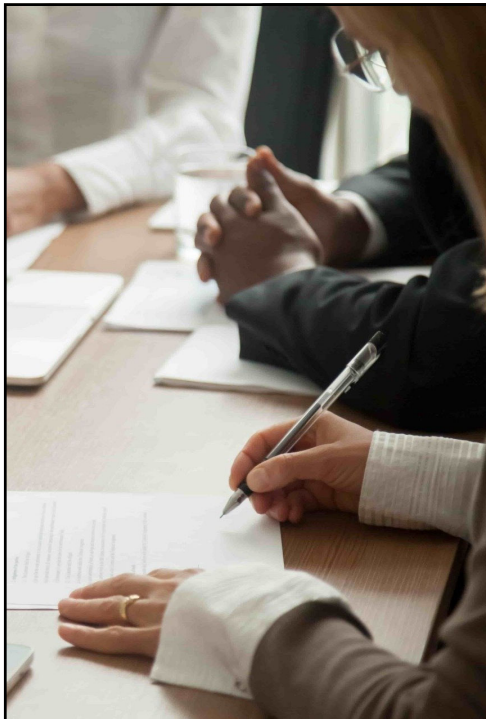# PREPARING REPORTS FOR PEER REVIEW

Patricia L. Donat, PhD
SACSCOC Vice President

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PEER REVIEW PROCESS

"The heart of the U.S. accreditation system "is the accreditation team itself: a small group of peers from other institutions who come together to assess a college's compliance with accreditation standards"

(McGuire, 2009, p. 29).

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YOUR GOAL IS TO ASSIST THE REVIEWER IN UNDERSTANDING YOUR INSTITUTION SO THAT THEY CAN WRITE AN ACCURATE REPORT DESCRIBING YOUR INSTITUTION'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE *PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION*

PEER EVALUATION: *PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT*

the art + science of professional judgment

THINK LIKE A REVIEWER

- Follow an organized format, following the order of each compliance component in the standard
  - Use key language from the standard so the reviewer knows what compliance component you are addressing in each section of narrative
- Remember to answer the question(s) asked

THINK LIKE A REVIEWER

- *Resource Manual* is helpful for brainstorming elements to consider in constructing a response but should **not** be used as a checklist.
- Institutions, however, should provide curated documentation (i.e., evidence carefully chosen and thoughtfully organized in support of its case for compliance).
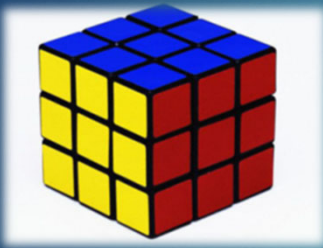
THINK LIKE A REVIEWER

- Address all components of the standard

- Compliance components are:
  - the <u>discrete elements</u> that must be addressed for each requirement and standard
  - embedded in the wording of the *Principles*
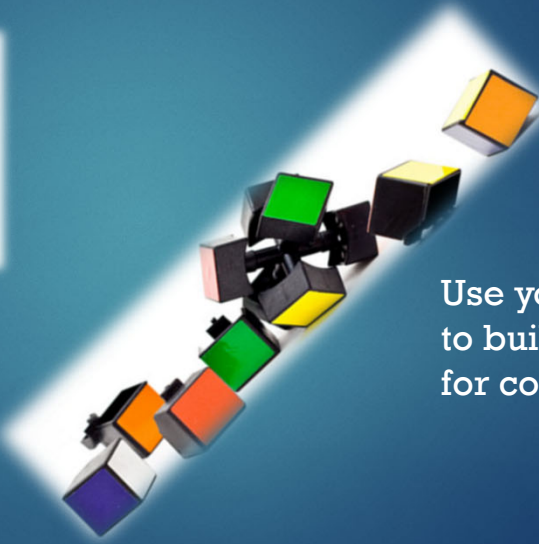   - (and frequently signaled by numbers, commas, and the use of compound modifiers)

COMPLIANCE COMPONENTS:
SUM IS LARGER THAN THE PARTS

Evidence and individual compliance components are important

Use your narrative to build your case for compliance

IDENTIFY THE COMPLIANCE COMPONENTS

Standard 2.1 (Institutional mission)

The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service.

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IDENTIFY THE COMPLIANCE COMPONENTS

Standard 2.1 (Institutional mission)

The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service.

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THINK LIKE A REVIEWER

- Use your narrative to make your case for compliance
- Support your case with two types of evidence
    - Documents describing the institution and its governing policies and procedures
    - Documents demonstrating how the institution operates in practice

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IDENTIFY THE EVIDENCE

STANDARD 5.2.B(CONTROL OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS)
THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER HAS ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR, AND EXERCISES APPROPRIATE CONTROL OVER, THE INSTITUTION'S INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS PROGRAM.

Remember to support your case with two types of evidence
- Documents that describe how the institution operates
- Documents that show how the institution operates in practice

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**IDENTIFY THE EVIDENCE
STANDARD 5.2.B. (CONTROL OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS)**

- Documents that describe how the institution operates
    - Organizational chart
    - Job descriptions
- Documents that show how the institution operates in practice
    - Performance evaluations addressing athletic oversight
    - Minutes from meetings with Athletic advisory board, athletic director, etc.
    - Formal reports, presentations
    - Redacted communications (memos, emails, etc.)
    - Redacted budgets, personnel actions, compliance documents

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STANDARDS REQUIRING A POLICY

(SEE APPENDIX A IN *RESOURCE MANUAL)*

Include:

- Documentation of **approval/approval process**
- Conformity with **commonly accepted practices**
- **Accurate description** of the institution's programs and services
- **Dissemination** to those affected by the policy
- Documentation of **implementation or enforcement** (or include statement attesting to the fact that a policy has never been implemented)

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SPECIFIC STANDARDS, NOTES, GUIDANCE

Suggestions based upon experience working with peer review committees

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SECTION 3: BASIC ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS

- *Institutions seeking reaffirmation of accreditation **do not need to address these standards** unless the basis of [its degree-granting authority, etc.] has changed.*

- Simply note that "degree granting authority" or "coursework for degrees" etc. has not changed since the last reaffirmation.

PERSONNEL EVALUATIONS
## (STANDARDS 4.2.C. FOR THE CEO, 5.4 FOR SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS, 5.5 FOR NON-FACULTY, 6.3 FOR FACULTY)

- Policies that describe process
- Documentation that illustrates REGULAR implementation
  - Recommend include full census for administrators
  - Recommend representative illustrations of each type for others
  - Provide the last two evaluations for your illustration(s).
- Evaluations may be redacted to protect sensitive information
- Note: These standards include additional compliance components that must be addressed.

SAMPLING FOR INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS STANDARDS (SEE *INTERPRETATION*)

- A valid cross-section of the institution's units, reflecting its mission
  - Administrative units representing each major division (Standard 7.3)
  - Educational programs representing each major division and program level. Sampling also should include or clarify that off-campus instructional sites and distance course offerings are included, along with an explanation of the process for inclusion/oversight (Standard 8.2.a).
  - Academic and student services representing each major division (Standard 8.2.c)
- A compelling case (rationale) for the sample
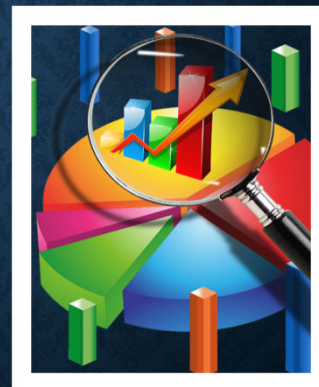
FULL-TIME FACULTY (SEE *GUIDELINE*)

**Core Requirement 6.1 (Institutional full-time faculty)**

- **Definitions** of full-time and part-time faculty

- Describe expected **role, responsibilities, and functions**, including overall **workload**

- **Adequacy** to support institutional mission/goals
    - **Rationale/evidence** in support of case for adequacy
    - Response should NOT be limited to instructional adequacy

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**FULL-TIME FACULTY (SEE *GUIDELINE*)**

6.2.b. (Program full-time faculty)

- Describe **full-time faculty adequacy** to ensure **quality, integrity, and review**

- Requires **disaggregated** full-time/part-time data **by *educational program***

- Recommend do NOT disaggregate by site/mode, but do **discuss how ensure quality and integrity across sites/modes**
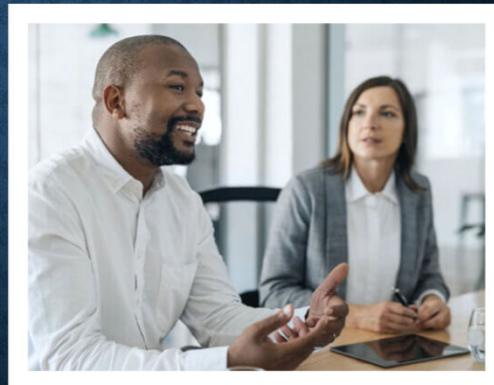
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6.2.A. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS (SEE *INTERPRETATION*)
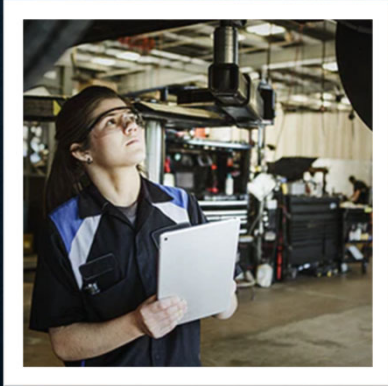
- Also see *General Instructions for Completing the Faculty Roster Form* for specific directions regarding completion

- During reaffirmation, institutions may use the *Faculty From Prior Review Form*

- Remember that academic **credentials /= qualifications**.

- The *Faculty Roster Form* should include all faculty teaching credit courses. The **instructor of record** is the person qualified to teach the course and who provides direct instruction for the course.

CORE REQUIREMENT 8.1 (STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT) (SEE *INTERPRETATION*)

- *Institutions are expected to demonstrate their success with student achievement and indicate the* criteria *and* thresholds of acceptability *used to determine that success.*
  - *The **criteria** are the items to be **measured** (and **published**); the **thresholds of acceptability** are the minimal expectations set by the institution. The institution is responsible for **justifying** both the **criteria** it utilizes and the **thresholds** it sets.*

CORE REQUIREMENT 8.1 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- *Institutions should address **graduation rates** using the **metric identified to SACSCOC** along with **strategies to seek improvement** (if needed).*

- *Institutions should **disaggregate graduation rates** and discuss the **rationale and strategies to seek improvement** in the achievement among identified populations.*
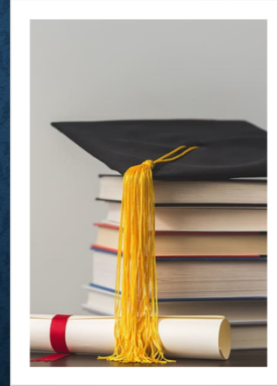
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13.8 (INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT) (SEE *INTERPRETATION*)

- The institution should include…information relating to any **investigations** by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for possible **violations alleging sexual violence.**

- If there are none, the institution must include an **EXPLICIT** statement to that effect.
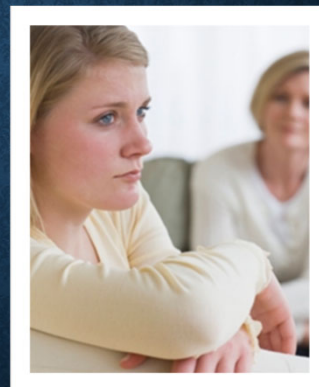
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14.1 (PUBLICATION OF ACCREDITATION STATUS)

Statement for Accredited Institutions:

(Name of member institution) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award (name specific **degree levels**, such as associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctorate). Questions about the accreditation of (name of member institution) may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information **available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org)**

"Institutional obligations for public disclosure" policy (rev 9/20)

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SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

"Reports submitted for SACSCOC review" (rev. 6/21)

- All reports should be submitted as **electronic copies**
  - Use **a single zipped** (compressed) file.
  - All hyperlinks should open **documents included in the extracted (self-contained) file** (NOT external sources).
  - Use common naming conventions for files. Do not include an "autorun" file.
  - Documents should be **bookmarked, indexed, and searchable**.
  - The zipped file may not exceed **10 gigabytes**.
  - **Label** all USBs with institutional name and report title.

Contact SACSCOC for "temporary workaround instructions" for Substantive Change submissions.

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RESOURCES

- *Resource Manual for the 2018 Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*
- *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation*
- *Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review*
- *Interpretations for specific standards*

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