WE HAVE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW WITH REGARD TO STUDENT COMPLAINTS, AND THEY MUST BE FOLLOWED BOTH AS A WAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES AND, JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, TO MITIGATE ANY LEGAL EXPOSURE THAT COULD RESULT FROM NONCOMPLIANCE.

- Designate a complaint committee: NACCAS recommends a committee "comprised of at least three individuals that may be from the following categories: school owner, director, instructor, financial aid administrator, member of the public interest or student," to investigate student complaints. This committee should convene no later than 10 days after receipt of a complaint and be prepared to act on any allegations within 15 days by outlining the steps required to fix the problem or provide information that shows the complaint was not based on fact.

- The published complaint procedure should contain the name, address, phone number, and Web site of the accreditor and/or state agency and should clearly state that the school is required to try to resolve the complaint in good faith.

- Schools should maintain a complaint file or log and should keep these through at least two accreditation cycles.

Follow these guidelines to keep your students in class happy, to avoid costly legal problems and to create an atmosphere that conveys to students that the school cares. Remember that these complaints must be handled in the most discreet manner possible to avoid any fear of retaliation. Our students need to see that we follow the rules and that the rules protect everyone. These steps will help you in maintaining a “Compliance Culture.”

Joanne is the founder and president of Educational Advisors Inc. With more than 30 years of experience, Joanne is an expert in the accreditation process and is a member of the AACS Accreditation Committee. For more information, contact Joanne at 562-436-3900 or joanne@edadvisors.com. To learn more about Educational Advisors Inc., visit www.edadvisors.com.