What to Expect When You’re Expecting a Disaster
Lessons from a Hair-Raising Fifth-Year Experience

RANGER COLLEGE
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Session Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

• identify potential or actual problems and issues in their own institutions in relation to the new SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation

• recognize the importance of developing adequate written policies

• apply the lessons learned by Ranger College to their own circumstances

• recognize the importance of adhering to the principle of integrity
About Ranger College

• Ranger, TX + two major off-campus centers
• Founded in 1926
• Around 50 dual credit partners
• Enrollment c. 2,500, with over half dual credit
• 3 transfer degrees (AA, AS, AAT) + several CTE programs
• Currently #1-ranked men’s basketball team and men’s golf team,  #6-ranked women’s golf team
• Only college in Texas able to provide Pell Grants to dual credit students
• One of the best hours-to-completion and time-to completion ratios in Texas
Dawn of Horror: Early 2018

• Fifth-Year Interim Report due in September. Discovery that no meaningful work had previously been done.

• Malfunctioning systems: learning outcomes assessment, general institutional effectiveness, strategic plan implementation.

• Vague and missing policies, procedures, documents. “Tribal knowledge.”

• Out of compliance on substantive change: 10 (!) unreported.

• QEP drift.
Dawn of Horror: Early 2018

• Significant administrator (and other) turnover:
  • Vice President of Instruction
  • QEP Director
  • Vice President of Student Services
  • VP and AVP of Erath and Brown County Centers
  • CFO
  • Director of Library/Learning Services
  • Director of HR
  • Director of IT
Compounding the Problem

Pervasive misunderstanding of SACSCOC and the Principles of Accreditation: Their nature and purpose
POLL:

How is SACSCOC generally viewed at your institution?

Link
Needed: A Fundamental Reorientation

Mission: “Why do we exist?”

Vision: “Who/what are we aiming to be?”

Values: “Who are we? What do we believe?”
Actions Taken

FIRST:
We returned to our core principles.

• Developed a vision statement: “Ranger College will be the trusted leader in meeting current and emerging needs for training and education that transforms lives, inspires hope, and builds communities.”

• Dramatically revised/clarified our mission statement: “The mission of Ranger College is to transform lives and give students the skills to be a positive influence in their communities.”

• Revised our statement of values.
• Created a new strategic plan.
POLL:

What’s the general public status of mission, vision, and values at your institution?
Actions Taken

SECOND: We flipped the cultural conversation about SACSCOC.

• Educated ourselves.
• Educated the entire college community. Accreditation and IE not in a silo.
  → Led Administrative Council through a study of the Principles of Accreditation
• Changed the narrative: SACSCOC not a Orwellian police force but a guide to best practices.
THIRD: We created systems that will outlast any individual employee.

- Established new policies and procedures, made tribal knowledge formal and official.
- Revised and rebooted learning outcomes assessment and IE.
Actions Taken

THIRD:
We created systems that will outlast any individual employee.

• Took steps to export the culture of the college to dual credit partner schools
• Invested in a good accreditation and assessment management system.
So how did it turn out?

• On-site committee visit: Three recommendations, all successfully addressed in our response.

• Off-site committee response: Five findings, the majority dealing with things already noted in the compliance certification.

• Vastly enhanced knowledge of ourselves, our institution, and SACSCOC.

• Ongoing improvement. The work is not (ever) done.
Lessons Learned

• It’s important to take tribal knowledge and write it down, make it formal.

• Take steps to transmit knowledge to future personnel. Have a succession plan for each position.

• Communication among divisions and departments is critically important.

• Constant upkeep is crucial in the areas of faculty credentials, substantive change, learning outcome assessment.
Lessons Learned

• It’s crucially important to involve executive-level administration in accreditation, discoveries, problem-solving, upkeep.

• Integrity is central. Be transparent with SACSCOC and your stakeholders. Tell it like it happened and say what you learned.

• To solve practical problems, begin with abstract ideals (e.g., mission, vision, values, culture).

• The crucial issue is: Who are we? What is our mission? Where are we going?