Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation
Presentation for the Provost’s Council

October 14, 2019

Barbara Gross Davis– Vice President
WASC Senior College and University Commission
UH Mānoa’s WSCUC Timeline

Fall 2009: Capacity and Preparatory Review
Spring 2011: Educational Effectiveness Review
Spring 2015: Interim Report
Spring 2016: Mid-Cycle Review
Spring 2021: *Accreditation Visit

*Update: Visit postponed to November 2021
Agenda for the Day

• The changing context for accreditation
• 2013 WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review
• Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of accreditation
• The institutional review process
• Commission action
Changing Context for Accreditation

- Greatly increased expectations for institutional accountability and consumer protection

- Demands for improved academic standards and student performance (as measured by retention, graduation rates and post-graduation job placement)

- New fiscal realities making cost-effectiveness a paramount issue forWSCUC and its constituents

- Calls for risk-based assessment, for both low-risk and high-risk institutions
Challenges for Higher Education and Accreditation

- Low graduation rates
- High student debt/high default rates
- Difficulty in transferring credits
- Dissatisfaction with quality of education/low levels of learning
- Rapid growth of online education
- Practices of the for-profit industry
- Increased federal regulation
- Concern about the value of higher ed
Challenges for Higher Education and Accreditation (continued)

• Changing demographics, including older, working, more diverse students
• Swirl: majority of students attend more than one institution
• Development of competency-based programs
• Shrinking support for public universities and trend to privatization
• Strong consumer demand for degrees leading to jobs
# How Accreditation is Changing

## Roles of Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Functions of Accreditation</th>
<th>Compliance Centered</th>
<th>Improvement Centered</th>
<th>Accountability/Quality Assurance Centered</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Review</td>
<td>All standards applied to assure compliance</td>
<td>Key areas selected and approved by accreditor for improvement</td>
<td>Specific areas identified as part of all reviews to address common policy issues—e.g., retention/graduation rates, student learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstration of Effectiveness</td>
<td>Must demonstrate standards are met at least at minimum level</td>
<td>Simplified compliance review and primary emphasis on recommended improvements</td>
<td>Standards of performance set by institutions, and, where appropriate, comparative indicators used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Reporting and Transparency</td>
<td>Public announcement of grant of accreditation</td>
<td>Reports internally circulated for improvement; accrediting action publicly reported</td>
<td>Meaningful and clear public information about institutional performance and commission actions reported</td>
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A Learning Curve

FROM:
Expecting programs to describe assessment processes

TO:
Asking for the results of these assessments
Another Learning Curve

FROM: WSCUC expecting programs to set standards for student learning

TO: WSCUC asking for evidence that students also achieve those standards
Evidence that the institution acts on findings and can show improvement

Also asking “Is this good enough? How do we know? What means do we use to establish standards of performance or proficiency?”
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2013 Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation

Three Core Commitments

Four Standards

• Criteria for Review (CFR)
• Guidelines
2013 Core Commitments

• Student Learning and Success
• Quality and Improvement
• Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability
Core Commitment: Student Learning and Success

“Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes….Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.”
“Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities…. Institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.”
Core Commitment: Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

“...Institutions engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions.”
2013 Standards of Accreditation

- Standard 1
- Standard 2
- Standard 3
- Standard 4
Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purpose
- Integrity and Transparency

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Student Learning and Success
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty and Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organizational Structures and Decision-making Processes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Quality Assurance Processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Institutional Learning and Improvement</td>
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Criteria for Review (CFR)

• Provide statements about the meaning of the Standard

• Are cited by institutions in their report, by teams in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions
Guidelines

• Show typical ways institutions can put into practice a CFR

• Offer examples of how an institution can address a particular CFR

• Are not requirements or mandatory
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Description of the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

- A review process for reaffirmation that is an alternative to the process described in the 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation*

- Institutions provide evidence of compliance with the Standards and federal requirements and address one or more self-selected themes to demonstrate educational effectiveness
Eligibility for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

• Institutions show consistent evidence of:
  • Healthy fiscal condition
  • Strong student achievement indicators
  • Sustained quality performance

• Process
  • Institutions that are invited to apply for TPR indicate their interest
  • WSCUC staff conducts eligibility review looking at 30 criteria
  • Commission makes final determination of eligibility for TPR
Key Elements of the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

• Approval of TPR in place of usual Institutional Review Process

• Identification of themes

• Institutional self-study and report
  • Four components (1, 2, 8, and 9 of usual components)
  • “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements”
  • “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators”

• TPR institutional review process
  • Accreditation Visit
  • Team report (posted on WSCUC website)

• Commission action (posted on WSCUC website)
Four Components of Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
Institutional Report

1. Introduction: Institutional context
2. Compliance
3. Institution-Specific Specific Themes
4. Conclusion
“Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Guide”

• Lists eligibility criteria

• Discusses process for submitting themes

• Describes drafting and submitting institutional report
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Overview of UH Mānoa’s Reaccreditation Process

INSTITUTION:
Self-Study & Report
Due 10 weeks before the Accreditation Visit
February 3, 2021*

TEAM:
Accreditation Visit
April 14-16, 2021**

COMMISSION:
Action
June 2021***

* Report due September 2021, per postponed visit.
** Visit postponed to November 2021
*** Commission Action now scheduled for February 2022
Timelines

1. Submit report
   - Institution submits report on box.com
   - 10 weeks

2. Conference call
   - Team holds conference call

3. Site visit
   - Site visit held and team report written
   - 10 weeks

4. Respond to errors of fact
   - Institution responds to errors of fact in team report

5. Respond to final report
   - Institution responds to final team report

6. Commission action
   - Commission acts at February or June meeting
# Timelines

## TLIMELINE for TPR VISIT

**INSTITUTION:** Full Name  
**VISIT TYPE:** Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Visit  
**VISIT START DATE:** Tuesday, March 20, 2018  
**WSCUC STAFF LIASON:** Firstname Lastname

We expect that you will communicate throughout the visit process by email and phone, checking in and following up with one another at various points. Please note that these dates are preferred dates but not inflexible. The dates of the visit and of the Commission review are fixed but all other dates may be adjusted. This timeline is to give you a sense of the sequence of events rather than to impose set dates.

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<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>TEAM MEMBERS</th>
<th>WSCUC STAFF</th>
<th>INSTITUTION STAFF</th>
<th>DATES</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair</td>
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### BEFORE THE VISIT

1. WSCUC sends preparation materials to ALO (team roster, timelines, draft schedules, logistics survey, email account information, hosting a visit guide).
2. WSCUC sends preparation materials to team (institutional and logistics information, team roster, timelines, worksheets etc.).
3. ALO sends the institution’s report electronically to WSCUC; WSCUC provides link to team members.

• Has the institution responded to previous Commission actions?
• Has the institution responded to the four components?
• Has it collected and analyzed data effectively?
• Are its conclusions supported by evidence?
• What are the strengths of the institution?
• Are there problems or potential areas of concern or noncompliance?
• Does the report contain recommendations for further institutional action?
Institutional Review Process: The Visit

- April 14-16, 2021*
- Team comes to campus for three days
- Team report and recommendation sent to WSCUC Commission for action

*Visit postponed to November 9-12, 2021
Institutional Review Process: **TPR Teams**

- Five peer evaluators on a team
- Normal evaluator selection process as other review types
- Peer evaluators will be trained using TPR Evaluator Guide, online courses, and on-site workshop
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Commission Review

- Commission Panel reads report and documentation including institution’s written response, talks with institutional representatives at Commission meeting
- Panel makes recommendation to Commission, and Commission acts
- Staff finalizes draft action letter on behalf of Commission
- Letter and team report are publicly available on WSCUC website
- Link provided on WSCUC website, if desired, to institution’s response to team report