

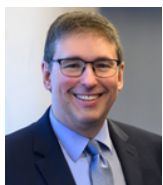


THE TORCH REPORT

NEWS & INSIGHTS FROM THE COMMISSION
ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

What Changed, What Hasn't, and Why

If you have visited our social media, our website, or opened a piece of our correspondence recently, you may have noticed something different.



Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt
Commission President

As of September 1, we are doing business as **The Commission on Colleges and Universities**.

Let me start with what that does not mean for you.

SACSCOC remains our accreditation name. Accreditation continues to carry the SACSCOC seal. Your institution's accreditation statement — in your catalog, in your consumer disclosures, in your state filings — does not need to change. Not now, and not at your next reprint. Your accreditation status, your reaffirmation date, and our recognition by the U.S. Department of Education are all exactly what they were in August.

That was a deliberate choice, and I want to explain it, because the simpler path was available to us and we did not take it.

A clean rename would have been easier for our staff and considerably harder for you. It would have meant every accredited institution rewriting catalog language, updating disclosures, amending state filings, and answering questions from boards and general counsel about whether anything substantive had changed.



Commission President Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt delivered a keynote address to leadership and faculty at the University of the Bahamas, which is working through candidacy.

Multiply that across our membership and it is thousands of hours of work that produces nothing for a single student.

So we kept SACSCOC where it does real work, and adopted a new name where a name does a different kind of work.

It means our staff now hold two names in their heads and have to know which applies where. That is a genuine complication for us. It is the right trade, and I would make it again.

As for why a new public name at all: our membership and our work extend well beyond what the old name described.

Institutions we serve are located across the country and around the world, and the name we introduce ourselves with should reflect that.

A name is not a small thing when your work depends on being understood by people who have never dealt with you before — legislators, reporters, employers, families trying to make sense of a credential.

Whatever we are called, the work has not changed, and neither has what I believe about it. Accreditation is how higher education holds itself accountable. It is not a government program, not a ranking, and not a seal an institution buys and displays.

It is a group of colleges and universities agreeing on what they owe their students, and then agreeing to let each other check. That arrangement is worth defending. **An accreditation that asks little of institutions is worth little to students.**

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In my travels, I've seen how seriously our member institutions take their obligations to students. That's exactly why the standards should be demanding. Institutions doing this work well deserve a process that can tell the difference.

That is why we send peers rather than inspectors, why we ask for evidence rather than intentions, and why we publish our standards and our decisions where anyone can examine them. It is also why I do not think accreditation should feel like something an institution survives every few years. At its best it is the occasion an institution uses to ask hard questions about its own work — the kind that are easy to postpone when no one is asking.

New name, same standards, same process, same expectations — of you, and of us.

If you have questions about what the change means for your institution, our [website has details](#), and your staff liaison can help with anything specific to you.

Be Bold, Stay Gold.

Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt

The Torch + Shield



The torch represents learning, discovery, and forward momentum.

The shield reflects accountability, stewardship, and our responsibility to protect the integrity and public trust of higher education.

Navy + Gold

Navy speaks to trust, stability, and credibility.

Gold reflects achievement, excellence, and the transformative power of higher education.

Together, the colors reflect our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of quality while helping institutions pursue innovation and continuous improvement.

Coming Soon:
New Website: [commissioncu.org](#) under construction
Vision Insights Dashboard - New Branded Materials
Updated Social Media Presence
Brand questions: [communications@commissioncu.org](#)

Which name to use, and when

Effective September 1, 2026. Accreditation remains SACSCOC.
Public-facing communications use The Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Context	Name to use	Notes
Institutional accreditation statements (catalogs, websites, consumer disclosures)	SACSCOC the accreditation name of record	No change required. Existing language stays as written.
The accreditation seal and certificate		Seal is unchanged.
Official accreditation actions, letters, and case correspondence		Legal name of record.
News releases, media, op-eds, public statements	The Commission on Colleges and Universities the public and brand name	Second reference: "The Commission."
Website, social media, publications, and events		Second reference: "The Commission."
Institutions referring to us in their own marketing or news	SACSCOC or The Commission	SACSCOC for accreditation status and actions. The Commission for everything else.

Dr. Geoffrey Klein Named Commission Chief of Staff



Dr. Geoffrey Klein

The Commission on Colleges and Universities announced the promotion of Dr. Geoffrey C. Klein to Chief of Staff and Vice President.

Klein, who has served as a vice president with the Commission since December 2021, succeeds Dr. Sandra Jordan, who retired after a distinguished career in higher education leadership and accreditation.

He will work closely with President Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt and senior leadership to advance organizational priorities, strategic initiatives, and support the Commission's accredited institutions.

"Higher education is experiencing unprecedented transformation, and accreditation plays an important role in ensuring quality and accountability in educational offerings to students, institutions, policymakers, and the public," Klein said. "Accreditation is a catalyst for innovation, encouraging institutions to explore new approaches and accreditors to build flexibility within their policies and procedures to improve student success while maintaining the highest standards of quality. I look forward to working with Dr. Pruitt, Commission Staff, and our member institutions toward this goal."

Before joining the Commission, Klein served as Vice Provost for Research, Graduate Studies, and Assessment at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. He also served as CNU's SACSCOC Liaison and successfully led the institution through its 2017 Reaffirmation process.

Klein's experience with the Commission extends well beyond his time on staff. He previously served on the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, including the Executive Council, worked as an accreditation consultant, and served as a peer evaluator on Substantive Change and Reaffirmation Committees. He also co-lead multiple Reaffirmation Bootcamps and presented on the development and sustainability of state accreditation networks.

Prior to moving into higher education administration, Klein was an Associate Professor of Chemistry at Christopher Newport University. He received the institution's inaugural Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching and secured more than \$2.6 million in grants to support his research and students. He also participated in the Harvard Institute for Management and Leadership in Higher Education and the Project Kaleidoscope Summer Leadership Institute for early-career STEM faculty. Klein earned his Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Florida State University and his B.S. in Chemistry from the College of William & Mary.



2026 Annual Meeting Registration Is Open

The registration link for the Commission's 2026 Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas, is live online [here](#).

Higher education continues to evolve as institutions respond to new educational models, emerging technologies, workforce needs, changing student expectations, and other developments shaping the educational landscape.

These changes create new questions and opportunities for institutions and for the work of accreditation.

Under the theme Exploring New Frontiers in Accreditation, the Commission's 2026 Annual Meeting invites participants to consider what these changes mean for accreditation while strengthening the knowledge and practices needed to support their institutions today.

Through sessions led primarily by institutional peers, along with Commission staff, participants will explore accreditation processes and practices, learn how colleagues are approaching their work, and engage with timely issues affecting higher education.

Whether you are new to accreditation activities or bring years of experience to the work, the Annual Meeting offers opportunities to expand your knowledge, gain practical insight, and connect with others across the Commission's membership.

Get more information about the 2026 Annual Meeting and register online [here](#).

The Commission's 2026 Annual Meeting:
December 5-8, 2026 | Houston, Texas
George R. Brown Convention Center
Exploring New Frontiers in Accreditation

Ascendium Grant to Support Transfer Credit Consortium Meeting

The Commission has received a \$55,000 Field Support and Development grant from Ascendium Education Group to support the Commission's Transfer Credit Consortium, a faculty-led initiative aimed at improving the transferability of general education coursework across colleges and universities.

The announcement comes as more than 160 institutions have committed to developing the Consortium framework, highlighting increasing national interest in collaborative solutions that enhance student transfer while maintaining institutional autonomy and academic quality.

“This investment reflects confidence in the idea that higher education can address one of its most persistent challenges by working together,” said Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt, President of the Commission. “Rather than waiting for solutions to be imposed from outside higher education, our member institutions are demonstrating that faculty leadership, institutional collaboration, and a shared commitment to student success can create a better path forward.”

Ascendium’s grant will provide critical planning support for the initiative, including convening institutional leaders, faculty members, state partners, and policy experts to develop the Consortium’s framework; conducting research and landscape analysis; identifying effective participation models; and preparing a long-term implementation strategy. The planning work will also build upon successful transfer systems already operating in states such as Alabama and Louisiana while exploring opportunities to expand effective practices across state lines through voluntary collaboration.

Substantive Change:
Recently approved workforce-aligned programs:

Reduced Credit Bachelor’s Degree:

- Louisiana State University Alexandria**
- Accelerated Baccalaureate in Information Technology (IT)

Certificates and workforce development:

- Athens State University**
- Undergraduate Microcredential in AI-Enhanced Experiential Learning

- Bluegrass Community and Technical College**
- Certificate in Waste Processing Attendant
 - Certificate in Wastewater Treatment Plant Attendant
 - Certificate in Water Treatment Plant Attendant

- McDowell Technical Community College**
- Certificate in Middle School Residency Licensure (Math and Science)
 - Certificate in High School Residency Licensure (Math and Science)

- Sandhills Community College**
- Certificate in Middle School Residency Licensure (Math and Science)
 - Certificate in Residency Licensure-Special Education

WORKFORCE IMPACT:

The Electrical Lineworker Program at **Angelina College** equips students with the technical skills, safety knowledge, and hands-on experience required to enter the workforce as qualified lineworkers.

As demand for reliable energy infrastructure continues to grow, driven by population growth, storm recovery efforts, and grid modernization, trained lineworkers are increasingly critical to communities throughout the region.



We want to hear from you! If your campus has recent news you'd like to share, please send a brief description, along with relevant links or photos, to communications@commissioncu.org.