

2028 SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team Meeting
December 15, 2025, 3:30-4:30pm
Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Raúl Hinojosa Jr., Mary Jo Venetis, Sarah Moore, Inga Musselman, Greg Argueta, Chandramallika Basak, Courtney Brecheen, KatyBelle Edwards, Lev Gelb, Rafael Martín, Vicky Morris-Dueer, William Nichols, Robin Paige, Amanda Smith, Stephen Spiro, Chad Thomas, Vy Trang, Angela Franklin

Absent: Juan González, Clark Meyer

- **SACSCOC Reaffirmation Orientation and Conference Takeaways:** Dr. Raúl Hinojosa Jr., Greg Argueta, Dr. Chad Thomas, Dr. Courtney Brecheen, and Dr. Sarah Moore shared reflections and key lessons from attending the SACSCOC Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN, focusing on compliance documentation, reviewer expectations, and best practices for the upcoming 2028 reaffirmation process.
 - **Financial Compliance Documentation:** Greg Argueta explained that for the financial section, there is no strict standard; institutions must justify their financial position and disclosures, emphasizing the importance of convincing documentation to demonstrate compliance.
 - **Avoiding Superfluous Information:** Dr. Chad Thomas highlighted that institutions often face issues when providing excessive or tangential documentation beyond what is required by standards and recommended focusing strictly on the standards to avoid complications during review.
 - **Use of Resource Manual:** Dr. Mary Jo Venetis advised referring directly to the resource manual and answer only the specific questions asked, provide only the requested documentation to streamline compliance, and avoid unnecessary scrutiny.
 - **Reviewer Perspective and Best Practices:** Dr. Courtney Brecheen emphasized the importance of thinking like a reviewer, citing best practices in higher education, and ensuring evidence aligns with standards, especially in areas like distance education and new enrollment pathways.
 - **Strategic Planning and QEP Documentation:** Dr. Courtney Brecheen discussed the need to leverage presidential surveys, focus groups, and other data sources to justify QEP selection, and noted the importance of documenting legislative influences and staffing changes for core curriculum compliance.
- **Preparation and Timeline for 2028 Reaffirmation:** Dr. Hinojosa outlined the timeline and key milestones for the 2028 reaffirmation, including compliance certification, peer reviews, QEP submission, and on-site committee visits, and stressed the need for early preparation and stakeholder engagement.
 - **Compliance Certification Report Deadline:** Dr. Hinojosa announced that the compliance certification report is due on September 8, 2027, prompting the team to begin building the necessary infrastructure and documentation early in the next semester (spring 2026).
 - **Peer Review and On-Site Visit Schedule:** Dr. Hinojosa detailed that the off-site peer review will occur from October 31-November 3, 2027, followed by a campus

visit from the on-site committee scheduled for March 20-23, 2028, with materials due by February 14, 2028.

- o **QEP Plan Submission:** Dr. Hinojosa stated that the QEP plan is expected to be submitted around February 4, 2028, aligning with the overall reaffirmation timeline and preparation activities.
- o **Stakeholder Engagement and Working Groups:** Dr. Hinojosa described plans to engage stakeholders through individual conversations and working groups to assess current compliance status, identify policy revision needs, and organize efforts for the compliance report.
- **Differentiated Review Approval and Working Group Structure:** Dr. Hinojosa and Dr. Venetis announced the institution's approval for differentiated review, explained the mapping of Principles for compliance, and initiated the process of forming working groups to address specific standards, with input from the leadership team and stakeholders.
 - o **Differentiated Review Standards:** Dr. Venetis explained that the differentiated review will require addressing about 40 standards, fewer than a full review but more than the Fifth-Year Interim Report.
 - o **Mapping Core and Federal Requirements:** Dr. Venetis described the mapping of core requirements and federal requirements, noting that failure to meet these standards results in monitoring review, and emphasized the need to address 24 federal requirements mandated by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - o **On-Site Committee Expectations:** Dr. Venetis clarified that the on-site committee would review documentation and may raise concerns that must be addressed during the campus visit, requiring leadership and working group members to be prepared for on-site responses.
 - o **Formation of Working Groups:** Dr. Venetis and Dr. Hinojosa discussed grouping Principles by area (faculty affairs, student/academic, financial) and selecting appropriate members for each working group, with a proposed structure to be shared for feedback in early 2026.
- **Changes in SACSCOC Leadership and Principles Review:** Dr. Hinojosa and Dr. Venetis described significant changes under new SACSCOC President Stephen Pruitt, including increased communication, a review and potential streamlining of accreditation Principles, and opportunities for public comment and institutional input.
 - o **Increased Communication Initiatives:** Dr. Hinojosa reported that SACSCOC has hired a director of public information, launched a newsletter, and introduced office hours for substantive changes, resulting in more frequent and transparent communication with member institutions.
 - o **Principles Review and Streamlining:** Dr. Hinojosa explained that a peer review team is evaluating the *Principles of Accreditation*, with a focus on minimizing the number of Principles and aligning closely with federal requirements, and that public comment periods will allow institutions to provide feedback before adoption.
 - o **Implementation Timeline for New Principles:** Dr. Venetis noted that, unlike previous cycles, institutions will have advance notice of new and/or revised Principles, with about nine months to adjust before submitting differentiated reports, improving preparation compared to past experiences.

- **Differentiation Among Institution Types:** Dr. Hinojosa mentioned ongoing discussions about how different institution types (e.g., community colleges vs. R1 universities) should respond to Principles, with summits and follow-up sessions planned to address these differences.
- **Substantive Change Process Streamlining:** Dr. Venetis discussed efforts by SACSCOC to streamline the substantive change process, including reducing documentation requirements and improving application forms, with further details to be reviewed and shared in January 2026.
 - **Reduction of Documentation Burden:** Dr. Venetis described the expansion of the substantive change process from 50 to over 100 pages and shared that President Pruitt aims to condense and simplify these requirements, particularly for off-campus instructional sites.
 - **Prospectus Application Improvements:** Dr. Venetis highlighted plans to improve the prospectus application form as part of the streamlining efforts, with more information to be provided after reviewing the new documentation in January 2026.
- **QEP Status and Future Uncertainty:** Dr. Moore, Dr. Hinojosa, and Dr. Brecheen discussed the current status and future of the QEP standard, noting its positive impact at UT Dallas, ongoing uncertainty about its retention, and the need to proceed with planning despite possible changes in accreditation requirements.
 - **QEP Impact and Best Practices:** Dr. Moore shared that UT Dallas' previous QEPs have set high standards for excellence and student success and recommended continuing with established best practices despite uncertainty about the standard's future.
 - **Potential Changes to QEP Requirement:** Dr. Moore explained that the QEP standard may be retained or discontinued, with a decision expected in December 2026 or June 2027, but advised continuing current practices due to their proven effectiveness.
 - **Alignment with Strategic Planning:** Dr. Hinojosa and Dr. Brecheen noted that ongoing strategic planning and student success initiatives align well with QEP requirements, facilitating continued progress regardless of future changes.
- **Next Steps and Meeting Cadence:** Dr. Hinojosa outlined the plan to reconvene the group in February 2026, establish a monthly meeting schedule, and focus on finalizing the working group structure and compliance preparation, with updates to be shared as new information becomes available.
 - **Monthly Meeting Schedule:** Dr. Hinojosa stated that the group will begin meeting monthly starting in February 2026 to coordinate compliance efforts, with meetings to be canceled if there are no updates or agenda items.
 - **Working Group Structure Finalization:** Dr. Hinojosa indicated that information about the proposed working group structure will be shared in January 2026, with the February 2026 meeting dedicated to ensuring the right structure and membership for compliance preparation.

Action Items:

- **Annual Meeting Presentation Materials Sharing:** Upload and share all annual meeting presentation notes and slides to the designated shared folder for team access. (Hinojosa, Brecheen, Thomas, Moore, Argueta)
- **QEP Session Notes Sharing:** Add summary notes from QEP-related sessions to the Box folder for team reference. (Brecheen)
- **Transition Checklist for Outgoing Staff:** Create a transition checklist for Dr. Musselman to ensure continuity of institutional knowledge during staff transitions. (Hinojosa, Brecheen)
- **Documentation of Legislative Impacts:** Document the influence of state legislative requirements, such as SB 37, on the core curriculum and related processes, ensuring continuity and clarity in records. (Brecheen)
- **Annual Meeting Materials Access:** Place the chart of Principles and mapping documents in the Teams channel for team review and input on working group composition. (Hinojosa)
- **Working Group Structure Proposal:** Develop and share a proposed structure for working groups, including suggested members, for feedback and refinement by the leadership team and President Moghe. (Hinojosa)
- **Substantive Change Process Review:** Review the updated substantive change process documentation and share an analysis of its impact on UT Dallas processes with the team. (Venetis)