

The Role of Chief Academic Officers and Accreditation

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Session Abstract:

The leadership of the chief academic officer significantly influences an institution's success in meeting its accreditation requirements. This session will explore how chief academic officers may productively apply Bolman and Deal's (2013) four-frame model for leadership to an institution's accreditation responsibilities, thus strengthening accreditation processes themselves and enhancing institutional leadership more broadly.

Framing Concepts:

1. "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 institution-wide 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.
2. The chief academic officer is one of few individuals on most campuses who is sufficiently connected to both the strategic and the operational to make the connections between the two which accreditation processes often require.
3. Corollaries:
 - 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.
4. Accreditation processes require too much work and investment of resources for them not to produce benefits to the institution far beyond accreditation itself.
5. Because few SACSCOC principles are prescriptive, chief academic officers have relative freedom to determine how to comply with a principle by finding ways to align internal needs and priorities with the relatively broad principles.

Discussion questions:

1. How might the four frames be applied to shape the overall accreditation process?
2. How might the four frames enhance an institution's overall approach to selected Principles?
 - 6.1 (*Full-time faculty*) and 6.2.b (*Program faculty*)
 - 8.2.a (*Student outcomes: educational programs*)
3. How might the four frames enhance an institution's development of required 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*)

Concluding remarks:

Applying the frames may strengthen institutional policies and processes above the minimal level required for accreditation compliance.

Applying the frames in the accreditation process can establish a baseline (and training) from which to use that frame in other ongoing leadership contexts.

Four Frames of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, multiple publications)

Below is a brief summary table describing each of the four frames of leadership as presented by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal in their book, *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. Parts of the information here comes from presentation of Lee Bolman at SACSCOC Summer Institute (Atlanta, GA, July 2018). Although individuals often have a preferred frame for leadership, effectiveness can be maximized when leaders view their organization and individual challenges and opportunities through multiple frames, selecting and applying the frame most appropriate to the specific situation.

	Structural	Human Resources	Political	Symbolic
Metaphor	Complex machine	Extended family	Jungle	Theater, temple
Leader as:	Analyst, architect	Servant, catalyst	Advocate, negotiator	Prophet, poet
Strategy	Do your homework, design new approach, implement	Build relationships, listen, educate, be open, empower others	Map terrain, create agenda, network, attract allies, defuse opposition	Reframe, use self as symbol, stage rituals and ceremonies, tell stories, create drama
Focus	Data, logic, structure, plans, policies	Skills, attitudes, teamwork, communications	Build power base, get access, influence key players	Meaning, belief, faith
Leadership role	Set goals, structures, and roles that enable efficiency through clear policies, procedures, and lines of authority	Provide responsive support and empowerment that promote loyalty	Build alliances and a base of power that may be exercised effectively to strategic advantage	Communicate passion that supports organizational commitment
Leadership communication	Provide information and facts	Are visible and accessible, exchanging thoughts and feelings	Influence and persuade individuals and groups	Tell a story that describes the vision
Problem-solving strategy	Follow a rational procedure and focus on implementation	Open dialogue and engage in a process	Clarify desired outcomes and exercise power and influence	Honor rituals that confirm organizational values and build community
Conflict resolution	Maintain organizational goals through authority resolution of conflict	Develop relationships through individuals resolving conflict	Use persuasion, negotiation, and if required, coercion to build support	Develop shared values and construct meaning
Goal setting	Provide clarity and appropriate focus and alignment to achieve organizational goals	Involve, inform, and engage others to develop mutual goals	Identify others' interests and build coalitions to inform goal development	Develop symbols, common narratives, and shared valued outcomes
Evaluation	Deliver rewards and penalties that reinforce internal controls	Promote personal and professional growth and development	Exercise power	Engage in shared ritual
Motivation	Effectiveness and organizational outcomes	Process, others' personal growth and self-actualization	Power, competitive advantage, and influence	Vision, cultural transformation, and celebration