



Southern Connecticut  
State University

# Preparing for Re-Accreditation

November 12, 2010



As you prepare your self-study and get ready for your site visit,  
a review of the

- What?
- Who?
- How?
- When?
- *and*
- Why?

of institutional accreditation

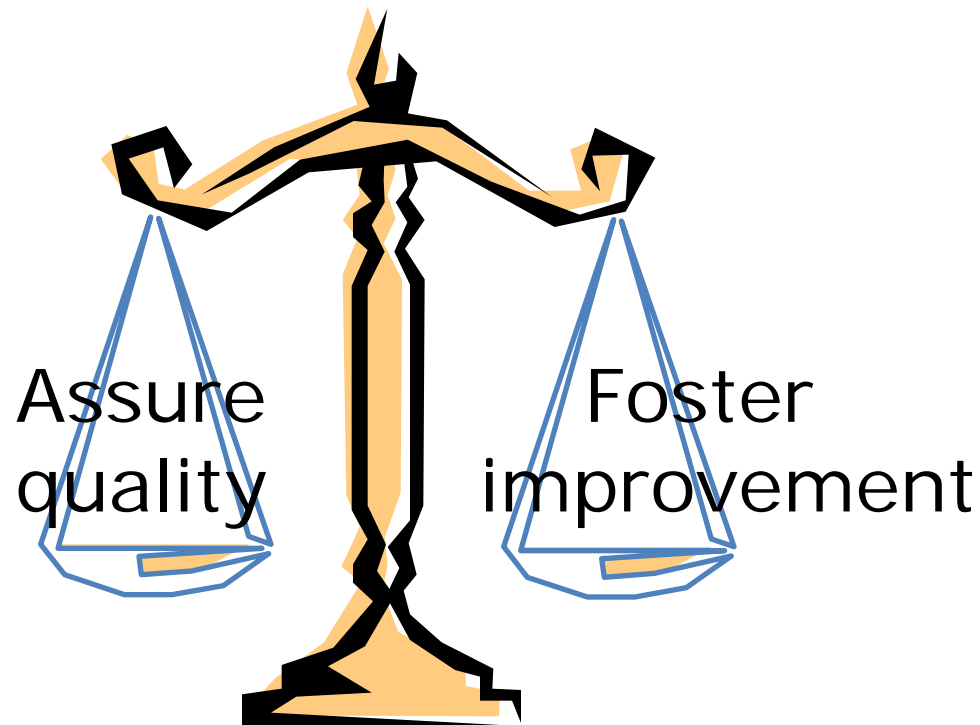
# What?

## Accreditation is

- a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality
- voluntary
- non-governmental
- self-regulatory
- institutional or specialized
- “uniquely American”

# What?

## Dual purposes of accreditation



# What?

Institutional accreditation certifies that a college or university:

- Has appropriate purposes
- Has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes
- Demonstrates that it is accomplishing its purposes
- Has the ability continue to accomplish its purposes

# Who?

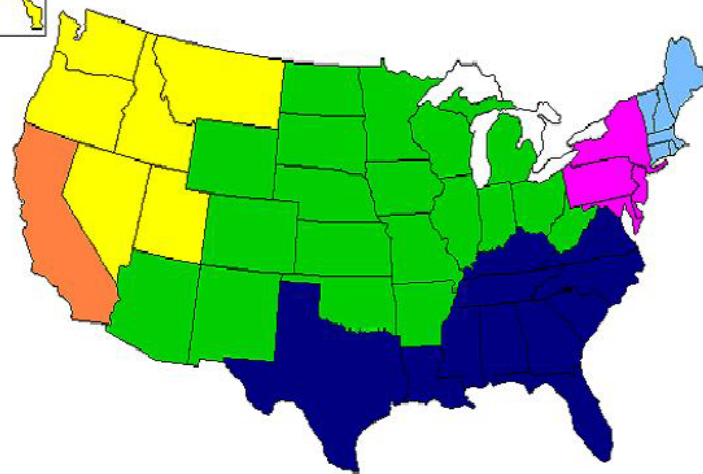
## Six regional accrediting associations in the United States

North Central (Higher Learning Commission)

North  
Western



Western



New England

Middle States

Southern

# Who?

## New England Association of Schools and Colleges

### Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

- 246 colleges and universities
- 24 commissioners
- 9 staff members (5 professional; 4 support)
- *hundreds* of volunteers

# How?

## Standards for Accreditation

- Mission and Purposes
- Planning and Evaluation
- Organization and Governance
- The Academic Program
- Faculty
- Students
- Library and Other Information Resources
- Physical and Technological Resources
- Financial Resources
- Public Disclosure
- Integrity

*These standards went into effect on January 1, 2006*

# Characteristics of the standards

- Mission-centric – institutional autonomy
- Aspirational Standards – to be met at least minimally
- Non-prescriptive - no “musts” or “shoulds”
- Largely qualitative
- Evaluation for improvement
- Responsible innovation can flourish
- Anticipate the future

# How?

## Three part process:

- Self-study
- Site Visit
- Commission action



# How?

## Self study is ...

“an intensive endeavor involving individuals throughout the entire institution in a process of self-examination aimed at institutional improvement ...”

“... a clear, concise and accurate picture of the institution as a dynamic entity with a sense of its history, an understanding of its present, and a vision of its future.”

# How?

Self study is as much

a process



as it is  
a product

# How?

## The process of self study

- 18 months to 2 years
- Steering Committee
- Writing Committees
- Widespread participation
- Timetable ... plan backwards

# How?

## Involving the campus community

- Interviews
- Existing structures and processes
- Open meetings
- Website



# How?

## The self study product

“A holistic and integrated document ... that reflects the totality of one institution.”

- Institutional characteristics
- Introduction (describes self-study process)
- Overview (sets institutional context)
- Narrative
- Data Forms (Data First, Student Success)

# How?

## More about the self-study narrative

- About 100 pages
- One chapter for each standard; include areas of emphasis clearly
- All students, all modalities, all locations
- Analytic framework:
  - **Description:** what are we doing?
  - **Appraisal:** how well are we doing?
  - **Projection:** what commitments do we make?

# How?

## A special emphasis on evidence

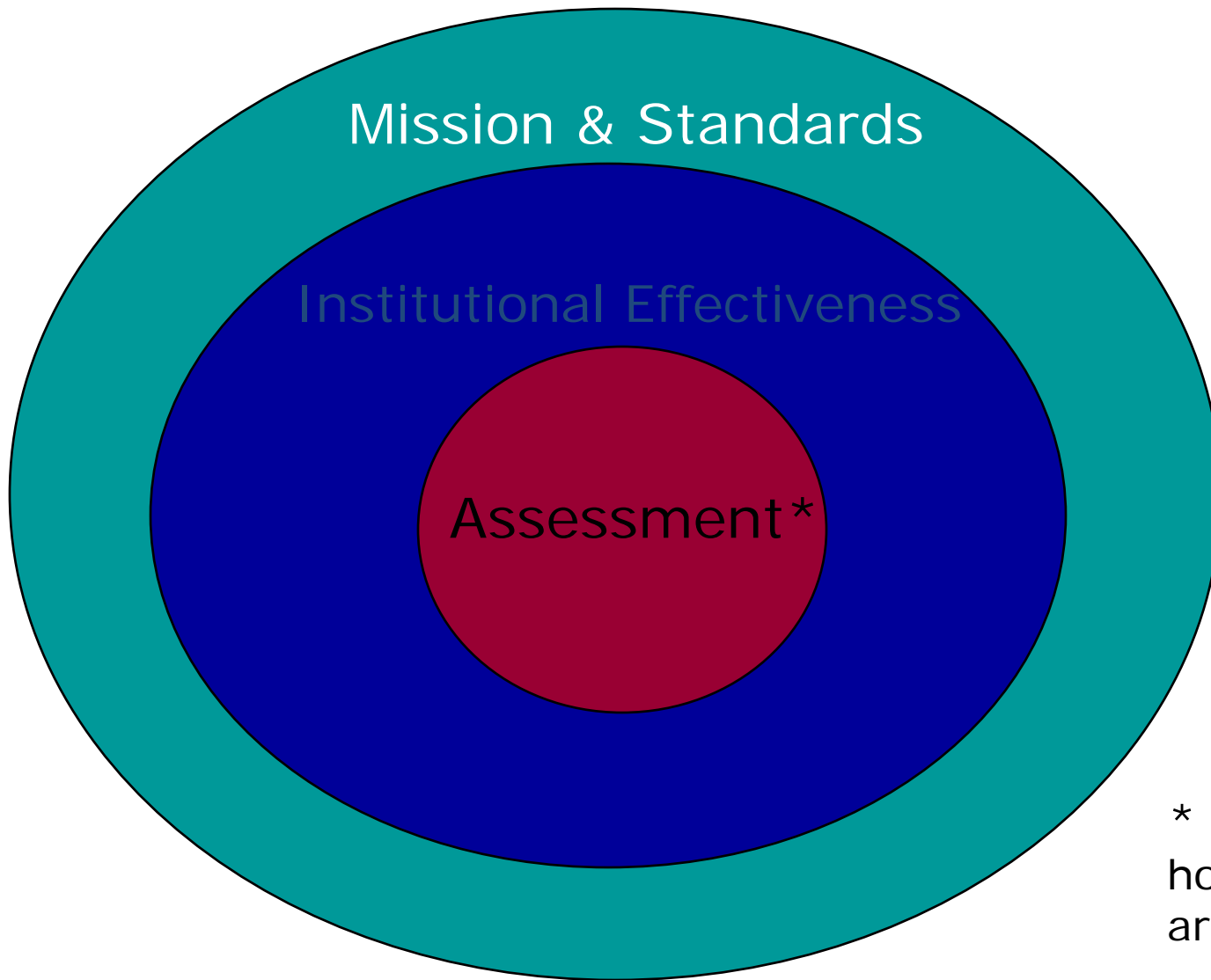
Evidence answers the question: “How do you know?”

Types of evidence: (not an exhaustive list!)

- Enrollment, retention and graduation data
- Publications, institutional work products
- Assessment results, surveys

Good evidence is relevant, verifiable, useful

# A special emphasis on assessment and institutional effectiveness



\* What and how students are learning

# Institutional effectiveness ...

... applies to all areas of the institution, as noted in the *Planning and Evaluation* standard:

**2.2:** The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness.

**2.6:** The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation.

References to institutional effectiveness also appear:

- as the last numbered paragraph of each standard
- at many points throughout the standards

# Assessment of Student Learning ...

... is defined by a section within the *Academic Program* standard (4.44 through 4.50) and receives specific attention at many other points in the Standards such as:

- Mission and Purposes (1.4)
- Planning and Evaluation (throughout)
- Academic Program (throughout)
- Faculty (5.3, 5.10, 5.13 and 5.15-5.18)
- Students (6.7, 6.17)
- Library and Other Information Resources (7.8)

# Clearer expectations regarding assessment

- Engagement (“It’s our agenda”)
  - of the college community
  - of the external community
- A thoughtful approach, related to mission
- Evidence (data) on what students know and can do
- Support from administration, faculty leaders
- Use of assessment results for improvement
- Ongoing commitment, integrated into campus culture

# How?

## Keys to a Successful Self-Study

Candid

Analytical

Concise

Useful

Clear

Participatory

Evidence-based



# How?

## Site visit

- Sunday afternoon - Wednesday morning
- 8-9 team members, from peer institutions, knowledgeable about the *Standards*
- Visits to off campus locations
- Meetings galore!
- Document room
- Exit report

# Site Visit

- Team interacts with all groups
- Hold open meetings for campus community
- May ask for additional meetings, interviews
- Develops preliminary report
- Exit meeting – initial report of strengths and concerns

# How?

## After the site visit

- Team writes a report
- Institution gets to check report for accuracy and respond to report
- Team makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission

# How?

## Commission Action

- Semester following site visit
- Commission reviews self-study, team report, confidential recommendation, institutional response to Team report
- President and Team Chair attend Commission meeting
- Letter to President

# SCSU's Process

- Last self-study and reaccreditation in 2001
- Interim report submitted in 2006
- Progress report submitted in 2008
- Steering Committee appointed in Oct. 2009

# Goal:

## Widespread Campus Involvement

- Strong administrative support
- Call for participation (Nov 2009)
- Data: interviews, focus groups, surveys, collect existing documents
- Meet with campus constituencies
- Open meetings
- Web site

# Standards for Accreditation

- Mission and Purposes
- Planning and Evaluation
- Organization and Governance
- The Academic Program
- Faculty
- Students
- Library and Other Information Resources
- Physical and Technological Resources
- Financial Resources
- Public Disclosure
- Integrity

*These standards went into effect on January 1, 2006*

# Standard 1: Mission And Purposes

The institution's mission and purposes are appropriate to higher education, consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and implemented in a manner that complies with the Standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The institution's mission gives direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness.

## Standard 2: Planning And Evaluation

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

# Standard 3: Organization And Governance

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and where appropriate research and creative activity. It assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component.

# Standard 4: The Academic Program

The institution's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program.

# The Academic Program cont'd

- Undergraduate programs
- General education
- The major or concentration
- Graduate degree programs
- Integrity in the award of academic credit
- Assessment of student learning

# Standard 5: Faculty

The institution develops a faculty that is suited to the fulfillment of the institution's mission. Faculty qualifications, numbers, and performance are sufficient to accomplish the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty competently offer the institution's academic programs and fulfill those tasks appropriately assigned them.

- Teaching and Advising
- Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

# Standard 6: Students

Consistent with its mission, the institution defines the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve and provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity.

# Students cont'd

- Admissions
- Retention and Graduation
- Student Services

# Standard 7: Library And Other Information Resources

The institution demonstrates sufficient and appropriate information resources and services and instructional and information technology and utilizes them to support the fulfillment of its mission.

# Standard 8: Physical And Technological Resources

The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes. It manages and maintains these resources in a manner to sustain and enhance the realization of institutional purposes.

# Standard 9: Financial Resources

The institution's financial resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future. The institution demonstrates through verifiable internal and external factors its financial capacity to graduate its entering class. The institution administers its financial resources with integrity.

# Standard 10: Public Disclosure

In presenting itself to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public, the institution provides information that is complete, accurate, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution.

# Standard 11: Integrity

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

# Our Timeline

- February 2011 – first draft submitted
- Spring/summer 2011 – refine self-study
- August 2011 – submit final self-study
- October 16-19, 2011 – site visit
- March or April 2012 – Commission action

# Summary

Self-study process takes 18-24 months

After accreditation,

- Interim report every 5 years
- Full self-study for re-accreditation every 10 years
- Special reports and/or focused visits as recommended by Commission

Accreditation as an “ongoing relationship”

---

# Why?

## Benefits of accreditation

- Systematic process of self-review
- Expertise of team members
- Become a part of a larger educational community
- Improved decision-making
- Assurance of quality to general public and to students
- Easier transfer of academic credit
- Students qualify for federal financial aid; college qualifies for federal and state grant programs

For more information, feedback, and questions:

SCSU website

[www.southernct.edu/neasc](http://www.southernct.edu/neasc)

Email us

[neasc@southernct.edu](mailto:neasc@southernct.edu)

CIHE website

<http://cihe.neasc.org/>

Many thanks to

Patricia M. O'Brien SND

Deputy Director

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

New England Association of Schools and Colleges