

Hello Mc Nelly Torres. In the interest of clarity, on November 19, 2010, Continental Academy made it clear to you in writing that it would be our pleasure to answer ten of your questions.

First and foremost, I would like to make you aware of the following **FACTS** related to high school accreditation and the acceptance of high school credits and high school graduates which you may not be aware of and your readers should be made aware of. The U.S. Department of Education provides the following verbiage on their web site for the general public and consumers of education:

**Note: The U.S. Department of Education does not have the authority to accredit private or public elementary or secondary schools, and the Department does not recognize accrediting bodies for the accreditation of private or public elementary and secondary schools.** However, the U.S. Department of Education does recognize accrediting bodies for the accreditation of institutions of higher (postsecondary) education. **If an accrediting body which is recognized by the Department for higher education also accredits elementary and secondary schools, the Department's recognition applies ONLY to the agency's accreditation of postsecondary institutions.**

Accreditation does not provide automatic acceptance by an institution of credit earned at another institution, nor does it give assurance of acceptance of graduates by employers. Acceptance of students or graduates is always the prerogative of the receiving institution or employer. For these reasons, besides ascertaining the accredited status of a school or program, students should take additional measures to determine, prior to enrollment, whether or not their educational goals will be met through attendance at a particular institution. These measures should include inquiries to institutions to which transfer might be desired or to prospective employers and, if possible, personal inspection of the institution at which enrollment is contemplated.

The above verbiage can be found on the U.S. Department of Education's web site at the following link:

[http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg2.html#U.S.](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg2.html#U.S.)

**1. Please describe the relationship between Home School of America and Continental Academy.**

Home School of America, Inc. D/B/A Continental Academy

Continental Academy has been serving the homeschooling community since 1996 and has been continuously accredited by the National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools (NALSAS [www.nalsas.org](http://www.nalsas.org)) since year 2000. Continental Academy is also a proud member of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA [www.hslda.org](http://www.hslda.org)). Both of these organizations have made significant contributions in making homeschooling legal in all 50 states.

Continental Academy was also accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools from July 26, 2006 until January 26, 2010.

**2. In 2009, the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation, or CITA, issued a letter to address consumers' questions about Continental accreditation. In that letter, CITA wrote that Continental's Fast Track Program "does not meet the spirit and intent of a high school diploma." Do you have a response to this?**

During the 2005-2006 calendar year, Continental Academy welcomed Mr. Ken Manuel, Dr. Wayne Kennedy, and Dr. Judy Flatt, seasoned SACS accrediting evaluators and educators who exhaustively reviewed every area of Continental Academy's school operations (faculty, staff, curriculum, board, etc.), including the now defunct Fast Track Program. Based on their review and recommendation, the Fast Track Program was approved for accreditation and Continental Academy was awarded SACS accreditation on July 26, 2006. Obviously, the proper moment to have cited Continental Academy for its alleged deficiencies would have been prior to obtaining accreditation. Instead, Continental Academy was found to have met all nine accreditation standards and was lauded as an example in the distance education field.

Dr. Wayne Kennedy who mentioned that his first accreditation site visit was in 1975 was assigned to Continental Academy to provide guidance during our SACS candidacy time period and he did an excellent job which Continental Academy is grateful for. Dr. Kennedy provided guidance throughout the development of the Fast Track Program and we took his advice and recommendations accordingly. Continental Academy would NEVER have spent the time, effort, and resources on developing the Fast Track Program without the approval of SACS and the Fast Track Program was presented and approved by SACS. If the Fast Track Program was unacceptable, Continental Academy would not have been awarded fully accredited status on July 26, 2006.

Continental Academy was never informed by CITA of the existence of this letter. Continental Academy was only made aware of this letter by the mother of a student after her son was denied admission to a college. Continental Academy was stunned to learn that CITA would publish such a public document concerning its accreditation, without the benefit of at least the courtesy of informing Continental Academy of its existence or allowing the school to provide any feedback.

Continental Academy had a standing agreement with CITA/SACS/AdvancED to sunset the Fast Track Program by May 13, 2008. Dr. Carter failed to mention that CITA/SACS recognized students graduating from the Fast Track Program who had enrolled by the deadline, as having received a SACS accredited high school diploma. As a foreseeable result of Dr. Carter's statement many post secondary institutions were forced to also make a distinction among Continental's graduates and the vast majority of colleges simply chose not to recognize ANY students graduating from the "Fast Track Program". Clearly Dr. Carter's poorly worded letter caused a great deal of confusion among post secondary institutions, damaged the school's reputation and worst of all, effectively abandoned all those students who graduated from the Fast Track Program between July 26, 2006 and May 13, 2008. This letter affected thousands of Continental Academy graduates who EARNED a SACS accredited high school diploma through the Fast Track Program between July 26, 2006 and May 13, 2008. Today, the vast majority of colleges and universities will not recognize a Continental Academy graduate if the student graduated from the Fast Track Program regardless of the date of enrollment and the fact that they have earned a SACS accredited high school diploma due to this letter.

### **3. Accreditation: Why did you withdraw your accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 2009?**

After much consideration, Continental Academy's governing body has decided that it is not in the best interest of Continental Academy to maintain its accreditation with AdvancED/SACS/CASI.

Aside from the lack of institutional support and structural confusion that Continental Academy received from SACS, a stark reality of maintaining SACS accreditation is that a school or school district must have a significant amount of financial resources available for continuous school improvement. There are only a handful of distance learning high schools in the United States that are SACS accredited and most of them are either publicly funded or are owned by a large private corporation or multi-national corporation.

For your awareness, Continental Academy is self-supportive. Continental does not receive any local, state, or federal funding. For a small, homeschooling academy to achieve SACS accreditation was simply remarkable and a moment I will never forget in my professional career.

**4. Were you aware that Continental graduates, who are applying to colleges, have been told that their HS diplomas from Continental are not considered valid? Are you addressing these complaints? If so, how?**

Yes. Continental Academy has been serving the homeschooling community since 1996. Thousands of homeschooling families have used our homeschooling curriculum for their homeschooling needs. Homeschoolers have historically been discriminated against by institutions and employers simply for not having completed a “traditional”, attendance-based high school diploma program. Even when we were SACS accredited, many colleges, employers, and military recruiters did not recognize our graduates’ high school diploma because they did not physically attend classes. For this reason, we advise students on our enrollment application that the P.A.C.E. (Online) Program is ideal for adults who are preparing to enter the job market or need an opportunity to earn their high school diploma for self-improvement and/or personal satisfaction. The O.U.T.R.E.A.C.H. (Online) Program is ideal for homeschooling parents searching for a quality online high school completion curriculum that encompasses grades 9-12 and for students who are preparing to study beyond high school. The S.E.A.L. Program is ideal for students who want to have their study materials mailed and want to study in a “traditional” paper and pencil homeschooling method and for students who are preparing to study beyond high school. More importantly, students are advised who we are accredited by and that the acceptance of credits or graduates is always the prerogative of the receiving institution or employer. If the student is under the age of 18, a parent or guardian signature of approval is required to confirm that they understand and agree to the terms and conditions of the enrollment application.

As an example, the City University of New York (CUNY) college system consisting of approximately 17 colleges is one of MANY colleges that did NOT and will NOT recognize ANY SACS graduates who graduate from a homeschool program.

Continental Academy’s OUTREACH and SEAL Program curriculum consists of 28 courses which equals 24 credits and is based on the Florida Sunshine State Standards for Secondary Education (these are the same standards used by Florida public schools). Better standards for a Florida high school to use do not exist and Continental Academy has voluntarily adopted these standards for our 24 credit programs. The validity of a high school completion program is a matter of opinion. To date, there is no institution in the United States that has the legal authority to determine if a high school completion program is valid or not valid.

Continental Academy addresses EVERY case when we receive documented evidence directly from a student, college or employer that does not accept our graduate due to the Continental Academy high school diploma that they have

earned. We respond to these denial letters in writing and provide a copy to the student.

Attached, you will find a letter that I mailed to a college on behalf of one of our graduates (I have deleted the name of the college and the name of the graduate). We have mailed MANY letters similar to this one to colleges and have NEVER received a written response to our letters. When we challenge the college's decision to deny admission to one of our graduates in writing, we never hear from the college and never hear from the graduate. Continental Academy will forever defend the constitutional rights of homeschoolers.

**5. The Better Business Bureau gave you an "F" rating because failed to handle consumer complaints according to their standards. What is your response to this rating?**

As you are aware, the Better Business Bureau is not a government agency. Continental Academy was a voluntary member of the Better Business Bureau since 1998 and has decided not to renew its Better Business Bureau membership this year. Obviously, we do not agree with an "F" rating. The "F" rating only appeared after we withdrew from SACS accreditation and colleges across the nation were informed that we are no longer SACS or regionally accredited. We invite you to look and report our Better Business Bureau rating between 1998 and 2009.

We have responded to all colleges in writing which provide our graduates with documentation stating the reason that their application was denied was specifically due to the college not recognizing Continental Academy. Continental Academy has defended the rights of these graduates and to date, has not received one written response from these colleges which are by and large regionally or SACS accredited. I will let you draw your own conclusions. The majority of these colleges accepted our graduates when Continental Academy was NOT SACS accredited.

Continental Academy has served thousands of students since 1996 and there are only 47 complaints which most of them have been resolved. Almost all of the 47 complaints are related to a college not accepting the student's high school credential. None of these complaints are related to the quality of our curriculum, the student experience during the time of enrollment, or the countless number of post graduate success stories. By and large, parents and students are very satisfied with Continental Academy's homeschooling curriculum. These complaints were generated AFTER graduation when a college did not accept the student for college admission. Continental Academy has absolutely no control

over the admissions requirements or admissions decisions that these colleges have made. Continental Academy has advised students who Continental Academy is accredited by and that the acceptance of credits or graduates is always the prerogative of the receiving institution or employer. ANY positive response provided by Continental Academy to the Better Business Bureau will NOT improve the "F" rating if the college does not accept the student based on not recognizing Continental Academy. Unfortunately, the Better Business Bureau nor you will ever hear the countless number of success stories of Continental Academy graduates due to fact that once a student graduates and obtains a job, job promotion, or enters college, the student will never call the Better Business Bureau. Every single school day, Continental Academy is exposed to student success stories.

**6. Why did Continental Academy say in a 2008 press release that it is accredited by the Florida Department of Education? Are you aware the Department of Education does not issue accreditation?**

Questions like these are just one example why we do not expect that you will provide a fair and balanced story. Do you honestly believe that in 2008, a "SACS" accredited, Florida private high school, would make such a SOPHOMORIC statement that they are accredited by the "Florida Department of Education?"

No one at Continental Academy writes press releases and no one at Continental Academy would ever authorize such an IRRESPONSIBLE statement. You will never find this statement on our web site or in our school literature.

**7. Continental reported in its 2009-10 survey that it has a staff of eight, consisting of six administrators and two counselors. Are these numbers still accurate?**

Please be advised that your statement is inaccurate. The question you are referring to comes from **Section 5: "Teacher Information"** on the annual survey and asks to "Insert number of teachers/administrators for current academic year." This question asks specifically for the number of teachers/administrators NOT for total number of employees. Every employee of Continental Academy is NOT a teacher/administrator. Therefore, if they are not a teacher/administrator, they cannot be included in this section. For your awareness, Continental Academy currently employs a total of 18 employees.

**8. How many students are currently enrolled at Continental? How many students are currently enrolled at Southeastern High School?**

You may refer to the 2010-2011 Private School Annual Survey for number of students enrolled for each school.

**9. What has Continental Academy done to address complaints about the school with the Attorney General's office, the Better Business Bureau and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services?**

Complaints are taken seriously at Continental Academy and we address them on a case by case basis.

**10. What is the nature of business for School Choice and Education Services International? Are these businesses active?**

We are not associated with School Choice and Education Services International was a corporation that never materialized and is inactive.

In conclusion, I would like to make you aware that the following Job Corps centers have used Continental Academy's high school completion curriculum for their students:

1. Atlanta Job Corps
2. Brunswick Job Corps
3. Montgomery Job Corps
4. Bamberg Job Corps
5. Gainesville Job Corps
6. Homestead Job Corps

Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through vocational and academic training.

Funded by Congress, Job Corps has been training young adults for meaningful careers since 1964. Job Corps is committed to offering all students a safe, drug-free environment where they can take advantage of the resources provided.

Job Corps' mission is to attract eligible young people, teach them the skills they need to become employable and independent, and place them in meaningful jobs or further education.

Continental Academy respects the rights of parents and students who choose an attendance-based high school completion program and recognizes that a group of the Continental Academy student population will always come from a classroom environment. When given an opportunity, we make clear to these parents and students that there is a widespread belief that the best education is for a student to be receiving an education in a daytime classroom environment. If that cannot happen for whatever reason, we inform them that an adult high school completion program is available to them in the evening. If that cannot happen for whatever reason, we inform them that they may want to try a GED prep program at their local public school. If that cannot happen for whatever reason, then we inform them that they may want to consider a distance learning high school completion program and in our opinion, Continental Academy is certainly a good option. However, **Continental Academy is an ALTERNATIVE!** Continental Academy encourages students that are currently enrolled in a daytime attendance-based program to stay in school and not withdraw. However, if a parent or student no longer wants to participate in an attendance-based program, Continental MUST RESPECT the parent and/or student's decision.

The fact of the matter is that the high school dropout rate has consistently increased over the years on a nationwide basis. The majority of these students that attempt to take an evening high school completion program drop out of the evening program. The majority of students enrolled in a GED preparation program drop out of the GED prep program and the majority of students that take the GED exam do not pass the GED exam. The adult-based student population has not been successful with the GED. Therefore, do we ignore the significant number of students who are unable to graduate from high school or do we give students an opportunity to learn the academic skills they need to become productive citizens of society? We believe EVERY student deserves an opportunity to succeed and continue their education if they wish to do so and we RESPECT the parent and/or student's decision to choose the best high school completion program for their learning needs.

Remember, Continental Academy is an alternative!