WASC

WASC Redesign
Institutional Reaccreditation Self-Study and Report
Pilot Institutions (Spring 2013 Off-Site Reviews)

PILOT 1

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING THE REPORT

Overview of the report.
Your reaccreditation report will consist of four major sections, as set forth below. Because you are participating in a pilot of the redesigned reaccreditation process, you have considerable flexibility in conducting your self-review and in the presentation of your report. We want to learn from your work on this review and use your feedback to refine the process and new areas of emphasis for the next round of reviews.

As you know, the Commission values a culture and practice of inquiry, evidence-based analysis, and self-reflection. As you prepare your report, please be guided by those values. Your report should demonstrate that you are asking the "right" questions and considering them in a thoughtful and systematic way, utilizing sound and reliable data and information. The report should not be merely descriptive, but should contain your analysis and evaluation, identification of areas for improvement, and plans for addressing those areas

Terminology and definitions.
We have provided some draft definitions for the terminology that is used in the report outline. (See footnotes where indicated.) These are not officially endorsed definitions, but are designed to encourage you to think about the meaning of the terms and to stimulate discussion at your institution as you develop your understanding and your own definitions in light of your distinctive mission.

Length of the report.
The report may be 50 to 75 pages. The page limits for each section below are suggested, but you may deviate from these guidelines as needed. You may also decide to combine one or more essays, e.g. Essays 1 and 2, if that helps you to tell your story more effectively. In the body of your report, please identify relevant documents in your electronic exhibits portfolio that provide support for the points you are making in your narrative.

References to the Standards.
For your convenience, citations to the Standards of Accreditation and specific Criteria for Review (CFRs) are included in section 2 below. Please cite relevant Standards and CFRs as appropriate in the body of your report. You do not need to cite all the CFRs, as this reaccreditation narrative report is not a comprehensive walk through the Standards. Rather, it is a focused review with emphasis on student learning and achievement, institutional sustainability and plans for the future, and, at your option, an additional theme or topic that is

important to your institution. Note that you should use the current Standards of Accreditation and CFRs (2008 version), as the revisions to the CFRs will not be adopted in final form until February 2013 after you are well into your self-study work.

Optional themes.
To adapt the new process to each institution's unique mission and priorities, and to enable you to get more value from the process, you may identify, study and report on one or two "themes" or topics that are specific to your institution and of critical importance at this time. These themes may have already emerged from work that you have done to prepare for reaccreditation prior to the change in the review process, or they may have been identified through institutional planning or other processes or the Self-Review under the Standards (see appendices). These themes should be connected to the Standards and appropriate for an accreditation review.

If you decide to include an institution-specific theme in your review, you should identify your theme(s) in section 1, Introduction: The Institutional Context. Your analysis, recommendations for action, etc. should then be included in an essay in Section 3 or woven into one of the other essays if this is appropriate. For example, if you have selected a theme that relates to student learning, it might fit best into one of the first three essays in Section 2. If your theme relates to planning for the future, it may be discussed logically in the fourth essay in Section 2. If a theme does not relate to the four common essay topics easily, include it as in optional Section 3. Finally, please let your assigned staff liaison know as soon as you identify your theme or themes so that we can be sure that a peer reviewer with appropriate background in that area is included on your visiting team.

Instructions for submitting the report.
You will provide a hard copy of the essays (sections 1-4 below), and an electronic version (memory stick or CD) that includes the essays and the electronic exhibit portfolio (section 5). The electronic version is to consist of a single PDF, with a table of contents and bookmarks. Please create the PDF by combining the various sections of your report into a single PDF via Adobe, not by scanning. Please be mindful of the length and file size of the total report. Do not include any non-required documents in this PDF. Please also test all hyperlinks in the PDF, and ensure they will work if the document is renamed and saved in different locations.

You will submit the following copies:
1) To WASC: One hard-copy set of the essays, plus three electronic copies with the PDF of the full report.
2) To each team member: One set of the essays in hard copy, plus one electronic copy with the PDF of the full report.
3) You do not need to mail a separate report to your WASC staff liaison. The hard copy and one of the electronic copies that you send to WASC is provided to him or her.

When you are ready to mail your report, please email the Visit Process Manager at WASC (swilliams@wascsenior.org) to request an updated team roster, to be sure you have the most

recent mailing addresses for each team member. The WASC copy should be mailed to WASC, attention Siobhan Williams, 985 Atlantic Ave, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501.

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

1. Introduction: The institutional context (Suggested length: 5-8 pages)

- History of the institution, including your accreditation history
- Strengths and challenges (based on your internal planning and evaluation and, as appropriate, drawing on your Self-Review under the Standards)
- Current priorities and plans

    [Note: If you have chosen to include a theme, please introduce it here and indicate where in the report it is covered, i.e. one of the four common essays or as an additional essay.]

- Preparation for this review: Who was involved? What was the process? How did this work connect with the institution's existing priorities and projects?

2. Body of the report: The four essays (Suggested length: 40-50 pages total for all four essays)

1) **Defining the meaning of your degrees and ensuring their integrity, quality[1] and rigor[2].** *Provide a description, analysis, self-assessment, and next steps. You may use the following prompts to get started, but you do not need to respond directly to these prompts.*

    - What does it mean for a graduate to hold a degree from <u>your institution</u>, i.e., what do your graduates know and what are they able to do? How do these outcomes flow from <u>your mission</u>? (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2)

        [Note: You may wish to discuss institutional learning outcomes that apply to all degree levels or discuss the meaning of the degree at each level you

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[1] A. Quality is the level of achievement in some defined attributes relative to a standard (i.e. a gold standard). B. Quality involves (1) making judgments about the level of achievement of an entity or process 2) using specific dimensions 3) relative to a standard of excellence. C. Quality is the degree of excellence of something.

[2] A. Academic rigor is at once the conservation and transmission of existing knowledge and the constant, vigorous testing of that knowledge. B. Rigor includes quality (the information provided and instruction given) and intensity (the course level …) along with the information learned (and the student's ability to apply it) define academic rigor [Both from *Understanding and Reporting on Academic Rigor, The Hechlinger Institute on Education and the Media, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009*]. C. Rigor is not a synonym for harder; but rather, rigor means teaching and learning things more thoroughly and more deeply [from *"Rigor: Is it a word teachers can learn to love?"* <u>Teacher Leadership,</u> June 8, 2009.]

offer, i.e., associate, baccalaureate, master's, doctorate. If you take the second approach, note the potential crossover with the next essay and remember that you can combine these essays if you wish.]

- What are the processes you use to ensure the quality and rigor of the degree? How do you evaluate whether the degrees you award are meeting your standards of quality and rigor? (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

2) **Achieving "core proficiencies."[3]** *Provide a description, analysis, self-assessment and next steps. You may use the following prompts to get started but you do not need to respond to each one.*

- Building on essay #1, what knowledge, skills, values and attitudes should students possess when they graduate with a degree from your institution? What are the key learning outcomes for each level of degree, e.g., what common learning outcomes for all degrees, majors, and distinctive institution-specific outcomes?
    - For undergraduate programs, consider how your common learning outcomes (or core competencies) align with those set forth in CFR 2.2a. (Also see CFRs 2.3, 2.4.)
    - For graduate programs, consider how your common learning outcomes align with CFR 2.2b. (Also see CFRs 2.3, 2.4 and the draft *Policy on Graduate Education.*)
- What are your standards of performance for students? How are these standards set and validated? (CFR 2.6)
- By what methods do you assess student learning and achievement of these proficiencies? When do you assess learning in these areas, i.e., are you assessing learning close to the time of graduation? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.6)
- What do you do if achievement gaps are identified? How are teaching and learning improved as a result of assessment? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)
- What evidence do you have that key learning outcomes are being met at the time of graduation? (CFR 2.6)

3) **Defining and promoting "student success."[4]** *Drawing on the narrative you submitted with your Retention/Graduation Report, provide a description,*

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[3] Graduation proficiencies include the core competencies and other knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that students are expected to attain during their degree program and to demonstrate at the time of degree completion.

[4] Student success encompasses both acceptable retention/completion rates and appropriate levels of learning within the context of the institution's mission and the degree level programs. It means that an appropriate proportion of students who start a degree program complete it within a reasonable period of time and with the kind and level of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that the institution intends for them to have upon graduation.

analysis, self-assessment, and next steps. You may use the following prompts to get started but you do not need to respond directly to them.

- How do you define student success (accounting for both completion and learning), given your distinctive mission, values, and character, the programs you offer, and the characteristics of the students you serve? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
    - Consider whether you need to address how the nature of the students you serve affects completion and learning. How do you strike the right balance?
- How do you promote student success, including both completion and learning? (CFRs 2.3, 2.10-2.14)
- How well are your students doing in meeting your definition of student success? In what ways do you need to improve so that more students are successful? What is your timeline for improvement? How do you intend to achieve these goals? (CFRs 2.6, 4.3-4.7)

4) **Ensuring institutional capacity and effectiveness in the future, and planning for the changing environment for higher education.** *Provide a description, analysis, self-assessment and next steps. You may use the following prompts to get started but you do not need to respond directly to them.*
    - Under Standard 3, institutions are expected to "develop and apply resources and organizational structures to ensure sustainability."
        - How can you demonstrate that your institution will remain financially sustainable and appropriately resourced in the next seven to ten years?
        - Further, in what ways can you ensure that your institution's educational effectiveness will continue during this period?
        - What systems and processes are in place to guide continued educational effectiveness work?
        - How deeply embedded are educational effectiveness initiatives into your systems and culture?
        - How is educational effectiveness prioritized and included in your institution's formal plans? (CFRs 3.1-3.11, 4.1-4.3)
    - What changes are taking place globally, nationally, locally, in higher education, and at your institution that will most affect your institution in the next seven to ten years?
        - How are you anticipating, planning for, preparing for, and adapting to changes? (CFRs 4.1-4.3, 4.6, 4.7)

3. Optional essay on institutional specific theme. *Please see instructions above. As with the other essays, please describe the topic you studied, explain your lines of inquiry, state what you learned, analyze the meaning of your findings, and set forth your plans.*

4. Integrative essay (Suggested length: 5-8 pages)

What is your overall assessment of your institution based on your own review in the areas above? Summarize the areas and plans for improvement that were identified in your review.

5. Electronic exhibit portfolio

1) *Compliance Audit* with an explanation concerning any missing documents.
2) *Self-Review under the Standards,* with a summary of areas that were identified as needing to be addressed, and plans to address them.
3) Required Data Exhibits
4) Responses to previous reviews, including Commission actions, finance review, and retention/graduation review, as appropriate.
   - <u>Last Commission action letter and team report; letters in response to substantive change proposals and interim reports, if applicable</u>: State each recommendation from the last Commission action letter to your institution and provide an update that reports actions you have taken to address it. If the underlying team report had major recommendations in other areas that were not specifically addressed in the action letter, please update actions taken to address those. Cross reference to the body of your report, as appropriate, to avoid repetition. If your institution had substantive change reviews or interim reports that resulted requests for follow up at the time of the next review, please respond to those here.
   - <u>Continuing momentum on assessment of student learning and program review</u>: To the extent that progress on assessment and program review has not been updated in the body of report or in response to the last action letter, include an update or additional information.
   - <u>Financial review</u>: Address any issues raised by the financial review report and provide additional documents, as appropriate, concerning financial viability, stability, management, and integrity.
   - <u>Retention/graduation review</u>: Address any issues raised by the retention/graduation review report, cross-referencing to essay #3 above to avoid repetition, as appropriate.
5) Institution-selected exhibits to support the essays.

6. Institutional Stipulations

The institutional stipulation appended to these instructions should be signed and submitted by the Chief Executive Officer with the Institutional Self-Study.

Institutional Stipulations

[Name of institution] will use the accreditation review process to demonstrate its fulfillment of the core commitments, will engage in the process with seriousness and candor, will present accurate data, and that it will fairly present itself in its institutional report and exhibits.

[Name of institution] has published and publicly available policies as identified by the Commission. Such policies will be available for review on request throughout the period of accreditation.

[Name of institution] will abide by procedures adopted by the Commission to meet United

States Department of Education procedural requirements.

[Name of institution] will submit, in a timely fashion, all regularly required data and any

additional data specifically requested by the Commission during the period of accreditation or candidacy.

[Name of institution] has reviewed its off-campus programs, distance education programs, international and joint degree programs to ensure that they have been approved as required by WASC policies.

CEO Signature:

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CEO Name and Title:

Name of Institution: