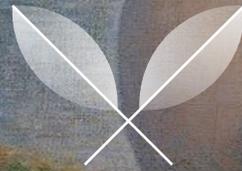


Framing the Canvas: Defining Quality in Higher Education



Dr. Geoffrey C. Klein
Vice President
SACSCOC



Gatekeeping
DEI
Political
ROI
Student
Outcomes
Access
Federal Aid
Transparency
Compliance
Culture
Regulatory Capture
Bureaucracy
Political Influence
Accountability
Compliance
Conflict of Interest
Competition
Cartel
Cost
Innovation
Monopoly

Episodic Account of Accreditation

Early obligation of Federal Government oversight of accreditation

Required schools to be accredited to receive NDEA Fellowships and college loans

Also led to shift in accreditation from inputs to outputs

Federal funds went to "numerous schools of dubious quality" (Paul Weissburg)

Assessment arose from increased demand for accountability

State Oversight Begins 1787

1890 Second Morrill Act

National Defense Education Act 1958

1980s: Federal gov't critical of dishonesty and abuse of financial aid

1950s: Federal Gov't Critical of State Oversight

1867 USDE (it's precursor) Created

Four regional associations become accreditors 1885-1895, including SACS

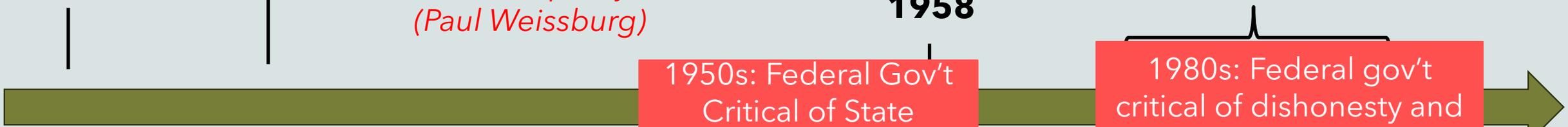
1944 GI Bill
State oversight

1952 Legislation requiring Office of Education to identify reputable accrediting organization

1964 Higher Education Act

Title IV - Expand access to higher education

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare made decision to entrust quality assurance to recognized accreditors



A Century of Commission Principles/Standards

1925

Standards of the Association

Three Sets of Standards:

- (1) College of Arts and Sciences (20 Standards)
- (2) Teacher Training Colleges (19 Standards)
- (3) Junior Colleges (17 Standards)

Similar in topical areas, but some different expectations (i.e., entrance requirements)

1966

Principles of the College Delegate Assembly in Accreditation

Eleven (11) Standards

In general, standards are presented in two parts. (1) Statement of the Principle/Standard
(2) Illustrations and Interpretations

1998

Criteria for Accreditation

Six (6) Sections

Over 400 "must" (or similar imperatives) are interpreted to mean that institutions are required to meet those specific criteria. Statements with the word "should" are advisory and are not requirements.

2024

Principles of Accreditation

Fourteen (14) Sections

Seventeen (17) Core Requirements and Fifty-six* (56) Standards

73 Total Standards*

*Includes Standard 7.2, Quality enhancement plan

Institutional Purpose/Mission

1925

No specific Standard; instead, three separate sets of standards for three different institutional types (albeit w/ a lot of overlap):

Colleges of Arts and Sciences

Teacher Training Colleges

Junior Colleges

1966

Standard One

“Each institution should clearly define its purpose and should incorporate this definition into a statement which is a pronouncement of its role in the educational world. The institution’s integrity is measured not only in terms of its stated purpose but also in terms of its conscientious endeavor to fulfill this purpose.”

1998

Section II

“An institution **must** have a clearly defined purpose or mission statement appropriate to collegiate education as well as to its own specific educational role...The official posture and practice of the institution **must** be consistent with its purpose statement.”

2024

Section 2

“The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service.”

Faculty

1925

Standard Number 5

"The average salary paid members of the faculty is an important consideration in determining the professional rank of members of the faculty. The training and experience of the members of the faculty should include at least two years of study in their respective fields of teaching in a fully organized and recognized graduate school." "The salary of full professors for nine months. The local cost of living and other factors should be taken into consideration."

1966

Standard Five

"The academic preparation and experience of the faculty are significant factors in determining the quality of a college or university and should be such as to further the purpose of the institution...All teaching faculty members should have advanced degrees...Any exception must be justified by special competence..."

1998

Section IV

"Each full-time and part-time faculty member teaching credit courses leading toward the baccalaureate degree, other than physical education activities courses, **must** have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree..."

2024

Section 6

"For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members."

Educational Programs

1925

Standard 15

“The character of the curriculum, efficiency of instruction, the scientific spirit, the soundness of scholarship, the standard for regular degrees, the conservation in granting honorary degrees, the character of its publicity, and the tone of the institution shall also be factors in determining its standing.”

1966

Standard Three

“The educational program must be clearly related to the purpose of the institution...Instruction, to be effective, must be evaluated continuously, and an institution should be able to present evidence that efforts are being made to improve instruction. Concern for improvement of instruction is a mark of institutional vitality.”

1998

Section IV

“The Commission expects each member institution to focus its resources and energies on the education of its students consistent with its purpose. An effective institution of higher education demonstrates attention to curricular consistencies, pedagogical competence, student accomplishment, intellectual inquisitiveness....”

2024

Section 9

“Educational programs (a) embody a coherent course of study, (b) are compatible with the stated mission and goals, and (c) are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. ”

Now it's your turn to paint the strokes of a quality education.....



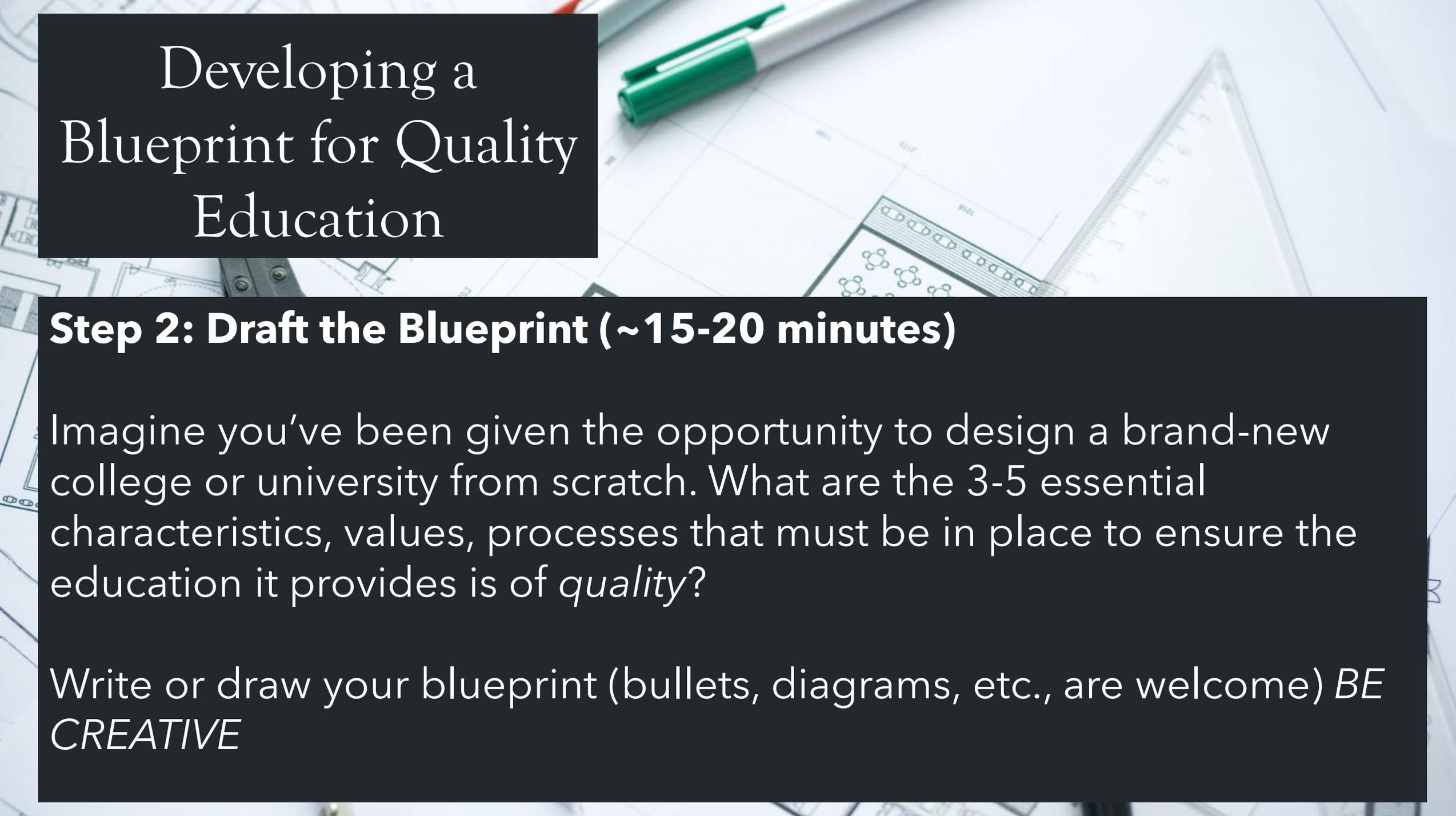


Developing a Blueprint for Quality Education

Step 1: Frame the Activity

Accreditation and institutional effectiveness are built on a shared commitment to defining and upholding quality. But what does 'quality education' look like today and into the future?

Work in groups to sketch your own blueprint for quality education.



Developing a Blueprint for Quality Education

Step 2: Draft the Blueprint (~15-20 minutes)

Imagine you've been given the opportunity to design a brand-new college or university from scratch. What are the 3-5 essential characteristics, values, processes that must be in place to ensure the education it provides is of *quality*?

Write or draw your blueprint (bullets, diagrams, etc., are welcome) *BE CREATIVE*



Developing a Blueprint for Quality Education

Step 3: Gallery Walk (~10 minutes)

- 1) Each group should display its blueprint.
- 2) Take a walk around the Gallery and place sticky dots on the characteristics you feel are most universal or essential.
- 3) Remember/notice those characteristics that get repeated across the blueprints.



Developing a Blueprint for Quality Education

Step 4: Connecting the Dots (~5 minutes)

- 1) What aspects of your blueprint received the most "dots"?
- 2) What characteristics were repeated across multiple blueprints?

Principles Review Process

Membership-Driven • Peer-Reviewed • Transparent



Principles Review Committee

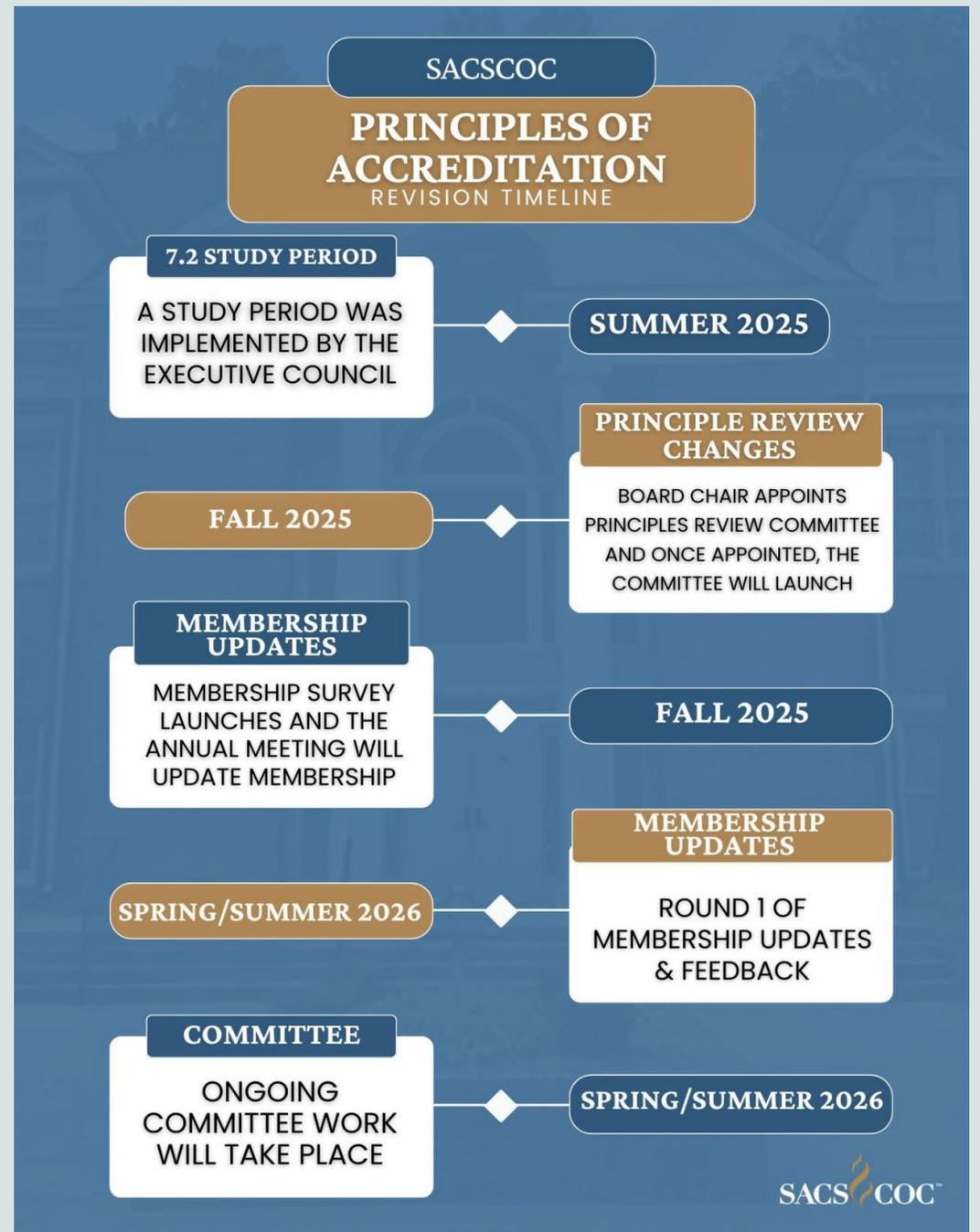
Membership demographics:
25 Members

Institutional Level	Number (#)	Private/ Public
I	4	0/4
II	4	2/2
III	4	2/2
IV	5	3/2
V	4	2/2
VI	4	3/1

2 Co-Chairs (President and Assoc. Provost)
15 Presidents; 9 Provosts/Assoc. Provosts; 2 IE Professional

Eleven (11) states represented (former geographic area)

Special Advisory Committee: four (4) members
One (1) International Representative, two (2) Public Reps, & one (1) Peer Evaluator





Principles Review Committee

Key Distinctives

Multiple Opportunities for membership to provide input and feedback.

Revision will focus on streamlining, differentiation, and the workforce.

Bias review and feedback from State Legislators

The Committee and SACSCOC Board will recommend/approve a “runway” to compliance following a positive membership vote.

******A process to ensure the development of standards that define quality education and continuous improvement within the context of higher education today, with flexibility to respond to future innovations.******



*The art of making art
Is putting it together
Bit by bit
Link by link
Drink by drink
Mink by mink
And that
Is the state
Of the Art!*

- George in Putting it Together



Beyond the First 100 Days: Advancing Excellence Together

Building on Dr. Pruitt's "First 100 Day" presentation, SACSCOC has been actively implementing key initiatives designed to enhance institutional quality and strengthen the accreditation process. This session will share updates on the progress of the 100-Day Plan. The session will conclude with an open Q&A period for participants to engage directly with Geoffrey to discuss the implications of this work.

Commit to Communications

Actions	Updates Since Announcement
Hire a Director of Public Information	Hired Mr. Eric Mann Started mid-October Lead communication efforts at the Commission
Conduct a communication audit (i.e., how do we communicate with our institutional members?)	Internal audit kicked off in October. Team of Staff reviewing communications and revising to align with our mission.
More frequent updates from the President	

Pruitt's Law or Lore Blog Series

- The Waiting Game – Substantive Change Notifications
- The Nuance of Faculty Credentials for Non-Traditional Transfer Degrees
- The Truth About Credit Transfer and SACSCOC
- The Truth About Graduate Hours and Dual Enrollments



Clarifying Our Commitment to ALL Institutions

Actions	Updates Since Announcement
Review Board Membership	Currently underway w/ applicable stakeholders, including Dr. Pruitt, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs, and SACSCOC Board of Trustees
Host R1 Summit	Held on October 16, 2025. (41 institutions represented)
Host Institutional Level Summits	These summits will take place on Tuesday(12/9/2025) morning of the SACSCOC Annual Meeting

R1 Summit ≡ Focus Group

Visualizing the Future of Continuous Improvement
 Emerging Accreditation Foci
 Stimulating Innovation

Process Reviews

Actions	Updates Since Announcement
Processes must be efficient, secure, and modern with continued affirmation of peer review	
Conduct Process Audit. The goal is to streamline processes for reaffirmation, 5 th -Year, and Substantive Change	Seven (7) Staff Audit Teams: AI, Complaint/Unsolicited Information, Areas of Distinction for Member Institutions, 5 th -Year, SubChange, Off-Site Review, and Reaffirmation Process – Producing recommendations to be presented to SACSCOC Board of Trustees
<p>New Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of secure AI for institutions, committees, and staff ▪ Move toward full use of Salesforce 	Leverage Salesforce for expediting communications and work efficiencies



Review QEP

Actions	Updates Since Announcement
For the period of the <i>Principles</i> Review, SACSCOC Staff and institutions will study the QEP for relevance and evaluate if it is meeting the needs of today	
Temporarily hold all institutions harmless from their participation in QEP during the Study for at least the length of the <i>Principles</i> revision.	QEP Transition Document can be found at https://sacscoc.org/100-day-package/



Additional Supports Associated with 100 Day Package

- ▶ Resources listed on <https://sacscoc.org/100-day-package/>
 - ▶ Webinar recording
 - ▶ PowerPoint Presentation
 - ▶ Frequently Asked Questions
 - ▶ QEP Transition Document
- ▶ For more questions on the 100 Day Package, email 100days@sacscoc.org.



Additional Updates

- [Good Practices in the Use of Generative AI](#) (Good practices)
 - Good practices for member institutions on the responsible and ethical use of AI endorsed by SACSCOC BOT
- [Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Degree Guidelines](#) (Guideline)
 - Guidance to member institutions on the expectations for reduced credit hour undergraduate degree programs
- [Revised Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) (Policy)
 - Removed all references to the *Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level* policy; all level change information revised and added to the substantive change policy to permit the separate outdated level change policy to be retired (pp. 4 and 96); added terms to glossary to distinguish *level authorization* from *level classification* (p. 149-150)
 - New prospectus content in Appendix A for Level Authorization Addition (pp. 122-123) and Level Change to a Higher Level (pp. 124-128)
 - Miscellaneous clarifications to Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan (pp. 24-25)
 - For Program Re-open, clarified that changes to level status or level authorization cannot be accomplished by re-opening a previously closed program (p. 74)
 - [Redline summary of changes to Sub Change policy](#) available on website
 - 3-part webinar series on level change and level authorizations
 - Use of Subchange@sacscoc.org email
- Slight revisions to [Institutional Summary Form](#)
 - Notified sites (25-49%) are no longer required.
- Revised Interpretation of Core Requirement 8.1(Student Achievement) Statement
 - Minor revision to language regarding disaggregation of KSCI data.
- New Policy Statement → Accreditation Procedures for Affiliate Institutions
 - For institutions of higher education that are formerly accredited by SACSCOC and wish to remain connected to SACSCOC.
 - Sample Benefits Include: Receive SACSCOC Communications, Attendance at SACSCOC-sponsored events at member rate, Eligibility to serve on SACSCOC peer review committees, plus others.

Most Frequently Cited *Principles*

Ten (10) most frequently cited *Principles* over the last three (3) Fifth-Year Review Cycles (AY 2024 and Spring 2025)

(1) CR 8.1 (Student Achievement)	(6) Std. 13.8 (Institutional environment)
(2) Std. 5.4 (Qualified administrative/academic officers)	(7) Std. 12.4 (Student complaints)
(3) Std. 6.2.c (Program coordination)	(8) Std. 14.4 (Representation to other agencies)
(4) Std. 6.2.b (Program faculty)	(9) Std. 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit)
(5) Std. 8.2.a (Student outcomes: educational programs)	(10) Std. 13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities)



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Q&A

