Coming of Age:
Steps, Challenges, and Lessons Learned from Becoming Separately Accredited

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Agenda

• Brief overview of institution and context
• Challenges and opportunities in becoming a separate institution
  – SACSCOC Application and Compliance Certification
  – IE Process and related standards
• Strategies to ensure autonomy and compliance with application standards: Lessons learned
• From the perspective of an HRI
• Questions & Answers
Texas Tech University
Health Sciences at El Paso
Our Institution: TTUHSC EL Paso

- TTUHSC El Paso began operating more than 40 years ago as a regional campus of the Texas Tech University (TTU) School of Medicine.
- TTUHSC El Paso was established in 2013 as the fourth university within the TTU System.
- TTUHSC El Paso is the ONLY health sciences center (HSC) in El Paso and the ONLY medical school on the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Submitted application for separate accreditation in January 2017.
- Successful SACSCOC on-site review in January 2018.
- TTUHSC El Paso was separately accredited in June 2018 and commended for a “culture of excellence.”
New Institution: Challenges and Opportunities

- Finalizing independent operation
  - Establishing offices, policies, procedures, etc.
- New Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
- Lack of institution-wide knowledge about Commission, SACSCOC standards, and accreditation process
- Aggressive timeline: submit application and CC in the same year!
- Cultural context of former institution
- Cultural context of new institution
  - Leadership change in 2014
  - Large numbers of new employees
Start with a Plan

• **Timeline**
  – Identify scope of work

• **Organizational Support Structure**
  – Committees, taskforces

• **Work Flow and Organization**
  – Dissect and map work to timeline
  – Assign tasks and set deadlines
  – Web-based accreditation management system

• **Develop IE Plan for campus-wide planning and assessment cycle**
  – Develop training workshops and materials
  – Define cycle dates and deadlines

• **Who will help?**
  – Available staff and resources
  – Taskforces: IE, Institutional Research (IR) and Accreditation
  – Consultant review
  – Colleagues at parent institution
Timeline: Lessons Learned

• Ensure timeline is achievable
  – Negotiate if needed and if possible
• Talk to others with experience
• Assess availability of resources and support
  – STAFF: you need a team!
  – What other responsibilities do team members have?
  – What other work needs to happen?
Organizational Support Structure

- Council (Authority, Division/School Leaders)
- Taskforces (Working Groups)
- Content Experts (Information)
- Lead Writers/Reviewers (Narratives)
- Data Stewards (Data)
- Documentation (System Support)
Support Structure: Lessons Learned

• Educate!
  – Use *every platform* to talk about accreditation and SACSCOC
  – Presentations on SACSCOC and IE
  – Use every opportunity to link every-day work and processes to accreditation

• Involve division leaders as much as possible
  – Leaders are busy - but want to contribute
  – Keep leaders informed and involved
  – Communicate regularly, cc on messages
    • Limits work conflicts
    • Leaders create availability for staff and faculty who are needed for the work
Lesson Learned: Take Control of the Writing

• Small team of writers
• Become content experts!
• Write as much as you can
• Ask department/school repos for review/edits and filling in of gaps
  • Creates a way of communicating gaps/need for documentation
  • Helps leaders understand what a comprehensive response looks like...
• Develop a style guide for those on the writing team
• Limit who can edit narratives within writing platform
Developing the Application: Work Flow and Organization

• Writing platform
  – Version control, tracks changes
  – Central location, accessible online
  – No need to email, access folders, etc.
  – Allows for task assignment with reminders

• Centralized document library
  – Develop work flow for collecting and storing evidence
  – Save evidence as you write; create evidence library
  – Develop naming convention for files and library folders

• Linking evidence
  – Link evidence in narrative as it is saved
  – Designate at least one person to link and manage evidence
Institutional Effectiveness Process

• Design and establish IE processes for TTUHSC El Paso
• Develop training and workshops on IE elements:
  – mission statement, goals, measures, targets, results, improvement strategies, and documentation.
  – Develop rubrics, materials, resources, update website
• Provide group and individual trainings/consulting
• Implement peer review process
• Document assessment cycle
TTUHSC El Paso Mission

Mission Guides Planning

Start Here Review/Reflect

What are we trying to do?
Review OIRE Feedback
Reflect on Previous Results

Goals

Where do we want to go?
What do we want to accomplish in the long-term?

Objectives

What are we going to do?
What will we offer and deliver?

Expected Outcomes

What should we learn/achieve?
What should our activities produce?

Measures/Targets

How will we assess learning/achievement?
How will we evaluate our progress/productivity?

Data Collection

What type of data will we collect?
What targets do we want to meet?

Results/Data Analysis

What did we achieve/learn?
What did we produce?
What does the data tell us?
Did we meet our target(s)?

Action Plan

What can we do differently?
How can we do better?

Improvements

What new strategies are we implementing?
Peer Review Process

• Teams of TTUHSC El Paso faculty and staff reviewed and evaluated all academic and administrative assessment plans.

• Rate the assessment plan in predetermined groups: independently, then adjudicate

• All reviewers received training prior to the review process.

• Two rubrics were provided by our office in the evaluation of the assigned assessment plans.
Institutional Effectiveness Process: Lessons Learned

• Keep it simple and facilitate as much as you can
• What review processes, reports, and data already exists?
• Find the overlap
  – link to program review/evaluation, school-based accreditations, program development
• Develop simple format for reviewers
  – Develop a template to present annual assessment data and improvements
  – Make it easy to read; tell a simple story
• Assess and improve your own IE process
  – Assess and refine
    • From group training series to overview workshops and focused individual consultations
    • Implemented electronic review forms for peer review
• Review unit structure as organization changes
From the HRI Perspective...

- Professional School Accreditations
  - Pros
    - Understanding of accreditation processes
    - Rigorous program reviews
    - Existing data
    - Ongoing assessment processes
  - Cons
    - Difference in scope and focus
    - Limited understanding beyond professional accreditation standards
      - State laws
      - Federal regulations
    - Placing more importance on professional accreditation
HRI Perspective: Lessons Learned

• Educate AND Learn
• How do agency standards compare/overlap?
• What are data needs? What is regularly collected? *What has been written?*
• Find opportunities for overlap and alignment
  – Eliminate extra work!
• Streamline/centralize documentation
Cultural Context: Lessons Learned

• From former to new institution
  – Change is wanted
  – Change is also difficult
    • Loss of routine
    • Loss of control
  – Lesson in leadership:
    • Empower and create opportunities for development/ownership
Thank you!

Time for Discussion