# Handbook of Accreditation

2020 Edition

**Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**
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# SECTION 1:
# THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

## PART A: THE NWCCU 2020 HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

### Purpose and Audience

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (Commission) provides a comprehensive system of support and information pertaining to institutions' continuous quality improvement, as well as effective and informed institutional accreditation reviews. Specifically, this NWCCU 2020 Handbook of Accreditation has been designed to serve as the primary resource:

- To present the Commission's Standards for Accreditation;

- To guide institutions through the institutional evaluation process; and

- To assist accreditation review teams at each stage of review.

The Handbook is intended to serve a variety of readers, including representatives of institutions accredited by the Commission and those seeking accreditation; chairs and members of review teams; those interested in establishing good practices in higher education; and the general public.

In addition to the Handbook, the Commission provides significant supporting documentation on policies, guides, and associated resources which may be referenced herein and are available on the Commission's website.

### Overview and Structure

Each major section of the 2020 Handbook is designed to serve as a stand-alone resource, and at the same time, fit within the larger framework of the Handbook as a whole. For reference:

- The "Handbook" refers to the NWCCU 2020 Handbook of Accreditation.

- "The Commission" refers to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

- "The Standards" refers to the NWCCU 2020 Standards for Accreditation.

### Updates and Revisions

The Commission reserves the right to update the Handbook and all related policies and procedures at any time to comply with federal requirements or in response to new needs in the region. Institutions should refer to the website (www.nwccu.org) for the most recent version of all Commission publications.

The Commission also welcomes suggestions for improvement of this Handbook and ways to make it, and the accreditation process itself, more useful to institutions, students, and members of the public.

### Copyright

The Handbook is copyrighted with a Creative Commons license (Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike) that allows sharing and remixing with attribution, but does not allow the work to be used for commercial purposes. It is the Commission's goal, through wide dissemination and application of the Handbook, that

the Standards and processes of NWCCU accreditation inform and contribute to institutions' continuous quality improvement, as well as effective and informed institutional reviews.

# PART B: THE CONTEXT OF ACCREDITATION

## Types of Accreditation

The U.S. system of higher education oversight rests on a concept known as the triad: the federal government, states, and accreditors work together to ensure quality at postsecondary institutions. Accreditation agencies are the element of the triad that must look at educational practices and outcomes across all types of institutions. Accreditors, and their policies and standards, are informed and recognized by the Department of Education as reliable authorities regarding the quality of education or training offered by the institutions or programs they accredit per the Code of Federal Regulations Title 34 Part 602: The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies.

Students attending accredited institutions may be eligible to apply for U.S. federal financial aid. Accreditation also helps ensure that credits and degrees are generally recognized for purposes of transfer, admission to other institutions, and employment.

In many countries, the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function; in the U.S., by contrast, accreditation is peer-driven and the dues of member institutions fund accrediting associations.

Review teams predominantly comprising of experts and representatives from similar institutions evaluate an institution for initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.

No institution in the U.S. is required to seek accreditation, but because of the recognized benefits of the process, most eligible institutions have sought to become accredited.

For the purposes of determining eligibility for United States government assistance under certain legislation, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education recognizes accrediting agencies as reliable authorities on the quality of education offered by educational institutions.

NWCCU accreditation applies to an institution as a whole, not individual programs or units within the institution. Accreditation agencies perform important functions, including fostering quality education and continuous improvement, and encouraging institutional efforts toward maximum educational effectiveness. The accrediting process requires institutions to examine their own missions, operations, and achievements. It then provides expert analysis by peer evaluators, which may include commendations for accomplishments as well as recommendations for improvement.

One of the requirements for institutions seeking to attain eligibility for federal funds is to hold Accredited or Candidate status with one of the accrediting agencies recognized by the Secretary. Accrediting agencies have no legal control over educational institutions or programs. They promulgate standards of quality and effectiveness and admit to membership those institutions that meet those standards.

While the procedures of accrediting agencies differ in detail to allow for interests and variations, their rules of eligibility, basic policies, and levels of expectation are similar. Given these variations in detail, accreditation of higher education institutions is intended to:

- Foster excellence in higher education through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness;

- Encourage institutional improvement of educational endeavors through continuous self-reflection and evaluation;

- Assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution has a clearly defined and appropriate purpose, exhibits through its resources and capacity the potential to fulfill its purpose, demonstrates that it substantially fulfills its purpose, and is likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future; and

- Provide guidance and assistance to established and developing institutions.

### Specialized (Programmatic) Accreditation

Specialized accrediting agencies accredit individual educational programs such as business, law, engineering, or nursing with regard to program-specific standards. Each of these specialized organizations has its distinctive definitions of eligibility, standards for accreditation, and operating procedures. Educational programs accredited by specialized accrediting agencies may reside within comprehensive institutions or within single-purpose institutions. Institutionally accredited institutions may also have programs with specialized accreditation.

### The Changing Landscape of Higher Education

A hallmark of U.S. higher education in the 21st century is the diversity of institutions, their missions, and the students they serve. Common across this diversity is a widespread understanding that higher education represents both a public good and a private benefit, fostering individual development and serving the broader needs of the society and nation. Higher education has created the conditions for improving quality of life, solving problems, and enabling a vision for the future, which are essential to supporting economic prosperity and sustaining democracy in the United States.

Accreditation has been committed to affirming that high-quality education, irrespective of the different purposes of individual institutions, is a contribution to the public good through the application of standards for quality. Student success continues to be at the center of accreditation; thus, accreditation seeks to establish standards and measurements of quality that ensure that students earn degrees in a timely manner, and that those degrees have demonstrable meaning and currency within the society at large. That meaning also extends to graduates' ability to be engaged citizens and to obtain productive employment.

Accounting for quality is a matter of public trust given the billions of dollars the government provides higher education through direct investment in institutions, federal and state financial aid for students, and tax exemptions for public and non-profit institutions. Quality also ultimately matters to students and their families, as well as employers and other critical stakeholders. Accreditation, therefore, has evolved in form and substance as it has adapted to continuous institutional and social changes, as well as increased global interdependence and dramatic developments in information and communication technologies.

### Development of the 2020 Standards for Accreditation

The evolving higher education context described above has formed the backdrop for the NWCCU 2020 Handbook of Accreditation. Colleges and universities have been under increasing pressure to become more accountable for student academic achievement and outcomes; to be more transparent in reporting these outcomes; and to demonstrate their contribution to the public good. Diminishing public funding for higher education along with escalating operating costs have, at the same time, placed increasing pressure

on public and private institutions alike, resulting in a deteriorating fiscal environment within which colleges and universities must operate.

Like earlier editions, this Handbook is the culmination of years of exploration and commitment on the part of institutions and stakeholders from across the NWCCU region. The Standards represented in the Handbook preserve and incorporate the fundamental values of higher education, while also addressing the factors in the operating environment that demand attention. These factors lie behind the Commission's decision to rebalance the dual role of accreditation to support both public accountability and institutional improvement. The revisions to the Standards and institutional evaluation process described in this Handbook have occurred within the context of these factors and reflect NWCCU's responsibility to assure the public that institutions act with integrity, yield high-quality educational outcomes, and are committed to continuous improvement.

There are several key features of the 2020 Standards for Accreditation to note:

- Students and their success, along with closing equity gaps, are at the center of the Standards and the accreditation review processes.

- The Standards and accreditation review processes have been updated to better respond to increasing financial pressures and concerns in order to ensure that institutions can demonstrate their long-term sustainability.

- The Handbook, while addressing all the requirements for accreditation, features processes that allow for adaptability and focused attention to support specific institutional needs.

With these and other revisions, the NWCCU membership and the Commission call upon institutions to take the next step on the assessment journey: moving from a focus on creating assessment infrastructures and processes to a focus on results and making use of the findings about the quality of learning that assessment generates. Institutions are also encouraged to move from productive internal conversations about improving learning to engaging more deeply with other institutions and higher education organizations.

## PART C: THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NWCCU)

### NWCCU's Mission

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accredits institutions of higher education by applying evidence-informed standards and processes to support continuous improvement and promote student achievement and success.

To achieve this mission, NWCCU promotes student achievement, learning, and success; seeks to close equity gaps and enhance educational quality and institutional effectiveness; facilitates analytical self-assessment and critical peer review; ensures accountability and transparency; and advances research and engagement.

## Overview of NWCCU

### The Region

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is incorporated in Washington state as a legally established, private 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation for the expressed purpose of accrediting higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. NWCCU also accredits a few institutions in British Columbia, Canada.

### History, Current Status, Scope, and Authority

NWCCU is a voluntary, nongovernmental organization for the improvement of educational institutions and was founded in 1917. Originally known as the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges and Universities, the connection between the association of secondary schools and the Commission on Colleges and Universities was severed in 2002, and the Commission was renamed the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

NWCCU and its predecessors have been listed since 1952 by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for institutions offering programs of at least one academic year in length at the postsecondary level. NWCCU has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education provided by member institutions of higher education offering associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and post-baccalaureate degrees. The Commission's recognition was most recently reaffirmed by the Department in 2018.

As a voluntary, nongovernmental agency, NWCCU does not have the responsibility to exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments or to apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, and the like. Furthermore, the Commission does not enforce the standards of specialized accrediting agencies, the American Association of University Professors, or other nongovernmental organizations, although institutions may wish to review the publications of such agencies as part of the self-evaluation process.

### The Board of Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities consists of a minimum number of Commissioners, a chair, and the President who is an ex officio member of the Board (see the NWCCU ByLaws on the NWCCU website for more detail: www.nwccu.org). A majority of Commissioners represent NWCCU-accredited institutions; however, at least one-seventh (1/7) of the membership of the Board is comprised of public members who are not affiliated with NWCCU-Accredited, Candidate, or Applicant institutions.

Commissioners are elected for staggered three-year terms and serve without compensation. Commissioners may serve no more than two (2) three-year terms. The Board of Commissioners normally meets twice a year, but various committees meet more frequently to facilitate the Commission's work. The Commission's day-to-day activities are conducted by its President and staff.

### Standing Committees

In accordance with its Bylaws, NWCCU has four Standing Committees comprised of representatives of member institutions that support the work of the Commission.

1. Executive Committee

2. Nominations Committee

3. Bylaws, Standards, and Policies Committee

4. Finance Committee

5. Audit Committee

Ad-hoc committees and Task Forces may be appointed by the Board Chair to consider a specific task or to pursue a specific initiative.

In addition to these Standing Committees, NWCCU utilizes two additional Committees to support the work of its efforts related to the accreditation and ongoing monitoring of NWCCU member institutions.

1. The **Substantive Change Committee** (**SCC**) reviews proposals for changes that may significantly affect an institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control. Federal regulations and Commission policies require prior approval of institutional substantive changes in degree programs, methods of delivery, and organizational changes.

2. The **Policy, Regulations, and Financial Review Committee** (**PRFR**) performs the evaluation of the Year Six PRFR reports as part of the accreditation cycle. This committee reviews compliance with regulations, performs a financial review for sustainability, performs a policy audit, and attests that the institution is in compliance with Commission policies and Standards.

### Educational Programming

NWCCU offers educational programming including webinars, academies, fellowships, and the Annual Conference to assist institutions in developing expertise in areas relevant to the Standards and institutional success. Educational programming is entirely optional and offers a useful and supportive way to build and develop human capital and maintain the momentum for institutional effectiveness. Information on educational programming may be found on the website (www.nwccu.org).

### Principles of NWCCU Accreditation

The overriding purpose of NWCCU accreditation is to assure stakeholders that a NWCCU-accredited institution has been rigorously evaluated and that it meets or exceeds the criteria required to maintain accreditation. In addition, the accreditation process is designed to build a culture of evidence, promote a commitment to institutional continuous improvement, validate institutional integrity, and provide feedback that improves the accreditation process itself.

Accreditation status granted by NWCCU is recognition that an institution's own purpose is soundly conceived, that its educational programs have been intelligently devised, and that its structure, resources, and programs support and result in substantial accomplishment of the institution's stated purposes. When granted or reaffirmed, accreditation applies to the entire institution at the time of the most recent evaluation. It indicates that the institution as a whole has been evaluated and has been found to be substantially fulfilling its mission. Further, it indicates that the institution substantially meets the Commission's expectations for compliance with the accreditation criteria.

Significant institutional changes initiated subsequent to the most recent evaluation are not automatically included in the institution's accreditation and require the submission of a substantive change prospectus to the Commission for its review and analysis. (See the NWCCU Substantive Change Policy and Substantive Change Manual on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

NWCCU considers each institution's stated mission and identified characteristics when evaluating institutions for accreditation. The Commission recognizes and supports the diversity of purpose and organizational culture that exists among its colleges and universities. Member and candidate institutions range from large, urban, multi-campus universities to small, rural colleges and Tribal colleges; from religiously-affiliated colleges to non-denominational institutions; from liberal arts-focused, private institutions to professional/technical public colleges; from institutions of residential student communities to colleges of all-commuter student bodies; and from those institutions that are highly selective to those with open admission policies. In respecting such diversity, indicators of educational quality and institutional effectiveness cannot be defined in absolute terms.

## Relationship with the U.S. Department of Education

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has been recognized since 1952 by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a regional accrediting agency for institutions offering collegiate-level degrees. The Commission maintains communication with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and other federal agencies. It responds to USDE inquiries regarding institutional eligibility for participation in the Higher Education Act programs. The Commission forwards any received claim of Title IV fraud and abuse to the institution for comments, and it shares with the Department of Education clear evidence regarding such a claim.

## Actions of State Agencies and Other Accrediting Bodies

In considering whether to grant Accreditation or Candidacy status to an institution, the Commission requires the institution to report actions taken by other recognized accrediting bodies that have (a) denied such status to the institution, (b) placed the institution on public probation, or (c) revoked the Accreditation or Pre-Accreditation status of the institution.

An Accredited or Candidate institution is expected to remain in good standing with other recognized accrediting bodies or specialized accrediting bodies that have granted Accreditation or Pre-Accreditation status to program(s) within the institution. If another recognized accrediting body or governmental agency (a) places an institution or a principal program offered by the institution on public Probationary status, or (b) revokes such status, the institution shall report that action to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, which will promptly review the Accreditation or Candidacy status it has previously granted to the institution to determine if there is cause to alter that status.

## Retention of Records

In accordance with its Accreditation Records Retention Policy, the Commission maintains the official records of Commission actions on institutions. It also retains copies of institutional reports and materials, and copies of Self-Evaluation Reports and Peer-Evaluation Reports that formed the basis for those actions. These documents include the two most recent Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Reports (or the equivalent) of each institution, including on-site Peer-Evaluation Reports, the institution's or program's responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports including Annual Reports, any reports of special NWCCU reviews conducted between regularly scheduled reviews, and a copy of the institution's most

recent Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (the comprehensive self-evaluation report or its equivalent). The Commission also maintains a record of all approved substantive changes.

## Good Practice and Ethical Conduct

In carrying out its functions, NWCCU has established a list of good practices and ethical conduct that guides its relations with the institutions it serves and with its internal organization and procedures.

The Commission maintains a commitment to:

1. Apply with good faith effort its procedures, Standards, and policies as fairly and consistently as possible.

2. Provide means by which institutions and others can comment on the effectiveness of the accreditation review process, Standards, and policies, and to conduct ongoing and regular reviews to make necessary changes.

3. Provide institutions and the general public with access to non-confidential information regarding Commission actions and opportunities to make informed comment in the development of Commission policies.

4. Encourage continuing communication between the Commission and institutions through the Accreditation Liaison Officer position at each institution.

5. Maintain and implement a conflict of interest policy for members of review teams, members of the Commission, and Commission staff to ensure fairness and avoid bias.

6. Value the wide diversity of institutions within its region and consider an institution's purpose and character when applying the Standards.

7. Assist and stimulate improvement in its institutions' educational effectiveness.

8. Provide institutions a reasonable period of time to comply with Commission requests for information and documents.

9. Endeavor to protect the confidentiality of an institution's proprietary information.

10. With respect to the accreditation review process:

    a. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self-evaluation and the development of appropriate evidence to support the accreditation review process.

    b. Recognize that more time and support will be required for institutions at risk of being out of compliance.

    c. Conduct reviews using qualified peers under conditions that promote impartial and objective judgment and avoid conflicts of interest.

    d. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to the assignment of a person to the institution's review team.

    e. Arrange for interviews with administration, staff, faculty, students, and governing board members during the accreditation review process.

11. With respect to Commission decisions on an institution's accreditation, provide the opportunity for the institution to:

    f. Respond in writing to draft team reports in order to correct errors of fact and propose redactions of proprietary information.

    g. Respond in writing to final team reports on issues of substance.

    h. Appear before the Commission when certain reports are considered.

    i. Receive written notice from Commission staff as soon as reasonably possible after Commission decisions are made.

    j. Appeal Commission actions according to published procedures.

12. Request a written response from an institution or refer a matter to the next review team when the Commission finds that an institution may be in violation of the Standards or policies. If the Commission requests the institution to respond, and the Commission deems such response inadequate, Commission staff may request supplemental information or schedule a fact-finding visit to the institution. The institution will bear the expense of such a visit.

13. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial accreditation at any time prior to final action by the Commission.

14. Withdraw accreditation or candidacy as provided in the Handbook of Accreditation.

## The Status of Accreditation

Institutions may attain accreditation following the evaluation of the entire institution; once attained, accreditation status continues until formally withdrawn. Accreditation is subject, however, to periodic institutional review under conditions and policies as determined by the Commission.

## The Role of the Standards

The Standards for Accreditation collectively represent the criteria against which institutions are evaluated. As such, the Standards:

- Apply to all institutions in the region.

- Define normative expectations and characteristics of excellence.

- Provide a framework for institutional self-review.

- Must be met at least at a minimum level for Candidacy to be granted to institutions seeking initial accreditation.

- Must be met at a substantial level for institutions to be granted initial accreditation and for those seeking reaffirmation of accreditation.

**Accredited Status**

The status of being "Accredited" indicates that an institution has fulfilled the requirements for accreditation established by this Handbook. This means that the institution has:

1.  Demonstrated that it meets the Eligibility Requirements.

2.  Conducted a self-review under the Standards, developed and presented indicators of institutional effectiveness, and identified areas for improvement.

3.  Developed approved institutional reports for accreditation that have been evaluated by teams of reviewers under the institutional evaluation processes described in this Handbook.

4.  Demonstrated to the Commission that it meets or exceeds the Standards.

5.  Committed itself to institutional improvement, periodic self-evaluation, and continuing compliance with the Standards, policies, procedures, and Commission actions.

**Periodic Reports and Review Cycles**

Initial accreditation, as a matter of Commission policy, requires institutional self-review and peer review no more than five years after the date of the Commission action granting such status.

Every accredited institution must:

-   Submit an Annual Report;

-   Undergo a Mid-Cycle self-review and peer review;

-   Undergo a Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) and peer review, and;

-   Undergo an Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) comprehensive self-review and peer review at least every seven years.

Neither accreditation nor candidacy is retroactive.

## Institutional Commitment and Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process

The effectiveness of self-regulatory accreditation depends upon an institution's acceptance of certain responsibilities, including involvement in and commitment to the accreditation process. This commitment includes a willingness to participate in the decision-making processes of the Commission and to adhere to all Commission policies and procedures.

**Institutional Self-Evaluation**

Institutional self-evaluations are the most significant aspect of the accreditation process. The aim of the self-evaluations is for the institution to understand, evaluate, and improve—not merely to defend what already exists. A well-conducted self-evaluation should result in a renewed common effort within the institution to reflect on practice and outcomes with the intention of continually improving the whole enterprise and documenting its achievements. The self-evaluations are expected to be accomplished through an inclusive process that results in improvements for the institution.

**Institutional Responsibilities, Integrity, and Communication with NWCCU**

The validity and vitality of the accreditation process can only be ensured if institutions accept seriously the responsibilities of Accredited and Candidate institutions and operate with integrity.

- Each Accredited and Candidate institution is responsible for ensuring integrity in all operations dealing with its constituencies, in its relationships with other institutions, and in its accreditation activities with the Commission.

- Each Accredited and Candidate institution is expected to conduct analytical self-evaluations at specified intervals and, at the conclusion of the self-evaluations, accept peer evaluation of the institution with regard to the Standards.

- Each Accredited and Candidate institution is expected to provide the Commission with access to all aspects of its operation, including accurate information about the institution's affairs, and reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies.

- Each Accredited and Candidate institution is expected to provide the Commission, or its representatives, with information requested during scheduled on-site evaluation visits, enabling evaluators to perform their duties with efficiency and effectiveness.

- Each Accredited and Candidate institution is expected to provide the most current information about its programs and offerings to the Commission by following the Substantive Change Policy and procedures detailed in the Substantive Change Manual on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

**Title IV Compliance**

The Commission expects Accredited and Candidate institutions to comply with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Therefore, institutions will make available information provided by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, including the most recent student loan default rates (and any default reduction plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education) and any other documents concerning the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, such as the results of financial or compliance audits and program reviews. The Commission reserves the right to review an institution's Accreditation status when U.S. Department of Education findings demonstrate significant non-compliance with the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

# SECTION 2:
# THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

## PART A: ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

### Function

The Northwest Commission on College and Universities' (NWCCU) Standards for Accreditation support the organization's mission to accredit institutions of higher education on a seven-year cycle by applying evidence-informed standards and processes to support continuous improvements and promote student achievement and success. As such, NWCCU's Standards for Accreditation define the quality, effectiveness, and continuous improvements expected of accredited institutions. The Standards serve as indicators by which institutions are evaluated through a process of self-reflection and evaluation that blends analysis and synthesis into a holistic examination of the institution's ability to fulfill its unique mission, deliver quality education, and promote student achievement.

### Structure

Each Standard for Accreditation is designated by a number and title (e.g., Standard One: Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness) and is further defined by elements of the Standard, which are designated by the number of the Standard followed by the element (e.g., 1.A Institutional Mission). Each Standard is introduced by a narrative summary intended to provide direction but not to serve as a criterion for evaluation.

## THE STANDARDS

### Standard One: Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

*The institution articulates its commitment to student success, primarily measured through student learning and achievement, for all students, with a focus on equity and closure of achievement gaps, and establishes a mission statement, acceptable thresholds, and benchmarks for effectiveness with meaningful indicators. The institution's programs are consistent with its mission and culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, credentials, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs. Programs are systematically assessed using meaningful indicators to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes for all students, including underrepresented students and first-generation college students.*

### Institutional Mission

1.A.1 The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.

### Improving Institutional Effectiveness

1.B.1 The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

### Student Learning

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in the achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

1.C.9 The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

### Student Achievement

1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

1.D.3 The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources.

1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

### Standard Two: Governance, Resources, and Capacity

*The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.*

### Governance

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

2.A.2 The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

2.A.3 The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

### Academic Freedom

2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

### Policies and Procedures

*The institution develops and widely publishes, including on its website, policies and procedures that are clearly stated, easily understandable, readily accessible, and administered in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.*

2.C.1 The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.

2.C.2 The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

2.C.3 The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.

2.C.4 The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

## Institutional Integrity

2.D.1 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

2.D.2 The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

2.D.3 The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.

## Financial Resources

2.E.1. The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission.

2.E.2. Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

2.E.3 Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.

## Human Resources

2.F.1 Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

2.F.2 The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

2.F.3 Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

2.F.4 Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.

## Student Support Resources

2.G.1 Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.

2.G.2 The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

2.G.3 Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

2.G.4 The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

2.G.5 Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website.

2.G.6 The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.

2.G.7 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.

## Library and Information Resources

2.H.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

**Physical and Technology Infrastructure**

2.I.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

# SECTION 3:
# ACCREDITATION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

## PART A: THE PATHWAY TO ACCREDITATION

NWCCU defines three distinct stages in an institution's progression toward achieving Accreditation, each of which may result in the award of a particular status.

1. Applicant

2. Candidate

3. Accredited

Only Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities' (NWCCU) institutions with "Accredited" status are members of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

## Applicant

- This initial, non-affiliated status may be granted by the Commission after the submission of an Application for Consideration of Eligibility by an institution and subsequent review by the Board of Commissioners.

- Upon being granted Applicant status, an institution must complete its initial self-evaluation and be evaluated by peers for consideration of Candidacy within a period not less than one year or more than three years of the time of acceptance of its Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

## Candidate

- Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accredited, affiliate status with the Commission. It denotes recognition by the Commission that the institution meets its Eligibility Requirements and is progressing toward Accredited status. It does not, however, imply or ensure eventual NWCCU Accreditation.

- After an Applicant institution has submitted a Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report addressing all accreditation criteria and the Commission conducts an on-site peer evaluation, the Board of Commissioners may grant Candidacy status to the institution if it finds the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements, minimally meets the Standards for Accreditation, and has the potential to meet all Standards for Accreditation within the five-year timeframe allowed for Candidacy.

## Accredited

- Following a period of Candidacy, the Board of Commissioners may grant Accreditation status to an institution following the submission of an Accreditation Self- Evaluation Report addressing all accreditation criteria and completion of an on-site peer evaluation validating that the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

- The institution becomes a member of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities upon being granted Accreditation.

- Accreditation is neither permanent nor awarded for a fixed number of years. Accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically following a process of self-evaluation and peer evaluation as described in this Handbook.

# PART B: ELIGIBILITY

## About the Eligibility Requirements

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) requires that every member, applicant, and candidate institution be a degree-granting institution whose mission is focused on excellence in higher education and meets the Eligibility Requirements described in this section.

Failure to meet any Eligibility Requirement may lead to the imposition of a sanction or adverse action for a member institution, denial of application for candidacy, or denial of initial accreditation.

## Eligibility for Accreditation

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accredits institutions that:

- Are concerned predominantly with higher learning;

- Have characteristics commonly associated with higher education; and

- Meet its Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

The principal programs of eligible institutions are degree related and built upon knowledge and competencies normally obtained by students through a completed high school program or its equivalent. Such programs are based on verifiable knowledge that has been subjected to examination by competent academic persons and by established higher education practitioners. Although diversity of requirements is expected among Candidate and Accredited institutions, course and degree requirements of an Applicant institution must also be congruent with those of the broader higher education community that the Commission represents.

Eligible institutions may offer programs or courses that the Commission would not define as higher learning (e.g., subject-based courses that some students may have missed in high school and courses and special programs specifically constructed to assist students to be successful with college-level coursework), but these are offered in addition to the courses and programs relevant to their higher education missions.

## Eligibility Requirements

### 1. Operational Status

The institution has completed at least one year of its principal educational programs and is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs at the time of NWCCU's acceptance of its Application for Consideration for Eligibility. The institution has graduated at least one class in its principal educational program(s) before NWCCU's evaluation for initial accreditation.

**2. Operational Focus and Independence**

The institution's programs and services are predominantly concerned with higher education. The institution has sufficient organizational and operational independence to be held accountable and responsible for meeting and sustaining NWCCU's Standards for Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements.

**3. Authority**

The institution is authorized to operate and confer degrees as a higher education institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, and/or governing board as required by the jurisdiction in which it operates.

**4. Institutional Effectiveness**

The institution demonstrates and publishes evidence of effectiveness and uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and measures to demonstrate institutional mission fulfillment. Through these processes, it regularly monitors its internal and external environments to determine how and to what degree changing circumstances may impact the institution and its ability to ensure its viability and sustainability.

**5. Student Learning**

The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree, certificate, or credential programs. The institution engages in regular and ongoing assessment to validate student learning and, consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses student learning outcomes (or core competencies) examples of which include, but are not limited to, effective communication, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy that are assessed across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum.

**6. Student Achievement**

The institution identifies and publishes expected outcomes and metrics for student achievement, including, but not limited to graduation, retention, completion, licensure, and measures of postgraduation success. The indicators of student achievement are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first-generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that are used to help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

**7. Non-Discrimination**

The institution is governed and administered with respect for the individual in a nondiscriminatory manner while responding to the educational needs and legitimate claims of the constituencies it serves as determined by its mission.

**8. Institutional Integrity**

The institution establishes and adheres to ethical standards in all of its academic programs, operations, and relationships.

### 9. Governing Board

The institution has a functioning governing board(s) responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for each college/unit within a multiple-unit district or system, to ensure that the institution's mission is being achieved. The governing board(s) has at least five voting members, a majority of whom have no contractual or employment relationship or personal financial interest with the institution. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities, shall have, with respect to such boards, clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities in a written contract(s). In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated, in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides NWCCU accredited institutions with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

### 10. Chief Executive Officer

The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose full-time responsibility is to the institution. The chief executive officer may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as chair.

### 11. Administration

In addition to a chief executive officer, the institution employs a sufficient number of qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability, who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness. Such administrators provide effective leadership and management for the institution's major support and operational functions and work collaboratively across institutional functions and units to foster fulfillment of the institution's mission. Executive officers may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as chair.

### 12. Faculty

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified faculty members sufficient in numbers to achieve its educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and sustainability of its academic programs. The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the performance of faculty members in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties.

### 13. Educational Programs

Consistent with its mission, the institution provides one or more educational programs all of which include appropriate content and rigor. The educational program(s) culminate in the achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes and lead to degree(s) with degree designations consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

### 14. Library and Information Resources

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

### 15. Physical and Technology Infrastructure

The institution provides the facilities, equipment, and information technology infrastructure necessary to fulfill and sustain its mission and maintain compliance with all federal and applicable state and local laws. The institution's planning includes emergency preparedness and contingency planning for continuity and recovery of operations should catastrophic events significantly interrupt normal institutional operations.

### 16. Academic Freedom

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to and maintains an atmosphere that promotes, supports, and sustains academic freedom and independence that protects its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment. Faculty, students, staff, and administrators are free to examine and test all knowledge and theories.

### 17. Admissions

The institution publishes student admission policies which specify the characteristics and qualifications appropriate for its programs and adheres to those policies in its admissions procedures and practices.

### 18. Public Information

The institution publishes current and accurate information regarding: its mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses; names, titles and academic credentials of administrators and faculty; rules and regulations for student conduct; rights and responsibilities of students; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

### 19. Financial Resources and Planning

The institution demonstrates financial stability, with cash flow and reserves necessary to support and sustain its mission, programs, and services. Financial planning ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and appropriate risk management to ensure short-term financial health and long-term financial sustainability.

### 20. Financial Accountability

For each year of operation, the institution undergoes an annual, independent financial audit by professionally qualified personnel in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The audit is to be completed no later than nine months after the end of the fiscal year. Results from the audit, including findings and management letter recommendations, are considered annually in an appropriate and comprehensive manner by the administration and the governing board.

### 21. Disclosure

The institution accurately discloses all the information NWCCU may require to carry out its evaluation and accreditation functions.

### 22. Relationship with NWCCU

The institution understands and accepts the Standards and policies of NWCCU and agrees to comply

with these Standards and policies. Further, the institution agrees that NWCCU may, at its sole discretion, make known the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding the institution's status with NWCCU to any agency or member of the public requesting such information.

### 23. Institutional Capacity

The institution demonstrates operational capacity (e.g., enrollment, human and financial resources, and institutional infrastructure) sufficient to fulfill and sustain its mission. It allocates resources as necessary to achieve its mission and engages in realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and capital planning to support the achievement of its identified strategic indicators of institutional capacity.

## Eligibility Process

When an institution determines that it meets NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, its chief executive officer makes a written request to the President of the Commission for approval to submit an Application for Consideration of Eligibility, the initial step in seeking accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

If that request is approved, the institution is authorized to submit a letter of application signed by the chief executive officer, an application fee (see "Dues and Fees" section on the Commission's website for the current fee: www.nwccu.org), and one electronic copy of the following documents:

- Thorough written response to each Eligibility Requirement;
- Current catalog;
- Current budget and audited financial statement; and
- Articles of incorporation and bylaws, or charter if the institution is independent, and when appropriate, proof of state authority to operate within the state and grant degrees.

The completed Application for Consideration of Eligibility is to be received in the Commission office no later than 60 days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

## Commission Evaluation for Eligibility

The following procedures are used in reviewing an Application for Consideration of Eligibility:

1. Commission staff review the Application and prepare an analysis.
2. The Application is placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
3. The institution is invited to send a representative(s) to appear before the Board when the Application for Consideration of Eligibility is considered.

## Commission Actions for Eligibility

The Board of Commissioners may take one or more of the following actions when considering an Application for Consideration of Eligibility:

- Accept the Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

- Defer action on the Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

- Reject the Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding the Application for Consideration of Eligibility, the institution is notified of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

If the Board of Commissioners determines that an institution appears to meet the NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, and Applicant status is granted:

- The effective date of acceptance is the date on which the decision was made.

- The institution is noted as an Applicant in the Commission's records and listed as such in the Directory of Institutions on the website.

### Time Frame for Eligibility

Acceptance of the Application for Consideration of Eligibility authorizes the institution to prepare a Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report addressing all Eligibility Requirements and Standards and host an on-site peer evaluation for consideration of Candidacy, which can occur no earlier than one year and no later than three years following acceptance of the Application for Consideration of Eligibility. If the self-evaluation is not completed within the three-year time limit, acceptance of the institution's Application for Consideration of Eligibility will be removed. A decision by the Board of Commissioners to reject or remove an Application for Consideration of Eligibility is not appealable.

### Voluntary Withdrawal of Application for Eligibility

An institution may voluntarily withdraw its Application for Consideration of Eligibility at any time prior to an action by the Board of Commissioners.

### Reapplication for Eligibility

If the Board of Commissioners rejects or removes an institution's Application for Consideration of Eligibility, the institution must wait at least two years before resubmitting a new Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

## PART C: CANDIDACY

### About Candidacy

"Candidacy" designates an affiliated, but not Accredited, status with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. It is recognized as a Pre-Accreditation designation by the U.S. Department of Education.

As described in Section 6 of this Handbook:

- The institution must demonstrate that it meets all Eligibility Requirements and meets all of the Standards at a minimum level, and that it has a clear plan in place to meet the Standards at a substantial level of compliance for accreditation.

- Criteria for Sufficient for Candidacy (Minimum Level) - The institution must:
    - o Meet all Eligibility Requirements.
    - o Demonstrate evidence of elementary or initial development and implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the Standards.
    - o Demonstrate achievement of each Standard at a sufficient level to support continued institutional development.
- Candidacy is limited to five years and is granted only when an institution can demonstrate that it is likely to become Accredited during the five-year period.

Attainment of affiliate Candidacy status does not ensure that Accreditation will be granted.

Candidacy lapses when an institution fails to achieve Accredited status within five years, the maximum allowed by the U.S. Department of Education (34 CFR 602.16[a] [2]). An institution whose Candidacy lapses must wait at least two years before resubmitting a new Application for Consideration of Candidacy.

The Commission also reserves the right during the Candidacy period to remove the institution's Candidacy status, after due notice, if evidence of progress is lacking or if the conditions on which the institution was admitted to Candidacy are substantially altered.

## Candidacy Process

### Step 1: Self-Evaluation

The institution is required to prepare a comprehensive, analytical Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation at each point of the candidacy process. Although a Candidate institution is not expected to fully meet the Standards for Accreditation, it must demonstrate that it meets the Eligibility Requirements, minimally meets the Standards for Accreditation, and documents the potential to achieve Accreditation status within five years of the granting of Candidacy.

### Step 2: Peer-Evaluation Visit

When an Applicant institution determines that it is ready for an evaluation for a determination of Candidacy, its chief executive officer makes a written request to the President of the Commission to schedule the on-site evaluation visit. This request must be submitted at least six months prior to the season (April or October) in which the on-site evaluation for consideration of Candidacy is to be conducted.

If the request is approved, suggested dates for the visit are provided to the institution. Once the dates are confirmed, the on-site evaluation is scheduled, and logistical arrangements are made.

**Peer evaluators:**

- Peer evaluators are assigned from out-of-state Accredited institutions. In selecting evaluators, care is taken to avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest.
- The number of peer evaluators depends upon the characteristics of the institution and the nature of its mission.

- The institution is charged a fee for each on-site evaluator. (See the Dues and Fees section of the Commission's website for the current fee.) The Commission reserves the right to adjust the evaluation fee to fit unusual circumstances associated with the visit.

- The institution provides electronic copies of its Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report to the Commission office and to the on-site peer evaluators.

**Before, during, and after the visit:**

- Peer evaluators study the institution's Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report, conduct an on-site evaluation, and prepare a written report of findings.

- A draft of the Peer-Evaluation Report is prepared and sent to the institution's chief executive officer, who is given an opportunity to correct errors of fact.

- The Peer-Evaluation Report is finalized and submitted to the Commission office.

- Evaluators submit a Confidential Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. The Confidential Recommendation is advisory only.

- Electronic copies of that report are sent to the institution's chief executive officer and Accreditation Liaison Officer.

- The institution is offered an opportunity to provide Commissioners with a written response to the Peer-Evaluation Report.

## Step 3: Commission Evaluation for Candidacy

The following procedures are used in making a determination of Candidacy for Accreditation:

- At its next regularly scheduled meeting, the Board of Commissioners considers the institution's Self-Evaluation Report, the Peer-Evaluation Report, the institution's written response to the Peer-Evaluation Report (if submitted), verbal statements of the chair of the peer-evaluation committee and institutional representatives, the evaluators' Confidential Recommendation, and third-party comments (if any) in taking action on the Accreditation status of the institution.

- Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding Candidacy for Accreditation, the institution is notified of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

## Step 4: Commission Actions during Candidacy

There are three possible phases of Commission Actions during the Candidacy process:

1. Granting of Candidacy

2. Continuation of Candidacy

3. Granting of Accreditation

Within each of these phases, several specific actions may be taken, as described below.

**Granting of Candidacy**

For each Candidacy evaluation, the Board of Commissioners may take one or more of the following actions:

- Grant Candidacy.

- Request a special report (with or without an on-site evaluation) to address specific areas of concern.

- Defer action on Candidacy for Accreditation.

- Deny Candidacy for Accreditation.

Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding Candidacy, the institution is notified of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

If Candidacy is granted, the effective date of Candidacy for Accreditation is the date of the action taken by the Board of Commissioners. That status is noted in the Directory of Accredited and Pre-accredited Institutions and posted to the Commission's website.

Within five years after being awarded candidacy status, the institution must submit a Comprehensive Report to serve as the Initial Accreditation Self-Evaluation Report and host an on-site peer evaluation for consideration of Accreditation. Requests for early consideration for an evaluation for consideration of Accreditation must be approved in advance by the President of the Commission.

**Continuation of Candidacy**

Every eighteen months after being awarded Candidacy status, an institution must submit an Interim Candidacy Report. Report guidelines are available on the Commission's website (www.nwccu.org).

For each Interim Candidacy evaluation, the Board of Commissioners may take one or more of the following actions:

- Grant Accreditation.

- Continue Candidacy.

- Request a special report (with or without an on-site evaluation) to address specific areas of concern.

- Defer action on Continuation of Candidacy for Accreditation.

- Issue, continue, or remove a sanction (Warning, Probation, or Show-Cause).

- Remove Candidacy for Accreditation status.

Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding the Candidacy or Accreditation status of an institution, the institution is notified in writing of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

**Granting of Accreditation**

In considering the granting of Accreditation, the Board of Commissioners may take one or more of the following actions:

- Grant Accreditation.

- Request a special report (with or without an on-site evaluation) to address specific areas of concern.

- Defer action on continuation of Candidacy for Accreditation (if the time limit for Candidacy has not expired).

  o Issue, continue, or remove a sanction (Warning, Probation, or Show-Cause) provided that the time limit for Candidacy has not expired.

  o Deny Accreditation.

Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding the Candidacy or Accreditation status of an institution, the institution is notified in writing of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

When Accreditation is granted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the effective date of Accreditation is the date of formal notice to the institution through its Commission Action Letter. in which the Commission takes action.

- *For example, if the Board of Commissioners grants Accreditation to an institution at its June 2020 meeting, the effective date of the institution's Accreditation is the date of the letter issuing the action (typically eight weeks following the Commission meeting).*

**Candidacy Terms of Agreement**

Candidate institutions must agree to the following terms:

- Use the prescribed official definition for Candidate for Accreditation in all official publications and correspondence.

  *(Name of Institution) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Candidacy is not Accreditation, nor does it ensure eventual Accreditation. "Candidate for Accreditation" is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward Accreditation.*

- Ensure that Candidacy covers only those programs, degrees, locations, and delivery methodologies at the time Candidacy for Accreditation was granted. Institutional changes subsequent to that date must be approved in advance of implementation by the Commission. (See Substantive Change Policy on the NWCCU website: www.nwccu.org).

- File an Annual Report with the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

- Submit an Interim Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation and host an on-site evaluation visit 18 months after Candidacy for Accreditation is granted to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

- Submit an Interim Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation and host an on-site evaluation visit 36 months after Candidacy for Accreditation is granted to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

- Submit a Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report to address all Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation and host an on-site evaluation visit for a determination of Accreditation within five years after Candidacy for Accreditation is granted. Requests for early consideration of Accreditation must be approved in advance by the President of the Commission.

## Voluntary Withdrawal from Candidacy

An institution may voluntarily withdraw its Candidate for Accreditation status at any time prior to action by the Board of Commissioners.

## Loss of Candidate Status

If the Commission deems that Candidacy status should be removed, a Show-Cause order will be issued requesting that the institution respond to the expressed concerns of the Commission within a specified period of time. The burden of proof rests with the institution to demonstrate why its Candidacy should be continued.

## Appealable Actions in Candidacy

Actions by the Board of Commissioners to impose Probation, issue a Show-Cause order, deny or remove Candidate for Accreditation status, or deny Accreditation may be appealed. (See Appeals Policy and Procedures.) For institutions in Candidacy, the Candidacy for Accreditation status remains in effect during the appeal.

## Reapplication for Candidacy

If the Board of Commissioners denies or removes Candidacy for Accreditation, the institution must wait a minimum of two years following the date of that action before resubmitting a new Application for Consideration of Candidacy.

# PART D: ACCREDITATION

Every NWCCU Accredited institution is required to conduct a thorough self-evaluation at specified intervals to address elements of the Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

- **Important Note:** Accredited institutions must maintain ongoing compliance with all Eligibility Requirements. At its discretion, the Board of Commissioners may request that the institution provide additional reports, submit additional reports, and,or host an on-site peer evaluation visit to demonstrate that ongoing compliance.

## The Self-Study Process

The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. At the beginning of the institutional evaluation process, the self-study provides the necessary preparation for later steps, yet also continues throughout the two to three years

of review for reaffirmation. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high-quality institutional report.

### Accreditation History in the Self-Study Process

In preparation for the Mid-Cycle and Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) self-evaluation reports, institutions are expected to review their accreditation history. This includes the most recent team evaluation report and all Commission action letters received since the last reaccreditation; documents submitted to NWCCU since the last review for reaffirmation of accreditation; and NWCCU responses where applicable (e.g., recommendations related to substantive changes or an interim report).

### Planning for the Self-Study Process

Another essential element at the outset of the self-study is practical planning for how the institution will launch and conduct the accreditation review. Such planning addresses the financial and human resources that will be needed, the structures that will support progress, the timeline and milestones that must be met, and data available or that must be prepared. To the extent possible, institutions are encouraged to make use of existing resources, processes, structures, and offices, such as standing committees, program review processes, and/or institutional research offices.

### Overview of the Seven-Year Accreditation Cycle

The Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) process described below applies to institutions that are seeking reaffirmation of accreditation. All institutions need to demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and policies and with those federal regulations that the Commission is required to evaluate. This process of ongoing self-evaluation ensures that the institution's responses to the Commission's accreditation Standards and the Commission evaluations of those responses remain current and relevant throughout the accreditation cycle.

Because institutions of higher education are complex and dynamic systems that exist within changing environments, the accreditation self-evaluation process is designed to allow for flexibility and growth as institutions seek to maintain quality, implement improvements, and build stability and sustainability. Within this context, the goal of the process is the improvement of student learning, student success, and institutional effectiveness. At the Commission's discretion, institutions may be directed to follow a process that differs from the one described in this Handbook, and those institutions will be guided by other documents describing those reviews.

| | |
|---|---|
| • Mid-Cycle Review | **Year 3** |
| • Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review | **Year 6** |
| • Self-Study Submitted<br>• Evaluation Site Visit<br>• Commission Decision | **Year 7** |

## Annual Reports

All institutions that have Candidacy or Accredited status must submit a report to the Commission annually. Annual Report forms are made available each spring to candidate and member institutions. The purpose of the report is to help the Commission be informed of significant changes taking place at institutions, such as substantive changes, serious budget deficits, crucial enrollment changes, etc. See details about Annual Reports on the NWCCU Website (www.nwccu.org).

- **DUE DATE:** Annual Reports are due no later than August 1.

## Year Three: Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report and Visit

Conducted in the third year of the seven-year cycle, the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation is intended to ascertain an institution's readiness to provide outcomes and evidence in the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness. The Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation is designed to assist institutions in determining if the process of outcomes assessment will lead them to a successful Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE)and intended to be a formative and collegial evaluation with the institution in conversation with the evaluators.

The Mid-Cycle Evaluation includes:

- A thorough self-evaluation report submitted in the third year of the accreditation cycle.

- A review team visit to the institution.

- **DUE DATE:** Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Reports are due to NWCCU and the Evaluation Committee five weeks in advance of the start of the campus visit.

Guidelines for the preparation of Mid-Cycle Self- Evaluation Reports are available on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

## Year Six: Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review

In Year Six of the seven-year cycle, the institution undertakes the Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) under the NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, Standards, Policies and Federal Regulations. The questions this process poses are designed to prompt conversation on institutional capacity and infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and plans for ensuring compliance with the Standards, as well as student learning, student success, institutional effectiveness, and institutional improvement.

The focus of the PRFR is to make preliminary findings based upon the Standards for Accreditation and supplementary documents. The PRFR Report focuses primarily on Standard Two of the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation, as well as the additional elements required by federal regulations.

### DUE DATES:

- Spring reports are due no later than March 1

- Fall reports are due no later than September 15

The review of this report will be conducted off-site by a panel of peer reviewers. The PRFR Committee evaluates the institution and its compliance with the Standards, Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review.

In addition to the evaluation, the PRFR Committee will complete a PRFR Committee Report in order to ensure that the institution is in compliance with the cited federal requirements. This summary is prepared by the team with guidance from the NWCCU staff liaison.

Following the PRFR, the institution receives a summary of strengths, areas that need improvement, questions for which the team seeks answers or clarification, additional materials that may be needed, and any special considerations.

The PRFR Review Summary is a private communication; it is not made public.

### Year Seven: Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness

In Year Seven of the seven-year accreditation cycle, the institution conducts a comprehensive self-evaluation on all Standards and attests to its continued compliance with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements called the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE). The EIE may also address any deficiencies or areas of inquiry from the PRFR Committee Report from the prior year.

- **DUE DATE:** Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Self-Evaluation reports are due to NWCCU and the Evaluation Committee eight weeks in advance of the start of the campus visit.

See Section 4 for an Overview of the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report and its components.

### Commission Evaluation Procedures for Accreditation

NWCCU member institutions are not accredited permanently nor for a fixed number of years. Rather, accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically over a seven-year cycle following a process of self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. The Commission uses the following procedures in evaluating institutions.

### Peer Evaluation

- All peer evaluators are assigned from out-of-state Accredited institutions.

- In selecting evaluators, care is taken to avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest.

- The number of peer evaluators is determined by the nature of the evaluation and characteristics of the institution.

- For Mid-Cycle Evaluations, peer evaluators from other Accredited institutions and appropriate agencies study the institution's Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report and conduct an on-site visit of the institution. The purpose is to provide formative feedback regarding the institution's assessment plan and use of data for quality improvement.

- For the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness, peer evaluators from other Accredited institutions study the institution's Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Self-Evaluation Report, conduct an on-site evaluation with respect to all Standards and Eligibility Requirements, and prepare an Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Peer- Evaluation Report of findings and a Confidential Recommendation.

- The institution is charged a fee for each on-site evaluator. (See the Dues and Fees section of the NWCCU website for the current fee.) The Commission reserves the right to adjust the evaluation fee to fit unusual circumstances associated with on-site evaluations.

**Peer Report Processes**

- For each evaluation, a draft of the Peer-Evaluation Report is prepared and sent to the institution's chief executive officer, who is given an opportunity to correct errors of fact.

- The Peer-Evaluation Report is finalized and submitted to the Commission office.

- Evaluators submit the Confidential Recommendation to the Commission. The Confidential Recommendation is advisory only.

- Electronic copies of the Peer-Evaluation Report are sent to the institution's chief executive officer and Accreditation Liaison Officer.

- The institution is offered an opportunity to provide Commissioners with a written response to the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Peer-Evaluation Report.

**Commission Review**

The Board of Commissioners considers the institution's Self-Evaluation Report, the Peer- Evaluation Report, the institution's written response to the Peer-Evaluation Report (if submitted), verbal statements of the chair of the peer-evaluation committee and institutional representatives (for Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness evaluations), the evaluators' Confidential Recommendation, and third-party comments (if any, for Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness evaluations) in taking action on the reaffirmation of Accreditation.

**Commission Actions for Accreditation**

For the evaluation regarding Reaffirmation of Accreditation, the Board of Commissioners may take one or more of the following actions:

- Reaffirm Accreditation.

- Request a special report (with or without an on-site evaluation) to address specific areas of concern.

- Defer action on Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

- Issue, impose, or continue a sanction (Warning, Probation, or Show-Cause).

- Remove a sanction.

- Terminate Accreditation.

Once the Board of Commissioners makes a decision regarding reaffirmation of Accreditation, the institution is notified of that decision within one month of the date the decision was reached.

## Terms of Agreement for Accredited Institutions

Accredited institutions must agree to the following terms:

- Ensure that Accreditation covers only those programs, degrees, locations, and delivery methodologies at the time the institution was most recently evaluated. Institutional changes subsequent to the last evaluation must be approved in advance of implementation by the Commission (See Substantive Change Policy).

- File an Annual Report with the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

## Voluntary Withdrawal from Accreditation

An institution may voluntarily withdraw its Accreditation status at any time prior to final action by the Commission.

## Loss of Accreditation

If the Commission judges that Accreditation status should be removed, a Show-Cause order will be issued requesting that the institution respond to the expressed concerns of the Commission within a specified period of time. The burden of proof rests with the institution to demonstrate why its Accreditation should be continued.

## Appealable Actions

Actions by the Board of Commissioners to impose Probation, issue a Show-Cause order, or terminate Accreditation status may be appealed. (See Appeals Policy and Procedures.) For Accredited institutions, the Accredited status remains in effect during the appeal.

## Reapplication

An institution for which Accredited status has been terminated must wait a minimum of two years following the date of that action before resubmitting a new Application for Consideration of Eligibility.

## Non-U.S. Based Institutions

In furtherance of its mission and in recognition of the increasing globalization of higher education, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities considers selected applications from institutions of higher education located outside of the United States. The Commission only considers applications from institutions where certain conditions prevail. For an explication of these conditions, please see the Commission's Accreditation of Non-U.S. Institutions Policy.

## Dues and Fees

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities determines annual dues for Candidate and Member institutions based upon total educational and general expenditures and mandatory transfers (exclusive of medical school and hospital budgets) for the previous academic year as reported to IPEDS. Invoices for annual dues are mailed in early fall of each year. In case of special circumstances, the Commission reserves the right to adjust the evaluation fee schedule.

The current dues structure may be found in the Dues and Fees section of the Commission's website (www.nwccu.org).

**Billing**

Institutions are billed for the evaluation fee two months prior to the on-site visit and as appropriate off-site visit. In the case of international institutions and other special circumstances, institutions may be billed in part or in total following the visit.

# SECTION 4

# THE YEAR-SEVEN EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

## OVERVIEW

In Year Seven, accredited institutions submit the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Report in preparation for the visit. This institutional report is based on the findings of the institution's self-study and, with the exception of an institution-specific theme, include the components described below. However, the institution may structure its report in the way it finds best suited to tell its story, reordering and perhaps combining these components as needed.

## REPORT GUIDELINES

### Length of the Report and Citation of Standards

- The institutional report narrative is typically 12,000 to 18,000 words (approximately 50-75 pages, double-spaced) in length.

- In the body of the report, it is helpful to hyperlink to relevant exhibit documents in order to support each assertion and to provide easy navigation for reviewers. Ensure that links go directly to the front page of interest, and that the links remain active through the Commission meeting.

- References to the Standards and citations of specific Eligibility Requirements are included, as appropriate, in the body of the report.

- It is not necessary to cite all the Eligibility Requirements because these will have been addressed as in the Year Six in the Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR). Instead, the institutional report may cite those Eligibility Requirements that are of direct relevance to a topic under discussion.

- In general, each component should include a discussion of the topic within the context of the institution; analyses undertaken; a self-assessment and reflection; areas of strength or significant progress; areas of challenge and improvements needed or planned; and next steps, as appropriate. When plans are described, targets, metrics, and timelines should be included, as appropriate.

- When the institutional report is submitted, it should be accompanied by the Institutional Report Certification Form, signed by the president/chancellor/board chair, affirming the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with the NWCCU 2020 Eligibility Requirements, Standards for Accreditation, and Policies.

### Structure and Contents

1. **Title page to include:**

   a. Title of Self-Evaluation Report

   b. Name of Institution

   c. Date Submitted

2. **Table of Contents**

3. **Institutional Overview (2 pages maximum)**

4. **Basic Institutional Data Form**

    d.  The Basic Institutional Data Form may be found on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org) by hovering over the "Publications, Forms, and Updates" button on the left hand side of the website and selecting the "Forms" option.

    e.  On the Forms page, the document will be found under the heading "Forms for Institutions."

5. **Preface**

    f.  Brief update on institutional changes since the institution's last report

    g.  Response to topics previously requested by the Commission (i.e., Addenda)

6. **Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

    h.  Standard 1.A. *Mission* to include [1 page maximum]:

        i.  Institution's mission statement

    i.  (OPTIONAL) *Core Themes* to include: One Section for each Core Theme [2 pages maximum per Core Theme]:

        i.  Title of the Core Theme

        ii.  Brief description of the Core Theme

        iii.  Objectives to be achieved via the Core Theme

        iv.  Indicators of achievement of the respective Core Theme objectives

        v.  Rationale for the selection of the respective indicators of achievement; why they are assessable and meaningful measures of achievement of the associated Core Theme objectives.

    j.  Standard 1.B. *Improving Institutional Effectiveness*

        i.  Definition and articulation of mission fulfillment through meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators and in comparison to regional and national peer institutions

        ii.  Evidence of continuous process of assessing institutional effectiveness

        iii.  Evidence of systematic evaluation and participatory planning to assign and allocate resources and to improve student learning and achievement

        iv.  Evidence of monitoring internal and external environments, and through the governance system, assessing strategic position and define future direction

k.  Standard 1.C. *Student Learning*

    i.  Evidence of appropriate content and rigor for degree designations and disciplines and of identified and published programmatic and student learning outcomes demonstrating appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing and synthesis of learning for programs

    ii.  Evidence of admissions and graduation requirements widely published and easily assessible

    iii.  Evidence of an effective system of assessment of student learning in programs with faculty establishing curricula, assessing student learning, and improving instructional programs

    iv.  Evidence of institutional level outcomes, core competencies, or General Education curriculum for undergraduate programs

    v.  Evidence of the use of assessment efforts to inform planning and practices, and to continuously improve student learning outcomes

    vi.  Evidence of published and easily accessible transfer of credit and credit for prior learning policies to safeguard academic quality.

    vii.  Evidence of distinction of graduate programs from undergraduate programs in depth of study, creative or intellectual capacity, knowledge of field, and student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

l.  Standard 1.D. *Student Achievement*

    viii.  Evidence of recruitment and admission of students with the potential to benefit, along with orientation of students sharing academic requirements and policies

    ix.  Evidence of established and widely shared student achievement indicators disaggregated in meaningful categories for the purpose of promoting student achievement and closing barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps), and in comparison with peer institutions

    x.  Evidence of widely published disaggregated indicators of student achievement, benchmarked against peer institutions, and used for efforts of continuous improvement

    xi.  Evidence of transparent processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement and uses to inform and implement strategies to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity

7.  **Conclusion [3 pages maximum]**

8.  **Appendices (REQUIRED)**

Response to any concerns raised in the peer-evaluation report of the Year Six, Standard 2 review, Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR); please attach the institution's Year Six PRFR Report and the Peer-Evaluation Report associated with the institution's PRFR report.

## Report Layout

- Use letter size portrait orientation (81/2" wide by 11" high) with 1" margins on all sides.

- Use 11- or 12-point type face for the body of the report. Larger fonts may be used for major headings which should be in bold print face. Do not use script or italic as the primary font.

- Number all pages (except Title page and Table of Contents page).

- Single space text in the body of the report.

## Publication of Report

- Provide the body of the self-evaluation report as a single Windows-compatible PDF file.

- If available, appendices may also be sent as a single PDF attachment.

- Non-PDF files and multi-file documents may be returned.

- The file should be emailed to: reports@nwccu.org.

## Submission of the Report

Submit the following to the Commission Office:

- One (1) electronic copy of the self-evaluation report; and

- One (1) copy of the institution's catalog (electronic acceptable).

Submit the following to each evaluator:

- One electronic copy of the self-evaluation report, and

- One copy of the institution's catalog to each evaluator (electronic acceptable).

**Please contact the Commission Office at 425-558-4224 if you have questions on these guidelines.**

# SECTION 5:
# INSTITUTIONAL VISITS

## OVERVIEW

NWCCU conducts institutional visits for the purposes of determining readiness to be granted initial accreditation, to reaffirm accreditation, and/or to investigate specific issues that may emerge related to NWCCU's Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies.

## ROLES

### The Accreditation Liaison Officer

The institution's designated Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) is the primary contact between NWCCU staff and the institution for all matters related to NWCCU accreditation, including annual reporting and the review and institutional visit process. Team members serving on reviews will also communicate with the ALO on matters related to visit logistics.

If someone other than the ALO is delegated responsibility for overseeing any part of NWCCU accreditation processes, the ALO is responsible for keeping that person updated and forwarding to that person any necessary information sent by NWCCU or a peer review team.

### The NWCCU Staff Liaison

Every institution seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation has a designated NWCCU staff liaison (see NWCCU's website for a list of institutional liaisons: www.nwccu.org).

The liaison, together with other NWCCU staff members, provides support and guidance to the institution, the peer evaluator team, and the Commission throughout the accreditation process. Institutions may also reach out to their NWCCU staff liaisons to clarify accreditation requirements and processes (e.g., Substantive Change).

### The Peer Evaluator Team

Throughout the institutional evaluation process, representatives of the institution interact with peer evaluator team members. The team, composed primarily of experienced educators from peer institutions as well as other experts identified to address specific needs of the institution, has the responsibility to evaluate the institution under NWCCU's Standards for Accreditation and policies. The evaluation team's work involves the following: reading the institutional report, exhibits, and other documents; conducting the visit; and preparing a report of the team's findings and recommendations.

## INSTITUTIONAL VISITS

### Candidacy

When an Applicant institution determines that it is ready for an evaluation for determination of Candidacy, its chief executive officer makes a written request to the President of the Commission to schedule the on-site evaluation visit. See Section 3 of this Handbook for more details on this process.

When the request is approved, suggested dates for the visit are provided to the institution. Once the dates are confirmed, the on-site evaluation is scheduled, and logistical arrangements are made.

## Reaffirmation of Accreditation

As part of the reaffirmation process in Year Seven, a multi-day visit takes place one year after the Policy, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR).

Before the visit, the institution shares with the team the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness report.

During the visit, the team is focused on evaluating institutional effectiveness, particularly as it relates to student success, using institutionally identified indicators for student learning and student achievement, such as course completion, experiential learning, retention, program completion, degree completion, job placement. The team also meets with institutional representatives to follow up on outstanding issues as needed from the PRFR, and to verify or revise its preliminary findings about compliance and improvement. The institution has an opportunity to demonstrate how it has responded to issues raised or questions asked at the time of the PRFR, and to address additional questions the team may have.

Following the visit, the team shares its draft team report with the institution for correction of errors of fact and concerns related to the sharing of proprietary information. The team then finalizes the team report and forwards it to the Commission for action.

At the next Commission meeting, the commissioners review the institutional self-study report, the evaluation team report and recommendations, and any other pertinent information relevant to the Year Seven evaluation. At this time the institution is availed the opportunity to provide its response to the evaluation site visit and report, after which the commissioners render a decision about the institution's accreditation status and any needed follow-up actions.

## INSTITUTIONAL VISIT RESOURCES

NWCCU provides several resources to aid institutions and teams in preparing for visits, including:

- ALO Handbook
- Training Resources for Peer Evaluators
- Templates and Forms for Chairs and Evaluators
- Visit Logistics Form

These and other resources are available on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

# SECTION 6:
# COMMISSION DECISIONS

## PART A: FORMS OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

The Commission serves as the decision-making and policy-setting body of NWCCU. The Commission is responsible for determining the action taken for eligibility, candidacy, initial accreditation, and reaffirmation of accreditation of institutions being reviewed.

### Commission Review Process

Following the team visit, the Commission reviews:

- The accreditation history of the institution.

- The institutional report and exhibits.

- The peer review team's report.

- The response, if any, of the institution to the peer review team report.

- Any comments made by the institution's representatives to the Commission subsequent to the peer review team report.

- Any other pertinent documents.

The Commission bases its decisions on the evaluation of the evidence before it. Institutional representatives have the opportunity to come before the Commission during the panel deliberations prior to Commission action. The Commission may reaffirm accreditation or impose a sanction or other conditions, in accordance with the 2020 Handbook of Accreditation.

### Action Letters

Once the Commission has made a decision regarding the accreditation of an institution, it notifies the institution in the form of an action letter as promptly as possible, but no later than 30 days from the Commission meeting. Action letters may contain special conditions, limits, or restrictions, which the institution is expected to follow in order to maintain accreditation. Examples include, but are not limited to requiring progress reports, interim reports, or special visits, or placing restrictions on the initiation of new degree programs, the opening of additional sites, or enrollment growth.

Following Commission actions, all action letters and team reports for candidate and accredited institutions are made public on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org). A report of Commission actions is published and distributed following Commission meetings, and each institution's status is noted on the website in the Directory of Institutions listing. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education is notified of Commission actions.

### Accreditors' Shared Framework

Accrediting commissions share a common framework and a common understanding of terms for certain actions regarding accredited institutions: Warning, Probation, Show Cause, Withdrawal of Accreditation, Denial of Accreditation, and Appeal.

**Public Sanctions**

- **Warning**: Indicates that an institution has been determined by the commission as not meeting one or more standards for accreditation.

- **Probation**: Indicates that an institution has been determined by the commission as not meeting one or more standards for accreditation and is an indication of a serious concern on the part of the commission regarding the level and/or scope of non-compliance issues related to the standards.

  o By federal regulation, the Commission must take immediate action to withdraw accreditation if an institution is out of compliance with accreditation standards for two years unless the time is extended for good cause.

- **Show Cause**: An institution is asked to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. A written report from the institution and, if specified by the commission, a focused visit are preliminary to a hearing with the commission. Show cause may occur during or at the end of the two-year probation period, or at any time a commission determines that an institution must demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn (i.e., probation is not a necessary precursor to show cause).

- **Withdrawal of Accreditation**: An institution's accredited status is withdrawn, and with it, membership in the Commission.

- **Denial of Accreditation**: An institution is denied initial accreditation because it does not meet the requirements for accreditation.

- **Appeal**: The withdrawal or denial of accreditation may be appealed. Institutions remain accredited (or candidates for initial accreditation) during the period of the appeal.

## Forms of Possible Commission Action

The forms of possible Commission action with regard to institutions include:

- Grant Candidacy
- Grant Initial Accreditation
- Deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation
- Defer Action
- Reaffirm Accreditation
- Issue a Warning (Sanction)
- Impose Probation (Sanction)
- Issue an Order to Show Cause (Sanction)
- Withdraw Candidacy or Accreditation

## Grant Candidacy

The institution must demonstrate that it meets all Eligibility Requirements and meets all of the Standards at a minimum level, and that it has a clear plan in place to meet the Standards at a substantial level of compliance for accreditation.

**Criteria for Sufficient for Candidacy (Minimum Level):**

The institution must:

- Meet all Eligibility Requirements.

- Demonstrate evidence of elementary or initial development and implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the Standards.

- Demonstrate an application of the principles of each Standard at a sufficient level to support continued development.

- Demonstrate that the understanding of principles is held at multiple relevant organizational levels.

Candidacy is limited to five years and is granted only when an institution can demonstrate that it is likely to become accredited during the five-year period.

## Grant Initial Accreditation

The institution must demonstrate that it has met all Eligibility Requirements and met all of the Standards at a substantial level.

**Criteria for Sufficient for Initial Accreditation (Substantial Level):**

The institution must:

- Demonstrate evidence that the core principle of the Standard is understood and articulated clearly as it applies to relevant operations.

- Demonstrate thorough and widespread implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the Standards with evidence of sustainable commitment.

Accreditation must be reaffirmed by a comprehensive visit and Commission action no later than six years following initial accreditation.

## Deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation

Denial of Candidacy or Initial Accreditation reflects the Commission's finding that an institution has failed to demonstrate that it meets all, or nearly all, of the Standards at the required level for Candidacy or Initial Accreditation.

- In this circumstance, Commission policy provides that an institution may reapply once it has demonstrated that it has addressed the issues leading to the denial.

- In all cases, the institution must wait at least two years before reapplying.

- Denial is an appealable action.

## Defer Action

Deferral of action is not a final decision. It is provisional and designed to provide time for the institution to correct specific deficiencies. This action allows the Commission to indicate to an institution the need for additional information or progress in one or more specified areas before a positive decision can be made. Deferrals are granted for a maximum period of one year.

## Reaffirm Accreditation

Reaffirmation is not granted for a specified period of years. Reaffirmation of accreditation occurs at the completion of the Institutional evaluation process or when an institution is taken off of a sanction. It indicates that the Commission has found that an institution has met or exceeded the expectations of the Standards.  The Commission may also request other reports and/or Special Visits.

## Sanctions

Under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when the Commission finds that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards, it is required to notify the institution of these findings and give the institution up to two years from the date of this action to correct the situation. If an institution has not remedied the deficiencies at the conclusion of the two-year sanction period, the Commission is required, under U.S. Department of Education regulations, to take an adverse action, defined in the law as the denial or withdrawal of accreditation. Thus, all institutions under sanction must address the areas cited by the Commission expeditiously, with seriousness and demonstrable attention of the institution's leadership. It is the responsibility of the Commission to determine, at the end of the sanction period, if the institution has corrected the situation(s) and has come into compliance with the Standards.

- The Commission has adopted three sanctions – **Warning, Probation, or Show Cause** – to inform the institution and the public of the severity of its concerns about an institution's failure to meet one or more Eligibility Requirements or Standards for Accreditation or one or more of any conditions or restrictions that were contained in a Commission action letter.

- Sanctions are not intended to be applied sequentially. Whichever sanction is imposed, the Commission is required by federal law to withdraw accreditation, rather than to continue the institution under the same or a new sanction for another two-year period, unless clear progress has been made within two years.

- All sanctions are made public and are published on NWCCU's website. NWCCU publishes the Commission action letter and related team report, in accordance with the Public Disclosure of Information Regarding Type of Accreditation Granted, Criteria, Accreditation Procedures, Evaluation Schedule, and Commissioners' and Commission Staff Policy.

- The institution is expected to notify its constituents about the Commission action.

When an institution is placed on a sanction, the Commission may request that a meeting be held between NWCCU staff, the institution's chief executive officer, representatives of the institutional governing board, and senior faculty leadership within 90 days following the imposition of the sanction. The purposes of the meeting are: 1) to communicate the reasons for the Commission action, 2) to learn of the institution's plan to notify the institutional community about the action, and 3) to discuss the institution's plan for addressing the issues that gave rise to the sanction.

## Extension of Two-Year Time Frame: Good Cause

Federal regulation permits an extension of the two-year time frame when good cause is found. The Commission has determined that it will grant an extension for good cause only under exceptional circumstances and only when the following criteria are met:

> The institution must have demonstrated significant accomplishments in addressing the areas of noncompliance during the period under sanction, AND

> The institution must have demonstrated at least partial compliance with the Standard(s) cited, and, for any remaining deficiencies, demonstrate actions toward addressing those deficiencies, and readiness, institutional capacity, and a plan to remedy those deficiencies within the period of extension granted by the Commission.

In determining whether these criteria have been met, the Commission may also consider whether:

- The quality of education provided by the institution is judged to be in substantial compliance with the Standards at the time of the extension, AND

- The Commission has evidence of any new or continuing violations of NWCCU Eligibility Requirements or Standards for Accreditation, AND

- The Commission has evidence of other reasons or current circumstances as to why the institution should not be continued for good cause.

The Commission may extend accreditation for good cause for a maximum of two additional years, depending on the seriousness of the issues involved, and on its judgment of how much additional time is appropriate. By the conclusion of the extension period identified by the Commission, the institution must prepare a report that details its compliance with those Standards cited by the Commission. Demonstrated compliance with the Standards is required and must be supported by verifiable evidence. Progress or promises of future action after such an extension are not sufficient.

## Issue a Warning (Sanction)

A Warning reflects the Commission's finding that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards for Accreditation. While on Warning:

- Any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change.

- The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the Warning period.

The Commission action to issue a Warning is subject to Commission Review, described below.

## Impose Probation (Sanction)

Probation reflects the Commission's finding that the institution has serious issues of noncompliance with one or more of the Standards. While on Probation:

- The institution is subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to receive special visits by representatives of the Commission.

- Any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change.

- The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the Probation period.

The Commission action to impose Probation is subject to Commission Review, described below.

### Issue an Order to Show Cause (**Sanction**)

When the Commission finds that an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to address identified concerns or when an institution is found to be in serious non-compliance with the Commission's accreditation criteria, it may require the institution to show cause why its candidacy or accreditation should not be terminated. In such cases:

- The burden rests with the institution to demonstrate why its candidacy or accreditation should be continued.

- The institution must demonstrate that it has responded satisfactorily to Commission concerns, has come into compliance with all Standards, and will likely be able to sustain compliance.

- The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the period of Show Cause.

- The institution will be subject to Commission monitoring, which may include a requirement to submit prescribed reports and to receive visits for evaluation by Commission representatives.

- The accredited status of the institution continues during the Show Cause period.

- Any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change and requires prior approval.

In addition, the institution may be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may include special conditions and the requirement to submit prescribed reports or receive special visits by representatives of the Commission.

### Withdraw Candidacy or Accreditation

A decision to withdraw candidacy or accreditation is made by the Commission when an institution has been found to be seriously out of compliance with one or more Standards.

- Although not required, a decision to withdraw accreditation may be made after an Order to Show Cause or another sanction has been imposed and the institution has failed to come into compliance.

- When accreditation is withdrawn, a specific date of implementation is specified.

- An action to withdraw candidacy or accreditation is subject to the NWCCU appeals process.

- If an institution closes after a withdrawal action, the institution must comply with federal requirements and NWCCU policies about teach-out. See the Teach Out Plans and Teach Out Agreement Policy on the NWCCU website for details.

## Summary Sanctions for Unethical Institutional Behavior

If verifiable information becomes available to the Commission or its staff that an institution is seriously out of compliance with Standards in a manner that requires immediate attention, investigations will be conducted and the institution will be offered an opportunity to respond on the matter. If the Commission concludes that the institution is seriously out of compliance due to unlawful or unethical action it may:

- Sever relations if the institution has applied for, but has not yet been granted, candidacy or accreditation; or

- If the institution is a candidate or accredited, either issue an Order to Show Cause why its candidacy or accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period; or in an extreme case, sever its relationship with the institution by denying or withdrawing candidacy or accreditation; or

- Apply less severe sanctions as deemed appropriate.

## PART B: COMMISSION REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR INSTITUTIONS ON SANCTION

Institutions that are placed on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause, or for whose applications for accreditation are denied, may request a review of this decision according to the following procedures. These review procedures are designed as a continuation of the accreditation peer review process and are therefore considered to be non-adversarial.

1. When the Commission takes any of the actions listed above, its President will notify the institution of the decision by a method requiring a signature, within 14 calendar days of the Commission's decision. Said notification shall contain a succinct statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision.

2. If the institution desires a review of the Commission action, it shall file with the President of the Commission a request for a review under the policies and procedures of the Commission. This request is to be submitted by the chief executive officer of the institution and co-signed by the chair of the governing board. Requests for review by an institution in a multi-college system shall also be signed by the chief executive officer of the system. The request for review must be received by a method requiring a signature, within 28 calendar days of the date of the mailing of the Commission's notification of its decision to the institution. The fee for the review process shall accompany the request.

3. Within 21 calendar days after the date of its request for review, the institution, through its chief executive officer, must submit a written statement of the specific reasons why, in the institution's opinion, a review of the Commission's decision is warranted. This written statement shall respond only to the Commission's statement of reasons for the Commission's decision and to the evidence that was before the Commission at the time of its decision. In so doing, the institution shall identify the basis for its request for review in one or more of the following areas: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the review team and/or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the review team or Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (3) the evidence before the Commission prior to and

on the date when it made the decision that is being questioned was materially in error; or (4) the decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

    a.    The institution may not introduce new evidence that was not received by the Commission at the time it made the decision under review. It is the responsibility of the institution to identify in the statement of reasons what specific information was not considered, or was improperly considered, by the visiting team or the Commission and to demonstrate that such acts or omissions were a material factor in the negative decision under review.

    b.    The statement of reasons will be reviewed by Commission staff for compliance with this provision. If, in the judgment of Commission staff, the statement of reasons is deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission chair. Should the Commission chair concur with the judgment of Commission staff, no review committee will be appointed, and the statement will be returned to the institution.

4.    If the statement of reasons is returned, the institution will be provided the opportunity to revise the statement within 21 calendar days from the date the notice of return is sent to the institution. Should the institution resubmit its statement of reasons within the prescribed time period, the revised statement will be reviewed by Commission staff. If the revised statement is still found to be deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission chair. Should the Commission chair concur that the revised statement is deficient, no review committee will be appointed. This action is final.

## Review Committee: Selection and Process

1.    Upon acceptance of the institution's written statement referred to in 3. above, a committee of three or more persons will be selected by Commission staff to serve as the review committee.

    a.    A roster of the review committee will be sent to the institution, normally within 30 calendar days of the date of the Commission's receipt of the institution's written statement.

    b.    No person who has served as a member of the visiting team whose report is subject to review shall be eligible to serve on the review committee.

    c.    The institution will be provided the opportunity to object for cause to any of the proposed review committee members.

    d.    After giving the institution this opportunity, Commission staff will finalize the membership of the review committee.

2.    Within a reasonable period of time after the review committee has been selected, the President of the Commission will schedule a meeting of the review committee at a location separate from the institution and Commission offices. No assurance can be made that the review committee process will take place in time for the review to be included on the agenda of the next Commission meeting.

3.    Prior to the meeting of the review committee, the committee members will review available information. If additional information is needed, the chair of the review committee may request such information from the chief executive officer of the institution, Commission staff, or the visiting team, before, during, or after the meeting of the review committee.

4. The review will be investigative and designed to determine if any of the grounds for review cited by the institution are valid.

    a. Commission staff other than the NWCCU liaison for the contested Commission action will assist the review committee as needed.

    b. The Committee may interview, among others, Commission readers, the chair or members of the previous visiting team, and the Commission staff member who supported the team visit.

    c. Outside legal counsel is not permitted to attend or be present in meetings with the review committee without the consent of the review committee chair. If allowed to be present, legal counsel will not be allowed to conduct any part of the proceedings but will be permitted to advise institutional representatives as needed. The Commission legal counsel may advise the review committee but may not attend those portions of the review committee's meetings when it is meeting with institutional representatives, unless legal counsel for the institution is also permitted to be present.

5. The review committee should open and close its meeting with the chief executive officer or other institutional representatives by attempting to ascertain whether or not the institution has any complaints about any aspect of the review process.

    a. All written evidence is to be provided to the review committee together with the institution's request for review. The Commission office shall provide the review committee with documents that were available to the Commission at the time of its action.

    b. The review committee may evaluate additional evidence that, in its opinion, is relevant to its recommendation to the Commission. If additional information is requested from the institution, it is to be provided at least seven business days in advance of the review committee's meeting.

    c. The review committee is only allowed to consider evidence that was available to or known by the Commission at the time of it taking action. No new evidence or information relating to actions or events subsequent to the date of the Commission action is to be presented or considered by the review committee.

6. The review committee shall prepare a report that states the reasons for the Commission action, identifies each reason advanced by the institution in its request for review, and, for each reason, evaluates the evidence that the institution has presented in support of its request for review. The report shall state only findings of fact and not consider or cite any evidence relating to facts or events occurring after the date of Commission action.

7. The chair of the review committee will submit a copy of the review committee's report that is referred to the chief executive officer of the institution, the chair of the institution's governing board, and the President of the Commission, normally within 30 calendar days of the end of the review committee's meeting.

8. In a confidential letter to the Commission, the review committee will recommend whether the Commission decision that is under review should be affirmed, modified, or rescinded. This recommendation of the review committee to the Commission will not be disclosed to the institution being reviewed. The recommendation is not binding on the Commission.

9. Within 14 calendar days of the institution's receipt of the review committee's report, the chief executive officer will submit a written response to the President of the Commission, with a copy to the chair of the review committee, for transmittal to the Commission. The review will be placed on the agenda of the next upcoming Commission meeting, for consideration by the Commissioners.

10. Prior to the Commission meeting, a reader meeting will be conducted by conference call or in person where the chief executive officer of the institution and a limited number of institutional representatives will be invited to discuss the review committee report with those Commissioners designated as readers. The chair of the review committee will also be invited to participate in the call. Discussion at this reader meeting will be confined to the report of the review committee and to the institution's response to this report.

11. The Commission readers will report the substance of this meeting to the Commission when it meets. Institutional representatives will be invited to appear before the Commission before it takes action.

12. The Commission will reach a final decision to: (1) reaffirm its original decision; (2) modify it; or (3) reverse it. As soon after the meeting as is practical, the President of the Commission will notify the chief executive officer of the institution, by a method requiring their signature, of the Commission's decision.

13. Special charges for the review process have been established by the Commission. A list of these charges is available on the Dues & Fees page of the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

14. The Commission may develop any necessary procedures and instructions to review committees to implement this process. These materials will be available from the Commission office.

## PART C: REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITATION STATUS

### Notifications

The Commission will provide written notice to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, other accrediting agencies, NWCCU-accredited and candidate institutions, and the public no later than 30 days after it makes:

- A decision to grant initial accreditation, candidacy, or reaffirmation.

- A final decision to place an institution on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause.

- A final decision to deny or withdraw candidacy or accreditation.

- Final approval of all substantive and structural changes.

No later than 60 days after a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, the Commission will make available to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the agency's decision.

## Institutional Decisions Regarding Accreditation Status

The Commission will, within 30 days, notify the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency if an institution voluntarily withdraws from candidacy or accreditation, or allows its candidacy or accreditation to lapse.

## Regard for Decisions of Other Agencies

If the Commission is notified by another recognized accrediting agency that an applicant or candidate institution has had a status of recognition with that agency denied, revoked, or withdrawn, the Commission will take such action into account in its own review if it is determined that the other agency's action resulted from an institutional deficiency that reflects a lack of compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation.

If the Commission is notified by another recognized accrediting agency that an accredited institution has had a status of recognition with that agency revoked, suspended, or withdrawn, or has been placed on a publicly announced probationary status by such an accrediting agency, the Commission will review its own status of recognition of that institution to determine if the other agency's action resulted from an institutional deficiency that reflects a lack of compliance with NWCCU's Standards for Accreditation. If so, the Commission will determine if the institution's status with the Commission needs to be called into question, or if any follow-up action is needed.

If the Commission is notified by a state agency that an applicant, candidate, or accredited institution has been informed of suspension, revocation, or withdrawal of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education, the Commission will review its own status of recognition for that institution to determine compliance with the Standards for Accreditation. If the Commission finds the institution is no longer in compliance with the Standards, the Commission will determine the appropriate action to be taken.

In regard to implementation, the Commission relies on other accrediting bodies and state agencies to inform the Commission of their actions so that the Commission can undertake the review specified. Applicants for eligibility with the Commission shall provide information on any actions by a recognized accrediting association within the past five years. In addition, the Commission requires candidate and accredited institutions holding accredited or candidate status from more than one U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting body to keep each accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

# APPENDICES

The following appendices are provided as resources to support institutions and peer evaluators in the accreditation process.

# APPENDIX A:
# STANDARD 2 EVIDENCE CHECKLIST

**Purpose:**

The items listed in the table below are required evidence to be submitted for the review of compliance associated with Standard 2. The institution may choose to include additional documentation or evidence.

**Directions to Institutions:**

- If submitting large documents (such as the Catalog), please use this worksheet to indicate specific pages where items may be located.

- If items are located on the institution's website, please include the permanent link and any guidance as to where item is on the page, if needed.

| ELEMENT | SPECIFIC ASSOCIATED STANDARD | REQUIRED ITEM (If present, note in check box.) | LINKS OR NOTES, PAGES, COMMENTS, OR CONCERNS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Governance** | 2.A.1 Board | ❑ Institutional governance policies & procedures | |
| | | ❑ System governance policies/ procedures (if applicable) | |
| | | ❑ Multiple board governing policies/ procedures (if applicable) | |
| | | ❑ Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies/ procedures | |
| | | ❑ By-laws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure | |
| | 2.A.2 Leadership | ❑ Leadership organizational chart | |
| | | ❑ Curriculum vitae of executive leadership | |
| | 2.A.3 CEO / President | ❑ Curriculum vitae of President/ CEO | |
| | 2.A.4 Decision-making | ❑ Institutional governance policies & procedures (see 2.A.1) | |
| **Academic Freedom** | 2.B.1 and 2.B.2 Academic freedom | ❑ Academic freedom policies and procedures | |

| Policies and Procedures | 2.C.1<br><br>Transfer of credit | ❑ Transfer of credit policies / procedures | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.C.2<br><br>Students' rights, responsibilities | Documentation of students' rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include:<br><br>   ❑  Academic honesty<br><br>   ❑  Appeals, grievances<br><br>   ❑  Accommodations for persons with disabilities<br><br>(Student handbook or catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) | |
| | 2.C.3<br><br>Admissions; placement; academic standing | ❑ Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students<br>(If Catalog, please note specific pages.) | |
| | | ❑ Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures<br>(If Catalog, please note specific pages.) | |
| | 2.C.4<br><br>Student records | ❑ Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies | |
| Institutional Integrity | 2.D.1<br><br>Truthful representation | ❑ Policies/procedures/ for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity | |
| | 2.D.2<br><br>Ethics and complaints | ❑ Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances | |
| | 2.D.3<br><br>Conflicts of interest | ❑ Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Financial Resources** | 2.E.1<br><br>Audits, oversight | ❑ Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources | |
| | | ❑ Latest external financial audit including management letter | |
| | | ❑ Cash flow balance sheets | |
| | 2.E.2<br><br>Planning | ❑ Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds | |
| | 2.E.3<br>Management | ❑ Description of internal financial controls | |
| | | ❑ Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies | |
| **Human Resources** | 2.F.1<br><br>Employee information | ❑ Human resource policies / procedures | |
| | | ❑ Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation | |
| | | ❑ Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination | |
| | 2.F.2 Professional development | ❑ Employee professional development policies/procedures | |
| | 2.F.3<br><br>Sufficiency | ❑ Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate | |
| | | ❑ Personnel hiring policy/procedures | |
| | | ❑ Academic organizational chart | |
| | 2.F.4<br><br>Evaluation | ❑ Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures | |

| Student Support Resources | 2.G.1<br><br>Effective learning and student support environment | ❑ Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.G.2<br><br>Publication of information | Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding:<br><br>❑ Institutional mission<br><br>❑ Admission requirements and procedures<br><br>❑ Grading policy<br><br>❑ Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion<br><br>❑ Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty<br><br>❑ Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities;<br><br>❑ Tuition, fees, and other program costs<br><br>❑ Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment<br><br>❑ Opportunities and requirements for financial aid<br><br>❑ The academic calendar<br><br>(See 2.C.2)<br><br>(Student handbook or catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) | |

| | 2.G.3<br><br>Licensure;<br>employment<br>requirements | Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:<br><br>❑ Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered.<br><br>❑ Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials. | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | 2.G.4<br><br>Financial Aid | ❑ Published financial aid policies/ procedures including information about categories of financial assistance<br>(Student handbook or catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) | |
| | | ❑ Information to students regarding repayment obligations | |
| | | ❑ Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs | |

| | 2.G.6<br>Advising | ❑ Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications (Student handbook or catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas)<br><br>❑ Systematic evaluation of advising<br><br>❑ Professional development policies / procedures for advisors | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.G.7<br>Identity verification (distance ed.) | ❑ Policies/procedures for ensuring identity verification for students enrolling in distance education courses | |
| **Library and Information Resources** | 2.H.1<br>Library and information resources | ❑ Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections | |
| | | ❑ Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development | |
| | | ❑ Library instruction plan; policies/ procedures related to the use of library and information resources | |
| | | ❑ Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process | |
| **Physical and Technology Infrastructure** | 2.I.1 | Facilities master plan, including<br><br>❑ Equipment replacement policies/procedures<br><br>❑ Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities | |
| | | ❑ Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities | |
| | | ❑ Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste | |
| | | ❑ Technology master plan and planning processes | |
| | | ❑ Technology / equipment update and replacement plan | |

# APPENDIX B:
# RUBRIC FOR INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS - STANDARDS 1.B.1 – 1.B.4

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this rubric is to support institutions and peer review teams in ensuring institutional effectiveness as detailed in Standards 1.B.1 – 1.B.4 in NWCCU's 2020 Standards for Accreditation.

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.B.1**<br><br>Process for assessing institutional effectiveness | Preliminary on-campus dialogue and exploration of institutional effectiveness assessment structures and practices | Established structures and practices for assessing institutional effectiveness; assessment occurring in some areas | Systematic and regular process of assessing institutional effectiveness including student learning, achievement, and support services. | Assessment of institutional effectiveness is systematic and leads to continuous quality improvement of all institutional systems, structures, practices, and student learning and achievement outcomes. |
| **1.B.1**<br><br>Evaluation and planning process inform institutional effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. | Planning and evaluation are evident in some areas of institution's programs and services. Some data and evidence are provided to support program and institution-wide planning efforts. | The institution has defined planning processes in alignment with mission fulfillment objectives and outcomes, including student learning and achievement outcomes. There is an emerging understanding of the alignment of unit level, cross-functional, and institutional plans. | Integrated planning processes are clearly defined, understood, and systematic.<br><br>The institution assesses progress toward achieving mission fulfillment indicators over time. | Ongoing, systematic, evidence-informed evaluation and planning are used to inform and refine systems, practices, strategies, and assign resources.<br><br>There is consistent and continuous commitment to improving student learning and achievement; educational effectiveness is a demonstrable priority in all planning structures and processes.<br><br>There is sufficient evidence that the institution has improved student learning and achievement as a result of ongoing and systematic planning and evaluation processes. |

| 1.B.2.<br><br>The institution sets meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators to define mission fulfillment and improve effectiveness | There is recognition of case need for quantitative and qualitative data, indicators, and analysis in planning and institutional effectiveness structures. | The institution has established core theme or mission fulfillment objectives, indicators, and goals. Standardized data are accessible at both unit and institutional levels. The institution uses applicable quantitative and qualitative data to improve effectiveness in some areas. | The institution assesses progress toward achieving its mission fulfillment objectives over time, using longitudinal data and analyses. Both standardized and program-specific data and performance measures are used to inform unit planning, program review, and institutional plans. | Mission fulfillment objectives, indicators, goals, and outcomes are widely distributed, discussed, analyzed, and used to determine strategic priorities. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.B.2<br><br>The goals, objectives, and indicators of mission fulfillment or institutional effectiveness are in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peers | There is no evidence that mission fulfillment data has improved effectiveness in comparison with regional and national peers. | Regional and national peers have been identified; minimal evidence that mission fulfillment data has improved effectiveness in comparison with regional and national peers. | Regional and national peers have been identified based on clear criteria; evidence that mission fulfillment data has improved effectiveness in comparison with regional and national peers. | Regional and national peers have been identified with clear criteria.<br><br>Data are analyzed and there is extensive evidence that the institution has improved institutional effectiveness in the context of regional and national peer institutions.<br><br>Regional and national peer institutions are regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate and meaningful comparison. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.B.3**<br><br>The planning process is inclusive, allocates resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness. | There is minimal evidence of the involvement of the various constituents.<br><br>There is minimal linkage between planning efforts, resource allocation, and outcomes. | Planning processes reflect the participation of an expanding constituent base.<br><br>There is some evidence that formal planning processes are aligned with mission fulfillment and strategic priorities.<br><br>Planning guides resource prioritization and allocation. | Processes reflect the participation and meaningful contribution of a broad constituent base.<br><br>Formal planning is clearly aligned to institutional objectives, indicators, and outcomes. Planning regularly guides resource allocation. | The institution provides evidence that its planning processes are broad-based, offer opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocate necessary resources, and lead to improvement of institutional outcomes. |
| **1.B.4**<br><br>Internal and external environmental monitoring. | There is minimal evidence of monitoring internal and external environments.<br><br>Current and emerging evidence of patterns and trends are not developed. | The institution has initiated monitoring of internal and external environments; data and evidence are used in some areas to inform planning and resource allocation. | The institution has developed structures for monitoring internal and external environments. Data and evidence from internal and environmental monitoring are used regularly in planning and resource allocation. | The institution monitors its internal and external environments continuously and systematically to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Data and evidence are systematically and regularly used to inform planning and resource allocation. |
| **1.B.4.**<br><br>Governance system engagement in institutional effectiveness | Planning and institutional effectiveness efforts are discussed in some areas of institutional governance | Governance, policy, and decision-making processes are informed by a review of institutional effectiveness. | Institutional effectiveness reports, findings, and recommendations are regularly discussed and addressed through the institution's governance system | Through its governance system, the institution uses findings and recommendations to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, the intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement. |

# APPENDIX C:
# RUBRIC FOR STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS 1.C.1 – 1. C.9

## Purpose:

The purpose of this rubric is to support institutions and peer review teams in assuring student learning as detailed in Standard 1.C.1 – 1.C.9 in NWCCU's 2020 Standards for Accreditation.

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.1** Program content is consistent with recognized fields of study. | No recognized processes for reviewing and updating program content or aligning with recognized fields of study. | Review and update of program content in line with recognized fields of study on a regular schedule in some programs. | Systematic review of all programs includes alignment with fields of study. | All program content is systematically reviewed for relevance and applicability in line with currently recognized fields of study. |
| **1.C.1** Appropriate rigor in student learning outcomes leads to college-level degrees, certificates, or credentials in programs of study.[1] | Course sequencing is based on traditional course numbering; some conversations about appropriate levels within disciplines or among faculty teaching the same course. | Regular processes exist for ensuring comparability in assessment standards appropriate to course level and sequencing; conversations about appropriate levels of rigor in student learning outcomes occurs in some programs. | Definitions of rigor exist and are used to determine appropriate levels of learning for courses, sequences, of courses, and program requirements; rigor builds across an academic program. | Intentionally crafted and sequenced learning activities supported by research provide students the opportunities to create and demonstrate their understanding; students articulate rigor in terms of learning. |
| **1.C.2** Awards of credit, degree, certificates, or credentials for programs are based on student learning.[2] | Statements of student learning are available, but evidence of assessment of learning relies on course grades as proxy for learning. | Statements of student learning outcomes are available for all courses and most degrees. There is a trend towards authentic assessment practices. | Courses, programs, certificates and degrees have clearly stated learning outcomes and consistent assessment practices; there is some level of institutional measurement of learning outcomes. | Transcripts include learning outcomes not just courses taken; students articulate learning outcomes. |

[1] Schwegler, A. F. (2019). Academic rigor: A comprehensive definition. Quality Matters. Retrieved from https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/resource-center/articles-resources/academic-rigor-white-paper-part-one
[2] Jankowski, N. A., Timmer, J. D., Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. D. (2018). Assessment that matters: trending toward practices that document authentic student learning. NILOA. Retrieved from https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/NILOA2018SurveyReport.pdf

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.2** Learning outcomes are of appropriate breadth, depth and sequencing.[3] | | | Learning outcomes are used in creating course sequences and prerequisite requirements; learning outcomes are appropriate to courses and assessed based on student demonstration relative to expected performance targets. | Learning outcomes are mapped from the course to the program and institution levels, identifying increasing depth and level of student demonstration and multiple methods of assessment.[4] |
| **1.C.3** All program and degree learning outcomes are published. | Learning outcomes may exist for some programs and degrees, but are largely identified only to enrolled students. | Learning outcomes are identified for courses, programs, and services. They are made available to students and users of services. | Learning outcomes are available to students and the public via multiple methods: catalog, course outlines/ syllabi program websites, brochures, etc. | Learning outcomes are publicly available in language commonly understood at the entry level for the program/degree. |
| **1.C.3** Enrolled students are provided expected learning outcomes for all courses. | All courses have learning outcomes; learning outcomes may be included in course materials, such as syllabi or outlines. | Student learning outcomes are published to all students enrolled in a course via course syllabi, outlines, or other means. | Learning outcomes form the framework of courses; course learning outcomes are available to students before they enroll via course catalogs or other means. | There is consistent commitment to teach to well-formulated learning outcomes, making them transparent to students and clearly linked to assessments. |

[3] Adelman, C., Ewell, P., Gaston, P., & Schneider, C. G. (2014). The degree qualifications profile 2.0. Lumina Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf

[4] Hutchings, P., Ewell, P., & Banta, T. (2012). Principles of good practice: Aging nicely. AAHE. Retrieved from https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Viewpoint-Hutchings-EwellBanta.pdf

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.4** Admission requirements are easily accessible to students and the public. | General admission requirements are available through centralized functions at the institution; confusion may exist about admission elements for programs, colleges, etc. | Admission requirements are available via multiple methods: website, catalog, program websites, brochures, etc. Program admission requirements are available through program websites or other means. | Admission requirements across the various elements of the institution are mapped such that the public can identify requirements for the institution and the various programs or colleges; checklists and timelines are available to assist with understanding processes. | Admission requirements are developed for readability and accessibility such that they are easily understood by the public; means of tracking applications and progress towards admission are readily accessible to applicants. |
| **1.C.4** Graduation requirements are easily accessible to student and the public. | General graduation requirements are available through centralized functions at the institution; confusion may exist about graduation requirements for programs, colleges, etc. | Graduation requirements are identified for all programs and compatible with general graduation requirements for the institution; graduation requirements are shared with students in programs and available via the college catalog . | Graduation requirements are clearly spelled out to students in programs via planning guides or other documents and progress towards graduation is available to students via degree audits or other means; the public can access graduation requirements via websites, the catalog, or other public means. | Students are regularly apprised of their progress towards meeting graduation requirements; there are means of identifying the impacts of changing majors or programs on graduation requirements; graduation requirements are systematically monitored and updated. |

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.5** An effective system of assessment of the quality of learning.[5] | Assessment of learning is done at the course level with little or no interaction across departments to discuss learning overall. | Academic departments and programs assess student learning within the courses and sequences of courses under their purview. Some cross-disciplinary discussion of student learning occurs, particularly when courses are prerequisites or program requirements. | The institution monitors assessment plans and reports and documents the use of results to improve learning outcomes across academic departments; common assessment elements such as rubrics exist. | The institution has a well-defined system for evaluating the effectiveness of its learning assessment plans, including training, timelines for review, scoring rubrics, and accountability measures across academic departments. |
| **1.C.5** Clearly identified faculty responsibility for curricula, student learning, and instructional improvement. | Departmental faculty are responsible for the curricula and assessment of student learning in the courses offered by their department. | Faculty-led committees, work groups, etc. approve curricula and student learning outcomes following a standardized process. | Faculty-led committees, work groups, etc. approve curricula and student learning outcomes on a cycle intended to improve instructional effectiveness; rationales for curricular changes are provided. | Faculty-led committees, work groups, etc. have established practices for reviewing curricula, analyzing student learning, and planning for instructional improvement across disciplines; impacts of curricular decisions on programs of study are carefully addressed. |

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[5] Reneau, F. H., & Howse, M. (2019). Trekking towards sustainable excellence through systematic outcomes assessment. NILOA. Retrieved from https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AiP-ReneauHowse.pdf

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.6** Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) and competencies are established and assessed for all programs or within General Education curriculum. | ILOs may exist; there is no standardized method of assessing ILOs. | ILOs are identified; there are common plans for the assessment of ILOs; some courses and programs identify the ILOs addressed; focus is more on identifying ILOs than on assessing them. | ILOs are identified and mapped across the institution; common methods of assessing ILOs are established and followed across the institution; there is evidence of assessment of ILOs from all programs or within General Education. | A process of establishing and reviewing ILOs is understood across the institution and within the units; ILOs are contributed to by multiple facets of the institution; student exposure to and competency in ILOs is monitored by program and the institution. |
| **1.C.7** Results of student learning assessment are used to inform and improve academic programs.[6] | Student learning assessment is isolated to courses or sequences of courses in the same discipline. Results may be used to inform course redesign. | Results of student learning assessment are shared within disciplines or related groups and used to improve courses and sequences of courses. | Results of student learning assessment are reviewed by program faculty and used to inform programs; may consult with faculty from other disciplines to inform course choices. | Cross-disciplinary faculty teams representative of the courses that comprise programs of study review student learning outcomes and co-plan for improvements. |
| **1.C.7** Results of student learning assessment are used to inform and improve learning support practices. | Learning support services such as tutoring or access to computer labs is available when arranged by the program, college, or other unit; limited services are available. | Learning support services such as tutoring and access to computer labs are available to students; these services are generically planned and generally accessed based on student initiated contact; students are informed about support services at orientations. | Learning support practices exist for the campus overall and for specific groups to support academic learning outcomes; students are referred to services by faculty and advisors | Learning support practices are available both program-specific and institution-wide across the institution; learning outcomes are identified for learning support programs; students are regularly informed about services, referred by faculty and advisors. |

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[6] Smith, K. L., Good, M. R., Sanchez, E. H., & Fulcher, K. H. (2015). Communication is key: Unpacking "Use of assessment results to improve student learning." *Research & Practice in Assessment*. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1137955

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.C.8** Transfer credit policies are clearly defined, easily accessible, and ensure comparable quality. | Transfer credits may be routinely accepted without comparison or rejected based on idiosyncratic decisions rather than reasoned policies; it is unclear how transfer credits are awarded. | Policies for accepting transfer credits are established; methods for evaluating comparability exist, but are largely based on individual assessments. | Commonly accepted transfer standards such as common course numbering or ACE credits are utilized to help address comparability standards; faculty are involved in analyzing comparable credits. | An established process of review for transfer credits engages faculty in determining comparable quality on an ongoing basis; this process is conducted in a timely, consistent manner. |
| **1.C.8** Credit for prior learning policies are clearly defined, easily accessible, and ensure comparable quality.[7] | Prior learning credit awards are addressed individually, one-on-one as requested by students. | Some disciplines, programs or colleges have identified procedures for granting prior learning credit; institutional policies exist but may difficult to decipher. | Policies for applying for and granting prior learning credit are established to ensure comparable quality; procedures are made available to students and the public. | An established process of review for prior learning engages faculty in determining comparable quality on an ongoing basis; the process of applying for prior learning credits is clearly mapped out for students and publicly available. |
| **1.C.9** Graduate programs are aligned with respective disciplines and professions. | Graduate programs are stand-alone, unrelated to standard academic disciplines. | Some graduate programs are aligned with respective disciplines or professions. | All graduate programs are aligned with respective disciplines and professions. | Graduate program requirements are systematically reviewed to keep current in respect to disciplines and professions. |
| **1.C.9** Graduate programs require greater depth, demands, and engagement of students than undergraduate programs. | Graduate program courses strongly resemble undergraduate major courses; other than increased workload demands, it is not clear that the graduate programs are of increased depth or demand. | Graduate program courses are sequenced, with an expectation of increased depth, demand, and engagement as students progress through the program. | Admission requirements for graduate programs clearly identify foundational skills; program courses and experiential requirements are sequenced to build in depth, demand, and engagement. | Graduate programs identify the relationship between undergraduate expectations and graduate expectations, clearly outlining for students how learning will advance across the completion of degree requirements. |

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[7] Council on Adult and Experiential Learning. Retrieved from https://www.cael.org/pla/publications?hsCtaTracking=24a593b0-7dc8-42df-a47f-98b9b679f85e%7C8afe32cb-8009-45b3-9a54-8bed38b0be42

# APPENDIX D:
# RUBRIC FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT - STANDARDS 1.D.1 – 1.D.4

Created by NWCCU Mission Fulfillment Fellows, June 2019

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this rubric is to support institutions and peer review teams in assuring student achievement effectiveness as detailed in Standards 1.D.1 – 1.D.4 in NWCCU's 2020 Standards for Accreditation.

| CRITERION | Initial | Emerging | Developed | Highly Developed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.D.1**<br><br>The institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational offerings. | Plan for recruitment is not evident; not implemented; or has not been created. | Recruitment efforts are unfocused or implemented by one unit with little to no coordination with other institutional units. | Recruitment efforts target multiple tiers of students and may be coordinated with at least one other student service unit. | Intentional and focused recruitment plan; evidence of integration with other institutional units. |
| **1.D.1**<br><br>The institution orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information. | Orientation is in the planning process or offered only by individual programs or units. | Orientation opportunities offered, likely to a narrow group; student feedback might be collected; opportunity for contact with academic advisor might occur. | Orientation with clearly presented information attended by most students; multiple campus groups present information; feedback collected from students on what they learned; opportunity for contact with academic advisor offered and encouraged. | Orientation required for all students; event planning cuts across multiple campus groups/siloes; feedback from student participants incorporated into future orientations; contact with academic advisors occurs systematically; advising and mentoring continues throughout students' program of study. |
| **1.D.2**<br><br>The institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement (such as course completion, experiential learning, retention, program completion, degree completion, job placement). | Institution has made none or minimal efforts to establish or share indicators for student achievement. | Institution has discussed indicators for student achievement and is working towards a plan to establish and share them. | Institution has established indicators for student achievement; a plan to share the indicators widely is in the process of being implemented. | Institution has established indicators that are integrated into institutional processes; institution demonstrates broad engagement with student achievement stakeholders. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.D.2**<br><br>Indicators are established in comparison with regional and national peer institutions. | Regional and/or national peers are not identified. | An initial set of regional and/or national peers are identified. | Regional and national peers are identified, and some indicators are compared. | Regional and national peers are identified, and several relevant indicators are compared.<br><br>Regional and national peers are regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate and meaningful comparison. |
| **1.D.2**<br><br>Student achievement indicators are disaggregated to promote equitable outcomes. | Student achievement data are not disaggregated. | Student achievement data are sometimes disaggregated but there is little evidence that disaggregated data are analyzed and used to promote equitable student achievement. | Student achievement data are disaggregated; some evidence that disaggregated data are analyzed and used to promote equitable student achievement. | Student achievement data are regularly disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race, first generation, Pell eligibility, and by other meaningful sectors; data are systematically and regularly analyzed to inform and promote equitable student achievement. |
| **1.D.3**<br><br>Results for student achievement are widely published. | Student achievement results are not shared. | Student achievement results are minimally shared to certain constituents. | Student achievement results are shared internally and externally; information may not be easily accessible. | Student achievement results are broadly shared and readily displayed internally and externally and are easy to access and understand. |
| **1.D.3**<br><br>Disaggregated indicators are aligned and benchmarked against regional and national peers. | Minimal evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are benchmarked against regional and national peers. | Disaggregated student achievement data are minimally benchmarked against some regional and national peers. | Disaggregated student achievement data are benchmarked against some regional and national peers. | Disaggregated student achievement data are benchmarked against intentionally selected regional and national peers; peers' data are regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate and meaningful benchmarking practices. |

| 1.D.4 Disaggregated indicators are used for continuous improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. | Minimal or no evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are used for planning, decisions, or resource allocation. | Some disaggregated data of student achievement are used for decisions or resource allocation. | Evidence of disaggregated data of student achievement are used for decision making and allocation of resources. | Extensive use of disaggregated student achievement data for ongoing planning, decision making, and resource allocation. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent; used to inform strategies and allocate resources to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity. | Minimal evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are used in mitigating achievement gaps and promoting equity. | Some evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are used in mitigating achievement gaps and promoting equity. | Evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are collected and analyzed and used to mitigate achievement gaps and promote equity. | Evidence that disaggregated student achievement data are collected, analyzed, and used for improvements, and evidence that achievement gaps have improved significantly as a result. |

# APPENDIX E:

# RESOURCES RELATED TO 2020 STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

## Purpose:

The purpose of this Resource Guide is to make available to institutions several collections of resources and best practices relevant to the 2020 Standards for Accreditation. The Resource Guide is not intended to be prescriptive or all-inclusive; instead, the resources shared are intended as a launch point to develop policies, practices, or processes and to support continuous institutional learning and improvement. Institutions should also refer to relevant NWCCU Policies available on the NWCCU website (www.nwccu. org) in regard to certain requirements.

| **Standard One** | | |
|---|---|---|
| *The institution articulates its commitment to student success, primarily measured through student learning and achievement, for all students, with a focus on equity and closure of achievement gaps, and establishes a mission statement, acceptable thresholds, and benchmarks for effectiveness with meaningful indicators. The institution's programs are consistent with its mission and culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, credentials, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs. Programs are systematically assessed using meaningful indicators to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes for all students, including underrepresented students and first- generation college students.* | | |
| **Institutional Mission** | | |
| 1.A.1 | The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education - Mission: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards <br><br> Meacham, Jack & Gaff, Jerry. (2006). Learning goals in mission statements: Implications for educational leadership. Liberal Education. 92. 6-13. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/learning-goals-mission-statements-implications-educational |

| **Improving Institutional Effectiveness** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.B.1 | The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. | The Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (AAHE): https://ahee.org<br><br>SCUP Institutional Effectiveness Planning: https://www.scup.org/planning-type/institutional-effectiveness-planning/<br><br>Association for Institutional Research (AIR): https://www.airweb.org |
| 1.B.3 | The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Standards: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 1.B.4 | The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals. | |

| Student Learning | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.C.1 | The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminates in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and includes designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Student Learning, Development, and Success; Assessment; Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 1.C.2 | The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning. | National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA): https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org |
| 1.C.3 | The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students. | Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AAHLE): https://www.aalhe.org

AAC&U Quality, Curriculum, and Assessment: https://www.aacu.org/quality-curriculum-and-assessment |
| 1.C.4 | The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public. | AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise:https://www.aacu.org/leap

University Innovation Alliance: http://www.theuia.org/ |
| 1.C.5 | The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs. | |
| 1.C.6 | Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy. | |
| 1.C.7 | The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes. | |

| 1.C.8 | Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality | AACRAO<br><br>• Transfer Credit Evaluation: https://www.aacrao.org/resources/core-competencies/professional-proficiences/transfer-articulation/transfer-credit-evaluation<br><br>• Transfer Credit Practices: http://tcp.aacrao.org<br><br>• A Guide to Best Practices: Awarding Transfer and Prior Learning Credit: https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/signature-initiative-docs/trending-topic-docs/transfer/guide-to-best-practices.pdf?sfvrsn=4820bb55_6<br><br>CAEL<br><br>• Credit for Prior Learning Standards: https://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning<br><br>• PLA Publications: https://www.cael.org/pla/publications |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.C.9 | The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice. | Council of Graduate Schools: https://cgsnet.org<br><br>Equity and Inclusion in Graduate Education – USC Pullias Center for Higher Education: https://pullias.usc.edu/graded/ |

| Student Achievement | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.D.1 | Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies. | National Association for College Admission Counseling: https://www.nacacnet.org<br><br>National Academic Advising Association (NACADA): https://nacada.ksu.edu |
| 1.D.2 | Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison, with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps). | U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard: https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/<br><br>National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute (Community Colleges): https://benchmarkinginstitute.org<br><br>University Benchmark Project:<br>https://universitybenchmark.org<br><br>AAC&U Peer Review (Spring 2017), Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence: https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2017/Spring |
| 1.D.3 | The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. | NILOA Transparency Framework:<br>https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/ourwork/transparency-framework/ |
| 1.D.4 | The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity. | Association for Institutional Research (AIR): https://www.airweb.org |

**Standard Two**

*The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is intentional in seeking input from faculty, staff and students. Through its planning, funding, operational activities, and resource allocation, the institution demonstrates financial stability and a commitment to student success, primarily measured through student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.*

**Governance**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.A.1 | The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission. | The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB): https://agb.org<br><br>American Association of University Professors (AAUP) – Shared Governance: https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/shared-governance<br><br>National Education Association – Faculty Governance in Higher Education: http://www.nea.org/home/34743.htm<br><br>Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Leadership, Management, and Supervision: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 2.A.2 | The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness. | |
| 2.A.3 | The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair. | |

| Academic Freedom | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.B.1 | Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment. | Resources on Academic Freedom – AAUP: https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/academic-freedom/resources-academic-freedom<br><br>Academic Freedom Primer – AAUP: https://agb.org/trusteeship-article/academic-freedom-primer/<br><br>A Guide to Academic Freedom – AGB: https://agb.org/trusteeship-article/a-guide-to-academic-freedom/ |
| 2.B.2 | Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same. | ACE Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities (2005): https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Statement-on-Academic-Rights-and-Responsibilities-2005.pdf<br><br>Association of American Universities – Academic Rights and Responsibilities: https://www.aau.edu/academic-rights-and-responsibilities-0<br><br>Academic Freedom in the 21st–Century College and University- American Federation of Teachers: https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/academicfreedomstatement0907.pdf |
| Policies and Procedures | | |
| 2.C.1 | The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals. | Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit" – ACE: https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Joint-Statement-on-the-Transfer-and-Award-of-Credit.pdf<br><br> AACRAO<br><br>• Transfer Credit Evaluation: https://www.aacrao.org/resources/core-competencies/professional-proficiences/transfer-articulation/transfer-credit-evaluation<br><br>• Transfer Credit Practices: http://tcp.aacrao.org |

| 2.C.2 | The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities. | AACRAO: https://www.aacrao.org/home<br><br>ADA National Network – What are a public or private college-university's responsibilities to students with disabilities: https://adata.org/faq/what-are-public-or-private-college-universitys-responsibilities-students-disabilities |
|---|---|---|
| 2.C.3 | The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy. | National Association for College Admission Counseling: https://www.nacacnet.org<br><br>National Academic Advising Association (NACADA): https://nacada.ksu.edu |
| 2.C.4 | The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records. | AACRAO Resources on Records and Academic Services:<br><br>https://www.aacrao.org/resources/records-academic-services<br><br>WCET Data Protection Resources: https://wcet.wiche.edu/focus-areas/policy-and-regulation/data-protection-privacy |

| Institutional Integrity | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.D.1 | The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Ethics, Law, and Policy: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 2.D.2 | The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner. | |
| 2.D.3 | The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff. | |
| Financial Resources | | |
| 2.E.1 | The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission. | National Association of College and University Business Officers: https://www.nacubo.org

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Financial Resources: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 2.E.2 | Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability. | |
| 2.E.3 | Financial resources are managed transparently and in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s) in accordance with its governance structure and state and federal and applicable state laws. | |

| **Human Resources** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.F.1 | Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. | College and University Professional Association for Human Resources: https://www.cupahr.org <br><br> Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Human Resources: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
| 2.F.2 | The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development. | |
| 2.F.3 | Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs. | |
| 2.F.4 | Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement. | |
| **Student Support Resources** | | |
| 2.G.1 | Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success. | ACE Institutional Commitment to Teaching Excellence: https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Institutional-Commitment-to-Teaching-Excellence.pdf <br><br> AAC&U Diversity, Equity, and Student Success Resources: https://www.aacu.org/diversity-equity-and-student-success <br><br> Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Program and Services; Student Learning, Development, and Success; Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |

| 2.G.2 | The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards |
|---|---|---|
| 2.G.3 | Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials. | U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, Gainful Employment: https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/school/ge |
| 2.G.4 | The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students. | National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA): https://www.nasfaa.org<br><br>National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP): https://www.nassgap.org |
| 2.G.5 | Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website. | |

| 2.G.6 | The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students. | National Academic Advising Association (NACADA): https://nacada.ksu.edu |
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| 2.G.7 | The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process. | WCET Student Authentication Resources: https://wcet.wiche.edu/focus-areas/student-success/student-authentication |

**Library and Information Resources**

| 2.H.1 | Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services. | Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL): http://www.ala.org/acrl/<br><br>ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education: http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/standardslibraries |
|---|---|---|

**Physical and Technology Infrastructure**

| 2.I.1 | Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services. | Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Technology; Facilities and Infrastructure: https://www.cas.edu/generalstandards<br><br>SCUP Campus Planning Resources: https://www.scup.org/planning-type/campus-planning/<br><br>Educause: https://www.educause.edu<br><br>SCUP IT Planning Resources: https://www.scup.org/planning-type/information-technology-planning/ |
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# APPENDIX F:
# A GUIDE TO USING EVIDENCE IN THE NWCCU ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) would like to express its appreciation to WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC) for allowing the adaptation of its excellent resource *Using Evidence in the WSCUC Accreditation Process Guide*, which has been modified and adapted to support NWCCU institutions in ensuring evidence-rich institutional reports.

## Purpose:

The purpose of this guide is to assist institutions in assembling and using evidence in NWCCU accreditation processes as well as to develop a common understanding throughout the region that the fundamental basis of NWCCU accreditation is concrete, verifiable evidence that an institution meets the NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation.

## An Overview of Principles and Properties of Good Evidence

### What is Evidence?

At the most fundamental level, "evidence" constitutes the substance of what is presented to support a claim that something is true. There are at least five important characteristics of evidence that differentiate it from just "information," "data," or "facts." In essence, evidence includes data, and facts, a descriptive narrative of accomplishments, achievements, and outcomes, along with the careful analysis of information, which are used to promote continuous improvement.

- Evidence is intentional and purposeful; it is provided to address specific needs or criteria.

- Evidence entails interpretation and reflection and is actionable; because it does not "speak for itself," institutions need to be able to draw conclusions from it and use that information for continuous improvement.

- Effective evidence is integrated and holistic; it does not consist merely of a list of unrelated data sets or facts.

- Evidence can be based on both quantitative and qualitative information.

- Evidence can be both direct and indirect. (See the Glossary in the 2020 Handbook of

- Accreditation for more information about direct and indirect assessment).

### Evidence for Accreditation

Traditionally in a self-study, institutions have used data and information largely to describe who they are, typically including enrollment counts, program inventories, faculty numbers and credentials, financial resources, space inventories, and the like. These are useful in accreditation reviews—both to orient visiting team members to the institution and to provide some indicators of capacity.

The kinds of evidence advanced in the NWCCU accreditation process, however, as reflected in the 2020 Standards for Accreditation, concentrate largely on results: what each institution does and how well it does it relative to its mission, goals, and standards of performance andin comparison to other institutions.

**Examples:**

- In the realm of student success, the evidence presented should go beyond the total numbers of students enrolled, to also focus on such things as retention and graduation rates for students from different backgrounds, and the extent to which both aggregated and disaggregated results match institutional expectations, targets, and goals.

- In the realm of student learning, institutions should cite more than just a list of assessment practices, activities, and selected performance results (such as licensure pass rates) to identify to what extent key learning outcomes and performance standards are being achieved.

- For faculty, in addition to their numbers and credentials, evidence revealing the effectiveness of faculty development and support, outcomes in pedagogical innovations, and/or improvement in faculty diversity or retention would be compelling.

- In regard to facilities, effective evidence would not be limited to just describing their status or sufficiency, but also how effective the planning and renewal processes are in support of institutional goals.

**Principles of Effective Evidence**

Evidence supports a specific question in the context of a given community of judgment; therefore, it is important to make clear the principles of evidence that are most compelling in the accreditation process. Five principles of evidence communicate this intent. Like any principles, these are intended to provide general guidance and should thus be applied flexibly. Indeed, several of them involve making hard choices about such matters as the level of detail to be provided, how much reflective commentary to include, and how much documentation is sufficient. Collectively, though, they frame an overall approach to using evidence in the accreditation process.

**Relevant**

Any evidence provided must be related to the Standard being addressed or the question being investigated.

- Institutions sometimes produce reams of data in the course of an evaluation that are only marginally related to the Standard or questions they are trying to answer.

- Validity is implied by this principle—the extent to which the evidence advanced is capable of faithfully and fully representing the underlying concept of interest.

- There is also a need to explain exactly how the evidence provided is relevant and, possibly, why it was chosen over other potential sources of information.

- In practical terms, this means that institutions need to select carefully the kinds or examples of evidence that they present in the light of specific NWCCU Standards or questions of importance to institutions themselves. Finally, institutions should present the evidence and briefly describe clear rationale for why it is included and how it is related to the Standard(s).

**Verifiable**

Evidence must also allow its validity to be readily checked by others.

- Partly this is a matter of whether the process of assembling it is replicable and, if repeated, would it likely obtain a similar result? This property, of course, corresponds directly to the concept of reliability in measurement.

- Verifiability is also a matter of documentation—whether sufficient information is available to enable a reviewer (or any third party) to independently corroborate what was found.

**Representative**

Any evidence advanced must be typical of an underlying situation or condition, and not be an isolated case.

- If statistics are presented based on a sample, evidence of the degree to which the sample is representative of the overall population ought to be provided. Further, it is helpful to present such statistics, not as a single year's snapshot, but rather over time (i.e., multiple years) to check for variation and to make any underlying trends apparent.

- If the evidence provided is qualitative—for instance in the form of case examples or documents—multiple instances should be given or additional data shown to indicate how typical the cases presented really are. Sampling procedures can save considerable energy and can allow much more scope for in-depth analysis and interpretation than trying to collect data about all cases. But in both sampling and reporting, care must be taken to ensure that what is claimed is typical.

**Cumulative**

Evidence gains credibility as additional sources or methods for generating it are employed. Conclusions are more believable when they can be independently corroborated from quite different sources.

- In evaluation, using multiple methods—triangulation—helps guard against the inevitable flaws associated with any one approach. The same principle applies to qualitative evidence whose "weight" is enhanced both as new cases or testimony is added and when such additions are drawn from different sources.

**Actionable**

Evidence should provide institutions with good information about taking actions for improvement.

- Both the analysis and presentation of evidence need to be disaggregated (as appropriate) to reveal underlying patterns of strength and weakness, or to uncover specific opportunities for intervention and improvement.

- Evidence provided should be reflectively analyzed and interpreted to reveal its specific implications for the institution.

**Principles of Effective Evidence of Student Learning**

One of the most difficult and widely discussed venues for evidence is that provided in the assessment of student learning. Here, four principles of evidence are applicable across a wide range of institutional settings and methods:

- Evidence of student learning should address knowledge and skills taught throughout the curriculum.

  o Unless a course is designed as an integrative capstone whose coverage is comprehensive, evidence provided to demonstrate student learning should not be limited to data or information from a single course or sub-field of the discipline.

- Evidence of student learning should involve multiple judgments of student performance.

  o More than one person should evaluate evidence of student learning. Many techniques are available for engaging multiple reviews and reviewers such as portfolio analyses, reviews of student work products drawn from throughout the curriculum, and follow-up studies. Faculty should engage with the data to make recommended adjustments that will improve student learning results.

- Evidence of student learning should provide information on multiple dimensions of student performance.

  o In essence, this principle suggests that assessment results in more than a single summative judgment of adequacy. Information should instead be collected on a number of discrete dimensions of performance, and it should be aggregated across students to provide evidence of the overall strengths and weaknesses of graduates in a program or at the institutional level.

- Evidence of student learning should involve more than surveys or self-reports of competence and growth by students.

  o Surveys asking students to rate their own strengths and weaknesses and/or areas of growth, though helpful, are inadequate as stand-alone assessments of learning outcomes because they are indirect measures. More and different types of evidence are expected in providing evidence of student learning, including the results of the direct assessment of student learning products.

**Avoiding the Pitfalls of Evidence**

When using evidence in the context of NWCCU accreditation, institutions need to take care to avoid a number of potential pitfalls, including:

- Trying to measure and report on everything.

  o In an evaluative situation like accreditation, it is easy to be misled into thinking that "more evidence is better." Instead, institutions should think carefully about the evidence they present and to ensure its relevance and quality. A structured and well-explained presentation, anchored on a succinct body of well- documented and reflected-upon evidence, will be far more convincing than simply a "data dump."

- Focusing on snapshots in time versus continuous improvement over time.

  o Strong evidence will paint a holistic picture of continuous improvement to achieve institutional goals and targets.

- Trying to prove that the institution is "the best."

  o The formative accreditation process itself calls for evidence-informed self-reflection along with meaningful comparison against peers to provide a contextualized perspective on an institution's quality.

- Trying to be too "precise."

  o Good evidence does not always have to be as precise as methodologically possible. Rather, it should be as precise as necessary, given the problem at hand, or the question to be answered.

- Trying to wrap it up.

  o Reflecting on evidence is a process that is never really done. As a result, institutions need not always draw summative conclusions from the evidence they present as part of the accreditation process. Sometimes reviewing evidence does provide "answers" and suggests particular actions that might be taken. But sometimes reflection yields more precise questions and suggests new lines of investigation that might be undertaken.

# APPENDIX G:

# CROSSWALK BETWEEN 2020 ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND 2010 ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

| 2020 Standards for Accreditation | Similar 2010 Standard | Related 2020 Eligibility Requirements | Related 2020 Standards | Associated Policies |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STANDARD ONE:** **STUDENT SUCCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND EFFECTIVENESS** | | | | |
| **Institutional Mission** | | | | |
| 1.A.1 The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement. | 1.A.1; 1.A.2 | ER1; ER2; ER3; ER6 | 1.C; 1.D | |
| **Improving Institutional Effectiveness** | | | | |
| 1.B.1 The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. | 3.A.1; 3.A.3; 3.A.4; 3.B.1; 3.B.2; 3.B.3; 4.A; 4.B; 5.A.2; 5.B.1; 5.B.2 | ER4; ER5; ER6; ER19 | 1.C; 1.D | |

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| 1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions. | 1.A.2; 1.B.2; 3.B.3 | ER4 | 1.A.2; 1.B.1; 1.B.3; 1.B.4 | |
| 1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offer opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness. | 3.A.1; 3.A.2; 3.A.4 | ER4; ER19 | 1.B.1; 1.B.2; 1.B.4 | |
| 1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals. | 5.B.3 | ER4 | 1.B.1; 1.B.2; 1.B.3 | Accreditation for System Institutions Policy; Related Entities Policy |

| Student Learning | | | | |
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| 1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminates in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and includes designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study. | 2.C.1; 2.C.3 | ER5 | 1.C.2; 1.C.3; 1.C.6;  2.H.1 | Credit Hour Policy; |
| 1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based on student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning. | 2.C.4 | ER5 | 1.C.1; 1.C.6; 2.H.1 | Credit Hour Policy; |
| 1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students. | 2.C.2 | ER5 | 1.C.1; 1.C.2; 1.C.6 | Credit Hour Policy; |
| 1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public. | 2.D.5 | ER17 | 2.D.3 | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; |

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| 1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assessing student learning, and improving instructional programs. | 2.C.5; 4.A.2; 4.A.3; | ER5; ER12; ER13 | 1.B.1; 1.C.1; 1.C.2; 1.C.6; 1.C.7; 1.C.8; 1.D | Credit Hour Policy; Distance Education Policy |
| 1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/ or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy. | 2.C.9; 2.C.10; 2.C.11 | ER5; ER13 | 1.C.1; 1.C.2; 1.C.3; 2.H.1 | |
| 1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning. | 4.A, 4.B | ER5 | 1.B.1; 1.D; 2.H.1 | |

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| 1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor and quality. | 2.C.7; 2.C.8; 2.C.13 | ER5; ER13 | 1.C.1 | |
| 1.C.9 The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study, demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice. | 2.C.12; 2.C.15 | ER5; ER13 | 1.C.1; 2.H.1 | |

| Student Achievement | | | | |
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| 1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies. | 2.D.3 | ER17 | 2.D.5 | |
| 1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps). | 1.A.2; 1.B.2 | ER6; ER21; ER22 | 1.C.1; 1.C.2; 1.C.3; 1.C.6 | |

| 1.D.3 The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used to continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources | 2.D.5; 3.A.1; 3.A.3; 3.A.4; 3.B.3; 4.B.1 | ER6; ER21; ER22 | 1.B.2; 1.B.3;1.D.2; 1.C.5; 1.C.7 | |
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| 1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity. | 4.A; 4.B.2 | ER6; ER21; ER22 | 1.B.2; 1.B.3; 1.D.2; 1.C.5; 1.C.7 | |

| STANDARD TWO: GOVERNANCE, RESOURCES, AND CAPACITY | | | | |
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| **Governance** | | | | |
| 2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission. | 2.A.1; 2.A.2 | ER9; ER21; ER22 | 2.A.2; 2.A.3; 2.A.4 | Accreditation for System Institutions Policy; Related Entities Policy; |

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| 2.A.2 The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness. | 2.A.9 | ER11 | 2.A.4; 2.F.3 | |
| 2.A.3 The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s), but may not serve as its chair. | 2.A.10 | ER10 | 2.A.1, 2.F.3 | |
| 2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest. | 2.A.1 | ER8 | 2.B.1; 2.C.2 | |
| **Academic Freedom** | | | | |
| 2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment. | 2.A.27 | ER16 | 2.A.4; 2.B.2 | |

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| 2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth.  Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same. | 2.A.28 | ER16 | 2.A.4; 2.B.1 | |
| **Policies and Procedures** | | | | |
| 2.C.1 The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals. | 2.A.14; 2.D.5 | ER18 | 1.C.1; 1.C.2 | Transfer and Award of Academic Credit; |
| 2.C.2 The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities. | 2.A.15; 2.D.5 | ER18 | 2.B.1; 2.A.4 | |

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| 2.C.3 The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy. | 2.A.16; 2.D.5 | ER17; ER18 | 1.C.4; 2.C.1 | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; Record of Student Complaints; |
| 2.C.4 The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records. | 2.D.7; 3.A.5 | ER15; ER18 | | Retention of Records; Record of Student Complaints; |

| Institutional Integrity | | | | |
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| 2.D.1 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services. | 2.A.21; 2.A.25; 2.D.4 | ER8 | 2.C | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited Policy; Substantive Change Policy; Teach-Out Plans and Teach-Out Agreements Policy; |
| 2.D.2 The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner. | 2.A.22 | ER8 | 2.A.4; 2.B; 2.C.3 | Fraud and Abuse Policy; Record of Student Complaints; |
| 2.D.3 The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff. | 2.A.23 | ER8 | 2.A.1 | Fraud and Abuse Policy; Record of Student Complaints; |

| **Financial Resources** | | | | |
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| 2.E.1 The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission. | 2.A.30 | ER19 | 1.B.2; 1.B.3 | Accreditation for System Institutions Policy; Related Entities Policy; |
| 2.E.2 Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short-term financial health and long-term financial stability sustainability. | 2.F | ER20 | 1.B.2; 1.B.3 | Accreditation for System Institutions Policy; Related Entities Policy; |
| 2.E.3 Financial resources are managed transparently and in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s) in accordance with its governance structure and applicable state and federal laws. | 2.F | ER18; ER19 | | |
| **Human Resources** | | | | |
| 2.F.1 Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. | 2.A.19 | ER12; ER23 | 2.F.2; 2.F.4 | |
| 2.F.2 The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development. | 2.B.3 | ER12; ER23 | 2.F.1; 2.F.4 | |

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| 2.F.3 Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs. | 2.B.1; 2.B.4 | ER12; ER23 | 2.A.2; 2.A.3; 2.H.1 | |
| 2.F.4 Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures.  Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated.  Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement. | 2.B.2; 2.B.6 | ER7; ER12; ER23 | 2.F.1 | |
| **Student Support Resources** | | | | |
| 2.G.1 Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning needs. | 2.D.1 | ER13; ER14; ER15 | 1.B.1; 1.C.5; 2.F.3; 2.G.6; 2.H.1 | Student Verification Policy; Correspondence Education; Distance Education Policy; Significant Growth Policy |

| 2.G.2 The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar. | 2.D.5 | ER18 | 1.C.3; 2.C.1; 2.C.2; 2.C.3; 2.G.3; 2.G.4; 2.G.5; 2.G.6 | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| 2.G.3 Publications and information describing educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials. | 2.D.6 | ER18 | 2.G.2; | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; |
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| 2.G.4 The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students. | 2.D.8 | ER18; ER23 | 2.G.2; 2.G.5 | Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; |
| 2.G.5 Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website. | 2.D.9 | ER18; ER23 | 2.G.4 | Fraud and Abuse Policy; Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status Policy; Responsibilities for Title IV Oversight Policy; |

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| 2.G.6 The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students. | 2.D.10 | ER18; ER23 | 2.F.3; 2.G.2 | |
| 2.G.7 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process. | 2.D.14 | ER15; ER18 | 2.I.1 | Distance Education Policy; Student Verification Policy; |

| Library and Information Resources | | | | |
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| 2.H.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services. | 2.E | ER14 | 1.C.1; 1.C.2; 1.C.3; 1.C.6; 1.C.7; 1.C.9; 2.F.3; 2.G.1 | |
| **Physical and Technological Infrastructure** | | | | |
| 2.I.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services. | 2.G | ER15 | 2.G.7 | |

# APPENDIX H:
# GUIDELINES FOR THE YEAR SIX POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND FINANCIAL REVIEW (PRFR)

The off-site Year Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) Evaluation is conducted for accredited institutions in the sixth year of the seven-year accreditation cycle. A team of evaluators with relevant expertise assesses the institution's compliance in the areas of policies, regulations, and financial sustainability.

The PRFR Evaluation team provides its evaluation and recommendations to the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

The institution's self-study PRFR report includes the following:

1. Mission Fulfillment – The institution provides a one-page executive summary, which describes the institution's framework for its ongoing accreditation efforts. This might include evidence of institutional effectiveness, Core Themes, or other appropriate mechanisms for measuring fulfillment of its mission.

2. Eligibility Requirements – The institution provides an attestation that it remains compliant with NWCCU's Eligibility Requirements. Citations and reports in support of specific Eligibility Requirements may be included in the PRFR and EIE reports as appropriate.

3. Standard Two – The institution addresses each component of Standard Two in a concise and informative manner through narrative and appropriate hyperlinks to policies, website and catalog pages, and other procedural materials. Additional guidance on required and suggested evidence may be found in the NWCCU Standard Two Checklist.

4. Moving Forward – The institution must provide its reflections on any additional efforts or initiatives it plans on undertaking as it prepares for the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report.

5. Addendums – (Where Applicable) – Institutions which have been asked to address prior recommendations or which have been asked to address any transitional efforts to the 2020 Standards may be included in an Addendums section.

# APPENDIX I:
# GUIDELINES FOR THE MID-CYCLE EVALUATION

The on-site Mid-Cycle Evaluation is conducted for accredited institutions in the third year of their seven-year accreditation cycle. A team of two (2) evaluators assesses the institution's progress in the areas of mission fulfillment, student achievement, and assessment of student learning. The Mid-Cycle Evaluation is intended to be a formative evaluation of the institution, with Evaluators providing feedback as to the institution's progress towards the Year Seven Evaluation.

The report is composed of the following components:

1. Mission Fulfillment – The institution provides an executive summary of no more than three pages, which describes the institution's framework for its ongoing accreditation efforts. This might include evidence of institutional effectiveness, Core Themes, or other appropriate mechanisms for measuring fulfillment of its mission.

2. Student Achievement – The institution provides a brief overview of the student achievement measures it uses as part of its ongoing self-reflection, along with comparative data and information from at least five institutions it uses in benchmarking its student achievement efforts. In providing the overview, the institution may consider including published indicators including (but not limited to) persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success student achievement measures. Additionally, the report must include the widely published indicators disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, Pell status, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close equity gaps, i.e., barriers to academic excellence and success amongst students from underserved communities.

3. Programmatic Assessment – The institution must provide programmatic assessment of at least two programs as evidence of a continuous process of improvement. The programs should be broadly representative of institutional efforts (and as a result programs that are approved by a CHEA-recognized programmatic accreditor are discouraged for this report).

4. Moving Forward – The institution must provide its reflections on any additional efforts or initiatives it plans on undertaking as it prepares for the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report.

5. Addendums (Where Applicable) – Institutions which have been asked to address prior recommendations or which have been asked to address any transitional efforts to the 2020 Standards may be included in an Addendums section.

# APPENDIX J:
# INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CERTIFICATION FORM



## Institutional Report Certification Form

On behalf of the Institution, I certify that:

- There was broad participation/review by the campus community

- This report accurately reflects the nature and substance of this institution

- The Institution is in compliance with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements

- The Institution will continue to remain in compliance throughout the duration of the institution's cycle of accreditation.

_____

(Signature of Chief Executive Officer)

_____

(Name of Chief Executive Officer)

_____

(Name of Institution)

_____

(Date)

# APPENDIX K:
# TRIBAL COLLEGES: GUIDANCE FOR NWCCU EVALUATORS

**INTRODUCTION**

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are a distinct classification of higher education institutions. TCUs are predominantly located on rural reservations and serve a historically underrepresented student body. While TCUs are chartered by federally recognized tribes and primarily serve American Indian students, each institution is unique in terms of mission, vision, student body, academic programs, and institutional culture.  Additionally, the TCUs in the NWCCU region are chartered by sovereign tribal nations which each have unique histories, cultures and worldviews.

All TCUs focus on economic and workforce development of American Indian communities as well as perpetuation of tribal cultures and lifeways. TCUs also serve non-native students in their communities, providing a path to education and opportunity for all. In addition, TCUs provide valuable community services such as adult education, health and computer centers, language preservation, and libraries.[8]

As of fall 2019, there are nine Tribal Colleges in the NWCCU region: one in Alaska, seven in Montana, and one in Washington. The unique history, missions, and organizational cultures of TCUs provide additional context for consideration by NWCCU evaluation teams.

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[8] Resource: American Indian College Fund, https://collegefund.org/about/about-us.html

- Northwest Indian C.
- Blackfeet C.C.
- Salish Kootenai C.
- Stone Child C.
- Aaniiih Nakoda C.
- Fort Peck C.C.
- Turtle Mountain C.C.
- Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish C.
- Red Lake Nation C.
- Cankdeska Cikana C.C.
- White Earth Tribal & C.C.
- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa C.C.
- Leech Lake Tribal C.
- Bay Mills C.C.
- United Tribes Technical C.
- Fond du Lac Tribal & C.C.
- Sitting Bull C.
- Little Big Horn C.
- Chief Dull Knife C.
- Sisseton Wahpeton C.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa C.C.
- C. of Menominee Nation
- Saginaw Chippewa Tribal C.
- Oglala Lakota C.
- Sinte Gleska U.
- Little Priest Tribal C.
- Nebraska Indian C.C.
- California Tribal C.
- Haskell Indian Nations U.
- Diné C.
- Institute of American Indian Arts
- Navajo Technical U.
- C. of the Muscogee Nation
- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
- San Carlos Apache C.
- Tohono O'odham C.C.
- Iḷisaġvik C.

AIHEC
AMERICAN INDIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

States whose AI students attend TCUs

## Federal Definition

Under federal law, a 'tribal college and/or university' is "an institution that qualifies for funding under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 (TCU Act) (25 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.); or is cited in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note). To qualify for funding under the TCU Act, an institution of higher education must:

1) be chartered by the governing body of a federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes;

2) have a governing board composed of a majority of American Indians;

3) demonstrate adherence to stated goals, a philosophy, or a plan of operation which is directed to meeting the needs of American Indians;

4) if in operation for more than one year, have students a majority (>51%) of whom are American Indian; and

5) be accredited, or have achieved candidacy status, by a nationally recognized accreditation agency or association.

Thirty-six Tribal Colleges (TCUs) have been designated by the U.S. Congress as land-grant colleges through the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994" (AIHEC, 1999; NIFA 2019).[9]

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[9] Resource: https://nifa.usda.gov/program/nifa-tribal-programs

**Common Elements**

Collectively called "Tribal Colleges and Universities," these institutions are in varying stages of development and differ in their structures, sizes, and other characteristics. Nevertheless, they share some basic commonalities:

- Most TCUs are less than 25 years old;

- Most have relatively small student bodies that are predominantly American Indian;

- Most are located on remote reservations, with limited access to other colleges. Their rural isolation also compounds their limited access to other resources and services;

- All have open admissions policies; and

- All began as two-year institutions (AIHEC, 1999).

**Mission**

In his report for the Carnegie Foundation entitled, "Native American Colleges: Progress and Prospects," author and researcher Paul Boyer stated that tribally controlled colleges are crucial to their communities' economic, cultural, and spiritual survival.

- Tribal colleges establish a learning environment that supports students who have come to view failure as the norm in any non-indigenous educational system.

- Tribal colleges celebrate and help sustain American Indian traditions.

- Tribal colleges provide essential services that enrich surrounding communities.

- Tribal colleges have become centers for research and scholarship that directly benefit their communities and tribes' economic, legal, and environmental interests (Stein, 2001).

**Governance**

**Role of the Tribe and Its Charter** — There are 565 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States. Each tribal nation has a unique political relationship with the federal government based on binding treaties signed by tribal leaders and U.S. government officials in the 1800s. In terms of self-governance, tribal nations are comparable to individual states and sovereign nations. Each tribal government is responsible for preserving and protecting the rights of its citizens and for maintaining the social and physical infrastructure necessary for their well-being.

Although tribal governments have the right to levy taxes, few do so because of the extreme poverty on their reservations. Most tribal governments provide police protection, social services, economic development, and educational services. If the tribe does not have the capacity to offer these services directly, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is ultimately responsible for the provision of these services through the federal government's treaty obligation, is required to provide them. In exercising their rights as sovereign governments, tribes that have the resources have established tribal colleges to provide their tribal members access to postsecondary education opportunities founded on tribal values, culture, and language.

Because TCUs are chartered by sovereign tribal nations, they are not required to have the approval of state education offices. However, some academic programs may be approved by state agencies as required, e.g. for nursing and teacher preparation programs.

**Role of Tribal Governments** — Many native nations vest legislative authority in a tribal council, although they are sometimes called something else. Tribal Governments function under diverse structures: tribal councils, general councils, business councils or committees, board of directors or trustees, and tribal or executive committees (Wilkins and Stark, 2011). Tribal Councils need to ensure that chartering mechanisms minimize political interference in the operations of the TCUs, as required by the United States Department of Education's Accreditation Handbook, 34 CFR Part 602. The Councils have a right to require regular reports and audits, and they should definitely review accreditation reports.

**Role of the Tribal College Board of Trustees** — The selection of the college trustees varies with each tribe. The Tribal Council members may seek applications and select the members, or they may opt to have an election process on the reservation held by each district or clan. The selection process is designated by the tribe at the time the college's charter is approved by the tribe. The Tribal Council may require that a Council member be a voting or ad hoc member on the Tribal College Board. The charter may also require regular reporting from the college to the Tribal Council to keep the Council apprised of the college's successes and challenges. The Tribal College Board is responsible for ensuring that the Tribal Council's role is appropriate and that the Tribal College Board maintains the decision-making responsibility and authority for the college.

There is a delicate balance that must be maintained among the Tribe, the politics within the community and on the reservation, the college and its board of trustees, and all other agencies. Indicators that this balance is being maintained successfully include: the Tribal College Board retains its autonomy in the governance of the Tribal College; the Tribal College Board is responsible for policy, strategic planning and oversight; the Tribal College Board holds full responsibility for the oversight of the college, development of policy, and the selection of the chief executive of the college; board members are trained and made aware of the institution's unique circumstances and needs; the Tribal College Board has a clear set of operating policies and procedures to help guide it; there is effective decision-making that is based on individuals and groups functioning within their designated roles and areas of responsibility. In addition, the Tribal College Board may have a statement of ethics based on expressed tribal values.

### Leadership

One of the most critical, and many times the most challenging, responsibilities for a Tribal College Board is the selection of the college's president. Hiring preference for a member of the respective tribe or another Native American Tribe has been important to ensure the individual selected has an understanding of the unique role of the college in the community and the importance of the preservation and integration of their culture and traditions, history, and language are integrated into the college's programs and curricula (Archambault and Allen, 2002).

The relationships of Tribal College Boards to administration and the relationship of outside political entities such as the Tribal Councils, community members, and organizations may have an impact on effective college leadership. TCUs should have processes and procedures in place to address selection processes for qualified personnel that ensure consistency and academic quality in college programming and services, as well as job descriptions, hiring practices, and transition planning adequate to support the institution's mission and unique characteristics.

**Role of AIHEC** — The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is the collective spirit and unifying voice of the nation's TCUs. AIHEC provides leadership and influences public policy on American Indian higher education issues through advocacy, research, and program initiatives; promotes and strengthens Indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging TCUs.

AIHEC has grown to 37 TCUs with more than 75 sites in the United States and one in Canada. Each of these institutions was created and chartered by its own tribal government for a specific purpose: to provide higher education opportunities to American Indians through programs that are locally and culturally based, holistic, and supportive. TCUs have become increasingly important to educational opportunity for American Indian students and are unique institutions that combine personal attention with cultural relevance to encourage American Indians—especially those living on reservations—to overcome the barriers they face to higher education (AIHEC, 2012).

While TCUs and their students face many difficult challenges, it is important to note that they represent an important resource to each other. While not constituting one system, as with state-controlled university systems, collectively the TCUs compose the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). At the national policy level, AIHEC is similar to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC); however, it differs in that it is a member-based organization, created, chartered, and governed directly by each of the accredited TCUs in the country. Through AIHEC, the TCUs are able to have a seat at the table in national policy and resource allocation discussions, and most important, they are able to share strategies and best practices in addressing the higher education needs of their students and the communities they serve (His Horse is Thunder, 2012).

### STUDENTS

As open-door institutions, TCUs provide access to higher education for a historically underrepresented student population. While the primary mission is to serve American Indian students, TCUs also serve non-Indian students and commonly have diverse student populations. Some TCUs enroll students from many different tribal nations, providing an additional component of diversity.

Many TCU students face significant challenges in completing their educational paths. A high percentage of students who come to the TCUs are underprepared for college-level work. As a result, the colleges invest significant energy to meet the needs of these students and develop programs focused on developmental education. High percentages of students are at or below the federally defined poverty level and qualify for PELL grants. Many TCU students are single parents, care for elders or other family members, and have tribal or cultural responsibilities. Students may commute from distances of up to 60 miles to attend classes and may not have access to internet and computers in their homes.

TCUs offer multiple resources to assist students to achieve their academic goals, including advising, disability and career services, admissions policies and procedures, and other student services.

### Financial Resources

The majority of tribal college funding is from variable sources, including money from tribes, federal allocation based on formula, and grants from state and federal sources and foundations.

**Federal Legislation** — In 1978, the U.S. Congress enacted the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act (P.L. 95-471) (TCCUAA), legislation that would provide a base of operating funding for these institutions. The legislation currently authorizes funding at $8,000 per student that is a member or a first generation descendant of a federally recognized tribe. Despite a clearly identified and justified need, Congress funds Tribal Colleges below the authorized amount. In fiscal year 2017-2018, TCU operating funds through the TCCUAA amounted to $7,285 per full-time American Indian student, still short of the Congressionally authorized enrollment-driven funding level for basic institutional operations. It has taken over 40 years to come within reach of achieving the authorized funding level of $8000/ISC (the Indian Student Count).[10]

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[10] Resource: http://www.aihec.org/what-we-do/legPriorities.htm

As a result of very limited or nonexistent local or state support, TCUs rely heavily on federal funds for their core operational funding. In particular, their operating expenses rely on the funds distributed through TCCUAA and administered by the Bureau of Indian Education. Compounding existing funding disparities is the fact that although the numbers of TCUs and students enrolled in them have dramatically increased since 1981, appropriations have increased at a disproportionately low rate. Since they were first funded, the number of TCUs has quadrupled and continues to grow; American Indian student enrollment has risen by more than 370 percent. TCUs are in many ways victims of their own successes. The growing number of tribally chartered colleges and universities being established and increasing enrollments have forced TCUs to slice an already inadequate annual funding pie into even smaller pieces (AIHEC, 2012).

The TCCUA Act authorizes funding through several sections:

- **Title I** currently allocates funding to 28 TCUs through a formula based on the number of Indian students enrolled (called the Indian Student Count or ISC) as described above. No funds are distributed for non-Indian students, who make up a significant percentage of total enrollment at Title I schools on average.

- **Title III** provides matching funds for endowment grants, and is authorized at $10 million. However, appropriations have never surpassed $1 million.

- **Title IV** is authorized at $2 million to finance local economic development projects, but funding has never been appropriated.

AIHEC works with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to sustain and increase funding for its member institutions funded under the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978 and other relevant legislation and to identify new sources of funding throughout the federal government to advance the collective mission of its member institutions.[11]

**Tribal Contributions** — Some tribal governments provide annual support to TCUs. The amounts vary widely depending on the resources and wealth of the tribe. The tribes also contribute significant in-kind resources including legal, financial management, human resources management, and facilities management. These in-kind services help the colleges provide the necessary range of services and support on very limited budgets. The tribes also contribute support through shared facilities.

**Community Contributions** — Some TCUs that are located in or near non-tribal communities may receive support from those communities. That may range from no support at all to provision of such resources as facilities, community library access, accommodations for research/ internships, and support in marketing. Support may depend upon the link between the tribe and the non-tribal community or the existence of other higher education institutions within the non-tribal community. The support is not expected, but certainly can contribute additional resources if available.

**Land Grant Status** — The TCUs benefit from 1994 federal legislation Equity in Educational Land Grant Status Act (Pub. Law 103-382) awarding them land-grant status, which is overseen by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). They join 55 state universities and 19 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which were designated as land-grant institutions in the 19th century. This designation as land-grants helps the TCUs become more visible and connected to mainstream institutions, by sharing projects, resources, and information with other land-grant colleges. With Land Grant Status, the Extension services provided by TCUs are very important to the tribal community. The professional development and the research opportunities for students are valuable components of this status.

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[11] Resource: http://www.bie.edu

**State Non-Beneficiary Funding** — Some TCUs, including those in Montana, receive state funding for students who are not tribal members or first generation descendants but are residents of the state. Termed "non-beneficiary funding", this source of revenue is generally allocated at a much lower rate than the per-student rate received by higher education institutions in the Montana University System and is meant to offset some of the costs of providing education for Montana residents who are not supported through TCCUAA funding.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture** — This department also awards rural development grants to colleges to strengthen aspects of the agricultural programs and make them "Centers of Excellence" in the nationwide rural development network. These resources assist the colleges in maintaining their commitment to their respect for the environment and sustainability.

**Title III-A and V under the Higher Education Act** — In addition, some TCUs—like other minority-serving institutions—receive funding from Title III under the Higher Education Act, including the Aid for Institutional Development program, TRIO, and Pell Grants.

**Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs** — include the **Tribally-Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions**, the **Native American Career and Technical Education Program** (**NACTEP**), and the **American Indian Adult and Basic Education** (**Office of Vocational and Adult Education**). Some TCUs apply for and are awarded these funds which are utilized for the development of technical courses, programs, and professional development.

**White House Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities** (**No. 13021**) — Given the chronic underfunding of TCUs, the first White House Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities (No. 13021) was signed in order to more fully integrate the colleges into federal programs. This document, issued by President Clinton on October 19, 1996, reaffirms the important role TCUs play in reservation development by directing all federal departments and agencies to increase their support to the colleges. The initiative was hoped to direct more attention toward the colleges, and bring in more resources and create greater opportunities (AIHEC, 1999). President Bush signed a second order on July 3, 2002 (No.13270), *"Improving American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Opportunities and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities."* On December 2, 2011, President Obama signed the third Executive Order (No. 13592), which, unlike the previous administrations, incorporates all levels of American Indian education into a single executive order.

**Other notes:**

The use of a wide range of grant funds is a much higher percentage of their total operating budget than is typically found in other higher education institutions. While this has been occurring for years and is not desirable, TCUs continue to work to become more self-sustaining.

Seeking and maintaining funding continues to challenge the institutions. Their staff and infrastructure are usually quite small, and everyone wears several hats. The development of grant proposals is rarely that of an individual but the responsibility of many.   It would be the exception if a TCU had a grants department or someone solely assigned to seek funding.

Tribal Colleges may achieve financial stability through solid fiscal management that addresses all sources under one fiscal system, strategic planning especially focused on college priorities, soliciting sources that address those priorities (not just because the dollars are available), and sustainability plans to maintain existing priorities and new initiatives.

**Curriculum**

**Academic Programs** — TCUs offer academic programs, continuing education, and workforce preparation certifications that are designed to meet the workforce needs of tribal communities as well as their geographic regions. TCUs and AIHEC have worked collaboratively to develop current resources for faculty and academic leaders to develop programs that meet the needs and support services of their students and the needs of their communities.

TCUs offer programs at the certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels. Their programs include a wide range of academic programs and a general education core, along with key occupational programs in areas such as technology, healthcare, education, and business.

Particular areas of attention for TCUs include ensuring appropriate academic rigor, meeting general education requirements, and having appropriate student assessment and learning outcomes in place. Related considerations might include the existence of strategic planning for program development and sustainability, along with assessment plans, faculty credentials, integration of technology, cultural components and service to the tribal communities.[12]

**Preservation of Language and Culture** — Most TCUs employ tribal elders, in addition to some tribal *experts* in tribal culture who are not yet considered to be *elders*. They may have expertise in such areas as tribal language or arts, but may not be designated as *elders*. In either case, the TCU should have an established minimum threshold of experience based on the tribe's defined role of elders and some documentation reflecting those minimum experiences.

Elders often serve as faculty and resource people to the TCU and the curriculum. All TCUs have the preservation and revitalization of their traditions, language and culture as a core value and priority. Elders, those individuals within the tribe who carry that designation and role, are often active as faculty in the integration of the culture and values into the curriculum and teach the language and culture classes, and is not determined by age.

**Faculty and Staff** — Because many TCUs are located in very remote areas of the Northwest Region, they may experience difficulty attracting well-qualified staff and faculty. Where there are gaps, the TCU should have a professional development plan that includes plans to help those individuals achieve advanced degrees. There should be appropriate evaluation systems in place and conducted on a regular timeline. The college should also maintain appropriate personnel files with current transcripts, resumes, and evaluations.[13]

**Assessment**

TCUs are committed to assessment to improve student learning and demonstrate accountability to their communities and accreditation bodies. They are committed to a foundation of assessment that is grounded within the unique tribal cultures and traditions.

With the new emphasis on outcomes, TCUs have an opportunity to redefine their own measures of success and therefore, their own curricular and pedagogical values and approaches in more culturally appropriate ways. By using their mission statements to set their own standards of measuring success, TCUs can view assessment programs as a means of pursuing their missions, building local capacity, and advancing processes of self-empowerment, self-determination, and decolonization among Native peoples

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[12] Resource: http://www.breakingthroughcc.org

[13] Resource: http://ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/assumed-practices

(Karlberg, 2010). AIHEC commissioned a publication to be a resource to TCUs in the development of their learning outcomes and appropriate measures, sensitive to their culture and traditions entitled, "Assessment Essentials for Tribal Colleges."[14]

**AIHEC American Indian Measures for Success (AIMS).** This initiative creates a national data base on TCUs as well as an effort to develop culturally relevant indicators of success for TCUs and their communities. Data collection processes are comprehensive and are utilized to inform their unique constituents. TCUs understand the principles of data collection and analysis. The initiative is working to collect data on TCU enrollment, budgets, curricula, facilities, services, and student outcomes to inform the colleges, AIHEC, the College Fund, and other stakeholders including legislators and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities.[15]

**Institutional Research at Tribal Colleges** — Many TCUs encourage research by faculty, staff, students, and other affiliated investigators that is consistent with the mission of the College, their tribe and their community.

All research involving human subjects, for whom students, faculty, and staff are subjects or investigators, whether on campus or elsewhere, is subject to review by the college Institutional Review Board to assure that the research activities meet ethical and legal standards. The college IRB is commonly designated to assure that research conducted under its auspices does not individually or collectively harm members of the tribe through the misuse of cultural or other resources.

TCUs are expected to comply with the regulations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the protection of human subjects involved in research (Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46 as revised June 23, 2005). The definition of research used in this policy follows 45 CFR 46.102(d). Research is defined by the regulations as "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" [Federal Policy § .102(d)] (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

### Cultural Competencies/Awareness

It is important for peer reviewers to recognize and acknowledge that they are guests on the reservations that are home to TCUs. This section offers some guidance on the cultures, customs, and protocols that the team should observe while visiting the college.

**Special Ceremonies and Cultural Customs** — Showing respect and appropriate protocol is important for the ceremonies that might be performed, prayers offered, and any special recognition of the team that are likely to be included in some aspect of the agenda for the visit. Food is an important part of many Native American gatherings.

**Role of the Team Chair** — The NWCCU evaluation team chair should be aware of tribal customs and in partnership with the NWCCU staff liaison provide appropriate training and information to team members about the unique aspects of visiting a Tribal College. Throughout the visit the chair should continue engage in ongoing dialogue with team members about their unique experiences during the visit and develop awareness of distinct aspects about the operations of the college and that may need further clarification or sensitivity to the college's culture and traditions.

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[14] Resource: http://www.aihec.org
[15] Resource: http://www.aihec.org/programs/documents/AIMS_OverviewOct06.pdf

The NWCCU team chair should be in contact with the Tribal College and ask about any cultural experiences or norms that the team should be aware of, including a blessing with sage and/or tobacco or other special ceremonies, or extending compliments about items that then could potentially lead the Native person to giving them the item of compliment. It is also appropriate to ask the college president about the proper protocol for any of the ceremonies so the college is comfortable that the team recognizes their importance.

**Communication** — Communication patterns in Native American individuals and communities vary as much as other aspects of their unique cultures. It is best to observe the communication styles and reflect those observations in meetings and interviews. While some Native Americans' communication styles may be similar to those of the dominant culture, other tribes are more traditional. When some Native Americans engage in conversation they may listen intently, look down and not establish eye contact, and wait until the person speaking is completely finished talking. Then the other person talks and fully expects to be able to completely finish their thought without interruption or before the conversation turns to another person (Standley, 2013). It is appropriate and expected that everyone at the meeting will be given an opportunity to speak if they choose. While the pace at meetings may be slower than at a non-TCU institution, it is important to respect the process.

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# APPENDIX L:
# NWCCU 2020 HANDBOOK GLOSSARY

**Academic Calendar**

A chronology of dates for a scheduled period of instruction which includes an institution's dates for class registration, additions and deletions to course schedules, beginning and ending for the term of instruction, institutionally scheduled examinations, and deadline for applications for graduation.

**Academic Credit**

Credit applicable toward a degree or credential from the institution awarding it, accepting it on transfer, or acknowledging equivalency from learning experience adequately substantiated. (See Credit, Unit of)

**Academic Year**

Instruction equivalent of two semesters of approximately 15 weeks each or three quarters of approximately 10 weeks each, either of which may include examination days. (See Credit, Unit of)

**Accreditation**

The status of public recognition that a recognized accrediting agency grants to an institution or educational program that meets its qualifying requirements and accreditation criteria. The process involves initial and periodic self-evaluation followed by an evaluation by peers.

**Accreditation Agency**

A non-governmental organization formally recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education or training offered by educational institutions or programs. It is a voluntary organization and not established by the federal or state governments or any agency, department, or office thereof. The essential purpose of the accreditation agency is to provide a professional judgment regarding the quality of the educational institution or program offered and to encourage continual institutional improvement.

**Accreditation Criteria**

The criteria, consisting of Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation, agreed upon by the membership of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, by which an institution is evaluated and admitted for initial and continuing membership. In the Standards for Accreditation the criteria are designated by the number of the Standard, letter of the element within the Standard, and number of the criterion within that element. (e.g., 4.A.3)

**Accreditation, Institutional**

Accreditation of an institution as a whole awarded by an agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education for institutions within a prescribed geographic region of the United States.

**Accreditation, Specialized or Programmatic**

Accreditation of a unit or educational program within an institution by an agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. The unit accredited may be a school, department, program, or curriculum. It may be a part of a comprehensive educational institution or may be an independent, specialized institution.

**Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)**

An individual selected by the chief executive officer of an institution as a primary point of contact with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities on matters of accreditation.

**Accredited Institution**

An institution that has been awarded Accreditation status by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. (See definition of Accreditation status)

**Accreditation Status**

Formal recognition that may be awarded to an institution or to a specialized program for meeting established standards of educational quality, as determined by accrediting bodies.

**Adaptation**

An institution's ability to adjust, as necessary, its mission, core themes, programs, and services to accommodate changing and emerging needs, trends, and influences to ensure enduring institutional relevancy, productivity, viability, and sustainability.

**Admission Policy**

The guiding principles that determine admission to an institution. Consideration is given to the role assigned to the institution by its governing body; the programs, resources, and facilities of the institution; and the qualifications and goals of the applicant.

**Adverse Action**

A decision to deny or remove Accreditation status or Candidacy status from an institution.

**Annual Report**

A brief form made available each spring to Candidate and Member institutions to be completed and returned to the Commission office. The purpose of the form is to provide the Commission with current information on matters such as enrollments, programs, and budgets.

**Appeal**

A petition for reconsideration of a negative decision. (See Appeals Policy and Procedures)

**Applicant**

Initial non-affiliated status granted to an institution by NWCCU following acceptance of an Application for Consideration of Eligibility and evaluation and acceptance by the Commission.

**Branch Campus**

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. The location of the institution is considered to be independent of the main campus if it: (1) Is permanent in nature; (2) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) Has its own budgetary and hiring authority. (34 CFR 600.2)

**Candidate for Accreditation**

Candidate for Accreditation is a Pre-Accreditation, affiliate status with NWCCU following a specified procedure for application, institutional self-evaluation, and on-site peer evaluation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation. It is an indication that an institution: 1) Complies with NWCCU Eligibility Requirements; 2) Minimally meets its Standards for Accreditation; and 3) Is making acceptable progress toward Accreditation.

**Candidacy**

(See Candidate for Accreditation)

**Capacity**

The ability and competency of an institution that, in combination with its demonstration of adequate resources, structures, and processes, predicts its potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the intended outcomes of its programs and services.

**Catalog**

The official bulletin or publication of a higher education institution stating admission and graduation requirements, majors, minors, current offerings, costs, faculty, and all other significant information necessary for an accurate understanding of the institution.

**Clock Hour**

A period of time consisting of: (1) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; (2) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60- minute period; or (3) Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

**College**

Generic term to denote any of the degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions (including universities). "College" is used as a synonym of "Institution" and does not refer to a specialized unit within an institution.

**Commendation**

A positive recognition of a noteworthy aspect of the institution.

**Commission**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

**Community Service**

(See Public Service)

**Complaint**

A written allegation against a Member or Candidate institution or against the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. (See Policy Complaints Regarding Member or Candidate Institutions and Complaints Against NWCCU.)

**Conflict of Interest**

A real or perceived circumstance that compromises an individual's capacity to render a fair and impartial evaluation or decision regarding the Accreditation status of an institution.

**Confidential Recommendation**

A private non-binding peer-evaluator suggestion to the Board of Commissioners regarding the accreditation action to be taken on an institution.

**Cooperative Education**

A program that combines study and practice and is accomplished, for example, on an alternating schedule of half days, weeks, or other period of time, thereby providing employment for students with organized, on-the-job training and related higher education instruction.

**Core Theme**

A manifestation of a fundamental aspect of institutional mission with overarching objectives that guide planning for contributing programs and services, development of capacity, application of resources to accomplish those objectives, and assessment of achievements of those objectives. Collectively, the core themes represent the institution's interpretation of its mission and translation of that interpretation into practice.

**Correspondence Education**

Correspondence education means: (1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor; (2) interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; (3) correspondence courses are typically self- paced; (4) correspondence education is not distance education. (Correspondence education is not yet included in the Commission's scope of recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.)

**Course**

A purposeful structured sequence of teaching and learning leading to achievement of student learning outcomes related to one or more academic topics. It is commonly designated by a title, number, credits, and expected learning outcomes.

**Credentials**

1. A document stating that a student successfully completed a prescribed curriculum or has passed certain subjects;

2. A detailed record of an applicant for a position, usually including transcripts of academic records and testimonials relative to previous experience, performance, and character.

**Credit, Unit of**

A quantification of student academic learning. One unit represents what a typical student might be expected to learn in one week (40-45 hours including class time and preparation) of full-time study. Thus a six-week summer session might, if full-time, equate to six units. An alternative norm is one unit for three hours of student work per week (e.g., one hour of lecture and two of study or three of laboratory) for ten weeks a quarter or 15 weeks a semester. A full-time undergraduate student program is usually about 15 units but not less than 12; a full-time graduate program is usually 10 to 12 units. Additional hours above the typical credit loads should be subject to special analysis and approval. (See Credit Hour Policy)

**Criteria**

The principle-based statements embedded in the Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation by which institutions are evaluated.

**Degree Levels**

**Associate**

A lower division undergraduate degree normally representing two years (approximately 60 semester credits or 90 quarter units) of lower-division collegiate study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience.

**Baccalaureate**

An undergraduate degree normally representing four years (approximately 120 semester credits or 180 quarter credits) of upper- and lower-division collegiate study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience.

**Masters**

A graduate degree representing approximately 30 semester credits or 45 quarter credits of post-baccalaureate study, or its equivalent in depth and quality.

**Doctorate**

A terminal degree representing three or more years of graduate study that prepares the recipient to conduct original research, engage in scholarship, create artistic expressions of human emotions, or apply knowledge to practice.

**Distance Education**

The U.S. Department of Education defines Distance Education as education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor, and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

- The internet;

- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;

- Audio conferencing; or

- Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition.

**Eligibility Requirements**

The conditions required of an institution to qualify for consideration of affiliation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

**Evaluation**

A process periodically and jointly conducted by the institution and the accrediting agency, which may take a number of forms. It includes as a minimum: 1) An institution's Self-Evaluation Report; 2) A Peer-Evaluation report; and 3) The institution's response to the Peer-Evaluation Report.

**Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Report**

In Year Seven of the seven-year accreditation cycle, the institution conducts a comprehensive self-evaluation on all Standards and attests to its continued compliance of the Eligibility Requirements. This is called the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) report.

**Evaluator**

A peer from an Accredited institution chosen by the Commission staff for his/her expertise related to the nature of the evaluation and the institution being evaluated and trained in the accreditation criteria and evaluation process. The evaluator's primary responsibility is to make a considered and informed judgment with respect to the accreditation criteria regarding the institution's educational quality and effectiveness in light of the institution's mission and characteristics.

**Experiential Learning**

Learning acquired from work and life experiences, mass media, and independent reading and study.

**Faculty**

Academic professionals employed by the institution to achieve its educational objectives.

### Full-time Equivalent Student

The course load for a student making normal progress toward completion of a degree or certificate; typically computed as 15 credits per term.

### Faculty/Administrator/Staff

The normal full-time workload/responsibilities expected of a person for that classification and assignment.

### General Education

An essential collegiate-level component of transfer-based, associate degree programs and baccalaureate degree programs designed to foster effective, independent, lifelong learning by introducing students to the content and methodology of the major domains of knowledge.

### General Education Development (GED)

An evaluation of adults who did not graduate from high school, to measure the extent to which they have attained the knowledge, skills, and understandings ordinarily acquired through a high school education.

### Guidelines

Explanatory statements which amplify the criteria for Accreditation or which provide examples of how the requirements may be interpreted to allow for flexibility yet remain within the framework of the accreditation criteria.

### Higher Education

Post-secondary education emphasizing degrees and certificates that incorporate broader learning, rather than training limited to skill development.

### Independent Institution

A college or university with self-perpetuating, or otherwise not publicly chosen, board, and little, if any, direct public tax support.

### Indicators of Achievement

Assessable, verifiable statements or statistics that identify how an institution will measure the objectives and desired outcomes to accomplish its core themes. Indicators of Achievement form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of core theme objectives.

### Institution

Educational institutions that offer programs leading to collegiate-level degrees and certificates. (See College)

### Institution - Additional Site

A component part of an institution but operating in a separate geographic location and authorized for a stated purpose in relation to the parent institution and the area served. It may have planned programs leading to undergraduate, graduate, or professional degrees which are granted by or in the name of the parent institution.

### Institution - Operationally Separate

An institution that is under the general control of a parent institution or a central administration in a multi-unit system. It has a core of full-time faculty, a separate student body, a resident administration, and it offers programs comprising a totality of educational experience as defined by the appropriate accrediting body.

### Institution – Community and Technical Colleges

Institutions that primarily grant associate degrees to its graduates.

### Institution - Senior Colleges and Universities

Institutions that primarily grant baccalaureate degrees and/or graduate degrees to its graduates.

### Institutional Integrity

Institutional operations and pursuit of knowledge governed and administered with respect for individuals in a non-discriminatory manner while responding to the educational needs and legitimate claims of the constituencies served by the institution, as determined by its mission and goals.

### Institutional Research

The collection, analysis, and use of institutional data to inform planning and judgments of achievements and effectiveness.

### IPEDS

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is designed to gather institutional level data, allow aggregation at various levels, and permit controls on data quality through follow-up and editing.

### Level of Coursework

Level of collegiate study. "Lower division" refers to coursework that builds the foundation for a baccalaureate degree and is generally taken in the first two years of a baccalaureate degree program. "Upper division" refers to the coursework taken in the last two years of collegiate study that builds upon the lower-division foundation to develop a deeper level of knowledge and understanding.

### Member Institution

An institution accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

**Mid-Cycle Evaluation**

The Mid-Cycle Evaluation is an on-site evaluation of the institution conducted in the third year of the seven year cycle. It is intended to ascertain an institution's readiness to provide evidence (outcomes) of mission fulfillment and sustainability in the Mission Fulfillment, and it is designed to provide formative feedback regarding the institution's assessment plan and use of data for quality improvement.

**Minor Change**

An institutional change such as adding, deleting, or suspending academic programs; developing or deleting program concentrations; or forming or altering relationships with other organizations. (See Substantive Change Policy.)

**Mission**

The institution's articulation of its purpose. The institution's mission statement reflects its values and encompasses the intellectual and affective development of students, the pursuit of knowledge, the study of values and attitudes, and public service. It serves as a guide for educational planning and framework for the allocation of the institution's resources.

**Mission Fulfillment**

Accomplishment of institutional intentions and realization of institutional purpose.

**Negative Action**

An action to deny or remove Candidacy or Accreditation status, issue or continue a Show-Cause order, or impose or continue Probation.

**Peer Evaluation**

An evaluation by peers from Accredited institutions and appropriate oversight agencies with respect to the accreditation criteria of its educational quality and institutional effectiveness in relationship to the institution's stated mission.

**Peer-Evaluation Report**

A written report of findings based on the accreditation criteria by peer evaluators following an evaluation of the institution.

**Peer Evaluator**

(See Evaluator)

**Planning**

The process by which the mission and goals of an institution are determined and the means to achieve them are specified. Institutional planning incorporates the institution's statement of purpose and its self-evaluation that takes into account the possible need for modification of goals, clientele served, programs offered, educational methods employed, and modes of support utilized.

**Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR)**

In Year Six of the seven-year cycle, the institution undertakes the Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) under the NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, Standards, Policies and Federal Regulations. The questions this process poses are designed to prompt conversation on institutional capacity and infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and plans for ensuring compliance with the Standards, as well as student learning, student success, institutional effectiveness, and institutional improvement.

**Post-secondary Education**

Education beyond high school level offered primarily to individuals 18 or older.

**Pre-Accredited**

(See Candidate for Accreditation)

**President**

A generic term for the chief executive officer of an institution or organization.

**Prior Experiential Learning (credit for)**

Credit granted toward the award of a certificate or degree for prior learning experiences demonstrated through various means of assessment to be the equivalent of learning gained through formal collegiate instruction.

**Private Institution**

(See Independent Institution)

**Probation**

A public negative sanction indicating that a Candidate or Accredited institution fails to respond to the concerns communicated by the Commission, or when it deviates significantly from NWCCU accreditation criteria, but not to such an extent as to warrant the issuing of a Show-Cause order or remove Candidacy or Accreditation. The institution may be placed on Probation for a specified period of time. While on Probation, the institution may be subject to monitoring, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to host on-site evaluations. In addition, during the period of Probation, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution will be regarded as a major substantive change. (See Substantive Change Policy.) The Candidate or Accredited status of the institution continues during the Probation period.

**Professional Development**

Professional learning activities intended to extend the professional competence of institutional personnel by keeping them current in their fields and increasing their job-related effectiveness.

**Professional/Technical Education**

Organized educational programs that develop and aggregate competencies or outcomes in the application of knowledge to specific areas of practice directly related to preparation for employment.

**Program**

A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses, forming a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree or a credential. In this context, the General Education components of baccalaureate degrees and transfer associate degrees and the related instruction components of applied degrees are considered to be programs.

**Public Institution**

College or university with governing board elected or appointed by elected officials and supported by public funding.

**Public Representative**

A public member of the Board of Commissioners of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities who represents the public interest and is not:

1. An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution that applied for accreditation or is currently accredited or pre-accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;

2. A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; or

3. A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1) or (2) above.

**Public Service**

Service of a practical nature to the external (non-academic) community—local, regional, national, or international. Often includes public lectures and performances, various forms of applied research, non-credit courses, and agricultural or other similar forms of extension.

**Reapplication**

The procedure used to re-submit an Application for Consideration of Eligibility following rejection of an Application for Consideration of Eligibility, denial or removal of Candidacy, or denial or removal of Accreditation.

**Recommendation**

A major finding with respect to the accreditation criteria requiring immediate institutional attention. A Recommendation may indicate an area of non-compliance with accreditation criteria or an area where the institution is substantially in compliance with accreditation criteria, but in need of improvement.

**Related Instruction**

A recognizable body of at least six semester credits or nine quarter credits, or identified equivalent in depth and quality of learning, in program-related areas of communication, computation, and human relations for applied or specialized associate degree or certificate programs of 30 semester credits or 45 quarter credits in length.

**Resources**

An institution's human, financial, student support, education, governance, physical, or technological infrastructure systems that contribute to fulfillment of the institution's mission.

**Sanction**

One of several conditions (Warning, Probation, and Show-Cause) of escalating seriousness with regard to institutional non-compliance with accreditation criteria. The intent of a sanction is to highlight the need for immediate action by the institution to bring itself into compliance with the associated accreditation criteria. Warning, Probation and Show-Cause are public sanctions.

**Self-Evaluation Reports**

Self-evaluation is an integrated ongoing process. At clearly identified regular intervals, institutions are required to conduct thorough self-evaluations with respect to the accreditation criteria and to prepare Self-Evaluation Reports, which are submitted to the Commission.

### Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report

An Applicant institution's comprehensive self-evaluation report institution that addresses all NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation. The Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report is submitted to the Commission for consideration of Candidacy.

### Interim Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report

A Candidate institution's comprehensive self-evaluation report that addresses all NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation. The Interim Candidacy Self-Evaluation Report is submitted to the Commission for consideration of continuation of Candidacy.

### Accreditation Self-Evaluation Report

A Candidate institution's comprehensive self-evaluation report that addresses all NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation. The Accreditation Self-Evaluation Report is submitted to the Commission for consideration of Accreditation.

### Annual Report

A brief form made available each spring to Candidate and Member institutions to be completed and returned to the Commission office. The purpose of the form is to provide the Commission with current information on matters such as enrollments, programs, and budgets.

### Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report

An accredited institution's self-evaluation report submitted in the third year of the seven year cycle. The evaluation is intended to ascertain an institution's readiness to provide evidence (outcomes) of mission fulfillment and sustainability in the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Report, and it is designed to provide formative feedback regarding the institution's assessment plan and use of data for quality improvement.

### Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR)

In Year Six of the seven-year cycle, the institution undertakes the Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) under the NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, Standards, Policies and Federal Regulations.

### Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report (EIE)`

An Accredited institution's self-evaluation report submitted in the seventh year of the accreditation cycle. It serves as a comprehensive evaluation addressing all Standards and all Eligibility Requirements.

### Financial Resources Review (FRR)

An ad hoc report from the institution which may be requested by the Commission to address concerns related to institutional finances and/or enrollment.

### Ad Hoc Evaluation or Special Report

This is a written Self-Evaluation Report to address one or more specified concerns communicated by the Commission. It may or may not require an on-site peer evaluation.

## Show-Cause

The Commission's most serious sanction, Show-Cause is issued when an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to address identified non-compliance issues related to the accreditation criteria. When a Show-Cause order is issued, the burden rests with the institution to demonstrate why its Candidacy or Accreditation should be continued. The Candidate or Accredited status of the institution remains in effect during the period of Show-Cause, and the institution will be subject to Commission monitoring, which may include a requirement to submit prescribed reports and host on-site evaluations.

## Standard Element

A major component of an Accreditation Standard. It is designated by the number of the standard, letter of the element, and descriptive name of the element. (e.g., 3.B Core Theme Planning).

## Standards for Accreditation

The principle-based criteria, agreed upon by the membership, for evaluating institutions for Candidacy and Accreditation. The five Standards for Accreditation have three levels of specificity. The first level is the Standard (e.g., Standard One – Mission and Core Themes), which is further defined by elements of the Standard, which are designated by the number of the Standard followed by the letter of the element (e.g., 1.A Mission). The criteria for evaluation more specifically define the elements and are identified by the number of the Standard, followed by the letter of the Standard element, followed by the number of the criterion (e.g., 1.A.1).

## Substantive Change

A change that significantly alters an institution's objectives or the scope of its offerings; alters its autonomy, sponsorship, or the locus of control over it; embarks on offering off-campus academic programs for credit; changes the geographic area(s) served; or offers programs or courses for academic credit on a military base. (See the NWCCU's Substantive Change Policy or Substantive Change Manual for more information)

**Sustainability**

Demonstration of institutional viability to fulfill its mission for the foreseeable future.

**Teach-Out Agreement**

A written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students if one of those institutions closes or stops offering an educational program before all students enrolled in that program have completed it.

**Transfer Education**

Educational programs offered by associate degree-granting institutions that are intended for those students who plan to continue their degree studies at a baccalaureate institution. Typically, transfer education combines General Education requirements and some requirements in a major field.

**Unfunded Student Financial Aid**

That portion of total student financial aid that is purely institutional assistance. It is the total amount of tuition scholarships that is awarded but not covered by endowment earnings and annual contributions designated for tuition scholarships; federal, state, or local funding; or monies an outside group contributes for student tuition. It is the amount of total tuition generated from enrollments that the institution foregoes to attract and retain students.

**University**

A large, multi-purpose institution with extensive graduate degree offerings, library, and other resources, and/or several schools with graduate offerings.

**Warning**

A sanction is issued to a Candidate or Accredited institution when it is found to be out-of-compliance with accreditation criteria or substantially in compliance with accreditation criteria, but where improvement is needed. Warning is issued when the Board of Commissioners concludes that the institution may be on a course that, if continued, could lead to more serious sanctions. A Warning is a public sanction and does not affect the Candidate or Accredited status of the institution. The Candidate or Accredited status of the institution continues while the Warning is in effect.