedicated team providing innovative, high-impact educational programs that support teachers throughout their careers—from initial licensure to advanced degrees. My passion for education and leadership has been shaped by decades of experience across K-12 education, higher education, and the ed-tech industry.

My motivation to serve as a DEAC Commissioner stems from a deep belief in the power of rigorous, forward-thinking accreditation standards to uphold academic integrity while fostering innovation. As distance education continues to expand, it is imperative that accreditation remains adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of students and institutions. DEAC already plays a crucial, innovative, and proactive role ensuring high institutional standards, and I am eager to contribute meaningfully by leveraging my expertise in instructional design, curriculum development, and organizational leadership.

Over my 34-year career, I have held leadership positions in both public education and ed-tech. I previously served as Superintendent of Schools for the Northwestern Lehigh School District in Pennsylvania, where I led strategic initiatives to improve curriculum, instructional practices, and student outcomes. My journey in education began as an elementary teacher, followed by roles as an Educational Consultant, Middle School Assistant Principal, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, and Assistant Superintendent.

Transitioning to the ed-tech sector, I spent nearly 12 years at Discovery Education as an executive leader focused on global professional development initiatives, higher education digital content integration, and fostering school and corporate partnerships. As Chief Operations Officer for Discovery's Corporate Partnership Team, I oversaw product development, implementation, and global education initiatives, working with Fortune 500 companies to bring innovative digital resources to schools and educators.

My expertise spans organizational leadership, academic literacy, STEM education, digital content integration, and professional learning. I am particularly passionate about leveraging technology to enhance student engagement, teacher effectiveness, and institutional success.

As a DEAC Commissioner, I would work to uphold the credibility of distance education accreditation by supporting policies that promote institutional integrity, drive innovation, and ensure continuous improvement. My goal is to contribute to DEAC's ongoing success in providing rigorous, relevant accreditation that empowers institutions, supports student achievement, and advances the field of online learning. I deeply value the voices of our members and look forward to meeting and collaborating with each institution.

I hold a BA from Muhlenberg College, an MEd from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, and an EdD from the University of Phoenix. It would be a privilege to bring my experience and dedication to this role and support DEAC and all its member institutions in shaping the future of distance education.

Robyn Burrell

Candidate – Institution Member
DEAC Board of Directors



My name is Robyn Burrell, and I am eager to serve as a Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) commissioner to actively contribute to DEAC's mission of promoting educational quality and supporting student success. I am passionate about leveraging my expertise to drive innovation and uphold high standards in online and career education, ensuring programs meet the evolving needs of students and industries.

I currently serve as the Director of Education Compliance and Financial Aid at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), where I oversee educational compliance and financial aid operations across GIA's global locations, including Carlsbad, CA, New York, NY, and international hubs in Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, London, and Mumbai. This role has provided me with a unique perspective on diverse student needs and complex regulatory landscapes.

With extensive experience in higher education leadership and a comprehensive understanding of online and career education, I am well-prepared to support DEAC's strategic direction. My background includes regulatory compliance, student success, curriculum development, and financial aid administration. I hold a bachelor's degree in Business Management, which has equipped me with strong strategic planning and operational efficiency skills.

I am excited about the opportunity to bring my knowledge, leadership, and passion for quality education to DEAC as a commissioner, contributing to the continued growth and advancement of online and career education.



DEAC Board of Directors Candidate Qualifications

In identifying qualified candidates, the Nominating Committee seeks to assure that the composition of the Directors adheres to Article IV, Section 3 of the *Bylaws*. At least two (2) Directors must be academics defined by the Corporation as a person who works full time in an educational institution who actively teaches, delivers educational content to learners, or engages in educational research related to the institution's mission. At least two (2) Directors must be administrators defined by the Corporation as a person currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in the administration of an institution.

Institution Member Qualifications

Individuals interested in candidacy for an institution representative position on the Board of Directors must minimally:

1. Represent a DEAC-accredited institution in good standing with DEAC as well as with any other accrediting organization or state or federal regulatory agency.
2. Represent a DEAC-accredited institution that completed at least one cycle to renew accreditation.
3. Possess at least five (5) years of experience in a senior leadership role (academic or administrative) at a DEAC-accredited institution.
4. Demonstrate experience as a DEAC evaluator
5. Demonstrate knowledge and application of learning theories, instructional design, educational technology, and outcomes-based assessment in distance education.
6. Possess the capacity to receive, review and evaluate electronically prepared materials prior to and during all meetings and conference calls. The Board of Directors carries out all its functions using electronically prepared materials.
7. Commit to allocating time for preparations, travel requirements, and full engagement needed for board meetings.

Commitment to the DEAC Board of Directors

Serving on the DEAC Board of Directors requires a significant commitment of time to effectively support the DEAC mission and the process of accreditation. The annual schedule of activities includes attendance at two (2) three-day accreditation decision meetings per year, participation in typically four (4) conference call meetings per year, and committee work in one or more of the Directors' policy and governance areas. Meetings require significant advance preparation as each member of the Board contributes to accreditation decision-making and good governance. On average, directors spend 15-20 hours per week for three weeks to fully prepare for an accreditation decision meeting. Committee responsibilities require an additional 8 to 10 hours of preparation for conference call meetings or in-person committee meetings. In addition to making meticulous preparations for meetings and calls, board members must maintain high standards of integrity, honesty, impartiality, and fidelity to the standards of accreditation in order to carry out the board's essential work. All Directors are required to comply with DEAC's conflict of interest policies.

Distance Education Accrediting Commission

Standards Committee Membership and Responsibilities

I. Background

The DEAC Standards Committee was created at the June 2015 Commission meeting following the dissolution of the Business Standards Committee and the Educational Standards and Research Committees.¹ This initiative corresponded with the Commission's ongoing efforts in 2015 to consolidate the education and business standards into one section of standards within the *DEAC Accreditation Handbook* and develop a smaller standards committee structure that could convene on a regular basis.

II. Eligibility and Membership Criteria

Members of the Standards Committee must

1. Represent a DEAC-accredited institution in good standing with DEAC as well as with any other accrediting organization or state or federal regulatory agency.
2. Represent a DEAC-accredited institution that completed at least one cycle to renew accreditation.
3. Possess at least five (5) years of experience in a senior leadership role (academic or administrative) at a DEAC-accredited institution or other institution accredited by a recognized accreditor.
4. Demonstrate comprehensive experience in applying the DEAC accreditation standards as a volunteer evaluator during a DEAC accreditation visit (e.g., Chair, Business Standards Evaluator, Educational Standards Evaluator).
5. Demonstrate active participation in DEAC Annual Conference and Accreditation Workshop events.
6. Possess the capacity to receive, review and evaluate electronically prepared materials.
7. Commit to allocating time for preparations, travel requirements, and full engagement needed for standards committee meetings.
8. Adhere to DEAC's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policies.

The Commission seeks to assure that the Standards Committee represents a rich diversity of educational offerings, culture, skills and experience across DEAC-accredited institutions. Accordingly, every effort is made to secure a diversified representation of DEAC institutions on the committee.

The membership of the Committee ranges between six and twelve appointed members with at least two members representing the Board of Directors, one public and one institutional. Members serve a three-year term and are eligible for reappointment by the Board for a second three-year term.

¹ Minutes from the April 19, 2015 joint meeting of the Business Standards and Research and Educational Standards Subcommittee Meeting.

III. Responsibilities

The Standards Committee is responsible for reviewing and facilitating the development or revisions of DEAC standards, policies and procedures. The Committee provides insights and comments on standards that are forwarded to the Commission for consideration.

Fundamental principles of the committee's work when forming its recommendations to the Commission are to:

1. Uphold the rigor and integrity of DEAC's accreditation procedures and standards.
2. Promote the value and role of the standards.
3. Commit to the best interests of the broader DEAC-accredited community.
4. Adhere to CHEA and USDE recognition requirements.
5. Keep any discussions and proposed revisions held in closed session confidential.
6. Respect all contributions to the process of review.
7. Review responses to DEAC Call for Comments on proposed changes to the *DEAC Accreditation Handbook*.
8. Attend in-person meetings held in conjunction with the DEAC Annual Conference and Accreditation Workshop and virtual meetings held, as needed, throughout the year.