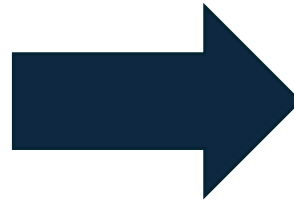


The Trustee's Guide to Accreditation: Advancing Quality, Accountability, and Institutional Success

Geoffrey C. Klein, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff



Names, not Functions Are Changing





Accreditation and The Commission

Origins of Accreditation

As the number of higher education institutions began to expand across the United States in the late 19th century, the Higher Ed Leaders began to discuss a means to establish institutional quality.

- 1880s: SACSCOC created in 1895 following first recognized meeting in the early 1880s
- 1950s: Federal Government looking for ways to ensure GI Bill funds went to quality institutions. SACSCOC was first recognized by federal government in 1952
- 1960s: Additional Financial Aid funds made available to institutions accredited by recognized accreditors



U.S. Accrediting Agencies are Unique in the World...



Today, there are 467 quality assurance agencies located in 175 countries.

But the U.S. accreditation is unique...and uniquely reflects an American ethos.

In Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America (1835) he observes that one of the things that made the U.S. modernize more quickly than other countries was the existence of professional associations.

Minimum bureaucracy, maximum expertise



Three Dimensions of U.S. Accreditation That Are Unique:

1. U.S. Accreditation is a **non-governmental**, self-regulatory, peer review system.
2. Much of the work & decisions are made by **peer volunteers** in the profession (plus public members).
3. Accreditation relies on the candor of institutions to assess themselves against a set of standards viewed in light of their mission....it is a process of “guided” self-improvement.





Higher Education Regulatory “Triad”

•Accrediting Agencies (Institutional and Programmatic Accreditors)

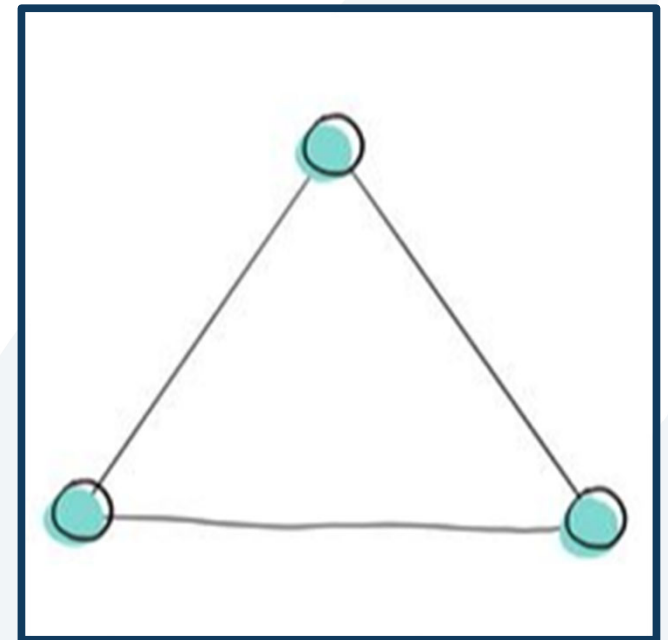
- Institutional quality and continuous improvement
- Accountability
- “Gate-keeper” function

•State Governments

- Authorize institutions to operate within the state
- Consumer protection
- Varying range of regulatory requirements

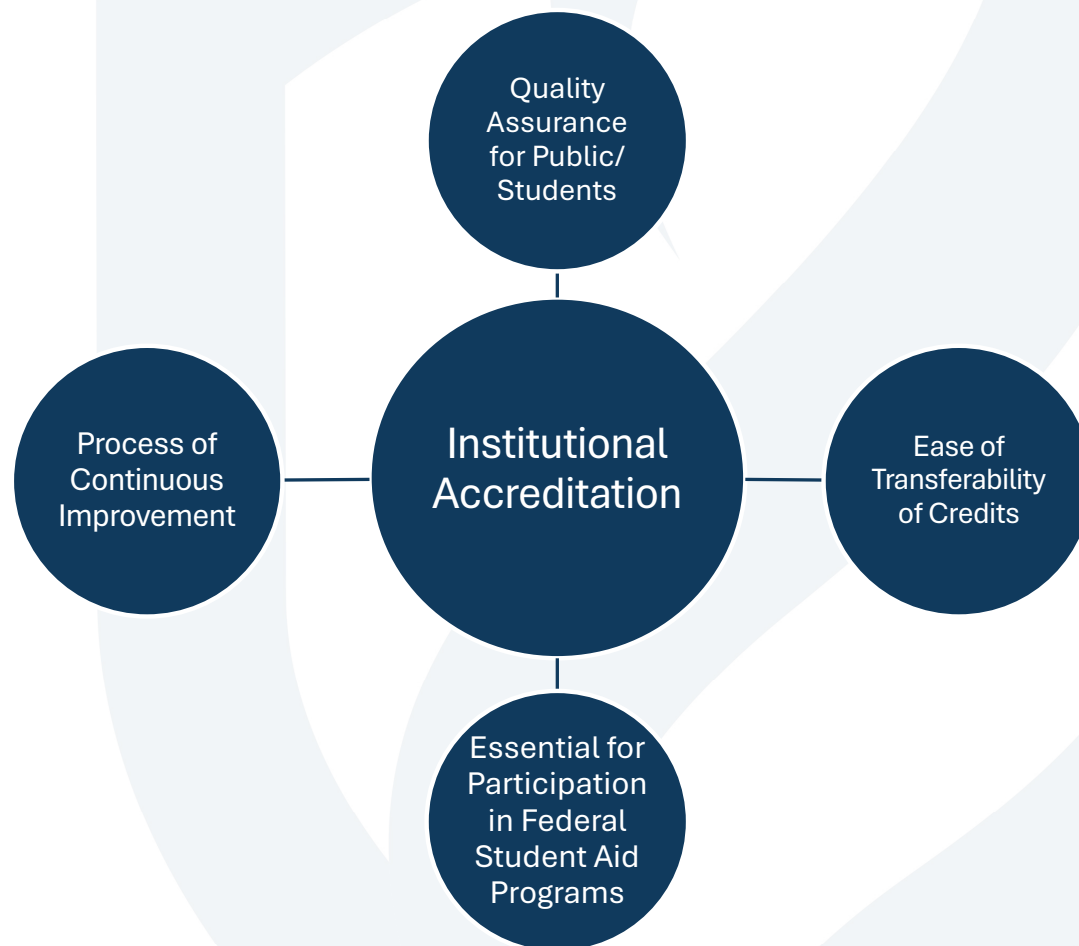
•Federal Government

- Focus on administrative and fiscal integrity of federal financial aid programs
- “Recognize” accreditation agencies





Why Institutions Seek Institutional Accreditation

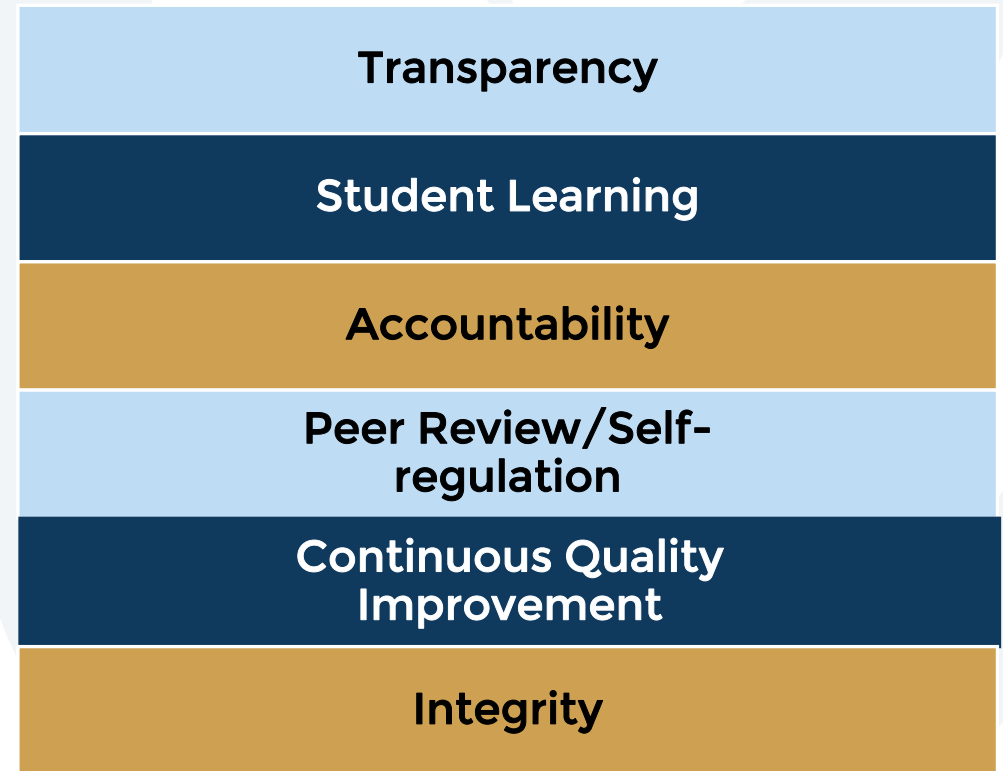




The Commission on Colleges and Universities

Mission

The mission of The Commission on Colleges and Universities is to assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions.



Core Values



Executive Council

**Committees on
Compliance &
Reports**

Commission Board of Trustees - Guides organization's work
and implements the accreditation process

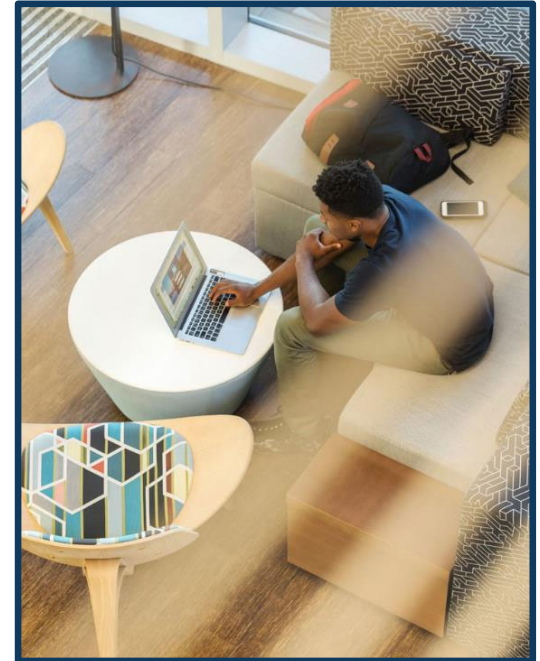
College Delegate Assembly (CDA) - One voting member from each
accredited institution (CEO/President). CDA elects the seventy-seven (77)
member Commission Board of Trustees

Member Institutions

The Commission Philosophy

Characteristics of Accreditation

- Voluntary
- Earned & renewed
- Membership determines standards
- Related to institutional purpose
- Focus on student learning
- Self-regulation
- Requires institutional commitment
- Based on peer-review
- Driven by integrity
- Continuous improvement





Principles of Accreditation (Standards)

Accreditation Standards



Scope of Current Accreditation Standards





Principles Revision

Principles Review Committee Guiding Questions

- Does this requirement genuinely promote student achievement?
- Does it advance quality and continuous improvement while maintaining transparency?
- Does it improve transparency and accountability while reducing unnecessary burden?
- Does it keep focus on outcomes and results – not process for its own sake?



General Context and Philosophy

Three core values: Enable innovation, Honor institutional mission diversity, and Reduce administrative burden.

Standards are being worded to allow space for institutions to make more internal decisions and, most importantly, to innovate, because the best outcomes often emerge when institutions have the freedom to find their own paths to excellence.

Standards are approached from a more contextual or “storytelling” perspective.



Proposed Changes to Standard (Big Picture)

Understanding that the refining is still underway, and AIM requirements were recently released for public comment:

1. Originally 73 Standards, Now 31
2. Currently 9 Governing Board Standards (Section 4), proposed 2 Governance Standards
3. Principles Review Committee has recommended and the Commission Executive Council has endorsed the use of attestations for a number of standards



Governance Standards (Current)

Board Characteristics

- Legal body with specific authority over the institution
- Fiduciary oversight
- Majority free of contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interest
- Is not controlled by a minority of board members
- Is not presided over by the CEO.





Other Governing Board standards

- ensures the regular review of the institution's mission. **(Mission review)**
- ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the board and the respective responsibilities of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. **(Board/administrative distinction and shared governance)**
- selects and regularly evaluates the institution's chief executive officer. **(CEO evaluation/selection)**



Additional Governing Board standards

- defines and addresses potential conflict of interest for its members. **(Conflict of interest)**
- has appropriate and fair processes for the dismissal of a board member. **(Board dismissal)**
- protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies. **(External influence)**
- defines its responsibilities and regularly evaluates its effectiveness. **(Board self-evaluation)**

Governance Standards (Proposed)

Shared Governance

The institution publishes shared governance policies and procedures that (a) are clearly articulated, effectively communicated, and consistently followed, and (b) ensure a clear and appropriate distinction between the function of the board and the respective responsibilities of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.

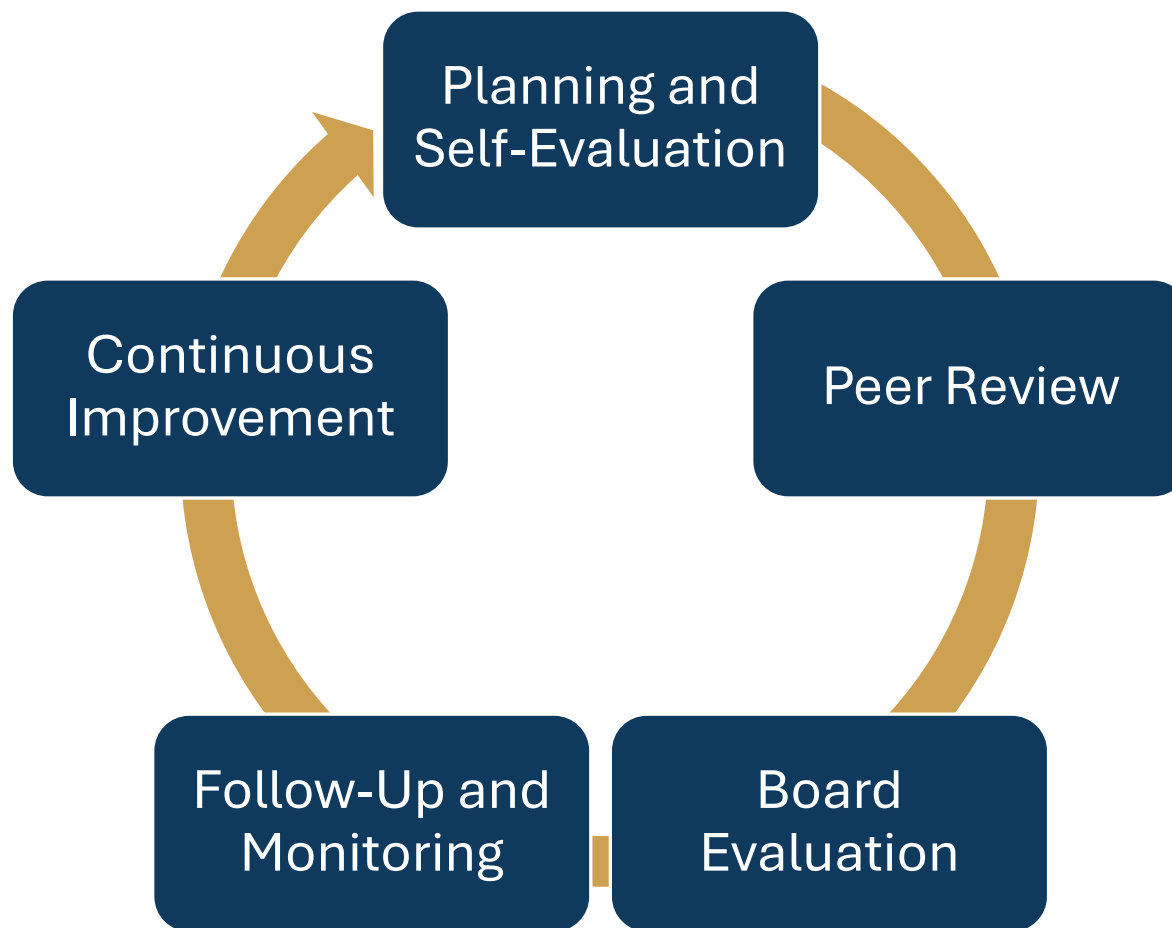
Governing Authority

The institution has a governing authority (for example, a governing board) responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that its mission is accomplished. To that end, the institution demonstrates that the board (a) exercises appropriate oversight, including fiduciary duties, (b) hires and evaluates the institution's CEO, (c) focuses on creating and approving governing policies, (d) protects institutional autonomy from undue influence and (e) adheres to ethical standards.





Process of Accreditation



Institutional Self Evaluation

Deep inquiry into strengths and weaknesses



Develop a case for compliance with standards and requirements



Documents success with respect to student learning and student success



Campus-wide focus on institutional quality





Reaffirmation Process

Institution



Compliance
Certification
Report &
Institutional
Summary Form



Focused Report &
Institutional
Summary Form



Response
Report, if
applicable

Peer Reviewers



Preliminary Report
of the Reaffirmation
Committee



On-Site Review
&
Report of the
Reaffirmation
Committee



**Board of Trustees
Review and Action**



Current Initiatives

Principles Review

The Commission Executive Council has endorsed the following recommendations from the Principles Review Committee:

- Shortening the years between reaffirmation;
- Elimination of the 5th Year review; and
- The return of non-binding On-Site committee suggestions, as well as recommendations related to compliance.
- Implementation Schedule of new Principles:
 - Class of 2027 – Current Principles
 - Class of 2028 – Choice
 - Class of 2029 – New Standards



SELECT INSTITUTION:

Our Snapshot data gives you insights into what we highlight, and we are improving.

Select Topic: Profile Context **SNAPSHOT** Enrollment Opportunity Affordability Support Mobility Completion Post-College Impact Research



7,239

Enrollment Total



84.0%

Graduation Rate



\$77,800

Graduates' Median Earnings



\$779,464,620

Graduates' Economic Impact

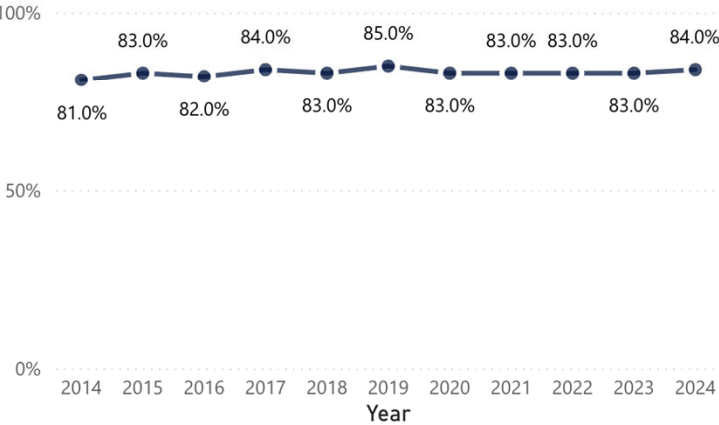
10%

Pell Grant Enrollment

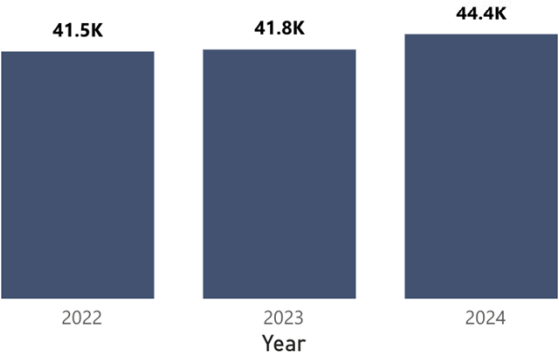
Our Story

The data presented in this dashboard is intended to help tell the story of the institution through clear, objective measures of performance, outcomes, and growth over time. While these figures provide only part of the overall picture, they offer an important foundation for understanding who we are, what we do well, and where we are working to improve.

Graduation Rate Trends



Average Annual Net Price



Torch Awards

Below are the categories in which this institution has been recognized for exceptional performance.

- ★ Economic Value Contribution of Graduates
- ★ Full-Time Students' Retention Rate
- ★ IPEDS Graduation Rate 150% Time
- ★ Median Earnings: 10 Year Post-Entry (in 2020)
- ★ Median Earnings: 10 Year Post-

Regional Workforce Initiative

- Spring 2026: Launched a Regional Workforce Alignment Initiative
 - 148 Institutions and 10 Systems
 - 8 Institutions and the Council of Post Secondary Education
- Four Phase Project: (1) State-by-State Workforce Priority Review, (2) Cross-State Mapping and Institutional Gap Analysis, (3) Workforce Guidance Co-Creation, and (4) Regional Workforce Summit



Credit Transfer Consortium

Voluntary and member-driven

Focus on general education coursework

Faculty-led review and equivalency development

Preserves institutional autonomy



Responsibilities

The Commission

- Convene institutional leaders to develop transfer framework
- Convene Commission Fellows each summer
- Maintain “transfer compendium”
- Develop technology portal for institutional access
- Develop Recognition

Institutional Responsibility

- Agree to transfer framework and accept all general education credits on the SACSCOC compendium
- Provide content experts for the Commission Fellows program
- Non-member institutions – Membership fee for participation





Thank You and Questions!