



## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION  
Washington, D.C. 20240

**JAN.12 2018**

Dr. Roger Bordeaux  
Acting Director  
Commission for Oceti Sakowin Accreditation  
616 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. West, Suite 1000  
Sisseton, South Dakota 57262

Dear Dr. Bordeaux:

Thank you for your letter of February 16, 2017 concerning the "Accreditation Partnership Agreement" (Agreement) between the Commission for Oceti Sakowin Accreditation (COSA) and Advance Education, Inc. (AdvancED), a generally recognized regional accrediting agency, dated November 1, 2016.

Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools may be accredited by, among other entities, a regional accrediting agency; or a tribal accrediting body if their accreditation standards have been accepted by formal action of a tribal governing body and such accreditation is acknowledged by a generally recognized regional accrediting agency. *See* 25 U.S.C. §2001(b)(1)(A)(i)-(ii).

The Agreement explains that AdvancED "crosswalked" COSA's standards against its own and acknowledges that they are "deemed acceptable." During a teleconference on August 16, 2017 you and representatives of AdvancED explained that the Agreement set up a "synchronized" accreditation process whereby teams from COSA and AdvancED would jointly visit schools and make accreditation decisions. COSA was organized by the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association in 2012. Each of the nine federally-recognized Oceti Sakowin Tribes (Tribes) is represented in COSA by their Tribal Education Director or designee. You have provided us with resolutions that formally endorse COSA from five of the nine Tribes.

Accordingly, it is our opinion that a Bureau of Indian Education-funded school accredited under the terms of the Agreement would be accredited by a regional accrediting agency because accreditation under the Agreement comes from both COSA and AdvancED. Similarly, such a school within the territory of a tribe that has formally accepted COSA's standards would be accredited by a tribal accrediting body since AdvancED has acknowledged COSA's standards.

We appreciate your support of Indian education.

Tony L. Dearman  
Director, Bureau of Indian Education