



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Learning Institution: Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality

November 15, 2017

University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

Resource Binder

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2017-2018 EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

WASC Senior College and University Commission is pleased to announce a selection of educational programs for 2017-18. Developed by regional and national experts, they cover topics of vital interest to all higher educational institutions – and particularly to those in the WSCUC region. They are entirely optional, but our hope is that member institutions will find them of service. WSCUC staff will be present at each session to answer any questions related specifically to WSCUC accreditation expectations.

- ★ **Assessment 101: Meaningful Assessment for Student Learning**
October 26, 2017. Mills College, Oakland, CA
- ★ **Analytics for Academics: Producing Actionable Information about Students and Learning to Improve Effectiveness**
October 27, 2017. Mills College, Oakland, CA
- ★ **NEW! The Learning Institution: Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality**
November 15, 2017. University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
- ★ **NEW! Program Review: Comprehensive and Sustainable Approaches for Educational Effectiveness**
November 16, 2017. University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
- ★ **President/Trustee Retreats**
December 7, 2017. Woodbury University, Burbank, CA
December 8, 2017. Mills College, Oakland, CA
- ★ **NEW! Assignment Design Charrette**
January 16, 2018. Kellogg West, Pomona, CA
- ★ **Building a Culture of Quality: A Retreat for Institutional Leaders**
January 17, 2018. Kellogg West, Pomona, CA
- ★ **NEW! The Diverse Campus: Intersecting Access and Equity Across the Student Experience**
February 1, 2018. Pitzer College, Claremont, CA
- ★ **Assessment 201: Advanced Topics in Assessment**
February 2, 2018. Pitzer College, Claremont, CA
- ★ **Assessment 101: Meaningful Assessment for Student Learning**
May 17, 2018. Chaminade University - Honolulu, Hawai'i
- ★ **NEW! The Learning Institution: Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality**
May 18, 2018. Chaminade University - Honolulu, Hawai'i

Check the WSCUC website for details!
<https://www.wascsenior.org/seminars>

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2018 WSCUC Academic Resource Conference – SAVE THE DATE	Back Cover

The Learning Institution: Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality

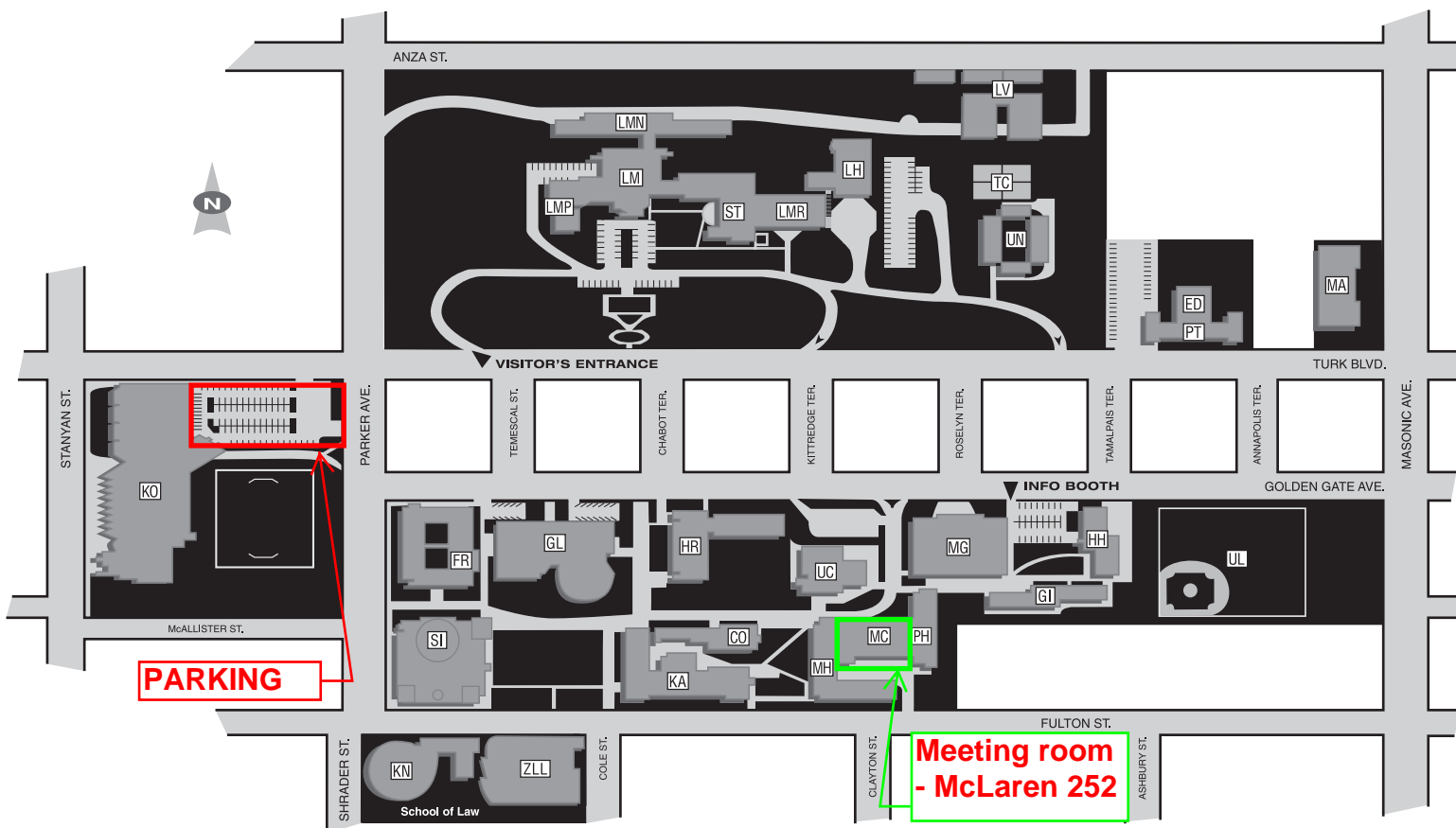
Wednesday, November 15, 2017

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

University of San Francisco

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

8:00 – 8:30	Arrival, check-in, registration
8:30 – 9:45	Introductions - The Learning Institution: What it is and Why it is Important Facilitated by David Chase, Laura Massa, Sammy Elzarka, Errin Heyman, and Carole Huston
9:45 – 10:45	Assessing Learning in The Learning Institution Facilitated by Laura Massa
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:00	Faculty Development in The Learning Institution Facilitated by Sammy Elzarka
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Emerging Practices: Understanding and Improvement in The Learning Institution Facilitated by Errin Heyman
2:00 – 3:00	Connections to Resource Allocation and Strategic Planning Facilitated by Carole Huston
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:30	Applying a Learning Organization Culture at Your Institution Facilitated by Laura Massa, Sammy Elzarka, Errin Heyman, and Carole Huston
4:30	Workshop Conclusion



Main Campus

- CO Cowell Hall
- FR Fromm Hall
- GI Gillson Hall
- GL Gleeson Library
- HH Hayes-Healy Hall
- HR Harney Science Center
- KA Kalmanovitz Hall
- MC McLaren Conference Center**
- MG Memorial Gymnasium
- MH Malloy Hall
- PH Phelan Hall
- SI Saint Ignatius Church
- UL Ulrich Field & Benedetti Diamond
- UC University Center

Lone Mountain Campus

- LH Loyola House
- LM Main Bldg/Classrooms/Study Hall
- LMN Lone Mountain North
- LMP Pacific Wing
- LMR Rossi Wing/Administration
- LV Loyola Village
- ST Studio Theater
- TC Tennis Courts
- UN Underhill Building
- ROTC/Upward Bound

School of Law

- KN Kendrick Hall
- ZLL Dorraine Zief Law Library

Koret Health & Recreation Center

- KO Koret Center

School of Education

- ED School of Education
- PT USF Presentation Theater

281 Masonic

- MA 281 Masonic

Office Locations

Academic and Enrollment Services
Lone Mountain Main

Academic Support Services
Gleeson Lower Level, 20

Admission Office
Lone Mountain Main

Alumni Office
Lone Mountain Rossi Wing, 112

Arts and Sciences, College of
Harney, 240

Athletics
Memorial Gym, Lower Level

Bookstore
University Center, Lower Level

Career Services Center
University Center, 5th Floor

Counseling Center
Gillson, Ground Floor

Education, School of
Turk at Tamalpais, 107

Financial Aid
Lone Mountain Main

Intercultural Center
University Center, 4th Floor

Information Technology Services
Lone Mountain North, 2nd Floor

International Student and Scholar Services
University Center, 5th Floor

Koret Health and Recreation Center
Corner of Parker and Stanyan

Law Library, Dorraine Zief
Corner of Fulton and Cole

Law, School of
Corner of Fulton and Shrader

Loyola House/Jesuit Community
Lone Mountain, 2600 Turk Street

Management, School of
Malloy Hall, 244

One Card
Lone Mountain Main, 130

One Stop Enrollment and Financial Services
Lone Mountain Main, 250

Nursing and Health Professions, School of
Cowell, 102

Public Safety
University Center, 310

Registrar's Office
Lone Mountain Main, 250

Residence Life
University Center, 5th Floor

Student Leadership and Engagement
University Center, 4th Floor

Student Disability Services
Gleeson Lower Level, 20

**The Learning Institution:
Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality**

Biographies

Facilitators

Sammy Elzarka

Sammy Elzarka, PhD is currently the Director of the Center for the Advancement of Faculty Excellence at the University of La Verne. His research interests include the role of technology in higher education teaching and learning, improving program quality informed by student performance data, and supporting faculty advancement through collaborative support and growth. He also supports university-wide assessment and accreditation efforts by facilitating learning-centered strategies including the use of ePortfolios. This role includes service on several faculty committees and co-leader of the data governance committee. Prior to his current role, he was the Director of Assessment and Accreditation at the University of La Verne. Prior to arriving at the University of La Verne, he served in similar capacities at the K-12 level. Dr. Elzarka has published and presented on a variety of topics including the engagement of students while teaching in online environments, generating faculty consensus on learning outcomes and their measurements, as well as making academic program assessment reviews meaningful. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from California State University, Fullerton and his doctorate from Claremont Graduate University.

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Errin Heyman

Errin Heyman, who leads WSCUC's Initiative for Advancing Leadership for and Visibility in Student Learning Outcomes Assessment, specializes in facilitation and assessment of student learning outcomes through faculty development and program/institutional review and assessment processes. She has over twenty years of higher education experience, with extensive practical and theoretical knowledge of online and on-ground pedagogy, curriculum and instruction, and accreditation processes and requirements. Dr. Heyman most recently served as the Dean of Educational Effectiveness at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, a multi-campus graduate institution. There she was responsible for the general oversight of academic quality across all university programs and for the coordination of faculty development opportunities, with the goals of enhancing student engagement and educational practice. She helped to lead the interdisciplinary coordination of outcome assessment with a focus on quality teaching and learning effectiveness, as well as curricular improvements. Prior to her work with USAHS, she spent 7 years at West Coast University, where she founded the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching, and Assessment. She also spent nearly 10 years at eCollege, a learning management system vendor, where she lead the academic

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Biographies

consulting and training team. Dr. Heyman holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership, with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction; an MA in Teaching of Writing; and a BA in English Writing.

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Carole L. Huston

Carole L. Huston is an Associate Provost at the University of San Diego, a Professor of Communication Studies, and a consultant for a number of institutions. She has served as USD's ALO and director of the Center for Educational Excellence, and participated in WSCUC accreditation review teams. In her more than 30 years of experience in higher education, Carole has researched and presented on many different facets of learning assessment at AI, AAC&U, AALHE, and WSCUC conferences, including competency assessments in general education, multi-institutional and multi-method assessment projects, integrative learning, program review, and assessing diversity and social justice in faith-based institutions. As an alumna, she currently co-facilitates the WSCUC Assessment Leadership Academy and serves as a co-chair of one of WSCUC's Community of Practice institutional teams. Carole has co-authored several articles, books and book chapters on assessment, research methods, interpersonal and intercultural communication, and she contributed to the VALUE rubrics project sponsored by ACC&U.

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Laura Massa

Laura Massa has served as the Director of Assessment at Loyola Marymount University since 2008. In this role she has guided the development and implementation of a university assessment plan, which has included efforts to help the LMU community understand and improve achievement of the WSCUC five core competencies. Through consultations and educational resources, Laura also provides support at LMU for core curriculum assessment, program assessment, academic program review, and program-specific accreditation. She regularly conducts workshops on assessment topics at LMU, as well as at other universities and for WSCUC. LMU was a pilot institution for WSCUC's revised reaffirmation of accreditation process, giving Laura hands-on experience with the 2013 process. Laura holds a doctorate from the University of California, Santa Barbara in Cognitive Psychology with an emphasis in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences. She has experience as both a researcher and Assistant Professor in Psychology, specializing in assessment and improving student learning outcomes.

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**The Learning Institution:
Aligning and Integrating Practices to Support Quality**

Biographies

WSCUC Representative

David Chase

David Chase is the Associate Vice President of Educational Programs at WASC Senior College and University Commission. Prior to joining WSCUC in 2017, David was responsible for leading Academic Affairs at the American Film Institute Conservatory in Los Angeles, California, which included the planning, development, and evaluation the Conservatory's academic programs and serving as the Accreditation Liaison Officer. David also held the position of Senior Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness at the University of the Pacific, where he also served as the Assistant Dean of the Conservatory of Music and taught courses in the Music Management program and in the core seminars of Pacific's General Education program. He earned Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts in Music degrees from Pacific's Conservatory. David is a co-author of the book *Assessment in Creative Disciplines: Quantifying and Qualifying the Aesthetic*, and has published and presented workshops on assessing student learning and on teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education arts disciplines. He is a graduate of the third class of WSCUC's Assessment Leadership Academy.

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Attendee Directory

The Learning Institution

November 15, 2017

University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

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Attendee Directory

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Introduction

The Learning Institution: What it is and Why it is Important

David Chase

Laura Massa, Sammy Elzarka

Errin Heyman, Carole Huston

The Learning Institution

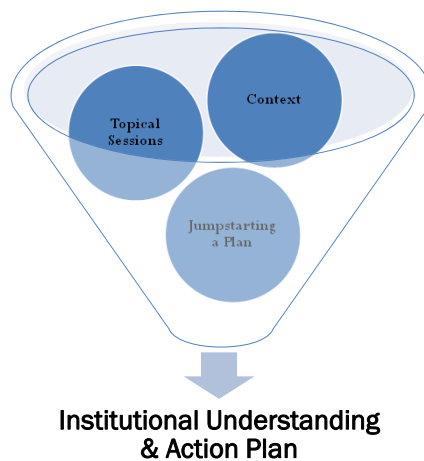
Welcome, Introductions, & Overview

David Chase
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The Learning Institution

October 2017

Workshop Design



Meaning Dimension

MEANINGLESS (Laziness) ← Continuum of Significance → MEANINGFUL (Truth)

What is The Learning Organization? Why is it Important?


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Necessity for The Learning Organization

The Changing Ecology of Higher Education

Higher education from the perspective of
from the public and policy makers:

- Need to articulate and demonstrate value
- Student need for a coherent, integrative, holistic educational experience



SOME NUTS & BOLTS
Accreditor Perspective – WSCUC Standards and Criteria

What Does WSCUC Want?!?

2013 Handbook: Core Commitments

- Student Learning and Success
- Quality and Improvement
- Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

Standards & Criteria For Review

Components of the Institutional Report

Student Learning & Success



“Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes....Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.”

Quality & Improvement

“Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities.... Institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.”

Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, & Accountability



“...Institutions engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and **adapt to changing conditions.**”

What are the criteria?

- 1.2 - Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. . .

What are the criteria?

- 2.2 - All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits.

What are the criteria?

- 2.3 - The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. . .

What are the Criteria?

- 2.4 - The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and (where appropriate) external stakeholders . . .

What are the criteria?

- 2.6 - The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. . .

What are the criteria?

- 2.7 - All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review.

What are the criteria?

- 4.1 - The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes ... including periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation.

Handbook – Component 3

Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity

Traditionally:

- Institutions have described their degrees either very generally (i.e., as something of self-evident value) or very concretely (in terms of specific degree requirements and preparation for specific professions).

Handbook – Component 3 (cont.)

- This component asks for something different:

“...a holistic exploration of the middle ground between those two extremes, expressed in terms of the outcomes for students and the institutional mechanisms that support those outcomes.”

Prompts - Meaning?

- What does a degree from the institution mean?
- What does it say students are capable of doing?
- What are the distinctive experiences and learning outcomes of an education at the institution?
- What does the degree all add up to?
- Is it more than the sum of its parts?
- What *are* the parts?
- What's the overarching goal?

Prompts - Quality?

- How rich are the experiences that the institution offers?
- How challenging? How rigorous?
- What quality assurance processes exist at the institution to guide improvement?

Prompts - Integrity?

- To what extent are all the parts of the educational experiences coherent, aligned, and intentional?
- To what extent does the institution deliver what it promises to deliver?
- How well does the institution achieve what it sets out to do?
- How does it know?
- How does it communicate about its degrees to internal and external audiences?

Handbook – Component 3 (cont.)

- Defining the meaning of higher degrees can provide clarity
 - for institutions
 - for students, and
 - for a public that seeks to understand what unique educational experience will be had at that particular institution and what makes the investment in that experience worthwhile.

Proficiency... a model and means for development

The ability to apply knowledge skillfully to address meaningful, ill-structured issues and problems

Proficiency encompasses a range of skillful performance on the continuum from novice to expert.

Novice ► Intermediate ► Competent ► Proficient ► Expert

What does proficiency look like in practice?

- You know it when you see it.
- Think of someone you know who is really good a complex role: what are the attributes of their abilities?

Domain-specific and tacit/procedural knowledge

Domain or discipline-specific knowledge concepts, facts, and related information about a discipline or domain;

Procedural, then tacit knowledge and skills the “how to” of the discipline. With expertise knowledge and skills often become tacit - we can know and do, but not be able to explain.

Mental Models

an individual “mental map” that includes:

An individual’s values and beliefs about the ideal and the actual domain;

the role and relative importance of values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills;

ways of processing information and applying skills to learn and solve problems (Eckert 2003).

Mental Model examples

Intelligence: fixed or malleable

Origin theories: scientific or religious

Leadership: authority or influence

Talent: inherent or developed

Teaching: content delivery or learning facilitation

Assessment: External Compliance or Internal Meaning Making

Metacognitive Skills

Metacognition means “thinking about thinking.”

Metacognitive skills involve planning, monitoring, evaluating, and improving upon one’s own learning.

These skills include self-regulation and self-direction, managing motivation, recognizing and overcoming barriers to learning.

Examples of effective student use of metacognitive skills

Organizing time to develop a vision and process for an assignment: planning, monitoring progress and making necessary adjustments.

Recognizing that a project requires self-direction and initiative; seeking out and employing strategies that work.

Examples of professional use of metacognitive skills

Knowing when a problem-solving strategy is not working and needs to be refined or completely overhauled.

Recognizing paradigm shifts occurring within a profession.

Shifting perspectives: seeing the trees and the forest, and knowing what level to attend to.

Recognizing how your mental model affects your approach to problem-solving, and when that might be limiting.

How is “proficiency” different from other ways to teach and learn?

Conventional instruction often considers domain-specific and procedural knowledge and skills as *discrete components, sometimes not scaffolded or clearly organized;*

Conventional instruction often *leaves out consideration of mental models and metacognitive skills*, essential components of proficiency and expertise.

Proficiency as a framework means explicit consideration of:

Mental models

Metacognitive skills

Integration and application of knowledge and skills to address meaningful, ill-structured issues and problems

Summary – proficiency

Domain-specific knowledge

Procedural knowledge/Tacit knowledge/skills

Metacognitive skills

All of these are organized within an accurate, flexible, extendable
mental model

The Learning Institution

An institution that focuses on a
holistic, developmental trajectory of
improvement over time in an
intentional and integrated way.

Leading a Learning Institution

“...a subtle process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling, and action. It produces cooperative effort in the services of purposes embraced by both leader and led.”

(Bolman & Deal, 2008)

Important Reminders:

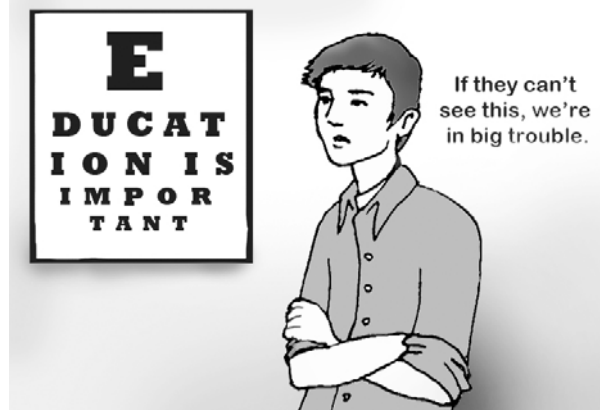
WSCUC does **not** require institutions to use any specific framework or resource.

Institutions are encouraged to **develop their own strategies** for realizing potential as a learning institution in ways that make sense for their mission, values, and student populations.

Prompts in Handbook are intended to help facilitate thinking – not necessarily to be answered in the report.

Practices in The Learning Institution

- **Assessing Learning in The Learning Institution** – Laura Massa, Loyola Marymount University
- **Faculty Development in The Learning Institution** – Sammy Elzarka, University of La Verne
- **Emerging Practices: Understanding and Improvement in The Learning Institution** – Errin Heyman, WSCUC Community of Practice
- **Connections to Resource Allocation and Strategic Planning** – Carole Huston, University of San Diego



Thank You

Cartoon by Ellen Weiss, ESU's The Bulletin

Assessing Learning in The Learning Institution

Laura Massa

Assessing Learning in the Learning Institution

Laura J. Massa
Loyola Marymount University

Workshop Learning Outcomes

Through completing this workshop, participants will:

- Explore the meaning of a higher education learning institution
- Examine the role of key practices of higher education learning institutions, including:
 - Assessment of student learning
- Connect elements of a higher education learning institution to the accreditation process

Primary Functions of Higher Education

- What are the two primary functions of higher education institutions?
 - 1.
 - 2.

Assessment

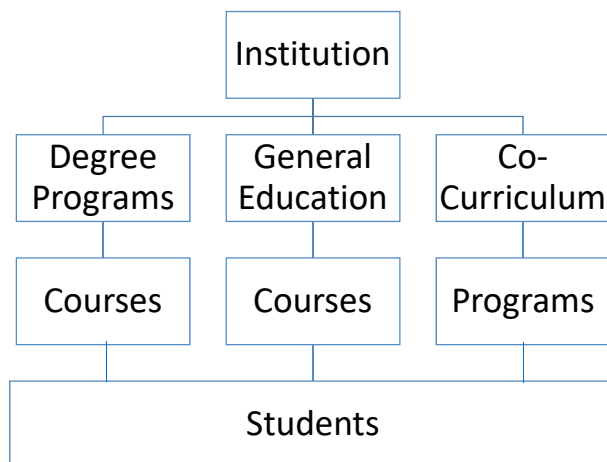
- A systematic, ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning
 - *Meaningful*
 - *Manageable*
 - *Sustainable*

Reasons to assess

- Assure public that the cost of education is worth it
- Meet accreditation requirements
- Make best use of resources in a competitive environment
- Provide students the best education you can

Assessment in a learning institution

- Happening throughout the institution



Assessment in a learning institution

- Supported by campus leaders
 - Clear message that assessment is valued
 - Assessment success stories are recognized
 - Professional development provided
 - Assessment is funded

www.lmu.edu/assessment

Assessment in a learning institution

- Faculty own the process
- Process is transparent
 - Plan noting what will do
 - Record of what have done

www.lmu.edu/assessment

Assessment in a learning institution

- Connected to other institutional processes
 - Development of new and revision of existing programs
 - Program review
 - Strategic plan
 - Budgeting
- Assessment is discussed regularly

Reflection: Assessment in your institution

Which elements does your institution do well? Which may need some development?

Do well	Needs work	Element	Why?
		Multiple levels	
		Leader supported	
		Faculty owned	
		Transparent (plan & record)	
		Connected to other processes	
		Regularly discussed	

Faculty Development in The Learning Institution

Sammy Elzarka

The Learning Institution through the Lens of Faculty Development

Sammy Elzarka, PhD
Director of Learning, Teaching, and Assessment
University of La Verne



1

Session Outcomes

Through completing this workshop, participants will:

Explore the meaning of a higher education learning institution

Examine the role of key practices of higher education learning institutions, including:

- Assessment of student learning

- Program review

- Co-curricular learning and assessment

- Faculty development**

- Strategic planning

- Resource allocation

Connect elements of a higher education learning institution to the accreditation process

2

Relevant CFRs

3.1 – “...faculty and staff are...sufficiently qualified to ensure integrity of academic programs.”

3.2 – “...faculty evaluation processes...are used to improve teaching and learning.”

3.3 – “...faculty and staff development activities are designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.”

3

Definition - Introduction - History

Description of learning institution: generating new knowledge and making organizational changes using that new knowledge

Characteristics of learning institution: acquisition of knowledge, experiential learning, sharing knowledge, use of knowledge

Garvin (1993)

Organizational Development is described as an effort planned, organization-wide, and managed from the top, to increase organizational effectiveness and health through planned interventions....using behavioral science knowledge

Beckhard (1969)

VIDEO: [Basics of Organizational Learning](#)

PE: Do you have a function called faculty development at your institution?

4

Definition of Faculty Development – “a process which seeks to modify the attitudes, skills, and behavior of faculty toward greater competence and effectiveness in meeting student needs, their own needs, and the needs of the institution” Francis (1975) p. 720

Faculty Development – the beginning

Centre (1976)

The role of student voices

Emphasis on assessment in the 80s

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching stance

Felten & Pingree (nd)

PE: Do you have a function called faculty development at your institution?

5

Benefits

There are views from multiple levels as described earlier (student → institution → SoTL)

Increased time on PD may encourage new ideas in assessment, focus on emergent issues, variations in assessment approaches, and collaboration

Lock & Kraska (2014)

PD encouraged the use of improved teaching practices and inspired improvement; facilitated exposure to varying methods of teaching and learning practices

Williams, Nixon, Hennessy, Mahon, & Adams (2016)

Instructor's desire to learn about teaching and learning was correlated with student perception of progress toward objectives and course performance

Merillat & Scheibmeir (2016)

Challenges

PE: What are your challenges with regard to faculty development?

Characteristics of failure in assessment:

using it to evaluate faculty;

over-reliance on standardized assessment;

not connecting assessment to teaching and learning;

use of large assessment committees;

not evaluating the assessment procedures;

not supporting and engaging faculty

Lock & Kraska (2014)

Perceived conformity; students resistant to learning in different ways

Williams, Nixon, Hennessy, Mahon, & Adams (2016)

9

Some organizational policies can inhibit effective use of assessment data

Kezar (2013)

PE: What policies are obstructive to faculty development at your institution?

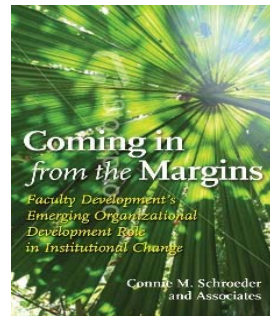


10

Since its inception, the faculty development movement has struggled with one of the three prongs that form its basis:

- individual
- instructional
- **organizational development**

Faculty development has emphasized instructional support at the expense of organizational development. Part of this trend is the lack of knowledge of developers in impacting organizational change and developmental support.



Schroeder (2011)

11

Best Practices

Nine principles of good assessment practices by the American Association of Higher Education

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.**
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

12

Seven Assessment Guidelines:

- focus on program improvement goals
- **making the process a team effort**
- **embedding assessment**
- **nurturing diverse learning abilities**
- connecting assessment to valued issues
- **make assessment results available to all**
- ensuring capacity to support assessment system

McEady (2000)

Four factors for successful assessment:

- measurement adequacy
- **faculty involvement**
- administrative support
- director expertise

Roberts (1992)

13

Definition of Culture of Assessment - An organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis, where services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for students and stakeholders

(Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

A culture of assessment is supported by:

- focus on student learning rather than accreditation
- **use of locally developed instruments**
- regular communication through workshops

Ndoye & Parker (2011)

Must involve faculty in the design of assessment plan, instruments, and analysis of data

- develop community of practice among faculty to exchange ideas
- include faculty as leadership
- focus on improving student learning
- communicate regularly about assessment
- policies that support assessment efforts

Guetterman & Mitchell (2016)

14

Rubric-based inter rater training enriched faculty vocabulary on assessment and enhanced self-efficacy

Kogan, Conforti, Bernabeo, Iobst, & Holmboe (2015)

Common themes: Faculty engagement and focus on improvement of student learning



15

Faculty developers should collaborate with upper leadership and impact change in the following key areas:

- Shaping institutional mission
- Informing the strategic plan
- Assessment of student learning
- Helping to develop and assess disciplinary programs
- Campus accreditation processes
- Connecting the campus units and departments to one another and to the institutional initiatives
- Providing input into promotion and tenure guidelines
- Mentoring new and adjunct faculty
- Providing ePortfolio support and development

Schroder (2011)

16

Study on Effective FD

A study using the theoretical sampling design was conducted to determine the characteristics of successful faculty development efforts. The study included 57 institutions.

Level of involvement in institutional initiatives:

Marginalized	6%
Slightly involved	4%
Occasionally involved	24%
Very involved	33%
Key leader	33%

Involvement in key initiatives:

Program assessment	74%
Retention	58%
Online education	50%
General education reform	49%
Scholarship of teach & learn	48%
Learning-centered teaching	48%
Interdisciplinary collaboration	38%
Service learning	36%
Curriculum reform	36%
Graduate student education	26%
Peer review	19%
Community based research	15%
Other	17%

Factors that enable and impede involvement in institutional leadership and initiatives

Enabling Factors

Institutional leadership
 Institutional priorities
 Type of institution
 Center leadership
 Center focus

Impeding Factors

Institutional leadership
 Institutional priorities

Implications of Study In Effective FD

Importance of speaking to Institutional strategy
 Leadership roles
 Knowledge of the institutional culture and general knowledge of the organizational change process
 Collaborative relationships
 FLC involvement
 Center mission

Schroeder (2011)
18

Final Prompt

If you were king/queen for one week, what are three things you would do to promote a learning institution where you are?

Now, your week is over, what concrete steps do you intend to take upon your return?

Emerging Practices: Understanding and Improvement in The Learning Institution

Errin Heyman

Emerging Practices: Understanding and Improvement in The Learning Institution

Errin Heyman

Project Manager, Advancing Learning Outcomes Visibility Initiative

WASC Senior College and University Commission

Workshop Outcomes Addressed

How does this fit in?

- Examine the role of key practices of higher education learning institutions, including:
 - Assessment of student learning
 - Program review
 - Co-curricular learning and assessment
 - Faculty development
- Connect elements of a higher education learning institution to the accreditation process

Overview/Context

Applicable insights from:

- Lumina Foundation. (2016, June). *The emerging learning system: Report of the recent convening and new directions for action.*
- WSCUC Criteria for Review and Handbook

SIX COMPONENTS OF AN EMERGING LEARNING SYSTEM

Quality Learning Frameworks

- Common Core and higher education alignment
- Degree Qualifications Profile and Tuning
- Essential Learning Outcomes
- Beta Credentials Framework
- Employer engagement in quality
- Additional learning frameworks

Pathways

- Competency-based education
- General education and major program redesign
- Remediation/developmental education
- High-impact practices
- Guided pathways
- Transfer

Assessment

- State of assessment
- Approaches to assessment
- Prior learning assessment
- Assignments as assessment
- Rubrics
- Co-curricular assessment
- General education assessment



Overview/Context: Student Success

Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes....Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.

- Visibility of Outcomes
- Use for Improvements

Student Success— *and visibility of...*

- CFR 2.6 - The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. . .
- Handbook, Component 3: Defining the meaning of higher degrees can provide clarity
 - for institutions
 - for students, and
 - for a public that seeks to understand what unique educational experience will be had at that particular institution and what makes the investment in that experience worthwhile.

Student & Institutional Success: Use of Assessment Results for Improvement

- CFR 4.3 Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is under-taken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.
- GUIDELINE: The institution has clear, well-established policies and practices—for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information—that create a culture of evidence and improvement.

Grant/Project Goals



- The call for visibility of student learning is in the spotlight.
- Through a grant from Lumina Foundation, WSCUC seeks to help assure various stakeholders in higher education (policy makers, parents, the general public, and students themselves) that higher education institutions in the region are delivering on their promises to students regarding learning outcomes.
- WSCUC is facilitating a Community of Practice (CoP) comprised of WSCUC institutions in order to increase leadership for and institutional capacity in learning outcomes assessment visibility and leadership.

Intended Outcomes of Project

1. Learning Outcomes Capacity-Building
2. Improved Learning Outcomes Visibility
3. Quality Assurance / Accreditation Resource Development, Curation, and Dissemination

See:

<https://www.wscuc.org/content/wscuc-%E2%80%98s-community-practice-advancing-learning-outcomes-visibility>

What is a Community of Practice?

- “A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wegner-Traynor). Additionally, [a Community] of Practice revolves around:
- **The domain:** members are brought together by a learning need they share (whether this shared learning need is explicit or not and whether learning is the motivation for their coming together or a by-product of it)
- **The community:** their collective learning becomes a bond among them over time (experienced in various ways and thus not a source of homogeneity)
- **The practice:** their interactions produce resources that affect their practice (whether they engage in actual practice together or separately).

(from: <http://wenger-trayner.com/resources/what-is-a-community-of-practice/>)

What is a Community of Practice?

*What are some examples of CoPs
at your institution?*

Themes of the Projects

- Assessment of Core competencies and General Education
- Students participating in assessment
- Co-curricular assessment
- Engaging faculty in assessment
- Student Achievement website/visibility

Assessment: Visibility of Outcomes

- **Visibility of Student Outcomes, Assessing Graduate Outcomes**

San José State University

- *Making It Real: Developing a Sustainable Process to Use and Share SJSU's Graduate PLOs and Evidence of Student Achievement*

Mills College

- *Assessment Refocus for Access, Visibility and Sustainability*

Program Review

Assessment of Core Competencies/General Education

Ashford University

- *General Education Assessment Plan*

University of Guam

- *Assessing Core Competencies in a Three Tiered General Education Structure*

California State University, Monterey Bay

- *Creating, Assessing, and Improving a Quality, Theme-Based General Education Program*

Faculty Development: Engagement in Assessment

CETYS University

- *Faculty Engagement: Assessment & Program Review – Fulfilling transnational stakeholders*

West Coast University

- *Assessment in the Allied Health Classroom*

Palo Alto University

- *PAU Faculty Learning Collaborative (FLC)*

Co-curricular

Northcentral University (NCU)

- *Increasing Student Learning Across the University: Closing the Loop on Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes*

Kaiser Permanente School of Allied Health Sciences

- *Development and Implementation of Co-Curricular Activities*

Brandman University

- *Integrating Students into the Program Assessment Process*

Making Student Achievement Visible and Understandable

Hawai'i Pacific University and Marymount California University

- *Showcasing Student Achievement at Hawai'i Pacific University and MCU*

University of San Diego

- *USD's Outcomes Transparency Website Project*

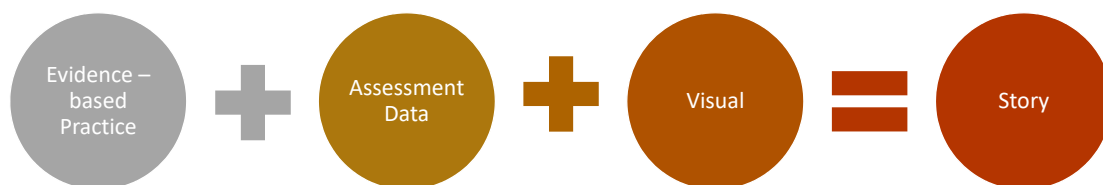
University of Hawaii at Manoa

- *Improving Oral Communication through Transparent and Transformative Assessment*

Student Achievement: Telling Your Story

- Drawing in Context
- Different Audiences
- **Data Visualization**

Telling Your Story: Data Visualization



Based on: Iliinsky, Noah PN, and Julie Steele. *Designing data visualizations*. O'Reilly, 2011

Five questions to Consider Before Engaging in Data Visualization

1. What data do we have?
2. Which data are best for visuals?
3. What are the key points of our message?
4. What important facts often get overlooked?
5. What does a good visual look like?

(from Courtney Vengrin, Iowa State University, *Data Visualization: Resources and Methods for Telling your Data Story*)

Dieter Rams' Principles of Good Design

- Is innovative
- Makes a ~~product~~ **data** useful
- Is aesthetic
- Makes a ~~product~~ **data** understandable
- Is unobtrusive
- Is honest
- Is long-lasting
- Is thorough down to the last detail
- Is ~~environmentally~~ **economically** friendly
- Involves as little design as possible

(from Courtney Vengrin, Iowa State University, *Data Visualization: Resources and Methods for Telling your Data Story*)

Community of Practice: Part of the Learning Institution?

Discussion:

- Useful as part of accreditation network?
- How to use to promote visibility of student outcomes?

Activity: Pulling it Together

- Based on your role, how might this information be used/implemented?
- What is at least one immediate next step you might take based on session?

Connections to Resource Allocation and Strategic Planning

Carole Huston

Learning Institution & Strategic Planning

WSCUC Workshop: November 15, 2017

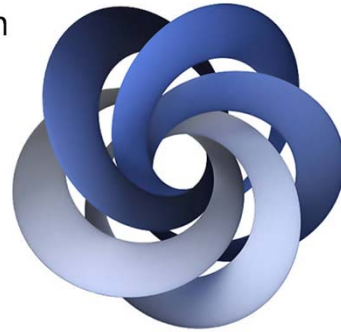
Carole L. Huston, PhD

Workshop Outcomes

- **Explore the meaning** of a higher education learning institution
- Examine the role of **key practices** of higher education learning institutions, including:
 - Strategic planning
 - Resource allocation
- **Connect elements** of a higher education learning institution to the accreditation process

Learning Institution Characteristics

1. Intentionality and shared meaning
2. Alignment, collaboration and integration
3. Holistic, learner-centered focus
4. Communication and transparency
5. Development and improvement
6. Engaged leadership



- Jankowski, N. & Marshall, D.W, (2017). *Degrees That Matter*
- Albertine, S. et al (2016). *The Emerging Learning System*

Description of a Strategic Plan

- Integration, communication, action
- Organizational direction
- Phased commitment of resources

- Society for College and University Planning (SCUP)
 - <https://www.scup.org>

Check-in Activity

- Where are you on the strategic planning continuum?
- Pair and share your answers to the following questions:
 - Does your institution have a strategic plan?
 - If you have a plan does it appear to be integrated with other plans or does it “stand alone”?
 - How does it influence (or not) decision-making processes, such as prioritization and allocation of resources, at your institution?
 - What would need to happen in order to make it a more effective plan?

Accreditation & Institutional Planning



- **CFR 1.1**
- **CFR 3.4, 3.7**
- **CFR 4.3, CFR 4.6, CFR 4.7**

Strategic Plan: Aligned Components



SCUP offers planning institutes for institutional teams: <https://www.scup.org/page/eventsandeducation/pi>

Linking Resources to Quality Assurance



Linking Strategic Goals to Quality Assurance

- Pursuit of Academic Excellence for Human Well-being (Marquette)
- Rejecting Complacency and Embracing Excellence (U Minnesota)
- Become a National Model for Undergraduate Education (Georgia State)
- Advance Student Learning and Superior Scholarship (Pepperdine)
- Enhance Student Success (Oakland Community College, MI)



Strategic Initiatives & Implementation

UCF Example: Increasing Student Access, Success, and Prominence

- Develop strategies with business and employer community that increase bachelor's and graduate degree attainment in fields aligned with current and future industry growth in the region
- Enhance or refine student support programs using evidence-based practices and information from student assessment surveys

USD Example: Enhance Student Learning and Success

- Fully implement the core curriculum by 2021 (includes assessment plan in implementation).
- Increase interdisciplinary learning opportunities, pilot new educational delivery systems, and expand online offerings.

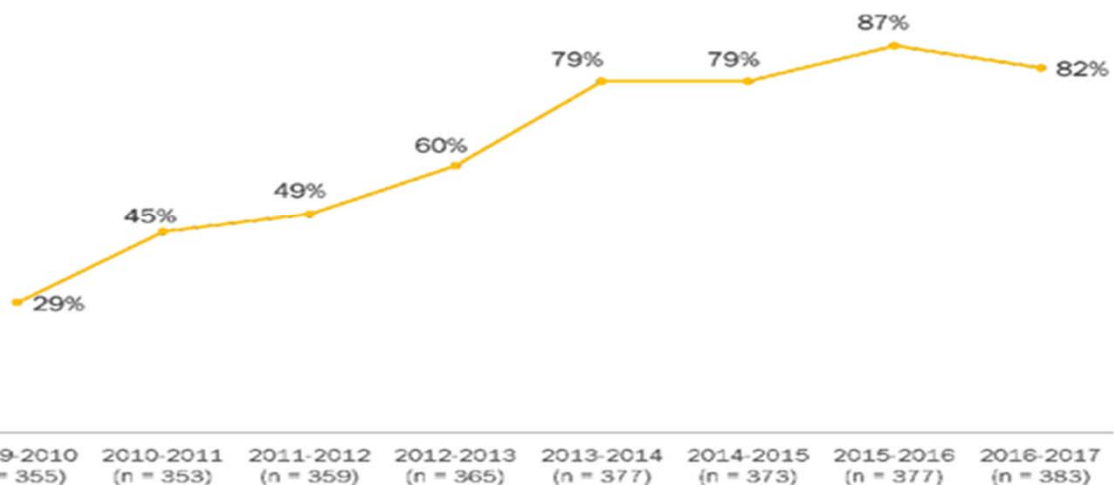
University of Central Florida

Similarities and Differences

IE Assessment	Program Reviews	Strategic Planning
Formative	Summative	Integrated; Highly formative and summative
Evidence-based decisions	Evidence-based decisions	Evidence-based decisions
Supports continuous quality improvement	Evaluates current status	Integrates current status, ongoing improvements, and future requirements
Possible budgetary impact	Possible budgetary impact	Major contributor to budgetary decisions
Opportunity to strengthen alignment of planning processes		



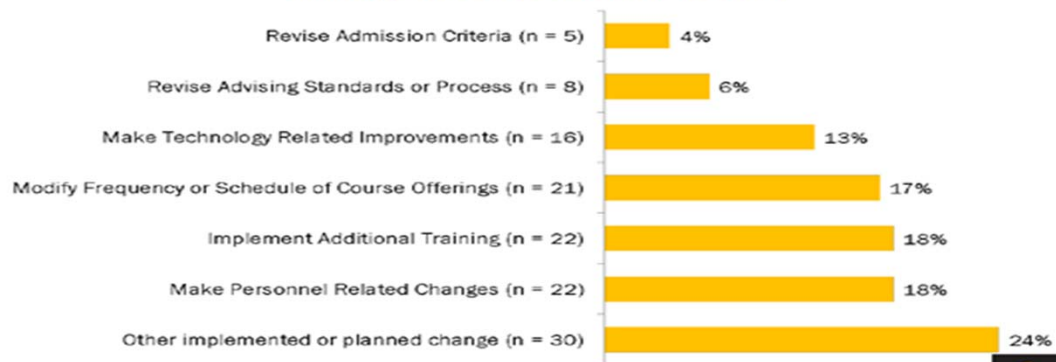
% of Assessment Plans with a Relationship to UCF Strategic Plan



UCF Report of Academic Program Change

Implemented and Planned Changes 2015-2016 Results for Academic Programs

Changes to Academic Process



Reflection

- What would need to happen in order to make strategic planning more effective on your campus? (Identify at least two actions)
- For example, think about:
 - How your strategic plan can be integrated with quality assurance and improvement
 - How you can link allocating resources to strategic planning and quality assurance and improvement processes

Applying a Learning Organization Culture at Your Institution

**Laura Massa, Sammy Elzarka
Errin Heyman, Carole Huston**

Activity Instructions

- In the next 45 minutes, discuss with your group the notes you have taken from your worksheet for assessment, faculty development, emerging practices, and strategic planning.
- Include in your discussion, current practices, practices to be developed, and next steps to grow a learning institution culture.
- In the final 30 minutes, each group will have a spokesperson report out to the entire audience.

Applying a Learning Institution Culture at your Institution

For each of the components of a learning institution, note your current practices, those practices that may need to be developed, and the next steps you will take to grow a learning institution culture at your institution

Component	Current Practices	Practices to be Developed	Next Steps
Assessing learning			
Faculty development			
Emerging practices			
Strategic planning			

Additional Resources

The Learning Institution: A Bibliography of Resources

“The Essential Learning Outcomes.” *Association of American Colleges and Universities*.

Can be accessed electronically through:

http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/EssentialOutcomes_Chart.pdf

This is a list of five overarching learning outcomes that should characterize all post-secondary educational programs. It was developed as a part of the Learning

Hampson, Keith, “*Dr. Mike Offerman, Capella University: Quality, Access and Transparency in Higher Education.*”

Interview published in *Higher Education Management*, Nov. 11, 2009

<http://highereducationmanagement.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/dr-mike-offerman-capella-university-quality-access-and-transparency-in-higher-education/>

Integrity in the College Curriculum. Washington: Association of American Colleges, 1985

Lumina Foundation. *The Degree Qualification Profile*. Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc., Indianapolis, 2011

Can be accessed electronically through:

http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf

Miller, Margaret, “The Meaning of the Baccalaureate.” *About Campus*. September-October 2003

<http://www.collegelevellearning.org/meaning.pdf>

This is the link to the electronic copy of Margaret Miller’s original paper that was published by The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) in their bimonthly ABOUT CAMPUS magazine.

Miller, Margaret & Ewell, Peter, “*Measuring Up on College-Level Learning.*” The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, October, 2005

May be accessed at: http://www.highereducation.org/reports/mu_learning/index.shtml

“The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees.” *Southern Association of Schools & Colleges, Commission on Colleges*. December, 2011.

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Quality%20and%20Integrity%20of%20Undergraduate%20Degrees.pdf>.

In response to the rapid increase in the number of non-traditional courses and programs available through accredited colleges and universities, the Southern Association of Schools & Colleges has issued this policy that requires institutions to explicitly indicate whether specific courses and programs are “intended for transfer.”

Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree. Washington: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2004

Schneider, Carol Geary, “The Baccalaureate Degree: Meaning, Integrity, and Quality .” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges & Universities, Dec. 7 2009

http://www.aacu.org/About/schneider/documents/2009_SACS_handouts.pdf

This is a handout for a presentation given by Dr. Carol Geary It contains a number of tables with a variety of information relating in one way or another to the issue of degree meaning and quality.

Online Resources

Assessment Commons: <http://assessmentcommons.org> [meta-site of online assessment resources]

ASSESS listserv: <http://sv.uky.edu/scripts/wa.exe?A0=ASSESS> [2000+ people on this listserv]

DQP Assignment Library: <http://www.assignmentlibrary.org>

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA):
<http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/NILOAResources.html>

WSCUC Document Library: <http://www.wascsenior.org/document-list>

Professional Organizations

Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE)

<http://aalhe.org>

Webinars; annual conference; Twitter chats; free online publications; members have access to archived webinars, etc.

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

<http://aacu.org>

Conferences and institutes on assessment related to liberal arts education and general education assessment; online publications (both cost and no-cost); VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Undergraduate Education)

National Association for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

<http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/>

Free online publications that are non-technical.

Campus Websites

California State University, Fullerton: http://www.fullerton.edu/assessment/sla_resources/

IUPUI: <http://planning.iupui.edu/assessment/resources.html>

James Madison University assessment: <https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/Visitor/AssessmentResources.shtml>

University of Central Florida assessment: <https://assessment.ucf.edu>

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa assessment: <http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment>

Classroom Assessment

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Bean, J. C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*, 2nd Ed., San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creative Disciplines Assessment

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Benjamin, R., et al. (2009). *Returning to learning in an age of assessment: Introducing the rationale of the Collegiate Learning Assessment*. Council for Aid to Education. Available at http://cae.org/images/uploads/pdf/03_Returning_to_Learning_in_the_Age_of_Assessment.pdf

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Kuh, G. (2009). The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In G. M. Gonyea & G. D. Kuh (Eds.), *Using NSSE in Institutional Research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Lovitts, B. E. & Wert, E. L. (2009). *Developing quality dissertations in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

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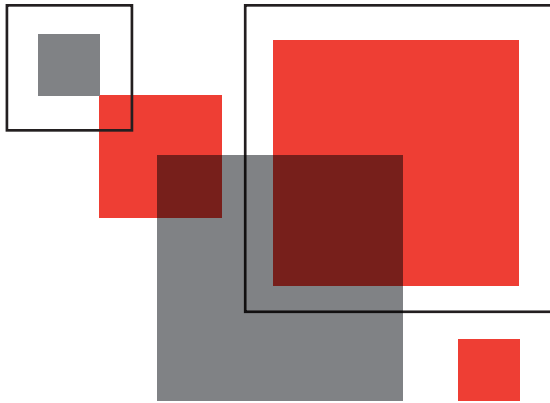
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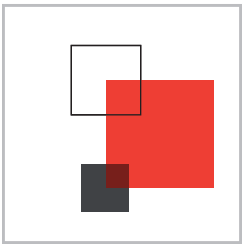


2013

Handbook of
Accreditation
Revised

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

WISC Senior College and University Commission



THE CORE COMMITMENTS AND STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

Overview

The Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation provide a foundation for institutional reviews and actions. The Core Commitments express the values underlying WSCUC accreditation, while the Standards build upon the Core Commitments, articulating broad principles of good practice. The Standards are explicated by the Criteria for Review (CFR), and the CFRs in turn are supported by Guidelines and Commission policies. Together, these elements provide a coherent basis for institutional review and at the same time assure quality and integrity.

Understanding the WSCUC Standards

The WSCUC process begins by calling upon institutions to ground their activities in three Core Commitments. By affirming these Core Commitments and taking ownership of the accreditation process, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve both students and the public good.

Core Commitment to Student Learning and Success

Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes. Institutions collect, analyze, and interpret valid and reliable evidence of learning as a way of assessing student achievement and success. Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.

Core Commitment to Quality and Improvement

Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities. They utilize appropriate evidence to improve teaching, learning, and overall institutional effectiveness. Through strategic and integrated planning, institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.

Core Commitment to Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

Institutions recognize that the public has entrusted them with the critical responsibilities of upholding the values of higher education and contributing to the public good. They engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions.

Standards of Accreditation

The Standards of Accreditation consist of four broad, holistic statements that reflect widely accepted good practices in higher education. WSCUC institutions are diverse in terms of mission, character, and type. The Standards are broad enough to honor that diversity, respect institutional mission, and support institutional autonomy. At the same time, institutions must demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the four Standards and related Criteria for Review in order to become and remain accredited. The four Standards are:

- **Standard 1:** Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives
- **Standard 2:** Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions
- **Standard 3:** Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability
- **Standard 4:** Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Criteria for Review

Thirty-nine Criteria for Review (CFR) are distributed across the four Standards. The CFRs under each Standard provide more specific statements about the meaning of the Standard. The CFRs are grouped under headings that identify major aspects of institutional functioning. The CFRs are cited by institutions in their institutional report, by peer reviewers in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions about institutions. Many of the CFRs are cross-referenced to allow for ease in identifying related and connected CFRs.

Guidelines

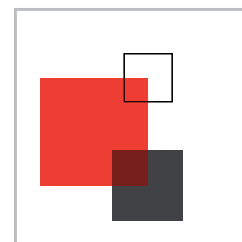
Where Guidelines are provided, they assist institutions in interpreting the CFRs by offering examples of how institutions can address a particular Criterion for Review. An institution is welcome to employ different practices from those described in a particular Guideline; in that case, the institution is responsible for showing that it has addressed the intent of that Criterion in an equally effective way.

Related Commission Policies and Resources

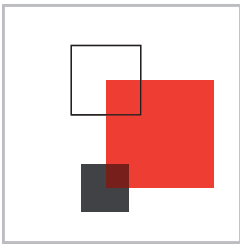
Following some CFRs are references to policies of particular relevance to those CFRs and any related Guidelines. Institutions are encouraged to become familiar with, and to review periodically, all Commission policies, which are binding on member institutions.

Following some CFRs are references to manuals and resource guides. The procedures described in WSCUC manuals, like policies, are binding. Guides, offering principles and examples of good practice, address topics such as program review, transparency, graduate education, and the use of evidence. Guides are not binding; they are merely suggestive and intended to provide helpful information.

Current versions of WSCUC policies, manuals, and resource guides are available at the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org.



Colleges and universities have been under increasing pressure to become more accountable for student academic achievement; to be more transparent in reporting the results of accreditation; and to demonstrate their contribution to the public good.



Understanding the WSCUC Standards

Institutions accredited by WSCUC share a common set of commitments that focus on students, safeguard quality, and assure integrity, accountability, and transparency. Institutions demonstrate this commitment by adhering to the Standards of Accreditation. WSCUC institutions represent richness in diversity of mission, character, and type, and the WSCUC Standards are written in such a way as to honor that diversity by respecting institutional mission and preserving institutional autonomy. By affirming these Core Commitments, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve the public good.

1. Core Commitments

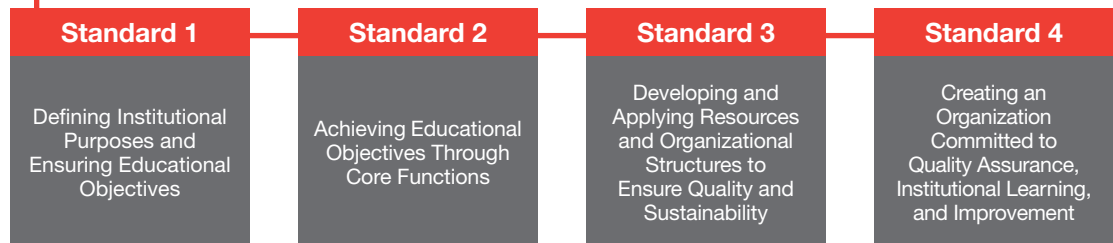
The WSCUC process begins by calling upon institutions to ground their activities in three Core Commitments. By affirming these Core Commitments and taking ownership of the accreditation process, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve both students and the public good.

- Core Commitment to Student Learning and Success
- Core Commitment to Quality and Improvement
- Core Commitment to Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

2. Standards of Accreditation

The Standards of Accreditation consist of four broad, holistic statements that reflect widely accepted good practices in higher education. WSCUC institutions are diverse in terms of mission, character, and type. The Standards are broad enough to honor that diversity, respect

institutional mission, and support institutional autonomy. At the same time, institutions must demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the four Standards and related Criteria for Review in order to become and remain accredited. The four Standards are:



Standard 1

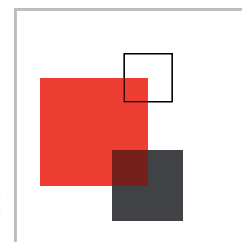
Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purposes
- Integrity and Transparency

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, and its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

example

Students and their success continue to stand at the center of concerns about higher education accreditation. Thus accreditation seeks to establish standards and measurements of quality that ensure that students earn degrees in a timely manner, and that those degrees have demonstrable meaning and currency within the society at large.



3. Criteria for Review

Thirty-nine Criteria for Review (CFRs) are distributed across the four Standards. The CFRs under each Standard provide more specific statements about the meaning of the Standard. The CFRs are grouped under headings that identify major aspects of institutional functioning. The CFRs are cited by institutions in their institutional report, by peer reviewers

in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions about institutions. Many of the CFRs are cross-referenced to allow for ease in identifying related and connected CFRs.

Embedded cross references can help institutions orient and check themselves with reference to other Criteria for Review.

Institutional Purposes Criteria for Review

1.1 *The institution's formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.*

1.2 *Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.*

example

4. Guidelines

Where Guidelines are provided, they assist institutions in interpreting the CFRs by offering examples of how institutions can address a particular Criterion for Review. An institution is welcome to employ different practices

from those described in a particular Guideline; in that case, the institution is responsible for showing that it has addressed the intent of that Criterion in an equally effective way.

➔ See also CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 4.2

example

5. Related Commission Policies and Resources

Following some CFRs are references to policies of particular relevance to those CFRs and any related Guidelines. Institutions are encouraged to become familiar with, and to review periodically, all Commission policies, which are binding on member institutions.

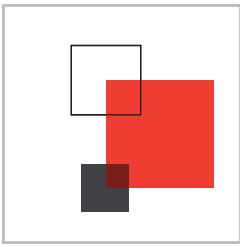
Guides are not binding; they are merely suggestive and intended to provide helpful information.

Following some CFRs are references to manuals and resource guides. The procedures described in WSCUC manuals, like policies, are binding. Guides, offering principles and examples of good practice, address topics such as program review, transparency, graduate education, and the use of evidence.

Current versions of WSCUC policies, manuals, and resource guides are available at the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org.

GUIDELINE: *The institution has a published mission statement that clearly describes its purposes. The institution's purposes fall within recognized academic areas and/or disciplines.*

example



STANDARD 1

Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purposes
- Integrity
- Transparency

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

Institutional Purposes

Criteria for Review

1.1 The institution's formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.

GUIDELINE: The institution has a published mission statement that clearly describes its purposes. The institution's purposes fall within recognized academic areas and/or disciplines.

1.2 Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.

See also CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 4.2

Integrity and Transparency

Criteria for Review

1.3 The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students, and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and writing.

GUIDELINE: The institution has published or has readily available policies on academic freedom. For those institutions that strive to instill specific beliefs and world views, policies clearly state how these views are implemented and ensure that these conditions are consistent with generally recognized principles of academic freedom. Due-process procedures are disseminated, demonstrating that faculty and students are protected in their quest for truth.

See also CFR 3.2, 3.10

1.4 Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity in society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, its hiring and admissions criteria, and its administrative and organizational practices.

- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has demonstrated institutional commitment to the principles enunciated in the WSCUC Diversity Policy.

See also CFR 2.2a, 3.1

Integrity and Transparency

Criteria for Review

1.5 Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

- Independent Governing Board Policy
- Related Entities Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution does not experience interference in substantive decisions or educational functions by governmental, religious, corporate, or other external bodies that have a relationship to the institution.

See also CFR 3.6-3.10

1.6 The institution truthfully represents its academic goals, programs, services, and costs to students and to the larger public. The institution demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. The institution treats students fairly and equitably through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, disability, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid

GUIDELINE: The institution has published or has readily available policies on student grievances and complaints, refunds, etc. The institution does not have a history of adverse findings against it with respect to violation of these policies. Records of student complaints are maintained for a six-year period. The institution clearly defines and distinguishes between the different types of credits it offers and between degree and non-degree credit, and accurately identifies the type and meaning of the credit awarded in its transcripts. The institution's policy on grading and student evaluation is clearly stated and provides opportunity for appeal as needed.

See also CFR 2.12

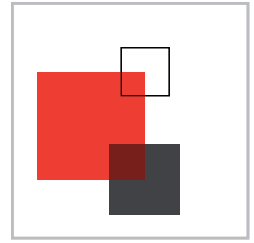
1.7 The institution exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations, as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, sound business practices, timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas. The institution's finances are regularly audited by qualified independent auditors.

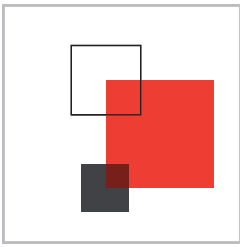
- Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy

See also CFR 3.4, 3.6, 3.7

1.8 The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission; to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor; to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution; and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.

- Degree Level Approval Policy
- Public Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions Policy
- Honorary Degrees Policy
- Legal Fees Policy
- Maintenance of Accreditation Records Policy
- Matters Under Litigation Policy
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual
- Unannounced Visits Policy





STANDARD 2

Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Student Learning and Success

The institution achieves its purposes and attains its educational objectives at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.

Teaching and Learning

Criteria for Review

2.1 The institution's educational programs are appropriate in content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery. They are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.

- Distance Education Policy
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual

GUIDELINE: The content, length, and standards of the institution's academic programs conform to recognized disciplinary or professional standards and are subject to peer review.

See also CFR 3.1

2.2 All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits. The institution has both a coherent philosophy, expressive of its mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees.

- Credit Hour Policy
- Joint Degrees Policy
- Credit for Experiential Learning Policy
- Study Abroad Policy
- Degree Definitions Policy
- Transfer of Credit Policy
- Dual Degrees Policy

See also CFR 3.1-3.3, 4.3-4.4

2.2a Undergraduate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, undergraduate programs actively foster creativity, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, ethical and civic responsibility, civic engagement, and the ability to work with others. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in cultural and aesthetic, social and political, and scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons. Baccalaureate degrees include significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major).

- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has a program of General Education that is integrated throughout the curriculum, including at the upper division level, together with significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major).

Teaching and Learning

Criteria for Review

2.2b The institution's graduate programs establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission to a graduate program.

GUIDELINE: Institutions offering graduate-level programs employ, at least, one full-time faculty member for each graduate degree program offered and have a preponderance of the faculty holding the relevant terminal degree in the discipline. Institutions demonstrate that there is a sufficient number of faculty members to exert collective responsibility for the development and evaluation of the curricula, academic policies, and teaching and mentoring of students.

See also CFR 3.1-3.3

2.3 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and standards are reflected in academic programs, policies, and curricula, and are aligned with advisement, library, and information and technology resources, and the wider learning environment.

GUIDELINE: The institution is responsible for ensuring that out-of-class learning experiences, such as clinical work, service learning, and internships which receive credit, are adequately resourced, well developed, and subject to appropriate oversight.

See also CFR 3.5

2.4 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and (where appropriate) external stakeholders. The institution's faculty take collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards.

GUIDELINE: Student learning outcomes are reflected in course syllabi.

See also CFR 4.3, 4.4

2.5 The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, take into account students' prior knowledge of the subject matter, challenge students to meet high standards of performance, offer opportunities for them to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.

See also CFR 4.4

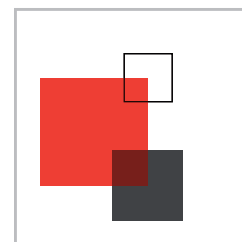
2.6 The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work.

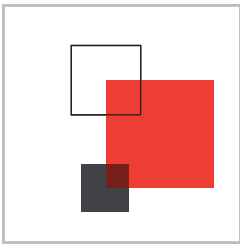
GUIDELINE: The institution has an assessment infrastructure adequate to assess student learning at program and institution levels.

See also CFR 4.3-4.4

2.7 All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

See also CFR 4.1, 4.6





Scholarship and Creative Activity

Criteria for Review

2.8 The institution clearly defines expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for its students and all categories of faculty. The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, and their dissemination appropriate to the institution's purposes and character.

GUIDELINE: Where appropriate, the institution includes in its policies for faculty promotion and tenure the recognition of scholarship related to teaching, learning, assessment, and co-curricular learning.

See also CFR 3.2

2.9 The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service.

See also CFR 3.2

Student Learning and Success

Criteria for Review

2.10 The institution demonstrates that students make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees and that an acceptable proportion of students complete their degrees in a timely fashion, given the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs it offers. The institution collects and analyzes student data, disaggregated by appropriate demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and the extent to which the campus climate supports student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students; assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences; and uses these data to improve student achievement.

GUIDELINE: The institution disaggregates data according to racial, ethnic, gender, age, economic status, disability, and other categories, as appropriate. The institution benchmarks its retention and graduation rates against its own aspirations as well as the rates of peer institutions.

See also CFR 4.1-4.5

2.11 Consistent with its purposes, the institution offers co-curricular programs that are aligned with its academic goals, integrated with academic programs, and designed to support all students' personal and professional development. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement.

See also CFR 4.3-4.5

2.12 The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and complete information and advising about relevant academic requirements.

□ Institutional Disclosure of Information for Students Policy

GUIDELINE: Recruiting materials and advertising truthfully portray the institution. Students have ready access to accurate, current, and complete information about admissions, degree requirements, course offerings, and educational costs.

See also CFR 1.6

Student Learning and Success

Criteria for Review

2.13 The institution provides academic and other student support services such as tutoring, services for students with disabilities, financial aid counseling, career counseling and placement, residential life, athletics, and other services and programs as appropriate, which meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the programs it offers.

- Collegiate Athletics Policy
- International Students Policy

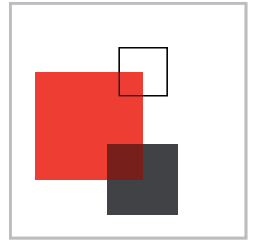
See also CFR 3.1

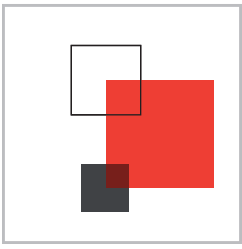
2.14 Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information, ensure equitable treatment under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer process.

- Transfer of Credit Policy
- Credit for Experiential Learning Policy

GUIDELINES: Formal policies or articulation agreements are developed with feeder institutions that minimize the loss of credits through transfer credits.

See also CFR 1.6





STANDARD 3

Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

- Faculty and Staff
 - Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources
 - Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes
- The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high-quality environment for learning.

Faculty and Staff

Criteria for Review

3.1 The institution employs faculty and staff with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, professional qualification, and diversity and to achieve the institution's educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs wherever and however delivered.

- Collective Bargaining Policy
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINES: The institution has a faculty staffing plan that ensures that all faculty roles and responsibilities are fulfilled and includes a sufficient number of full-time faculty members with appropriate backgrounds by discipline and degree level.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.2b

3.2 Faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation is consistent with best practices in performance appraisal, including multisource feedback and appropriate peer review. Faculty evaluation processes are systematic and are used to improve teaching and learning.

See also CFR 1.7, 4.3-4.4

3.3 The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.

GUIDELINES: The institution engages full-time, non-tenure-track, adjunct, and part-time faculty members in such processes as assessment, program review, and faculty development.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.2b, 4.4

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

Criteria for Review

3.4 The institution is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits and resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Resource planning is integrated with all other institutional planning. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives.

GUIDELINES: The institution has functioned without an operational deficit for at least three years. If the institution has an accumulated deficit, it should provide a detailed explanation and a realistic plan for eliminating it.

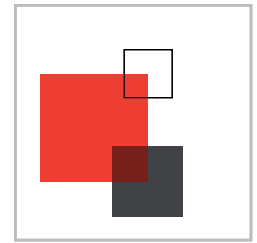
See also CFR 1.1, 1.2, 2.10, 4.6, 4.7

3.5 The institution provides access to information and technology resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind at physical sites and online, as appropriate, to support its academic offerings and the research and scholarship of its faculty, staff, and students. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the institution's educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes.

- Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution provides training and support for faculty members who use technology in instruction. Institutions offering graduate programs have sufficient fiscal, physical, information, and technology resources and structures to sustain these programs and to create and maintain a graduate-level academic culture.

See also CFR 1.2, 2.1, 2.2



Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

Criteria for Review

3.6 The institution's leadership, at all levels, is characterized by integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability.

3.7 The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

GUIDELINE: The institution establishes clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority.

3.8 The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibilities are to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.

3.9 The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer.

- Independent Governing Board Policy
- Related Entities Policy
- Institutions within a System Policy

GUIDELINE: The governing body comprises members with the diverse qualifications required to govern an institution of higher learning. It regularly engages in self-review and training to enhance its effectiveness.

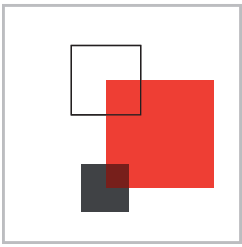
See also CFR 1.5-1.7

3.10 The institution's faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure that both academic quality and the institution's educational purposes and character are sustained.

- Collective Bargaining Policy
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution clearly defines the governance roles, rights, and responsibilities of all categories of full- and part-time faculty.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 4.3, 4.4



STANDARD 4

Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

- Quality Assurance Processes
- Institutional Learning and Improvement

The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory self-reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. The institution considers the changing environment of higher education in envisioning its future. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities, to plan, and to improve quality and effectiveness.

Quality Assurance Processes

Criteria for Review

4.1 The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

- Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction Policy
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual
- Program Review Resource Guide

See also CFR 2.7, 2.10

4.2 The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and characteristics. Data are disseminated internally and externally in a timely manner, and analyzed, interpreted, and incorporated in institutional review, planning, and decision-making. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the institutional research function and the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.

See also CFR 1.2, 2.10

Institutional Learning and Improvement

Criteria for Review

4.3 Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.

GUIDELINE: The institution has clear, well-established policies and practices—for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information—that create a culture of evidence and improvement.

See also CFR 2.2-2.6

4.4 The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty and other educators take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and uses the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

GUIDELINE: Periodic analysis of grades and evaluation procedures are conducted to assess the rigor and effectiveness of grading policies and practices.

See also CFR 2.2-2.6

4.5 Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, students, and others designated by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment and alignment of educational programs.

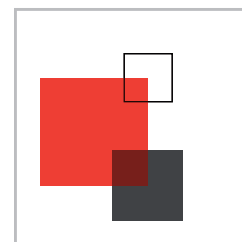
See also CFR 2.6, 2.7

4.6 The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution's strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.

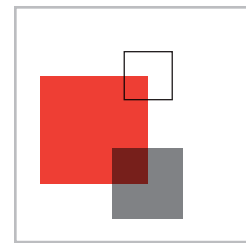
See also CFR 1.1, 3.4

4.7 Within the context of its mission and structural and financial realities, the institution considers changes that are currently taking place and are anticipated to take place within the institution and higher education environment as part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation.

See also CFR 1.1, 2.1, 3.4



The Institutional Review Process



This section is designed to assist institutions as they address WSCUC's 2013 Standards of Accreditation for reaffirmation of accreditation. It provides a description of the steps involved in an institution's reaffirmation process, the components that need to be included in the institutional report, interactions with the evaluation team, and other details.

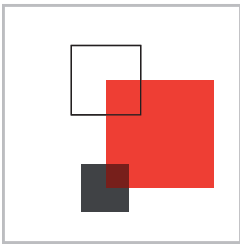
The Institutional Review Process (IRP) described below applies to institutions that are seeking reaffirmation of accreditation. Other models apply for institutions seeking Eligibility, Candidacy, or Initial Accreditation. At the Commission's discretion, institutions may be directed to follow a process that differs from the one described in the pages that follow, and those institutions will be guided by other documents describing those reviews.

All institutions need to demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and with those federal regulations that the Commission is required to oversee the implementation of. Within this con-

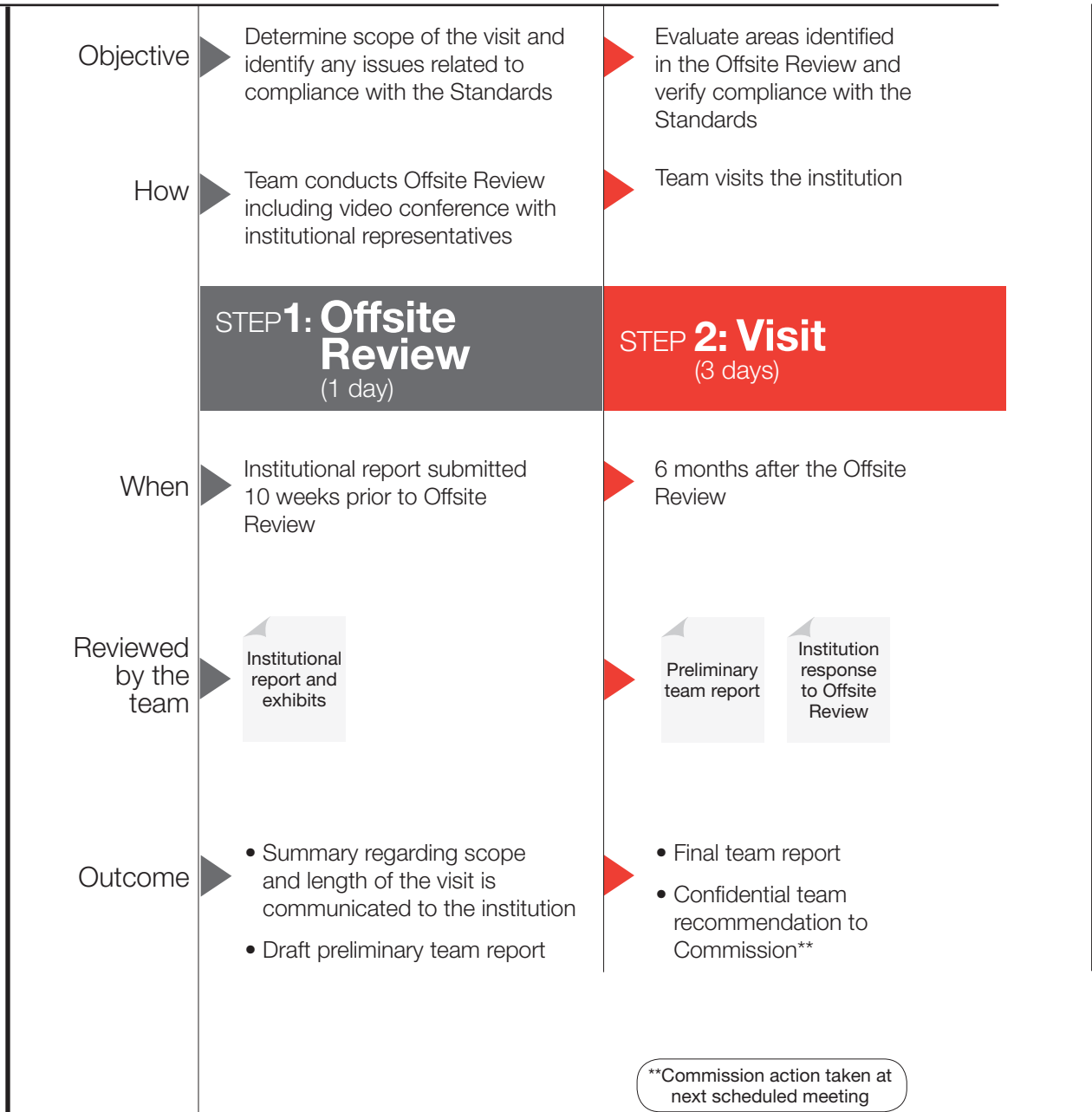
text, the goal of the process is the improvement of student learning, student success, and institutional effectiveness.

Institutions can typically expect to spend two to three years pursuing reaffirmation of WSCUC accreditation. Briefly stated, the IRP involves an Offsite Review by the evaluation team; and an Accreditation Visit to the institution by the same evaluation team. These steps are followed by a Commission decision on an institution's reaffirmation of accreditation. A description of the review process follows.

Student success includes not only strong retention and degree completion rates, but also high-quality learning. It means that students are prepared for success in their personal, civic, and professional lives, and that they embody the values and behaviors that make their institution distinctive.



Overview of the Institutional Review Process



Self-Study and Preparation for the Institutional Review Process

Opportunities for Guidance: WSCUC is committed to supporting institutions as they prepare for the Institutional Review Process. There will be multiple opportunities for institutions to receive information and guidance in order to prepare for the Offsite Review and Visit.

- **Academic Resource Conference:** Every year, WSCUC sponsors the Academic Resource Conference (ARC), which includes workshops and panels on the revised process that institutions will find helpful.
- **Institutional consultations:** Institutions should arrange on-campus consultations, at their cost, with their WSCUC staff liaison. Objectives for this consultation include a review of the institution's responses to previous Commission recommendations and identification of the goals for the self-study, including strengths and areas of challenge. In addition, the WSCUC liaison is available to meet on-site with groups and individuals involved in the self-study process. Together, the team and staff liaison will clarify subsequent steps and strategies for the review. These may include, for example, how the institution will organize for the review, how various constituencies will be involved, and what resources will be required.

The Self-Study: The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. At the beginning of the IRP, the self-study provides the necessary preparation for later steps, but self-study continues throughout the two to three years of review for reaffirmation. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high quality institutional report.

In preparation for the self-study, institutions are expected to review their accreditation history. This includes the most recent team report and all Commission action letters received since the last reaccreditation; documents submitted to WSCUC since the last review for reaffirmation of accreditation; and WSCUC responses where applicable (e.g., recommendations related to substantive changes or an interim report).

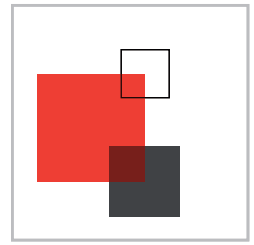
Early in the self-study, the institution undertakes the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements. This worksheet offers a guide to the four Standards of Accreditation, the Criteria for Review under each Standard, and Guidelines. The questions it poses are designed to prompt conversation on institutional capacity and infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and plans for ensuring

compliance with the Standards and institutional improvement.

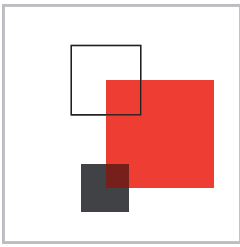
This worksheet calls only for information that has not been submitted with the institution's annual report and that demonstrates compliance with several federal requirements accreditors are expected to monitor. The institution should complete this worksheet for verification by the team during the review process.

The institution also completes the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, which provides a comprehensive overview of the institution's assessment processes and will be updated for the Mid-Cycle Review.

The completed Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements and the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, with links to supporting documentation, are submitted as exhibits with the Institutional Report. Their more important function, however, is to provide concrete prompts that help the institution to think collectively about its current status, its vision for the future, and what it may need to do to build on areas of strength, ensure improvement in areas of weakness, demonstrate compliance with federal regulations and WSCUC requirements, and accomplish a successful reaffirmation of accreditation.



The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards.



Instead of beginning with the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements and with the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, some institutions may prefer to frame their self-study around their own priorities and planning (e.g., strategic, financial, and/or academic). The accreditation review may then be adapted to support those goals. Some institutions administer surveys or conduct focus groups to identify top campus priorities. Such approaches have the advantage of putting the emphasis on the institution's goals and then integrating them with WSCUC expectations; thus they may inspire broader campus engagement, stronger commitment to the process, and greater returns on the effort and resources invested. However the institution chooses to begin, explicit attention to the Standards and CFRs, as well as documented compliance with federal laws and regulations, is required.

After these initial steps, the focus of the self-study shifts to the specific components that form the institutional report. These components are described in detail below, along with prompts that can stimulate inquiry and reflection.

Another essential element at the outset of the

self-study is practical planning for how the institution will launch and conduct the accreditation review. Such planning addresses the financial and human resources that will be needed, the structures that will support progress, the timeline and milestones that must be met, and metrics that are available or must be generated. To the extent possible, institutions are encouraged to make use of existing resources, e.g., standing committees, an assessment office, program review, and institutional research, before introducing new processes.

The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high quality institutional report.

The Institutional Report

Overview: The institutional report is based on the findings of the institution's self-study and, with the exception of an institution-specific theme, must include the components described below. However, the institution may structure its report in the way it finds best suited to tell its story, reordering and perhaps combining these components as needed. A suggested order for the components follows:

- Introduction: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions
- Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators
- Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees
- Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation
- Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation
- Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence
- Sustainability: Financial Viability; Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment
- Institution-specific Themes(s) (optional)
- Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The required and optional components of the institutional report are described below. Numbering is provided for ease of reference; it does not indicate relative value or a required order of presentation. In general, each component should include a discus-

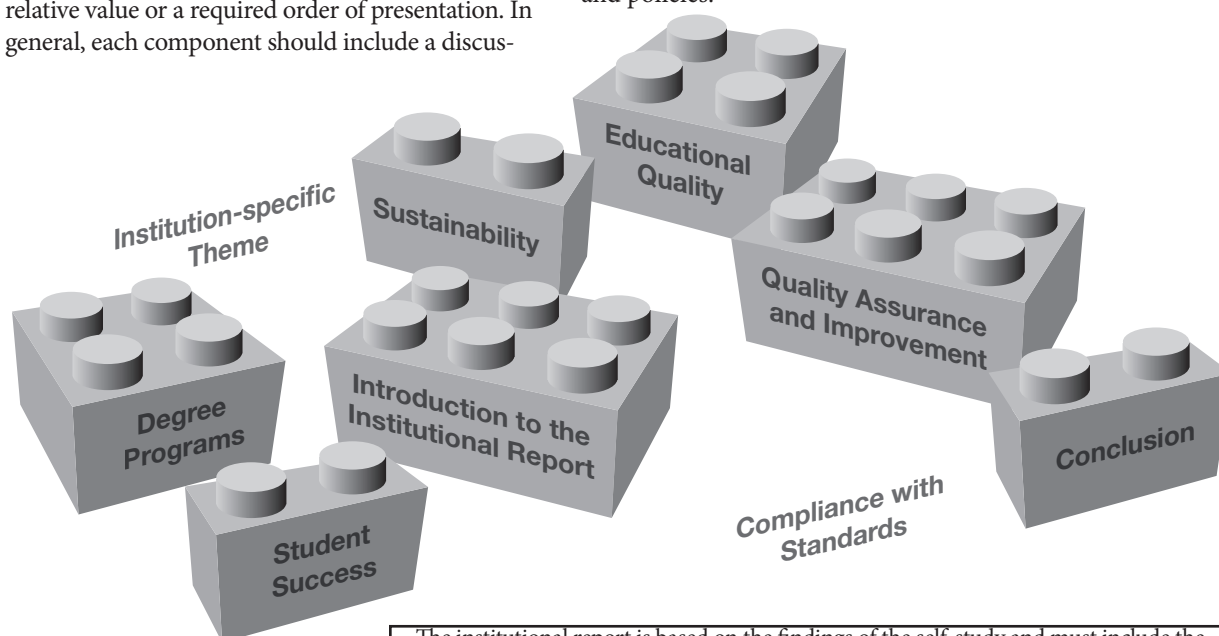
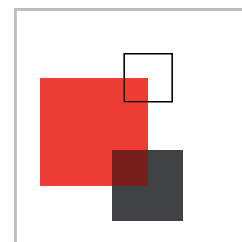
sion of the topic within the context of the institution; analyses undertaken; a self-assessment and reflection; areas of strength or significant progress and areas of challenge; and next steps, as appropriate. When plans are described, targets, metrics, and timelines should be included, as appropriate.

Length of the Report and Citation of Standards:

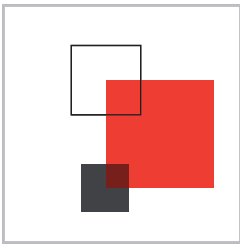
The institutional report narrative is typically 12,000 to 18,000 words (approximately 50-75 pages, double-spaced ; see the Style Guide for Writing WSCUC Reports) in length. In the body of the report, it is helpful to hyperlink to relevant documents in the exhibits in order to support each assertion and to provide easy navigation for evaluators.

References to the Standards of Accreditation and citations of specific CFRs are included, as appropriate, in the body of the report. It is not necessary to cite all the CFRs because these will have been addressed in the Review under the WSCUC Standards. Instead, the institutional report can cite only those CFRs of direct relevance to the topic under discussion (i.e., meaning of degrees, student learning and achievement, student success, quality assurance, planning for the future, and possibly an additional theme). Institutions may cite others, as relevant to their narratives.

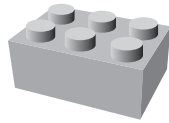
When the institutional report is submitted, it should include a letter, signed by the president/chancellor, affirming the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with WSCUC Standards and policies.



The institutional report is based on the findings of the self-study and must include the listed components. However, the institution may structure its report in the way it finds best suited to tell its story, reordering and perhaps combining these components as needed.



Components of the Institutional Report



1: Introduction to the Institutional Report: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions

(CFR 1.1, 1.8)

This component offers a succinct history of the institution and an overview of the institution's capacity, infrastructure, and operations. Activities such as distance education, hybrid courses, and off-campus instructional locations are integrated into this discussion. Special attention is given to significant changes since the last accreditation review, e.g., in mission, student demographics, structure, instructional modalities, finances, and other institution-level matters. This is also the place to provide a description of institutional values, the qualities of the educational experience that make graduates of this institution unique, how the institution is addressing diversity, and how it is contributing to the public good. If a theme(s) is included, it is introduced here with an explanation of how it was selected and where in the report the theme appears.

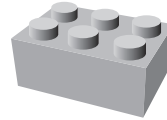
As part of this component, the institution also reviews the most recent team report and action letter and responds to Commission recommendations. As relevant, substantive change reviews, annual and interim reports, and trends or patterns of complaints against the institution, if any, may be discussed. This overview of its accreditation history, operations, strengths, and challenges can help the institution identify issues and anticipate questions that evaluation team members may pose as the institutional review proceeds.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What does the institution perceive as its strengths and challenges based, for example, on internal planning and evaluation?
- How has the institution responded to earlier WSCUC recommendations?
- How does the institution demonstrate its contribution to the public good?
- What are the institution's current priorities and plans?
- How did the institution prepare for this review? Who was involved? What was the process? How did this work connect with existing priorities and projects?

- What theme(s), if any, will be discussed and where in the report do they appear?
- Has the institution provided any additional guidance that will help readers follow the organization of the report?

2: Compliance with Standards: Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators



Federal law requires every institution coming under review for reaffirmation of accreditation to demonstrate that it is in compli-

ance with the Standards and CFRs of the accrediting association. In addition, the Commission requires that the institution have in place policies and procedures considered essential for sound academic practice.

WSCUC provides two documents— Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; and Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators—to assist institutions in reflecting and reporting on their compliance with these expectations. In addition, these documents will assist institutions in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Institutions need to complete both forms and include them among the exhibits that accompany the institutional report when it is submitted. An analysis and discussion of the institution's self-assessment and any plans emerging from these two exercises are discussed in the narrative for this component of the institutional report.

The Review under the WSCUC Standards systematically walks the institution through each of WSCUC's Standards, CFRs, and Guidelines. It prompts the institution to consider where it stands in relation to capacity and educational effectiveness. The required federal checklists provide the opportunity to show how it is meeting federal requirements. As part of the self-study, the Self-Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements can stimulate useful conversations about the institution's strengths, weaknesses, and future efforts.

Similarly, the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators provides assurance that every degree program has in place a system for assessing, tracking, and improving the learning of its students. This worksheet can assist institutions in determining the extent to which they have

effective assessment systems in place, and what additional components or processes they need to develop for continuous improvement. The Inventory will also be used as part of the Mid-Cycle Review, as institutions are requested to update the information for that review.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- Who participated in the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from completing this worksheet? What are the institution's strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- Who participated in the completion of the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators? What are the institution's strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- What plans are in place to address areas needing improvement? What resources, fiscal or otherwise, may be required?

3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees

(CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

Institutions are expected to define the meaning of the undergraduate and graduate degrees they confer and to ensure their quality and integrity. “Quality” and “integrity” have many definitions; in this context WSCUC understands them to mean a rich, coherent, and challenging educational experience, together with assurance that students consistently meet the standards of performance that the institution has set for that educational experience.

Traditionally, institutions have described their degrees either very generally (i.e., as something of self-evident value) or very concretely (in terms of specific degree requirements and preparation for specific professions). This component of the institutional report asks for something different: a holistic exploration of the middle ground between those two extremes, expressed in terms of the outcomes for students and the institutional mechanisms that support those outcomes. Defining the meaning of higher degrees can provide clarity for institutions, for students, and for a public that seeks to understand what unique educational experience will be had at that particular institution and what makes

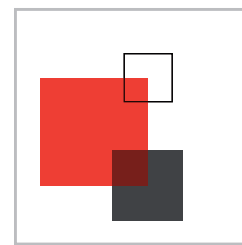
the investment in that experience worthwhile.

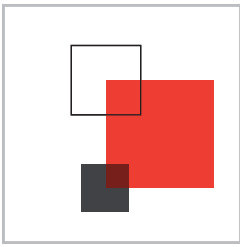
CFR 2.2 indicates that the degree as a whole should be more than the sum of its traditional parts: courses, credits, and grades. Exploring the meaning of a degree thus involves addressing questions about what the institution expects its students—undergraduates and graduates alike—to know and be able to do upon graduation, and how graduates embody the distinct values and traditions of the institution through their dispositions and future plans. It leads to analysis of how effectively courses, curricula, the co-curriculum, and other experiences are structured, sequenced, and delivered so that students achieve learning outcomes at the expected levels of performance in core competencies, in their majors or fields of specialization, in general education, and in areas distinctive to the institution. It means ensuring alignment among all these elements, and maintaining an assessment infrastructure that enables the institution to diagnose problems and make improvements when needed. Not least of all, it means developing the language to communicate clearly about the degree—what it demands and what it offers—to internal and external audiences.

Institutions may wish to draw on existing resources that can be used to understand and articulate the meaning of degrees. These include, for example, AAC&U's LEAP outcomes, the VALUE rubrics (which align with the LEAP outcomes), high-impact practices (or HIPS), and findings from NSSE, UCUES, CIRP, or the CSEQ (see Glossary for information on these resources). As appropriate, institution-level learning outcomes (ILOs) may also play a useful role in defining the meaning of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Identifying common outcomes at the division or school level rather than the institution level may make sense for some institutions.

Another resource is the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). This framework describes the meaning of three postsecondary degrees: associate, baccalaureate, and master's and defines increasingly sophisticated levels of performance in five broad areas of learning appropriate to postsecondary education. The DQP offers institutions—and the public—a point of reference and a common framework for talking about the meaning of degrees, but without prescriptions or standardization.

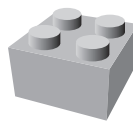
WSCUC does not require institutions to use any specific framework or resource in the articulation of the meaning, quality, and integrity of their degrees. Rather, institutions are encouraged to develop their own strategies for articulating the meaning of their degrees in ways that make sense for their mission, values, and student populations.





Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What does it mean for a graduate to hold a degree from the institution, i.e., what are the distinctive experiences and learning outcomes? For each degree level offered, what level of proficiency is expected? What is the overall student experience? How do these outcomes flow from the mission? (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) [Note: The discussion may focus on institutional learning outcomes that apply to all degree levels, or on the meaning of the degree at each level offered, i.e., associate, baccalaureate, master's, doctoral.]
- What are the processes used at the institution to ensure the quality and rigor of the degrees offered? How are these degrees evaluated to assure that the degrees awarded meet institutional standards of quality and consistency? (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6)
- What was identified in the process of considering the meaning, quality, and integrity of the degrees that may require deeper reflection, changes, restructuring, etc.? What will be done as a result? What resources will be required?
- What role does program review play in assessing the quality, meaning, and integrity of the institution's degree programs? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)



4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation (CFRs 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to document that students acquire knowledge and develop higher-order intellectual skills appropriate to the level of the degree earned. This documentation is a matter of validating institutional quality and providing accountability as well as setting the conditions for improvement of learning.

CFR 2.2a states that undergraduate programs must: “ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking.”

The institutional review process calls upon institutions to describe how the curriculum addresses each of the five core competencies, explain their learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies, and demonstrate, through evidence of student performance, the extent to which those outcomes are achieved. If they wish, institutions may create their own limited list of essential higher-

order competencies beyond the five listed. They may also report student performance in majors or professional fields and in terms of institution-level learning outcomes that make the institution's graduates distinctive. The institution analyzes the evidence according to its own judgment, reports on student achievement of its learning outcomes in a way that makes sense for the institution (e.g., as a single score, or within ranges or qualitative categories), contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement, if needed.

For example, for each core competency, the institution may set a specific level of performance expected at graduation and gather evidence of the achievement of that level of performance (which can be based on sampling) using the assessment methods of its choice.

The five core competencies listed in the *Handbook* are relevant in virtually any field of study, though different fields may define these outcomes in different ways and may also include other outcomes. At many institutions, it is the assessment of learning in the major or professional field that engages faculty and produces the most useful findings. Thus institutions may wish to embed assessment of core competencies in assessment of the major or professional field. Capstones, portfolios, research projects, signature assignments, internships, and comprehensive examinations provide rich evidence that can be analyzed for multiple outcomes, both specialized and common to all programs, at a point close to graduation as determined by the institution. Whatever the expectations and findings, they need to be contextualized and discussed in this component of the institutional report.

It is the institution's responsibility to set expectations for learning outcomes that are appropriate to the institution's mission, programs offered, student characteristics, and other criteria. The Commission is not seeking a minimum standard of performance that students would already meet upon entry or upon completion of lower-division general education courses. Nor does it seek outcomes common to all institutions irrespective of mission. Rather, the Commission seeks learning outcomes and standards of performance that are appropriately ambitious, that faculty and students can take pride in, and that can be explained and demonstrated to external audiences. If a given competency is not a priority for the institution or a particular field of study, expectations may legitimately be lower. Within the context of the institution's mission, the evaluation team then weighs the appropriateness of outcomes, standards, and evidence of attainment.

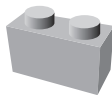
Standards of performance are best set through internal discussion among faculty and other campus educators. Although it is not required, institutions may benefit from external perspectives and collaboration with other institutions, e.g., through benchmarking or use of comparative data. For example, an institution may join a consortium that shares assessment findings and calibrates desired levels of performance.

Graduate programs and graduate-only institutions are expected to define and assess the generic intellectual competencies that are foundational in their field. CFR 2.2b, which refers to graduate programs, calls for expectations that are “clearly . . . differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of . . . standards of performance and student learning outcomes.” Graduate programs also set standards of performance, choose assessment methods, interpret the results, and act on findings in ways that make sense for the program and institution.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes should students possess when they graduate with a degree from the institution? What are the key learning outcomes for each level of degree?
 - For undergraduate programs, how do the institution’s key learning outcomes align with the core competencies set forth in CFR 2.2a? (CFRs 2.3, 2.4.)
 - For graduate programs, how are graduate level outcomes developed? How do these outcomes align with CFR 2.2b? (CFRs 2.3, 2.4)
- What are the standards of performance for students? How are these standards set, communicated, and validated? (CFR 2.6)
- What methods are used to assess student learning and achievement of these standards? When is learning assessed in these areas (e.g., close to graduation or at some other milestone)? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.3)
- What evidence is there that key learning outcomes are being met? (CFR 2.6)
- What steps are taken when achievement gaps are identified? How are teaching and learning improved as a result of assessment findings? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.3, 4.4)

- What role does program review play in assessing and improving the quality of learning? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
- How deeply embedded is learning-centeredness across the institution? What is the evidence? (CFRs 4.1-4.3)



5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation

(CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.13)

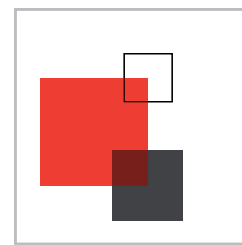
Student success includes not only strong retention and degree completion rates, but also high-quality learning. It means that students are prepared for success in their personal, civic, and professional lives, and that they embody the values and behaviors that make their institution distinctive. Institutions’ definitions of success will differ, given their unique missions, traditions, programs, and the characteristics of the students served.

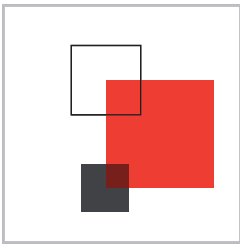
One metric for this component is WSCUC’s Graduation Rate Dashboard (GRD), which uses six data points to estimate the institution’s absolute graduation rate over time and accounts for all graduates regardless of how students matriculate (first-time or transfer, lower or upper division) or enroll (part-time, full-time, swirling), or what programs they pursue.

The GRD does not track specific cohorts of students. Institutions should also calculate direct measures of retention and graduation.

This component needs to address, explicitly, the learning and personal development dimensions of student success. Since aggregate data can mask disparities among student subpopulations, institutions are advised to disaggregate their data, going beyond demographic characteristics. For example, analysis using several variables (such as students’ choice of major, participation in research, study abroad, leadership roles, admission to honor societies, pass rates on licensure examinations, and admission to graduate programs) may yield useful information.

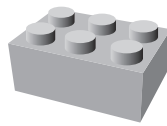
While student success is the responsibility of the entire institution, student affairs and academic support can play a particularly critical role. Here, too, a well-developed assessment infrastructure can provide the data to document and improve student success.





Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How is student success defined (accounting for both completion and learning), given the distinctive mission, values, and programs offered, and the characteristics of the students being served? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
- How is student success promoted, including both completion and learning? What has been learned about different student subpopulations as a result of disaggregating data? (CFRs 2.3, 2.10-2.14)
- What role does program review play in assessing and improving student success? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
- Which programs are particularly effective in retaining and graduating their majors? What can be learned from them? What is the students' experience like? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
- How well do students meet the institution's definition of student success? In what ways does the institution need to improve so that more students are successful? What is the timeline for improvement? How will these goals be achieved? (CFRs 2.6, 4.1-4.4)



6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence

(CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

Successful quality improvement efforts are broadly participatory, iterative, and evidence-based. This component of the institutional report includes a discussion of three basic tools of quality improvement—program review, assessment of student learning, and data collection and analysis—and presents the ways these tools inform the institution's decision making. In addition, institutions are welcome to discuss other quality improvement approaches that have made a difference, if they wish.

Program review remains a priority for WSCUC. It is a natural nexus and point of integration for the collection of data and findings about the meaning of the degree, the quality of learning, core competencies, standards of student performance, retention, graduation, and overall student success. Because of the commitment of students to their degree programs and the loyalty of faculty to their disciplines, program review has great power to influence the quality of the educational experience. Program review can also provide insight into desirable future directions for the program and the institution.

In addition to implementing systematic program review, institutions are expected to periodically assess the effectiveness of their program review process. They can do so, for example, by reviewing the quality and consistency of follow-up after program reviews; determining the effectiveness with which the program review addresses achievement of program learning outcomes; and tracing how recommendations are integrated into institutional planning and budgeting.

Assessment, along with program review, is an essential tool that supports the goals and values of the accreditation process. "Assessing the assessment" should not crowd out the work of understanding student learning and using evidence to improve it. However, good practice suggests that it is wise to step back periodically, ask evaluative questions about each stage of the assessment cycle, and seek ways to make assessment more effective, efficient, and economical.

Data provide the foundation for effective program review, assessment of student learning, and other quality improvement strategies. However, to have an impact, data need to be turned into evidence and communicated in useful formats. The discussion of data collection, analysis, and use can include, for example, information about resources provided by the institutional research office (if one exists), software used to generate reports, access to data, processes for making meaning out of data (see the WSCUC Evidence Guide for more information), and mechanisms for communicating data and findings.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How have the results of program review been used to inform decision making and improve instruction and student learning outcomes? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)
- What was identified in the process of examining the institution's program review process that may require deeper reflection, changes, restructuring? What will be done as a result? What resources will be required? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6)
- What has the program or institution learned as it carried out assessments of students' learning? How have assessment protocols, faculty development, choices of instruments, or other aspects of assessment changed as a result? (CFR 4.1)
- How adequate is the institutional research function? How effectively does it support and inform institutional decision-making, planning, and improvement? How well does it support assessment of student learning? (CFRs 4.2-4.7)

7: Sustainability: Financial Viability; Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment

(CFRs 3.4, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3-4.7)

To survive and thrive, institutions must not only cope with the present, but also plan for the future. In this component, WSCUC asks each institution first to describe its current status as a viable, sustainable organization; and second, to evaluate how it is poised to address fundamental changes facing higher education in the decade to come. In other words, what is the institution's vision of a 21st century education, and what role will the institution play?

At its most basic, “sustainability” means the ability to support and maintain, to keep something intact and functioning properly. Institutional sustainability has at least two dimensions. Fiscal sustainability—that is, adequacy of financial resources and the appropriate alignment of those resources—is fundamental and has always been critical in any institutional review. Indeed, financial exigency has historically been regional accreditors' single most frequent cause for sanctions. In a highly volatile financial environment, assurance of financial sustainability becomes even more critical.

In this component, the institution presents its current financial position. If the Financial Review Committee has raised any issues or made recommendations, then the institution presents its response in this section of the report. Plans should include targets, metrics, and timelines.

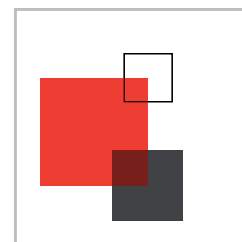
A second facet of financial sustainability is alignment. It is essential that resources be allocated in alignment with the institution's priorities. For an educational institution, clearly, a top priority is student learning and success; thus resource allocation needs to support educational effectiveness, along with other activities that advance knowledge, develop human capital, and allow the institution to learn, adapt, and thrive.

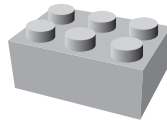
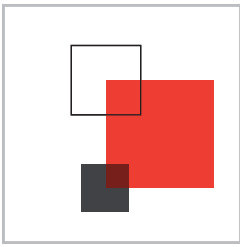
A third dimension of sustainability is the institution's ability to read the evolving higher education landscape and anticipate ways in which the institution itself may need to change. New technologies, economic pressures, public concern about the quality of learning, demographic shifts, student preparation for college, new skills and knowledge needed for success, and alternatives to traditional degrees—all these shifts and many others are rapidly transforming the social, economic, and political environment in which higher education functions.

The task here is for institutions to develop a vision of their role in 21st century higher education. The choices institutions make in the face of these bracing conditions will influence their long-term success.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- Under Standard 3, institutions are expected to “develop and apply resources and organizational structures to ensure sustainability.” How can the institution demonstrate that its operations will remain financially sustainable over the next 6 to 10 years? (CFRs 3.4 and 4.6)
- How well do financial allocations align with institutional priorities, particularly those related to the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees offered; student learning and success; and processes for quality assurance, accountability, and improvement? (CFRs 3.4, 4.3)
- Under Standard 2, how does the institution identify and enhance the competencies that students will need to succeed in the future? (CFRs 1.2, 2.2)
- What role does program review play in developing a vision of 21st century education for individual programs and for the institution as a whole? (CFR 4.7)
- In what ways can the institution ensure that educational effectiveness will continue during the period from the present to the next reaffirmation of accreditation? What systems and processes are in place? How deeply embedded are these initiatives in institutional systems and culture? How is educational effectiveness prioritized in the institution's formal plans? (CFRs 3.1-3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.6)
- How does the institution demonstrate that it is a learning organization? What evidence can be put forward? (CFRs 4.3-4.7)
- What resources have been committed to assessment of learning and improvement of student performance? How are decisions about levels of support made? How is support maintained even in times of constrained resources? (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.4)
- Of the changes taking place globally, nationally, locally, and in higher education, which ones will affect the institution most strongly in the next seven to 10 years? What is the institution's vision of education for the coming decade? For the more distant future? How is the institution anticipating, planning for, and adapting to such changes? (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)
- What specific skills does the institution possess or need to develop in order to engage with developments impacting its future, including those occurring globally? (CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 4.6, 4.7)





8: Institution-specific Theme(s) (optional) (CFRs as appropriate)

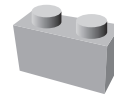
The accreditation review is an opportunity for institutions to align their own priorities with WSCUC's quality improvement process. In the *2001 Handbook*, the theme-based approach to self-study offered institutions the clearest opportunity for this kind of campus-wide engagement and improvement, and the vast majority of institutions took advantage of it. Thus the *2013 Handbook* continues to offer this option. In addition to addressing the components described above, institutions may identify and study one or two themes that are specific to the institution and of critical importance. The theme may emerge from institutional planning or other processes; in any case, it should connect to the Standards.

If the institutional report includes a theme, the component on institutional context is the place to introduce the theme and orient the reader to the part(s) of the institutional report where the theme will be developed. Origins of the theme, analysis, recommendations for action, and related steps can be included as a separate component of the institutional report, or the theme can be woven into one of the other components, as appropriate. Whatever the institution decides, it is helpful to inform the WSCUC staff liaison of the theme early on, so that an individual with relevant background can be included on the evaluation team.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What one or two themes would advance institutional priorities and add value to the accreditation review?

- What are the institution's goals or outcomes in pursuing this theme? What is the timeline, what evidence and metrics will show progress, and what resources (financial, human, other) will be required?



9: Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

In this concluding component, the institution assesses the impact of the self-study, reflects on what it has learned in the course of the self-study, and discusses what it plans to do next. This is also the place to highlight what the institution has learned about key areas of exemplary institutional performance.

Exhibits

Exhibits are attached to the institutional report and support the narrative. By being selective about what to include, an institution can avoid excessive documentation, which can be challenging for institutions to collect and for evaluation team members and the Commission to read.

The exhibits include the following items:

- Completed Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements.
- Completed Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators.
- Institution-selected exhibits that support the institutional report's narrative.

Program review remains a priority for WSCUC. It is a natural nexus and point of integration for the collection of data and findings about the meaning of the degree, the quality of learning, core competencies, standards of student performance, retention, graduation, and overall student success.



Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees FAQs

Overview & Purpose

In the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*, institutions are asked to address the Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees in component 3 of the institutional report. The purpose of these FAQs is to provide additional information to institutions regarding how to think about and address this component.

1. What is meant by the “meaning,” “quality,” and “integrity” of degrees and how can an institution demonstrate it is meeting this requirement?

CFR 2.2 indicates that the degree as a whole should be more than the sum of its traditional parts: courses, credits, and grades. Demonstrating the meaning of degrees thus involves addressing questions about what the institution expects its students – undergraduates and graduates alike – to know and be able to do upon graduation, and how graduates embody the distinct values and traditions of the institution through their dispositions and future plans. A degree that is of high quality and integrity is one in which appropriately relevant and challenging learning goals are met by students who are offered a rich and coherent educational experience that is designed, delivered, and assessed by appropriately qualified faculty and supported by other institutional personnel as needed to ensure student success in achieving those goals. An institution may want to address all of these elements in providing evidence of the meaning, quality, and integrity of its degrees.

2. Why are institutions in the region being asked to define and document the meaning, quality, and integrity of our degrees?

The value of higher education in the U.S. is being questioned today more forcefully than at any time in recent memory. Institutions and accreditors are challenged to demonstrate that it is worth the time, effort, and money necessary for students to engage in and complete postsecondary study leading to a degree. Traditionally, institutions have described their degrees either very generally (i.e., as something of self-evident value) or very concretely (in terms of specific degree requirements and preparation for specific professions). This component of the institutional report asks for something different: a holistic exploration of the middle ground between those two extremes, expressed in terms of the outcomes for students and the institutional mechanisms that support those outcomes. Defining the meaning of higher degrees can provide clarity for institutions, for students, and for a public that seeks to understand what unique educational experience will be had at that particular institution and what makes the investment in that experience worthwhile.

3. What's the relationship between the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees (component 3 of the institutional report) and educational quality, specifically the core competencies (component 4)?

Component 3 takes a broad, holistic view of the entire educational experience leading to a degree; component 4 is concerned with five specific higher-order intellectual skills that provide a foundation for current and future learning. For Component 3, institutions are encouraged to develop their own strategies for articulating the meaning of their degrees in ways that make sense for their mission, values, and student populations.

The response in Component 4 should convey the institution's expectations for its graduates' performance in these specific areas and how the institution determines whether graduates are reliably achieving those expectations. It is the institution's responsibility to set expectations for learning outcomes that are appropriate to the institution's mission, programs offered, student characteristics, and other criteria. The institution analyzes the evidence according to its own judgment, reports on student achievement of its learning outcomes in a way that makes sense for the institution (e.g., as a single score, or within ranges or qualitative categories), contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement, if needed.

An institution's response in component 3 provides a broad background for understanding how these specific competencies are related to the meaning of the institution's degrees. Some institutions might find it useful to frame their response to component 3 in a way that anticipates its response to component 4. The *2013 Handbook* notes that institutions may structure their reports in the way that they find best suited to telling their stories and are free to depart from the suggested order by combining or reordering the components. However, reviewers should be able to identify the parts of the report that are intended as the response to the various components.

4. Do institutions have to use the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)? Does it improve their chances of a positive review if they do?

No and No. WSCUC does not require institutions to use the DQP or any other specific framework or resource. Rather, institutions are encouraged to develop their own strategies for articulating the meaning of their degrees in ways that make sense for their mission, values, and student populations.

5. Are institutions being asked to document that every student is meeting every expectation?

No. For good assessment practices to be sustainable, sampling is appropriate in most cases. Institutions are free to develop practices that best meet their needs.

Adopted by the Commission in June 2014



Core Competency FAQs

Overview & Purpose

In the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*, Criteria for Review 2.2a states:

Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, **written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking.**

Component 4 (Educational Quality) of the Institutional Review Process asks for institutions “to describe how the curriculum addresses each of the five core competencies, explain their learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies, and demonstrate, through evidence of student performance, the extent to which those outcomes are achieved.”

The purpose of these FAQs is to provide additional information to institutions regarding the five core competencies.

1. How did WSCUC come up with these five competencies? Why were writing (W), oral communication (OC), quantitative reasoning (QR), information literacy (IL), and critical thinking (CT) singled out for such focused treatment in the institutional report?

These competencies have been part of Standard 2 for undergraduate degrees (criterion for review 2.2a) since 2001. The language of CFR 2.2 states that “all degrees . . . awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of . . . levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits.” Now, at a time when there is widespread concern about the quality of graduates’ learning, and when assessment practices have emerged that are able to address these outcomes in nuanced ways, the Commission is asking for documentation of actual achievement.

While CFR 2.2a mentions additional outcomes beyond the five core competencies – e.g., creativity, appreciation for diversity, and civic engagement – the five that are the focus of component 4 were deemed generic, fundamental to students’ future success, and assessable. The focus on these five does not in any way limit institutions that wish to address additional competencies.

2. What are the definitions of these five core competencies? Who gets to define them?

Institutions are free to define each core competency in a way that makes sense for the institution, its mission, its values, and the needs of its student body. The assumption, however, is that these are generic competencies – that is, applicable across multiple programs – that will be approached in an interdisciplinary, integrative way. Institutions have a lot of latitude in deciding how they will do that.

3. Are these core competencies supposed to be institutional learning outcomes (ILOs)?

That's one way to approach them. For many institutions, there's a lot of overlap between their ILOs and the five core competencies. For very large, complex institutions, it may be more appropriate – and manageable – to approach them at the college, division, or department level.

4. Can institutions assess the core competencies in the major?

Because most students take major courses right to the end of their studies, there are advantages in embedding core competencies into the assessment of the major or professional field. Many majors use capstones, senior projects, e-portfolios, or other methods of collecting student work for assessment, and these can provide evidence of students' mastery of the competencies. Assessing core competencies at the degree level allows expectations and types of evidence to be adapted to the degree. For example, depending on the field, oral communication skills might be demonstrated through debating, interviewing, negotiating, counseling, or presenting ideas.

In some cases, assessing students' level of achievement in a particular competency through the major assessment might not seem appropriate (e.g., quantitative reasoning in an English or dance major) or feasible, where faculty are reluctant to integrate them into their assessment of the major. In that case, the institution can look at other options such as upper-division GE; signature assignments across a range of upper-division courses that students may be taking as electives; or a core competency portfolio that students assemble with artifacts that illustrate each of the core competencies. The benefit of this last approach is that it can also include items from the co-curriculum or internships.

So the answer to the question about "having" to assess core competencies in the major is no. The major is probably the easiest place to do it, but not the only place, and it's definitely not required.

5. Do institutions need to assess and support transfer students' development of the CCs?

Yes. The diploma that students receive, whether they're native students or transfers, will look the same. It's the institution's responsibility – as well as in the student's interest – to ensure that the degree represents high-quality learning for every graduate.

6. Academic programs are all so different. Does this mean there are different definitions of the core competencies and different assessment processes for each program?

Program-level learning and assessment results are very important; they're a key part of program review, which also has a place in the 2013 institutional review process, or IRP (see Component #6: Quality Assurance and Improvement). But with the core competencies, the goal is a higher level of aggregation: the institution level, or at very large and complex universities, the school or college or division level. Institutions should develop processes that allow for differences while at the same time focusing on commonalities across disciplines.

7. Is it necessary to document how much students learned and developed from entry to exit? Should there be pre- and post-testing?

No. While it can be useful to know the trajectory of students' learning over time, so faculty can see where they improved or plateaued or even became less proficient, the focus is on their level of

proficiency at graduation. Think of assessment that measures growth as a tool for enhancing the final result. Pre- and post-testing is one approach to assessment, and it may be useful. But it can also be costly, it is methodologically challenging, and the results can be difficult to interpret. In some contexts, it can be inauthentic and self-serving.

8. What about institutions that award A.A. or A.S. degrees? Should core competencies be assessed for students as they leave with an associate's degree? What if they transfer to a baccalaureate program?

Yes, the Commission cares about students' mastery of competencies in all degree programs, from associate to graduate levels. Institutions that award A.A. or A.S. degrees should also set standards, report results, and document plans for improvement when necessary at those levels.

9. Does this core competency requirement mean that institutions have to show 100% of students meeting the standard? Or that a student who doesn't meet the standard gets a failing grade – for example on their capstone – or doesn't graduate?

No. What is important—to the institution as well as the Commission—is the distribution: what proportion of your students is meeting the standard or even exceeding it? What proportion is below the standard, and how far below? And what do you plan to do to raise overall performance and shift the distribution upward, if you are dissatisfied with the results?

10. How can such extensive and complex findings be documented for the institutional review process, particularly at large institutions with hundreds of programs, multiple divisions, and several degree levels?

As an element of their institutional reports, institutions are asked to describe and provide evidence of how they assess students' achievement of core competencies. Institutions are free to decide how best to organize the setting of proficiency standards, assessment, documentation, and reporting of results, but it must be clear that this work is documented as it occurs throughout the institution. For large, complex institutions a narrative summary might be provided to include where responsibility for this work lies; general information on the definition of these proficiencies and how they were developed; general information on cycles and timelines for reviews across the institution; systems or processes for reviewing data/information obtained through reviews; and locus of authority for taking action based on results. A matrix providing specifics could be created to demonstrate the pervasiveness and effectiveness of this work throughout the institution. Depending on the size and structure of the institution, this might be done through a selection of examples that represent all of the institution's programs, divisions, and degree levels.

Adopted by the Commission in June 2014

THE EMERGING LEARNING SYSTEM

Report on the recent convening and new directions for action

June 2016



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FOREWORD

In February, Lumina Foundation hosted more than 40 national experts in a discussion central to Goal 2025. With nine years remaining to reach Goal 2025 and growing concern about the learning that stands behind postsecondary credentials in the U.S., we're pleased to share the discussions from the convening and proposed next steps to advance what is coming to be known as *learning systems reform*.

Lumina is committed to Goal 2025 – *increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality postsecondary credentials to 60 percent by 2025*. Lumina defines high-quality credentials as those with *transparent learning outcomes leading to further education and employment*. Since adopting Goal 2025, we have hosted a number of conversations related to learning – most recently, the convening that is described in this report. We've also supported a series of conversations which are part of an evolving national dialogue on credentialing summarized in *Connecting Credentials: Lessons from the National Summit on Credentialing and Next Steps in the National Dialogue* (see www.ConnectingCredentials.org for further background).

What is increasingly apparent from these conversations is that they are converging around learning as central to the national effort to increase postsecondary attainment. Many higher education institutions are using the *Degree Qualifications Profile* (DQP) to guide efforts to strengthen the quality of their associate, bachelor's and master's degrees. There are other learning and skills frameworks that apply to other credentials (e.g., certificates, industry certifications, badges, apprenticeships, micro-credentials) to help clarify the learning/skills outcomes behind them. These include the beta Credentials Framework, employability skills frameworks, and a number of industry sector frameworks.

The National Summit on Credentialing held in October 2015 led to the appointment of work groups that have been meeting since February to address five focus areas to advance the credentialing effort. The work groups' goal is to create an action plan for a coherent, connected and clear credentialing system that works for *all* students. The groups comprise roughly 100 national experts in the credentialing area, some of whom are also part of the learning systems group described in this report. The five focus areas dovetail in many ways with the directions for action emerging from the Learning Systems convening.

The table on Page 3 outlines excerpts of important areas of commonality between the recommendations in this report and those offered in an earlier report: *Connecting Credentials: Lessons from the National Summit on Credentialing and Next Steps in the National Dialogue*.

We are heartened to see these important conversations about learning and credentialing converge. Educators, employers, learners, policymakers and researchers are increasingly asking the same questions: *Do our degrees, certificates and other credentials stand for high quality? What is the learning – the skills – that our credentials signify? How do we know learning has occurred and that skills have been acquired? Which credentials have the most value?*

There is growing recognition that credentials must stand for high-quality learning and skill development; that several key steps are needed to advance the creation of a more transparent, connected credentialing system in the U.S.; and that we must not advance these actions in silos. Rather, progress requires partnerships and collective action. That's the only way to achieve our shared vision and leverage resources for the long journey ahead.

We have many groups to thank for their leadership in the conversation about learning systems reform. Key among them are the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). These organizations ably assisted us in identifying resources to inform the convening discussions on learning systems and the national experts who are leading major efforts to strengthen learning outcomes.

Finally, our sincere appreciation goes to the more than 40 national experts who joined Lumina Foundation and our colleagues from the Teagle Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at the February convening. These individuals informed the growing community of individuals and organizations committed to learning systems work and urged us all to consider thoughtfully the type of collaboration necessary to advance this work. The insights from these experts have strengthened Lumina's own commitment to connect high-quality credentials to learning – and we invite others to join us in the critical work ahead.

Dewayne Matthews, Ph.D.
Vice President of Strategy Development

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Strategy Director

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Strategy Officer

• CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES FROM TWO GROUPS

CONNECTING CREDENTIALS

- Develop a common language so that we have a common way of explaining credentials in terms of the competencies – the knowledge and skills – that each represents.
- Use technology and real-time data to empower credential users including learners, employers and advisers to make informed decisions about credential options, pathways to them, and their value in the labor market.
- Create nimble quality-assurance processes to ensure the credentials people earn are of high quality so that workers enter the workforce prepared to thrive, and all stakeholders trust the validity of the credentials being used.
- Develop scalable ways of engaging employers to ensure credentials are relevant in the workforce, in the creation and use of those credentials.
- Build credentialing pathways to increase equity so that quality credentials are linked to career pathways and the pathways are increasing attainment among first-generation and minority students. This will lead to greater social equity and better outcomes for those who have not been well served by our higher education system.

EMERGING LEARNING SYSTEM

- We need a shared language to talk more widely about the reforms needed in our learning systems. A specific next step is to create a shared glossary of terms. A shared glossary will help us avoid disagreements about what some terms mean and make the case for changes needed.
- Every professional is important – advisers, course designers, registrars, faculty, staff, and employers – and each uses technology in helping students learn what they need to succeed in the 21st century economy and society.
- Curriculum is redesigned to ensure students' educational experiences create personalized learning pathways toward the learning outcomes associated with the high-quality credential they seek.
- Research informs us that integrated, interdisciplinary learning requires faculty to move beyond a discipline-based orientation to work with educators across the institution and practitioners in the employer world.
- Shift the public policy narrative from 'postsecondary education is a private good' to the equity-minded view that 'postsecondary education is a public good.' Jobs providing a living wage will require post-secondary credentials. This underscores the urgency that Americans from every background pursue a high quality postsecondary credential.

INTRODUCTION

WHY A ‘LEARNING OUTCOMES’ CONVENING?

For more than two decades, higher education leaders and associations, employers and policymakers have been asking tough questions about how well our nation’s colleges and universities prepare graduates to contribute successfully to a changing global workforce and society. Business leaders often express frustration that college graduates are not achieving the broad, cross-cutting learning outcomes they need at high enough levels to fuel a technology-rich, innovation-driven economy. They also complain that – whatever levels of learning graduates might be achieving – transcripts, resumes, and other current forms of documentation do not provide information that enables anyone outside the academy to understand clearly what students actually learned in college. They often don’t know what a specific degree or credential signifies in terms of *learning* – what students know and can do.

“We have no idea what our nation is getting substantively in exchange for an enormous public investment in higher education and constantly rising private tuition.” - *The Hill*

Given how important a highly educated citizenry has become to our nation’s economic vitality, it is not surprising that policymakers at both the state and federal levels also have been asking tougher questions about how well our colleges and universities are performing. While policymakers have until very recently been primarily focused on access, affordability, attainment rates, and average salaries of graduates, business leaders have been more concerned – and vocal – about actual learning outcomes. A recent op-ed in *The Hill* (Barry 2015) noted that “for all the rhetoric and angst about increasing college prices, the dirty little secret of higher education is that a college degree doesn’t actually represent any particular set of knowledge or skills. We have no idea what our nation is getting – substantively –

in exchange for an enormous public investment in higher education and constantly rising private tuition. Do students leave with just a piece of paper or do they leave intellectually with something appreciably greater?”

Higher education leaders have not ignored these critiques. Many educators also have been concerned – especially in the face of changing demographics and changing patterns of college attendance – about the intentionality of curricular pathways and the actual levels of learning of students. In the past, students relied on one institution for their degree program and institutions hoped to deliver a logically sequenced education. While coherence may have been illusory even then, newer attendance patterns place greater responsibility on students themselves to create meaningful learning from a supermarket of choices (AAC&U 2002). This trend toward “student swirl” has only increased. It emphasizes the need for institutions and systems of higher education to collaborate on clarifying expected learning outcomes and demonstrating students’ achievement as they progress.

These pressures and concerns all drive a steady increase in attention to learning outcomes – how we define them and measure how well students are actually achieving them in and across all kinds of institutions and educational experiences. Dozens of projects and many reports have been issued in the last decade addressing the need for greater clarity about learning outcomes and the need to assess them more effectively.

Lumina Foundation’s Goal 2025 seeks to *increase the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025*, defined as those that are based on transparent learning outcomes **and** that lead to further education and employment.

With Goal 2025 in mind, and aware of growing concern about student learning outcomes, Lumina Foundation invited more than 40 practitioners and leaders working in the learning outcomes space to a convening in early February 2016. The goal of the convening, called “It’s All About the Learning,” was to strengthen collaboration among a variety of efforts advancing quality learning, equity, and completion; the use of credential/learning outcomes frameworks; the creation of transparent,

flexible and guided learning pathways; and recognition of credentials based on competencies. The objectives of the convening were to:

- Create a shared understanding of initiatives focused on enhancing high-quality learning, equity and completion, including what is working or not working.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration in advancing initiatives focused on learning, equity and completion, as well as expanding cross-initiative support.
- Develop plans for how to move forward on opportunities of shared interest and discuss the potential for a more organized community of policy and practice to support this work.

The accompanying table outlines six likely categories of the emerging concept of a learning system. The categories were identified following an analysis of nearly 200 resources (e.g., reports, books, tools, bibliographies) that inform higher education institutions, systems and state leaders about how to engage in learning systems work. A key criterion for including an item in the resource list was that it had been published within the past five years. The first supplemental document appended to this report (*It is About the Learning*) contains more information about the key categories of a learning system and resources reviewed, by categories.

SIX COMPONENTS OF AN EMERGING LEARNING SYSTEM

Quality Learning Frameworks

- Common Core and higher education alignment
- Degree Qualifications Profile and Tuning
- Essential Learning Outcomes

- Beta Credentials Framework
- Employer engagement in quality
- Additional learning frameworks

Pathways

- Competency-based education
- General education and major program redesign
- Remediation/developmental education

- High-impact practices
- Guided pathways
- Transfer

Assessment

- State of assessment
- Approaches to assessment
- Prior learning assessment
- Assignments as assessment

- Rubrics
- Co-curricular assessment
- General education assessment

Recognition of Credentials

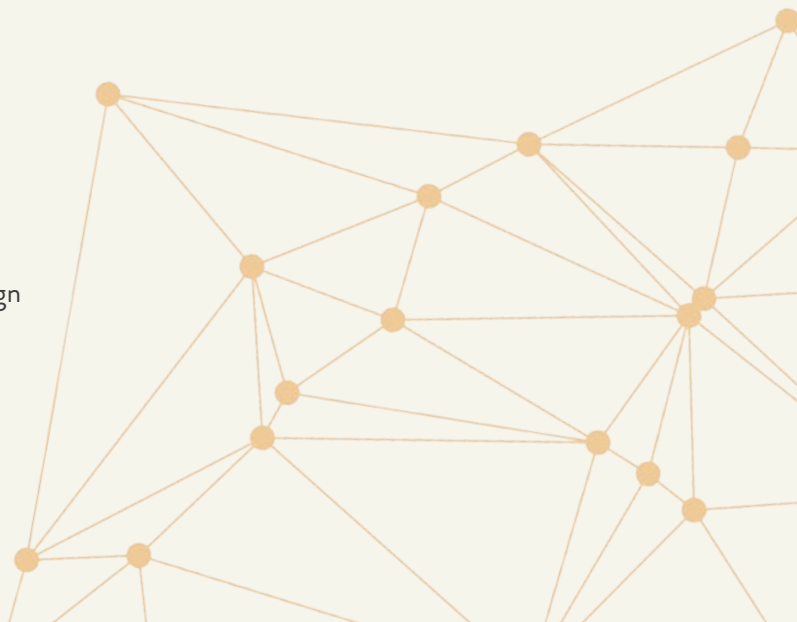
- Transcripts and badges
- Credential registry
- Comprehensive student records

Equity

- Inclusive excellence
- Equity-minded practice
- Culturally relevant curriculum design

Leadership and Change

- Senior leaders
- Change initiatives
- Faculty



IDENTIFYING THE PARTICIPANTS

In planning for the convening, Lumina worked closely with two leading organizations in learning outcomes work – the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). These organizations suggested resources to inform the discussions and also helped identify national experts who lead major projects on learning outcomes, approaches to teaching and learning, frameworks, pathways, equity, assessment, and documentation of learning.

The attendees represented research centers, higher education systems and institutions (community colleges and universities), assessment offices, regional accrediting bodies, and intermediary organizations with expertise in policy and technical assistance. Experts represented six categories that constitute the emerging learning system (see accompanying chart and Appendix A).

Because this was an initial gathering, the participant list was not exhaustive. For example, employers and policymakers – groups that clearly have essential roles

to play in the learning outcomes reform movement – were not included. The intent was not to exclude them but to first gain clarity from educators about how to move forward before bringing them more directly into the evolving national dialogue.

The great deal of work already underway in many locations (e.g., within individual colleges/universities and among interinstitutional and regional compacts, national online collaboratives and national disciplinary associations) was reflected in the pre-conference reading materials. Much of this work focuses on the use of learning outcome frameworks and credential frameworks, the creation of guided learning pathways, and the recognition of credentials based on competencies and other learning outcomes. It was also evident that these efforts are often disconnected. A key purpose of the convening, therefore, was to encourage attendees to look for ways to combine and/or expand their efforts in order to scale these changes to a larger group of learners.



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Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.

As a private foundation, Lumina Foundation does not support or oppose any legislation. Lumina provides educational information, nonpartisan research and analysis to advance Goal 2025.



learning
strategic
campus
organization
group
mission
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A Practical Guide to Strategic Planning in Higher Education

by Karen E. Hinton

need
operational
staff
activities
faculty based
planning
academic
institutions
resources
students
committee
members
statement
issues
process
administrative
goal
budget
department
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assessment
number
critical
technology
analysis
institution's
initiatives

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About the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP)

The Society for College and University Planning is a community of higher education planning professionals that provides its members with the knowledge and resources to establish and achieve institutional planning goals within the context of best practices and emerging trends.

What is Integrated Planning?

Integrated planning is the linking of vision, priorities, people, and the physical institution in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making and action. It shapes and guides the entire organization as it evolves over time and within its community.

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Foreword

Over the course of my career as a strategic planner in higher education, I have worked with a wide variety of individuals who have misconstrued the role of strategic planning in the academy. A great number of individuals are unaware of the necessary components of a strategic plan and what is required to implement and sustain such a plan. Some of the misinformed were consultants in occupations that serve the post-secondary community, and others were members of a college or university. Regardless of their relationship to the academic enterprise, those who misunderstand or are uninformed about planning practice can be a serious detriment to successful planning.

The costs of engaging in a poor planning process range from disillusioned faculty, staff, and students, to poor use of vital resources, to failed accreditation reviews which, in turn, cause an institution to lose funding and prestige. The stakes are high, but the rewards are higher. A well designed and implemented strategic planning process can provide an institution with a forum for campus-wide conversations about important decisions. The process can also be organized to make assessment, resource allocation, and accreditation easier, and be a source of information about progress and achievement with very real meaning to those associated with the institution.

This booklet is written to provide a practical overview of what strategic planning should be at the post-secondary level and define the elements of a successful process. The content offers a brief overview of the history of strategic planning in the academy from a practitioner's perspective and a more detailed examination of current planning practice. In some ways the content of this monograph is an examination of the criticism that strategic planning as a process is too linear to cross organizational silos and achieve institutional transformation. I believe those who have taken the view of strategic planning as a tool of limited use need a better understanding of the process.

It is my hope that those who engage in all types of planning activities on behalf of a post-secondary institution will use this information to educate themselves about what a strategic plan is and what its potential can be.

About This Book

"Undergoing a strategic planning process can be a monumental task, especially for higher education institutions that are attempting a more contemporary model for the first time. Dr. Hinton's guide shortens the learning curve and unites college leadership with its intuitive, step-by-step approach. It not only takes you through the planning process, but also provides guidance on how to ensure the plan's long-term success."

Kasey McKee
Vice President, College Advancement
St. Charles Community College (SCC) Foundation

About the Author



Karen E. Hinton, PhD, has more than twenty-five years of experience in planning and administration in higher education, serving at large and small public and private colleges and universities, a community college, and a university system office. She has developed, facilitated, and managed numerous strategic plans, accreditation self-studies, and process improvement initiatives in a wide range of situations.

As a senior associate for Rickes Associates, Inc., Hinton currently continues to work with institutions, providing leadership and support for strategic planning, regional accreditation, and administrative studies.

Hinton has taught courses in composition, literature, and research methods, and served as an academic advisor for undergraduate and graduate students. She served as SCUP's membership liaison for New Mexico, up-state New York, and as a board member for the North Atlantic region. She is currently a member of the American Society for Quality. Hinton has made numerous presentations and written articles and reviews for such publications as *Knowledge Directions* (the journal of The Institute for Knowledge Management) and *Planning for Higher Education*.

The author and the society would like to thank *Planning for Higher Education* Editorial Review Board member, Arnold J. Gelfman, Executive Director, Planning, Assessment & Research, Brookdale Community College, for his meaningful contributions to the development of this guide.

Section One: Overview of Strategic Planning in Higher Education

From the point at which George Keller published his *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education* in 1983, American post-secondary institutions have struggled with the concept of and uses for strategic planning in the academy. Prior to Keller, long-range planning was practiced by most institutions, but this was often a budget-driven, incremental process intended to ensure long-range fiscal planning. Prior to Keller, strategic planning was conducted in the realm of corporate or military operations, where mission driven long-term objectives and short-term actions needed to be efficiently integrated through a type of administrative coordination most colleges and universities never aspired to emulate.

Cohen and March (1974) used the term “loosely coupled organization” to describe the competing and sometimes opposing operational cultures of the academy. This phrase captures the essence of an organization which, at its core, finds institutionally comprehensive planning antithetical to many of the activities that give American higher education its unique, dynamic character.

The emergence of strategic planning in higher education coincided with the difficulties experienced in all of education in the 1970s and 1980s, as enrollments began to fluctuate, student demographics started to change, and funding became inconsistent. At this point, futures research and the rise of technology-enabled data collection and analysis pointed the way to strategic planning as one solution for developing a proactive stance in the environment of changing demands and declining resources.

The difficulties with initial attempts to convert corporate strategies to the culture of higher education were legion. Adapting a process designed to motivate assessment-based change within a short timeframe was frustrating at best and ineffective most often. While corporations developed their planning processes based on market data and customer-driven production, academe was limited in the data it could bring to bear on its issues and did not view itself as serving “customers”.

At its beginning, the strategic plan in post-secondary education was viewed as a tool to articulate institutional mission and vision, help prioritize resources, and promote organizational focus. As a result, many of the early strategic planning efforts produced documents that described the institution, but did little to motivate a process. These “shelf documents” often sowed the seeds of discontent within the institution, since many who participated in the process spent long hours on the plan’s development and then saw relatively little implementation.

At the time strategic planning was beginning to gain some acceptance in higher education, federal and state governments, and the major accrediting commissions, were responding to external demands for accountability through the development of standards for assessment and learning outcomes measures. Historically, accreditation standards were based on types of administrative data such as the fiscal stability of the institution, the number of faculty with terminal degrees, and the number of volumes in the library. However, the need to arrive at specific assessment measures for the academic enterprise was seen as the purview of academic staff who, because of their professional culture, had a difficult time determining what, if anything, could measure the learning process.

To tighten the standards, the accreditation commissions began to insist institutions have a strategic plan and an assessment plan in order to meet accrediting requirements. By the 1990s, workshops provided by the various accrediting commissions outlined expectations regarding the scope of an institutional planning and assessment process. Institutions began to find themselves under serious scrutiny during their reaccreditation processes if they did not have a working strategic plan and some form of assessment plan in place.

The pressure to provide documented planning and assessment did not only come from the accrediting commissions, however. At the same time, state and federal governments began tying funding and regulatory oversight to accountability measures, moving the business of the academy into the arena of political discourse. With the reduction in student populations and funding, most post-secondary institutions were competing for extremely limited resources. Identifying and developing the assessment measures necessary to support the case for institutional self-determination and continued funding created an environment that led to the rise of campus strategic planning offices. The concurrent development of technology and methodology in institutional research

supported this organizational focus through accountability measures, making the planning process more data driven.

Also, at about this time, the US Department of Commerce widened the scope of its Malcolm Baldrige award to include hospitals and educational institutions. Application for the award required documented analysis of process improvement within the context of mission-driven activities. The Baldrige application process had originally been developed specifically for corporations. Adaptation of the processes in education took a number of years and was considered by most in academe to be irrelevant to the mission of the academy. However, the underlying concept of the Baldrige application requirements combined strategic planning, assessment, and process improvement in such a way that various accrediting commissions saw in it a framework that influenced their expectations.

By the late 1990s, blue ribbon panels and various educationally related organizations had begun defining some standardized indicators of achievement to be used as evaluation output measures in higher education. A number of state and federal reports were developed based on these measurements, giving rise to an entire industry of consumer-focused comparative reports, such as state report cards and the college evaluation issues of a number of magazines.

By the end of the century, it appeared strategic planning had become a victim of the ever-fickle cycle of management theories du jour. The frustrations of staff and faculty who had spent countless hours on strategic plans that were never implemented created an internal environment where stakeholders refused to participate. "We tried that and nothing ever happened," was a common response to the calls for planning at the campus level. Even colleges and universities with successful planning processes began to dismantle their planning offices in favor of new initiatives focused on assessment.

The literature of the time shifted from institutional strategic planning to institutional leadership, giving some indication of what might have been wrong with higher education's initial attempts to adopt the practice. The calls for leadership, compounded with increasing demands for accountability and assessment, meant strategic planning was bypassed for shorter-term solutions of immediate issues. In essence, the academy was back to reactive, incremental problem-solving.

However, the accrediting commissions kept requiring institutional strategic plans as a major part of the standards they used to assess an institution's ability to meet its mission. This presented a problem for many colleges. Institutions needing a strategic plan to satisfy accrediting requirements began to develop what they believed were strategic plans in conjunction with some other form of planning. In some cases the institution was in the process of developing an information technology (IT) plan, an academic master plan (including the all-encompassing assessment component), or even a facilities master plan. This, they believed, would fill the requirement for an institutional strategic plan. Of course, various members of the staff might sit on the committee to ensure "realistic" initiatives were implemented incrementally so they would not strain limited resources. But the real issues remained: once an institution produced a document called a strategic plan, what did it do and how did it get implemented?

What was lost during this evolution was the institutional understanding of the role of a strategic plan and what key elements were necessary for the plan to function.

Section Two: Components of a Strategic Plan

Contemporary strategic plans have multiple components and each component serves a specific purpose. These components are planning tools used either separately or in groups, but their development is usually, of necessity, a linear progression. One of the purposes of the planning process is to ensure these individual components are aligned with each other and mutually supportive.

While not technically a part of the strategic plan, the mission statement is the foundation for it because everything contained in the strategic plan must be aligned with the mission. In addition to the mission statement, a vision statement, institutional goals, and an optional values statement comprise the supporting documents establishing the context for a strategic plan. These supporting documents provide specific points of guidance in the planning process. The vision statement is the expression of institution aspiration, and is based on analysis of the institution's environment. Institutional goals provide the mechanism for evaluating progress toward the vision, and values statements describe the manner in which the institution will work to achieve its goals.

Figure 1 Components of a Strategic Plan



Institutional Mission and Values

Mission

The foundation of any strategic plan is the institutional mission statement. This statement delineates, in concise language, why the institution exists and what its operations are intended to achieve. For publicly controlled institutions, this statement of purpose may be dictated by the state, but for all institutions the statement serves as the explanation for the existence of the organization.

Historically, mission statements were long, exhaustively detailed descriptions of the institution's founding, curricular history, unique culture and current services. The mission statement also often included an explanation of what the institution stood for and what it intended its students to become. An interested student of strategic planning can open any archived college catalog to find, within the first few pages, a mission statement at least a full page long containing all the historic information about the institution anyone would care to know. These types of mission statements have been termed "comprehensive mission statements" because they tend to include everything anyone thought might be important to know about the institution.

With the advent of contemporary planning methods, however, the comprehensive mission statement became a limiting factor in the planning process. Two major problems were created by trying to develop a strategic plan based on a comprehensive mission statement. First, it could be difficult to sift through the verbiage to isolate and

identify *specifically* those elements of the statement everyone agreed identified the foundation for all activities. This identification was critical because the accrediting commissions had formed an evaluation standard to examine how well all operations aligned with the mission. Comprehensive missions, as a result of their breadth, provided ample opportunity for wide interpretation; a condition called “mission creep”. Institutions found themselves having to justify community outreach or academic programs that extended the activities of the institution beyond its actual mission. From the perspective of the accrediting commission, a situation where the institution was using resources for activities beyond the scope of its mission indicated the institution might not be using its resources as effectively as possible. This definition of “institutional effectiveness” meant accrediting commissions were looking for a direct relationship between how the institution used its resources and what the mission statement outlined as the reason the institution existed.

The second limitation of comprehensive mission statements was that most of them were rife with statements about institutional culture and values. While critical to revealing how the institution differed from others with similar characteristics, the effect of these statements was to virtually require the institution to evaluate and assess them as part of institutional effectiveness. With all the other aspects of assessment academe needed to oversee, developing measurements for values was perhaps not the most critical priority.

As a result of these very real limitations, more recent planning practice limits the mission to its primary function. The mission statement is stripped down to a very short, basic statement of purpose. If the institution believes it also needs to provide a separate set of institutional goals, they can be appended to the shorter mission statement in a subsection or displayed in conjunction with the mission statement. The mission statement can then be a clear, concise statement, “This is *what* we are here to do.”

Values

Values have been removed from the mission to their own Values Statement component. There, they explain what the institution stands for and the way in which it intends to conduct its activities. In some cases, these values are so important the institution has programs and assessment measures to support and sustain them as key elements. But regardless of their priority, within the context of planning and evaluation, the values statement should declare, “These are the characteristics we believe are important in *how* we do our work.”

The Institutional Vision Statement

The institutional vision statement is one of the most important components of a strategic plan. The vision statement is an institution’s clear description of what it intends *to become* within a certain timeframe. The vision statement defines the institution’s strategic position in the future and the specific elements of that position with relationship to the mission statement. In some cases, the vision is that of one leader at the campus. Often this leader is the president, but the vision can sometimes come from an academic vice president or provost. Usually, however, the vision is reviewed and revised by members of the campus community, especially the strategic planning committee.

Vision statements benefit the planning process by providing everyone in the institution with the same vision of the future. If the purpose of the planning process is to align mission, vision, goals and resources, it is critical to ensure those who will be called upon to implement the strategic plan are all “pulling in the same direction”. This is especially true if the vision statement is really a reflection of one person’s vision for the institution. In this case, it is in the best interests of the institution to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to “own” the vision, either through review and revision of the statement or some form of early input into the statement draft.

The mission and vision statements provide the two ends of an analytical view of the institution from which the strategic plan is developed. The mission and vision represent the current and envisioned state of the institution. The strategic plan is used to bridge the gap between the two.

It is regularly assumed by members of the campus community that a vision statement can only be produced if market research has been conducted to determine what educational needs are not being met by peer and

aspirational institutions. This perception is only partially true. In fact, market research is more effective if it is conducted *after* the vision statement has been written and approved. What is needed to complete a strategic plan is, more often, an environmental scan. The differences between an environmental scan and market research are explained in Section Eight, “A Table of Troublesome Terms”.

One of the most curious problems with writing a vision statement comes when those writing the statement have to decide whether the verbs in the statement are present or future tense. There are so many subtle implications for either approach, and it is often the case that the strategic planning committee will write the vision statement in one tense and then change it to the other.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

There is much confusion about the terms used to name the parts of a strategic plan. Many people use the words “goal” and “objective” almost interchangeably, and have a distinct rationale for their particular definitions. In point of fact, as long as everyone involved in the planning process agrees to a definitional hierarchy, any combination of words can be used. However the words goal and objective carry connotations that can help guide their use in the process. The word goal connotes specific achievement; a target reached and “checked off”. The word objective is slightly more general in connotation. An objective helps set a course by giving a general direction, but an objective does not usually contain the specifics of its own completion. Given the nature of the activities required to implement a plan, and the need to assess the achievement of the plan’s implementation, it seems logical to use terms that encourage overarching directional guidance for the major themes that organize the plan, and more specific terms for the parts of the plan requiring accountability and measurement.

For example, a major theme in many strategic plans is to improve academic programs. Each institution has its own perspective on what is important about academic programs, and these statements usually reflect an institutionally-specific perspective. One institution might want to ensure programs and curriculum fit the educational needs of its student population, while another institution is more interested in improving its curriculum by expanding its graduate and research programs. These are very general desires, and might best be called strategic objectives, themes, or even directions. However, the specific actions taken to improve academic programs could range from ensuring all academic programs offer an internship option for students who want “real world” experience to setting target enrollments for specific graduate programs or research dollars brought to the campus. These types of actions seem to fit more closely the definition of a goal, because they can be measured and “checked off”.

Regardless of the words selected to name the parts of a strategic plan, these basic elements—goals and objectives—form the basis of the portion of the strategic plan most often used as the public document, approved by the governing board, and distributed to the campus community.

There is one final caution about the goals and objectives of a strategic plan—timing. Most colleges and universities use either a five or ten year cycle for their plans. These cycles are often driven as much by the reaccreditation schedule as any internal issue. For this reason, most strategic plans have overarching themes that are very general and do not tend to change over time. In fact, in many planning processes, these overarching themes can be carried over from one planning cycle to the next with only minor modification. The goals used as the basis for the implementation plan are a different issue, however. There is a tendency to “front load” or “back load” the deadlines for the goals in a plan.

Front loading usually occurs because enthusiasm is high and everyone would like to see the plan successfully completed. Another reason front loading occurs is those who are determining the deadlines are used to thinking in short one or two year timeframes. This approach misses completely the purpose of a five or ten year planning cycle, which allows more complex solutions to be spread out over a longer period of time. In either circumstance, front loaded goals take the form of assuming a goal can be completed in a very short period of time, and also assumes a minimum of effort. These assumptions encourage people responsible for the implementation to take

the fastest, least complicated path to completion. In many cases, if an issue has risen to the level of the strategic plan, it is not easily addressed nor is it a simple issue.

Back loading usually occurs when members of the institutional community are not committed to the plan or are unsure about the resources needed to implement. A thoughtful strategic planning committee will use its collective wisdom to ensure each goal is appropriately phased.

There are several reasons phasing is necessary. One of the most obvious is, in many cases, before one action can be taken, another has to be completed. A second reason, where resources are concerned, is any need to accrue the personnel, facilities, or funding necessary for the action. Using the strategic planning committee as a forum to question and test the reasonableness of proposed deadlines is often a challenge. In many cases, institutional personnel are not used to thinking holistically about initiatives with wide-ranging scopes or timelines. It is difficult to develop in planning committee members that sense of strategic thinking that allows them to look cross-functionally to see the implications for the entire institution. For example, if the institution has determined it will expand the number and types of student support services offered through Student Affairs, most planning committee members will assume Student Affairs will see to the implementation. However, what if that implementation requires an upgrade to technology? The IT department needs to consider what the upgrade will require and how long it will take, not only in terms of technology but also with regard to staff training. Additionally, the Facilities Department will need to know if there are to be changes to the spaces currently being used in Student Affairs, or if new space needs to be found and what length of time it may take to produce that space. While a great many of these types of issues can be discussed in committee and the deadlines revised, in some cases the projects are complicated enough to require actual process analysis techniques to determine the sequence of actions. Regardless of the method used, the result is a strategic plan populated with short-, middle-, and long-range deadlines that form the backbone of a strategic plan that is realistic in terms of what can be accomplished and in what timeframe.

Taking the time to ensure the strategic plan reflects such phasing has two other significant benefits. First, it provides a learning opportunity regarding institution-level thinking for members of the planning committee. Second, phasing the major goals of the strategic plan begins the process of thinking through the implementation plan, which will build on the phased aspects of the strategic plan.

What the strategic planning committee should not allow is an effort to “cost out” the entire plan as if it were all going to be implemented simultaneously. A demand for costing out is often an attempt to scale back the scope of the plan, but can also be seen as a misunderstanding of how the planning process works. Scaling back a plan as a result of tight resources will happen automatically if it needs to happen. What is incumbent on the members of the planning committee is to ensure the transformational aspects of the vision are captured in the goals and objectives and phasing is realistic for implementation.

It is important to remember the ultimate purpose of a strategic plan is to drive resource allocation. If the institution has a vision requiring additional resources, it phases implementation of that vision over time, including securing the resources to make it happen.

The Implementation Plan

Turning goals and objectives into a working plan is the function of the Implementation Plan. This part of the strategic planning process is not usually for public consumption, and seldom is made available to the governing board. There are a variety of reasons this working document is not widely distributed, but the primary one is, more than any other part of the strategic plan, the implementation plan is revised, amended, and changed frequently to respond to environmental factors. While the strategic plan's goals and objectives remain a source of guidance and focus, the implementation plan delves into the messy work of getting the job done.

One other aspect of the implementation plan critical to the planning process—and also to the budgeting process—is identifying the resources each goal and step will require. It should be noted resources, in this instance, are defined in the broadest way possible. Resources for implementing a strategic plan include: people, time, space,

technology, and funding. Sometimes, the exact amount of a critical resource is not known at the time of the plan's inception; however, the type of resource can be identified. It is important to know what specific resources will be needed and continue to refine the size of the need as the plan develops.

The implementation plan needs to be directive, clear, and documented. The implementation of a strategic plan depends on the institution's ability to turn strategic thoughts into operational action. For this reason it is necessary to document who is responsible for implementing an action, a date by which the action is expected to be completed, and what measures will be used to assess completion of the action. It is wise to ensure the person assigned responsibility for the action has the authority to make it happen. It is also wise to identify one and only one person to be the agent accountable for overseeing completion of the action. Obviously many people or departments may be needed to implement a specific action. However, if a group is designated as accountable, each person in the group will believe someone else in the group is taking charge.

Section Three: Coordinating the Planning Process

The Planning Committee

Institutions without a standing planning committee should create and maintain one. Many institutions select representatives from the major stakeholder groups to serve on a planning committee with the intention that, once the plan has been created, the group is disbanded. In much the same way institutions form working groups and a steering committee for reaccreditation self-studies, they try to bring enough insight to the table to give balance and reality to the initial product. However, there are three extremely important reasons to have a standing planning committee.

First, the work of the strategic planning committee has to be learned by its members. Very few people appointed to a planning committee have a working knowledge of strategic planning, or the broad institutional perspective to do it well in the beginning. It takes time and hard work to develop a functioning planning committee that can operate effectively. If the committee is only formed to create the plan, and then does not participate in its implementation and assessment, all the hard-won knowledge is lost.

Second, to ensure the plan is being implemented, there has to be some sort of monitoring process to assist with decisions and keep the planning process on track and responsive. While this can be done by a single individual, it is difficult for a single individual to have a working knowledge of all aspects of such a large and complex organization. This complexity is precisely the reason stakeholders from the various functional areas are called together in the first place. Committee members know why a certain goal or step must come prior to another, or why a particular goal is no longer as relevant in year three of the plan as it was in year one.

Finally, it is vital to have as many stakeholders as possible understand how the planning process works. Non-permanent members of the planning committee, such as students and faculty who normally need to rotate off the committee, can be replaced with new members in staggered terms. Such a rotation allows new people to learn from the committee, while the replaced members take their knowledge back with them to their departments. This type of participatory learning increases the ability of the entire institution to understand how the planning process works and supports strategic thinking across the campus. These benefits accrue in the same way a reaccreditation self-study helps teach the campus community about itself. Part of the advantage with the planning process is it is continuous. The learning should never be allowed to be shelved for five or ten years.

The Charge to the Committee

There are no circumstances in which a planning committee should be formed without a written charge. For standing committees the written charge is absolutely essential and should contain, at a minimum:

The size and composition of the planning committee:

- The most effective size of a planning committee is between 10 and 12 people.
- The senior administrative staff should always be included as permanent members.
- Academic staff and students should be included and given limited terms to account for restrictions in long-term time commitments. Where these members can be drawn from leadership positions, such as President of the Faculty Senate or President of the Student Government Association, the appointment provides additional benefits for distribution of information and access to readily identified groups of stakeholders.
- It is preferable that the president of the institution chair the committee. This stipulation can be a “deal breaker” if presidential engagement is less than complete. The presence of the president is critical because it provides integrated leadership and support as the group deliberates. Few people have a better strategic sense of the institution than its president. His or her perspective brings together not only all aspects of the institution’s operations, but also any concerns of the governing board and the system office, if it is a state

system institution. Also, if the president does not participate, the group's decisions cannot be considered completed until the absent president is briefed and has commented. This type of situation nullifies the purpose of the group and eviscerates the group's role in producing and implementing a plan.

Finally, while the governing board is responsible for approving the strategic plan and monitoring it at the policy level, the president reports to the governing board, and therefore will be required to explain, advocate, and interpret the plan to the satisfaction of the board. It is difficult for a president to act as the official leader of the planning process if he or she has not fully participated.

The length of terms:

If the planning group is a standing committee, the length of terms for the non-permanent members needs to be rotated so that the committee does not face large turnovers that leave a leadership vacuum.

- Obviously, most student members will only have a year or two during which they are available.
- Faculty may also only have a year or two if they experience a change in teaching duties or take a sabbatical that impacts their ability to participate. In order to ensure that the original balance is maintained, the position or type of member should be designated in the Charge. For example, committee membership might include two academic deans, one librarian, the president of the faculty senate, one undergraduate student, and one graduate student. In this way, when, to further the example, the librarian's term has expired, there is a clear record that the position should be refilled by someone from the library. It also avoids the issue of non-permanent members deciding they will stay on when their terms have expired. If the person who has been president of the faculty senate no longer holds that position, the place on the planning committee must be relinquished for the new president.

The scope of responsibilities of the committee:

There is a tendency for planning committees to fall into one of two traps. They either believe they have no authority at all, and therefore demur from decisions and accountability, or they believe every action taken on behalf of the strategic plan should be approved by them prior to action. Neither position bodes well for the institution, so it is necessary to literally tell the members of the committee the scope of their responsibilities. This scope can be easily described through a series of bulleted statements directing the activities of the committee to the necessary tasks and then establishing who is responsible for each.

The expectation for participation for each member:

It would seem obvious to many that if one is selected to a committee, one has an obligation to participate. However, we also recollect that many parts of the institution believe planning is either not possible or not important enough to take time away from primary duties. This situation is especially true if there has been a failed strategic plan previously, or if the institution's leaders are not actively involved. For these reasons, it is important to specify that members of the strategic planning committee have certain professional responsibilities. Among these are: attending meetings, contributing at the meetings, collecting information bearing on the plan from constituents, helping to educate the campus community about the process, and disseminating the plan.

For a standing committee, the guidance provided by the written charge ensures that, over years of change in membership and environment, it is always clear why the committee exists and what is expected.

Deciding the Planning Year

There are a number of ways in which the planning process needs to be coordinated. One of the most basic issues in coordination concerns the multiple calendars that drive academe. The most important reason for implementing an institutional strategic plan is it provides the framework for making budget decisions and decisions about resources in general. For this reason alone, it is critical that the budget cycle and the planning cycle be aligned, not

only on an annual basis, but over the long term. This is a more difficult result to achieve than might be supposed, especially since the budget cycle often follows either the state or federal fiscal calendar (July-June or October-September) and the planning cycle tends to follow the academic calendar. Using the academic calendar not only results in different start and end dates, but also compresses the planning year because so many of the key participants are not available during the summer. So, while it is an axiom that the plan drives the budget, it is also true that the budget calendar drives the planning calendar. It requires careful analysis of the various steps in the annual budget cycle to determine when annual planning goals need to be confirmed to support decision-making in the budget.

There is an additional calendar that should be mentioned in regard to the planning cycle and that is the calendar used by human resources (HR). The HR calendar is usually January through December. Depending on how fully the strategic plan is used, if personnel decisions and the resources to support them are aligned with an HR calendar, the alignment of all three cycles into one may be quite difficult. While it may seem there is little to be gained in adding the HR calendar year to the mix, it is important to remember there are two personnel issues that provide most institutions with plan-critical data: professional development plans which have attendant training costs; and, annual payroll data, which usually reflect the largest non-capital institutional expenditure.

Each institution is slightly different in its ability to adjust these processes so they are mutually supportive. However, being able to show an integrated calendar and a transparent process between planning and budget is a key factor in documenting that the planning process is working as it should.

Using a Planning Consultant

At this point it may be beneficial to discuss the appropriate use of a planning consultant. A motivating factor in developing this document was my reflection on differences among planning consultants and the ways in which they are used by the institutions that hire them. There are a number of reasons an institution might decide to hire a planning consultant; however, some reasons are more appropriate than others.

The primary reason an institution begins to consider hiring a planning consultant is that the institution has decided to initiate a strategic plan, either through its own volition or because it has been compelled to do so by an accrediting commission, governing board, or state agency. If the first circumstance is true, it is often because there has either been a turnover at an executive position (president, provost, or senior vice president) or, ironically, because an accreditation self-study is coming due and will require demonstration of institutional planning.

Unfortunately, an institution can decide to start the planning process in absence of any knowledge of how to achieve an effective end product. As described in Section I, most of the administrative support for strategic planning (offices and staff for strategic planning) was eliminated during the 1990s. There are few institutions that can boast of staff with enough comprehensive experience to lead and support an institutional strategic plan without some external guidance. So, as the institution begins the process, it discovers planning is more complex and difficult than anyone suspected. It is also true that sometimes the wrong institutional personnel are assigned to lead the process, causing stumbles, misdirection, or even political problems that slow or stop the process.

At that point, someone decides to call in a consultant to “advise” them and make the process workable. Examples abound of institutionally-initiated planning where the institution started with activities that should occur in mid-process, leaving out very critical early-process preparation. These institutions come to a point where they have no idea what comes next but, when the consultant arrives, they are looking for someone who can take the mess and “just tell us what the plan should be”.

No consultant, or external agent, should ever tell the institution what its strategic plan should contain or how it should be implemented without the careful development of a forum for institutional consensus-building. Consultants cannot “tell” an institution what it should achieve with a strategic plan any more than an institution’s president can “tell” each of his staff specifically how they will implement his vision. Without the ownership developed through a participatory process, the likelihood of a failed plan is enormous, as are incidences of process sabotage and simple non-implementation (Robertson and Tang, 1997).

The best way to understand how the planning consultant can help is to remember: a qualified consultant is a master of the process, but institutional staff are masters of the content. This means a very good consultant can provide guidance and options for the process based on the content the campus community develops and the way campus culture shapes the issues. An outstanding consultant can even analyze the institution and challenge it with new ways of thinking or doing, but members of the institution must control the plan and its content.

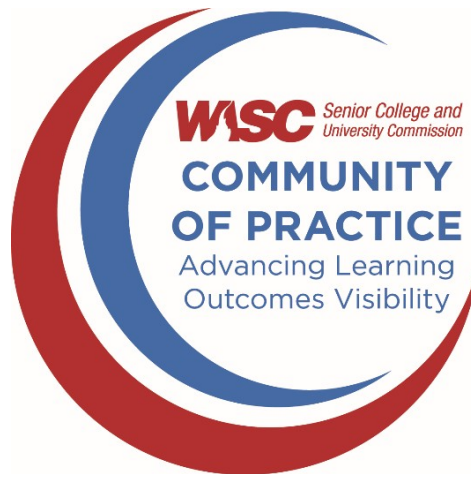
An additional advantage to engaging an experienced planning consultant is to engage someone who has the skill to facilitate the planning committee meetings. This extra benefit allows everyone on the planning committee to participate in the meetings without having to be concerned about meeting management. This situation is particularly helpful for senior administrators who do not often have an opportunity to act as contributing community members. Good outside facilitation is also helpful to the entire campus community because an outside facilitator can balance competing voices to ensure the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders, not just those who can dominate a meeting.

It should be noted that not all “planning” consultants are able to support a comprehensive institutional strategic plan. Understanding contemporary strategic planning is essential to a successful planning process. Institutions that use a consultant need a basic understanding of contemporary strategic planning as preparation to hire the right consultant. There is great value in finding a consultant who has experience as a staff or faculty member at an institution, understands the relationship between strategic planning, assessment, and accreditation, and has a balanced perspective of an institution’s many functional areas. It is necessary for each institution to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of any potential consultant and, from that, determine if the “fit” is the right one for the institution at that point in time.

A well-crafted, implemented strategic planning process will be self-sustaining and the consultant’s contract is usually complete once the Implementation Plan is drafted; although, sometimes the consultant is further engaged to assist with the implementation process. It is not generally assumed, however, if the strategic plan includes, for example, IT upgrades, new facilities, or new academic programs, that the consultant’s role would be expanded. For these reasons, it is important that the campus planning leaders who hire a planning consultant be able to match the culture and priorities of their institution with the skills, training, and long-term experience of the planner they select.

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Community of Practice for Advancing Learning Outcomes Visibility

In spring 2017, with funding from Lumina Foundation, WSCUC launched the first cohort of the Community of Practice for Advancing Learning Outcomes Visibility. This initiative provides guidance and consulting for projects related to assessing student learning and the visibility of that learning. WSCUC is supporting participants as they implement their own projects, which will contribute to the development of a collection of good practices, resources, and guides to share both regionally and nationally.

Participants in the Community of Practice are engaging in student learning assessment and visibility projects that are informed by national and regional thought leadership, knowledge generation, capacity building, and resource sharing within the Community of Practice, with the intention of broad-based engagement across the region over time. Expert consultants are guiding projects and highlighting best practices, and participants are building networks to support projects and share ideas and information.

Community of Practice outcomes include:

- **Improved Learning Outcomes Visibility:** to support WSCUC institutions in making good evidence of student learning more visible and accessible to a general public and various stakeholders.
- **Learning Outcomes Capacity Building:** to further develop WSCUC's regional capacity and national leadership in providing evidence of student learning as one crucial component of student achievement. The key focus is on using learning outcomes assessment results to support authentic student learning and/or institutional improvement.
- **Quality Assurance / Accreditation Resource Development, Curation, and Dissemination:** to develop a curated collection of accreditation process resources, including exemplars and learning guides for the WSCUC region – and nationally – around aligning and assessing student learning outcomes per the Standards or Accreditation, the visibility of evidence, and using evidence for improvement.

*Visit the Community of Practice on WSCUC's website to
learn about current projects and mentors:*

www.wscuc.org/cop

An Opportunity for Your Institution to Develop Assessment Expertise and Leadership

March 2018 - January 2019

Applications will be accepted November 15, 2017 - February 15, 2018

Purpose of the Academy

The WSCUC Assessment Leadership Academy (ALA) prepares postsecondary professionals to provide leadership in a wide range of activities related to the assessment of student learning, from facilitating workshops and supporting the scholarship of assessment to assisting administrative leadership in planning, budgeting, and decision-making related to educational effectiveness. ALA graduates have also provided consultation to the WSCUC region and served on WSCUC committees and evaluation teams; some have moved on to new positions with greater responsibilities. The Academy curriculum includes both structured and institutionally-tailored learning activities that address the full spectrum of assessment issues, and places those issues in the national context of higher education policy on educational quality, accreditation, and accountability.

Who Should Participate in the Academy?

Higher education faculty, staff, and administrators who are committed to:

- Developing assessment expertise;
- Serving in an on-going assessment leadership role at their institution;
- Devoting significant time to complete ALA reading and homework assignments.

Assessment Leadership Academy Faculty

ALA participants will interact with and learn from nationally-recognized higher education leaders. Faculty lead interactive class sessions and are available to participants for one-on-one consultations.

Faculty Facilitators of the ALA:

- **Amy Driscoll**, Former Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, CSU Monterey Bay
- **Carole Huston**, Associate Provost, University of San Diego (ALA Alum)

Guest Faculty Include:

- **Peter Ewell**, President Emeritus, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
- **Adrianna Kezar**, Associate Professor for Higher Education, University of Southern California
- **Jillian Kinzie**, Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research & NSSE Institute
- **Kathleen Yancey**, Kellogg W. Hunt Professor of English, Florida State University
- **Laurie Dodge**, Vice Chancellor of Institutional Assessment and Planning, Brandman University (ALA Alum)
- **Kevin Grant**, Assistant Dean of Student Development, Biola University (ALA Alum)
- **Susan Platt**, Executive Director of Assessment Emerita, CSU Long Beach (ALA Alum)
- **And others!**

Learning Goals

Participants who complete Academy requirements will acquire foundational knowledge of the history, theory, and concepts of assessment; they will also develop expertise in training and consultation, institutional leadership for assessment, and the scholarship of assessment.

Application Deadline and More Information

Applications for the 2018-19 cohort will be accepted from November 15, 2017 until February 15, 2018.

For more information and application materials, please see **Assessment Leadership Academy** on the WSCUC website <http://www.wascsenior.org/ala/overview>

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