MSCHE Accreditation Process Changes

The Renewed Accreditation Process: A Holistic Approach

Robert K. Clark
Chair, Process Change Committee
Commissioner, MSCHE
Associate Professor, Cumberland County College
Cast your mind back one year. . .

- The Commission proposed the framework for a renewed accreditation process:
  - Eight year cycle
  - Annual institutional updates (AIUs)
  - Mid-point peer review of AIUs (no PRR)
  - Self-Study punctuates the cycle

- Sought member endorsement
What, exactly, were we engaging in?

• A **multi-step process** for renewing accreditation activities.
  
  – Response to changing higher education realities.
    • Regulatory climate
    • Growing expectations of students and their families
    • Increasing accountability to taxpayers
    • Overburdened resources of our member institutions
And what led to this framework?

• The Assessment Task Force

• Revision of the Standards

• The Collaborative Implementation Project

• **Initiation** of Process Change
Member Endorsement of Framework

• Overwhelming endorsement

• 93% affirmative votes

• Largest election turnout in MSCHE history
What did we promise?

- To fill in the details of this process within the endorsed framework
- To return at this time to update membership
- To hold a final vote on the new process

And here we are today!
So, how did we proceed?

- With a **member-driven** process
  - Work Groups of **volunteers** supported by staff
  - Input from **Commissioners**
  - Five **Town Hall Meetings** throughout the region

*Incorporating member-input at each step*
The Process Change Work Groups

• Steering Committee leading 3 Work Groups
  – Financial Sustainability
  – “Student Achievement"
  – Self-Study and Team Visit

• Included participants from 36 member institutions

• Directly supported by MSCHE Staff
Work Groups’ Goals

• Recommendations leading to consistent interpretation and application of the Standards that:
  – Enable the Commission to take unassailable actions;
  – Support continuous institutional improvement;
  – Are respectful of the resources expended by member institutions;
  – Meet expanding Federal requirements.
How we worked

• A **two-day working session** of the entire committee, April 7 & 8, 2016

• A **one-day working session** of the Steering Committee, May 24, 2016

• **Many** telephone, conference call and email exchanges were held among various members.
Work Group Recommendations

• Presented to the Commission
  – Productive discussion ensued
  – Further recommendations were made

• Commission endorsed the current path
More development by Chair and Staff

• Incorporating Commissioners’ input

• Leading to the five Town Hall Meetings
  – San Juan
  – Pittsburgh
  – Albany
  – Baltimore/Washington
  – Philadelphia
Five Town Hall Meetings

• Presentation **and** Listening Sessions
  
  – *More member input*

• Changes were incorporated along the way
Who Attended the Town Hall Meetings?

• **Largest turnout** in MSCHE history
  – 648 Total Attendance
  – 357 Institutions Represented

68% of member institutions
The New Process

Annual Institutional Updates
- Financial and Student Achievement data elements
- Responses to recommendations (if needed)

Midpoint Review
- Cumulative Peer Review of AIU data
- Feedback from the Commission

Self-Study Evaluation
- Campus engagement in self-study process that culminates with an onsite team visit by peer evaluators

Opportunities/Input for Institutional Improvement
Annual Institutional Update

- Financial and Student Achievement data elements
- Responses to recommendations (if needed)

Midpoint Review

- Cumulative Peer Review of AIU data
- Feedback from the Commission

Self-Study Evaluation

- Campus engagement in self-study process that culminates with an onsite team visit by peer evaluators

Opportunities/Input for Institutional Improvement
Annual Institutional Update: Goals

• Provide information on institution’s general health.
  – Service to students/constituents
  – Financial Sustainability
• Metrics must be useful and used
• Must not be overly burdensome for institution
• Must meet Federal requirements
  – Enabling effective response to increased scrutiny
Annual Institutional Update: Metrics

• Loosely divided into two categories:
  – “Student Achievement” Metrics
  – Financial Sustainability Metrics

• Include optional limited-word text boxes for context
AIU Metrics: “Student Achievement”

• Academic Progress Metrics
  – **Three** mandatory academic progress data elements
  – Eight *optional* data elements to provide context

• Post-Institutional Metrics
  – **Two** mandatory post-institutional success data elements
  – Six *optional* data elements to provide context
### “Student Achievement—”
#### Academic Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Retention Rates</td>
<td>• % Credits Completed/Attempted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IPEDS Graduation Rates</td>
<td>• % Pell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mean Time to Graduation</td>
<td>• % Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• % Developmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• % 1st Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• % Non-Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• % Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-Identified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Student Achievement-”
Academic Progress

**Mandatory**
- Retention Rates
- IPEDS Graduation Rates
- Mean Time to Graduation

**Optional**
- % Credits Completed/Attempted
- % Pell
- % Minority
- % Developmental
- % 1st Generation
- % Non-Traditional
- % Part-Time
- Self-Identified
### “Student Achievement—” Post-Institutional

**Mandatory**
- Loan Default Rate
- Loan Repayment Rate

**Optional**
- 1\textsuperscript{st} time Pass Rates on Licensure Exams
- Graduate Survey Satisfaction Results
- Career Placement Rates
- “First Destination” Survey Placement Rates
- Transfer Rates
- Self-Identified
“Student Achievement—”
Post-Institutional

**Mandatory**
- Loan Default Rate
- Loan Repayment Rate

**Optional**
- 1st time Pass Rates on Licensure Exams
- Graduate Survey Satisfaction Results
- Career Placement Rates
- “First Destination” Survey Placement Rates
- Transfer Rates
- Self-Identified
AIU Metrics: Financial Sustainability

• **Thirteen** data elements
  – Some may not apply to all institutions

• **Seven** document uploads
  – Some may not apply to all institutions
Financial Health Indicators - Data Elements

- Available Net Assets
- % Cash + Investments/Total Operating Expenses
- Debt Service/Op Expenses
- Cash + Investments/Debt
- Receivables/Tuition + Fees
- Tuition Discount Ratio
- \(\frac{[\text{Op Revenue}-\text{Op Expense}]}{\text{Total Revenue}}\)
- Investment Funds/Operating Budget
- \(\Delta\) Available Net Assets/Total
- Financial responsibility Composite Score
- HCM Status Incl. Reason
- “90/10” Revenue Percentage
- Audit Qualifying Letter Type
Financial Health Indicators - Documents

All
• Most Recent Audited Financials
• IPEDS Finance Data
• Title IV Compliance Audits
• Catalog/URL
• Most Recent USDE Composite Score

If Applicable
• Bond Rating for New Debt issued
• Financial Audit from Parent Corporation
AIU Data Sources

• **Mandatory data elements**
  – Uploaded directly from IPEDS by MSCHE
    • Decrease burden on institutions
  – Satisfy Federal Regulators
  – Decrease confusion of multiple definitions

• **Optional data elements**
  – Entered by institution at their discretion
Annual Institutional Updates: Useful and Used

• AIUs will be reviewed by staff.
  – Trends rather than bright lines.
  – Staff feedback only if warranted
    • Trend thresholds trigger contact from MSCHE Staff

• Self-generated AIU reports also useful to institutions
  – Graphics enable institutions to monitor progress.
  – Ability to compare trends to aggregated peer-group.
Midpoint Peer Review

Annual Institutional Updates
- Financial and Student Achievement data elements
- Responses to recommendations (if needed)

Midpoint Review
- Cumulative Peer Review of AIU data
- Feedback from the Commission

Self-Study Evaluation
- Campus engagement in self-study process that culminates with an onsite team visit by peer evaluators

Opportunities/Input for Institutional Improvement
Midpoint Peer Review

• Based on preceding AIUs.
  – No PRR report or equivalent

• Peers review information

• Follow-up as needed
Self-Study and Team Visit

Annual Institutional Updates

- Financial and Student Achievement data elements
- Responses to recommendations (if needed)

Midpoint Review

- Cumulative Peer Review of AIU data
- Feedback from the Commission

Self-Study Evaluation

- Campus engagement in self-study process that culminates with an onsite team visit by peer evaluators

Opportunities/Input for Institutional Improvement
Self-Study Evaluation

• Replaces decennial review

• Engages entire campus community

• Examines progress during past eight years

• Plans for future initiatives
Self-Study Evaluation:
A Holistic Approach

• Multiple Sources of Evidence: One Action
  – Document Archive
  – Institutional Narrative
  – Team Visit

• Focus is on institutional improvement
Self-Study Evaluation Demonstrates Institutional Health

**Medical Check-Up**
- Clinical History
- Test Results/Blood Work
- Specialists’ Consultation
- Diagnosis/Prognosis

**Self-Study Evaluation**
- Institutional Narrative
- Document Archive Data
- Team Visit
- Commission Action
Document Archive

• **Piloted** in CIP

• **“Resource Room”** within MSCHE Portal
  – MSCHE requested and institution-originated documents
  – **May** be briefly annotated to provide context

• **Useful** to multiple constituents
  – **Institution**- While developing narrative, and ongoing repository
  – **Evaluators**- Prior to and during site visit
Self-Study Narrative

• Focus is on institutional improvement
  – In context of the Standards

• **Narrative** report on major initiatives
  – Identified in **previous** Self-Study
  – Initiated **since** last Self-Study
  – Planned **future initiatives**
Narrative Initiatives

• **Initiatives** included in narrative will be:
  
  – **Identified** in Self-Study Design
    • Approved by MSCHE Liaison
  
  – **Broad** in scope
    • Major impact on large sectors of the institution
  
  – **Linked** specifically to appropriate Standards
    • Via final criterion of each Standard
Self-Study Narrative:
Role of each Standard’s final criterion

• In context of initiatives, narrative presents:
  – What you learned from this assessment
  – How results informed initiatives
    • Past, current and planned
    • Or, indicated no initiative needed
Linking Self Study Reviews

Annual Institutional Updates
- Financial and Student Achievement data elements
- Responses to recommendations (if needed)

Midpoint Review
- Cumulative Peer Review of AIU data
- Feedback from the Commission

Self-Study Evaluation
- Campus engagement in self-study process that culminates with an onsite team visit by peer evaluators
The Holistic Accreditation Cycle

• One prominent pathway
  – For institutions in compliance

• Alternate pathways when guidance is needed
  – Additional institutional improvement is sought

• Pathways for returning to compliance
  – Following an adverse action
Accreditation Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Self-Study</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Visit</td>
<td>Compliant</td>
<td>Updates on Inst. Improvement</td>
<td>Updates on Inst. Improvement</td>
<td>Updates on Inst. Improvement</td>
<td>Compliant</td>
<td>Updates on Inst. Improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliant w/ rec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Compliant</td>
<td>Updates on Inst. Improvement</td>
<td>Follow-up Report &amp; Team Visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Re-Affirmation without Recommendations
Re-Affirmation with Recommendations
Non-Compliance
Timing

• Spring 2017- Institutional Profiles upload w/ minor updates

• November 2017- Training in new process for **2019-2020 cohort** institutions

• Spring 2018- Portal opens, **AIUs begin**, training available

• Summer/Fall 2018- **MPPR** conducted for 1\textsuperscript{st} cohort

• June 2019- SS evaluations of last institutions under old process

• Fall 2019- Training for evaluators using new process

• June 2020- **Evaluation of 1\textsuperscript{st} cohort** under new process
In Conclusion

- A member-driven, multi-step process has brought us to this point:
  - Assessment Task Force
  - Revision of the Standards
  - Collaborative Implementation Project
  - Process Change

The new process is at hand.
We have met these goals

- A process leading to consistent interpretation and application of the *Standards* that:
  - Enables the Commission to take *unassailable actions*;
  - Supports continuous *institutional improvement*;
  - Is *respectful* of the resources expended by member institutions;
  - Meets expanding *Federal* requirements.
Thank you for your participation and attention!