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AGENDA

2018 SACSCOC Reaffirmation

Mission, Governance, and Administration Committee Meeting

June 22, 2016

BBS Dean's Conference Room, Room JO 4.306

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes David Cordell

2. Announcements Serenity King
 - A. SACSCOC Updates to Policy/Documents
 - B. SACSCOC Annual Meeting
Atlanta, GA, December 3-6, 2016
 - C. Wheelan and Elgart's *Chronicle of Higher Education* article:
response to Department of Education letter
 - D. UT System web resources for SACSCOC CCR –
beneficial for this committee

3. Workspace / Technical Support Simon Kane

4. Assigned Committee Work – Status, Issues, etc. Committee Members
 - A. Reports by Committee Members
 - B. Recommendations for additional members

5. Adjournment David Cordell

ITEM 1

May 4, 2016 Meeting Minutes

**2018 SACSCOC Mission, Governance, and
Administration Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 4, 2016 10:00 – 11:00AM
Lone Star Conference Room, AD 3.104

I. Attendees:

David Cordell (chair), Serenity Rose King (vice-chair), Kurt J. Beron, Colleen Dutton, Abby R. Kratz, Terry Pankratz, Richard K. Scotch, Timothy Shaw, Mary Jo Venetis, Vy Trang, Caroline Ries

Absent: Sue Sherbet, Simon Kane (guest)

II. Announcements

Updated Interactive Web Links and Policies

The ‘Assigned Principles’ document distributed at the previous meeting has been updated with interactive web links and policies. This interactive document allows members to view the supporting documents.

ACTION ITEM: Mary Jo will email the updated document to committee members.

Department of Education Letter

The Department of Education has issued a letter to the regional accreditors, which includes SACSCOC, regarding both flexibility and tighter scrutiny of applying standards. Two major impacts of this letter are the following: 1) it would allow accreditors to perform an abbreviated review of institutions based on the level of the institution, and 2) there will be more focus on the outcomes and achievements (quantitative measures) of the institutions.

ACTION ITEM: Serenity will update the committee as more information becomes available.

III. Selected Principles for Committee Members’ Work

- 2.1 Degree-granting authority
- 2.2 Governing board (Cordell)
- 2.3 Chief executive officer (Dutton/Pankratz)
- 2.4 Institutional mission (Pankratz)
- 2.6 Continuous operation (Pankratz)
- 3.1.1 Mission (Pankratz)
- 3.2.1 CEO evaluation/selection (Dutton/Pankratz)
- 3.2.2.1 Governing board - institution’s mission (Pankratz)

- 3.2.2.2 Governing board – fiscal stability of the institution (Pankratz)
- 3.2.2.2 Governing board – institutional policy
- 3.2.3 Board conflict of interest (Shaw)
- 3.2.4 External influence (Shaw)
- 3.2.5 Board dismissal
- 3.2.6 Board/administration distinction (Cordell/Scotch/King/Leaf)
- 3.2.7 Organizational structure (Dutton)
- 3.2.8 Qualified administrative/academic officers (Dutton)
- 3.2.9 Personnel appointment (Dutton)
- 3.2.10 Administrative staff evaluations (Dutton)
- 3.2.11 Control of intercollegiate athletics (Beron)
- 3.2.12 Fund-raising activities (Cordell)
- 3.2.13 Institution-related entities (Shaw)
- 3.2.14 Intellectual property rights (Sherbet/Rafael Martin)
- 3.4.3 Admissions policies (Kratz/Venetis)
- 3.4.5 Academic policies (Kratz/Venetis)
- 3.4.7 Consortial relations/contractual agreements (King/Shaw)
- 3.7.5 Faculty role in governance (Scotch)
- 3.12.1 Substantive change (Venetis)
- 3.13.1 Policy compliance (King/Kratz/Venetis)
- 3.14.1 Publication of accreditation status (King)
- 4.3 Publication of policies (Kratz)
- 4.6 Recruitment materials (Venetis/Lauraine O’Neil)

ACTION ITEM: Principles 2.1, 3.2.2.2, and 3.2.5 need to be assigned.

ACTION ITEM: Members will need to read the assigned principles by the June 22 meeting.

IV. Workspace/Technical Support

Serenity briefly demonstrated the DOX repository.

ACTION ITEM: Serenity will send the link to the eform for members to request access to DOX.

V. Future Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 22, 2016 at 2-3pm.

VI. Adjournment

ITEM 2A

SACSCOC Updates to Policy/Documents

SACSCOC made additional revisions to its website, indicating that changes were made to some of its Commission policies and policy statements effective May 2016.

1. Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions

- Last edited in January 2015, adopted by SACSCOC Executive Council in March 2016
- The matrix for “Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change” has been revised
 - UT Dallas’ website will be updated accordingly
- Additional forms, including documentation templates, have been created for various substantive changes for the SACSCOC Substantive Change Committee reviewers/visits

2. Compliance Certification Document

- Updated in May 2016 to replace policy wording in CS 3.13.2 and CS 3.13.4a.
 - CS 3.13.2 Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures
 - CS 3.13.4.a: Applicable Policy Statement: Distance and Correspondence Education under Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports

3. Report of the Reaffirmation Committee (for off-site and on-site reviewers)

- Revised in January 2012, updated in May 2016.

4. Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs: Policy Statement

- Edited in May 2016.

5. Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form or Legal Status

- Revised in December 2015, updated in May 2016.

6. Requests for Data or Research Assistance

- Approved by SACSCOC Executive Council in December 2015

7. Preliminary Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Principles – 2015

- Chart has been added to the UT Dallas’ website / sidebar menu
- New cited Principles: CS 3.2.9, CS 3.2.14, CS 3.10.3, and CS 3.3.1.4

ITEM 2C

Wheelan and Elgart's *Chronicle of Higher Education* article: response to Department of Education letter

Wheelan, B. S. & Elgart, M. A. (2016, May 25). Let accreditors do what does the most good for students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Let-Accreditors-Do-What-Does/236594>

COMMENTARY

Let Accreditors Do What Does the Most Good for Students

By Belle S. Wheelan and Mark A. Elgart | MAY 25, 2016



Doug Paulin for The Chronicle

When too many colleges have low rates of graduation and high rates of student-loan default, you would expect the U.S.

Department of Education to take bold action. But it came as a surprise recently

when the department sent a letter to leaders of regional accrediting agencies asking them to shift from evidence-based institutional oversight to more like a data-collection service.

The letter offers guidance on a series of executive actions the department announced in November to "move toward a new focus on student outcomes and transparency."

Accreditors at all levels of education share the goal of using data and other evidence that shed light on factors that inhibit quality and undermine student success. The new focus, however, crosses the line between what accreditors do

and what government seeks to accomplish, and requires us — leaders of accrediting groups responsible for oversight of schools and colleges in dozens of states — to speak with one voice about our concerns.

The Department of Education's letter urges accreditors to go beyond their work of providing qualitative assessments of every aspect of an institution to tilt the focus toward a few narrow measures of performance using uniform metrics, or else risk being shut down.

To the department's credit, its request for more data comes with a promise of allowing greater flexibility in how accrediting agencies choose to scrutinize performance. Institutions and programs with solid track records do not need review with the same frequency and depth of assessment, allowing the agencies to home in on struggling institutions.

But the department's determination to have accreditors give greater weight to bright-line indicators — rates of retention, graduation, job placement, student-loan repayment and defaults — is disturbing. There are differences between the data we collect to assess quality, the data the department requires to enforce financial-aid and regulatory compliance, and the data legislators seek to develop policy. This new guidance "encourages" accrediting agencies to collect data for purposes that are clearly outside of their missions.

As we've seen with the department's heralded College Scorecard initiative, data dumps and rating systems lack any degree of nuance and force institutions to focus more on outcomes — some of which they have no control over — rather than explore the myriad underlying causes of low performance in an effort to map a path toward improvement.

Accreditation can reveal useful information about why students aren't graduating; how, why, and when they fail; and how to make adjustments in teaching and learning, course sequencing, and other factors. But reporting on only a few outcomes provides no such useful data.

Nor do simple bright-line measures tell the college-going public about the experience of attending an institution. They merely provide information to the U.S. Department of Education that can help it determine how to better administer federal financial-aid programs. That purpose was the intent of the scorecard, a more appropriate place for such an effort (although it was not welcomed by colleges).

Moreover, putting too much weight on a few metrics will not improve results. Fourteen years of the federal No Child Left Behind law have caused the nation's public schools to focus their improvement efforts on a few narrow measures but have led to no better outcomes and a host of unintended consequences, including overuse of testing, skewing of curricula, demoralization of educators, and rampant cheating and efforts to game the system.

The Department of Education's letter should raise red flags for colleges nationwide. That is because:

- Striving for common rate thresholds for outcomes could cause colleges to limit the access of underserved populations. Applying the same metric to all colleges could also lead the government to shut down or withhold resources from some institutions, such as historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving colleges, and tribal colleges, serving some of the least advantaged students. And what about community colleges grappling with returning adult students who may never have envisioned themselves in college or who need help reacquiring learning skills? We need these institutions to train both the entry-level and transitioning work force and not

be judged solely by an indicator of their graduation rates.

- Student-loan repayments and defaults and job placements are important outcomes of college but are often beyond an institution's control. They more often reflect economic conditions and employment trends than what colleges do to prepare people with degrees that have value in the real world.
- The proposed shift would provide impetus for institutions to manipulate data and change admissions or grading policies to produce higher graduation rates. Such gamesmanship would actually limit educational opportunity and lead to inadequate academic and career preparation.

Setting standards and evaluating their use on campus, engaging institutions in the reflective process of self-study, and using expert and peer review to promote continuous improvement are activities that accrediting agencies have been conducting and refining for more than 100 years. This self-regulation and respect for the uniqueness of institutions is a reason that American higher education continues to be the best, most diverse system in the world.

Equally important, holding accreditors accountable for data collection raises a host of questions: Who is the information for? How reliable is it? How will it be used? What are the consequences for colleges? Do the data help advance improvement?

There are other problems with the bright-line measures, most notably the limitations of the information itself. For example, the Department of Education relies upon its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, which provides information about some of what we need to know, but not so much about the majority of those attending college, who don't fit the definition of "traditional student." Iped's has looked only at first-time, full-time students who enroll in an institution in the fall term and receive a degree from that same institution; they now amount to fewer than half of all college students.

This year, IpedS has begun asking colleges to report data on part-time and non-first-time students, which will address some limitations. But the department still has not taken on key issues. For example, how should colleges account for students who complete a credential elsewhere? This requires access to individual student data, like those collected by the nonprofit National Student Clearinghouse (on whose board one of us serves).

Today's students are young and not so young, attending part time, stepping in and out, and transferring in state and out of state. The clearinghouse provides a more complete demographic picture, one that shows the complications of reducing student behaviors to a simple graduation rate.

The proposal for accreditors to assess institutional compliance with federal data requests also requires greater definition about what we mean by "completion," "student achievement," and other outcomes within the contexts of our diverse institutions. We need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the oversight triad — federal government, states, and accreditors — and ensure that neither states nor the federal government asks accreditors to perform roles that more appropriately belong to government.

For accreditation to help improve quality at the institutional level, accrediting teams and colleges rely on reams of data appropriately collected and applied. The data that inform federal policy is not the same as those collected to guide institutional performance. We need to resist efforts to redefine the purpose of accreditation and the missions of our institutions in misguided ways.

Belle S. Wheelan is president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Mark A. Elgart is founding president and chief executive officer of AdvancED.



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