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**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**  
**Commission on Independent Schools**

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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Visiting Committee Chairs and Members  
**From:** Bill Bennett  
**Subject:** Responding to Difficult Economic Conditions

The Commission recently discussed the ramifications of the current economic upheaval for NEASC accreditation. We agreed on several steps we could take to support schools and to be sure that extraordinary financial concerns do not dominate or overwhelm the accreditation process:

1. The Commission directed the staff to look for ways to minimize the expense of visiting teams to schools. As a consequence, we will discontinue our practice of sometimes adding one member to a small team to provide a margin in the event someone drops off at the last minute; we will take into account travel distances when inviting visiting team members; and we will encourage schools to limit entertainment expenditures for receptions and/or dinners for the team.
2. The Commission urged sensitivity to a school's circumstances by everyone involved in an accreditation visit. This means:
  - using extra vigilance in watching for advocates at the school who might seek to misuse the self-study or the presence of the visiting committee to advance special interests – especially in a time when many schools are forced to find ways to cut back in one area or another.
  - being scrupulous to avoid prescriptive recommendations that would entail major expenditures.
  - recognizing possible preoccupation of school staff with immediate financial difficulties.
  - anticipating possible morale problems among staff, especially if the school has (or plans to) cut positions.
  - understanding and adjusting if last minute updates to the self-study are made to take into account changes in the school's circumstances.
  - including people with financial experience on more teams.
  - maintaining the visiting committee's focus on the whole school and all its programs.
3. The Commission confirmed that it would be receptive to requests for postponements of a visit from schools facing a disruptive situation as a result of the economic conditions.
4. Finally, the Commission affirmed its responsibility to review visiting committee reports and edit any overly prescriptive or otherwise inappropriate recommendations.