The Fifth-Year Review Process Demystified

Dr. Crystal Baird
Coordinator of
Commission Support
SACSCOC

Over the next 2 hours, we will…

➢ Review the Fifth Year Interim Review Process

➢ Have a Closer Look at the 14 Standards & How to Avoiding Common Trouble Spots

➢ Discuss Crafting the QEP Impact Report

➢ Q & A

Why a Fifth-Year Interim Review Process?

➢ Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)
  - Reg 602.19(b) Speaks to accrediting agencies monitoring their accredited institutions to ensure ongoing compliance.

  - Reg 602.22(c)(2) Calls for accrediting agencies having an effective mechanism for conducting, at reasonable intervals, visits to additional locations of institutions that operate more than three additional locations.

  - There are variances in review cycles among accrediting bodies.

So how does this process work?

- **NOTIFICATION**: Institutions are notified about eleven months prior to the due date for the report.
- **SUBMISSION:** Fifth-Year Interim Reports are submitted mid-March or mid-September.
- **REVIEW:** Report will be reviewed by the Fifth Year Interim Review Committee, which meets each June and December.
- **RESULTS:** A letter will go out to the reviewed institutions the following month, informing them of the results of the review.
- **FOLLOW UP:**
  - If there are no issues for follow up—the process ends here.
  - If there are issues, an institution would be asked to provide an additional report that will go to Compliance & Reports Committee, addressing the specific areas noted.

Components of the Report

- Part I: Signatures Attesting to Integrity
- Part II: Abbreviated Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews
- Part III: Fifth-Year Compliance Certification
- Part IV: Additional Report *(applicable only to select institutions)*
- Part V: Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan
- An institution may be requested to host a committee charged to review new, but unvisited, off-campus sites initiated since the institution's previous reaffirmation. An institution was notified of this at the time it received its letter from Dr. Wheelan regarding the Fifth-Year Interim Report.

A Closer Look at Part III

- Responding to 14 areas:
  1. CR 2.8 Number of Full-time Faculty
  2. CR 2.10 Student Support Programs
  3. CS 3.2.8 Qualified Administrators and Academic Officers
  4. CS 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness: Educational Programs, to include Student Learning Outcomes
  5. CS 3.4.3 Admissions Policies

6. CS 3.4.11 Qualified Academic Coordinators
7. CS 3.11.3 Physical Facilities
8. FR 4.1 Student Achievement
9. FR 4.2 Program Curriculum
10. FR 4.3 Publication of Policies
11. FR 4.4 Program Length
12. FR 4.5 Student Complaints
13. FR 4.6 Recruitment Materials
14. FR 4.7 Title IV Program Responsibilities and CS 3.10.3 Financial Audits

Snapshot of Areas that the (39) 2015 Track A Institutions Were Cited		
CS 3.3.1.1	28	72%
CR 2.8	19	49%
FR 4.4	16	41%
CS 3.4.11	12	31%
CS 3.10.3/FR 4.7	9	23%
FR 4.5	7	18%
CS 3.2.8	5	13%
FR 4.3	4	10%
FR 4.6	4	10%
CR 2.10	3	8%
FR 4.1	2	5%
FR 4.2	1	3%
CS 3.4.3	0	0%
CS 3.11.3	0	0%
QEP Impact Report	13	33%

*Items shaded in yellow were most cited for the 2013 & 2014 cohorts.

CS 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness: Educational Programs

Cited for 28 of 39 institutions or 72%

➢ Common Issues:
- Lack of defined student learning outcomes and/or methods for assessing the outcomes
- Limited/Immature data
- Non-representative sampling
- Not addressing distance education and off-campus site programs

CS 3.3.1.1 Tips:

- Focus on educational programs and student learning outcomes

- Use mature data
  - If using a new system, use data from the previous system, if necessary and possible, to demonstrate ongoing compliance

- If presenting a sampling, use a representative sampling and include a rationale for what makes the sample reasonable and representative of the programs offered

- Include data on programs offered at off-campus sites and via distance learning - consider comparability

CR 2.8 Number of Full-time Faculty

Cited for 19 of 39 institutions or 49%

- Common Issues:
  - Not providing faculty data disaggregated down to the program or discipline level
  - Not explaining what the data mean or not presenting a case for why the number of faculty is adequate
  - Not addressing faculty loads
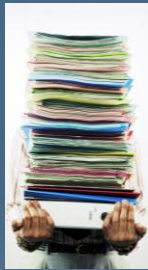
CR 2.8 Tips:

- Disaggregate full-time faculty by program/discipline/mode/location; include information on faculty teaching in all programs, including those teaching via distance education and at off-campus sites.

- Explain why the number is adequate, if indeed it is, or describe the plan for coming into compliance if the number is not adequate.

- Provide information regarding faculty loads and expectations for faculty outside of the classroom like committee work, service, advising, curriculum development, etc.

FR 4.4 Program Length
Cited for 16 of 39 institutions or 41%

➢ Common Issues:
- Not explaining how comparability is assured between traditional and accelerated/compressed programs
- Program length exceeds those allowed by internal or system policy
- Discrepancies exist between the length of program as presented and as described in the catalog

FR 4.4 Tips:

➢ Identify measures of program length for all programs, including those offered at off-campus sites and via distance learning.

➢ Describe why those measures are appropriate, including those for compressed/accelerated programs.

➢ Make sure that program lengths are within the appropriate ranges.

➢ Verify that program length information is published accurately.

CS 3.4.11 Qualified Academic Coordinators
Cited for 12 of 39 institutions or 31%

➢ Common Issues:
- Not providing a rationale for why an individual is qualified to coordinate a program, and oversee the development and review of the curriculum
- Listing a coordinator's degree with no reference to major

CS 3.4.11 Tips

➤ Identify coordinators for all programs, including those offered at off-campus sites and via distance learning.

➤ List coordinator's degree and major.

➤ Make a case for the coordinator's qualifications to oversee the development of the program.

➤ Consider using faculty roster form.

FR 4.7 Title IV Program Responsibilities and CS 3.10.3 Financial Audits

Cited for 9 of 39 institutions or 23%

➤ Common Issues:
- Audit results are not yet available.
- The institution has responded to audit issues with a plan but has not yet received the USDOE letter accepting the plan.

➤ Tips:
- Work with auditors well in advance to ensure that audit is available by report due date.
- Present evidence of financial aid audits as required by *state* regulations, not just federal, in CS 3.10.3.

FR 4.5 Student Complaints

Cited for 7 of 39 institutions or 18%

➤ Common Issues:
- No evidence of implementation provided
- Inappropriate example (e.g., a complaint from a parent)
- Not addressing how a complaint from students enrolled in distance education programs or at off-campus locations is handled

FR 4.5 Tips:

> Provide a copy of student complaint policies.

> Provide real examples (student names redacted) that document and illustrate how complaints are resolved.

> Address how complaints are handled from students enrolled at off-campus sites and via distance education.

CS 3.2.8 Qualified Administrators and Academic Officers

Cited for 5 of 39 institutions or 13%

> Common Issues:
  - Giving a list of names and degrees, or set of vitae with no explanation
  - Not providing an organizational chart to help evaluators understand who oversees what
  - Providing degree level information (MA, PhD) without listing major

CR 3.2.8 Tips:

> Provide an organizational chart.

> Describe the qualifications the administrators and academic officers, building a case for why they are qualified for their respective roles.

> Provide documentation like current vitae.

> Consider using the faculty roster form.

FR 4.3 Publication of Policies
Cited for 4 of 39 institutions or 10%

➢ Common Issue:
- Variations exist between published versions of the grading policies, refund policies and/or academic calendars

➢ Tips:
- Verify that all versions of published academic calendars, grading, and refund policies are current and accurate.

- Address how this information is disseminated to distance education and off-campus site students.

FR 4.6 Recruitment Materials
Cited for 4 of 39 institutions or 10%

➢ Common Issue:
- Recruitment presentations are not addressed

➢ Tip:
- Address how the institution ensures that recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent institutional practices and policies.

CR 2.10 Student Support Programs
Cited for 3 of 39 institutions or 8%

➢ Common Issues:
- The institution's website and/or catalog details numerous services not mentioned in the report.

- Student Support Program descriptions are confusing, jargon-laden, or inadequately explained.

-
- No mention is made of how support is provided to distance education and off-campus site students.

CR 2.10 Tips:

➢ Clearly describe the Student Support Services provided.

➢ Explain how the services meet the needs of your students, including those enrolled in programs offered via distance education and at off-campus sites.

FR 4.1 Student Achievement
Cited for 2 of 39 institutions or 5%

➢ Common Issue:
- Using select program graduation rates alone to evaluate overall student achievement

➢ Tip:
- Include a variety of measures, when possible, including general and program-specific graduation rates, job placement rates, course completion rates, and/or licensure exam pass rates.

FR 4.2 Program Curriculum
Cited for 1 of 39 institutions or 3%

➢ Common Issues:
- Not offering a rationale for the appropriateness of the programs offered
- Not providing supporting documentation
- Not addressing distance education and off-campus sites

➢ Tips:
- Explain how the mission and the curricula are related.
- Document how the curriculum is developed, including distance education and off-campus site programs.

CS 3.4.3 Admissions Policies
Cited for 0 of 39 institutions or 0%

- Common Issue:
  - Information provided in the report does not match that given in the catalog and/or website

- Tips:
  - Provide a clear and consistent narrative regarding admissions policies.

  - Address special admissions policies for specific programs as well as the institutional admissions policy.

CS 3.11.3 Physical Facilities
Cited for 0 of 39 institutions or 0%

- Common Issues:
  - Data presented indicated a lack of adequate physical facilities
  - Not discussing physical facilities for off-campus sites

- Tips:
  - Include supporting documentation such as current Facilities Master Plan, space utilization reports, facilities maintenance schedules.

  - Address facilities at off-campus sites.

QEP Impact Reports
Cited for 13 of 39 institutions or 33%

- Common Issues:
  - Failure to launch due to leadership and/or resource issues
  - Not presenting the goals or outcomes of the project
  - Not describing the implementation of the project, regardless of changes from original plan
  - Not collecting and/or using data to assess the impact on student learning

QEP Impact Report Tips:

➢ Address all of the elements

- The title and a brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan as initially presented

- A succinct list of the initial goals and intended outcomes of the QEP

- A discussion of changes made to the QEP and the reasons for making those changes

- A description of the QEP's direct impact on student learning including the achievement of goals and outcomes, and unanticipated outcomes of the QEP, if any

QEP Impact Report
Use your 10 pages wisely

➢ Reviewers are looking to see that the institution…
- Adequately documented the implementation of the QEP regardless of the changes needed throughout its delivery
- Provided adequate documentation of the assessment of the QEP's impact on student learning
- Demonstrated sustained support for the QEP

Words of Wisdom from Fifth-Year Report Evaluators

➢ Your narrative and evidence for each standard should be as comprehensive as your narrative/ evidence in your Compliance Certification Report.

➢ Follow all of the directions.

➢ Use outside readers to identify and reduce institution-specific jargon and blind-spots as well as assist with editing.

➢ Provide an analysis of data, not just a data dump.

➢ Make sure all electronic devices and links work!

➢ Serve as an evaluator, if you can.

Also…

➢ Write clearly and succinctly.

➢ Use pointed examples.

➢ Save the reader time by pointing directly to the specific supporting documentation - excerpting when it makes sense.

➢ When in doubt, ask your SACSCOC Vice President for advice.

➢ Use sampling, when appropriate, and explain your rationale for how you have established that sample.

So what's in it for me and my institution??

➢ Fifth-Year Review is an excellent opportunity to refocus on compliance and introduce new campus community members to accreditation concepts.

➢ Completion of a cycle; marks conclusion of the reporting on your QEP

Questions?