SACS COC

The Role of Chief Academic Officers and Accreditation

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Goals for this Session

- **Academic Leadership through the Accreditation Process**
- **Bolman & Deal's (2013) Four Frame Model of Leadership**
- **Applications to Accreditation**
- **Tools for Professional Development of Future Leaders**

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> **"While colleges still depend on their presidents to set big-picture vision and make decisions about direction, they increasingly rely on chief academic officers to shepherd improvement and innovation and get institutionwide support for change. Provosts' roles are expanding to involve more strategic thinking, particularly as pressures grow for colleges to prove their worth and rein in costs."**

–Lee Gardner, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 11, 2015, Page A16.

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Challenges of Academic Leadership
(from Lee Bolman, SACSCOC Summer Institute 2018)

Academic institutions characterized by "VUCA" (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous)
- **Multiple tasks and goals**
- **Multiple disciplines and constituencies**
- **Goals are often vague, disputed, hard to measure**
- **Institutions are designed to give academic units and scholars substantial autonomy (i.e., adaptive at unit level, but often inertial at institutional level)**
- **An environment which typically presents many brakes and few accelerators**

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CAO Leadership In Accreditation

- **The chief academic officer is one of the few individuals on most campuses who is sufficiently connected to both the strategic and the operational functions to make connections between the two that accreditation processes often require.**

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CAO and Leadership

- **Successful accreditation processes seldom occur without significant involvement of the institution's chief academic officer.**
- **The chief academic officer can seldom lead the institution effectively if the accreditation process is not functioning successfully.**

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CAO Leadership In Accreditation

- **Accreditation processes require too much work and investment of resources for them not to produce benefits to the institution far beyond accreditation itself.**

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CAO Leadership In Accreditation

- **Because few SACSCOC principles are prescriptive, chief academic officers may frame compliance mechanisms that align internal needs and priorities with accreditation principles.**

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Benefits of Leveraging Accreditation Processes

- **Internal and external verification of program quality and process validity**
- **Alignment of internal practices/procedures with "good practices"**

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More Benefits

- **Showcase of institutional effectiveness for constituent groups, including the governing board, students, and the public**
- **Inclusive accreditation process that builds community, shared vision, and participatory leadership**

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Still More Benefits

- **Mechanism to motivate institutional change and continuous improvement**
- **Professional development opportunity for potential institutional leaders**

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Bolman & Deal's (2013) Frames of Leadership

- **Structural Frame**
- **Human Resource Frame**
- **Political Frame**
- **Symbolic Frame**

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Structural Frame

- **Clarify institutional goals and objectives**
- **Evaluate and align structures to meet organization's current circumstances, goals, and priorities**
- **Distinguish problem areas/performance deficits from structural deficits**
- **Identify remedies through problem solving and restructuring**

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Human Resource Frame

- **Provide a responsive and supportive environment that invests in individuals**
- **Promote open dialogue and active engagement**
  - **Provide information and support**
  - **Encourage autonomy and participation**
  - **Foster self-managing teams**
- **Promotive personal and professional growth and development**

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Political Frame

- **Build coalitions**
  - **Identify relevant relationships and power dynamics**
  - **Assess interests and resistance**
  - **Build linkages to key stakeholders**
- **Use persuasion and negotiation**
- **Leverage resources and exercise power to meet strategic priorities**

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Symbolic Frame

- **Identify priorities and communicate them with passion**
- **Use symbols and stories to clarify direction and anchor hope/vision**
- **Attend to and value the process as a means to develop shared meaning**
- **Use rituals to honor values and leverage process to build community**

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Discussion (1)

- **How might each of the four frames be applied to enhance an institution's (and a CAO's) overall approach to the accreditation process?**

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Discussion (2)

- **How might the four frames enhance an institution's overall approach to selected *Principles*?**

    - **6.1 (*Full-time faculty*)**
    - **6.2.b (*Program faculty*)**
    - **8.2.a (*Student outcomes: educational programs*)**

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Discussion (3)

- **How might the four frames enhance an institution's overall approach to selected *Principles*?**
  - **Development of policies/procedures:**
    - **4.2.b (Board/administrative distinction) and 10.4 (*Academic governance*)**
    - **6.2.c (*Program coordination*)**
    - **6.3 (*Faculty appointment and evaluation*)**
    - **6.4 (*Academic freedom*)**
    - **13.8 (*Institutional environment*)**

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Final Remarks

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