UC MERCED

Comprehensive Review for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

March 12, 2015

Barbara Gross Davis– Vice President
WASC Senior College and University Commission

Agenda for the Day

- UC Merced timeline
- The changing context for accreditation
- 2013 WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review
- Comprehensive review for reaffirmation of accreditation
- The institutional review process
- The institutional self-study and report
- Commission action
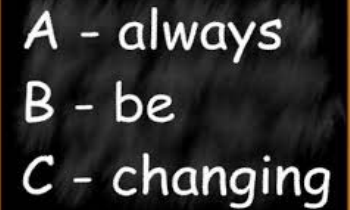- Tools and resources

UC Merced's WSCUC Timeline
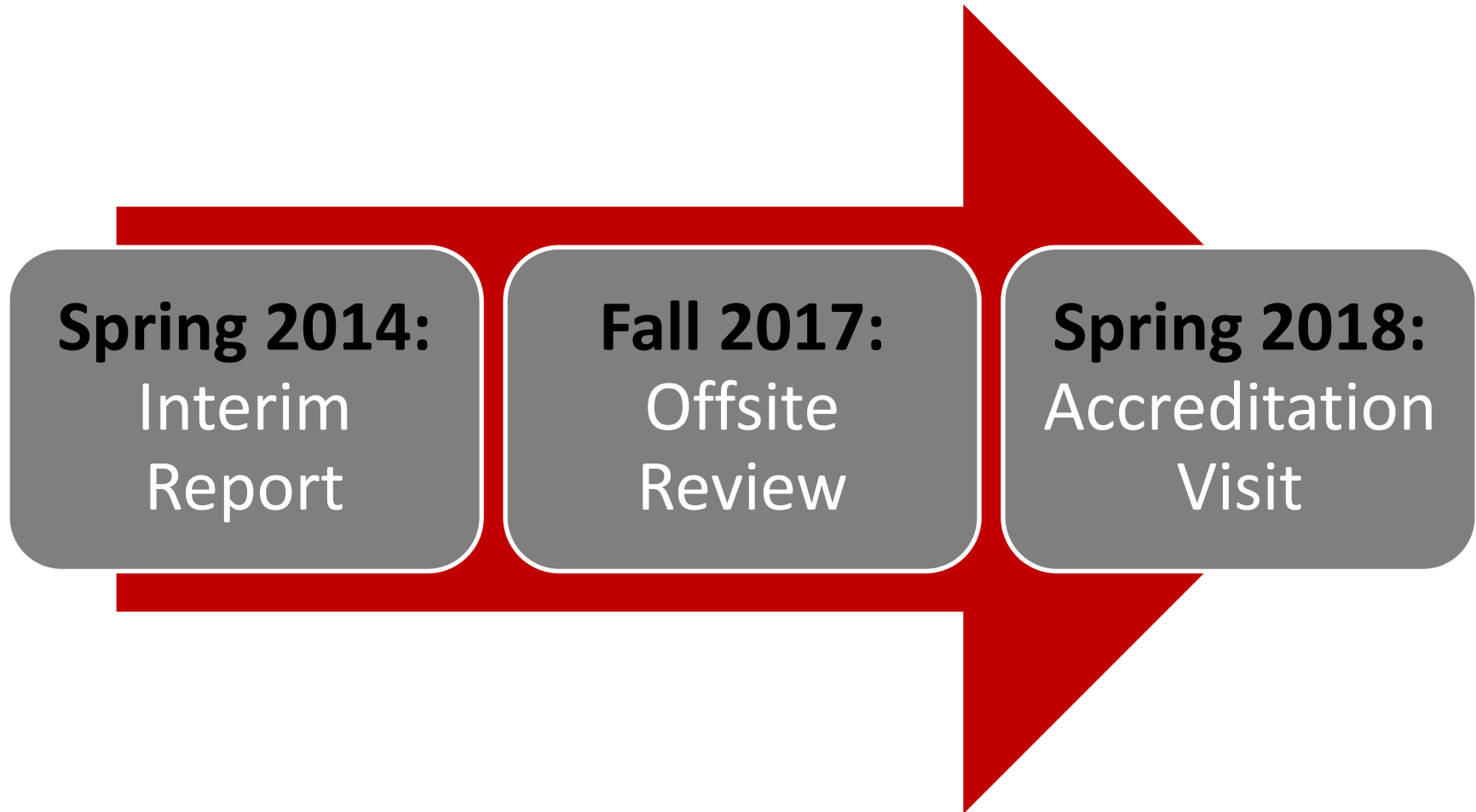
Spring 2014: Interim Report

Fall 2017: Offsite Review

Spring 2018: Accreditation Visit

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Changing Context for Accreditation

- Greatly increased expectations for institutional accountability and consumer protection

- Demands for improved academic standards and student performance (as measured by retention, graduation rates, student learning, and post-graduation job placement)

- New fiscal realities making cost-effectiveness a paramount issue for WSCUC and its constituents

Challenges for Higher Education and Accreditation
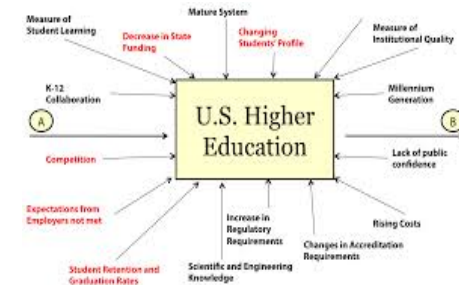
- Low graduation rates
- High student debt/high default rates
- Difficulty in transferring credits
- Dissatisfaction with quality of undergraduate education/low levels of learning
- Rapid growth of online education
- Practices of the for-profit industry
- Increased federal regulation

Challenges for Higher Education and Accreditation (continued)

- Changing demographics, including older, working, more diverse students
- Swirl: majority of students attend more than one institution
- Emergence of open source and Do-It-Yourselfers (DIY)
- Rapid growth of online programs/institutions, MOOCs
- Momentum for competency-based programs
- Shrinking support for public universities and trend to privatization

How Accreditation is Changing

ROLES OF ACCREDITATION			
Core Functions of Accreditation	**Compliance Centered**	**Improvement Centered**	**Accountability/Quality Assurance Centered**
Focus of Review	All standards applied to assure compliance	Key areas selected and approved by accreditor for improvement	Specific areas identified as part of all reviews to address common policy issues—e.g., retention/ graduation rates, student learning outcomes
Demonstration of Effectiveness	Must demonstrate standards are met at least at minimum level	Simplified compliance review and primary emphasis on recommended improvements	Standards of performance set by institutions, and, where appropriate, comparative indicators used
Public Reporting and Transparency	Public announcement of grant of accreditation	Reports internally circulated for improvement; accrediting action publicly reported	Meaningful and clear public information about institutional performance and commission actions reported

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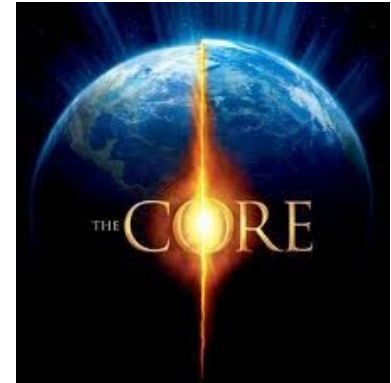# 2013 Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation
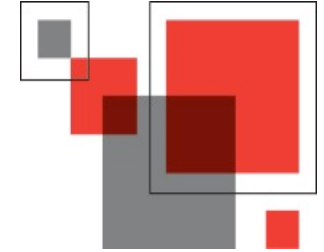
Three Core Commitments

Four Standards

- Criteria for Review (CFR)
- Guidelines

2013 Core Commitments

- **Student Learning and Success**

- **Quality and Improvement**

- **Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability**

Core Commitment: Student Learning and Success

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

Core Commitment:
Institutional Integrity,
Sustainability, and Accountability
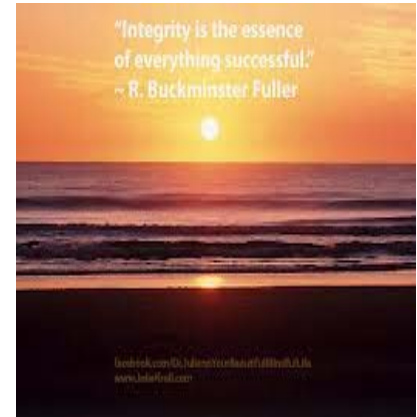
"…Institutions engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions."

Core Commitment:
Quality and Improvement

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

2013 Standards of Accreditation

- Standard 1
- Standard 2
- Standard 3
- Standard 4

Standard 1:

Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- *Institutional Purpose*
- *Integrity and Transparency*

Standard 2:

Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

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

Standard 3:

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

- *Faculty and Staff*
- *Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources*
- *Organizational Structures and Decision-making Processes*

Standard 4:

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

- *Quality Assurance Processes*
- *Institutional Learning and Improvement*

Criteria for Review (CFR)

- Provide statements about the meaning of the Standard

- Are cited by institutions in their report, by teams in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions

Guidelines

- Offer examples of how an institution can address a particular CFR

- Are not requirements or mandatory

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Overview of Comprehensive Review

INSTITUTION:
Self-study & Report

TEAM:
Offsite Review & Accreditation Visit

COMMISSION:
Action
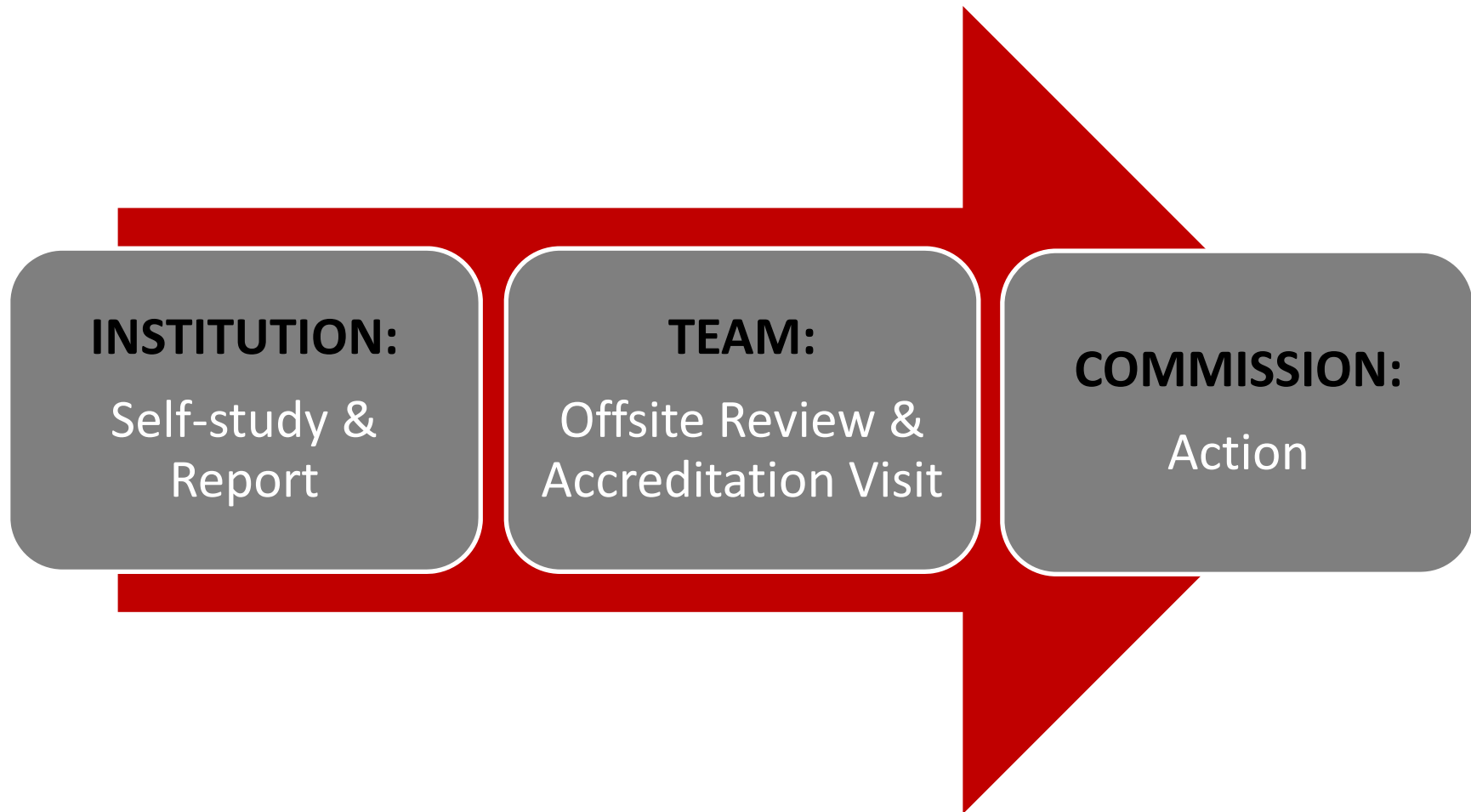
Key Elements of Comprehensive Review

- Institutional self-study and report
  - Nine components
  - "Review under the Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements"
  - "Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators"

- Institutional review process
  - Offsite Review (OSR)
  - Accreditation Visit (AV)
  - Team report (posted on WSCUC website)

- Commission action (posted on WSCUC website)

Schedule for the Review of UC Merced

- Institutional report due 10 weeks before the date of the Offsite Review

- Offsite Review: Typically in November or December (Fall 2017)

- Accreditation Visit: Typically in March or April (Spring 2018)

Commission Issues for UC Merced

- Financial sustainability
- Enrollment planning
- Continued progress in assessment and program review
- Continued progress in student success

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Institutional Review Process: Institutional Report

- Has the institution responded to previous Commission actions?
- Has the institution responded to the components?
- Has it collected and analyzed data effectively?
- Are its conclusions supported by evidence?
- What are the strengths of the institution?
- Are there problems or potential areas of concern or noncompliance?
- Does the report contain recommendations for further institutional action?

Institutional Review Process:
Offsite Review (OSR)

OFFSITE

- Takes place on 1 day in WSCUC offices

- Peer evaluation team reviews the institutional report

- Includes a video conference with institutional representatives

- Results in "Lines of Inquiry" document sent to institution by team – to plan the visit

- No Commission Action

Institutional Review Process: Accreditation Visit (AV)

Run for your life! They're coming!

- Takes place three – six months after OSR

- Institution responds to Lines of Inquiry eight weeks before the visit

- Team comes to campus for three days

- Team report and recommendation sent to WSCUC Commission for Action

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The Institutional Self-Study and Report

- **Reflect and research before you write**

- **The self-study is the process**

- **The report is the product**

The Institutional Report

Your story matters

Write your story in a way that you would want to read it

The Institutional Report: Importance of Evidence

AN EVIDENCE-BASED REPORT:	USE EVIDENCE THAT IS:
• Report should not just be narrative and descriptive, but reflective and analytical • Analysis should be evidence-based • This does **NOT** mean a data-dump!!!	• **Relevant** • **Verifiable -** *truthful* • **Representative** • **Cumulative** • **Actionable** *Evidence helps tell your story – and makes it convincing!*

The Institutional Report: Good Evidence

- Intentional and purposive
- Entails interpretation and reflection
- Integrated and holistic
- Quantitative and qualitative
- Direct and indirect

The Institutional Report: Tips

- You may reorder and combine components (though I don't recommend it)

- Prompts are there to help facilitate your thinking; you do not need to answer each prompt

- Define (discuss), measure (assess), analyze, act (plan)

- Be self-reflective

Institutional Report:
Nine Report Components

1. Introduction: Institutional context
2. Compliance
3. Meaning, Quality, Integrity of Degrees
4. Educational Quality
5. Student Success
6. Quality Assurance
7. Sustainability
8. Institution-Specific Themes (optional)
9. Conclusion

Institutional Report **Component 1: Introduction: Context, Response to Previous Commission Actions**

- Addresses history, mission, core constituencies, recent changes

- Gives reviewers a picture of the institution's distinctive character

- Responds to issues identified in previous Commission action letters

- Use the prompts as discussion-starters for the institution

Institutional Report
Component 2: Compliance with Standards and Policies

- One document: "Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements" replaces two: "Self Review Under the Standards" and "Compliance Checklist"

- Compliance includes four required Department of Education forms that must be completed by team members
  - Credit hour and program length review
  - Marketing and recruitment review
  - Student complaints review
  - Transfer credit review

- Compliance includes two areas for review, as appropriate
  - Off campus locations
  - Distance education

- "Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators"

Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements

- Institution reviews itself under the Standards and under four federal requirements

- Review worksheet is submitted by the institution as part of its report, with links to documents

- Team verifies the information

- Four required checklists are attached as an appendix to the team report

- Two areas are reviewed, as appropriate, and checklists are attached as an appendix to the team report

Compliance: Credit Hours

Average Weekly Hours To Work Per Credit			
CREDITS (hours)	Semester		
	Fall 15 weeks	Spring 15 weeks	Summer 7 weeks
1 - 2 (120)	8	8	17
3 (180)	12	12	26
4 (240)	16	16	34

Questions for the institution:

- Does the institution have a policy for assigning credit hours?

- How does the policy address non-standard courses (e.g., labs, studios, internships, individual directed studies)?

The team:

- Reviews a sample of syllabi for non-standard courses
- Examines one term's course schedule
- Completes Credit Hour form as an appendix to team report

Compliance:
Marketing and Recruitment

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Questions for the institution:

- Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students?
- Does the institution provide accurate information about time to degree and overall cost of the degree?
- As applicable, does the institution provide accurate information about careers and employment?

The team:

- Verifies that the institution provides accurate and truthful information in marketing and recruiting materials and in contacts with potential students
- Confirms that the institution follows federal regulations
- Completes Marketing and Recruitment form as an appendix to team report

Compliance:
Student Complaints

Questions for the institution:

- Does the institution have a policy for handling student complaints?
- Does the institution maintain records of student complaints?
- Does the institution follow its required policies in handling complaints?

The team:

- Verifies that the student complaint policy is readily accessible and adhered to
- Completes Student Complaint form as an appendix to team report

Compliance:
Transfer Policy

Questions for the institution:

- Does the institution have a policy or procedure for reviewing and receiving transfer credits?

- Is the policy publicly available?

- Has the institution established criteria for transfer of credits?

The team:

- Verifies that the transfer policy is readily accessible, includes criteria, and is adhered to

- Completes Transfer Policy form as an appendix to team report

Compliance: Off Campus Locations

(applies to locations 25 miles or more from main campus and 50% or more of a degree program; 25% of locations will be visited)

The team:

- Develops plan for review
- Interviews faculty, staff, students
- Evaluates off site facilities
- Observes classes (can be done before institutional visit)
- Documents findings in appendix, using off site form
- Discusses important findings with team for inclusion in report, as appropriate

Compliance: Distance Education
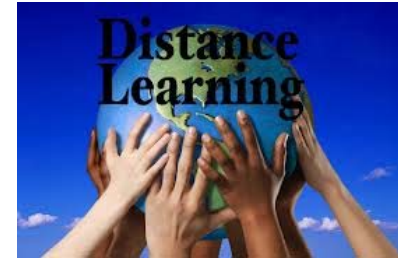
(degree programs with 50% or more of the courses online)

The team:

- Develops plan for review
- Interviews faculty, staff, students
- Evaluates online infrastructure
- Reviews courses (can be done before institutional visit)
- Documents findings in appendix, using distance education form
- Discusses important findings with team for inclusion in report, as appropriate

Compliance:
Inventory of Educational
Effectiveness Indicators

- Provides an overview of the institution's assessment processes

- Requests brief descriptive information for each degree program

- Ensures that every degree program has in place a quality assurance system for assessing, tracking, and improving the learning of its students

Institutional Report

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

Meaning Dimension

MEANINGLESS (Falsehood) ← Continuum of Significance → MEANINGFUL (Truth)
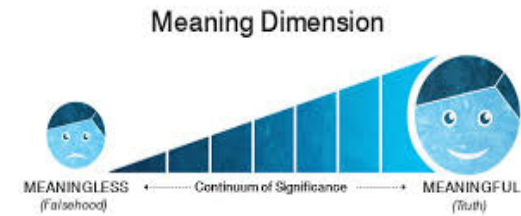
Meaning

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

Quality

- How rich are the experiences that the institution offers?

- How challenging? How rigorous?

- What quality assurance processes exist at the institution to guide improvement?

Integrity

- To what extent are all the parts of the educational experiences coherent, aligned, and intentional?
- To what extent does the institution deliver what it promises to deliver?
- How well does the institution achieve what it sets out to do?
- How does it know?
- How does it communicate about its degrees to internal and external audiences?
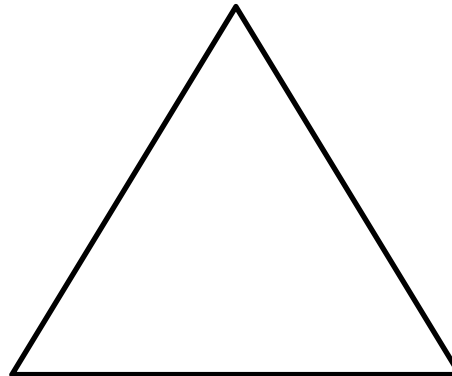
Institutional Report
Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees (continued)
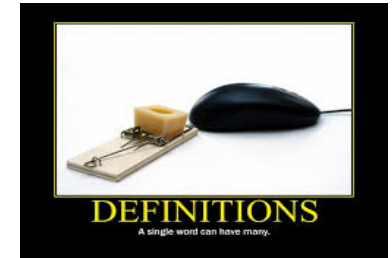
MEANING - A description of degree outcomes from a holistic institutional perspective.

Defined in terms of expected student learning outcomes.

QUALITY - Defining the expected level at which graduates will have achieved the expected degree outcomes.

Demonstrated through the assessment processes.

INTEGRITY - The cohesion of the degree and its relationship with external expectations of meaning & quality.

Demonstrated through:
- **Alignment of learning outcomes at various levels.**
- **Alignment with external requirements.**

Student Learning

- What do students learn in General Education? The major? Elsewhere?

- How well do students learn?

- How does the institution know?

- What's "good enough?"

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance (continued)

Five Undergraduate Core Competencies
1. Written Communication
2. Oral Communication
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Critical Thinking
5. Information Literacy

Questions to pose
- How well do students at a point near graduation?
- How does the institution know?
- What's "good enough"?

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation


CHANGED

Background on Approach to Retention and Graduation (R&G)

- The Commission decided not to continue with the review approach currently described in the 2013 Handbook

- The Commission decided to discontinue the Retention and Graduation Committee

- Institutions can add five pages to recommended length of this component to include narrative about R&G data; can add actual data to appendix

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success:
Student Learning, Retention and
Graduation (continued)

2008 Graduation Rates
Source: Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics.
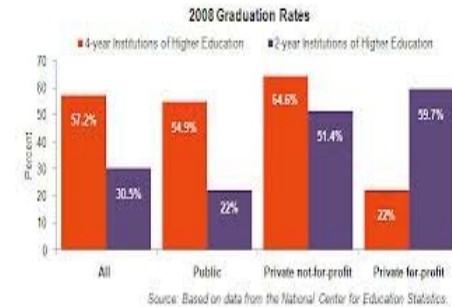
- CFR 1.2: Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, *and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.*

- WSCUC asks for this webpage link as part of the annual reporting and posts the link on the WSCUC website

Institutional Report

Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation (continued)

- How does the institution define student success (accounting for completion and learning) given its mission, values, programs and the students it serves?

- How does the institution promote student success?

- How well are students doing in meeting the institution's definition of student success?

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation (continued)

Examples of Measures of Student Success

Retention rates
Graduation rates
Time-to-degree data
Learning outcomes
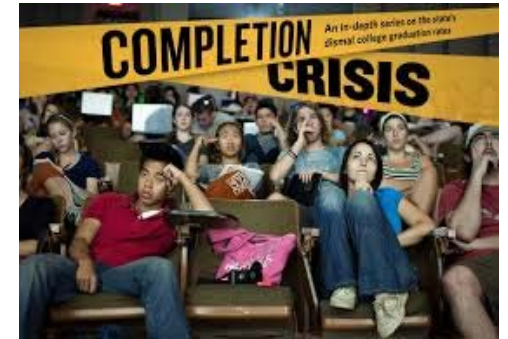Licensing exam pass rates
Board certification
Employment
Student engagement
- NSSE
- UCUES
- Locally developed surveys

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation (continued)

Examples of Retention and Graduation Rates

IPEDS
National Student Clearinghouse
College Portraits
Absolute Graduation Rate (Dashboard)

**Institutional Report
Component 5: Student
Success: Student Learning,
Retention and Graduation
(continued)**

For retention and graduation data

- Does the institution report 3-5 year trends in retention and graduation rates (aggregated and disaggregated)?
- What do the data show?
- Has the institution benchmarked its rates against peer institutions or aspirational institutions?
- Does the institution have goals with timelines to make improvements overall or for subgroups, as appropriate?
- Does the institution judge its retention and graduation rates to be satisfactory?

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation (continued)

Institution may consider and reflect the effect of:

- the way students matriculate (first time; transfer; lower division; upper division)

- enrollment patterns (part time; stop and return; transfer and return)

- differences in types of programs

- international students

Institutional Report
Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation (continued)

Institutions may describe:

- Trends; changes over time
- Results considered "too low," or otherwise unacceptable
- Disaggregated results compared with overall
- Comparison of results with similar institutions; aspirational institutions; internal programs
- Effectiveness of data gathering and analysis systems
- Challenges to improving results; factors that influence data
- How data are used to improve student learning

Institutional Report

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

- Program review

- Assessment of student learning

- Data collection, analysis, and use in decision-making

Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review

- Is there a robust system of cyclical program review (including the co-curricular) in the institution?

- Does it include findings from assessment of student learning?

- Is program review tied to planning and budgeting?

- Will program review promote the sustainability of assessment?

- Has program review resulted in attention to and enhancement of student learning?

Quality Assurance and Improvement:
Assessment of Student Learning

Has the institution:

- defined student learning outcomes?
- gathered evidence of student learning?
- analyzed and interpreted the evidence?
- used this information to improve student learning?

Quality Assurance and Improvement:
Use of Data and Evidence

- To what extent does the institution use evidence in decision-making, planning, resource allocation and other institutional processes?

- To what extent is use of data and evidence embedded in and characteristic of an institution's actions and practices?

Institutional Report

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability, Preparing for Changing Higher Education Environment

- Financial viability

- Changing ecology

Institutional Report

Financial viability

- Are resources allocated according to institutional priorities?

- Does the allocation process includes strategic planning, operational execution, institution-wide evaluation, recalibration?

- Is the institution financially sustainable?

Institutional Report

Changing Ecology

- What changes taking place globally, nationally and locally will affect the institution?

- How is the institution paying attention to and planning for these changes?

- What is the institution's vision of education for the coming decade?

- Resource: "*The Changing Ecology of Higher Education and its Impact on Accreditation*"

http://www.wascsenior.org/redesign/conceptpapers

Institutional Report

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability, Preparing for Changing Higher Education Environment (continued)

Changing Ecology: Top Issues (an unscientific, biased list)

1. "It's the economy, stupid"
2. Cost and student debt
3. Careerism or education for life?
4. Quality assurance
5. Education for all

Institutional Report

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability, Preparing for Changing Higher Education Environment (continued)

6. Student success

7. Changing ecology

    - Rise of for-profits

    - Rise of online education

    - Unbundling of American higher education

8. Seat time or outcomes based?

    - Competency based education

    - Certificates and badges

9. Globalization

10. Values

Institutional Report
Component 8: Institution-Specific Themes

Optional

Selected theme(s) to advance institutional priorities

(What?!? you really want to do more?)

Institutional Report
Component 8: Institution-Specific Theme(s)

- Optional

- Introduce in Component 1

- Alert WSCUC staff liaison so an appropriate team can be selected

Institutional Report
Component 9: Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

- What did the institution learn through the self-study process?

- What are the plans for the future based on what was learned?

Institutional Report
Exhibits

Exhibits

- "Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements"

- "Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators"

- Institution-selected exhibits in support of narrative

**The Institutional Report: Format, Length, and Submission**

- 50 – 75 pages, double spaced, 12 point font
- Name attachments so they reference text (Not: "Exhibit 1")
- Will be submitted via the cloud (Box.com)
- More is not better…necessarily

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WSCUC Commissioners
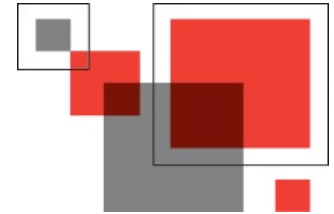
- 27 volunteer members
- Nominated and voted upon by the CEOs of member institutions
- Represent the region and the general public
- Meet two times a year for actions (and one for a retreat)

Commission Review

- Commission Panel reads report and documentation including institution's written response, talks with institutional representatives at Commission meeting
- Panel makes recommendation to Commission, and Commission acts
- Staff finalizes draft action letter on behalf of Commission
- Letter and team report are publicly available on WSCUC website
- Link provided on WSCUC website, if desired, to institution's response to team report

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Tools: WSCUC Resources

- **Materials on Box**

- **Materials on website (wascsenior.org)**

- **WSCUC Workshops**

- **The ARC – Academic Resource Conference**
  - **April 22-24, 2015 – Oakland, CA**

Tools: WSCUC Liaison

- Counselor
- Coach/ Trainer
- Collaborator
- Communicator/Interpreter
- AND lastly
- Compliance Officer

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