George Washington, Popeye, and WYSIWYG

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Section 14
Transparency and Institutional Representation

WYSIWYG!
An institution is responsible for representing accurately to the public its status and relationship with SACSCOC; reporting accurately to the public its status with state or the federal government, if receiving funding from either or both; maintaining openness in all accreditation-related activities; ensuring the availability of institutional policies to students and the public; and publishing appropriate information with respect to student achievement.

14.1 Publication of accreditation status

Representation of accreditation status

- Only member/candidate institutions
- Statements from the 2012 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation (5.3.14.1) are now in SACSCOC policy “Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure”
- No statement allowed regarding possible future accreditation by SACSCOC
- Accreditation is institutional; SACSCOC does not accredit individual degrees or programs
- Accreditation is binary – “partial” accreditation is not possible
Collaborative arrangements

• Partnering with a non-SACSCOC accredited institution?
  • Accreditation is not “transitive”
  • Disclaimer statement – See SACSCOC Policy “Agreements involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards”
  • Avoid use of the SACSCOC trademarked logo
  • International institutions may need particular vigilance
  • Responsibility for compliance and transparency falls on SACSCOC institution(s)

Branch campuses

• Somewhat separate by nature
• May have history of independence that remains largely intact
• Include name of accredited institution in the name of the branch campus
• Clear that the accreditation of the branch depends on the accreditation of the “parent”
• If branch is too independent, a committee may recommend separate accreditation

14.2
Substantive change
Significant departure(s)

- Substantive changes are common reality; explosion over the past ten years
- Proper reporting and approval vital to ongoing financial aid for students in programs/at locations
- Institutional policy/procedures aligned with SACSCOC policy/procedures
- Clear and functional organizational structure for identifying, reporting, and managing substantive changes

14.3 Comprehensive institutional reviews

Distance learning

- Off-campus instructional sites – including branch campuses and online
- Something of a “catch-all” standard, since the evidence of review and application of “appropriate standards and policies” is found in narrative and supporting documentation for those standards
- Under 25%, 25-49%, and 50% thresholds
- New policy on “Dual Enrollment”
14.4
Representation to other agencies

Accurate representation

- SACSCOC Policy “Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies” – “identical terms”
  - Purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents
  - Not “identical statement”
  - Particular issue with programmatic accreditors where institution is silent on the relationship between program and the entire institution
  - Not just USDOE recognized agencies

Change of accreditation status

- Institutional responsibility to notify all accreditors of changes in accreditation status (sanction, voluntary withdrawal, etc.)
- Accreditors are usually copied on such action letters, but...
- And... accreditors will usually follow up to make sure that such decisions don’t indicate non-compliance with their own standards
14.5 Policy compliance

What else is there?

• Accreditation standards reviewed every three and five (or so) years
• In interim, policies may need to be established to address USDOE “Dear colleague” letters or other changes in the higher education landscape
• Some SACSCOC policies apply only to SACSCOC
• Others require institutional action/response:
  • 2018 revision of the POA incorporated all but two SACSCOC policies requiring institutional action/response into the language of the Standards
  • 14.5.a – System description
  • 14.5.b – Separate accreditation

What needs clearing up?