

# SACSCOC Accreditation 101

February 15-16, 2021



# Tennessee State University Mission, Vision, and Core Values

<https://www.tnstate.edu/president/mission.aspx>

## **Our Mission**

Tennessee State University, through its legacy as an HBCU and land grant institution, transforms lives, prepares a diverse population of leaders, and contributes to economic and community development by providing affordable and accessible educational programs at various degree levels promoting academic excellence through scholarly inquiry, teaching, research, lifelong learning, and public service.

## **Vision Statement**

Tennessee State University aspires to be the premier public urban, comprehensive institution achieving prominence through innovation and instruction, research, creativity, and service with the dissemination of knowledge and information.

## **Core Values**

Tennessee State University maintains the following core values:

Learning everyday

Making excellence a habit

Thinking beyond the obvious

Working relentlessly

Serving everyone, we encounter

*Excellence*  
is our Habit!

# OBJECTIVES:

- Accreditation - What, Why and When
- Principles of Accreditation
- The Reaffirmation Process

# What is accreditation?

- Concept
  - Higher education accreditation is to improve and enhance academic quality and student success at colleges and universities.
- Defined
  - Accreditation is a process established to evaluate, assure and improve educational quality in higher education. It is a peer-review process designed to recognize and validate that an institution or program within an institution meets a set of established standards and fosters a commitment to continued excellence. (Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions)

# Types of Accreditation

1. Institutional Accreditors (formerly termed Regional Accreditors)
  - Within the U. S. there are 14 accrediting agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education (DOE). One being SACSCOC. (<https://www2.ed.gov>)
2. Specialized or Programmatic Accreditors
  - Programs, departments, or schools within an institution.

## History

- The Higher Education Act of 1965 required colleges and universities to be accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the DOE for institutions to be eligible for federal student aid programs.
- In 1992 there was a Higher Education Act Amendment submitting Congress define in law the standards accreditors need when assessing quality at higher education institutions.

# FAQ – SACSCOC

## **What is SACSCOC?**

It is an acronym for our institutional accreditation agency: SACSCOC: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. SACSCOC accredits a college or university as a whole and does not accredit individual programs. Approximately 80 institutions undergo review each year by SACSCOC. SACSCOC as an accrediting agency is reviewed every 5 years by DOE

## **What does SACSCOC do?**

The organization accredits institutions of higher education in 11 southern states and in Mexico, Costa Rica, and the United Arab Emirates. The Commission on Colleges is comprised of approximately 13,000 colleges and universities.

## **Where do I find the accrediting standards of the SACSCOC?**

The *Principles of Accreditation* is the document that contains the core requirements, comprehensive standards, and federal requirements on which an institution is reviewed. The current version can be found at

<http://www.sacscoc.org>

## FAQ – SACSCOC

### **WHEN - How often does an institution participate in institutional accreditation activities?**

SACSCOC accredited institutions are reviewed every 10 years with a 5 year interim reporting requirement. Accreditation consists of ongoing activities related to institutional mission, facilities and technology, distance education, staff and faculty qualifications and adequacy, institutional effectiveness, governance, financial adequacy, institutional integrity, sufficient library resources, appropriate academic and student support services, academic freedom, admissions, employee evaluation, marketing, and recruitment efforts, leadership, governance and indications that the institution engages in continuous improvement through systematic evaluation of performance toward its mission.

### **WHY is accreditation important to students and institution?**

Accreditation allows students to have access to federally-subsidized financial aid and ensures that the courses and degrees that students complete are recognized by other institutions.

Meeting requirements of Higher Education Act of 1965.

# SACSCOC BY THE NUMBERS

# 73

STANDARDS IN THE SACSCOC PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION



# 11



**States in the Southeast are in the SACSCOC region – as well as schools in Mexico, Costa Rica, and the United Arab Emirates.**

# 10

Years between accreditation cycles (though SACSCOC requires a Fifth Year Interim Report on selected standards)

## *The Principles of Accreditation*

The SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation are the foundation of quality enhancement. There are 14 sections which contain either Core Requirements or Standards.

Core Requirement – A Core Requirement is a basic, broad-based, foundational requirement which establishes a threshold of institutional characteristics required of all institutions. If a member institution is judged by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to be out of compliance with a Core Requirement, it must be placed on a sanction. (SACSCOC Resource Manual)

Standards – Established standards serve as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees.

## OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS (*Principles of Accreditation*) Section and Theme

- Section 1 – The principle of integrity (1 core requirement)
- Section 2 – Mission (1 core requirement)
- Section 3 – Basic Eligibility Standard (3 core requirements)
- Section 4 – Governing Board (1 core requirement, 8 standards)
- Section 5 – Administration and Organization (1 core requirement, 6 standards)
- Section 6 – Faculty (1 core requirement, 7 standards)
- Section 7 – Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (1 core requirement, 2 standards)
- Section 8 – Student Achievement (1 core requirement, 3 standards)
- Section 9 – Educational Program Structure and Content (3 core requirements, 4 standards)
- Section 10 – Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices (9 standards)
- Section 11 – Library and Learning/Information Resources (1 core requirement, 2 standards)
- Section 12 – Academic and Student Support Services (1 core requirement, 5 standards)
- Section 13 – Financial and Physical Resources (2 core requirements, standards)
- Section 14 – Transparency and Institutional Representation (5 standards)

# OVERVIEW OF THE REAFFIRMATION PROCESS

## Review

- To maintain accreditation, member institutions have a periodic comprehensive review referred to as the decennial reaffirmation of accreditation.

## Internal Institutional Analysis

- Commonly referred to as a self-study, institutions conduct a self-evaluation as to compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* - core requirements, comprehensive standards, and federal requirements.

# STEPS IN THE REAFFIRMATION PROCESS

## **Step 1: Preparation**

- Orientation Meeting (2018)

## **Step 2: Advisory Visit**

- Optional – SACSCOC Staff VP conducts a visit to answers questions.

## **Step 3: Compliance Certification**

- Institution prepares and submits its CCR with supporting documentation as to its judgement of compliance with requirements and standards and Institutional Summary Form. (Submitted September 2020)

## **Step 4: Off-Site Review and Report**

- Review of CCR and materials is conducted by a group of peer evaluators comprised of persons from institutions of a similar mission and institution type. (November 2020)

## **Step 5: Review of the Report**

- Preliminary Report of the Reaffirmation Committee is sent to the CEO of institution. (December 2020) In response to any compliance issues or need for clarification or documentation, the institution prepares Focused Report and Quality Enhancement Plan. (Submitted February 2021)

## STEPS IN THE REAFFIRMATION PROCESS (continued)

### **Step 6: On-Site Reaffirmation Committee Roster**

- Institution receives the roster of on-site reaffirmation committee chair and committee members. (January 2021)

### **Step 7: Materials for the Committee**

- Institution sends the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee its Focused Report, Quality Enhancement Plan, and current Institutional Summary Form. (February 2021)

### **Step 8: On-Site Visit and Report**

- Committee's report submitted to the CEO of institution for any errors of fact. Committee chair sends final report to SACSCOC VP and transmitted to the CEO of institution.

### **Step 9: Response to the Visiting Committee Report**

- If applicable, institution prepares a response to the recommendations in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee.

### **Step 10: Board of Trustees Action (December 2021)**

- Board takes action on the institution's reaffirmation.

# TSU's UPCOMING ON-SITE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE VISIT (Virtual)

## ❖ **March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

- On-site Committee virtual visit begins.
- Committee meets with TSU Leadership Team
- Quality Enhancement (QEP) Working Committee presents overview of the plan.
- Virtual Campus Tour
- Committee interviews requested faculty, staff, and administrators to resolve compliance issues.

## ❖ **March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

- Committee meets with QEP Working Committee for in-depth discussion of QEP.
- Committee meets with campus constituent groups for discussion of the QEP.
- Committee interviews requested constituent groups.
- Committee makes deliberations and decides on compliance and recommendations, if needed.

## ❖ **March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

- Committee conducts Exit Conference with President and campus community members invited by President

## FAQ - SACSCOC

Who and how many people serve on the visiting team?

A visiting team is made of approximately 8 – 10 peers from other SACSCOC accredited institutions. The team will most likely include: a college president, someone from institutional effectiveness, a librarian, someone familiar with the SACSCOC faculty credentialing guidelines, someone with a finance background, a QEP Evaluator, someone from student services, someone from Academic Affairs, and the institutional liaison from the SACSCOC staff.

How can employees further prepare for our on-site visit?

1. Become familiar with the institutional mission and related policies and procedures.
2. Become familiar with the CADENCE Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on the advising coordinated care network.

## *TIPS For Working With the On-Site Committee*

You may be contacted to be interviewed on topics related to your area or the University in general. If contacted, reviewing the compliance document, Focused Report, and possible questions will help to prepare you for your interview.

- Always be courteous and helpful yet refrain from initiating a conversation with the team members.
- As always highlight your students. They prove our mission.
- Be confident and relaxed when interacting with the Committee.
- Answer only the question that is asked during your interview.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, please take note of the question, advise the visitor that you will find out the answer and have it provided to them later in the day. Then let your Institutional Liaison staff member know the details of the inquiry. We will assist in making sure this information is discovered and delivered to the committee.
- Please do not guess or make assumptions.
- Operate with integrity in all matters related to SACSCOC
- Make sure the individuals in your division know the University mission and QEP topic of the University.
- Be positive, tell the truth, and help us make this a successful reaffirmation on-site virtual visit.

# SACSCOC Interviews

## Potential QEP – Quality Enhancement Questions

- What is a QEP?
  - The QEP is a plan of the University which has as topic identified through ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation process that focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success.
- What is TSU's QEP topic?
  - The topic of the QEP is holistic, integrative, and individualized advising.
- How was the QEP created?
  - CADENCE was created in a two-phase, campus-wide process from 2018 through early 2021. The research and selection of the QEP topic was conducted campus-wide in 2018 and 2019, and the plan was written in 2020 and 2021.
- What are the specific goal(s) of TSU's QEP?
  - The goal of CADENCE is to promote student success through holistic advising, improved utilization of academic and student support resources, and the integration of educational and career planning.
- How will TSU's QEP improve student success?
  - CADENCE will institutionalize an advising Coordinate Care Network, provide comprehensive advising resources for students online, and use existing technology platforms (EAB Navigate, Tiger Print, and Handshake) to improve advising and career development.

# SUMMARY

## **Components of the Review Process**

1. Compliance Certificate
2. Focused Report
3. Quality Enhancement Plan

## **Review by the Commission on Colleges**

1. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Review
2. The On-Site Reaffirmation Review
3. Review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees

## **Getting Information**

1. Every institution is assigned to a SACSCOC VP.
2. Every institution assigns an Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL) – communication with the SACSCOC VP and other offices.

# Direct Questions To: Institutional Accreditation Liaison

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