

GUIDE TO EVALUATING INSTITUTIONS

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

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Introduction

This *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* is designed to be used by institutions preparing their Self Evaluation Report as well as by teams conducting an external evaluation visit. The *Guide* is meant to provoke thoughtful consideration about whether the institution meets the Accreditation Standards at a deeper level than compliance. It is intended to also provide some guidance for a holistic view of an institution and its quality. The *Guide* is predicated on the belief that both institutional members and external evaluators use the Standards to assess the institution, and that they should be using the same tools to conduct that assessment.

This *Guide* begins with "General Information about Accreditation," a description of the purpose and general process of accreditation. Readers should review this section each time they engage in activities associated with an institutional evaluation visit or external evaluation process. It is important to be clear on the things accreditation seeks to accomplish, and the things it does not.

The next section describes "Dialogue," a key component of a quality institution and a necessary attribute for an institution that is focusing primary attention on student learning. The kind of dialogue described will be useful as institutions strive to support and improve student learning, as planning groups are self-reflective and self-evaluative in an effort to improve, and as teams consider the educational quality of colleges.

The "Themes of Accreditation" section describes the six themes of quality that pervade the Accreditation Standards. While the individual Standards are the key benchmarks or criteria an institution must meet, the Standards themselves are interlocking. A careful read of the Standards will reveal several themes that pervade the Standards' definition of a quality institution. This section of the *Guide* has articulated six themes; they can provide a basis for a summative assessment of how well the institution is working as a whole.

The "Characteristics of Evidence" section provides guidance on the nature of good evidence that self evaluation teams and external evaluation teams will use to evaluate an institution. There are several different kinds of evidence required during an accreditation review: evidence of structure, evidence of resources, evidence of process, evidence of student achievement, and evidence of student learning; and each requires careful consideration. Persons evaluating a college will want to be thoughtful about the kinds of evidence they consider, and the degree to which their conclusions are supported by the appropriate evidence.

The major portion of this *Guide* is the "Questions to Use in Institutional Evaluation." Here the reader will find the Accreditation Standards followed by sample questions about their application at an institution. The questions are designed to guide a thoughtful examination of institutional quality. There are many other questions that institutions could develop to stimulate thorough self-reflection. Likewise, there are many other questions evaluation team members can and should ask to determine the degree to which the institution is meeting the Standards and ensuring institutional quality and improvement. The questions should not be used as a substitute for the Standards or as substitutes for thorough introspection and examination. At the end of each Standard, there is a list of potential sources of evidence. This non-exhaustive list is not meant to indicate which documents must be present, but that

these might be sources of the evidence. There may be many other sources that institutions should provide and evaluation teams should consider.

General Information about Accreditation

Accreditation as a system of voluntary, non-governmental self-regulation and peer review is unique to American educational institutions. It is a system by which an institution evaluates itself in accordance with standards of good practice regarding mission, goals and objectives; the appropriateness, sufficiency, and utilization of resources; the usefulness, integrity, and effectiveness of its processes; and the extent to which it is achieving its intended outcomes. It is a process by which accreditors provide students, the public, and each other with assurances of institutional integrity, quality, and effectiveness. Accreditation is intended to encourage institutions to plan for improvement in educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

Each institution affiliated with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accepts the obligation to participate in a cycle of periodic evaluation through institutional self evaluation and external review by teams of peer evaluators. The heart of this obligation is conducting a rigorous self evaluation during which an institution appraises itself against the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies in terms of its stated institutional purposes. The cycle of evaluation requires a comprehensive self evaluation every six years following initial accreditation and an evaluation visit by an external team of peers. The cycle includes a mandatory Midterm Report in the third year as well as any other reports requested by the Commission. All reports beyond the Institutional Self Evaluation Report every six years may be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

Teams conduct an external evaluation review following completion of an institutional self evaluation in order to determine the extent to which an institution meets Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. Team members, selected for their expertise from member institutions, make recommendations to meet Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, make recommendations for improvement to an institution, commend exemplary practices, and provide both the college and the Commission with a report of their findings.

It is the responsibility of the nineteen-member Commission to determine the accredited status of an institution. In determining this status, the Commission uses the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the External Evaluation Report, and the accreditation history of the institution. The Commission decision is communicated to the institution via an action letter and is made public through Commission announcements.

Dialogue

As the Commission was developing the Accreditation Standards, it became evident that if an institution is to ensure that its resources and processes support student learning and its continuous assessment, as well as the pursuit of institutional excellence and improvement, an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue must become central to institutional processes. This dialogue should provide a college community with the means to integrate all of the elements of the Standards, resulting in a comprehensive institutional perspective that verifies integrity and promote quality and improvement. Accordingly, the subtitle of the Introduction to the Accreditation Standards is "Shaping the Dialogue."

A dialogue is a group discussion among colleagues, often facilitated, that is designed to explore complex issues, create greater group intelligence and facilitate group learning. The idea of colleagues is important; dialogue occurs where individuals see themselves as colleagues. In order for the group to engage in dialogue, individuals must suspend their own views to listen fully to one another in order to understand each other's viewpoints. Groups engaged in dialogue develop greater insights, shared meanings and ultimately, collective understanding of complex issues and how best to address them.

Dialogue improves collective thinking. A practice of dialogue can have benefits for the individual as well as the institution. Dialogue can help build self-awareness, improve communication skills, strengthen teams, and stimulate innovation that fosters effective change. Dialogue is a powerful, transformational experience that leads to both personal and collaborative action. Dialogue also allows controversial topics that may have in the past become sources of disagreement and division to be explored in a more useful context that can lead to greater group insight.

The Standards emphasize dialogue as a means for an institution to come to collective understanding of what it means to be learning-focused in the context of a particular institution's history and mission, of what the meaningful student learning outcomes at the program and degree level should be, and how institutional resources and processes might be structured to support the improvement of student learning.

Unlike debate, in which most academicians are trained to score points and persuade, the goal of dialogue is mutual understanding and respect. Dialogue involves active listening, seeking to understand, giving everyone the opportunity to talk, and trying not to interrupt. A conscious commitment to engage in dialogue ensures that a group welcomes a range of viewpoints during its search for effective ways of addressing important issues. Retaining the use of a facilitator can help ensure that the ground rules are maintained and can help clarify themes and ideas.

While dialogue may not lead to resolution of a conflict, it can lead to a change in the way the conflict is pursued. Instead of being destructive and divisive, the pursuit can be constructive and lead to personal and institutional growth. Too often on a college campus, constituent groups avoid certain controversial topics or take a perspective that leaves them in about the same place they started, with little or no additional understanding of the issue. By assisting in the discovery of common ground and by developing increased willingness to work collegially to illuminate and solve problems, dialogue has the potential to improve an

institution's ability to deal with the inevitable disagreements that arise in the life of an institution.

The national accreditation standards' focus on student learning calls for higher education institutions to deal with a very complex issue, improving student learning. It also asks institutions to change and to learn. Dialogue can be a powerful strategy for generating creative discussions, developing collective wisdom, and enabling institutional change.

Themes

Several themes thread throughout the Accreditation Standards. These themes can provide guidance and structure to self-reflective dialogue and evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The themes are listed below.

Institutional Commitments

The Standards ask institutions to make a commitment to providing high quality education congruent with institutional mission. The first expression of this is in Standard I, which calls for an institutional mission statement that reflects the intended student population and the institution's commitment to student learning. Throughout the Standards, the Commission requires that institutions ensure the consistency between mission and institutional goals and plans and ensure that the mission is more than a statement of intention - that it guides institutional action. The Standards also require that an institution commit to supporting student learning as its primary mission.

The references to student learning outcomes throughout the Standards are designed to guide this institutional commitment to student learning. The Standards' requirement that the entire institution participate in reviewing institutional performance and developing plans for improvement of student learning outcomes is intended to help the institution sustain its commitment to student learning. Finally, the requirement that an institution regularly review its mission statement asks that the institution periodically reflect on its mission statement, adapt it as needed, and renew commitment to achieving the mission.

Evaluation, Planning, and Improvement

The Standards require ongoing institutional evaluation and improvement to help serve students better. Evaluation focuses on student achievement, student learning, and the effectiveness of processes, policies, and organization. Improvement is achieved through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation. The planning cycle begins with evaluation of student needs and college programs and services. This evaluation in turn informs college decisions about where it needs to improve, and the college identifies improvement goals campus wide. Resources are distributed in order to implement these goals. When resources are insufficient to support improvement goals, the college adjusts its resource decisions to reflect its priorities or seeks other means of supplying resources to meet its goals. Once improvement plans have been fully implemented, evaluation of how well the goals have been met ensues. Thus, the planning cycle is comprised of evaluation, goal setting, resource distribution, implementation, and reevaluation.

Student Learning Outcomes

The development of Student Learning Outcomes is one of the key themes in the Standards. The Standards require institutions to consciously and robustly demonstrate the effectiveness of efforts to produce and support student learning by developing student learning outcomes at the course, program, certificate, and degree level. This demonstration of effectiveness requires that learning outcomes be measured and assessed to determine how well learning is occurring so that changes to improve learning and teaching can be made. It requires that faculty and others responsible for student progress engage in discussions of ways to deliver instruction to maximize student learning. It requires that those providing student support

services develop student learning outcomes and evaluate the quality of their policies, processes, and procedures for providing students access and movement through the institution. And it requires that student learning outcomes be at the center of the institution's key processes and allocation of resources. Ultimately, this theme requires that an institution engage in self-analysis leading to improvement of all that it does regarding learning and teaching.

Organization

The Standards require colleges to have inclusive, informed and intentional efforts to define student learning, provide programs to support that learning, and to evaluate how well learning is occurring. This requirement means that the institution must have in place the organizational means to identify and make public learning outcomes, to evaluate the effectiveness of programs in producing those outcomes, and to make improvements. The requirement for adequate staff, resources and organizational structure (communication and decision making structures) is not new to regional accreditation standards, but the new expectation is that these be oriented to produce and support student learning. Consequently, they will be evaluated in part by how well they support learning.

Dialogue

The Standards are designed to facilitate college engagement in inclusive, informed, and intentional dialogue about institutional quality and improvement. The dialogue should purposefully guide institutional change. All members of the college community should participate in this reflection and exchange about student achievement, student learning, and the effectiveness of its processes, policies, and organization. For the dialogue to have its intended effect, it should be based on reliable information about the college's programs and services and evidence on how well the institution is meeting student needs. Information should be quantitative and qualitative, responsive to a clear inquiry, meaningfully interpreted, and broadly communicated. The institutional dialogue should result in ongoing self-reflection and conscious improvement.

Institutional Integrity

This theme deals with the institution's demonstrated concern with honesty, truthfulness, and the manner in which it represents itself to all internal and external stakeholders. This theme speaks to the intentions of an institution and how it implements them. It prompts institutional assessment of the integrity of its policies, practices, and procedures and to how it interacts with students, employees, and its community. It asks that the institution concern itself with the clarity, understandability, accessibility, and appropriateness of its publications; that its faculty provide for open inquiry in their classes as well as student grades that reflect an honest appraisal of student performance against faculty standards. It has an expectation of academic honesty on the part of students. It requires that the institution demonstrate regard for issues of equity and diversity. It encourages the institution to review its hiring and employment practices as well as its relationship with the Commission and other external agencies. Finally, it expects that an institution be self-reflective and honest with itself in all its operations.

Evolution of the Standards

In the early 1960s initial accreditation required evidence that basic structures and processes were in place and essential resources were available to operate an institution. For example, the existence of a mission statement, president, governing board, etc., provided evidence of structures; sufficient full-time faculty with appropriate training, sufficient funds, an adequate library, etc., provided evidence of resources sufficient to support college operations. Evidence of processes for supporting academic freedom, curriculum development, governance, decision making was also required.

Beginning in the 1990s, accreditation added a requirement that colleges provide evidence that students had actually moved through college programs and were completing them. This student achievement data provided evidence that students were completing courses, persisting semester to semester, completing degrees and certificates, graduating, transferring, and getting jobs. The standards of this era also specified that institutions provide evidence that program review was being conducted and that plans to improve education were being developed and implemented.

The initial focus on structures, resources, and processes was an approach to quality that was built on what any good organization needed to survive. It was not particularly education-oriented, but it was necessary to support education. The second focus on student success in moving through the institution began to address the results of college efforts concerning student achievement.

The ACCJC Accreditation Standards add another emphasis to accreditation's focus on student success: the focus on what students have learned as a result of attending college - student learning outcomes. This focus requires that the institution provide evidence of a conscious effort to:

- ensure learning is the institution's core activity,
- support and produce student learning,
- assess how well learning is occurring,
- make changes to improve student learning,
- organize its key processes to effectively support student learning,
- allocate its resources to effectively support student learning, and
- improve learning as an important means to institutional improvement.

Today, educational quality is linked with student success, measured both in learning and in achievement, as hallmarks of institutional effectiveness. Institutions should demonstrate and teams should verify that students are learning and achieving.

Characteristics of Evidence

Evidence is information upon which a judgment or conclusion may be based. As such, it is presented in answer to questions that have been deliberately posed because an institution regards them as important. Evidence tells all stakeholders that an institution has investigated its questions and knows something about itself; it knows what it achieves. Evidence can include data, which refers to categories of information that represent qualitative attributes of a variable or a series of variables.

For evidence to be useful, it must have undergone analysis and reflection by the college community. The dialogue required for analysis and reflection is an integral part of the capacity an institution has for using the evidence it has accrued to make improvements.

Good evidence, then, is obviously related to the questions the college has investigated and it can be replicated, making it reliable. Good evidence is representative of what is, not just an isolated case, and it is information upon which an institution can take action to improve. It is, in short, relevant, verifiable, representative, and actionable.

It is important to note that evidence per se does not lead to confirmations of value and quality. Rather, the members of the college community, or of the higher education community, must arrive at the decisions about value and quality through active judgments. The purpose of good evidence is to encourage informed institutional dialogue that engages the college community and leads to improvement of its processes, procedures, policies, and relationships, ultimately with the effect of improving student learning. Good evidence should provide the means for institutions or evaluators to make sound judgments about quality and future direction, and at the same time it will probably stimulate further inquiry about institutional quality.

Institutions report or store good evidence in many formats, and institutions engaged in self evaluation or external evaluation teams may find good evidence in a number of sources, including institutional databases; documents such as faculty handbooks, catalogues, student handbooks, policy statements, program review documents, planning documents, minutes of important meetings, syllabi, course outlines, and institutional fact books; from survey results; from assessments of student work on examinations, class assignments, capstone projects, etc.; from faculty grading rubrics and assessment of student learning outcomes; and from special institutional research reports.

Self evaluation should be only one phase of on-going institutional evaluation. An External Evaluation Team should be able to see how the institution develops and uses evidence of effectiveness as part of its ongoing evaluative processes. Institutions should gather and use both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and often must use indirect as well as direct measures to assess institutional effectiveness. Good evidence used in evaluations has the following characteristics:

- It is intentional, and a dialogue about its meaning and relevance has taken place.
- It is purposeful, designed to answer questions the institution has raised.
- It has been interpreted and reflected upon, not just reviewed in its raw or unanalyzed form.

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- It is integrated and presented in a context with other information about the institution that creates a holistic view of the institution or program.
 - It is cumulative and is corroborated by multiple sources of evidence and/or data.
 - It is coherent and sound enough to provide guidance for improvement.

The institution will provide to the evaluation team members visiting the institution an electronic copy of the Self Evaluation Report and evidence in advance of the visit. During the visit, the team members should also have access to the evidence and data upon which the institutional analysis is based at the time of the institution's submission of the Self Evaluation Report. Institutions have been informed that it is useful for readers when the electronic copy of the report contains hyperlinks to the relevant evidence provided on an electronic memory device. Links to websites or other materials should be tested to ensure they are working.

Evidence on Student Achievement and Student Learning

The evidence the institution presents should be about student achievements (student movement through the institution) and should include data on the following:

- Student preparedness for college, including performance on placement tests and/or placement
- Student training, needs, including local employment training needs, transfer education needs, basic skills needs, etc.
- Course completion data
- Retention of students from term to term
- Student progression to the next course/next level of course
- Student program (major) completion
- Student graduation rates
- Student transfer rates to four-year institutions
- Student job placement rates
- Student scores on licensure exams

The evidence should be disaggregated by age, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, delivery mode, instructional site, cohort group, and other categories as relevant to the institution's service area and mission. (Refer to the Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation, Section 5.4 "Requirements for Evidentiary Information" for a detailed description of evidence.)

The evidence the institution presents should also be about student learning outcomes (mastery of the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and values at the course, program, and degree levels in the context of each college's mission and population) and should include data on the following:

- Development, dissemination, and assessment of student learning outcomes attainment
- Samples of student work/performance (recitals, projects, capstone courses, etc.)

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- Summary of assessment data on student learning outcomes
 - Measurement and analysis of student attainment of student learning outcomes used as part of the institution's self evaluation and planning processes
 - Improvement of the teaching/learning process as a result of the above analysis

Questions to Use in Institutional Evaluation

This *Guide* is designed to provoke thoughtful dialogue and judgment about institutional quality by college communities engaged in self evaluation and by external evaluation teams assigned to affirm the quality of institutions. As either group seeks to evaluate an institution's ability to meet the Accreditation Standards, inquiry – asking questions and seeking answers – is necessary before judgment is made. The following questions are designed to provoke thoughtful reflection about institutional quality and may be asked by either the institution engaged in self-reflection for self evaluation, or by the External Evaluation Team that visits the college. The *Guide* also provides a list of possible sources of evidence that can be used to develop answers to the questions raised through the process of inquiry.

The questions, and lists of possible evidence, are designed to inform discussions of student achievement, such as number of graduates, number of transfer students, retention rates, course completion rates, job placement rates; institutional performance such as the presence and effective use of institutional resources, structures, and policies, to achieve the institutions educational mission; and student learning outcomes such as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that the institution intended students to learn and which are defined by the institution as the intended learning outcomes. There may be many other questions that institutions and team members can and should ask in order to assess institutional quality and effectiveness.

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

- What does the institution's mission statement say about its educational purposes? Are these purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning?
 - Who are the college's intended students? How does the institution determine its intended population? Is the identified population a reasonable match for the institution's location, resources, and role in higher education?
 - What processes does the institution use to foster college wide commitment to student learning? Does the mission statement express this commitment?
1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.
 - Have discussions been held among key constituents regarding the relevance of the mission statement to student learning?
 - What statements about student learning are included in the mission statement? How do these statements make explicit the purposes of the institution?
 - How does the institution know that it is addressing the needs of its student population?
 - What assessments of institutional effectiveness are undertaken?
 2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.
 - When was the current mission statement approved by the board?
 3. Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.
 - How effective is the institution's process for periodic review of the mission statement? Does the process allow for incorporating the interests of the institutions' stakeholders?
 - How does the institution know that the way the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders is effective? What circumstances prompt changes to the statement?

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4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.
 - How effectively does the mission statement prompt planning and decision making? To what extent is the mission statement central to the choices the college makes?

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

1. The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.
 - How has the college structured its dialogue? How well does the college embrace and understand the purpose of the dialogue?
 - When, how, and about what subjects has the college engaged in dialogue? What impact has the dialogue had on student learning?
 - Does the dialogue lead to a collective understanding of the meaning of evidence, data, and research used in evaluation of student learning?
2. The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.
 - What criteria does the college use to determine its priorities (set goals)?
 - Is there broad-based understanding of the goals and the processes to implement them? Is there institutional commitment to achieve identified goals?
 - How well does the college implement its goals?
 - Are goals articulated so that the institution can later determine the degree to which they have been met?
 - To what extent does the college achieve its goals?
 - What evidence is used to demonstrate progress toward achieving college goals?
3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation,

implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

- To what extent does the institution understand and participate in ongoing and integrated planning?
 - Does the college have a planning process in place? Is it cyclical, i.e., does it incorporate systematic evaluation of programs and services, improvement planning, implementation, and re-evaluation? How does college budgeting of resources follow planning? How is planning integrated?
 - To what extent are institutional data and evidence available and used for planning? Are data analyzed and interpreted for easy understanding by the college community?
4. The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.
- What mechanisms exist for participation in college planning?
 - How is broad involvement guaranteed?
 - To what extent does the college allocate resources to fulfill its plans?
 - When resources to fulfill plans are not available, does the college identify and follow strategies to increase its capacity, i.e., seek alternate means for securing resources?
 - What changes have occurred as a result of implemented plans?
5. The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies.
- What assessment data does the college collect?
 - By what means does the college make public its data and analyses internally and externally?
 - How does the college assess whether it is effectively communicating information about institutional quality to the public?
6. The institution assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes by systematically reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, all parts of the cycle, including institutional and other research efforts.
- What processes does the institution use to assess the effectiveness of its cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation implementation, and re-evaluation?
 - How effective is the college planning process for fostering improvement?

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7. The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.
- What mechanisms does the institution use to gather evidence about the effectiveness of programs and services?
 - How effectively do evaluation processes and results contribute to improvement in programs and services?

Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard I

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard I. There may be many other sources that institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

- Evidence that analysis of how the institutional mission and goals are linked to the needs of the student population has taken place
- Evidence of analysis of how the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders
- Evidence of analysis of the process used for the periodic review of the institution's mission; evidence that the process is inclusive
- Evidence that the mission statement provides the preconditions for setting institutional goals
- Evidence of analysis of how the cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation relates to the mission and is used for institutional improvement

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

- Evidence that the institution has developed processes by which continuous dialogue about both student learning and institutional processes can take place
- Evidence of broad-based participation in the dialogue
- Evidence that clearly stated, measurable goals and objectives guide the college community in making decisions regarding planning and allocation of resources as well as curriculum and program development
- Written, current institutional plans that describe how the institution will achieve its goals
- Evidence that the processes used in planning and institutional improvement are communicated and they provide the means by which the college community can participate in decision-making
- Evidence that goals are developed with the knowledge and understanding of the college community
- Evidence there exists a current cycle in which evaluation results are utilized in integrating planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation

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- Evidence that data is both quantitative and qualitative
 - Evidence that well-defined, decision-making processes and authority facilitate planning and institutional effectiveness
 - Evidence of regular and systematic assessment of the effectiveness of all institutional services and processes
 - Evidence that the results of evaluations are disseminated to and understood by the college community
 - Evidence that results of regular and systematic assessments are used for institutional improvement
 - Evidence of current, systematic program reviews and use of results
 - Evidence that program review processes are systematically evaluated

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

A. Instructional Programs

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.¹
 - How does the institution ensure that all institutional offerings align with the stated mission of the institution?
 - How does the institution ensure that its programs and services are high quality and appropriate to an institution of higher education?
 - How does the institution choose the fields of study in which it offers programs? What are the student achievement outcomes of the institution's programs, i.e., to what extent do students progress through and complete degrees and certificates, gain employment, or transfer to four-year institutions? By what means are programs assessed for currency, teaching and learning strategies, and student learning outcomes?
 - How does the institution ensure that its programs and curricula are current?
 - a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.
 - What research is conducted to inform the college of student learning needs? What means does the institution use to assess students' educational preparedness?
 - How is this information incorporated into program planning?
 - What kind of research is being conducted to determine if students are achieving stated learning outcomes?

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- b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.¹
- How does the institution determine that delivery of instruction supports the objectives and content of its courses?
 - How are delivery methods evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting student needs?
 - What dialogue is taking place about delivery systems and modes of instruction?
 - How effectively are delivery systems and modes of instruction facilitating student learning?
- c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.
- What student learning outcomes has the institution identified for its courses, programs, certificates, and degrees?
 - How and by whom are student learning outcomes and strategies for attaining them created? How and by whom are student learning outcomes and program outcomes assessed? How are the results used for improvement?
 - Are student learning outcomes verifiably at the collegiate level? What assessments are in place for measuring these outcomes? How effectively are the assessments working?
 - What dialogue has occurred about using assessment results to guide improvements to courses, programs, etc.? What improvements have resulted?
2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.^{1,2}
- By what criteria and processes does the institution decide to offer developmental, pre-collegiate, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training, international student, or contract education programs?
 - Which of these (or other) categories of courses and programs does the institution offer?
 - By what means does the institution ensure that all of its instructional courses and programs are of high quality? Are they all of high quality?

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- What is the process for establishing and evaluating each type of course and program? How does the college determine the appropriate credit type, delivery mode, and location of its courses and programs?
 - How does the institution ensure the quality of all instructional courses and programs offered in its name? Does the institution use evaluation of courses and programs effectively for improvement?
- a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.
- What established policies and institutional processes guide the development and evaluation of courses, programs, certificates, and degrees? What is the role of faculty?
 - Do these procedures lead to assessment of quality and improvement? Who is responsible for identifying appropriate student learning outcome/assessments?
 - Are student learning outcomes and assessments established for each course, program, certificate, and degree?
 - What processes exist to approve and administer courses , programs, certificates, and degrees? Are the processes effective?
 - How are courses, programs, certificates, and degrees evaluated? How often? What are the results of the evaluations?
 - What improvements to courses, programs, certificates, and degrees have occurred as a result of evaluation? How does the institution assure that it relies on faculty discipline expertise for establishing the quality of its courses and programs?
- b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.
- How are competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes determined? What is the role of faculty? What is the role of advisory committees?
 - How has the institution structured the relationship between student learning outcomes, competency levels for degrees, certificates, programs, and courses?
 - Do students have a clear path to achieving the student learning outcomes required of a course, program, certificate and degree? How well does the institution achieve and evaluate the effectiveness of learning at each level?

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- c. High-quality instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning characterize all programs.
- How does the institution demonstrate the quality of its instruction? What evidence exists that all programs are characterized by the variables cited in this standard?
 - What institutional dialogue has occurred to enhance understanding and agreement about the quality and level of its programs?
 - What criteria does the college use to decide the breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning breadth of each program it offers?
 - What role do faculty play in these decisions? How does the college use these qualities (breadth, depth, etc.) to determine that a program is collegiate or pre-collegiate level?
- d. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.¹
- What assessment of student learning styles has the college performed?
 - How does the institution demonstrate it is meeting the needs and learning styles of its students? What do faculty and staff know about learning needs and pedagogical approaches?
 - Do courses include multiple ways of assessing student learning? How does the college determine what delivery modes are appropriate for its students?
 - What teaching methodologies are commonly used? How are methodologies selected? Have faculty discussed the relationship between teaching methodologies and student performance? What efforts has the college made to match methodologies with particular needs of students' learning styles?
 - Has the college investigated the effectiveness of its delivery modes? How effective are delivery modes and instructional methodologies that the college uses in producing learning?
- e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an ongoing systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.
- How does the college evaluate the effectiveness of its courses and programs?
 - Do criteria used in program review include relevancy, appropriateness, achievement of student learning outcomes, currency, planning for the future? Is this process consistently followed for all college programs, regardless of the type of program (collegiate, developmental, etc.)?

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- What types of data are available for program evaluation? Does the evaluation include a curricular review? Does the evaluation include a comprehensive review of the program role in the overall college curriculum?
 - How is the relevancy of a program determined? Have student learning outcomes for the program been identified and assessed? How well are student achieving these outcomes?
 - How are results of program evaluation used in institutional planning? What changes/improvements in programs have occurred as a result of the consideration of program evaluations?
- f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.
- To what extent does the institution understand and participate in ongoing and integrated planning?
 - Does the college have a planning process in place? Is it cyclical, i.e., does it incorporate systematic evaluation of programs and services, improvement planning, implementation, and re-evaluation? How does college budgeting of resources follow planning?
 - To what extent are institutional data and evidence available and used for planning? Are data analyzed and interpreted for easy understanding by the college community?
- g. If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.
- How does the institution ensure the use of unbiased, valid measures of student learning?
- h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.³
- Are student learning outcomes the basis for credit awarded for courses? Are credits awarded consistent with accepted norms in higher education?

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- i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.
 - By what means does the institution ensure that achievement of stated programmatic learning outcomes are the basis for awarding degrees and certificates?
 - What institutional dialogue has occurred about the learning expected of students to earn a degree or certificate?
 - How has the college identified student learning outcomes for its degrees and certificates?

 3. The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalogue. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course.
 - What evidence is found in the catalogue of a faculty developed rationale for general education that serves as the basis for inclusion of courses in general education?
 - How are student learning outcomes used to analyze courses for inclusion as general education?
 - How is the rationale for general education communicated to all stakeholders?
 - How is the general education philosophy reflected in the degree requirements?

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:

- a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.
 - How are the basic content and methodology of traditional areas of knowledge in general education determined?
 - What process is used to ensure that general education courses include this content and methodology?
 - Do general education courses demonstrate student achievement of comprehensive student learning outcomes?
 - Do student learning outcomes for general education courses require students to understand the basic content and methodology in the major areas of knowledge? Is there a consistent process for assuring that the content and methodology are included in course outlines?
 - How well are students able to apply their understanding to subsequent coursework, employment, or other endeavors?

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- b. A capability to be a productive individual and lifelong learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.
- What criteria have been developed to determine if general education students have attained these capabilities or skills?
 - What criteria does the college use to assure that the required skill level meets collegiate standards? Is there a consistent process for assuring that expected skill levels are included in course outlines? What measures of student skills are employed? Is the college satisfied that these measures are effective?
 - How well are students achieving these outcomes? How well are students able to apply these skills to subsequent coursework, employment, or other endeavors?
- c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.
- How are student learning outcomes developed to address concerns about ethics and effective citizenship? How is it determined where to include student learning leading to development of these qualities?
4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.
- Do degree programs include at least one area of focused study or interdisciplinary core?
5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.
- What evidence exists that students who complete vocational and occupational degrees and certificates meet employment competencies; are prepared for licensure; are prepared for certification by external agencies?
 - How does the college acquire reliable information about its students' ability to meet these requirements?
6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies.³ The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning outcomes consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.
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- How does the institution assure that information about its programs is clear and accurate? Are degrees and certificates clearly described? Are student learning outcomes included in descriptions of courses and programs?
 - How does the institution verify that students receive a course syllabus that includes student learning outcomes?
 - How does the college verify that individual sections of courses adhere to the course objectives/learning outcomes?
- a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.⁴
- What policies does the institution have to address transfer of coursework internally and externally and how are they communicated to students? Are these policies regularly reviewed?
 - How does the institution develop, implement, and evaluate articulation agreements?
- b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.³
- What policy does the institution have to address elimination of, or major changes in, programs?
 - How are students advised to complete educational requirements when programs are eliminated or modified?
- c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public and its personnel, through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.⁵
- How does the institution conduct regular reviews of its policies and practices regarding publications to ensure their integrity? Are electronic representations of the institution regularly reviewed?
 - Does the institution provide information on student achievement to the public? Is that information accurate and current?

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7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or world views. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.
- Do board-approved policies on academic freedom exist and are they made public? Do board-approved policies on student academic honesty exist and are they made public?
 - a. Faculty distinguishes between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.
 - What policies demonstrate institutional commitment to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge?
 - How does the college communicate its expectation that faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline? In what discussions have faculty engaged to deepen understanding of this expectation? How successfully does the faculty make this distinction in the classroom? What mechanisms does the college have for determining how effectively it is meeting this expectation?
 - b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and consequences for dishonesty.
 - What mechanism does the institution have for informing and enforcing its policies on academic honesty for students and faculty?
 - c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.
 - How are requirements of conformity to codes of conduct communicated?
 - If a college seeks to instill specific beliefs or world views, what policies does it have in place to detail these goals? How are the policies communicated to appropriate constituencies?
8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with standards and applicable Commission policies.²
- How well do curricula offered in foreign locations to non-U.S. students conform to the specifications of Commission policy Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals?

B. Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

- How does the institution determine that admitted students are able to benefit from its programs? How is this information applied to admissions policies and procedures?
 - What college wide discussions have occurred about how student access, progress, learning, and success are consistently supported?
1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.^{1,2}
 - By what means does the institution assure the quality of its student support services? How does the institution demonstrate that these services support student learning?
 - How are distance education and correspondence education (DE/CE) student support services evaluated for comparability to face-to-face course/program student support services?
 2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:
 - a. General Information
 - Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website
 - Address of the Institution
 - Educational Mission
 - Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
 - Academic Calendar and Program Length
 - Academic Freedom Statement
 - Available Student Financial Aid
 - Available Learning Resources
 - Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
 - Names of Governing Board Members
 - b. Requirements
 - Admissions

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- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
 - Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer
- c. Major Policies Affecting Students
- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
 - Nondiscrimination
 - Acceptance of Transfer Credits
 - Grievance and Complaint Procedures
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Refund of Fees
- d. Locations or Publications Where Other Policies May Be Found
- Is the catalog current, complete, clear, easy to understand, easy to use, well-structured?
 - How is the catalog reviewed for accuracy and currency? What process does the college use to ensure that the information in its publications is easily accessible to students, prospective students, and the public?
 - Is the catalog information on the college website identical to the printed version?
 - When policies are not included in the catalog, are the publications in which they are found easily accessible?
 - Does the institution maintain records of student complaints/grievances and make them available to the team?
3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.
- By what means does the institution determine the support needs of its students? How well does it address these needs?
 - If courses, programs, certificates or degrees are offered via DE or CE, how does the institution determine and monitor learning support needs?
- a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.¹
- What evidence is provided that the institution assesses student needs for services regardless of location or mode of delivery, and provides for them?
 - How are online and off-site location services evaluated? How well are services meeting the needs of students?

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- b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.
- What is the institution doing to provide a learning environment that promotes these personal attributes? What dialogue has the institution about what constitutes a good learning environment?
 - What programs or services has the institution determined contribute to this environment? What areas have been identified for improvement? How does the college evaluate its efforts in this area? How are the results of the evaluations used to improve the environment?
- c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.
- Does the institution develop, implement, and evaluate counseling and/or academic advising?
 - Does the evaluation of counseling and/or academic advising include how it enhances student development and success?
 - Are those responsible for counseling/advising trained?
 - Are these or comparable services available to online students?
- d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.
- What does the institution do to promote student understanding and appreciation of diversity? What measures does the institution use to determine the effectiveness of services?
 - Are these or comparable services available to online students?
- e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.
- What processes are used to evaluate the effectiveness of practices and tools of admissions? What evaluations of placement processes are used to ensure their consistency and effectiveness? How are cultural and linguistic bias in the instruments and processes minimized?
- f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.

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- What institutional policies govern the maintenance of student records? Are records secure? Does the institution have a policy for release of student records?
4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
- How does the institution provide for systematic and regular review of its student support services? How are the results used?
 - Does the evaluation assess how student support services contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes? How are evaluation results used to improve services?

C. Library and Learning Support Services

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.¹
 - a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.
 - What information about student learning needs is provided by other instructional faculty and staff to inform selection of library resources?
 - How does the institution assess the effectiveness of its own library collection in terms of quantity, quality, depth and variety?
 - What level of quality is determined by the institution?
 - How does the institution know it has sufficient depth and variety of materials to meet the learning needs of its students?
 - What information does the library use to determine whether it is enhancing student achievement of identified learning outcomes?
 - How are comparable services provided to DE/CE students and students at off-site locations?
 - b. The institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency.
 - What are the information competencies that the institution purports to teach all students? What is the evidence that the institution acts purposefully to teach these competencies?
 - How does the institution assess the competencies in information retrieval/ use that it teaches students? How does the institution evaluate its teaching effectiveness and set goals for improvement?
 - How are comparable information competency skills developed for DE/CE students and students at off-site locations?

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- c. The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.¹
- What are the hours of operation of the library?
 - What is the availability of electronic access to library materials?
 - Are all campus locations/all types of students/all college instructional programs equally supported by library services and accessibility?
- d. The institution provides effective maintenance and security for its library and other learning support services.
- e. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible, and utilized. The performance of these services is evaluated on a regular basis. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the reliability of all services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement.
- What contracts, if any, exist for the provision of library and learning support services (LSS)? What processes does the institution have for evaluating and ensuring the quality of those contracted services? How does the institution gather information to assess whether the services are being used?
2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
- What methods does the institution use to evaluate its library and other LSS? Does the evaluation assess use, access, and relationship of the services to intended student learning? Does the evaluation include input by faculty, staff and students?

Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard II

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard II. There may be many other sources that institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

A. Instructional Programs

- Evidence that all instructional offerings align with the institution's mission regardless of where and how they are taught
- Evidence that the quality of all programs is consistently determined to meet a high standard and rigor appropriate for higher education
- Evidence of analytical reviews demonstrating that instructional programs are relevant to the interests, needs and educational goals of the students served by the institution
- Evidence students are achieving stated learning outcomes
- Evidence the institution considers how instruction is delivered and how it assesses that delivery is both appropriate and current
- Evidence of the development of student learning outcomes and strategies for attaining those outcomes at the course, program, certificate and degree level
- Evidence of assessment of student learning and program outcomes
- Evidence of assessment of student achievement data
- Evidence of analysis of assessment results and use for improvement of student learning
- Evidence that an institutional process exists for determining the quality of all courses and programs
- Evidence that established procedures are used to develop courses and programs and that faculty play a major role in this endeavor
- Evidence of a faculty-driven assessment plan that includes systematic evaluation and integrated planning of student learning outcomes for all courses, programs certificates, programs, and degrees
- Evidence that systematic evaluation and review of student progress toward achieving learning outcomes take place
- Evidence of the role played by advisory committees

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- Evidence instructional offerings are in appropriate areas of academic study given the institution's mission
 - Evidence programs are appropriately sequenced to provide the bases for success in subsequent courses
 - Evidence courses are of sufficient content, breadth, and length to permit the student to learn and practice expected knowledge, skills, and abilities
 - Evidence the institution concerns itself with pedagogy that addresses student needs and learning styles
 - Evidence that diverse methods of instruction are used and that students are exposed to a variety of points of view
 - Evidence of regular, systematic evaluation and review of instructional courses and programs, using consistent and valid research strategies
 - Evidence evaluation results are used for improvement
 - Evidence that elements assessed include measures of student learning
 - Evidence for an assessment plan that includes systematic evaluation and integrated planning of student learning outcomes for all courses, programs, certificates and degrees
 - Evidence that results of evaluation are communicated and disseminated
 - Evidence that results of evaluation are used for improvement
 - Evidence of a process for validating the effectiveness of examinations that assess student learning
 - Evidence that placement tests are examined for biases
 - Evidence the institution has developed a means for awarding credit based on student learning outcomes
 - Evidence that credits awarded are consistent with accepted higher education practices
 - Evidence the college uses student achievement of stated learning outcomes in awarding credit for degrees and certificates
 - Evidence that a consistent process for examining student learning outcomes is used to analyze courses for inclusion as general education
 - Evidence that the rationale for general education is communicated to students, employers, and other constituencies

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- Evidence that content and methodology is determined by appropriate discipline faculty
 - Evidence the institution has determined standards for the skills in general education
 - Evidence students who complete general education programs are proficient in general education skills
 - Evidence the program of general education includes student learning outcomes concerning values, ethics, civic responsibility, and diverse perspectives
 - Evidence that students who complete vocational and occupational degrees and certificates meet employment competencies, are prepared for certification by external agencies, are prepared for licensure
 - Evidence that clear and complete information about degrees and certificates is made available to students in publications and course syllabi
 - Evidence that transfer policies are made available to students
 - Evidence that transferred courses accepted are comparable to the college's student learning outcomes for courses
 - Evidence that articulation agreements exist and are regularly evaluated
 - Evidence students are able to complete programs that substantially change or are eliminated
 - Evidence students are advised on what they must do to complete the programs above
 - Evidence that publications and other representations of the college are regularly reviewed for clarity and accuracy
 - Evidence that institutional policies are regularly reviewed to ensure integrity
 - Evidence the institution provides the public with information about student achievement
 - Evidence of board-approved and distributed policies on academic freedom and student academic honesty
 - Evidence that the policies above are followed
 - Evidence of faculty awareness and commitment to fair and objective presentation of knowledge
 - Evidence that a college's declaration of specific world views or codes of conduct policies are clear in publications provided in advance of enrollment or employment

B. Student Support Services

- Evidence the institution systematically evaluates its student support services in light of its stated mission
- Evidence student support services support learning
- Evidence that the catalog contains items specified in Standards II.B.2.a-d
- Evidence the institution assesses student needs for services and provides for them
- Evidence the institution assesses student needs for services regardless of location or mode of instructional delivery and provides them
- Evidence activities encouraging personal development are made available to students
- Evidence the institution develops, implements, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising
- Evidence that evaluation of counseling and/or academic advising includes how it enhances student development and success, including online students and students at off-campus locations
- Evidence that those responsible for counseling/advising are appropriately trained
- Evidence the institution develops, implements, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity
- Evidence admissions practices and placement instruments are regularly evaluated
- Evidence placement instruments are valid and minimize bias
- Evidence that student records are kept confidential and secure
- Evidence for how student records are released
- Evidence that review of student service programs is regularly conducted and results are used for improvement
- Evidence that analysis of review of student service programs includes verification that services contribute to student learning outcomes
- Evidence the institution maintains a file of student complaints/grievances
- Evidence of a student authentication process to ensure the student enrolled in an online course is the same student that participates, completes the course, and receives the credit.

C. Library and Learning Support Services

- Evidence that includes the evaluation instruments, their analysis, conclusions and plans for improvement of the library and learning support services (LSS), evidence that improvements are planned and implemented
- Evidence that demonstrates quantity, quality, depth and variety:
 - **Description of quantity:** Number of volumes, number of periodicals, description of number and kinds of technological resources or equipment, including computers, microfiche machines, video equipment, audio tapes, CD ROM's and other data source, number of student stations available in library and learning resource center (LRC)
- Evidence that demonstrates ongoing instruction:
 - List of courses, workshops and other training held each academic year and the attendance
 - Course or workshop outlines, materials used in training, including identified learning outcomes
- Evidence the library evaluates the effectiveness of student learning during courses, workshops on information competency and use of the library and LSS
- Evidence that data links purchases to educational programs and SLOs defined by educational programs and by assessments of student learning
- A description of library acquisition plans related to educational plans
 - Data and analyses of the institutional evaluations of library holdings by faculty (or disciplines or programs), students, and any external reviewers
 - Other analyses showing relationship between library use and student learning
- Evidence that includes a description of hours of operation or access, description of remote access to library and LRC holdings, capacity of the remote means of delivery, any contingencies on turnaround time, limits to access relative to on campus students
- Evidence that holdings are related to educational programs and that all educational program needs have adequate materials in the library
- Evidence there is access to library and LSS for remote students/staff and institutional policies on remote access, including personnel policies that describe access provided to educational staff
 - Description of remote access practice that is computer based, circulation of volumes, etc., for each remote site or population
 - Description of use of library and LSS by remote users - students, faculty

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- Evidence that includes institutional maintenance schedules, capital improvement plans, a description of security provisions for library holdings, and any institutional self-assessments of adequacy
 - Institutional plans for improvement of library and LSS
 - Evidence that includes the formal agreements or contracts themselves, and evidence therein of the accredited institution's expectations for services
 - Description of the contracted/collaborated services quantity, quality, depth and currency, as in a, b, c and d, above
 - Results of evaluation of the contracted/collaborated library and LSS
 - Provisions of the contract that provide for accredited institution's control of quality or ability to influence quality of contracted/collaborated service
 - Evidence the institution complies with the Commission's "Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations."

Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Accredited colleges in multi-college systems may be organized such that responsibility for resources, allocation of resources and planning rests with the system. In such cases, the system is responsible for meeting standards on behalf of the accredited colleges.

A. Human Resources

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services.
 - What methods does the institution use to assure that qualifications for each position are closely matched to specific programmatic needs? What analyses and discussions have led the institution to agree on those needs?
 - Are the institution's personnel sufficiently qualified to guarantee the integrity of programs and services?
- a. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.³
 - How does the institution decide hiring criteria?
 - How are faculty involved in the selection of new faculty?
 - How does the college decide an applicant is well-qualified?
 - How does the college know that the faculty selected have knowledge of their subject matter?
 - By what methods does the college define and evaluate "effective teaching" in its hiring processes? How is that effectiveness judged?

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- How does the college define and judge scholarship in a candidate, and by what means does it judge a candidate's potential to contribute to a college mission?
 - How are jobs advertised?
 - By what means does the institution verify the qualifications of applicants and newly hired personnel?
 - How does the college identify faculty expertise in DE/CE instruction?
 - How does the college check the equivalency of degrees from non-U.S. institutions?
 - What evidence is there that hiring processes yield highly qualified employees?
 - What safeguards are in place to assure that hiring procedures are constantly applied?
- b. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.
- How does the college decide on appropriate institutional responsibilities for personnel participation? How is participation judged?
 - What process is in place to assure that evaluations lead to improvement of job performance?
 - What is the connection between personnel evaluations and institutional effectiveness and improvement?
 - Do evaluation criteria measure the effectiveness of personnel in performing their duties?
- c. Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.
- What are the roles of faculty, tutors, and others in producing student learning outcomes?
 - What in-depth thinking have faculty, as individuals and collectively, engaged in about how well students are learning in their courses and programs? What measures have they, again as individuals and collectively, created or selected to measure that learning? Are these measures different for DE/CE students?
 - What discussions have faculty had about how to improve learning? What plans have been made?

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- What changes have faculty made in teaching methodologies to improve learning?
 - What changes in course content or sequencing have resulted from analyses of how well students are mastering course content in both DE/CE and face-to-face instructional formats??
 - What methods has the institution developed to evaluate effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes? Are these methods yielding meaningful and useful results?
 - How does the institution use analysis of the results of assessment to improve student learning outcomes?
 - How has professional development supported faculty performance in satisfactory development and assessment of student learning outcomes?
 - Is there professional development for faculty using DE/CE modes of instruction?
- d. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all its personnel
- How does the institution foster ethical behavior in its employees?
 - Does the institution have a written code of professional ethics for all its personnel?
2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.
- By what means does the institution determine appropriate staffing levels for each program and service?
 - How does the institution decide on the organization of administrative and support staffing?
 - How effectively does the number and organization of the institution's personnel work to support its programs and services? How does the institution evaluate this effectiveness?
3. The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.
- What processes does the institution use to develop and publicize its personnel policies?
 - How does the institution ensure that it administers its personnel policies and procedures consistently and equitably? Do these policies and processes result in fair treatment of personnel?

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- a. The institution establishes and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.
 - b. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.
 - What are the institution's provisions for keeping personnel records secure and confidential?
 - How does the institution provide employees access to their records?
4. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.
- In what ways does the institution foster an appreciation for diversity?
 - How effective are the institution's policies and practices in promoting understanding of equity and diversity issues? How does the institution know these policies and practices are effective?
- a. The institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel.
 - How does the institution determine what kinds of support its personnel need?
 - How does the institution design programs and services that provide for the range of diverse personnel at the institution?
 - What programs and services does the institution have to support its personnel? How effective are these programs?
 - Are the programs, practices and services evaluated on a regular basis?
 - b. The institution regularly assesses that its record in employment equity and diversity is consistent with its mission.
 - What is the institution's record on employment equity and diversity?
 - How does the institution track and analyze its employment equity record? How does it use this information?
 - c. The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, staff and students.
 - What policies and procedures about the treatment of personnel does the institution have in place?
 - How does the institution ensure that its personnel and students are treated fairly?
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5. The institution provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on identified teaching and learning needs.
 - a. The institution plans professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel.
 - b. With the assistance of the participants, the institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
 - What professional development programs does the institution offer and/or support?
 - How does the institution identify teaching and learning needs of its faculty and other personnel?
 - What processes ensure that professional development opportunities address those needs?
 - How does the college ensure meaningful evaluation of professional development activities?
 - What impact do professional development activities have on the improvement of teaching and learning? How does the institution evaluate that improvement?

 6. Human resources planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.
 - What process does the institution use to assess the effectiveness of human resources in meeting the stated college mission and goals?
 - How does the institution ensure that human resource decisions are developed from program review results, institutional needs, and plans for improvement? What evidence is there that demonstrates the institution bases its human resource decisions on the results of the evaluation of program and service needs?
 - How does the institution determine that human resource needs in program and service areas are met effectively?

B. Physical Resources

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services, regardless of location or means of delivery.
 - Against what criteria and by what processes does the institution evaluate the safety of its facilities?
 - What evidence and/or data does the institution use to determine the sufficiency of its classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, and other facilities? What mechanisms does the college use to evaluate how effectively facilities meet the needs of programs and services?
 - How well does the institution meet its facilities needs? Does the institution use the same criteria and processes for determining safety and sufficiency of facilities at off-campus sites? To what extent are off-campus sites safe and sufficient?
 - How does the college use the results of facilities evaluations to improve them? Does the college use similar processes to assure the safety and sufficiency of its equipment?
 - How does the institution support the equipment needs of the distance delivery modes it offers? Are institutional needs for equipment met?
- a. The institution plans, builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services.
 - How does the institution consider the needs of programs and services when planning its buildings?
 - What processes ensure that program and service needs determine equipment replacement and maintenance?
 - How does the institution evaluate effectiveness of facilities and equipment in meeting the needs of programs and services?
 - How effectively does the institution use its physical resources?
- b. The institution assures that physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.
 - How does the institution assure access to its facilities?
 - How does the institution ensure it maintains sufficient control over off-site facilities to ensure their quality?

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2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.
- What process does the institution use to assess the use of its facilities? How often does the evaluation occur?
 - How does the college use the results of the evaluation to improve facilities or equipment?
- a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.
- What process does the institution follow to develop capital plans? How are long-range capital projects linked to institutional planning?
 - What elements comprise the definition of "total cost of ownership" that the institution uses when making decisions about facilities and equipment?
 - How do planning processes ensure that capital projects support college goals? How effective is long-range capital planning in advancing the college improvement goals?
- b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.
- How does the institution ensure that facilities decisions are developed from program review results, institutional needs, and plans for improvement?
 - What evidence is there that the institution bases its physical resource decisions on the results of evaluation of program and service needs? How does the institution prioritize needs when making decisions about equipment purchases?
 - How does the institution determine that physical resource needs in program and service areas are met effectively? How effectively are those needs met?

C. Technology Resources

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.
 - How does the institution ensure that its various types of technology needs are identified?
 - If the college is not supported by technology, how did the college make that decision?
 - How does the institution evaluate the effectiveness of its technology in meeting its range of needs? How effectively are those needs met?
- a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.
 - How does the institution make decisions about technology services, facilities, hardware, and software?
 - How well does technology accommodate the college's curricular commitments for distance learning programs and courses? Whether technology is provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, are there provisions for reliability, disaster recovery, privacy, and security?
- b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.
 - How does the institution assess the need for information technology training for students and personnel?
 - What technology training does the institution provide to students and personnel? How does the institution ensure that the training and technical support it provides for faculty and staff are appropriate and effective? How effective is the training provided? How is the training evaluated?
- c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.
 - How has the institution provided for the management, maintenance, and operation of its technological infrastructure and equipment?
 - Does the college provide an appropriate system for reliability and emergency backup?

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- d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.
- How does the institution make decisions about use and distribution of its technology resources?
 - What provisions has the institution made to assure a robust and secure technical infrastructure that provides maximum reliability for students and faculty?
 - What policies or procedures does the institution have in place to keep the infrastructure reasonably current and sustainable?
 - Does the institution give sufficient consideration to equipment selected for DE programs? How effectively is technology distributed and used?
2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.
- How does the institution ensure that facilities decisions are developed from program review results, institutional needs, and plans for improvement?
 - What evidence is there that the institution bases its technology decisions on the results of evaluation of program and service needs?
 - How does the institution determine that technology needs in program and service areas are met effectively?
 - How does the institution prioritize needs when making decisions about technology purchases? How effectively are those needs met?

D. Financial Resources

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning at both college and district/system levels in multi-college systems.

- What is the institution's overall budget?
 - Does it have sufficient revenues to support educational improvements?
 - Are the institution's finances managed with integrity in a manner that ensures financial stability?
 - Does the resource allocation process provide a means for setting priorities for funding institutional improvements?
 - Are institutional resources sufficient to ensure financial solvency?
1. The institution's mission and goals are the foundation for financial planning.
 - a. Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.
 - Does institution review its mission and goals as part of the annual fiscal planning process?
 - Does the institution identify goals for achievement in any given budget cycle?
 - Does the institution establish priorities among competing needs so that it can predict future funding? Do institutional plans exist, and are they linked clearly to financial plans, both short-term and long-range?
 - Does the financial planning process rely primarily on institutional plans for content and timelines?
 - Can the institution provide evidence that past fiscal expenditures have supported achievement of institutional plans?
 - Does the governing board and other institutional leadership receive information about fiscal planning that demonstrates its links to institutional planning?
 - b. Institutional planning reflects realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.
 - Do individuals involved in institutional planning receive accurate information about available funds, including the annual budget showing ongoing and anticipated fiscal commitments?

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- Does the institution establish funding priorities in a manner that helps the institution achieve its mission and goals? Are items focused on student learning given appropriate priority? What other documents are used in institutional planning?
- c. When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies, plans, and allocates resources for payment of liabilities and future obligations.
- What evidence of long-term fiscal planning and priorities exists?
 - Does the institution have plans for payments of long-term liabilities and obligations, including debt, health benefits, insurance costs, building maintenance costs, etc.? Is this information used in short-term or annual budget and other fiscal planning?
 - Does the Institution allocate resources to the payment of its liabilities and funds/reserves to address long-term obligations? Are resources directed to actuarially developed plans for Other Post-Employment Retirement Benefit (OPEB) obligations?
- d. The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.
- Where or how are the processes for financial planning and budget recorded and made known to college constituents?
 - What mechanisms or processes are used to ensure constituent participation in financial planning and budget development?
2. To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of financial resources, the internal control structure has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making.
- a. Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, have a high degree of credibility and accuracy, and reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services.
- Are funds allocated, as shown in the budget, in a manner that will realistically achieve the institution's stated goals for student learning?
 - What do the audit statements say about financial management?
 - Does the institution provide timely corrections to audit exceptions and management advice?
 - Is the institutional budget an accurate reflection of institutional spending and does it have credibility with constituents?

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- Are audit findings communicated to appropriate institutional leadership and constituents?
- b. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.
- What information about budget, fiscal conditions, financial planning, and audit results is provided throughout the college? Is this information sufficient in content and timing to support institutional and financial planning and financial management?
- c. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution, in a timely manner.
- What is the ending balance of unrestricted funds for the institution's immediate past three years? Is this amount sufficient to maintain a reserve needed for emergencies?
 - Does the institution have any other access to cash should the need arise?
 - How does the institution receive its revenues? Does this receipt pose cash-flow difficulties for the college? If so, how does the college address cash-flow difficulties? (e.g., Certificates of Participation (COPS), loans)?
 - Has the institution sufficient insurance to cover its needs? Is the institution self-funded in any insurance categories? If so, does it have sufficient reserves to handle financial emergencies?
- d. All financial resources, including short- and long-term debt instruments (such as bonds and Certificates of Participation), auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants, are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source.
- What are the institution's procedures for reviewing fiscal management? Are they regularly implemented?
 - What evidence about fiscal management is provided by external audits and financial program reviews?
 - Does the institution review its internal control systems on a regular basis? Does the institution respond to internal control deficiencies identified in the annual audit in a timely manner?
 - Is there an annual assessment of debt repayment obligations, and are resources allocated in a manner that ensures stable finances?
 - Are student loan default rates, revenues, and related matters monitored and assessed to ensure compliance with federal regulations?
 - Has the institution received any audit findings or negative reviews during the last six years? Have these been addressed in a timely manner?

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- e. The institution's internal control systems are evaluated and assessed for validity and effectiveness and the results of this assessment are used for improvement.
 - Are the institution's special funds audited or reviewed by funding agencies regularly?
 - Do the audits demonstrate the integrity of financial management practices?
 - Are expenditures from special funds made in a manner consistent with the intent and requirements of the funding source? Are bond expenditures consistent with regulatory and legal restrictions?
 3. The institution has policies and procedures to ensure sound financial practices and financial stability.
 - a. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and develops contingency plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.
 - What is the level of the institution's fiscal reserve?
 - b. The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.
 - What processes does the institution use to assess its use of financial resources?
 - How does the institution ensure that it assesses its use of financial resources systematically and effectively?
 - How does the institution use results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement?
 - c. The institution plans for and allocates appropriate resources for the payment of liabilities and future obligations, including Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), compensated absences, and other employee related obligations.
 - Is the institution fully funding its annual OPEB obligation (Annual required contribution (ARC))? At what level is the contribution being funded?
 - d. The actual plan to determine Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is prepared, as required by appropriate accounting standards.
 - e. On an annual basis, the institution assesses and allocates resources for the repayment of any locally incurred debt instruments that can affect the financial condition of the institution.
 - What is the level of locally incurred debt?
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- What percentage of the budget is used to repay this debt?
 - Does the locally incurred debt repayment schedule have an adverse impact on institutional financial stability?
- f. Institutions monitor and manage student loan default rates, revenue streams, and assets to ensure compliance with federal requirements.
- What is the default rate for the past three years?
 - Is the default rate within federal guidelines?
 - Does the institution have a plan to reduce the default rate if it exceeds federal guidelines?
- g. Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.⁶
- What contractual agreements exist, and are they consistent with institutional mission and goals?
 - Does the institution have appropriate control over these contracts? Can it change or terminate contracts that don't meet its required standards of quality?
 - Are external contracts managed in a manner to ensure that federal guidelines are met?
- h. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management practices and the results of the evaluation are used to improve internal control structures.
- Does the institution have an annual external audit to provide feedback on its processes?
 - Does the institution review the effectiveness of its past fiscal planning as part of planning for current and future fiscal needs?
4. Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement of the institution.
- How does the institution ensure that financial decisions are developed from program review results, institutional needs, and plans for improvement?
 - What evidence is there that the institution bases its financial decisions on the results of evaluation of program and service needs?
 - How does the institution determine that financial needs in program and service areas are met effectively?
 - How does the institution prioritize needs when making financial decisions? How effectively are those needs met?

Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard III

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard III. There may be many other sources which institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard III: Resources

A. Human Resources

- Evidence about how the institution determines human resource needs of programs and services
- Evidence the institution uses analyses in determining hiring priorities
- Evidence, such as planning meeting minutes, that the institution systematically considers and relies on needs of programs and services in determining hiring priorities
- Evidence the institution has a reasonable means for deciding what employee qualifications are needed for each position
- Evidence the institution uses a clear and reasonable process for determining personnel selection criteria
- Evidence that hiring procedures are written and consistently applied
- Evidence the institution verifies employee degrees, experience, and references of newly hired personnel
- Evidence of a systematic process for determining personnel evaluation criteria
- Evidence evaluation criteria are based on job responsibilities
- Evidence evaluation processes are written and followed
- Evidence evaluations are conducted regularly
- Evidence the institution uses the results of personnel evaluations for improvement
- Evidence the institution evaluates the effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes of faculty, tutors, and others involved in the teaching-learning process
- Evidence the institution applies an ethics document or documents for all personnel
- Evidence the institution employs a core of full-time faculty
- Evidence the institution employs qualified administrators and support staff in sufficient numbers
- Evidence the institution administers its personnel policies consistently and fairly

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- Evidence the institution maintains personnel records appropriately
 - Evidence about how the institution provides employees access to their records
 - Evidence the institution has written policies on equity and diversity
 - Evidence the institution is sensitive to issues of equity and diversity
 - Evidence that programs and services are designed to provide for the range of personnel needs at the institution
 - Evidence about how the institution tracks, analyzes, and uses its employment equity record
 - Evidence about how the institution interacts with its personnel and students fairly
 - Evidence about how the institution uses identified teaching and learning needs to determine professional development opportunities, including instruction via a mode of electronic delivery
 - Evidence the institution evaluates professional development needs of its personnel
 - Evidence the institution bases its programs on identified needs
 - Evidence about how participants are involved in the programs' evaluation
 - Evidence the institution assesses the use of its human resources
 - Evidence the institutional plans determine human resource allocation priorities
 - Evidence that human resource decisions are based on the results of program review and the evaluation of program and service needs, and are integrated with institutional planning

B. Physical Resources

- Evidence about how the institution evaluates the safety and sufficiency of its facilities
- Evidence the institution provides adequate facilities for its programs and services
- Evidence that off campus sites are adequate to support courses, programs and services provided at those sites
- Evidence that equipment supports the needs of its programs and services
- Evidence that equipment supports the needs of the distance modes of delivery the college offers
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution plans and maintains its facilities
- Evidence the institution has considered the total cost of ownership when making decisions about facilities and equipment
- Evidence the institution's bases its building plans on the needs of programs and services
- Evidence the institution has replacement and maintenance plans for equipment
- Evidence the institution uses its facilities and equipment effectively
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution constructs and maintains its facilities at all locations
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution evaluates its facilities
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution evaluates the physical resources needs of its programs and services
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution plans its facilities
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution makes decisions about equipment purchases
- Evidence that long range capital projects are based on institutional planning
- Evidence the institution assesses the use of its physical resources
- Evidence that institutional plans determine physical resource priorities
- Evidence that physical resource decisions are based on the results of program review and evaluation of program and service needs and are integrated with institutional planning

C. Technology Resources

- Evidence demonstrating that the institution evaluates how well its technology meets the needs of its programs and services
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution evaluates how well its technology meets the need for college-wide communications, research, and operational systems
- Evidence demonstrating that the institution makes decisions about technology services, facilities, hardware, and software
- Evidence about how the institution evaluates the effectiveness of its technology
- Evidence the institution assesses the need for information technology training for students and personnel
- Evidence that training is designed to meet the needs of students and personnel
- Evidence about how the institution plans and maintains its technology, infrastructure, and equipment
- Evidence the institution bases its technology plans on the needs of programs and services
- Evidence the institution has replacement and maintenance plans for its technology
- Evidence demonstrating how the institution uses and distributes its technology resources
- Evidence the institution assesses the technology needs of its programs and services
- Evidence the institution assesses the use of its technology resources
- Evidence that institutional program reviews and plans determine technology resource priorities
- Evidence that technology resource decisions are based on program review results and evaluation of program and service needs and are integrated with institutional planning

D. Financial Resources

- Evidence that includes copies of the annual budget, audits for past three years, financial plans associated with institutional plans, budget documents prepared for grant and other external funding, data showing financial planning is regularly evaluated and the results of that evaluation, documents showing institutional fiscal commitments for foreseeable future, including contracts for services, employee agreements, loans and other debt
- Other debt evidence includes actuarial plans for the repayment of Other Post Employment Retirement Benefits (OPEB) and funding plans to address the obligation
- Evidence that the mission and goals are used in short and long-range financial planning, such as a list of financial goals, a grid showing financial contributions to meeting goals, or an introductory text to fiscal documents such as annual budgets, long-range capital plans, long-range financial plans, etc., that show the relationship to educational goals as identified through institutional assessment and planning
- Evidence showing that fiscal planning follows institutional planning (in time sequence), and funds are used to achieve institutional plans and goals
- Evidence that fiscal planning is evaluated on the basis of its contribution to achievement of institutional goals, not solely on the basis of accounting principles of good practice. Evidence that the financial plans, including annual budgets, capital plans, and long-term fiscal plans undergo periodic review and evaluation
- Evidence of a fiscal planning process, documents describing the financial planning, and budgeting processes, and minutes or other records showing the institution has followed those processes
- Evidence the institution monitors student financial aid obligations such as student loan default rates and compliance with all federal regulations that impact the institution
- Evidence the institution ensures that financial decisions are developed from program review results, institutional needs, and plans for improvement
- Evidence the institution bases its financial decisions on the results of evaluation of program and service needs
- Evidence the institution determines that financial needs in program and service areas are met effectively
- Evidence the institution prioritizes needs when making financial decisions

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

A. Decision-Making Process

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.
 - What do the statements about institutional mission and goals reveal about the institution's commitment to student success and educational excellence?
 - Are the institution's goals and values clearly articulated and understood by all? Can college staff list what those goals and values are?
 - Can staff describe their roles in assisting the institution to achieve its goals?
 - What information about institutional performance is circulating and available to staff and students? How is the information kept current? Is it easily accessed, is it understandable? Is it regularly used in institutional dialogue and decision-making sessions?
 - Do the institution's processes for institutional evaluation and review, and planning for improvements, provide venues where the evaluations of the institution's performance are made available to all staff?
 - Do institutional planning efforts provide opportunity for appropriate staff participation?
 - How do individuals bring forward ideas for institutional improvement?
 - How does the institution articulate the responsibilities of individuals to develop ideas for improvements in their areas of responsibility?
 - How do individuals and groups at the institution use the governance process to enhance student learning?
2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their

constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

- a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.
 - What do institutional policies and procedures describe as the roles for each group in governance, including planning and budget development?
 - What evidence demonstrates that these policies and procedures are functioning effectively?
 - b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.
 - What documents describe the official responsibilities and authority of the faculty and of academic administrators in curricular and other educational matters?
3. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.
- Do the written policies on governance procedures specify appropriate roles for all staff and students? Do these policies specify the academic roles of faculty in areas of student educational programs and services planning?
 - Are staff and students well informed of their respective roles. Do staff participate as encouraged by these policies? Do the various groups work in collaborative effort on behalf of institutional improvements? Is the result of this effort actual institutional improvement?
 - Is there effective communication at the college - clear, understood, widely available, current communication?
 - Do staff at the college know essential information about institutional efforts to achieve goals and improve learning?
4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self evaluation, and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.

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- What does documentation of the institution's past accreditation history demonstrate about integrity in its relationship with the Commission - has it responded expeditiously and honestly to recommendations, are there citations indicating difficulty, etc.?
 - Are the institution's communications of education quality and institutional effectiveness to the public accurate?
 - What is the institution's evidence of compliance with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regulations?
5. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.
- What process does the institution use to evaluate its governance and decision-making structures? Are the results communicated within the campus community?
 - How does the institution use identified weaknesses to make needed improvements?

B. Board and Administrative Organization

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.⁷

1. The institution has a governing board that is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or the district/system.
- Does the institution have a policy manual or other compilation of policy documents that demonstrate that the governing board's role in establishing a policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or district/system and reviewing it on a regular basis?
 - What statements about quality of programs, integrity of institutional actions, and about effectiveness of student learning programs and services are to be found in the institution's board-established policies, mission statement, vision or philosophy statement, planning documents, or other statements of direction?
 - What is the written policy describing selection and evaluation of the chief administrator? Has the board followed it?
- a. The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a

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- decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.
- Is the governing board appropriately representative of the public interest and lacking conflict of interest? Does the composition of the governing board reflect public interest in the institution?
 - Are less than half of the board members owners of the institution? Are a majority of governing board members non-owners of the institution?
- b. The governing board establishes policies consistent with the mission statement to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services and the resources necessary to support them.
- What policies, institutional goals or other formal statements exist that describe governing board expectations for quality, integrity and improvement of student learning programs and services?
- c. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity.
- Is the governing board independent; are its actions final and not subject to the actions of any other entity?
- d. The institution or the governing board publishes the board bylaws and policies specifying the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures.
- e. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. The board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.
- Do the records of governing board actions (minutes, resolutions) indicate that its actions are consistent with its policies and bylaws?
 - Does the governing board have a system for evaluating and revising its policies on a regular basis? Is this system implemented?
- f. The governing board has a program for board development and new member orientation. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.
- What is the governing board's program for development and orientation?
 - Does the governing board development program address the need to learn about Accreditation Standards and expectations?
 - Does the board have a formal, written method of providing for continuing membership and staggered terms of office?

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- g. The governing board's self evaluation processes for assessing board performance are clearly defined, implemented, and published in its policies or bylaws.
- What is the board self evaluation process as defined in its policies? Does the process as described present as an effective review?
 - Does the governing board policy call for regular self evaluation? Does the institution's board regularly evaluate its own performance?
- h. The governing board has a code of ethics that includes a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code.
- What is the board's stated process for dealing with board behavior that is unethical? Does the governing board implement this process? Is there evidence of results?
- i. The governing board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.
- What training is provided to the board about the accreditation process and Accreditation Standards?
 - How does the board participate appropriately in institutional self-evaluation and planning efforts?
 - How do board actions indicate a commitment to improvements planned as part of institutional self evaluation and accreditation processes?
 - How do board actions reflect the commitment to supporting and improving student learning outcomes as reflected in the Accreditation Standards and expectations for institutional improvement?
 - Is the board informed of institutional reports due to the Commission, and of Commission recommendations to the institution?
 - Is the board knowledgeable about Accreditation Standards, including those that apply to the board?
 - Does the board assess its own performance using Accreditation Standards?
- j. The governing board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/system chief administrator (most often known as the chancellor) in a multi-college district/system or the college chief administrator (most often known as the president) in the case of a single college. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively. In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.
- What is the established board process for conducting search and selection processes for the chief administrator? Are those processes documented?

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- Has the board used these processes in its most recent chief administrator searches?
 - How is the board delegation of administrative authority to the chief administrator defined? (In policy documents? In a contract with the chief administrator?)
 - Is this delegation clear to all parties?
 - How effective is the governing board in focusing at the policy level?
 - What mechanisms does the board use in its evaluation of the chief administrator's performance on implementation of board policies and achievement of institutional goals?
 - How does the board set clear expectations for regular reports on institutional performance from the chief administrator?
 - How does the board set expectations for sufficient information on institutional performance to ensure that it can fulfill its responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity?
2. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.
- a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.
- b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:
1. establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities;
 2. ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions;
 3. ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes; and
 4. establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.
 - What does the president do to communicate institutional values, goals and direction?
 - How familiar is the president with data and analyses of institutional performance?
 - How does the president communicate the importance of a culture of evidence and a focus on student learning?

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- Where does the research office report in the institution; does it have easy access to the president's office?
 - What mechanisms has the president put in place to link institutional research, particularly research on student learning, institutional planning processes, and resource allocation processes?
 - How does the district chief executive officer follow the component parts of this Standard in the role of providing effective district leadership?
- c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.
- d. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.
- e. The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.
3. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system provides primary leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. It establishes clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system and acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board.⁷
- a. The district /system clearly delineates and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice.
- Does the district/system have a written delineation of responsibilities? Are institutional and district/system staff knowledgeable of this delineation?
 - Is the delineation of responsibilities evaluated for effectiveness?
- b. The district/system provides effective services that support the colleges in their missions and functions.
- What feedback mechanisms does the district/system have in place to provide assessment of the effectiveness of district/system services?
 - Is the assessment of district/system services data driven? Does it reflect the needs and priorities of the institutions?
 - Are district/system services regularly evaluated with regard to their support for institutional missions and functions?

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- c. The district/system provides fair distribution of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations of the colleges.
- What is the district/system's method of distributing resources to its institutions? Is the district/system based in a realistic assessment of needs of each institution? Is it a fair process?
 - Is the district/system's resource distribution method data-driven? Does it reflect the needs and priorities of the institutions?
- d. The district/system effectively controls its expenditures.
- What are the institution's financial control mechanisms? Does the institution follow standard good practice in fiscal management?
 - Does the institution consistently end the fiscal year with an positive ending balance?
 - What do the institution's most recent annual independent audit reports and audited financial statements reveal about control of expenditures?
- e. The chancellor gives full responsibility and authority to the presidents of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without his/her interference and holds them accountable for the operation of the colleges.
- f. The district/system acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board. The district/system and the colleges use effective methods of communication, and they exchange information in a timely manner.
- What methods of working jointly do the district/system and institutions use?
 - Do these methods result in clear and timely communications in all directions?
 - Are the institutions well informed about district/system issues, governing board actions and interests that have an impact on operations, educational quality, stability or ability to provide high quality education?
- g. The district/system regularly evaluates district/system role delineation and governance and decision-making structures and processes to assure their integrity and effectiveness in assisting the colleges in meeting educational goals. The district/system widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.
- What are the district/system's methods for evaluating its effectiveness?
 - Does it conduct regular assessments? How does it communicate the results?

Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard IV

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard IV. There may be many other sources which institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

- Evidence that demonstrates board and other governance policies and descriptions of the participation of constituencies in decision-making bodies
- Evidence that includes documents showing the transmission of recommendations from faculty and academic administrators to decision-making bodies, and descriptions of the institution's information and decision-making process
- Evidence that includes copies of governance policies and procedures, the composition of governance bodies, minutes of meetings, and documents showing the roles academic staff play in reviewing and planning student learning programs and services
- Evidence that includes evaluations and analyses the institution conducts of its governing and decision-making processes, and the form of communication of same to the college community
- Evidence that includes the policy manual, institutional statement of mission, vision or philosophy, and institutional planning documents

B. Board and Administrative Organization

- Evidence that includes published statements of institutional goals that reference the governing board's expectations for student learning and quality of education
- Evidence that includes documents describing the authority of the governing board; the absence of any external, higher authority than the board; descriptions of the board appointment and replacement process
- Evidence of the published bylaws
- Evidence of board minutes or a schedule showing board evaluation of policies
- Evidence of the materials from board training workshops
- Evidence of the policy on board membership, appointment and replacement
- Evidence that includes the board's policy and instruments used for self evaluation, analyses and reports on the last few self-evaluations completed
- Evidence of the governing board policy statement of ethics

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- Evidence that includes board minutes, statements to college constituents on the delegation of authority, the board policy manual, any contracts with administrators that specify delegation of authority, board agreements with faculty bodies regarding delegation of authority
 - Evidence that includes budget documents and independent audit reports and audited financial statements showing ending year balances, and audit exceptions (if any)
 - Evidence that includes the results of surveys, other evaluations of the president's activities directed toward the communities served by the institutions
 - Evidence that includes surveys and other evaluative instruments, and the results of evaluation. Evidence that includes descriptions of funding rules or formulas, committee minutes or other documents demonstrating that the system has assessed the needs of each institution
 - Evidence that includes financial policies and manuals, the content of internal audits and reviews, annual independent external audits, fiscal program reviews conducted by other agencies, and the annual budget documents
 - Evidence that includes any formal delineation of responsibilities that might be found in district/college documents, including descriptions of job duties, descriptions contained in employment contracts, and the district mapping provided to the institutions and the Commission
 - Evidence of other documented or recorded communications
 - Evidence that would include institutional analyses of performance, including fact books, reports, website data, portfolios, and publications that describe research on institutional performance
 - Evidence of documented information about institutional planning processes, minutes of meetings, records of participation in institutional evaluation and planning sessions
 - Evidence that includes the district/system's evaluation instruments, the results of the evaluation, and plans for improvement increasing
 - Evidence the multi-college district/system has developed a "functional map" or description of district and college functions that delineates and distinguishes roles and responsibilities clearly

List of Policies Referenced in the Accreditation Standards

1. Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education
2. Policy and Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals
3. Policy on Transfer of Credit; Policy on Award of Credit
4. Policy on Closing an Institution
5. Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status
6. Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations
7. Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems