

## **Introduction to the Accreditation Standards**

### **Shaping the Dialogue**

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution. Although the standards are presented in four parts, they work together to facilitate this dialogue on the institution's effectiveness and on ways in which it may improve. The self study provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning (Standard I). Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV).

A college-wide dialogue that integrates the elements of the Standards provides the complete view of the institution that is needed to verify integrity and to promote quality and improvement.

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Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
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- Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness
- Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services
- Standard III: Resources
- Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

**Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

**A. Mission**

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

**B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness**

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

**Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services**

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

**A. Instructional Programs**

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

**B. Student Support Services**

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

### **C. Library and Learning Support Services**

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

### **Standard III: Resources**

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

#### **A. Human Resources**

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

#### **B. Physical Resources**

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

#### **C. Technology Resources**

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

#### **D. Financial Resources**

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

### **Standard IV: Leadership and Governance**

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional

effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

#### **A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes**

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

#### **B. Board and Administrative Organization**

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.

### **ACCJC Standards Glossary**

#### **Assessment—**

Methods that an institution employs to gather evidence and evaluate quality.

#### **Collegial—**

Participative and mutually respectful

#### **Dialogue—**

Self-reflective exchanges engaged in by the college community, characterized by a free exchange of ideas without the purpose of defending or deciding on a course of action.

#### **Evidence of Institution and Program Performance—**

Quantitative and qualitative data which an institution as a whole uses to determine the extent to which it attains the performance goals it establishes for itself.

#### **Information Competency—**

Capability to access, evaluate, and use information in fulfillment of coursework and independent study.

#### **Ongoing—**

Addressed regularly as part of the business of the college rather than in response to periodic external requirements.

#### **Qualitative Data—**

Data relating to, or involving quality or kind, which cannot be represented numerically, such as portfolios of work, narrative description and evaluation of a performance, learner description and analysis of a learning experience.

#### **Quantitative Data—**

Data which can be represented numerically

#### **Student Learning Outcomes—**

Knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences.

#### **Total Cost of Ownership—**

In addition to the initial cost of a purchase, all long-term and indirect costs resulting from that purchase.