

# ACGC MESSENGER



A Newsletter from the Accreditation Council  
for Genetic Counseling

## WELCOME TO THE ACGC MESSENGER

Welcome to the 2024 Second Quarter ACGC Messenger newsletter. We look forward to keeping you updated with important information and announcements in this quarterly newsletter.

## STANDARDS GIVING YOU TROUBLE? THERE'S A VARIANCE FOR THAT!

*By Ian Wallace, MS, CGC, MBA*

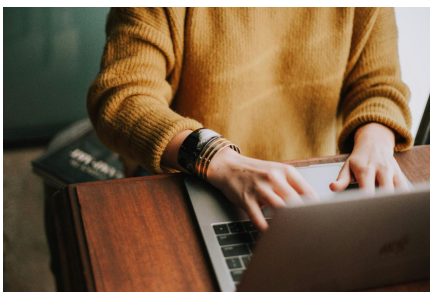
The Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC) Board of Directors recently approved an updated variance policy. We reached out to the architects of this change, Sarah McBrien, PhD, and Molly McGinniss, MS, CGC, to find out what it means for ACGC accredited programs. McBrien is the ACGC Standards Committee Board Liaison and the Director of Academic Affairs for the College of Allied Health Professions at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. McGinniss is the ACGC Nominating Committee Board Liaison and the Senior Director of Medical and Scientific Affairs at Genome Medical.

But first, what is a variance, and why was an updated policy needed? Genetic counseling training programs need to apply for a variance if they want an alternative way to meet an established ACGC Standard or policy. Yet the ACGC didn't have a comprehensive variance policy in place until now. McBrien and McGinniss referenced other accrediting bodies registered with the Association of Specialized and Professional Creditors to ensure that the new policy is in line with industry standards.



While variances could always be requested, McGinniss says the updated process establishes "guidelines for the definition, consideration, and approval of variances, with the goal of increasing transparency in our review processes." An approved variance is "not an exemption, it's an alternate method of achieving the Standard," McBrien emphasized, "so it's really meant to provide programs with an alternative method of achieving a Standard when it poses an undue hardship."

Variance requests will not only benefit the applicant program, but rather these requests and approvals can lead "to innovation and changes within the Standards because we can see what programs need to adapt," McGinniss noted. "So having a systematic process for us to track and watch changes over time can be helpful."



One of the sparks for updating this policy is the recent trend of politicizing and banning collegiate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) efforts, which McBrien admitted "really spurred anxiety and concern for some of our institutions about how to adhere to the laws and regulations but also to the Standards of Accreditation."

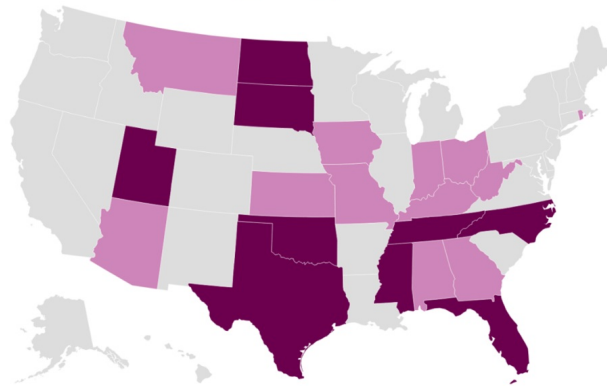
The ACGC recently updated their Standards for Accreditation to incorporate principles related to DEIJ in August 2023. These changes were meant to improve the Standards by integrating equitable practices across program operations, to include processes related to recruitment, admissions, curriculum development, clinical training, and research.

While ACGC remains committed to DEIJ, this goal of supporting equitable educational practices has turned into a political target. Both state and national political leaders have claimed that DEIJ efforts violate free speech, break anti-discrimination laws, and are a misuse of public money.

### States that have proposed legislation limiting DEI programs and offices on college campuses

Since 2021; As of Jan. 29, 2024

Where at least one anti-DEI bill has been: ■ Proposed ■ Passed



*Courtesy of Axios*

More than thirty bills across the country have been introduced to strip DEIJ funding or regulate DEIJ application in education, with many already signed into law. This puts training program leadership in a tough spot: either break state law or defy ACGC Standards. Both McBrien and McGinniss strongly recommend that programs consult with their university's legal affairs department to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws when determining a need for a variance application.

Once the variance policy details are finalized in the coming weeks, programs will be able to request access to the forms within Armature. There will also be office hours available and a Frequently Asked Questions section on the ACGC website, but feel free to contact ACGC directly if you have questions prior to these resources becoming available at [info@gceducation.org](mailto:info@gceducation.org).

## REPORT OF CURRENT STATUS DEADLINE CHANGE FEEDBACK

Based on recent conversations during Office Hours, ACGC is considering changing the deadline from 2025 onwards of the Report of Current Status (RCS) from June 15th to June 30th. However, we would like to have input from our community on the impact of this change. Please provide your feedback using the survey linked [here](#).

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### 2024 Application Status

#### Ongoing New Program Applications

Loma Linda University School of Medicine (January 15, 2024, Review Cycle)

Xavier University of Louisiana (January 15, 2024, Review Cycle)

Charles Drew University (May 15, 2024, Review Cycle)

Southern California University Health Sciences (May 15, 2024, Review Cycle)

University at Buffalo (January 15, 2025, Review Cycle)

#### Accredited, New Program Status

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

**2024 Programs Undergoing Reaccreditation**  
Augustana University  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Stanford University  
University of Arizona Health Sciences  
University of British Columbia  
University of California – San Francisco  
University of Washington  
Wake Forest University  
Washington University in St. Louis

## ACGC OFFICE HOURS



June 10, 2024, from 12-1 pm ET – Program Review Committee (PRC) Related (Site Visits/RCS)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



National Society of Genetic Counselors 43rd Annual Conference – *New Orleans, LA: September 17-21, 2024*  
Accreditation Fees: **June 15, 2024**  
Report of Current Status Application: **June 15, 2024**  
Self-Study Application: **August 1, 2024**  
Compliance with 2023 Revised Standards: **August 1, 2024**  
2024 Site Visits: **October 2024 through January 2025**  
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics Annual Clinical Genetics Meeting – *Los Angeles, CA: March 18-22, 2025*  
National Society of Genetic Counselors 43rd Annual Conference – *Seattle, WA: November 7-10, 2025*

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*We encourage you to forward and share this newsletter on your social media platforms or with colleagues and associates.*