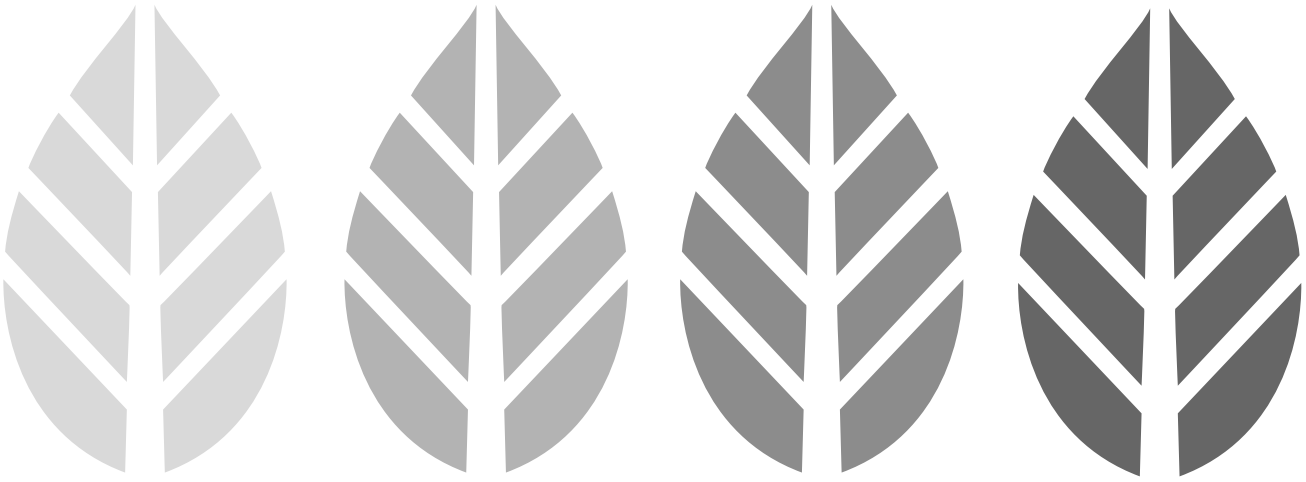
Restructured Expectations: A Transitional Workbook

Prepared for the
2003 Annual Meeting

The Higher Learning Commission



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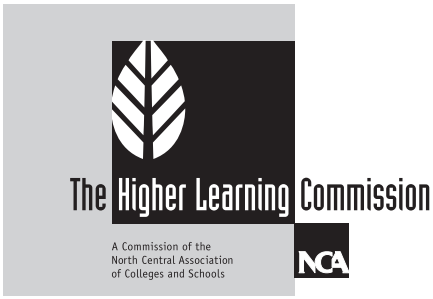
April 13-16, 2003

Hyatt Regency Chicago



The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(800) 621-7440

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Introduction

The 2003 Annual Meeting presented some unique challenges. In late February the Board of Trustees adopted new Criteria for Accreditation, a new Eligibility Program, and a policy on new annual reporting expectations of our affiliated organizations. Many people are attending this meeting and its training workshops specifically to learn about the implementation of this new accreditation program. We could not create in this short time a completely new *Handbook of Accreditation,* but we worked to draft some basic chapters for it. They are printed in this "Workbook" and they will support the various training sessions focused on the new Criteria.

On the eve of this Annual Meeting, the Commission office was restructured, and the "traditional" decennial comprehensive evaluation program for accreditation received new name and a director, Dr. John Taylor. This structure mirrors to some extent what we did when we established the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). We have decided to call that program, Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ). Therefore some, but not all, documents in this "Workbook" might refer to PEAQ. Institutions will receive candidacy and accreditation through PEAQ; they can choose either AQIP or PEAQ as the process for renewing accreditation.

The Board of Trustees determined that a completely new *Handbook for Accreditation* will be prepared by July 1, with the intent that it be sent to a large number of the Commission's constituencies by September. Therefore, this "Workbook" has a very short lifespan. Because it signals how portions of the new *Handbook* might read, **we invite your critical comments on its content.** Every working draft of a chapter is open for revision.

Concluding that it would be altogether too confusing to give the *2002 Addendum to the Handbook* to each registrant, we added to this "Workbook" a variety of documents from the *Addendum,* documents particularly germane to many of the presentations at the Meeting. We expect to include most of these documents as well in the new *Handbook.*

Many of the documents in this "Workbook" are also in downloadable files on the Commission's website: www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org. They will remain there until the new *Handbook* is completed.

Part 1

The Criteria for Accreditation and the Eligibility Requirements

Understanding the New Criteria for Accreditation: Exploring the Criteria and the Core Components

The 1997 edition of the Commission's *Handbook for Accreditation* provided considerable explanatory text for the Criteria together with a variety of examples about how each might be interpreted in different institutional contexts. Although that Handbook addressed five Criteria, as does this one, the Criteria themselves were considerably broader, and the patterns of evidence were relatively limited in number. To help institutions explore the rich potential of each Criterion and its suggested patterns of evidence, therefore, the Commission created interpretive text and examples.

In this new edition of the *Handbook,* the Core Components make possible a fuller understanding of each Criterion and the Examples of Evidence help define the breadth and depth of each Core Component. The text that follows, therefore, provides a basic conceptual frame for each Core Component. It includes, when appropriate, definitions of words or phrases in the Criterion, Core Component, or Examples of Evidence requested by those who reviewed the penultimate version of the Criteria.

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

It is axiomatic to claim that the strength and vitality of higher education in the United States is directly related to the extraordinary diversity of organizations and institutions providing that education. Since the early 1930s accreditation of institutions of higher education within the North Central region has respected the importance of institutional diversity by applying broadly stated standards that can be interpreted and applied to fit specific institutional contexts. Fundamental to the Commission's capacity to make institution-specific judgments is the clarity of the institution's own stated mission.

Only a few years ago, the Commission called for an accredited institution to have a public mission statement adopted by the governing board. The Commission expected the mission statement to include stated purposes—specific goals and objectives the institution intended to achieve to fulfill its mission. Increasingly, organizations of all types, including colleges and universities, have created and use a variety of documents that summarize their core commitments for both internal and external constituents. Mission statements, once several paragraphs in length, now often contain no more than ten or fifteen words. Stated purposes are frequently captured in documents that define an organization's vision, values, and strategic goals. Although the methods by which organizations explain their core commitments might be changing, it remains fundamental to the accreditation process that these core commitments are readily understood by people within and outside of the organization and are appropriate to an institution providing higher learning for students in the twenty-first century.

The Commission's first Criterion of accreditation focuses the attention of the organization and of the Commission's peer review process on the role of these mission documents in defining and shaping the operations and priorities of the organization. All other Criteria in one way or another relate to Criterion One.

Criterion 1 - Core Component 1a

The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.

What is clear in this age of marketing is that a tagline or slogan cannot by itself define an organization's multifaceted mission. It might be valuable for every student, faculty member, and administrator to be able to repeat a concise, pithy mission statement, but the best of those statements usually open a variety of operational possibilities. Only through other statements of vision, values, and goals can an organization provide some structure and priority to decision making.

The governing board formally adopts the mission documents of the organization. Those documents contain the goals for which the organization is willing to be held accountable.

Effective organizations revisit their mission documents frequently, assuring that they are dynamic and current as well as clear and understood. As external environments shift, so also might some definitions of core commitments, or the vision for the organization may shift with new leadership.

The organization's Web site, catalog, student and faculty handbooks, and recruitment and marketing materials might be the most useful places to make these documents readily available to the public. They may also exist in a variety of other formats. What is important is the ease with which internal and external constituencies have access to the documents and can understand them. The proposed types of evidence for this Core Component not only illustrate the challenge of clarity and availability, but also identify some other expectations of their contents, particularly organizational commitment to high academic standards and to assessment of achieved learning.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The board has adopted statements of mission, vision, values, goals, and organizational priorities that together clearly and broadly define the organization's mission.
- The mission, vision, values, and goals documents define the varied internal and external constituencies the organization intends to serve.
- The mission documents include a strong commitment to high academic standards that sustain and advance excellence in higher learning.
- The mission documents state goals for the learning to be achieved by its students.
- The organization regularly evaluates and, when appropriate, revises the mission documents.
- The organization makes the mission documents available to the public, particularly to prospective and enrolled students.

Criterion 1 - Core Component 1b

In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

The Commission pledged that the new accrediting standards would engage organizations in conversations fundamental to their future. What is known for certain about the future of higher education in the United States is that it will have to be responsive to increasing numbers of students of diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds, and that it will have to prepare its students to live productively in a national and global society marked by extraordinary diversity.

Because attention to diversity is fundamental to quality higher learning in the twenty-first century, the Commission expects every organization to address diversity in its mission documents. The premises undergirding this position are found in the Commission's "Statement on Diversity" (see Appendix A).

Diversity is a complex concept. For some organizations, ethnic and racial representation on campus, in educational programs, or in faculty and administration might be very important, particularly if their mission is to serve communities marked by ethnic and cultural diversity. For many organizations serving educational needs of rural or homogeneous communities, recognition and understanding of the impact of diversity may be more important than representation. For other organizations, particularly those that are faith-based, diversity could be understood to mean acceptance and toleration. The Commission acknowledges the importance of distinct cultural contexts and, therefore, recognizes the importance that organizations attach to being able to define themselves in ways that are unique to their existence and respective missions. With its expectation that even these organizations acknowledge the importance of diversity, the Commission asks that all organizations be transparently clear in their statements of expectations of college constituencies, fair in their enforcement of those expectations, and protective of the dignity of individuals whose behavior or beliefs may not always fit those expectations.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- In its mission documents, the organization addresses diversity within the community values and common purposes it considers fundamental to its mission.
- The mission documents present the organization's function in a multicultural society.
- The mission documents affirm the organization's commitment to honor the dignity and worth of individuals.
- The organization's required codes of belief or expected behavior are congruent with its mission.
- The mission documents provide a basis for the organization's basic strategies to address diversity.

Criterion 1 - Core Component 1c

Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.

Unless all its internal constituencies understand and support the fundamental mission of the organization, even the most beautifully crafted mission documents will fail to count for much. This is especially true in this era of significant change and restructuring within higher education. Confusion about mission inevitably leads to disagreements on priorities, to not meeting students' expectations, and to decision making shaped more by the opportunities of the day than by a clear vision of the organization and its future.

Most successful organizations engage their constituents in the creation, review, and revision of basic mission documents. Most provide programs, materials, and orientations to ensure the creation of a common interpretation of mission documents. Most can also point to the key role the mission documents have played in stimulating new initiatives; creating organizational priorities; and informing seminal decisions about allocations of time, energy, and resources.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The board, administration, faculty, staff, and students understand and support the organization's mission.
- The organization's strategic decisions are mission-driven.
- The organization's planning and budgeting priorities flow from and support the mission.
- The goals of the administrative and academic sub-units of the organization are congruent with the organization's mission.
- The organization's internal constituencies articulate the mission in a consistent manner.

Criterion 1 - Core Component 1d

The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

Beyond a common understanding of and support for the mission, the organization must have structures through which decisions are made, responsibilities assigned, and accountability for end results established. Shared governance has been a long-standing attribute of most colleges and universities in the United States. Whatever the governance and administrative structures, they need to enhance the organization's capacity to fulfill its mission.

While each college and university needs people with many different skills and talents, each also needs leadership capable of creating an environment in which the use of those skills and talents furthers the organization's mission. Capable board leadership understands the boundaries of board responsibility; effective executive leadership appreciates the need for teamwork; strong faculty leadership helps create a faculty culture supportive of the organization's goals; and good student leadership understands that the organization exists for future as well for current students. Effective leadership inevitably involves as much vision as technique, as much appreciation for the contributions of others as defined power, and as much capacity for creative compromise as ultimate authority.

There is a difference between an organization that is offering higher education and a business that is selling a consumer product. Higher education is not indoctrination; nor is it training. It is an enterprise in which qualified professionals determine what students should know and be able to do as a result of their education and create processes to determine that students actually know and can do these things. It is also an enterprise that seeks to equip people to be self-motivated and self-sustaining learners throughout their lives. It is to fulfill this very critical set of goals that colleges and universities create structures to enable their achievement.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Board policies and practices document that the board's focus is on the organization's mission.
- The board enables the organization's chief administrative personnel to exercise effective leadership.
- The distribution of responsibilities as defined in governance structures, processes, and activities is understood and is implemented through delegated authority.
- People within the governance and administrative structures are committed to the mission and appropriately qualified to carry out their defined responsibilities.

- Faculty and other academic leaders share responsibility for the coherence of the curriculum and the integrity of academic processes.
- Effective communication facilitates governance processes and activities.
- The organization evaluates its structures and processes regularly and strengthens them as needed.

Criterion 1 - Core Component 1e

The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

Integrity is a concept with multiple interpretations. When applied to an organization, it can be understood to refer to

- The honesty of the organization in its operations
- The congruence between what an organization's mission documents say the organization is about and what it actually does
- The reputation of the organization
- The fairness with which it interacts with internal and external constituencies
- The practice of knowing and abiding by relevant laws and regulations

The Commission proposes that all of these interpretations of integrity should inform an organization's self-evaluation and a team's review.

The tremendous diversity in organizations providing higher education degrees is a given in the United States. As we move farther into the twenty-first century, the structures of those organizations will become increasingly complex and increasingly flexible; increasingly reliant on partnerships, consortia, and collaborations to provide quality higher learning in an age transformed by technology; increasingly driven to respond to unanticipated and different opportunities to provide education to new and changing populations of students; and increasingly required to provide education relevant to a global society.

What were understood to be hallmarks of institutional integrity just a couple of decades ago are no longer sufficient. Then, integrity frequently was connected with accurate representation of programs and policies, with concepts of institutional autonomy, and with the capacity of the institution to make decisions with little undue influence from the society it served. Now organizational integrity is vastly more complicated, with as many issues related to relationships among internal constituencies as to relationships with broader communities of interest. Maintenance of integrity is more than just following the advice of legal counsel, although increasingly that voice must be heard. Essentially, an organization's definition of integrity must be shaped by the values it affirms for itself as it defines its roles with its multiple constituencies.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The activities of the organization are congruent with its mission.
- The board exercises its responsibility to the public to ensure that the organization operates legally, responsibly, and with fiscal honesty.
- The organization understands and abides by local, state, and federal laws and regulations applicable to it (or by laws and regulations established by federally-recognized sovereign entities).
- The organization consistently implements clear and fair policies regarding the rights and responsibilities of each of its internal constituencies.
- The organization's structures and processes allow it to ensure the integrity of its co-curricular and auxiliary activities.
- The organization deals fairly with its external constituents.
- The organization presents itself accurately and honestly to the public.
- The organization documents timely response to complaints and grievances, particularly those of students.

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

The last decade of the twentieth century demonstrated that no college or university can prepare for the future by simply trying to continue the actions of the past. Technology, particularly through massive and powerful networks created by the Internet, has fundamentally transformed the processing of information and, therefore, the creation and transmission of knowledge. Globalization has affected not just multinational corporations, but also—through new trade agreements—fundamental economic realities in every nation. At least in the United States, global economic competitiveness rapidly moved from manufacturing to knowledge and "knowledge workers." Major demographic shifts are occurring in the United States that may very well change the makeup of every student body.

The accreditation process has always been understood to say something about the future of the accredited organization. In the past, the affirmation of an organization's future rested heavily on judgments about how the organization had handled change in the past and on the health of planning processes. Criterion Two continues to weigh those variables but adds significantly to what is understood to be the challenge of confronting the future in this new century.

Criterion 2 - Core Component 2a

The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

Fundamental to preparing for the future is an inventory of the trends that will create multiple new contexts for the organization. Some of the trends will inevitably shape aspects of the organization; others may not. Change often opens new opportunities and closes old ones. In creating its preferred future, an organization must also attend to its history and heritage and to its resource capacity as it determines which new opportunities to grasp. In identifying the trends and understanding which will require organizational attention, an organization displays its definition of realistically.

While many organizations providing quality higher learning are finding ways to be more nimble and responsive, the predominant culture of colleges and universities has involved careful study and limited risk-taking. In fact, the expectation has been that shared governance, for example, will serve as a check -and a balance to ensure academic integrity. The effect of shared governance can change if the total organization values innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking. However, even the most entrepreneurial college knows that there are boundaries to what it can and should attempt. The organization defines clearly how its goals are set by recognizing and honoring those boundaries.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's planning documents reflect a sound understanding of the organization's current capacity.
- The organization's planning documents demonstrate that attention is being paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.
- The organization's planning documents show careful attention to the organization's function in a multicultural society.
- The organization's planning processes include effective environmental scanning.
- The organizational environment is supportive of innovation and change.
- The organization incorporates in its planning those aspects of its history and heritage that it wishes to preserve and continue.
- The organization clearly identifies authority for decision making about organizational goals.

Criterion 2 - Core Component 2b

The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

An organization's resource base includes human resources as well as financial and physical assets. One test of the realism of an organization's preparation for the future is its capacity to make a valid assessment of the strength of its existing resources. Particularly in this time of straitened finances, most colleges and universities are discovering that they cannot maintain the quality of all educational offerings, but must instead make very difficult decisions about how to delete or merge programs or find partners to share costs. Realistic plans, therefore, inevitably will include a variety of shifts in the organization's educational programming, but all plans must evidence concern with ensuring the quality of those programs, whether continuing or new, and their consistency with the mission.

It is a fundamental premise that every affiliated organization wants to provide the best education it can. To be able to do this, the organization must know what it does well and create strategies to continue that excellence even as it focuses on improving programs that do not meet the

standard the organization has set for itself. Improvement might be as simple as experimenting with a different pedagogy, or it might require significant investment in personnel and learning support.

Some organizations may face a future of substantial change—creating new delivery systems, moving to higher degree levels, establishing new instructional sites, recruiting and admitting new student bodies, for example. Some changes will be made to enhance the organization's financial health, some to be responsive to new educational markets, and others because a profession has changed expectations for the entry-level credential necessary for licensure. How well the organization understands the relationship between its resource base and those changes is also a test of commitment to educational quality.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's resources are adequate for achievement of the educational quality it claims to provide.
- Plans for resource development and allocation document an organizational commitment to supporting and strengthening the quality of the education it provides.
- The organization uses its human resources effectively.
- The organization intentionally develops its human resources to meet future changes.
- The organization's history of financial resource development and investment documents a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality (e.g., investments in faculty development, technology, learning support services, new or renovated facilities).
- The organization's planning processes are flexible enough to respond to unanticipated needs for program reallocation, downsizing, or growth.
- The organization has a history of achieving its planning goals.

Criterion 2 - Core Component 2c

The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

Every organization of higher learning generates data and information. Participation in financial aid programs inevitably requires the reporting of a considerable amount of data. Evaluation, however, is the effort by the people within the organization to make sense of those data. Some organizations have institutional research offices that both gather and interpret data routinely; the test of their effectiveness is how their work provides a reliable overview of performance and informs planning and budgeting processes. Other organizations may take a much less formal and consistent approach to evaluation and assessment, making more challenging the task of connecting the processes to one another and to overall planning initiatives. These organizations should determine whether their approaches should be more formal and regular or whether they actually provide sufficient evidence about performance to inform sound planning.

An organization affiliated with the Commission should desire to create a future in which it continuously performs better than it has in the past. Without stated goals for its own performance, an organization does not know what it is supposed to achieve. Without dependable and ongoing systems of self-evaluation, an organization is hard-pressed to know what it needs to improve. This basic need to create a culture of evidence has led some organizations to implement quality improvement principles. A Baldrige Award is now tailored to higher education. The Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) option recognizes the connection between accreditation and continuous quality improvement. But an organization need not pursue either in order to appreciate the importance of having dependable data to evaluate performance and create strategies for improvement.

Again, it is worth noting that evaluation and assessment processes create data, but it is the interpretation of those data that creates reliable evidence. Data can be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the conceptual framework (or at times, the political agenda) brought to the task. Therefore, effective processes make the interpretation of data and information explicit, accurate, and clear.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization demonstrates that its evaluation processes provide evidence that its performance meets its stated expectations for institutional effectiveness.
- The organization maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information.
- Appropriate data and feedback loops are available and used throughout the organization to support continuous improvement.

- Periodic reviews of academic and administrative sub-units contribute to improvement of the organization.
- The organization provides adequate support for its evaluation and assessment processes.

Criterion 2 - Core Component 2d

All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

In most organizations, various kinds of planning take place at the same time. Perhaps the CEO has an organization-wide planning effort that results in a document adopted by the board and published in the organization's annual report to constituencies. Within such an organization, academic departments or schools may also create plans. Administrative-function areas usually do their own planning as well. Operational planning and strategic planning are not designed to achieve the same goals, but unless they are informed by a common understanding of the organization's mission, they run the risk of allowing areas to function at cross-purposes. Therefore, successful organizations not only endeavor to create tangible links among these processes, but also insist on grounding all planning in the organization's mission documents.

The Commission understands that successful planning can result from many different processes. But planning processes disconnected from budgeting processes will doom even the most inclusive and engaging planning effort. Without access to the resources—physical, financial, and human—supported through budget allocations, even the best-laid plans developed to strengthen capacity to fulfill the organization's mission will come to naught.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Coordinated planning processes center on the mission documents that define vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities for the organization.
- Planning processes link with budgeting processes.
- Implementation of the organization's planning is evident in its operations.
- Long-range strategic planning processes allow for reprioritization of goals when necessary because of changing environments.
- Planning documents give evidence of the organization's awareness of the relationships among educational quality, student learning, and the diverse, complex, global, and technological world in which the organization and its students exist.
- Planning processes involve internal constituents and, where appropriate, external constituents.

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Although the next three Criteria are presented separately, they are rooted in the historic understanding of the roles of universities in society—teaching, research, and service. That understanding has been recast to fit organizations of higher learning in the twenty-first century. The reconceptualization of this historic mission emerged from the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (March 2000). Several colleges and universities have come to appreciate the power of recasting an old mission to fit new and changing needs.

In new Criterion Three, the Commission does not replace teaching with learning because the two are powerfully intertwined. However, it makes clear that teaching that does not lead to student learning cannot be called effective. In short, the test of teaching is in the learning achieved by students.

The wording of the Criterion makes an important shift from emphasizing process to emphasizing evaluation of evidence. Moreover, the evidence needs to show that results of the learning and teaching are directly related to the educational mission stated by the organization.

Criterion 3 - Core Component 3a

The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

In crafting this Core Component, the Commission unambiguously embedded into its accreditation program its decade-long program to challenge affiliated organizations to create a culture of assessment. An organization needs to be accountable to itself and to its constituencies, to be clear about what it intends students to know and to do, and to find ways of learning whether, as a result of the education provided, students actually know and can do. The culture of assessment ought to extend to all education and training provided by the organization, not simply to the degree programs it offers. The Commission's ongoing commitment to this work is explained in its "Statement on Assessment of Student Learning" (see Appendix B).

Assessment of student learning is a process, and the process must have results foundational to the education of students.

- The results should testify to achievement of stated goals for learning.
- The results should enable the organization to strengthen and improve the capacity for student learning.
- The results should have credibility with the faculty responsible for creating effective learning environments.
- The results should have such credibility that they shape budgeting and planning priorities.

While the Core Component identifies the outcomes of strong assessment, the proposed evidence includes tested best practices in assessment as a means to achieve those outcomes.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each.
- Assessment of student learning provides evidence at multiple levels: course, program, and institutional.
- Assessment of student learning includes multiple direct and indirect measures of student learning.
- Results obtained through assessment of student learning are available to appropriate constituencies, including students themselves.
- The organization integrates into its processes for assessment of student learning and uses the data reported for purposes of external accountability (e.g., graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams; placement rates; transfer rates).
- The organization's assessment of student learning extends to all educational offerings, including credit and non-credit certificate programs.
- Faculty are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved.
- Faculty and administrators routinely review the effectiveness of the organization's program to assess student learning.

Criterion 3 - Core Component 3b

The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Some have argued that the Commission should focus only on learning in these new Criteria; unless learning is achieved, according to this view, we should not care about teaching. Others argue that all institutions of higher education must shift from the view that they exist for teaching to the view that they exist for learning. But the fact is that whether the emphasis of teaching shifts from delivering information to supporting students in creating knowledge from information gleaned from multiple sources, teaching must be done.

The narrow definition of teaching as essentially giving lectures and grading exams misrepresents the multifaceted work that goes into effective teaching. Organizations providing higher learning must have qualified faculties—people who by formal education or tested experience know what students must learn—who create the curricular pathways through which students gain the competencies and skills they need. Effective faculty members understand that students learn in very different ways. The organization encourages and supports their efforts to respond to diverse learning needs.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Qualified faculty determine curricular content and strategies for instruction.

- The organization supports professional development designed to facilitate teaching suited to varied learning environments.
- The organization evaluates teaching and recognizes effective teaching.
- The organization provides services to support improved pedagogies.
- The organization demonstrates openness to innovative practices that enhance learning.
- The organization supports faculty in keeping abreast of the research on teaching and learning, and of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction.
- Faculty members actively participate in professional organizations relevant to the disciplines they teach.

Criterion 3 - Core Component 3c

The organization creates effective learning environments.

Colleges have created multiple learning environments, perhaps without being conscious of the pedagogical rationales behind them. Many graduate and upper-division courses have long used seminar formats instead of lectures, but now students of the freshman-year experience propose that freshman seminars might help student success and retention. Faculty-student research, once the purview of graduate education, now marks much undergraduate education. Internships and applied courses basic to good vocational education are now seen to be excellent ways for students to learn in the humanities and social sciences. Study abroad is a very specific learning environment. So too are new computer-based learning labs.

Research about factors that contribute to effective student learning can no longer be ignored. How students interact with other students is often as important as how they interact with faculty, but effective interaction is essential. Mentoring and advising, once thought to be primarily a faculty task, may now be found throughout an organization, particularly in the student services area. All of these variables contribute to learning environments. Faculty members are coming to appreciate how they contribute to these environments, fully understanding that the classroom experience is only one part of any learning environment.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Assessment results inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services.
- The organization provides an environment that supports all learners and respects the diversity they bring.
- Advising systems focus on student learning, including the mastery of skills required for academic success.
- Student development programs support learning throughout the student's experience regardless of the location of the student.
- The organization employs, when appropriate, new technologies that enhance effective learning environments for students.
- The organization's systems of quality assurance include regular review of whether its educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning.

Criterion 3 - Core Component 3d

The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

It was not that long ago that accreditation was understood to focus rather heavily on resources in the library. Accrediting teams counted staff members and the square footage allocated to the library and to book inventories. Unless libraries are used and valued by students and faculty, their impact on learning is small. In short, a library—or a learning resource center—exists to support learning and teaching.

Libraries are just one of many resources needed to support learning. Science education requires laboratories, arts education requires studios and performance space, and many programs require sites at which students can practice their professions under supervision. Increasingly, organizations cannot own all of these resources. They find ways to share them, or they discover that technology provides access unthought of barely ten years ago. The test for accreditation is no longer ownership. Instead, it evaluates the organization's understanding of what resources are needed for effective learning and teaching and its creative ways of linking faculty and students to the resources and making sure they are used.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization ensures access to the resources (e.g., research laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites) necessary to support learning and teaching.
- The organization evaluates the use of its learning resources to enhance student learning and effective teaching.
- The organization regularly assesses the effectiveness of its learning resources to support learning and teaching.
- The organization supports students, staff, and faculty in using technology effectively.
- The organization provides effective staffing and support for its learning resources.
- The organization's systems and structures enable partnerships and innovations that enhance student learning and strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- Budgeting priorities reflect that improvement in teaching and learning is a core value of the organization.

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

What separates an organization of higher learning from a postsecondary training institute? Interestingly enough, it is not the range and types of educational programs offered, nor the duration of those programs. When one compares the educational pathways of students attending an excellent technical institute with those of students in community colleges and comprehensive universities, one finds remarkable similarities in the skills the programs are meant to develop.

An organization of higher learning, while sharing the same commitment to providing education that is relevant and practical, has a broader perspective on what it means to be an educated person. That is, although it sees a student as a potential skilled employee, it values even more the need to help that student become an independently creative person, an informed and dependable citizen, and a socially aware and responsible individual. An organization of higher learning sets goals for learning and behavior relevant to these multiple and vitally important needs.

Knowledge is a powerful word, for it speaks to comprehension, application, and synthesis, not just mastery of information. Computers may have introduced the Information Age, but in a short time our definitional language for this new era began to include the term knowledge worker. The shift is as important as it is misunderstood. The knowledge worker will be technologically literate, to be sure, but what is valued is the knowledge worker's capacity to sift and winnow massive amounts of information in order to discover or create new or better understandings of ourselves and the world we live in.

Criterion 4. Core Component 4a

The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

In the first Criterion, the Commission sets the expectation that an organization's mission documents include commitments to excellence in higher learning. With this Core Component, the Commission seek evidence to document that the organization is living up to those commitments.

Excellence in higher learning presupposes that colleges and universities are committed to helping students become educated people capable of a life of learning. Yet students are not the sole constituency of an accredited organization. Faculty and administrators not only nourish the intellectual growth of students; they also model for each other, for students, and for other constituencies of the organization the transformational power of a life of continuous learning.

At a time when colleges and universities are too often known more for their athletes than for their scholars, the organization seeking affiliation with the Commission makes clear that its educational priorities have to do with acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's planning and pattern of financial allocation demonstrate that it values and promotes a life of learning for its students, faculty, and staff.

- The board has approved and disseminated statements supporting freedom of inquiry for the organization's students, faculty, and staff, and honors those statements in its practices.
- The organization supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its administrators, faculty, and staff.
- The organization publicly acknowledges the achievements of students and faculty in acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge.
- The faculty and students, in keeping with the organization's mission, produce scholarship and create knowledge through basic and applied research.
- The organization and its units use scholarship and research to stimulate organizational and educational improvements.

Criterion 4 - Core Component 4b

The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

U.S. higher education is known for its long-standing commitment to breadth of learning within its undergraduate degree programs. A baccalaureate degree, for example, represents more than the successful accumulation of a specific number of credits; it has always testified to an understood balance within those credits between studies related to a specific field and studies meant to provide a breadth of learning appropriate to the degree designation. General education—or liberal studies—is the term usually applied to studies meant to provide breadth of learning. Over the years, an orthodoxy has developed about what general education should look like and who should provide it.

With this Core Component, the Commission honors these commitments even as it recasts somewhat the understanding about how organizations might live them out. The Commission has articulated its reasons for this in its "Statement on General Education" (see Appendix C).

By its very title, this Criterion is about the skills and attitudes an educated person should possess, not about the specific curricular pathway assumed to contribute to that development. Moreover, it makes explicit a new premise for accreditation: the educated person understands that learning will continue throughout life. To learn throughout life, people need to master fundamental skills of intellectual inquiry, and they should master those skills through excellent undergraduate education.

Recently, some scholars have commented on the detrimental impact of increased specialization at the graduate level. Although not quite advocating general education for graduate students, they illustrate the idea that college and university faculties committed to quality higher learning ought to be responsible for ensuring that students at all levels master the skills requisite to being creative and independent learners throughout their lives.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.
- The organization regularly reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education.
- The organization assesses how effectively its graduate programs establish a knowledge base on which students develop depth of expertise.
- The organization demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved breadth of knowledge and skills and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning.

Criterion 4 - Core Component 4c

The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Once academics argued that higher learning focuses on the life of the mind and professional training focuses on the life of work. The dichotomy was never that simple in many professions, and it is misleading in the twenty-first century. It is perhaps that dichotomy that makes the phrase knowledge worker jarring to the ears of many academics. However, the juxtaposition of those two words says something important to the academy and to students.

Core Component 3 speaks most directly to those responsible for creating curricula—the faculty. Faculty members have long held to the tenet that excellent teaching requires being current with the scholarship in the discipline. Now the Commission proposes that faculty would be well-served to hear other voices as they create and revise courses and programs for students. It is easy to identify employers as one set of voices that need to be heard. Alumni who are building careers might provide excellent advice about the fit between the curriculum and the work world. Leaders from business and industry provide important insights into the changing environments they experience and, consequently, that they think well-educated people should understand.

It is a given that the academy needs to retain control over the education it provides. Increasingly, however, it is obvious that the academy can learn from others, and that learning can influence how educational pathways are structured for the benefit of students.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Regular academic program reviews include attention to currency and relevance of courses and programs.
- In keeping with its mission, learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce.
- Learning outcomes document that graduates have gained the skills and knowledge they need to function in diverse local, national, and global societies.
- Curricular evaluation involves alumni, employers, and other external constituents who understand the relationships among the course of study, the currency of the curriculum, and the utility of the knowledge and skills gained.
- The organization supports creation and use of scholarship by students in keeping with its mission.
- Faculty expects students to master the knowledge and skills necessary for independent learning in programs of applied practice.
- The organization provides curricular and co-curricular opportunities that promote social responsibility.

Criterion 4 - Core Component 4d

The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Support in this Core Component is partly about financial support. Because it refers to the supportive nature of the environment created by the whole organization, it identifies student services and academic support services as essential to that environment. Supporting these services so that they can be as vital as possible involves commitment of funds.

Support has broader meanings worth considering as well. A supportive environment is provided by an organization when it foresees the ethical and moral implications of various approaches to acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge. For example, it can use an effectively administered honor code to help students understand the concept of responsible use of knowledge. It can pay better attention to the integrity of research and writing done by faculty. It can require institution-wide discussions about good practices in research on animal and human subjects. It can engage students and faculty in seminal discussions about the social responsibility of the academy itself.

The organization should model responsible use of knowledge. Two clichés come to mind: "walk the talk" and "practice what you preach." That is, if the organization expects students, faculty, and staff to be responsible with knowledge, then the organization needs to be responsible in the ways it treats creation and application of knowledge. What message about responsible ways to discover knowledge is sent when research assistants receive no credit for the final outcome of a major research project? And when published research fails to identify its sponsorship by organizations with a vested interest in the results, what does this teach about applying knowledge responsibly? These are two of many questions with no easy answers, but an organization's policies and procedures indicate whether they have been asked and answered. An organization that compromises on its own integrity, whether it intends to or not, teaches all its constituencies a bad lesson.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to responsible use of knowledge.

- The organization follows explicit policies and procedures to ensure ethical conduct in its research and instructional activities.
- The organization encourages curricular and co-curricular activities that relate responsible use of knowledge to practicing social responsibility.
- The organization provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and practice conducted by its faculty and students.
- The organization creates, disseminates, and enforces clear policies on practices involving intellectual property rights.

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

This Criterion can too readily be understood in the functional context of many organizations of higher learning: it must be about the extension program or the continuing education wing or the customized training department. It is, to be sure, about these components, but the Commission's interest in engagement is much broader. Attention to engagement is woven throughout these Criteria, for it constitutes a basic understanding that an organization affiliated with the Commission cares deeply about how its work intersects with the lives of individuals on and off campus and with local, national, and global organizations. The Commission's interest is directly related to its mission: "serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning."

Although contemporary political thinking might hold that higher education is a private rather than a public good, the Commission continues to believe that higher education is an asset of incalculable worth to society as well as to individuals. Whether students attend public, private, or proprietary colleges and universities, they move into a society that expects to benefit from the learning achieved, from the knowledge created, and from the values of social responsibility inculcated. If colleges and universities have erred in the past half century, it has been in marginalizing the importance of their engagement in "serving the common good."

The academy is being buffeted by social and economic changes beyond its control. It is asked to understand and respond to those changes. This Criterion posits that effective engagement with society is a dialogue that involves the organization at multiple points and levels. Moreover, it posits that services considered by all to be valuable and beneficial constitute evidence of effective engagement.

In the first Criterion, the Commission calls for an organization to make explicit how it defines its constituencies and the service it intends to provide them. This fifth Criterion repeats that call but asks for evidence that the organization lives up to its mission.

Criterion 5 - Core Component 5a

The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

There is an expectation in this Core Component that an organization affiliated with the Commission will be proactive in relations with its constituencies. Assuming that the organization has a clear sense of who constitutes its constituencies, this proposes that an engaged institution tries to listen to them to discern their educational needs. This Core Component deliberately did not use the words "the organization identifies the needs of its constituents." Engagement involves an interaction that leads to results of mutual benefit.

Effective engagement also requires careful consideration of whether and how the organization can—or should—meet all of the expectations. The hard fact is that many organizations of higher learning lack the capacity to respond to every educational need around them. Not every need, therefore, is automatically an opportunity to be grasped. There are times that organizational mission alone precludes a positive response. More often, the organization needs to be clear about whether it can fulfill the need or should offer to find other organizations better equipped to respond. Usually it is not hard for an organization that is eager to serve to identify unmet educational needs. But the organization should be clear about whether those needs come from its clearly identified constituency and, if so, whether the organization can reasonably meet them.

Many colleges and universities have created distinct administrative or educational units to respond to external constituency needs. At the very least, such organizations need to evaluate the effectiveness of those units both in identifying the appropriate needs and in creating and delivering training and education to meet them.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's commitments are shaped by its mission and its capacity to support those commitments.

- The organization practices periodic environmental scanning to understand the changing needs of its constituencies and their communities.
- The organization demonstrates attention to the diversity of the constituencies it serves.
- The organization's outreach programs respond to identified community needs.
- In responding to external constituencies, the organization is well-served by programs such as continuing education, outreach, customized training, and extension services.

Criterion 5 - Core Component 5b

The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

It is worth noting that capacity appears in two of the Core Components for this Criterion. Over the last thirty years, many organizations accredited by the Commission have moved their educational offerings off campus into high schools, learning centers, shopping malls, branch campuses, and other locations. In so doing, they have dramatically increased access to higher education. Capacity can be a real challenge to being responsive, no matter how strong the commitment. Some colleges clearly have capacity but have no strong overarching organizational commitment that enables them to make use of it.

An effective college or university is able to define its primary constituents and communities. For many, geography essentially defines both. For others, both are defined more by shared beliefs. Some more-specialized colleges serve both a professional community and a specific business or industry. In an era of intense competition for students and finances, constituencies and communities of service can become extraordinarily fluid. Community colleges, once clear about who their constituents were, now use the Internet to identify constituents in a global rather than local community. Several liberal arts colleges continue to have small residential campuses but have hundreds or thousands of students enrolled in their programs in foreign countries. Regional public universities use technology to expand their constituencies to include many outside the region and the state. The risk of such fluid definitions of constituencies is that none might be served adequately.

A connected organization strives to serve constituencies by creating connections among them as well. Service learning programs, for example, now appear on many campuses. Faculty, students, and external constituencies of the college collaborate in creating activities directly connecting student learning with serving communities needs.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's structures and processes enable effective connections with its communities.
- The organization's co-curricular activities engage students, staff, administrators, and faculty with external communities.
- The organization's educational programs connect students with external communities.
- The organization's resources—physical, financial, and human—support effective programs of engagement and service.
- Planning processes project ongoing engagement and service.

Criterion 5 - Core Component 5c

The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

For the most part, it is the college or university, not the Commission, that determines its constituencies. But organizations of higher learning must accept some constituencies as theirs, and recognize that they have a responsibility toward these constituencies. Perhaps the constituencies most talked about are elementary and secondary education systems. From those systems come students for our colleges and universities; from our colleges and universities come the teachers for those systems. More and more high school graduates believe that college is necessary for their future success, and increasing numbers of them matriculate. The lack of fit is evident as developmental courses balloon in numbers and enrollments and as course and degree completion rates stagnate. Responsibility for this must be shared, and many colleges are helping high schools in their region bring their students to mutually accepted standards of performance.

In many rural sections of the North Central region, communities have come to depend on a single college, or two or three reasonably closely located institutions, for educational services. The willingness of those institutions to collaborate to create seamless pathways for many kinds of learners is strong evidence of engagement and service. Sometimes the collaboration must involve local business or industry as the best

partner, while at other times the most effective partner could be a college hundreds of miles away that is willing to collaborate in creating programs needed by the community. Participating in the creation of multi-organizational higher learning centers is a good example of responding to educational needs by drawing on the strengths of several different colleges and universities.

In our urban areas, many colleges find their constituencies shifting simply because the demographics of the local population shifts. Suddenly there might be a major demand for educational services that, by mission and commitment, they want to provide, but that they are ill-equipped to handle. It is a testimony to engagement when such colleges show creativity in effectively compensating for their lack of preparedness.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Collaborative ventures exist with other higher learning organizations and education sectors (e.g., K–12 partnerships, articulation arrangements, 2+2 programs).
- The organization's transfer policies and practices create an environment supportive of the mobility of learners.
- Community leaders testify to the usefulness of the organization's programs of engagement.
- The organization's programs of engagement give evidence of building effective bridges among diverse communities.
- The organization participates in partnerships focused on shared educational, economic, and social goals.
- The organization's partnerships and contractual arrangements uphold the organization's integrity.

Criterion 5 - Core Component 5d

Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

This Core Component calls for evaluation, but it sets the measure of usefulness and effectiveness of service as the value external and internal constituencies find in it. Perhaps being able to attend an organization's theater productions or to participate in forums and workshops on healthcare, childcare, gerontology, tax filings, drug dependency, and welfare benefits are of value to members of the community. Moreover, the organization or members in it should also find value in extending these opportunities. While the numbers of partners might testify to the value the external community places in an organization's service learning programs, it is important to know whether students and faculty value the learning achieved through those programs. Sometimes the measures of values differ. For example, professionals will value a program to gain license-mandated CEUs; the organization may value the income derived from providing the program.

At the center of this Criterion and this Core Component is the expectation that organizations affiliated with the Commission take seriously their unique role in providing services to their communities of interest. As important and common as they may be, blood drives, participation in the United Way, and voter registration programs are evidence of service, but lack the sense of engagement. Because the Commission accredits such a breadth of institutions and because those institutions have exceptionally different constituencies to serve, there cannot be an expectation that all organizations will provide similar services. A comprehensive community college, for example, may offer many customized training programs; a selective liberal arts college may provide a strong alumni educational program; and a specialized school of applied health may connect with public clinics.

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- The organization's evaluation of services involves the constituencies served.
- Service programs and student, faculty, and staff volunteer activities are well-received by the communities served.
- The organization's economic and workforce development activities are sought after and valued by civic and business leaders.
- External constituents participate in the organization's activities and co-curricular programs open to the public.
- The organization's facilities are available to and used by the community.
- The organization provides programs to meet the continuing education needs of licensed professionals in its community.

Appendix A

By adopting a formal position statement for the Commission, the Board of Trustees explains the premises on which it creates certain policies. Position statements, therefore, amplify the intent of policies and are not policies in and of themselves. Within the position statement, the Board points to relevant policies. Implementation of those policies, therefore, should honor the fundamental intent established by the Board in its formal position statement.

Commission Statement on Diversity

The Commission recognizes that much of the vitality that characterizes the higher education system in the United States is derived from the diversity found within the universe of organizations that comprise it. The Commission further recognizes that the diversity inherent among the people of the United States enriches American higher education and contributes to the capacity that students develop for living in a culturally pluralistic and interdependent world.

Diversity is represented in many forms, ranging from differences in organizational mission and educational levels to differences in the ideas, viewpoints, perspectives, values, religious beliefs, backgrounds, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, human capacity, and ethnicity of those who attend and work in the organizations. Individual and group differences add richness to teaching and learning, and also challenge them. People become more aware of their differences and similarities in a variety of ways, including through the processes of discovery and exploration, interaction, collaboration, and partnering. In this context, the Commission champions diversity as a value to be upheld, and it looks to its member organizations to promote diversity in both concept and practice as they realize their respective missions.

Recognizing diversity is one of the values embraced by the Commission in its overall statement of mission and its new Criteria of Accreditation. Therefore, member organizations are encouraged to evaluate their respective missions, visions, values, and character to determine how well they address issues of diversity when providing enriching educational experiences and services for their constituencies. Organizations teach by example; they model approaches to diversity by conducting their operations in an equitable and just manner.

An organization that provides diverse experiences for its constituencies establishes an environment in which greater intellectual development can occur, and from which the its constituencies can learn that focusing on commonalities, while understanding differences, binds peoples and cultures. Valuing diversity relates to experiencing it; thus, people in an environment that encourages inclusiveness and discourages acts of insensitivity and disrespect can become more enlightened. The Commission urges its member organizations to create and maintain teaching and learning environments that provide educational opportunities for diverse individuals and groups. In addition, the Commission urges its member organizations to provide learning environments, larger than its classroom settings, in which students can contribute to and learn from the diversity that broad life exposure offers.

The Commission recognizes the value that member institutions place on their histories, traditions, and missions and the effect of such factors on their policies and practices. Therefore, the Commission does not prescribe a set of actions to address issues of diversity. However, through its Criteria, the Commission does expect its member organizations to evidence positive responses to issues of diversity and to show the relationship of those responses to the integrity of their operations.

February 21, 2003

For further information contact:

Steven Crow, Executive Director
scrow@hlcommission.org

Appendix B

By adopting a formal position statement for the Commission, the Board of Trustees explains the premises on which it creates certain policies. Position statements, therefore, amplify the intent of policies and are not policies in and of themselves. Within the position statement, the Board points to relevant policies. Implementation of those policies, therefore, should honor the fundamental intent established by the Board in its formal position statement.

Commission Statement on Assessment of Student Learning

The Commission posited in October 1989 that assessment of student academic achievement is an essential component of every organization's effort to evaluate overall effectiveness. The experience of the past fourteen years has demonstrated that it is key to improving student learning. Assessment of student academic achievement is fundamental for all organizations that place student learning at the center of their educational endeavors.

Among the public's many expectations of higher education, the most basic is that students will learn, and in particular that they will learn what they need to know to attain personal success and fulfill their public responsibilities in the Twenty-first Century. The focus has moved from considering resources as primary evidence of the quality of education to expecting documentation of student learning. An organization's focus on achieved student learning is critical not only to promoting and improving effective curricular and cocurricular learning experiences and to providing evidence of the quality of educational experiences and programs, but also to enhancing the public's perception of the value of higher education.

The Commission appreciates that effective assessment can take a variety of forms and involve a variety of processes. However, faculty members, with meaningful input from students and strong support from the administration and governing board, should have the fundamental role in developing and sustaining systematic assessment of student learning. Their assessment strategy should be informed by the organization's mission and include explicit public statements regarding the knowledge, skills, and competencies students should possess as a result of completing course and program requirements; it also should document the values, attitudes, and behaviors faculty expect students to have developed. Moreover, while strong assessment should provide data that satisfy any externally mandated accountability requirements, its effectiveness in improving student learning relies on its integration into the organization's processes for program review, departmental and organization planning, and unit and organizational budgeting.

An organization's commitment to and capacity for effective assessment of student learning will figure more prominently than ever in the accreditation relationship established between the Commission and that organization. The Criteria for Accreditation, the Core Components, and the Examples of Evidence adopted by the Commission in 2003 forge important new links between assessment of student learning and accreditation. More than just an effective strategy for accountability or an effective management process for curriculum improvement, assessment of student achievement is essential for each higher learning organization that values its effect on the learning of its students. Therefore, an organization committed to understanding and improving the learning opportunities and environments it provides students will be able to document the relationship between assessment of and improvement in student learning.

February 21, 2003

For further information contact:

Steven Crow, Executive Director
scrow@hlcommission.org

Appendix C

By adopting a formal position statement for the Commission, the Board of Trustees explains the premises on which it creates certain policies. Position statements, therefore, amplify the intent of policies and are not policies in and of themselves. Within the position statement, the Board points to relevant policies. Implementation of those policies, therefore, should honor the fundamental intent established by the Board in its formal position statement.

Commission Statement on General Education

Understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit not only allow people to live richer lives but also are a foundation for most careers and for the informed exercise of local, national, and international citizenship. The Commission expects organizations of higher learning to address these important ends, and has embedded this expectation in its Criteria for Accreditation.

Throughout its history, the Commission has believed that quality undergraduate higher education involves breadth as well as depth of study. As understood by the Commission, general education is intended to impart common knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and to develop in them the skills and attitudes that an organization's faculty believe every educated person should possess. From an organization's general education, a student acquires a breadth of knowledge in the areas and proficiency in the skills that the organization identifies as hallmarks of being college educated. Moreover, effective general education helps students gain competence in the exercise of independent intellectual inquiry and also stimulates their examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values.

Effective general education can be shaped to fit unique organizational contexts. As higher education changes, so too do the ways in which organizations create and provide general education. General education must be valued and owned by the organization whether its courses are created, purchased, or shared; whether faculty are full-time, part-time, or employed by a partner organization; and whether the organization creates general education opportunities primarily through curriculum or relies heavily on experiential and off-campus opportunities to achieve its learning goals for general education.

Regardless of how a higher learning organization frames the general education necessary to fulfill its mission and goals, it clearly and publicly articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of the general education it provides for its students. It also shows its commitment to the centrality of general education by including an appropriate component of general education in all undergraduate programs of substantial length, whether they lead to certificates, diplomas, or degrees. Moreover, the organization's faculty exercises oversight for general education and, working with the administration, regularly assesses its effectiveness against the organization's stated goals for student learning.

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For further information contact:

Steven Crow, Executive Director
scrow@hlcommission.org

The New Criteria for Accreditation: Exploring the Usefulness of Cross-Cutting Themes as Context for Evaluation

In June 2001 the Board of Trustees initiated a process through which the Commission could create new accrediting standards for the twenty-first century. The standards were to apply only to organizations of higher learning legally authorized to grant higher education degrees. They were to engage those organizations in significant conversations about their commitment and capacity to maintain integrity and quality in an uncertain future. One focal point of the dialogue had to be about the learning their students achieved. Beyond these stipulations, the Board asked only that the process engage large numbers of constituents, that it be iterative, and that the integrity of process make credible the new standards formed through it.

An invited group framed the architecture of the new Criteria. The content of the new standards was shaped and reshaped at four regional meetings early in the process and four regional meetings near the end of the process. Six electronic work groups contributed seminal ideas on how to address organizational governance, finance, technology and learning, general education in contemporary undergraduate education, diversity, and institutional mission in relationship to the common good. The Board and staff responded to and contributed to the formation of the standards at each new iteration. The existing five Criteria, each with a relatively short list of patterns of evidence, evolved into five new Criteria, each with at least four Core Components that serve as major organizational tools for the lengthy list of examples of evidence appropriate to each new Criterion.

At first glance, it seems clear that the Commission has moved away from Criteria and General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) that emphasized institutional inputs to standards that direct the attention of evaluation to organizational effectiveness and performance. It would not be misleading to argue that this shift of emphasis is the single most important change between the accreditation program created by the 1992 Criteria and GIRs and the program promised by the 2003 Criteria.

The observation, while true, is too simple. After all, one of the 1992 Criteria almost solely focused on an institution's accomplishment of its stated purposes, and another largely addressed planning for the future. The 2003 Criteria demand attention to resources and planning. The 2003 Criteria focus accreditation on institutional effectiveness and performance by emphasizing the actions and documentation to support an organization's case that it is effective and high performing and deserves to be accredited.

The New Criteria

Criterion 1 - **Mission and Integrity.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Criterion 2 - **Preparing for the Future.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Criterion 3 - **Student Learning and Effective Teaching.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Criterion 4 - **Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge.** The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Criterion 5 - **Engagement and Service.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

The Core Components for each of these Criteria and the numerous examples of evidence appropriate to each highlight the breadth of the Criteria. Moreover, the dense texture of the new Criteria is in no small part a result of the overlapping evidence proposed for each Core Component. In short, each Criterion engages an organization in an evaluation of multiple but closely related matters that inevitably also touch on other Criteria.

In fact, the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Were the Criteria and Core Components viewed and implemented as independent and only loosely related standards, their real potential might be muted. During the process of forming the new Criteria, participants tended to want clear distinctions between and among them. Some groups devoted as much time to the "title" of a Criterion as to its content, confident that a specific title would make the Criterion clearly distinct from the others. Differentiation was important to everyone. Yet despite those efforts, the new Criteria are holistic and integrated.

Several overarching and fundamental themes are evident in the new Criteria. By identifying them, the Commission

1. Highlights primary attributes of effective and high-performing organizations valued by the Commission
2. Establishes broad benchmarks for evaluating the interpretation and application of the new Criteria
3. Indicates the interrelatedness of the Criteria
4. Suggests an organizational schema that could inform self-study processes and give structure to self-study reports

There may be other overarching themes, but the four are unmistakable, are directly related to goals of the project, and are in keeping with the Commission's stated mission, vision, and core values.

The Four Themes

In promulgating the new Criteria, the Commission demonstrates that it values the four themes of orientation to the future, focus on learning, connectedness (internally and externally), and distinctiveness.

1. The Future-Oriented Organization

- **Engages in planning.** In proving that it is future-oriented, an organization will, at a minimum, document its engagement in effective strategic planning initiatives. The new Criterion Two, "Preparing for the Future" speaks most directly to the need for an organization to know itself well enough that its multiple planning efforts will result in realistic and achievable plans. The Core Components speak to planning based on effective evaluation so the organization can maintain and strengthen its quality and its educational programs, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill its mission in the years ahead. Such efforts are essential to the future health of the organization.

- **Is driven by the mission.** More than ever, organizations that are most successful in maneuvering through an uncertain future are committed to a vision and capable of identifying their core values. Otherwise, the availability of too many options might cause confusion or lack of direction. Competitors' success might lure an organization to wander away from its mission. Unanticipated financial downturns may threaten even the best strategic plans. The new Criterion One, "Mission and Integrity," speaks to the fundamental importance of organization's mission documents. A mission that is largely a statement or an advertising tagline and is not rooted in rich soil of vision and values can so readily be changed or broadly interpreted as to be of little use in times of rapid change. A future-oriented organization does not treat its mission so lightly.

- **Understands social and economic change.** A future-oriented organization works diligently to understand the social and economic trends that will shape society and culture in the future. Major demographic shifts are inevitably bringing about important changes in our society. Some of the most salient are immigration, the aging of the baby-boomers, migration to urban centers, and increasing income disparity. Today, 70 percent of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education. Many students will extend college over many years and will go to two or more institutions before completing their education. As more and more jobs require degrees or higher education certifications, the demand for access to higher learning will continue to grow. A future-oriented organization may see opportunities in these changes and will plan new programs or sites or collaborative relationships to respond to them. At a minimum, a future-oriented organization will carefully study the potential impact of the changes. The new Criterion Five, "Engagement and Service," also calls attention to the need for a future-oriented organization to analyze its capacity to serve the needs and expectations of its constituencies experiencing change.

- **Focuses on the futures of constituents.** A future-oriented organization also attends to the futures of its constituents. The new Criterion Four, "Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge," with its emphasis on promoting a life of learning is fundamentally about the future of the organization's constituents. It asks an organization to include in its educational priorities developing the future capacity

of its students to live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society, for example. A future-oriented organization also cares about the capacity of its faculty, staff, and administrators to be productive contributors to the future of the organization and its students.

- **Integrates new technology.** A future-oriented organization understands that the information revolution spawned by new technologies will continue and will move at an even faster rate. Therefore, it seeks to understand and integrate technologies into its learning environments as well as into its support systems. New Criterion Three, "Student Learning and Effective Teaching," draws attention to new learning environments now possible through the use of technology. The word *technology* appears in Core Components of other criteria as well, for it is transforming much more than just the delivery of quality education.

2. The Learning-Focused Organization

- **Assesses student learning.** With its new Third Criterion, the Commission continues its efforts to engage the membership in effective and useful assessment of student learning. A learning-focused organization must know what it intends its students to learn and whether that learning has actually been achieved. The first Core Component embeds assessment in the Commission's accreditation standards. The Criterion also clearly signals the Commission's understanding that learners succeed in no small measure because of the quality of those who create their curricula and who teach and mentor them.

- **Supports learning.** All learning-focused organizations strive to create learning environments supportive of the multiple learning styles of their students, frequently turning to new technologies to assist in these efforts. Criterion Three draws particular attention not only to the need to attend to learning environments, but also the need to attend to services and facilities that support student learning. The learning-focused organization also supports the learning of other key constituents. As the Core Components of Criterion Four make clear, the capacity of faculty, staff, and administrators to continue learning is of great concern to a learning-focused organization.

- **Supports scholarship.** Criteria Three and Four draw attention to the fact that scholarship, in its multiple forms as defined by Ernest Boyer (Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, 1990), is the lifeblood of higher learning. Students need to understand the role and purpose of scholarship as a means of organizing and transmitting knowledge. Scholarship may involve pure or applied research engaged in by all types of students and faculties at all types of organizations. Faculties concerned about effective teaching ought to be supported in their understanding of the scholarship of teaching. Organizations that value discovery and creation of knowledge by faculty and students create environments to support research. They also integrate recognition of the accomplishments of students and faculties into the organizational culture.

- **Creates the capacity for lifelong learning.** A learning-focused organization is concerned with connections between the curricula it provides and the lives its students will pursue after they complete their courses, certificates, or degrees. For example, Criterion Four addresses the currency and relevance of the curriculum. The fit between learning and living is of central interest to any learning-focused organization. The organization may provide a rich variety of learning options, including internships, mentored research, honors programs, and service-learning, to enhance students' learning and to demonstrate the connection between the life of the mind and the life of work.

- **Strengthens organizational learning.** A learning-focused organization strengthens its own capacity to learn. An organization that lacks or fails to use multiple evaluation programs to get information essential to maintaining and strengthening quality is at risk. Criterion Two signals this vital need, particularly in its call for ongoing evaluation and assessment processes that provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness and inform strategies for continuous improvement. Organizational learning also requires carefully listening to multiple constituencies. Both Criteria One and Five draw attention to this critically important aspect of effective organizational learning. In this regard, being learning-focused is foundational to being effectively future-oriented.

3. The Connected Organization

- **Serves the common good.** The connected organization sees its role as serving society. Throughout these new Criteria, the Commission signals the importance of linkages between member organizations and the broader society. Criteria call on member organizations to state—in mission, vision, and values documents—the ways they mean to serve their constituents. Criterion One is clear that even the most distinctive organization still must understand that it serves the greater society.

- **Serves constituents.** The test of every good statement of intent is actual performance. While Criteria Three and Four focus primarily on internal constituencies, Criterion Five requires an accredited organization to address the multiple connections between it and the broader society. *Engagement* is not a synonym for *service*; *engagement* suggests a two-way relationship through which the organization is open to learning from those it wishes to serve. Strong mutual understanding is necessary for the effectiveness of the many services that an accredited organization may choose to provide.

- **Creates a culture of service.** A connected organization creates and supports a culture of service. A variety of programs and volunteer and community service activities may be available for engaging students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Increasingly, organizations have sought to integrate community service into the learning opportunities they provide, expecting students and faculty to define the learning that occurred through participation in mentored activities in the community. In the very way it interacts with local, regional, state, and national organizations and issues, the organization models service for its constituencies.

- **Collaborates.** A connected organization deals effectively with seemingly competing imperatives: protecting the integrity of the organization while engaging in partnerships and collaborations that challenge some concepts of autonomy. An accredited organization must be responsible for everything that uses its name, but it also must build dependable bridges to other institutions and organizations that provide education. A connected organization understands its role in helping students create seamless learning pathways through and among these institutions and organizations. This is as true for pathways between high schools and colleges as for pathways between colleges and graduate programs. It is true for pathways from nationally accredited institutions as well as from institutions accredited by other regional associations. Increasingly, connected organizations work to diminish unnecessary educational barriers to people from other countries.

- **Engages in healthy internal communication.** Other kind of connections are also vital to the well-being of an accredited organization. The connected organization shows that it understands that the health of connections within its community is key to its success. Effective governance and administrative structures, for example, connect multiple internal constituents in shared efforts to fulfill the organization's mission. Criterion One calls for an institution to evaluate the health and effectiveness of these connections. Criterion Two identifies a major challenge to healthy internal connections, the alignment of all levels of planning with the organization's mission.

4. The Distinctive Organization

- **Has an unambiguous mission.** In these new Criteria, the Commission expands its understanding of organizational mission to also include statements of vision, values, and goals. The Commission maintains its long history of evaluating an organization against its own distinctive identity and goals. A distinctive organization, therefore, knows what it is about. It can provide the public with documents that state its mission clearly. The knowledge of the mission pervades everything the organization does. Moreover, the organization understands the essential connection between operating with integrity and keeping faith with the mission. The new Criterion One most clearly lays out the absolute importance of this foundation.

- **Appreciates diversity.** The distinctive organization understands the complexity of the diverse society in which it is located, and it can identify how it responsibly responds to that society while honoring its unique mission. Whether diversity marks the classroom or the curriculum, whether learning about diversity is shaped by the students and faculty who fill the classrooms or by students' off-campus experiences, the distinctive organization serves the common good by honoring the worth of all individuals. While Criterion One identifies the importance of organizational recognition of diversity, Criterion Four identifies the direct relationship between what students learn and the diverse society in which they will live and work.

- **Is accountable.** Evaluation of actual performance is essential for an organization's case that it is, indeed, distinctive. Therefore, a distinctive organization finds ways to document how it achieves the goals embedded in its mission that are understandable and credible to internal and external constituents. Criterion One proposes that accountability and integrity are closely interwoven. Criterion Three holds that an accredited organization's goals for student learning are clearly stated and amenable to effective assessment. Criterion Five calls on organizations to document that constituencies value their services. The expectation is that a distinctive organization is willing to be accountable for fulfilling its unique mission.

- **Is self-reflective.** A distinctive organization is determinedly self-reflective. That is, the organization regularly takes time to engage its constituencies in credible self-evaluation processes. While this may be accomplished through ongoing planning processes at multiple levels, evaluation processes built into shared governance, or periodic open community meetings, a distinctive organization studies itself much more frequently than only before a comprehensive accreditation visit. Criterion One links adherence to mission and protection of integrity to conscious self-reflection. Criterion Two ties the capacity to meet the future to ongoing evaluation and assessment processes. Criterion Five proposes that quality of service is directly related to an organization's ability to learn, analyze, and evaluate capacity.

- **Is committed to improvement.** Any organization desirous of maintaining its own distinctiveness must be committed to improvement. Criterion Two explicitly links sound evaluation to continuous improvement. In establishing the importance effective assessment and of valuing and supporting effective teaching, Criterion Three connects both to improvement of educational programs. Improvement is also embedded in many of the examples of evidence for these and other Criteria.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the Commission has several purposes in mind in identifying these themes. The themes

- Highlight primary attributes of effective and high-performing organizations valued by the Commission
- Establish broad benchmarks for evaluating the interpretation and application of the new Criteria
- Indicate the interrelatedness of the Criteria
- Suggest an organizational schema that could inform self-study processes and give structure to self-study reports

The Commission also acknowledges that these may not be the only themes identifiable in the Criteria. As institutions and peer reviewers go about their respective tasks in applying the new Criteria, the Commission staff would greatly value comments on the usefulness of the themes as a tool or strategy. Staff would also like to know of any other themes that emerge and could be shared with others.

The Criteria for Accreditation

The Criteria Headings Defined

The Criteria for Accreditation are organized under five major headings. Each criterion has three elements: Criterion Statement, Core Components, and Examples of Evidence. These elements are defined as follows.

Criteria Statements: These statements, adopted by the Commission, define necessary attributes of an organization accredited by the Commission. An organization must be judged to have met each of the Criteria to merit accreditation. Sanctions may be applied if an affiliated organization is in jeopardy of not meeting one or more of the Criteria.

Core Components: The Commission identifies Core Components of each criterion. An organization addresses each Core Component as it presents reasonable and representative evidence of meeting a criterion. The review of each Core Component is necessary for a thorough evaluation of how an organization meets a criterion.

Examples of Evidence: The Commission provides in the Examples of Evidence illustrative examples of the specific types of evidence that an organization might present in addressing a Core Component. Organizations may provide other evidence they find relevant to their mission and activities. Some types of evidence suggested by the Commission may not be appropriate for all organizations; therefore, the absence of a specific type of evidence does not in and of itself mean that the organization fails to meet a Core Component.

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Core Component - 1a

The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.

Examples of Evidence

- The board has adopted statements of mission, vision, values, goals, and organizational priorities that together clearly and broadly define the organization's mission.
- The mission, vision, values, and goals documents define the varied internal and external constituencies the organization intends to serve.
- The mission documents include a strong commitment to high academic standards that sustain and advance excellence in higher learning.
- The mission documents state goals for the learning to be achieved by its students.
- The organization regularly evaluates and, when appropriate, revises the mission documents.
- The organization makes the mission documents available to the public, particularly to prospective and enrolled students.

Core Component - 1b

In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Examples of Evidence

- In its mission documents, the organization addresses diversity within the community values and common purposes it considers fundamental to its mission.
- The mission documents present the organization's function in a multicultural society.
- The mission documents affirm the organization's commitment to honor the dignity and worth of individuals.
- The organization's required codes of belief or expected behavior are congruent with its mission.
- The mission documents provide a basis for the organization's basic strategies to address diversity.

Core Component - 1c

Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization

Examples of Evidence

- The board, administration, faculty, staff, and students understand and support the organization's mission.
- The organization's strategic decisions are mission-driven.
- The organization's planning and budgeting priorities flow from and support the mission.
- The goals of the administrative and academic sub-units of the organization are congruent with the organization's mission.
- The organization's internal constituencies articulate the mission in a consistent manner.

Core Component - 1d

The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

Examples of Evidence

- Board policies and practices document the board's focus on the organization's mission.
- The board enables the organization's chief administrative personnel to exercise effective leadership.
- The distribution of responsibilities as defined in governance structures, processes, and activities is understood and is implemented through delegated authority.
- People within the governance and administrative structures are committed to the mission and appropriately qualified to carry out their defined responsibilities.

- Faculty and other academic leaders share responsibility for the coherence of the curriculum and the integrity of academic processes.
- Effective communication facilitates governance processes and activities.
- The organization evaluates its structures and processes regularly and strengthens them as needed.

Core Component - 1e

The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

Examples of Evidence

- The activities of the organization are congruent with its mission.
- The board exercises its responsibility to the public to ensure that the organization operates legally, responsibly, and with fiscal honesty.
- The organization understands and abides by local, state, and federal laws and regulations applicable to it (or by laws and regulations established by federally-recognized sovereign entities).
- The organization consistently implements clear and fair policies regarding the rights and responsibilities of each of its internal constituencies.
- The organization's structures and processes allow it to ensure the integrity of its co-curricular and auxiliary activities.
- The organization deals fairly with its external constituents.
- The organization presents itself accurately and honestly to the public.
- The organization documents timely response to complaints and grievances, particularly those of students.

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Core Component - 2a

The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's planning documents reflect a sound understanding of the organization's current capacity.
- The organization's planning documents demonstrate that attention is being paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.
- The organization's planning documents show careful attention to the organization's function in a multicultural society.
- The organization's planning processes include effective environmental scanning.
- The organizational environment is supportive of innovation and change.
- The organization incorporates in its planning those aspects of its history and heritage that it wishes to preserve and continue.
- The organization clearly identifies authority for decision making about organizational goals.

Core Component - 2b

The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's resources are adequate for achievement of the educational quality it claims to provide.
- Plans for resource development and allocation document an organizational commitment to supporting and strengthening the quality of the education it provides.
- The organization uses its human resources effectively.
- The organization intentionally develops its human resources to meet future changes.
- The organization's history of financial resource development and investment documents a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality (e.g., investments in faculty development, technology, learning support services, new or renovated facilities).
- The organization's planning processes are flexible enough to respond to unanticipated needs for program reallocation, downsizing, or growth.
- The organization has a history of achieving its planning goals.

Core Component - 2c

The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization demonstrates that its evaluation processes provide evidence that its performance meets its stated expectations for institutional effectiveness.
- The organization maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information.
- Appropriate data and feedback loops are available and used throughout the organization to support continuous improvement.
- Periodic reviews of academic and administrative sub-units contribute to improvement of the organization.
- The organization provides adequate support for its evaluation and assessment processes.

Core Component - 2d

All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Examples of Evidence

- Coordinated planning processes center on the mission documents that define vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities for the organization.
- Planning processes link with budgeting processes.
- Implementation of the organization's planning is evident in its operations.
- Long-range strategic planning processes allow for reprioritization of goals when necessary because of changing environments.
- Planning documents give evidence of the organization's awareness of the relationships among educational quality, student learning, and the diverse, complex, global, and technological world in which the organization and its students exist.
- Planning processes involve internal constituents and, where appropriate, external constituents.

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Core Component - 3a

The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each.
- Assessment of student learning provides evidence at multiple levels: course, program, and institutional.
- Assessment of student learning includes multiple direct and indirect measures of student learning.
- Results obtained through assessment of student learning are available to appropriate constituencies, including students themselves.
- The organization integrates into its assessment of student learning the data reported for purposes of external accountability (e.g., graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, transfer rates).
- The organization's assessment of student learning extends to all educational offerings, including credit and non-credit certificate programs.
- Faculty are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved.
- Faculty and administrators routinely review the effectiveness and uses of the organization's program to assess student learning.

Core Component - 3b

The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Examples of Evidence

- Qualified faculty determine curricular content and strategies for instruction.
- The organization supports professional development designed to facilitate teaching suited to varied learning environments.
- The organization evaluates teaching and recognizes effective teaching.
- The organization provides services to support improved pedagogies.
- The organization demonstrates openness to innovative practices that enhance learning.
- The organization supports faculty in keeping abreast of the research on teaching and learning, and of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction.
- Faculty members actively participate in professional organizations relevant to the disciplines they teach.

Core Component - 3c

The organization creates effective learning environments.

Examples of Evidence

- Assessment results inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services.
- The organization provides an environment that supports all learners and respects the diversity they bring.
- Advising systems focus on student learning, including the mastery of skills required for academic success.
- Student development programs support learning throughout the student's experience regardless of the location of the student.
- The organization employs, when appropriate, new technologies that enhance effective learning environments for students.
- The organization's systems of quality assurance include regular review of whether its educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning.

Core Component - 3d

The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization ensures access to the resources (e.g., research laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites) necessary to support learning and teaching.
- The organization evaluates the use of its learning resources to enhance student learning and effective teaching.
- The organization regularly assesses the effectiveness of its learning resources to support learning and teaching.
- The organization supports students, staff, and faculty in using technology effectively.
- The organization provides effective staffing and support for its learning resources.
- The organization's systems and structures enable partnerships and innovations that enhance student learning and strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- Budgeting priorities reflect that improvement in teaching and learning is a core value of the organization.

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Core Component - 4a

The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

Examples of Evidence

- The board has approved and disseminated statements supporting freedom of inquiry for the organization's students, faculty, and staff, and honors those statements in its practices.
- The organization's planning and pattern of financial allocation demonstrate that it values and promotes a life of learning for its students, faculty, and staff.

- The organization supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its administrators, faculty, and staff.
- The organization publicly acknowledges the achievements of students and faculty in acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge.
- The faculty and students, in keeping with the organization's mission, produce scholarship and create knowledge through basic and applied research.
- The organization and its units use scholarship and research to stimulate organizational and educational improvements.

Core Component - 4b

The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.
- The organization regularly reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education.
- The organization assesses how effectively its graduate programs establish a knowledge base on which students develop depth of expertise.
- The organization demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved breadth of knowledge and skills and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning.

Core Component - 4c

The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Examples of Evidence

- Regular academic program reviews include attention to currency and relevance of courses and programs.
- In keeping with its mission, learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce.
- Learning outcomes document that graduates have gained the skills and knowledge they need to function in diverse local, national, and global societies.
- Curricular evaluation involves alumni, employers, and other external constituents who understand the relationships among the courses of study, the currency of the curriculum, and the utility of the knowledge and skills gained.
- The organization supports creation and use of scholarship by students in keeping with its mission.
- Faculty expect students to master the knowledge and skills necessary for independent learning in programs of applied practice.
- The organization provides curricular and co-curricular opportunities that promote social responsibility.

Core Component - 4d

The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to responsible use of knowledge.
- The organization follows explicit policies and procedures to ensure ethical conduct in its research and instructional activities.
- The organization encourages curricular and co-curricular activities that relate responsible use of knowledge to practicing social responsibility.
- The organization provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and practice conducted by its faculty and students.
- The organization creates, disseminates, and enforces clear policies on practices involving intellectual property rights.

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

Core Component - 5a

The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's commitments are shaped by its mission and its capacity to support those commitments.
- The organization practices periodic environmental scanning to understand the changing needs of its constituencies and their communities.
- The organization demonstrates attention to the diversity of the constituencies it serves.
- The organization's outreach programs respond to identified community needs.
- In responding to external constituencies, the organization is well-served by programs such as continuing education, outreach, customized training, and extension services.

Core Component - 5b

The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's structures and processes enable effective connections with its communities.
- The organization's co-curricular activities engage students, staff, administrators, and faculty with external communities.
- The organization's educational programs connect students with external communities.
- The organization's resources—physical, financial, and human—support effective programs of engagement and service.
- Planning processes project ongoing engagement and service.

Core Component - 5c

The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

Examples of Evidence

- Collaborative ventures exist with other higher learning organizations and education sectors (e.g., K-12 partnerships, articulation arrangements, 2+2 programs).
- The organization's transfer policies and practices create an environment supportive of the mobility of learners.
- Community leaders testify to the usefulness of the organization's programs of engagement.
- The organization's programs of engagement give evidence of building effective bridges among diverse communities.
- The organization participates in partnerships focused on shared educational, economic, and social goals.
- The organization's partnerships and contractual arrangements uphold the organization's integrity.

Core Component - 5d

Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

Examples of Evidence

- The organization's evaluation of services involves the constituencies served.
- Service programs and student, faculty, and staff volunteer activities are well-received by the communities served.
- The organization's economic and workforce development activities are sought after and valued by civic and business leaders.
- External constituents participate in the organization's activities and co-curricular programs open to the public.
- The organization's facilities are available to and used by the community.
- The organization provides programs to meet the continuing education needs of licensed professionals in its community.

The Eligibility Requirements

An organization seeking INITIAL AFFILIATION with the Commission by either accreditation or candidacy will:

1. Hold an appropriate legal status to operate as an organization offering higher learning in one of the states or sovereign nations within the North Central region, and have the legal authority to award higher education degrees and any other educational offerings wherever and however delivered.

2. Publish and make available to students and the broader public a statement of mission approved by its governing board defining clearly the nature and purpose of the higher learning provided by the organization and the students for whom it is intended.

3. Have students enrolled in its degree programs before achieving candidacy or have graduated students from its degree programs before achieving accreditation.

4. Document governance and administrative structures that legally enable the organization to protect its institutional and educational integrity.

5. Document that it has core values and strategic priorities that assure its graduates will be capable of contributing to the communities in which they live and work.

6. Demonstrate that it has engaged qualified academic personnel essential to assure effective curriculum, instruction, and academic programs.

7. Demonstrate the ownership of or responsibility for assuring access to the learning resources and support services necessary to facilitate the learning expected of its enrolled students.

8. Provide documentation of existing and future financial capacity.

9. Provide students with electronic or print documents that outline educational program requirements appropriate in terms of length, content, and required learning outcomes for the credential awarded.

10. Document that it presents itself to the public and prospective and enrolled students fairly and accurately with up-to-date information published electronically or in print about credit transfer, costs and refunds, financial aid, and the accreditation status of the organization and its programs.

11. Document that it provides its students, administrators, faculty, and staff with the policies and procedures informing them of their rights and responsibilities within the organization.

12. Present evidence of ongoing planning that includes a realistic action plan for achieving accreditation with the Commission within the period of time set by Commission policy.

Part 2.

Self-Study and Commission Evaluation

The Self-Study Process in Accreditation

Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study Process

There are many different ways to conduct a self-study that is both highly useful to the organization and appropriate in the accreditation process. An effective self-study process

☐ **Fits the distinctive nature of the organization**

An organization's mission makes it distinctive, as might its breadth of educational offerings or specific foci within them. Some organizations have many students and complex structures, while others serve smaller numbers of students and have relatively simple structures. The distinctions among institutions are too numerous to mention, and they inevitably result in self-study processes that cannot and should not be replicated exactly in other settings. It is important for an organization's self-evaluation and assessment to fit its unique organizational context.

☐ **Achieves stated goals that guide the plan and the conduct of the process**

Knowing what is to be accomplished through the self-study process helps an organization make sure it remains focused. This means that goals shape the plan and the process, rather than emerging from them. Moreover, to create successful strategies, participants need to understand the goals. Effective self-studies typically have a limited number of recognizably significant goals.

☐ **Ensures effective evaluation of the whole organization**

Organizations providing higher learning increasingly are becoming more complex. The evaluation for accreditation looks at the total organization. It is easy to focus on the core educational endeavors of the organization, but it is also important to account for substantial subsidiary enterprises, noncredit training programs or other significant continuing education endeavors, and development and alumni relations programs, just to name a few. Attention, too, should be given to the influence of intercollegiate athletics and social fraternities and sororities on the lives of students as well as to important educational opportunities used by some students, such as study abroad, service learning, and co-op programs.

☐ **Promises to have an impact on the organization beyond the Commission visit**

A self-study process ultimately should connect to an organization's ongoing visioning, budgeting, and planning processes. Highly effective self-study processes produce findings and recommendations that the organization should address. When the leadership of the organization affirms that the self-study report will be a living document rather than gathering dust on a shelf, the organization's constituencies respond to an organizational agenda, not simply to one set by the Commission.

☐ **Engages multiple constituencies of the organization**

An organization is best seen through multiple lenses. A successful organization involves the work of many, and the contributions of the various constituencies make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Therefore, the value of inclusiveness in review ensures that a holistic perspective can be achieved.

☐ **Builds naturally on existing and ongoing self-evaluation processes**

Current practice is well past seeing self-study for accreditation as an activity separate from and added onto an organization's existing and ongoing evaluation processes. Organizations have too little time and energy and too few resources to build a process parallel to existing effective ones. A well-designed self-study builds on what is already in place, adding to it or, sometimes, transforming it into a more effective means of evaluation. Moreover, there is no need to gather data that already exist somewhere in the organization, whether in the institutional research office or some other area that routinely or periodically gathers information for reporting or institutional use.

☐ **Has strong presidential and board support**

The president and board should have high expectations for organizational learning from the self-study process. Without these expectations, it is too easy to turn self-study into a compliance activity. Clear evidence of this support inspires stakeholder engagement.

☐ **Draws on the expertise and credibility of recognized leaders throughout the organization**

As with any task important to the organization, self-study should tap the talents and commitments of leaders who will make the effort credible. They cannot conduct the self-study alone, so they should be known for their ability to generate and support the involvement of others. They should know and call on people with expertise who can make the process both efficient and effective.

☐ **Maintains regular and effective communication links with institutional constituencies**

Keeping constituencies informed and involved is essential. Communication is an interactive process; effective communication allows for frequent constituency input and feedback. When the evaluation team reaches the campus and holds informal interviews in faculty and administrative offices, discusses the organization with staff, and chats with students in the dining areas or classroom hallways, it should discover that all of them know about the process and its results.

☐ **Produces evidence to show that the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation are met**

As the Commission initiates the new Criteria, it is time to rethink and redesign the self-study process the organization last used. The accuracy and quality of an organization's response to the Criteria and Core Components are contingent upon its production of substantive evidence that is cogent and evaluative. Data are not evidence; connecting and interpreting data create evidence.

☐ **Produces a self-study report that meets the Commission's needs**

A well-designed self-study report may have many audiences, but the Commission is obviously one of the most important. The report bears the weight of providing evidence that the organization warrants an affiliated status with the Commission. It allows the evaluation team to conduct an efficient visit; it informs the people who participate in the Commission's subsequent review and decision-making processes. The self-study report needs to link solidly with the findings produced by the self-study process.

Practical Advice for Creating and Conducting an Effective Self-Study Process and Team Visit

At each Annual Meeting over the past decade, experienced self-study coordinators have mentored people new to the self-study process. They have provided excellent practical advice in their meeting presentations and in the papers they wrote for the *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement*. Commission staff had only to study the Collection of Papers for the last four years to glean the practical advice that follows. This summary can be supplemented by reviewing the essays in the Collection of Papers or by going to the Commission's Web site, where some of the papers have been published.

I. Make good preparations

An effective self-study process builds on the context of the organization and its ongoing planning. While the steering committee and its coordinators have fundamental roles in making the process effective, the leadership of the organization needs to attend to some critically important tasks before turning the self-study process over to the steering committee.

- ○ Create the stated organizational goals or outcomes for the process; if there are expected priorities for organizational issues, make them clear.
- ○ Identify anticipated changes or improvements that need to be integrated into the self-study process or the self-study report (e.g., review of a change requiring Commission approval).
- ○ Make explicit the organization's values and culture that the self-study process must honor.
- ○ Propose the appropriate linkages between the self-study process and ongoing institutional planning endeavors.
- ○ Understand the U.S. Department of Education compliance components of the Commission's accrediting activities.
- ○ Consult with Commission staff as needed to determine how the self-study process can be used to meet leadership objectives.

The leadership should also be thoughtful in positioning the steering committee. Some institutions create sizable steering committees because they give every administrative and academic unit a place. Sage advice from experienced self-study coordinators holds that the leadership may wish to

- ○ Determine the size of the committee in relation to tasks that only the members of the committee can achieve
- ○ Use a smaller, more efficient committee charged with creating and working with multiple subcommittees or working groups

After creating a steering committee, the leadership will want to collaborate with it in crafting the self-study plan. Together they will consider which self-study model to use. The following models, all of which have been used by organizations, are not the only ones possible.

- Craft the self-study process around the Criteria for Accreditation.
- Craft the self-study process around the themes identified by the Commission.
- Craft the self-study process around functional areas of the organization.
- Organize the self-study process to fit continuous quality improvement structures and processes (including benchmarking as appropriate).
- Structure the self-study process around strategic planning processes.
- Build the self-study process around a major mission revision process.
- Build the self-study process around selected topical headings.
- Create the self-study process to support a learning organization.
- Develop a customized self-study process and obtain Commission approval (see the section on Customized Accreditation Review Process).

Of course, every process needs to ensure that the organization can provide evidence that it fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation.

Very early, the organization's leadership and the steering committee must agree on

- Established timelines that fit the time available before the evaluation visit. If the leadership has already set the date for the visit, make sure that the steering committee believes it can meet that date. If there are concerns, contact the Commission to discuss rescheduling options.
- The tasks to be done. It is good practice for the CEO to provide a formal written charge to the steering committee and its coordinators and to make the charge known to the broader communities of the organization.
- The expected outcomes of the process. Other than preparing for an accreditation visit, the total community should know of any outcomes of the process that have been set by the leadership and the steering committee, including outcomes anticipated after the visit is concluded.
- The budget for the process. The budgeting process should be realistic, accounting for anticipated direct costs, and taking into account a variety of indirect costs. Successful self-study processes usually include funds to cover such things as attendance at the Commission Annual Meeting and programs to reward and recognize those who oversee the process.

II. Involve the Right People in the Process

The leadership of the organization makes a very critical strategic decision in naming the steering committee and the self-study coordinator(s). Choose the right people. Experienced Self-Study Coordinators advise that the steering committee should include people who are

- Experienced with accreditation including, if possible, a few veterans who did it a decade earlier
- Able to focus on the organization, mitigating against silo-thinking
- Recognized for their credibility within the organization
- Highly visible and influential within the organization

Because they are part of the self-study steering committee, the coordinators of the self-study should have similar attributes. In light of their special task, they should be chosen because they also have demonstrated flexibility, leadership, process management, and strong team skills.

The organization's leadership and the self-study coordinators need to attend to the care and support of the talented and resourceful people called upon to oversee the self-study process. They should

- Be very conscious of the risk of task overloading
- Recognize the work being accomplished

- Provide training, guides, and consultant help if necessary
- Support networking activities

III. Establish and Use Effective Structures, Processes, and Techniques

As the steering committee and coordinators plan for the process ahead of them, they would be well-served by

- Creating structures or processes that involve a broad range of constituencies. These are often subcommittees or small working groups with specific tasks or projects.
- Using technology for data collection, communication, and networking.
- Establishing effective coordination of all processes within the larger self-study process. Some propose that the steering committee and coordinators see themselves as "filters" through which multiple smaller, focused working groups are coordinated. They serve as the point of centralized communication about the process.
- Providing effective data management. A steering committee must coordinate data-gathering activities. By creating an inventory of existing collections of data in the organization, the committee can be of great assistance. It should guard against allowing the use of multiple self-study surveys that quickly result in diminishing returns. It should support the gathering of new data, when necessary, that speak to the institutional trend line and inform evidence-building within the process.
- Overseeing effective use of the budget for the self-study process. Make sure that there are funds for rewards and recognition and for training costs such as attending the Commission's Annual Meeting.
- Creating a process check system. Such a system will allow the committee and coordinators to know the status of the multiple parts of the process.
- Including ways to have fun. This advice is repeated frequently by experienced coordinators and should not be ignored. Self-study of an organization can be a lot of work; it certainly is important work. Stress occurs because of timelines, of discovering that even the best plans hit snags, of plain old interpersonal squabbles, and of being sideswiped by the unanticipated (e.g., massive budget cuts or an unanticipated leadership transition). Knowing how to have fun in spite of the distractions enables the steering committee members and coordinators to keep the self-study process on target.

IV. Plan for Writing the Report

In collaboration with the organization's leadership, the steerting committee should define the multiple audiences for the report. While it is obvious that one audience is The Higher Learning Commission (the evaluation team and the participants in subsequent review processes), the organization may also have internal and external uses for the report. Those uses with multiple different audiences need to be considered in designing the look of the report and the ways in which it presents evidence.

Early in the planning process the steering committee needs to determine how it will create the self-study report. Not long ago, many self-study reports were simply a compilation of smaller reports done by subcommittees. They often lacked a strong organizational voice. It is increasingly important for an effective self-study process to culminate in a document that speaks on behalf of the total organization. As the steering committee plans its strategy for creating the report, it should

- Choose one or more editors and clearly define the responsibilities of that position.
- Weigh how direct the linkages must be between working papers generated through the process and the self-study report. When all of the working papers are available for the team to study, many self-study processes allow the writer/editor of the report to create a document based on, but not built directly around, those papers.
- Create a time frame for writing that allows for multiple drafts, and create strategies for review and revision that include the steering committee, the leadership, and others identified by the steering committee.

Develop the strategy for providing data in the report. The steering committee, not the editor/writer, should determine evidence that must be found in the report. Much evidence and data can be provided to the team via the Web, and much can be placed in the team resource room. This decision should be based on the role of the data in supporting the evidence provided in the report. Many organizations choose to include charts, tables, and statistical analyses, as well as normative and longitudinal comparisons.

Self-study coordinators have found it very helpful to review reports created by other organizations. Each Annual Meeting includes a large number of self-studies for review, and each organization represented by a self-study has indicated a willingness to make a copy available

at cost. The list of available self-study reports is posted on the Commission's Web site. The self-studies are also available for review at the Commission's office.

V. Prepare for Hosting the Visit

The CEO and the self-study coordinators need to maintain open and effective communication channels. The Commission sends all official documents (proposed team roster, final team roster, and Commission materials for the visit) to the CEO. If the CEO chooses to have the self-study coordinators work directly with the Commission on some matters, those documents need to be routed to the coordinators. Moreover, Commission staff should be informed that the self-study coordinators could, on behalf of the organization, agree to such things as team replacements or team arrangements.

Whatever the relationship, it is important for the organization to establish early links with the team chair. At that point, the chair should know who to contact to receive assistance in arranging team accommodations and travel, determining the schedule for some of the team's interviews and meetings, and ensuring that the team will have the on-site support it needs. Teams will expect

- Support through a well-designed physical resource room that might also include easy online access to virtual resources, with exhibits clearly identified and appropriately referenced in the self-study report.
- Technology support for writing the team report and readily accessing the Web-based materials the organization expects the team members to study.
- One or more people to assist the team in scheduling interviews on campus and locating information or data not available in the resource areas (faculty personnel files, for example). Experienced coordinators suggest that a small campus team can be most adept at providing this kind of support.

Some self-study coordinators have benefited from creating and conducting a mock visit. They called on colleagues within the organization or others with experience as Commission evaluators, and asked them to review materials, assess the adequacy of the self-study report and resource room, and do some interviewing. Since the costs of a mock visit can be high, the organization should think carefully about whether the benefits are worth the costs.

Good planning always involves thinking about how to handle the unexpected. Sometimes a team member cannot make the trip, becomes ill on the visit, or is called away by an emergency. Much more frequently, weather interferes with travel schedules. Sometimes significant campus administrators are called away. Consider who can serve as backup or whether teleconferencing might make an important interview possible with an unexpectedly absent representative of the organization or the team.

VI. Use Commission Support

All experienced self-study coordinators commented on the importance of

- Attending the self-study workshops at the Annual Meeting (in fact, attending the whole Annual Meeting)
- Working with the Commission's liaison, including, when appropriate, scheduling a campus visit by that liaison
- Seeking help in networking with similar organizations or other coordinators, both at the Annual Meeting and through direct inquiry with the Commission office
- Using materials generated by the Commission such as the *Handbook for Accreditation* and the *Collection of Papers* of each Annual Meeting.

The Commission will provide other support as it implements the new Criteria. Regional transition meetings will be held in fall 2003, with a specific track for self-study coordinators and steering committees. Depending on the success of and demand for the meetings, the Commission might repeat them throughout 2004. Commission staff have long contemplated the need to offer useful educational opportunities for self-study coordinators and steering committees outside of the Annual Meeting, so these transition meetings may serve as a prototype for distributed training opportunities.

Created originally as a program for organizations contemplating participation in AQIP, the Commission's Vital Focus program has the flexibility to be a very useful component of any self-study process (Those interested in learning more about Vital Focus should attend the Workshop session at the Annual Meeting).

The Customized Accreditation Review Process

Purpose

The customized accreditation review process allows an institution to move beyond the basic mode of self-reflection in order to pursue planning and evaluative activities that further enhance the self-study process and contribute to the attainment of organizational priorities. An institution consciously selects a customized accreditation review process as an alternative, when it wishes to generate additional value within the self-study activity that is designed to assure and advance the quality of the education and services it offers.

Through participation in the customized accreditation review process, an institution demonstrates a high level of inspired and creative leadership, establishes goals and priorities, and invests energy, time, and resources to support strategies designed to improve organizational effectiveness. Customized accreditation processes can be far-reaching. They require a level of commitment that challenges and affects the institutional learning community.

Benefits

Customized accreditation review processes make for creative and meaningful evaluative experiences. While giving appropriate attention to the core of the accreditation review requirements—engaging in institutional self-study and participating in peer review—customized accreditation review processes are recognized for their value-added dimensions. They are important and viable alternatives because

- They take on unique features and character based on the flexibility that can be added to the traditional accreditation review model
- They allow the institution to tailor creative, evaluative, and developmental experiences that are compatible with its mission, goals, and priorities
- They allow the institution to focus on issues, mutually agreed upon with the Commission, it deems essential to future organizational progress
- They invite more committed involvement from institutional constituencies
- They imbue a true sense of organizational ownership because invested efforts, energy, time, and resources represent genuine institutional commitments to achieve specific ends
- They provide flexibility that enables the mission and character of the institution to shape the framework of the creative experience
- They revitalize an institution when desired outcomes are achieved
- Their outcomes can be shared with other institutions that are seeking models and benchmarks

Attention to the Accreditation Core During Customized Review Processes

Assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning are central to the mission of the Commission, and the Criteria for Accreditation are the bedrock upon which it bases its evaluative and consultative activities. The Commission's customized accreditation review processes do not remove the obligation of an institution to prove that it meets the accreditation Criteria. Instead, they allow the institution to succinctly demonstrate evidence of fulfilling the Criteria and to focus more time and attention on other salient institutional matters. Accreditation reviews, therefore, remain essential to membership in the Commission, and such reviews are conducted on an established schedule.

The accreditation review process is multidimensional.

1. An institution provides evidence to show it has
    a. Engaged in self-study

   b. Identified and presented patterns of evidence in a report that supports claims of meeting the Commission's Criteria of Accreditation

   c. Identified factors defining its capacity to achieve continuous improvement

2. The Commission delegates a team of accreditation reviewers to

   a. Evaluate the accuracy and quality of the institution's claims regarding fulfillment of the Criteria of Accreditation

   b. Offer advice and recommendations for continuous improvement

3. The Commission's Board of Trustees validates the declarations of assurance cited by both the institution and its accreditation reviewers and monitors the progress that institutions make following their formal reviews

It is in this context that the Commission encourages institutions to use customized accreditation review processes to enhance their engagement in self-study and peer review.

Overview

The Higher Learning Commission agreed "to provide multiple accreditation processes that place emphasis on an institution's own processes of quality assurance and quality improvement, and to accredit based on the integrity of those processes and their results" in June 2000. It is in this context that institutions are encouraged to consider using customized accreditation processes.

The institutions affiliated with the Commission are diverse and may be best served by having a collection of customized accreditation review processes to choose among. A member institution may choose a customized accreditation review process as an alternative or may use the traditional accreditation process to its own best benefit. Optional models of the alternative customized review process are as follows.

1. **Change request:** accreditation review process (self-study and peer review) with an accompanying institutional change request requiring special team evaluation

2. **Special emphasis:** self-study with a special institutional emphasis; team members, while attending to required assurance issues, spend considerable time serving in a consultative role

3. **Site visits that include a specialized accrediting agency:** joint or collaborative accreditation reviews in which the institution responds to the respective criteria, standards, and processes established by both the Commission and another accrediting agency recognized by the CHEA or the Department of Education; the institution hosts either a joint team or collaborating teams—one from each agency

4. **Visits with another regional accrediting agency reviewing interregional sites:** collaborative accreditation reviews involving the participation of representatives from other regional agencies when an institution's educational programs are delivered across interregional-agency boundaries

5. **Sequential visits:** arranged sequential visits designed to facilitate the review of an institution having multiple dispersed sites either within or outside the Commission's region, or for special purposes associated with the character and nature of program offerings

Basic Understanding

The organization's mission, vision, values, goals, and priorities should help the institution decide which accreditation review process will add the greatest value. Regardless of the review option chosen, basic factors undergird the customized accreditation process.

☐ **The Institution's Role**

1. The organization is clear in identifying intended goals and priorities and the expected outcomes of its customized accreditation review efforts.

2. The organizational constituents demonstrate ownership and commitment to the review focus; vibrant and aggressive leadership is evident at all levels of administration, faculty, and staff.

3. The organization shows commitment to aggressively pursuing its intended goals and priorities and expected outcomes following the completion of the accreditation review process.

4. The organization demonstrates progress in achieving the outcomes expected from its efforts and displays the capacity to sustain the positive change that is initiated.
5. The organization commits itself to following up on the special features associated with its accreditation review process, and to keeping the Commission informed about its progress.
6. The organization, the Commission's staff, and the consultant-evaluators work collaboratively to maximize both the evaluative and consultative dimensions of the accreditation review process.

☐ **The Commission's Role**

The Commission supports a customized accreditation review process.

1. The Commission will provide consultation and assistance as the accreditation review goals, priorities, and expected outcomes are being determined.
2. The Commission will provide assistance in arranging for any necessary pre-visit activities.
3. The Commission will select consultant-evaluators who have expertise in the areas of focus that the institution has chosen for its review goals.
4. The Commission will prepare and train teams to work effectively throughout the institutional visit and any sequential visit.
5. The Commission will support involvement in follow-up activities once the team visit is completed.

Information about the conduct of the specific options for customized accreditation review processes may be found on the Commission's Web site at http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org, in its printed materials, or by contacting the Commission office and its assigned staff liaisons.

Maintaining Accreditation Through the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Academic Quality Improvement Program provides an innovative process through which an organization can maintain its accredited status while pursuing continuing performance improvement. By engaging in AQIP, an organization demonstrates that it continues to meet the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission, since these requirements are embedded in AQIP's Criteria, Principles, and activities.

Exploring AQIP and Quality Improvement

The first step for any organization interested in continuous improvement is to learn as much as possible about AQIP and other quality programs, and to kick off a campus wide discussion of how such an initiative might serve your needs and "fit" your culture. If your organization has already had this conversation, if you currently have a quality program, then you have finished this stage. But if words like alignment, process, silo, team, and metric are foreign to campus discourse, you need to encourage conversation and learn more about quality principles before you go further. It is critical that a core of people on your campus that includes your senior leaders appreciate the principles of continuous quality improvement and the level of commitment they demand. They need to clearly understand how systems-wide continuous improvement could be introduced, how improved processes can be encouraged, and how enhanced performance can affect overall organizational fitness. Although successful quality initiatives involve everyone, support from the top is essential.

Determining whether your organization can benefit from the demanding, continuous cycle of involvement inherent in AQIP's processes takes some study. There are valuable publications about quality in higher education as well as many national and state quality organizations whose resources can guide and inform you as you work toward a judgment. From the AQIP website ‹www.AQIP.org› you can download a useful bibliography of books and articles on quality improvement and link to other organizations that make quality improvement resources available. The American Society for Quality ‹www.ASQ.org›, the Continuous Quality Improvement Network ‹www.CQIN.org›, the National Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award ‹www.nist.gov›, and various state organizations maintain websites. Your own library would be a good source for published information.

Further, we have discovered that every campus has faculty and staff that are already familiar with quality improvement principles and tools, experts just waiting for a chance to share their enthusiasm with their colleagues. If you want to talk directly with AQIP staff members or participate in events that provide deeper understanding, see the links on the AQIP website homepage.

Self-Assessing Your Organization

Once you have decided that AQIP might be right for your organization, you can begin the application process. A complete application must address one prerequisite, a Self-Assessment, which itself will further help you clarify whether a quality approach can complement your organization's ways of working and thinking.

AQIP requires applying organizations to have planned or completed a self-assessment that demonstrates your organization has begun to think about itself in a quality framework. In short, we want evidence that your organization has looked at itself as a set of systems and processes rather than merely as a collection of offices, departments, and academic or administrative units. Your self-assessment also needs to provide some outside perspective. Often the people within an organization are too close to the front lines to perceive the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement.

You can use a variety of means to conduct this self-assessment, which does not need to be elaborate, expensive, or time-consuming. If you have already completed an application to a state or national quality award program, the feedback report you received is a valuable self-assessment. A report that gives evidence of outside advice and guidance resulting from a quality-based self-assessment you undertook in partnership with a consultant would also meet AQIP's expectations. The Pacesetter and Trailblazer programs (see ‹www.CQIN.org›) can be valuable as well. Or, you can use AQIP's Vital Focus.

AQIP has developed Vital Focus, a self-assessment package, to help organizations ready themselves for implementing quality improvement by looking at their improvement opportunities from a systems and process perspective. It swiftly provides your organization with an index of its

strengths in relationship to the AQIP Criteria and Principles of High Performance Organizations. It makes visible the gaps between your current performance and where you could or should be. By evaluating AQIP's fit with your organization's strategic context, mission, goals, and priorities, Vital Focus serves as a tool for strategic planning and organizational learning. It also enables your organization to tap into the diverse perspectives of your staff, revealing your organization's cultural foundation. The package involves an on-line survey form completed by all faculty and staff, followed by a visit to campus by an AQIP representative to kickoff a campus discussion series exploring the survey results. We think it's a valuable tool for getting an entire campus involved in the discussion of continuous systematic improvement, something quality award applications often fail to do.

Formally Applying to Participate

To participate in AQIP, your organization must first formally submit an application and The Higher Learning Commission must approve it. Like all AQIP documents, the application is web-based, and can be found at ‹www.AQIP.org›. We urge you to submit your application well before the time you would need to begin a traditional self-study process for your next comprehensive visit. Again, your application needs to indicate that you have already completed some form of quality-based self-assessment that included an "outside perspective," or that you have concrete plans to do so, with a target date for the self-assessment's completion.

After you have submitted the application for your organization, it will undergo Preliminary Independent Review by a Panel of educational and quality experts who will then forward a consensus recommendation to the Commission's Institutional Actions Council (IAC). Having challenges to face will not exclude your organization from AQIP, for systematic improvement is often the ideal strategy for solving a problem or enhancing performance. When the Panel's recommendation is acted upon and a decision is made by the Institutional Actions Council, you will receive a letter from the Executive Director announcing the Commission's action. AQIP will then become your liaison with the Commission for all matters, and the entire AQIP staff will be available to serve your organization's needs.

How AQIP Affects Your Accreditation Status

When your college or university formally joins AQIP, the date of your next reaffirmation of accreditation (on your Statement of Affiliation Status) will be set seven years from the date of the contract signing. Reaffirmation in seven years will be based on the pattern of your full participation in AQIP during that period, and by the evidence of progress and improvement in your organization. If you are not making satisfactory progress in improving the quality of your systems and processes, AQIP will work with you to help you get the results you seek.

You can elect to leave AQIP at any time, without explanation, to return to the traditional process for maintaining your accreditation. If your organization chooses to withdraw from AQIP in five or fewer years, the date for your next comprehensive visit will revert to the date on which it was originally scheduled, or a year later if you need more time to prepare. If you withdraw from AQIP after five or more years of participation, your next traditional comprehensive visit will be five years from the date you formally withdrew.

Participating in AQIP — Without Affecting Accreditation

An organization or a major division of a large learning organization can become a participant for the purpose of using AQIP's processes (the Strategy Forum, the Portfolio Appraisal, etc.) for improvement purposes and for the opportunity to network with other organizations that are using quality principles and tools. This "non-accreditation" participation in AQIP is appropriate for organizations not located in the NCA region (and therefore not eligible for Higher Learning Commission accreditation) or for divisions (e.g., the School of Education, the College of Engineering, or the Student Affairs Division) of major organizations that are not yet ready or willing to base their organizational accreditation on evidence of an organization-wide quality initiative. Participation in this category is the same as for organizations that use AQIP to maintain their accreditation, except that accreditation is not part of the relationship. For further details about this possibility, telephone Stephen D. Spangehl, AQIP Director (800-621-7440, ext. 106).

A Brief Outline of AQIP's Core Processes

Strategy Forum and Action Projects, Annual Updates, and Systems Portfolios are all integral pieces of AQIP's alternative reaccreditation program. As an overview, a brief description of each of these processes is provided below. More detailed information on these processes can be found in handouts available for download on the AQIP Web site at ‹www.AQIP.org›.

☐ **Improving Quality: Strategy Forum, Action Projects, and Annual Updates**

- ○ Prior to each Strategy Forum, an institution proposes 3 - 4 specific Action Projects that can address opportunities for improvement, problems, or challenges, while deepening shared commitment to a culture of continuous improvement.

- Participation in a Strategy Forum allows the institution to receive analysis and counsel from peers before initiating planned Action Projects, and to formulate implementation steps and metrics that will enhance prospects for success.
- Every institution updates AQIP each September on its progress or completion of Action Projects, and receives feedback, advice, and, if needed, outside assistance via AQIP.
- Action Projects are shared through the AQIP website to promote collaboration, to communicate self-improvement efforts of higher education to the public, and to highlight "outstanding practices" that deserve Commission acclaim and broader recognition.
- Any institution may receive help, feedback, or consulting from AQIP for any Action Project on which progress is unsatisfactory.

☐ **Taking Stock: Systems Portfolio and Systems Appraisal**

- Crafted during the first three years of AQIP involvement, the Systems Portfolio consists of a concise, 100-page, double-spaced public description of major systems critical to any successful higher education institution. Each institution's Portfolio addresses all nine AQIP Criteria, describing context, processes, results, and improvement in each system.
- Each institution maintains its Systems Portfolio by updating changes in key processes and performance results. Kept current, the Systems Portfolio serves as an always-available report on institutional vitality for stakeholders, including other accreditors and state agencies, and as the primary evidence AQIP examines for the Systems Appraisal.
- Systems Appraisals are conducted by teams of trained reviewers who are experienced in continuous systems improvement. Teams include peers from an assortment of different types of institutions, as well as representatives from outside higher education.
- Reviewers provide formal evaluation and feedback in the Systems Appraisal. Analysis is presented in summary rubrics for public information, and in a confidential report containing detailed, actionable comments and explanations for the institution.
- Every Systems Appraisal results from a robust process that includes separate independent and consensus stages, producing uniformly reliable feedback that represents experts' shared views.
- Critical issues identified by the Systems Appraisal may generate new Action Projects, with institutions requesting AQIP to provide individuals able to consult on specific challenging issues.

Timeline for institutions participating in AQIP (typically a four-year cycle)

Institution	Strategy	Annual Updates on Action Projects	Systems Appraisal
0	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Year 4
joins AQIP	Forum	Creation of Systems Portfolio	Feedback Report

Strategy	Annual Updates on Action Projects	Systems Appraisal
Year 5	Years 6 - 7	Year 8
Forum	Bringing Systems Portfolio up to date	Feedback Report

Strategy	Annual Updates on Action Projects	Systems Appraisal
Year 9	Years 10 - 11	Year 12
Forum	Bringing Systems Portfolio up to date	Feedback Report

Strategy	Annual Updates on Action Projects	Systems Appraisal
Year 13	Years 14 - 15	Year 16
Forum	Bringing Systems Portfolio up to date	Feedback Report

How the AQIP Criteria capture the expectations of the Commission's common *Criteria for Accreditation*	AQIP Criteria								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Criterion One: Mission and Integrity. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.	✔	✔	✔		✔			✔	
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.				✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.	✔		✔		✔	✔	✔		
Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔			
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.		✔		✔	✔		✔		✔

The Nine AQIP Criteria

1. **Helping Students Learn** examines how an organization designs the teaching and other processes that promote student learning, and how effectively these processes perform their functions.
2. **Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives** examines the processes that contribute to the achievement of other major organizational objectives that fulfill other portions of the organization's mission—research, community service, outreach, development, etc.
3. **Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs** examines how effectively an organization's processes help it to understand the specific needs of those it serves—the students and other individuals and groups that have a major stake in the organization's success.
4. **Valuing People** examines an organization's processes and performance in developing and using the talents of all of its faculty, staff, and administrators for organizational success.
5. **Leading and Communicating** examines an organization's leadership and communication processes and performance in guiding the organization to set directions, make decisions, seek future opportunities, and build and sustain a learning environment.
6. **Supporting Organizational Operations** addresses the variety of organizational support processes that, while they do not directly impact student learning, help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.
7. **Measuring Effectiveness** examines the processes an organization employs to collect and use data and information to manage itself responsibly and to drive performance improvement.
8. **Planning Continuous Improvement** examines how an organization aligns what it wants or hopes to do with what it actually does.
9. **Building Collaborative Relationships** examines an organization's processes for creating and maintaining internal and external relationships that assist the organization in accomplishing its mission.

COMMISSION DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

TYPE OF REVIEW	ROUTING OF RECOMMENDATION	REVIEW AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES			
		Readers Panel (RP)	Review Committee (RC)	Institutional Actions Council (IAC)	Board of Trustees (BoT)
Comprehensive Evaluation for Continued Accreditation	Accreditation continued. Next comprehensive evaluation in 6-10 years.	*Who goes:* all cases in which the institution agrees with the team. *What happens:* (1) RP refers to IAC for decision; or (2) RP refers to RC for further review	*Who goes:* (1) all cases referred by RP; and (2) all cases where institution does not agree with team recommendation. *What happens:* (1) RC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation; or (2) RC process fails to find consensus, sends to IAC for decision.	*Who goes:* (1) all cases referred by RP; and (2) cases referred by RC due to lack of consensus. *What happens:* IAC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation.*	Validation process**
	Accreditation continued. Next comprehensive evaluation in 5 or fewer years.		*Who goes:* all cases *What happens:* (1) RC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation; or (2) RC process fails to find consensus, sends to IAC for decision.	*Who goes:* cases referred by RC due to lack of consensus. *What happens:* IAC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation.*	Validation process**
Evaluations for Continued Candidacy and Focused visits	All recommendations other than those involving probation or denial or withdrawal of status.	*Who goes:* all cases in which the institution agrees with the team. *What happens:* (1) RP refers to IAC for decision; or (2) RP refers to RC for further review	*Who goes:* (1) all cases referred by RP; and (2) all cases where institution does not agree with team recommendation. *What happens:* (1) RC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation; or (2) RC process fails to find consensus, sends to IAC for decision.	*Who goes:* (1) all cases referred by RP; and (2) cases referred by RC due to lack of consensus. *What happens:* IAC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation.*	Validation process**
Evaluations for Initial Candidacy or Initial Accreditation	Team has recommended granting of status.		*Who goes:* all cases *What happens:* (1) RC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation; or (2) RC process fails to find consensus, sends to BoT for decision.		(1) Validation process where consensus exists; or (2) reviews and acts on cases where RC failed to reach decision.**
All reviews that involve probation, or denial or withdrawal of status	Team or other process has recommended imposition or removal of probation or denial or withdrawal of status		*Who goes:* all cases *What happens:* RC reviews and makes recommendation; forwards case to BoT for review and decision.		The Board reviews and acts on all cases that involve probation or denial or withdrawal of status. (Actions on denial or withdrawal of status may be appealed.) **
Evaluators Panels (EP) and Staff Recommendations	All positive EP recommendations; all staff recommendations			*Who goes:* all cases *What happens:* IAC makes decision, sends to BoT for validation.*	Validation process**

* IAC may defer action in special cases

** The Board of Trustees validates decisions made by other bodies during its regular meetings or through electronic or mail ballot. Validation is completed within four working days of the meeting of the designated decision-making body. Validation requires a 2/3 majority of voting trustees.

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Part 3.

Commission Monitoring

Institutional Change

The following revised policy replaces the information in the Handbook on pages 161-164.

Institutional Changes Requiring Commission Approval (policy I.C.2)

The Commission requires that an institution receive Commission approval when initiating certain institutional changes. To gain approval, an institution files a formal request for approval of institutional change. Based on that request, staff determine the appropriate means to forward a recommendation for approval to the appropriate Commission decision-making body, a Review Committee or the Institutional Actions Council. Recommendations may come from on-site teams (comprehensive or focused), Evaluators Panels, or Commission staff. As defined in Policies I.C.2a (3), (6), (7); I.C. 2b (5); I.C.2c (1), (4); and I.C.2d (3), (4), Commission staff may—but are not required to—make a decision on behalf of the Commission. All decisions except those made by staff are validated by the Board of Trustees; staff decisions are reported to the Board of Trustees.

In determining the appropriate process for reviewing an institutional request, Commission staff weigh the following variables: the clarity of connection between the institution's mission and the change; the history of the Commission's relationship with the institution; the institution's history of successfully initiating change; the scope of the change; the potential impact of the change on the institution; review of the change by other bodies (e.g., state agencies, program accrediting bodies); and the strength of the evidence provided in the institution's request that it can effectively initiate the change and evaluate its effectiveness,

The Board of Trustees reviews its change policies and procedures annually to evaluate their responsiveness to institutional dynamics, their effectiveness in providing quality assurance, and their usefulness in enhancing institutional and educational improvement.

☐ **Changes in Mission or Structure (policy I.C.2.a).** Commission approval is required when

1. An institution changes, after significant planning, the character and nature of the student body;
2. An institution merges with an unaccredited institution; (A site visit is required either before approval or within six months after the merger is official.)
3. An institution merges with a regionally accredited or affiliated institution; Commission staff may give approval upon receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institution or new entity continues to meet Commission requirements and criteria, but will schedule an on-site evaluation to be conducted within a year.
4. An institution changes institutional affiliation with a sponsoring organization;
5. An institution contracts with non-accredited entities to provide 50% or more of a credit-bearing program;
6. An institution changes ownership and/or legal status; Commission staff may give approval upon receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institutional mission remains unchanged, that the academic programs will continue, that board governance continues to meet Commission requirements, and that appropriate financial resources continue to support the institution, but will schedule an on-site evaluation to be conducted within six months.
7. An institution experiences unanticipated but significant changes in the character and nature of the student body (e.g., assuming oversight for programs orphaned by a closing institution). Commission staff may give approval after receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institution's activities, particularly those involving teach-outs, meet Commission and federal requirements, but if the institutional commitment is for more than a limited teach-out, staff may require an on-site evaluation visit within a year.

☐ **Changes in Educational Offerings (policy I.C.2.b).** Commission approval is required to extend accreditation to include

1. Program offerings at a new degree level;
2. Significant new academic program or major that requires substantial financial investment or substantial reallocation of financial resources;

3. A new academic program that shifts the mission of the institution;

4. Degree programs offered through distance delivery methods;

5. Offering courses regularly that are not currently included within the institution's affiliated status. Commission staff may give approval after receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institution's offerings are appropriate to the institution's mission, have all necessary approvals, and will be effectively developed and supported.

☐ **Changes in Educational Sites (policy I.C.2.c).** Commission approval is required to extend accreditation to include

1. A new site that houses a full range of instruction as well as administrative and support services (e.g., a new campus or a new branch); Commission staff may give approval upon receipt and evaluation of documentation including a business plan, but will schedule an on-site visit to be conducted within six months of the opening of the site.

2. An instructional site at which the institution provides a degree program(s);

3. An off-campus site at which the institution offers 50% or more of the courses leading to one of its degree programs and at which the institution enrolls 100 or more students (unduplicated headcount) in an academic year;

4. Five or more courses a year at an out-of-state site or at an international site. Commission staff may give approval after receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institution's offerings are appropriate to the institution's mission, have all necessary approvals, and will be effectively developed and supported.

In keeping with federal regulations, the Commission will conduct an on-site visit of each of the first three sites begun by an institution, and it will require an on-site visit before extending accreditation to include a new site for an institution under Commission sanction, or experiencing serious financial problems, or already known for having inadequate quality assurance processes.

☐ **Changes in relationship with the Commission (policy I.C.2.d).** Commission approval is required to

1. Change the stipulations within the current affiliation status.

2. Change the date of comprehensive visits beyond the cycle established by policy.

3. Change the date of other visits or required reports. Commission staff may make the decision after receipt and evaluation of documentation that shows that such changes are appropriate.

4. Transfer accreditation to a new entity. Commission staff may give approval after receipt and evaluation of documentation that the institution or new entity continues to meet Commission requirements and criteria, but will schedule an on-site evaluation to be conducted within a year.

Commission Monitoring of Institutions (policy I.C.3)

The Commission reserves the right to call for special monitoring when the integrity of the institution and its educational programs might be in jeopardy. The Executive Director may conduct such monitoring by calling for a special report or an advisory team visit. A special report or advisory team report will not be reviewed through the Commission's regular review processes; it may be used by the Executive Director to provide information, to support a recommendation to the Board for a possible sanction, or for any other purpose supported by the policies and practices of the Commission. Any action proposed by the Executive Director will be shared with the institution for response at least two weeks prior to the intended date of Board deliberation and decision. Among the situations that might result in such monitoring are:

1. institutional declaration of bankruptcy, financial exigency, or intent to close;

2. highly publicized and divisive controversies among the governing board, the administration, and/or the faculty or the student body;

3. significant unanticipated reduction in program offering, faculty, and/or enrollment;

4. public sanctions applied by governmental agencies or by other accrediting or licensing bodies;

5. serious legal, financial, or ethical investigations, including those involving adjudication in courts;

6. financial audit reports that raise serious concerns about financial viability or financial management practices;

7. serious misrepresentation to students and the public.

Evaluating Institutional Change

The following replace information in Chapter 12 on pages 165–167.

Information and Documentation to Support a Request for Institutional Change

The institution's written request and supporting documentation serve as the basic reference for the Commission's decision to approve or deny a request to extend accreditation to include a significant institutional change. Approval of the request results in the modification or expansion of the institution's relationship with the Commission.

A request for approval of institutional change must provide a well-written and comprehensive analysis of the proposed change. There are six major questions for the institution to address. Each major question is followed by a series of imperatives that solicit information and documentation that are fundamental to the development and evaluation of the proposed change.

1. **What is the change being proposed?**
   - State the specific change that is proposed.
   - State the expected outcomes of this proposed change (e.g., enrollment growth, enhanced services, financial growth)
   - Project the impact of this proposed change on the institution's current mission, the numbers and types of students to be served, and the breadth of the institution's educational offerings.
   - Identify the Commission's policy(ies) relevant to this change:
     - Change in mission or structure (policy I.C.2.a)
     - Change in educational offering (policy I.C.2.b.)
     - Change in educational sites (policy I.C.2.c.)
     - Change in relationship with the Commission (policy I.C.2.d.)
2. **What factors led the institution to undertake the proposed change?**
   - Describe the relationship between the proposed change and ongoing institutional planning.
   - Describe the needs analysis related to this proposed change.
   - Describe the involvement of various constituencies in developing this proposed change.
3. **What necessary approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?**
   - Identify the internal approvals required and provide documentation confirming these actions.
   - Identify the external approvals required and provide documentation confirming these actions.
4. **What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the Commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?**
   - Identify any challenges directly related to the proposed change.
   - Describe how the institution has addressed the challenge(s).
5. **What are the institution's plans to implement and sustain the proposed change?**
   - Describe the involvement of appropriately credentialed faculty and experienced staff necessary to accomplish this proposed change (e.g., curriculum development and oversight, evaluation of instruction, and assessment of learning outcomes).
   - Describe the administrative structure (e.g., accountability processes, leadership roles) necessary to support this proposed change.
   - Describe how the institution will make learning resources and support services available to students (e.g., student support services, library resources, academic advising, and financial aid counseling).
   - Provide financial data/information that documents the institution's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed change (e.g., projected budgets, recent audit reports, revenue streams, cost of facilities, and projected facility and equipment costs).
   - Specify the timeline used to implement the proposed change.
6. **What are the institution's strategies to evaluate the proposed change?**
   - Describe the measures the institution will use to document the achievement of its expected outcomes.
   - Describe how the assessment of student learning is integrated into the institution's assessment program.

The Operational Indicators

THE OPERATIONAL INDICATORS will be the centerpiece of the new online Annual Report. We expect this new report will strengthen the continuous relationship between the affiliated organization and the Commission in several ways:

1. They will provide regular snapshots of an organization's ongoing health.
2. They will mark dramatic or sudden changes in an organization's profile.
3. They will provide longitudinal data on individual organizations.
4. When appropriately aggregated, they will provide trend and normative data for the various groups of organizations.
5. They will lessen the special reporting required of an organization before team visits.
6. They will provide more objective information for visiting teams.
7. They will provide a means for both the organization and the Commission to remain accountable to their various stakeholders.

We ask for data on Demographics because changes in the numbers and types of students served may have a strong relationship to information provided on financial strength, program diversity, and scope of educational operations. Changes over time in faculty and staff demographics may relate to these other variables as well. Data on Educational Programs should help us to understand possible shifts in organizational priorities as well as demographics and financial strength. Moreover, we seek assurance of basic financial support for those educational programs. We include credit and non-credit certificate programs because they have come to constitute a growing component in many organizations. The ratios identified under Financial Strength follow the recommendations of financial experts who hold that the ratios serve monitoring purposes better than reading of audits. Information required under Scope of Activities allows us to assure that we know the full scope of the organization's educational offerings, thereby helping us to fulfill our gatekeeping function for federal funds.

We will introduce a transitional Annual Report in Spring 2003 which will contain more than half of the Operational Indicators. The full Report will be launched the following year by which time the institution will have designated an internal liaison who will be responsible for its completion. You will notice that you can refer to your IPEDS reports to gather much of the required data. Specific definitions will be provided in the web-based Report.

Coding identifies numbers that are reported on IPEDS (IPEDS) or can be readily calculated from IPEDS-reported numbers (IPEDS-computed). Some tentative working definitions are provided; other definitions and explanations will be created as needed.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

a. Student count by status
   1. full-time undergraduate (IPEDS)
   2. part-time undergraduate (IPEDS)
   3. full-time graduate (IPEDS)
   4. part-time graduate (IPEDS)
   5. full-time post-baccalaureate first professional (IPEDS)
   6. part-time post-baccalaureate first professional (IPEDS)
   7. non-credit students (all levels)

b. Student count by category
   1. degree-seeking undergraduate (IPEDS-computed)
   2. certificate-seeking undergraduate (credit and non-credit). (This includes students seeking pre-associate certificates as well as students enrolled in any other free-standing certificate programs that do not require the holding of a baccalaureate degree. Do not include certifications integrated into a degree.)
   3. post-baccalaureate certificate seeking (credit and non-credit). (This includes students enrolled in certificate programs created specifically for students already holding a baccalaureate degree; the credits may or may not count as graduate credits. Do not include certifications integrated into a degree).
   4. degree-seeking graduate (IPEDS-computed)

c. Total entering undergraduate count
   1. full-time
   2. part-time

d. Count of
   1. faculty (IPEDS-computed)
   2. administration (IPEDS-computed)
   3. staff (IPEDS-computed)

e. Faculty status by count
   1. full-time (IPEDS)
   2. part-time (IPEDS)

II. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

a. Numbers of programs (note: IPEDS classifies credit programs by CIP code)
   1. Programs leading to award of pre-associate certificates
   2. Programs leading to award of other undergraduate certificates/diplomas

3. Programs leading to award of undergraduate degrees
4. Programs leading to award of graduate degrees
5. Programs leading to award of post-baccalaureate certificates
6. Programs leading to award of post-baccalaureate first professional degrees

b. Addition/deletion in the last completed academic year of programs leading to degrees and/or certificates

c. Completion rates
1. Number of undergraduate degrees awarded (IPEDS-computed)
2. Number of undergraduate certificates/diplomas awarded (for pre-associate, IPEDS-computed)
3. Number of graduate degrees awarded (IPEDS- computed)
4. Number of post-baccalaureate certificates awarded
5. Number of post-baccalaureate first professional degrees awarded (IPEDS- computed)

d. Credit hours generation (note: IPEDS asks for Total Credit Activity for graduate and undergraduate programs, but does not ask by faculty status)
1. Undergraduate credit hours generated by full-time faculty
2. Undergraduate credit hours generated by part-time faculty
3. Graduate and post-baccalaureate first professional credit hours generated by full-time faculty
4. Graduate and post-baccalaureate first professional credit hours generated by part-time faculty

e. Instructional spending per FTE (IPEDS-computed) and percent of unrestricted revenues (excluding non-mandatory transfers) used for instruction

III. FINANCIAL STRENGTH

a. Net Operating Income or Deficit (excluding non-mandatory transfers)

b-e. see chart below

f. Bond Rating, if applicable
1. Current Bond Rating(s)
2. Changes, if any, from previous year

IV. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

a. Distributed Education
1. List of locations by Commission-defined categories where institution provides credit-bearing instruction to students registered in the institution. Provide student count for each location (duplicated count is acceptable). The Commission will provide three levels of operation and three categories of locations:

a) levels of operation:
— course (courses only)
— site (50% or more of degree offered),
— campus (significant range of program offerings supported by a full range of services taught and administered by campus personnel)

b) categories of locations:
— in-state
— out-of-state
— out-of-nation

2. Count in dual enrollment (high school) programs
3. List of distance education degree and certificate programs

Definition:

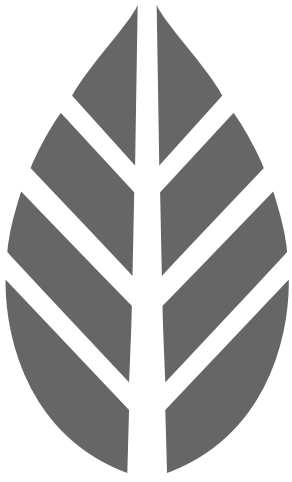
- Include only programs that provide a complete degree or credit-bearing certificate, that are designed for students away from the campus, and that do not require students to attend a specified physical instructional site to participate in the course offerings.
- Include programs that might require only attendance of an on-site orientation and/or the taking of proctored exams at a specific site. The list will include primary instructional modality [e.g., Video/TV/CD ROM; Internet; Correspondence; Dial-Up; Audio Bridge].
- Reporting enrollment count in these programs will be optional.

b. Collaborative Education
1. List of consortia or other collaborative arrangements necessary for admitted students to complete programs offered by the institution. Provide enrollment count in these programs (duplicated count acceptable).

Financial Strength – b.-e.	1. Public institutions	2. Private institutions	3. Proprietary institutions
b. Viability Ratio (resources to cover debt)	$\frac{\text{Expendable Fund Balances}}{\text{Plant Debt}}$	$\frac{\text{Expendable Net Assets}}{\text{Long Term Debt}}$	$\frac{\text{Adjusted Equity}}{\text{Total Long Term Debt}}$
c. Primary Reserve Ratio (length of time the institution could operate)	$\frac{\text{Expendable Fund Balance}}{\text{Total Expenditures and Mandatory Transfers}}$	$\frac{\text{Expendable Net Assets}}{\text{Total Expenses}}$	$\frac{\text{Adjusted Equity}}{\text{Total Expenses}}$
d. Net Income Ratio (capacity to operate within revenues)	$\frac{\text{Net Reserves}}{\text{Total Revenue}}$	$\frac{\text{Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets}}{\text{Total Unrestricted Income}}$	$\frac{\text{Income Before Taxes}}{\text{Total Revenues}}$
e. Debt Burden Ratio (excluding depreciation expense)	$\frac{\text{Debt Principal and Interest}}{\text{Total Expenses}}$	$\frac{\text{Debt Principal and Interest}}{\text{Total Expenses}}$	$\frac{\text{Total Debt Service}}{\text{Total Unrestricted Revenue}}$

Part 4.

Good Practices and Tools



Principles of Good Practice In Adult Degree Completion Programs

These Principles were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Commission on June 22, 2000.

☐ **Mission**

The adult degree completion programs are consistent with and integral to the institution's mission.

☐ **Resources**

Faculty members share a commitment to serve adult learners, bring appropriate credentials to their work assignments, and participate in determining policies that govern adult degree completion programs.

Full-time and part-time faculty members who work in adult degree completion programs participate in professional development activities that focus on the needs of adult learners.

The institution provides an adequate organizational structure, administrative support, and financial resources to ensure the effectiveness of adult degree completion programs.

Adequate institutional resources are committed to the adult degree completion programs to ensure quality and appropriate student services.

The institution provides timely and adequate access to the range of student services—including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and counseling and placement services—needed to ensure academic success.

The institution ensures access to learning resources, technology, and facilities to support its adult degree completion programs.

☐ **Educational Programs and Other Services**

The adult degree completion programs that the institution offers are in subject areas that are consistent with the institution's mission.

The adult degree completion programs have clearly stated requirements and outcomes in the areas of the major and general education.

Adult degree completion programs and courses that are offered in distance delivery modalities conform to the Guidelines for Distance Education cited in the NCA *Handbook for Accreditation.*

The assessment of student learning outcomes is a standard practice in all adult degree completion programs and is linked to program improvement.

The institution uses a variety of acceptable methodologies [e.g., examinations in subject areas; assessment of prior learning using principles advocated by organizations such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Adult Higher Education Alliance, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSA/CHE)], and its faculty is trained in how to use and apply these methods.

Multiple measures (portfolio assessment, capstone courses, oral examinations, juried examinations, standardized national exams, locally developed tests, performance on licensure, and certification/professional exams) are used are to assess the learning outcomes of students enrolled in adult degree completion programs.

Adult degree completion programs address students' education and career goals at the time of re-entry and throughout the degree completion process in order to assess the learning they will need and to help them reach their goals.

☐ **Planning**

Consideration of adult degree completion programs is integrated into the institution's planning and evaluation processes in order to ensure continuous improvement in the offerings.

☐ **Integrity**

The institution has processes in place to ensure that the adult degree completion programs it sponsors are offered with integrity and are responsive to learners and the community.

The institution that partners with another organization to deliver an adult degree completion program is knowledgeable of the "Good Practices in Contractual Arrangements Involving Courses and Programs" published by the NCA Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and uses the document as a guide in ensuring the integrity of its program.

Guidelines for Assessing Prior Learning for Credit*

These Guidelines were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Commission on June 22, 2000.

1. Make clear basic principles and values held by the institution regarding credit for prior learning.
2. Provide explicit guidelines as to what is considered college-level learning.
3. Make clear that credit can be awarded only for demonstrated college-level learning, not for experience per se.
4. Specify, as clearly and unambiguously as possible, the standards of acceptable performance in each academic area.
5. Specify what form the claim for credit should take, e.g., course equivalent, competency list.
6. Insure that evaluation of learning is undertaken by appropriately qualified persons.
7. Indicate the appropriate form such as semester hours, course units, etc., the evaluator's credit recommendation should take.
8. Specify which degree requirements may be met by prior learning.
9. Specify how credit for prior learning will be recorded.
10. Define and articulate roles and responsibilities of all persons connected with the assessment process.
11. Develop procedures to monitor and assure fair and consistent treatment of students.
12. Develop clearly stated assessment policies and descriptive information for students, faculty, administrators and external sources.
13. Include provisions for periodic re-evaluation of policies and procedures for assessing learning and awarding credit.
14. Advise students that the institution cannot guarantee the transferability of prior learning credits to another institution.
15. Develop evaluation procedures of overall prior learning assessment program to ensure quality.

* These guidelines were taken from the policy statement, Assessing Prior Learning for Credit, approved by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. They are used with that Commission's permission.

Good Practices in Contractual Arrangements Involving Courses and Programs

Preamble

This statement of good practices regarding contractual arrangements has been developed by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Mindful of the increasingly diverse nature of contractual relationships in U.S. higher education, the Commission provides this document to speak to matters that deserve the scrutiny of affiliated institutions—both accredited or holding candidacy status—engaged in or planning to engage in contractual arrangements either to receive or to deliver credit-bearing courses and programs.

The Commission expects that institutions will enter into contractual relationships after giving careful attention to the scope of the arrangement and to the appropriateness of the contractual partner(s). It also expects that the goal of such arrangements is to preserve and enhance the quality of the institution's academic offerings to students. Therefore, these good practices signify the Commission's flexibility in reviewing a wide range of contractual relationships useful to the maintenance and strengthening of the quality of educational programs.

The document is structured to address first contractual arrangements among accredited entities, then adds to those other good practices to be considered in contractual arrangements with non-regionally accredited institutions, and provides yet more good practices to be followed in contractual arrangements with international entities. This document can provide guidance to institutions engaging a wide range of contractual arrangements through which an accredited institution might share in the development and delivery of courses/programs, might purchase or use courses/programs developed by accredited or non-accredited entities, and/or might contract to provide its courses/programs through an international entity. Similarly, the document should assist evaluation teams in determining the appropriateness of such contractual relationships. The Commission understands that many collaborative arrangements do not require formal contracts; these good practices can inform the development and evaluation of appropriate documents for those relationships.

The Good Practices are based on the following basic assumptions:

A. The courses/programs involved in any contractual arrangements are consistent with the accredited institution's stated educational mission and purposes and augment the institution's mission if offered under the name of the contracting institution.

B. The accredited institution is responsible for any activities conducted in its name.

C. These statements of Good Practice supplement but do not supplant the Commission's stated criteria and requirements for accreditation unless exceptions are stated explicitly.

D. The accredited institution bears the responsibility to assure that a non-accredited party to the contract does not claim for itself or imply any accredited status other than its negotiated association with the accredited institution.

E. In developing any contractual relationship, the accredited institution also follows the Commission's policies that require prior approval of specific institutional changes.

1. Good Practices in Writing a Contract between Accredited Institutions Concerning Educational Courses/Programs.

1.a. The contract is executed by the duly designated officers of the contracting parties, each legally qualified to commit the contracting entity to a binding contract.

1.b. The contract clearly establishes

- the nature of the services to be performed by each party;
- the period of the agreement;
- the conditions under which the contract will be reviewed;
- the conditions under which the contract can be renewed;
- the conditions under which the contract can be terminated, including appropriate protection for enrolled students in such situations; and
- the venue(s) for addressing perceived breaches of the contract.

1.c. The contract explicitly defines

- educational courses, program(s), and services included in the contract;
- the institution(s) awarding the credit;
- how the faculties of the accredited entities will periodically review the courses and programs;

- how student support services necessary to the courses/program(s) will be delivered; and
- how student access to the learning resources requisite for the course/program(s) will be assured.

1.d The contract explicitly states financial arrangements

- that specify the compensation and other considerations for the services provided by each of the parties;
- that set forth a mechanism to account for the services provided by each of the parties; and
- that meet all legal requirements for federal and state student aid programs that might be used by students or the contracting accredited entities.

1.e. The contract is

- submitted to federal and state agencies when required by regulations;
- submitted to the Commission for approval when required by federal or state regulations;
- submitted, when appropriate, to the Commission as part of a request for approval of institutional change; and
- available on request by the Commission and its teams.

2. Additional Good Practices for Contractual Arrangements with Organizations not Accredited by a Regional Institutional Accrediting Association.

2.a. The accredited institution's faculty has the responsibility to review and approve the content of the courses/programs, and those faculty have credentials that meet requirements of the Commission and are qualified by experience and/or training.

2.b. The accredited institution follows all of the procedures established by its governance structure and by the Commission for approval of the courses/programs.

2.c. The accredited institution not only has the contractual obligation for but also has systematic processes to assure its capacity to carry out its responsibility for oversight of:

- advertising and recruitment,
- admissions,
- appointment of faculty,
- content and rigor of courses/program(s),
- evaluation of student work, and
- award of credit/certificates/degrees.

3. Additional Good Practices for Contractual Arrangements with International Entities.

3.a. The contract follows the good practices outlined above.

3.b. The contract is in English and the primary language of the international contracting entity.

3.c. The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution exercises appropriate oversight for the international program in conformity with the Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals and the requirements of the Commission.

Adopted by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools August 7, 1998

Statement of Commitment by the Regional Accrediting Associations for the Evaluation of Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs

Technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance has rapidly become an important component of higher education. Growing numbers of colleges and universities are going on-line with courses and programs, while those already involved are expanding these activities. New providers, often lacking traditional institutional hallmarks, are emerging. This phenomenon is creating opportunities to serve new student clienteles and to better serve existing populations, and it is encouraging innovation throughout the academy. While these are welcome developments, the new delivery systems test conventional assumptions, raising fresh questions as to the essential nature and content of an educational experience and the resources required to support it. As such they present extraordinary and distinct challenges to the eight regional accrediting commissions * which assure the quality of the great majority of degree-granting institutions of higher learning in the United States.

The approach of the regional commissions to these emergent forms of learning is expressed in a set of commitments aimed at ensuring high quality in distance education. These include commitment to those traditions, principles, and values which have guided the regionals' approach to educational innovation; commitment to cooperation among the eight regional commissions directed toward a consistent approach to the evaluation of distance education informed through collaboration with others; and commitment to supporting good practice among institutions.

Commitment to Traditions, Values, and Principles

The lengthy history of regional accreditation has been one of adaptation to a changing educational environment, of maintaining high standards while also recognizing that education can be provided effectively in a variety of ways. Responsible innovation has been encouraged within a system of accountability grounded in enduring values and principles through which quality has been defined. The result has been an ever-expanding set of educational opportunities, marked by diversity and excellence, to meet the changing needs of our society. It is in keeping with this tradition that the regional commissions individually and collectively are responding to new forms of distance education. Of necessity, this will be a work in progress; educational change continues apace with technological change making efforts to develop settled definitions of the essential structures and conditions in distance education, and procedures to apply them, neither possible or even desirable. Rather, the regionals' response will be developmental, though experience thus far indicates a strong evaluative competence among individual regional accreditors in responding to the ingenuity of colleges and universities as they use technology to better achieve their educational goals.

As they proceed with the assessment of educational programming offered at a distance, the regional commissions will continue to work toward a balance between accountability and innovation. They will seek to sustain an equilibrium between fulfilling the expectation that regional accreditation is a dependable indicator of institutional quality and encouraging perceptive and imaginative experimentation. Sound departures from traditional formulas will be validated; those falling short will not.

The regional commissions use mission-driven standards to define institutional quality. The college or university that has purposes appropriate to higher education, the resources necessary to achieve those purposes, demonstrates that it is achieving them and has the ability to continue to do so, is one worthy of the distinction of being regionally accredited. This implicitly flexible paradigm is particularly appropriate for the assessment of new forms of distance education as well as technologically-spawned innovations in educational practice on-campus.

While endeavoring to maintain balance and flexibility in the evaluation of new forms of delivery, the regional commissions are also resolved to sustain certain values. These include, among other things:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning;
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

There can be no doubt that there are challenges in sustaining these important values through technologically mediated instruction. The regional commissions appreciate this reality, and also recognize that these values may be expressed in valid new ways as inventive institutions seek to utilize technology to achieve their goals.

The regional commissions will continue to limit their scope to include only degree-granting institutions of higher learning. They are also aware, that many of the educational offerings provided at a distance do not lead to degrees, but rather are short-term and highly focused, providing specific skills-training and leading to at most certificates. Such activities at regionally accredited colleges or universities, or at those that seek regional accreditation, undertaken in their name, are considered as included within the institution's accreditation and thus are subject to evaluation.

The regional commissions are attentive to the fact that their field of view increasingly includes educational entities and configurations which test conventional ideas as to what constitutes an institution of higher learning. Generating opportunities for innovative collaboration, the application of new technologies to education has resulted in unprecedented cooperative agreements and configurations among accredited colleges and universities as well as with entities outside the academy. While frequently resulting in a beneficial expansion of educational opportunity and a greater optimization of assets, these arrangements often result in a diffusion of responsibility for the overall quality of the student's academic experience. In addition, in these situations quality is often dependent on the continued availability of multiple resources only loosely bound. The regional commissions, as they review such arrangements, will consider it essential that accountability be clearly fixed and meaningfully expressed within the accredited entity and that reasonable guarantees are provided to assure the continued availability of necessary resources outside the institution's control.

Commitment to Cooperation, Consistency, and Collaboration

The regional approach to quality assurance has served our society well. Though fundamentally similar, the eight commissions have been able to reflect America's rich cultural diversity in their criteria and operations and undertake useful local experimentation from which the whole has benefited. In addition, regionalism has greatly fostered self-regulation by keeping these accreditors close to their member institutions.

Technologically mediated instruction, increasingly asynchronous and web-based, and as such not location dependent, raises questions about the suitability of the regional approach to quality assurance. The regional commissions recognize this. However, they also note that the great majority of collegiate instruction offered in the United States remains on-ground, and that nearly all on-line programming leading to degrees is being provided by traditional institutions which have a substantial academic infrastructure within a single region. To be sure, this may change over time, but for the present, the regional framework continues to be appropriately responsive to the current realities of American higher education and is effective in fulfilling the nation's overall quality assurance needs.

Nonetheless, because the new delivery systems are becoming increasingly important, with institutions developing national and international student populations enjoying only virtual residence, the regional commissions have sought and will continue to seek a significant degree of cross-regional consistency, compatible with their independence and autonomy, in evaluating these activities. Moreover, the commissions are seeking to assure that technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance by whatever institution in whatever region meets the same high standards for quality through the application of an evaluative framework utilizing peer review common to all the regions:

- the first-time development of distance education programming leading to a degree designated for students off-campus will be subject to careful prior review;
- institutional effectiveness in providing education at a distance will be an explicitly and rigorously appraised as a part of the regular evaluation of colleges and universities such as the comprehensive visit and the interim report;
- an essential element in all evaluative processes will be institutional self-evaluation for the purpose of enhancing quality;
- in cases where deficiencies are identified and/or concerns regarding integrity, remediation will be expected and aggressively monitored;
- appropriate action will be taken in keeping with individual commission policy and procedure in those cases where an institution is found to be demonstrably incapable of effectively offering distance education programming.

As each of the regional commissions continues to accrue skill in assessing distance education programming, they are pledged to learn from the experiences of one another particularly when innovative approaches are utilized.

While most institutions providing educational programming at a distance are clearly based in one of the six regions, placing them within the jurisdiction of the local accrediting commission, technology has already demonstrated the possibility of a virtual institution that is not plainly confined to a given location. In those cases, it is not obvious which regional commission should have quality assurance responsibility. Though few such institutions without apparent regional residency are anticipated, this circumstance presents difficult issues for which the regional commissions working through their national organization, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) are seeking to address.

The regional accrediting commissions are aware of the need for a collaborative approach which extends beyond their community, that others, particularly the states and the federal government, have a substantial voice in addressing quality assurance issues related to distance education programming. Building on a well-established tradition of cooperation with state higher education offices and the United States Department of Education, the eight commissions are pledged to continue to work individually and collectively with these agencies to achieve our commonly held goals of assuring the quality of academic offerings regardless of the medium of delivery. To that end, the commissions will seek the continued assistance of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a convener and facilitator.

No less important, as self-regulatory entities, the regional commissions recognize the necessity of working collaboratively with their affiliated colleges and universities. Each of the commissions have well established practices and procedures to ensure meaningful institutional involvement in developing standards and more broadly defining in general terms the practice of accreditation within its region. It is with a redoubled commitment to the participative involvement of their respective institutional memberships that the regional commissions will fashion their response to the quality assurance challenges created by technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance.

Commitment to Supporting Good Practice

As the higher education community increasingly expand educational opportunities through electronically offered programming, the regional commissions are committed to supporting good practice in distance education among affiliated colleges and universities. Doing so is in keeping

with their mission to encourage institutional improvement toward a goal of excellence. To this end several years ago, each commission adopted and implemented a common statement of *Principles of Good Practice in Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs* developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET), resulting in a shared approach to distance education. More recently, desiring to complement these efforts, the regional commissions collectively, through C-RAC, contracted with WCET to fashion a more detailed elucidation of those elements which exemplify quality in distance education. Based upon the expertise of WCET and the already substantial experience of the regional commissions in assessing distance education, the resulting statement, *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs,* provides a comprehensive and demanding expression of what is considered current best practice. It is being utilized by each commission, compatibly with their policies and procedures to promote good practice in distance education among their affiliated colleges and universities.

* The eight regional accrediting commissions are:

Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools ..... info@msache.org

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges ..... cihe@neasc.org

Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, New England Association of Schools and Colleges ..... rmandeville@neasc.org

The Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools ..... info@ncahigherlearningcommission.org

Commission on Colleges, The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges ..... pjarnold@cocnasc.org

Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools ..... webmaster@sacscoc.org

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges ..... accjc@aol.com

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges ..... wascsr@wascsenior.org

Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs[1]

Introduction

These Best Practices have been developed by the eight regional accrediting commissions in response to the emergence of technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance as an important component of higher education. Expressing in detail what currently constitutes best practice in distance education, specifically electronically offered degree and certificate programs, they seek to address concerns that regional accreditation standards are not relevant to the new distributed learning environments, especially when those environments are experienced by off-campus students. The Best Practices, however, are not new evaluative criteria. Rather they explicate how the well-established essentials of institutional quality found in regional accreditation standards are applicable to the emergent forms of learning; much of the detail of their content would find application in any learning environment. Taken together those essentials reflect the values which the regional commissions foster among their affiliated colleges and universities:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning;
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

These Best Practices are meant to assist institutions in planning distance education activities regarding the electronically offered degree and certificate program, and to provide a self-assessment framework for those already involved. For the regional accrediting associations they constitute a common understanding of those elements which reflect quality of technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance. As such they are intended to inform and facilitate the evaluation policies and processes of each region.

Developed to reflect current best practice in electronically offered programming, these Best Practices were initially drafted by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications ‹www.wiche.edu/telecom›, an organization recognized for its substantial expertise in this field. Given the rapid pace of change in distance education, these Best Practices are necessarily a work in progress. They will be subject to periodic review by the regionals, individually and collectively, who welcome comments and suggestions for their improvement.

Overview to the Best Practices

These *Best Practices* are divided into five separate components, each of which addresses a particular area of institutional activity relevant to electronically offered degree and certificate programs. They are:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Faculty Support
4. Student Support
5. Evaluation and Assessment

Each component begins with a general statement followed by individual numbered paragraphs addressing specific matters describing those elements essential to quality distance education programming. These in turn are followed by protocols in the form of questions designed to assist in determining the existence of those elements when reviewing either internally or externally distance education activities.

The Best Practices and Protocols

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organization, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.

1a. In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

- What is the evidence that the program is consistent with the role and mission of the institution including its goals with regard to student access?
- Is the institution fulfilling its stated role as it offers the program to students at a distance, or is the role being changed?

1b. It is recognized that a healthy institution's purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them. Each accrediting commission has established definitions of what activities constitute a substantive change that will trigger prior review and approval processes. The appropriate accreditation commission should be notified and consulted whether an electronically offered program represents a major change. The offering of distributed programs can affect the institution's educational goals, intended student population, curriculum, modes or venue of instruction, and can thus have an impact on both the institution and its accreditation status.

- Does the program represent a change to the institution's stated mission and objectives?
- Does the program take the college or university beyond its "institutional boundaries," e.g., students to be served, geographic service area, locus of instruction, curriculum to be offered, or comparable formally stated definitions of institutional purpose?
- Is the change truly significant?

1c. The institution's budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.

- How is the student assured that the program will be sustained long enough for the cohort to complete it?
- How are electronically offered programs included in the institution's overall budget structure?
- What are the institution's policies concerning the establishment, organization, funding, and management of electronically offered programs? Do they reflect ongoing commitment to such programs? (See also item 1e below.)

1d. The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.

- Do technical and physical plant facilities accommodate the curricular commitments reviewed below, e.g., instructor and student interaction (2e), and appropriateness to the curriculum (2a)?
- Whether facilities are provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, what are the provisions for reliability, privacy, safety and security?
- Does the institution's budget plan provide for appropriate updating of the technologies employed?
- Is the staffing structure appropriate (and fully qualified) to support the programs now operational and envisioned in the near term?

1e. The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution. Ordinarily, however, this will include the capability to:

- Facilitate the associated instructional and technical support relationships.
- Provide (or draw upon) the required information technologies and related support services.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan that takes into account the target student population, the technologies available, and the factors required to meet institutional goals.
- Provide training and support to participating instructors and students.
- Assure compliance with copyright law.
- Contract for products and outsourced services.
- Assess and assign priorities to potential future projects.
- Assure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards, both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students who may enroll in both electronically offered and traditional on-campus courses.
- Maintain appropriate academic oversight.
- Maintain consistency with the institution's academic planning and oversight functions, to assure congruence with the institution's mission and allocation of required resources.
- Assure the integrity of student work and faculty instruction.

Organizational structure varies greatly, but it is fundamental to the success of an institution's programs. The points above can be evaluated by variations of the following procedure and inquiries:

- Is there a clear, well-understood process by which an electronically offered program evolves from conception to administrative authorization to implementation? How is the need for the program determined? How is it assigned a priority among the other potential programs? Has the development of the program incorporated appropriate internal consultation and integration with existing planning efforts?
- Track the history of a representative project from idea through implementation, noting the links among the participants including those responsible for curriculum, those responsible for deciding to offer the program electronically, those responsible for program/course design, those responsible for the technologies applied, those responsible for faculty and student support, those responsible for marketing, those responsible for legal issues, those responsible for budgeting, those responsible for administrative and student services, and those responsible for program evaluation. Does this review reveal a coherent set of relationships?
- In the institution's organizational documentation, is there a clear and integral relationship between those responsible for electronically offered programs and the mainstream academic structure?
- How is the organizational structure reflected in the institution's overall budget?

- How are the integrity, reliability, and security of outsourced services assured?
- Are training and technical support programs considered adequate by those for whom they are intended?
- What are the policies and procedures concerning compliance with copyright law?
- How does program evaluation relate to this organizational and decision-making structure?

1f. In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on modes of delivery.

- What are the institution's policies concerning articulation and transfer? What are decisions regarding transfer of academic credit based upon?
- Is the institution internally consistent in its handling of articulation and transfer issues, or do different divisions have different policies and procedures?

1g. The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.

- When a student or instructor proceeds from one course or program to another, is it necessary to learn another software program or set of technical procedures?
- When new software or systems are adopted, what programs/processes are used to acquaint instructors and students with them?

1h. The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.

- Is a help desk function realistically available to students during hours when it is likely to be needed?
- Is help available for all hardware, software, and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the program?
- Does the help desk involve person-to-person contact for the student? By what means, e.g., email, phone, fax?
- Is there a well-designed FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) service, online and/or by phone menu or on-demand fax?

1i. The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should include specific consideration of the match between technology and program.

- How were the technologies chosen for this institution's programs?
- Are the technologies judged to be appropriate (or inappropriate) to the program(s) in which they are used?
- Are the intended students likely to find their technology costs reasonable?
- What provisions have been made to assure a robust and secure technical infrastructure, providing maximum reliability for students and faculty?
- Given the rapid pace of change in modern information technology, what policies or procedures are in place to keep the infrastructure reasonably up-to-date?

1j. The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.

- Does institutional documentation indicate an awareness of these requirements and that it has made an appropriate response to them?

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum-driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population.

2a. As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements.

- What process resulted in the decision to offer the program?
- By what process was the program developed? Were academically qualified persons responsible for curricular decisions?
- How were "learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded" established? Does the program design involve the demonstration of such skills as analysis, comprehension, communication, and effective research?
- Is the program "coherent and complete?"
- Are related instructional materials appropriate and readily accessible to students?

2b. Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications.

- What were the academic qualifications of those responsible for curricular decisions, assessment, and program oversight?
- What are the academic qualifications of those presenting and managing the program?
- If the principal instructor is assisted by tutors or student mentors, what are their qualifications?
- Are these qualifications considered appropriate to the responsibilities of these persons?

2c. In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (See also 2d below, concerning program elements from consortia or contract services.)

- How are students notified of program requirements?
- If the institution relies on other providers to offer program-related courses, what is the process by which students learn of these courses?
- Is the total program realistically available to students for whom it is intended? For example, is the chosen technology likely to be accessible by the target student population? Can target students meet the parameters of program scheduling?

2d. Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate. It is the institution in which the student is enrolled, not its suppliers or partners, that has a contract with the student. Therefore, the criteria for selecting consortial partners and contractors, and the means to monitor and evaluate their work, are important aspects of the program plan.

In considering consortial agreements, attention is given to issues such as assuring that enhancing service to students is a primary consideration and that incentives do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational program. Consideration is also given to the effect of administrative arrangements and cost-sharing on an institution's decision-making regarding curriculum. Current examples of consortial and contractual relationships include:

- Faculty qualifications and support.
- Course material:
  - Courses or course elements acquired or licensed from other institutions.
  - Courses or course elements provided by partner institutions in a consortium.
  - Curricular elements from recognized industry sources, e.g., Microsoft or Novell certification programs.
  - Commercially produced course materials ranging from textbooks to packaged courses or course elements.
- Course management and delivery:
  - WebCT, Blackboard, College, etc.
- Library-related services:
  - Remote access to library services, resources, and policies.
  - Provision of library resources and services, e.g., online reference services, document delivery, print resources, etc.
- Bookstore services.
- Services providing information to students concerning the institution and its programs and courses.
- Technical services:
  - Server capacity.
  - Technical support services, including help desk services for students and faculty.
- Administrative services:
  - Registration, student records, etc.
- Services related to orientation, advising, counseling, or tutoring.
- Online payment arrangements.
- Student privacy considerations.

Evaluation of contract services and consortial arrangements requires a review of pertinent formal agreements. Note, for example:

- Are performance expectations defined in contracts and agreements? Are conditions for contract termination defined?
- Are there adequate quality control and curriculum oversight provisions in agreements concerning courseware?
- Are there appropriate system reliability and emergency backup guarantees in agreements concerning technology services?
- What are the provisions for protection of confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information?
- What are the assurances concerning qualifications and training of persons involved in contact with students? These services may range from help desk to tutoring or counseling.
- Consortial agreements introduce additional elements to be evaluated:
  - How are curriculum-related decisions made by the consortium, noting the requirement that "Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions regarding program curricula and program oversight?"
  - Is the institution fully engaged in the consortial process, recognizing the decision-making responsibilities of shared ownership?
  - What are the financial arrangements among the parties to the consortial agreement? What are the implications of these arrangements for institutional participation and management?
  - What entity awards the certificates and degrees resulting from the consortial program?
  - What articulation and transfer arrangements are applicable to courses offered via the consortium? Did these arrangements involve specific curricular decisions by the academic structures of the participating institutions? Were they prescribed in a state or system decision?
  - To what extent are the administrative and student services arrangements of the consortium focused on the practical requirements of the student?

2e. The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.

- What provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction are included in the program/course design and the course syllabus? How is appropriate interaction assured?
- Is instructor response to student assignments timely? Does it appear to be appropriately responsive?
- What technologies are used for program interaction (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, Web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions, etc.)?
- How successful is the program's interactive component, as indicated by student and instructor surveys, comments, or other measures?

3. Faculty Support

As indicated above, faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks

of course development and direct instruction to students. Regardless of who performs which of these tasks, important issues are involved.

3a. In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member's professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.

- Have decisions regarding these matters been made in accordance with institutional or system processes customarily used to address comparable issues?

3b. The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.

- What support services are available to those responsible for preparing courses or programs to be offered electronically? What support services are available to those faculty members responsible for working directly with students?
- Do participating faculty members consider these services to be appropriate and adequate?
- Does the staff include qualified instructional designers? If so, do they have an appropriate role in program and course development?

3c. The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program's technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development?
- Is adequate attention paid to pedagogical changes made possible and desirable when information technologies are employed?
- Given the staff available to support electronically offered programs, are the potential changes in course design and management realistically feasible?
- Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

3d. The institution provides to those responsible for working directly with students the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the technologies for these purposes, including strategies for effective interaction.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development? Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

4. Student Support

Colleges and universities have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today's institutions.

4a. The institution has a commitment—administrative, financial, and technical—to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.

- Do course and program schedules reflect an appropriate commitment to the program's students?
- Do budget, faculty, and facilities assignments support that commitment?

4b. Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution:

- Ascertains by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills.
- Informs the prospective student concerning required access to technologies used in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning technical competence required of students in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning estimated or average program costs (including costs of information access) and associated payment and refund policies.
- Informs the prospective student concerning curriculum design and the time frame in which courses are offered, and assists the student in understanding the nature of the learning objectives.
- Informs the prospective student of library and other learning services available to support learning and the skills necessary to access them.
- Informs the prospective student concerning the full array of other support services available from the institution.
- Informs the prospective student about arrangements for interaction with the faculty and fellow students.
- Assists the prospective student in understanding independent learning expectations as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in the program's technology-based environment.
- Informs the prospective student about the estimated time for program completion.

To evaluate this important component of admission and retention, it is appropriate to pursue the following:

- How do potential students learn about the electronically offered program? Is the information provided sufficient, fair, and accurate?
- How are students informed about technology requirements and required technical competence?
- How are students informed about costs and administrative arrangements?
- What information and/or advice do students receive about the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in an anytime/anywhere environment?
- What criteria are used to determine the student's eligibility for admission to the program?
- What steps are taken to retain students in the program?
- What is the history of student retention in this program?

4c. The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the work-

ing assumption that these students will not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include:

- Accurate and timely information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs, and related policies and requirements.
- Pre-registration advising.
- Application for admission.
- Placement testing.
- Enrollment/registration in programs and courses.
- Financial aid, including information about policies and limitations, information about available scholarships, processing of applications, and administration of financial aid and scholarship awards.
- Secure payment arrangements.
- Academic advising.
- Timely intervention regarding student progress.
- Tutoring.
- Career counseling and placement.
- Academic progress information, such as degree completion audits.
- Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to data bases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.
- Training in information literacy including research techniques.
- Bookstore services: ordering, secure payment, and prompt delivery of books, course packs, course-related supplies and materials, and institutional memorabilia.
- Ongoing technical support, preferably offered during evenings and weekends as well as normal institutional working hours.
- Referrals for student learning differences, physical challenges, and personal counseling.
- Access to grievance procedures.

Within the context of the program, the requirements of the program's students, and the type of institution, review each of the services and procedures listed above from the standpoint of a student for whom access to the campus is not feasible.

- Are the institution's policies and procedures appropriate and adequate from the standpoint of the distant student?
- If not all appropriate resources are routinely available at a distance, what arrangements has the institution made to provide them to distant students?
- Are these services perceived by distant students to be adequate and appropriate?
- Are these services perceived to be adequate and appropriate by those responsible for providing them? What modifications or improvements are planned?

4d. The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through such actions as encouraging study groups, providing student directories (with the permission of those listed), including off-campus students in institutional publications and events, including these students in definitions of the academic community through such mechanisms as student government representation, invitations to campus events including graduation ceremonies, and similar strategies of inclusion.

- What strategies and practices are implemented by this institution to involve distant students as part of an academic community? By their statements and actions, do administrators and participating faculty members communicate a belief that a sense of academic community is important?
- How are the learning needs of students enrolled in electronically offered programs identified, addressed, and linked to educational objectives and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of the institution's definition of itself as a learning community.
- Do representative students feel that they are part of a community, or that they are entirely on their own?

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes, and may affect future policy and budgets and perhaps have implications for the institution's roles and mission.

5a. As a component of the institution's overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes.

- How does the institution review the effectiveness of its distance education programs to assure alignment with institutional priorities and educational objectives?
- How does evaluated student performance compare to intended learning outcomes?
- How is student performance evaluated?
- How are assessment activities related to distance learning integrated into the institution's broader program of assessment?

5b. When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work.

- If proctoring is used, what are the procedures for selecting proctors, establishing student identity, assuring security of test instruments, administering the examinations, and assuring secure and prompt evaluation?
- If other methods are used to identify those who take the examination, how is identification firmly established? How are the conditions of the examination (security, time limits, etc.) controlled?
- Does the institution have in place effective policies and procedures to assure the integrity of student work?

5c. Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

- What procedures assure the security of personal information?
- How is personal information protected while providing appropriate dissemination of the evaluation results?

5d. Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as:

- The extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major.
- The extent to which student intent is met.
- Student retention rates, including variations over time.
- Student satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys.
- Faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes.
- The extent to which access is provided to students not previously served.
- Measures of the extent to which library and learning resources are used appropriately by the program's students.
- Measures of student competence in fundamental skills such as communication, comprehension, and analysis.
- Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives.

Although not all of these measures will be applicable equally at every institution, appropriate evidence is generally available through:

- Evaluations of student performance (see 5a above).
- Review of student work and archive of student activities, if maintained, in the course of program reviews.
- Results from students' routine end-of-course and program evaluations.
- Student surveys of overall satisfaction with the experience of electronically offered programs; surveys reflecting student cost trade-offs experienced as they pursued the program.
- Faculty surveys, peer reviews of programs, and discussion groups.
- Documentation concerning access provided to students not previously served, through a combination of enrollment records and student surveys.
- Usage records concerning use of library and learning resources, and instructor assignments that require such usage.
- Assessment of students' fundamental skills in communication, comprehension, and analysis. How have the institution's usual measures of these skills been adapted to assess distant students?
- Documentation of the institution's analyses that relate costs to goals of the program.

5e. The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution's service to its internal and external constituencies. The program and its results are reflected in the institution's ongoing self-evaluation process and are used to inform the further plans of the institution and those responsible for its academic programs.

- How is the institution's ongoing program of assessment and improvement developed and conducted?
- Does it cover the essential categories of improved learning outcomes, retention, use of resources, and service to core constituencies?
- Does the program appropriately involve academically qualified persons?
- What are the institution's mechanisms for review and revision of existing programs and courses?
- How does program evaluation affect institutional planning?
- What constituencies are actively involved in the ongoing process of planning for improvement?
- Has the process had measurable results to date?

5f. Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.

- What are the administrative and procedural links between the evaluation of electronically offered programs and the ongoing evaluation of all academic programs?
- How are the respective characteristics of campus-based and electronically offered programs taken into account?

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement: Assessment Culture Matrix

Introduction

The clusters of characteristics contained in the "Assessment Cuture Matrix" emerge from rigorously applied research analysis of content found in team reports, the source of Consultant-Evaluators' discussion of assessment at scores of institutions. The Matrix provides markers of the progress institutions have made in developing their assessment programs. As institutions and teams use the Matrix, it is unlikely they will find any assessment program exhibiting all of the characteristics associated with a particular pattern at any given time. Moreover, not every assessment program will progress through every characteristic before it becomes an effective, ongoing system of processes that results in the continuous improvement of student learning. The Commission's research continues, and as its learning grows, these characteristics will be modified and updated.

The complexity of the "Assessment Cuture Matrix" indicates fluid and dynamic patterns of characteristics, rather than a uniform structure. The patterns of characteristics are fluid because within any one institution, different individual units may exhibit characteristics that cut across two or even all three sections of the matrix. They are dynamic because the goal of assessment is continual improvement of student learning, not completion of items on a checklist. Clearly, though, there is a basic assumption that the characteristics are cumulative in nature. That is, while not all of the characteristics in one column are restated in the next, it is assumed that most of them continue.

March 2000
Revised: March 1, 2001
Revised: March 1, 2002
Revised: April 1, 2003

I. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE: a. Collective/Shared Values

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Collective / Shared Values —

- A shared understanding of the purposes, advantages, and limitations of assessment has not evolved or is just emerging.
- There is not an institution-wide understanding of the strategies to be used in conducting an effective assessment program.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Collective / Shared Values —

- A shared understanding of the purposes, advantages, and limitations of assessment exists and is broadening to include areas beyond the instructional division.
- Student learning and assessment of student academic achievement are valued across the institution, departments, and programs.
- Some but not all academic programs have developed statements of purpose and educational goals that reflect the institutional mission and specifically mention the department's focus on improving student learning, and the importance they attribute to assessing student learning as a means to that end.
- The institution has yet to extend its assessment program to include all of its academic programs.
- Assessment of general education skills, competencies, and capacities is progressing but has not been fully implemented or was begun but has stalled.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Collective / Shared Values —

- Assessment has become an institutional priority, a way of life.
- Students, faculty, and staff view assessment activities as a part of the institution's culture and as a resource and tool to be used in improving student learning at all degree and program levels.
- Academic units and programs consider assessment of student learning to be integral to their educational operations.
- Assessment of student learning is an integral component of each academic program offered by the institution, including distance learning, and non-traditional, off-campus, and adult degree programs.
- Academic units and programs regard assessment findings as a source of knowledge essential for continuous improvement in instruction and program offerings.
- Institutional decisions are tied to assessment results.

I. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE: b. Mission

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Mission —

- Neither the institutional statements of Mission or Purposes nor statements of educational goals includes wording about student learning.
- The statement of departmental purposes and the statement of educational goals of some or all academic units do not show an easily identifiable relationship to the institutional mission and goals.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Mission —

- The institutional statements of Mission or Purposes or statement of educational goals indicate the value the institution places upon student learning.
- Some but not all of the institution's assessment efforts are recognizably expressive of the sentiments about the importance of assessing and improving student learning found in the Mission and Purposes statements.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Mission —

- The characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Every academic program has a published statement of its purpose and educational goals, developed by the academic unit's faculty, which reflects the institution's Mission and Purposes statements, including those portions directly focused on assessing and improving student learning.
- The assessment program materials developed at the institutional level reflect the emphasis of the Mission and Purposes statements on the importance of identifying learning expectations, on determining the outcomes of assessing student learning across academic programs, and on using assessment results to improve student learning.

II. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: a. Faculty

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Faculty —

- Only a few academic departments or programs have described measurable objectives for each of their educational goals.
- Most academic programs have not identified and used direct measures of student learning.
- Programmatic or departmental faculty members depend excusively on indirect measures of learning.
- A few academic units have begun to expand assessment activities beyond teacher evaluation of student learning and grades awarded in courses.
- Faculty and staff are questioning the efficacy of the assessment program, and their buy-in to date is minimal.
- Quantitative and qualitative measures are not aligned with academic program goals and objectives.
- Assessment of student learning is limited to those programs whose professional agencies mandate it.
- Many programmatic or departmental faculty are not engaged in assessment activities that get to the core of measuring student learning outcomes.
- A substantial number of faculty members across the institution do not differentiate between grading in individual courses and the broader measurement of student outcomes across an academic program.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Faculty —

- Faculty in many or most departments have developed measurable objectives for each of the program's educational goals.
- Faculty members are taking responsibility for ensuring that direct and indirect measures of student learning are aligned with the program's educational goals and measurable objectives.
- The Faculty Senate, Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, other faculty bodies, and individual faculty leaders accept responsibility for becoming knowledgeable and remaining current in the field of assessment.
- Faculty members are becoming knowledgeable about the assessment program, its structures, components, and timetable.
- Faculty members are learning the vocabulary and practices used in effective assessment activities and are increasingly contributing to assessment discussions and activities.
- After receiving assessment data, faculty members are working to "close the feedback loop" by reviewing assessment information and identifying areas of strength and areas for possible improvement of student learning.
- Groups of faculty identified by the institution receive assessment reports and provide suggestions and recommendations to appropriate constituencies.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Faculty —

- All of the characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Faculty members engage in effective assessment practices.
- Faculty members routinely collaborate to determine appropriate measures for publicly stated goals, objectives, and intended outcomes and to justify and recommend improvements based on corresponding results.
- Faculty members speak both publicly and privately in support of assessment.
- Faculty members systematically educate persons unfamiliar with institutional and departmental assessment programs about their value.
- Faculty members continually explore the uses of assessment in the context of research on learning theories, constructing vs. acquiring knowledge, and active learning strategies.
- Faculty members routinely link their assessment findings to decision making and instructional and program improvement.

II. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: b. Administration and Board

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Administration and Board —

- Concerns about the assessment plan identified in the last Evaluation Team's Report and/or the APR review (assessment panel review) have not been addressed or not adequately addressed.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Administration and Board —

- The Board, the CEO, and the executive officers of the institution express their understanding of the meaning, goals, characteristics, and value of the assessment program, verbally and in written communication.
- The CAO has oversight responsibility for the ongoing operation of the assessment program and for promoting the use of assessment results to effect desired improvements in student learning, performance, development, and achievement.
- The CAO arranges for awards and public recognition to individuals, groups, and academic units making noteworthy progress in assessing and improving student learning.
- Deans, directors, and other academic officers demonstrate their commitment to the assessment program by informing senior administrators about assessment results and needs to make improvements in instruction, staffing, curriculum, and student and academic services.
- Unit heads devise strategies to ensure that their academic departments/programs implement the assessment plans they developed or develop them more fully.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Administration and Board —

- All of the characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Board members routinely champion institutional and other improvement efforts that are based on assessment findings.
- Board members advocate the continual improvement of student learning as an institutional priority.
- Senior administrators annually provide resources for the assessment program and provide additional resources necessary to enhance assessment practices and improve faculty's understanding of assessment principles and use of assessment results.
- Senior administrators routinely authorize various campus offices (e.g., institutional research) to provide the support services needed to carry out the assessment programs.
- Senior administrators regularly provide resources for special projects to enhance the assessment program (e.g., pilot projects, summer stipends, departmental grants, and support for assessment symposia).

II. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: c. Students

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Students —

- Students know little or nothing about the assessment program. They do not understand how it will be carried out, their role in its success, or how it could be useful to them and future cohorts of students.
- Prospective and incoming students are provided with few or no explicit public statements regarding the institution's expectations for student learning and the student's role and responsibility in that effort.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Students —

- Students are becoming knowledgeable about the institution's assessment program.
- There is student representation (undergraduate and graduate, as appropriate) on the assessment committees organized within the institution.
- The institution effectively communicates with students about the purposes of assessment at the institution and their roles in the assessment program.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Students —

- Throughout their academic programs, students are provided formal occasions to reflect upon their academic work and express their thoughts, in verbal and written forms, about the levels of success they think they have experienced in achieving the learning outcomes identified and expected by faculty.
- Students are regularly required to present verbal and written explanations of how work products they have selected demonstrate attainment of publicly stated goals and objectives for their learning.
- Student leaders educate their peers about the assessment program through conversations, public presentations, and/or articles in the student newspaper.
- Students routinely participate in discussions with the unit faculty about improvements that might be made in areas of learning where assessment results indicate a need for strengthening.

III. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: a. Resources

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Resources —

- The institution has not designated funds in its operating budget to support a comprehensive assessment program.
- The institution does not understand or clarify the difference between the evaluation of resources and processes and the assessment of student learning.
- Sufficient resources have yet to be allocated in the annual E&G operations budget to operate and sustain a comprehensive assessment program.
- The institution does not protect the assessment program from the funding vicissitudes of particular schools, colleges, and units.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Resources —

- The CEO and CAO annually negotiate a budget for the assessment program sufficient to provide the technological support, physical facilities, and space needed to sustain a viable assessment program and to make professional development opportunities available.
- In institutions without an Office of Institutional Research (OIR), knowledgeable staff and/or faculty members are given release time or additional compensation to provide these services.
- Unit heads endorse the use of departmental funds for professional development in assessment, for faculty release time, and other expenses associated with the department's assessment activities and initiatives based on assessment findings intended to improve student learning.
- Resources are made available to support assessment committees seeking to develop skills in assessing student learning.
- Resources are made available to departments seeking to implement their assessment programs and to test changes intended to improve student learning.
- The institution provides resources to support an annual assessment reporting cycle and its feedback processes.
- Assessment information sources such as an assessment newsletter and/or an assessment resource manual are made available to faculty to provide them with key assessment principles, concepts, models, and procedures.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Resources —

- All of the characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- A budget line has been established and sufficient resources are allocated in the annual E&G operations budget to sustain a comprehensive assessment program.
- Funds are available and sufficient to support consultation, workshops, and professional development for faculty in the area of assessment of student learning.
- The Assessment Committee solicits proposals and awards funding for programmatic and departmental assessment activities and initiatives.
- Individuals who have administrative assignments (including deans and department heads) are given the responsibility and authority to use budgeted resources to support academic changes based on assessment findings.

III. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: b. Structures

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Structures —

- The structure of the assessment program is beginning to take shape.
- There is little or no infrastructure to support the institution's assessment program.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Structures —

- There is an organizational chart and an annual calendar of the implementation of the assessment program.
- The assessment program is provided with a Coordinator/ Director who reports directly to the CAO.
- The CEO or CAO has established a standing Assessment Committee, typically comprised of faculty, academic administrators, and representatives of the OIR and student government.
- The administration has enlarged the responsibility of the OIR to include instruction and support to the Assessment Committee, academic unit heads, and academic departmental or program faculty.
- The CAO delegates unit heads sufficient authority and resources to conduct an effective assessment program.
- Unit leaders (department heads) have responsibility for maintaining successful assessment programs as a part of their formal position descriptions.
- Some or many academic units and the Curriculum Committee are requiring that faculty members indicate on the syllabi of previously approved courses and in the proposal for new courses, and for new or revised programs, the measurable objectives for student learning and how student learning will be assessed.
- Members of the Assessment Committee serve as coaches and facilitators to individuals and departments working to develop or improve their assessment programs and activities.

Structures — continued on following page

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Structures —

- All of the characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Syllabi for courses being currently offered and all submitted courses and programs state measurable objectives for student learning and provide for the assessment of students' academic achievement.
- The institution maintains a system of data collection that helps sustain an effective assessment program.
- The comprehensive assessment program is evaluated regularly and is modified as necessary for optimal effectiveness.
- Institutional and departmental assessment programs are annually reviewed and annually updated.
- The effectiveness of the changes in curriculum, academic resources, and support services made to improve student learning is evaluated and documented.
- The institution, through its organizational structure, provides financial resources and other support for all aspects of the assessment program, including research and evaluation design, data collection and maintenance, decision making, and consultation services.
- The institution, through its organizational structure, provides on-line access to assessment data for academic departments and programs.
- The institution, through its organizational structure, continually fosters accountability by facilitating the integration of planning and budgeting processes with the results of assessment.

Structures — continued on following page

III. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: b. Structures (continued)

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

Structures — continued from previous page

- The Assessment Committee is working with unit heads and with faculty and student government leaders to develop effective feedback loops so that information (about assessment results and the changes tried where those results suggest improvement is needed) can be shared with all institutional constituencies and used to improve student learning.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

Structures — continued from previous page

- The institution, through its organizational structure, systematically and routinely links assessment outcomes to the allocation of resources for the improvement of student learning.
- Academic unit heads report annually to the chief academic officer on accomplishments and challenges relating to the unit's assessment program.
- Academic unit heads report annually to the chief academic officer on recommended and implemented changes in the previous year's assessment plan.
- Information about assessment activities and their results is communicated regularly to the campus community.

IV. EFFICACY OF ASSESSMENT

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs

— Efficacy —

- Implementation of the assessment program is in its infancy, is progressing at a slower than desired pace, or has stalled.
- There is minimal evidence that the assessment program is stable and will be sustainable.
- Confusion exists regarding the different purposes and relationships among: placement testing, faculty evaluation, program review, institutional effectiveness, and the assessment of student learning.
- Assessment of general education skills, competencies, and capacities has not been implemented or has stalled.
- Reported learner outcomes do not correspond with publicly stated goals and objectives for student learning.
- Few academic programs and departments are collecting, interpreting, or using data about student learning beyond the level of the individual classroom.
- Few if any academic programs are using assessment results to improve student learning.
- The assessment program is not designed to provide useful data, which could impact change.
- The data are being collected but not disseminated to constituencies.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs

— Efficacy —

- Considerable program-level data about student and program performance are available, but individual units vary widely in the degree to which they are using this information to improve the quality of educational experiences.
- Assessment data are inconsistently used as the basis for making changes across the institution.
- The data the assessment program collects are not useful in guiding effective change.
- Assessment data are being collected and reported but not being used to improve student learning.
- Faculty members are increasingly engaged in interpreting assessment results, discussing their implications, and recommending changes in academic programs and other areas in order to improve student learning.
- Many academic units or programs are collecting, interpreting, and using the results obtained from assessing student learning in general education, in undergraduate majors, and in graduate and professional programs.
- Assessment findings about the state of student learning are beginning to be incorporated into reviews of the academic program and into the self-study of institutional effectiveness.
- The conclusions faculty reach after reviewing the assessment results and the recommendations that they make regarding proposed changes in teaching methods, curriculum, course content, instructional resources, and in academic support services are beginning to be incorporated into regular departmental and/or institutional planning and budgeting processes and included in the determination of the priorities for funding and implementation.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement

— Efficacy —

- All of the characteristics described in Level Two are continued, sustained, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Student learning is central to the culture of the institution and finding ways to improve it is ongoing.
- A "culture of evidence" has emerged, sustained by a faculty and administrative commitment to excellent teaching and effective learning.
- Explicit statements regarding the institution's expectations for student learning are widely publicized.
- Programmatic benchmarks are established against which students' learning outcomes are assessed.
- The institution publicly and regularly celebrates demonstrated student learning, performance, and achievement.

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
NCA

Assessment Culture Matrix and the Patterns of Characteristics Analysis Worksheet

Where would you place your institution, division, department, or academic unit (circle focus of your evaluation) on the continuum of assessment program implementation? Using the Patterns of Characteristics as your reference, circle your response for each Pattern of Characteristics and give your reasons.

Patterns	Beginning Implementation			Making Progress in Implementation			Maturing Stages of Implementation			Evidence / Rationale
I. Institutional Culture										
a. Collective / Shared Values	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
b. Mission	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
II. Shared Responsibility							(IN)			
a. Faculty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
b. Administration and Board	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
c. Students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
III. Institutional Support										
a. Resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
b. Structures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
IV. Efficacy of Assessment										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

Design concept by Richard K. Foral, Nicolet Area Technical College (WI) and Gloria M. Rogers, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Adapted by Cecilia L. López, Associate Director, The Higher Learning Commission

The Higher Learning Commission
30 N. LaSalle St., Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602-2504
800-621-7440 • www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org

We Need Your Comments on this Workbook

This *Workbook* provides the first drafts on the Commission's new Criteria for Accreditation. It also includes new draft sections on the evaluation process and Commission monitoring. In the coming months, the staff will revise these materials and add others in preparation for the new *Handbook of Accreditation*. The drafting of the *Handbook* will be completed in July 2003, with copies printed and ready for distribution in September. The Commission welcomes comments and suggestions on this draft document from those who will use the *Handbook*. Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return it to the Commission office.

Send your completed form by fax to 312-263-7462 or by mail to 30 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602
Deadline is May 15, 2003

Part 1. The Criteria for Accreditation and the Eligibility Program

a. Rate the usefulness of the section on "Understanding the New Criteria"

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

b. Are the definitions in this section useful?

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

c. What other terms would it be useful to define?

d. Rate the section on "Exploring the Usefulness of Cross-Cutting Themes"

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

e. Do the themes provide a useful tool for viewing the new Criteria?

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

f. What other themes emerge as you work with the new Criteria?

Part 2. Self-Study and Commission Evaluation

a. Rate the usefulness of the section on The Self-Study Process in Accreditation

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

b. Rate the usefulness of Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

c. Rate the usefulness of section on the Customized Accreditation Review Process

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

d. Rate the usefulness of section on the Academic Quality Improvement Program

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

Part 3. Commission Monitoring

a. Rate the usefulness of the section on institutional change

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

b. Rate the usefulness of the section on the Operational Indicators

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

Part 4. Good Practices and Tools

a. Rate the usefulness of the Statements of Good Practice

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

b. What other topics might be addressed through good practices?

c. Rate the usefulness of the Assessment Culture Matrix

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
Not Useful Useful Very Useful

d. What other tools might the Commission provide related to evaluation and accreditation?

General Comments

a. How might these materials be improved?

b. What other types of assistance would be useful in addition to the *Handbook?*

Please indicate (check all that apply):

◯ CEO
◯ CAO
◯ Self-Study Coordinator
◯ Self-Study Steering Committee Member
◯ Consultant-Evaluator
◯ AQIP Peer Reviewer
◯ Other _____
_____

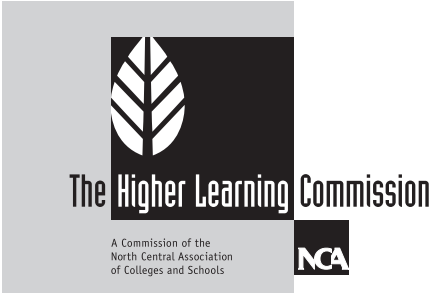
Restructured Expectations:

A Transitional Workbook

Prepared for the 2003 Annual Meeting

April 13-16, 2003

Hyatt Regency Chicago



The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(800) 621-7440