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## **Institutional Assessment and Accreditation News**

Georgia Southern University

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## ***ACCREDITATION UPDATE***

### ***Your Roadmap to Successfully Navigating SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation***

As part of our university-wide process to prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation with SACSCOC, we will share our milestones and next steps through this newsletter. The current edition provides a snapshot of where we are in the reaffirmation process, including details of February's lightning talks, a note from our Accreditation Faculty Fellow on building a case for compliance, and a celebration of Enrollment Management's excellence in assessment practices.

***Scroll to the bottom and click "Enter to Win" for your chance to win a prize for completing a short survey!***

***READY***

**To engage. To assess. To shine. To achieve Reaffirmation of Accreditation.**

## **SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation**



### **A Flash of Insight: Lightning Talk Takeaways**

On February 1, 2022, Compliance Certification Teams presented lightning talks to the President's Cabinet and other teams. Since September, teams have been conducting internal audits of SACSCOC standards, during which time they have gathered evidence and identified potential areas for improvement. Despite moving the scheduled in-person event to an online forum, over 80 members across 10 different teams were in

attendance, and eight teams presented audit results. In addition, Provost Dr. Carl Reiber provided the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) team update.

Lightning talks highlighted where the institution stands with respect to reaffirmation standards and provided an opportunity for feedback from other Compliance Certification teams. Using an online collaboration tool, audience members provided suggestions on how the institution could strengthen compliance with SACSCOC standards. The results of this initial audit were promising, especially this early in the reaffirmation process. Of the 66 standards presented, 44 standards were identified as having the appropriate evidence needed to construct a strong argument for compliance. For those areas identified for improvement, teams presented recommendations for strengthening potential evidence of compliance as we prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation.

Not surprisingly, areas identified for improvement such as tracking faculty qualifications (6.2.a) and outcomes for student services (8.2.c) mirror SACSCOC's *Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Principles* presented in our last newsletter. One common theme that emerged from the presentations was refining systematic institutional processes (e.g., better documenting how we seek improvement based on data gathered from ongoing assessment practices). Overall, the institution is achieving the spirit of the standards, but in a few instances needs to strengthen the processes for conveying this information.

As we move into the next phase of our reaffirmation process, Compliance Certification teams will begin using their collected evidence to construct their narratives in *Weave*, a higher education assessment and accreditation management software. During our upcoming all-team meeting on Tuesday, April 26th, IAA will introduce *Weave* to team members and provide some general guidelines for drafting narratives.

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**6 phases. 5 years.  
4 instructional sites. 3 reviews.  
One result.**

***Georgia Southern has adopted six phases to track our progress through the reaffirmation process.***

**PHASE 1:  
KICK-OFF & TRAINING**



Phase 1 includes identifying and training Compliance Certification teams.



**PHASE 2:**

Compliance Certification teams make recommendations based on an internal audit and begin gathering evidence for narratives in Phase 2.

## INFORMATION GATHERING

### PHASE 3: DRAFT SUBMISSION & INTERNAL REVIEW



Teams draft initial Compliance Certification narratives and revise narratives based upon an internal review in Phase 3.



Phase 4 includes two rounds of external reviews and revisions of Compliance Certification narratives.

### PHASE 4: EXTERNAL REVIEW & REVISIONS

### PHASE 5: QUALITY CHECK & SACSCOC PEER REVIEW



Phase 5 includes a final quality check of submitted materials including the Compliance Certification narrative and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as well as the off-site and on-site SACSCOC Reaffirmation Reviews.

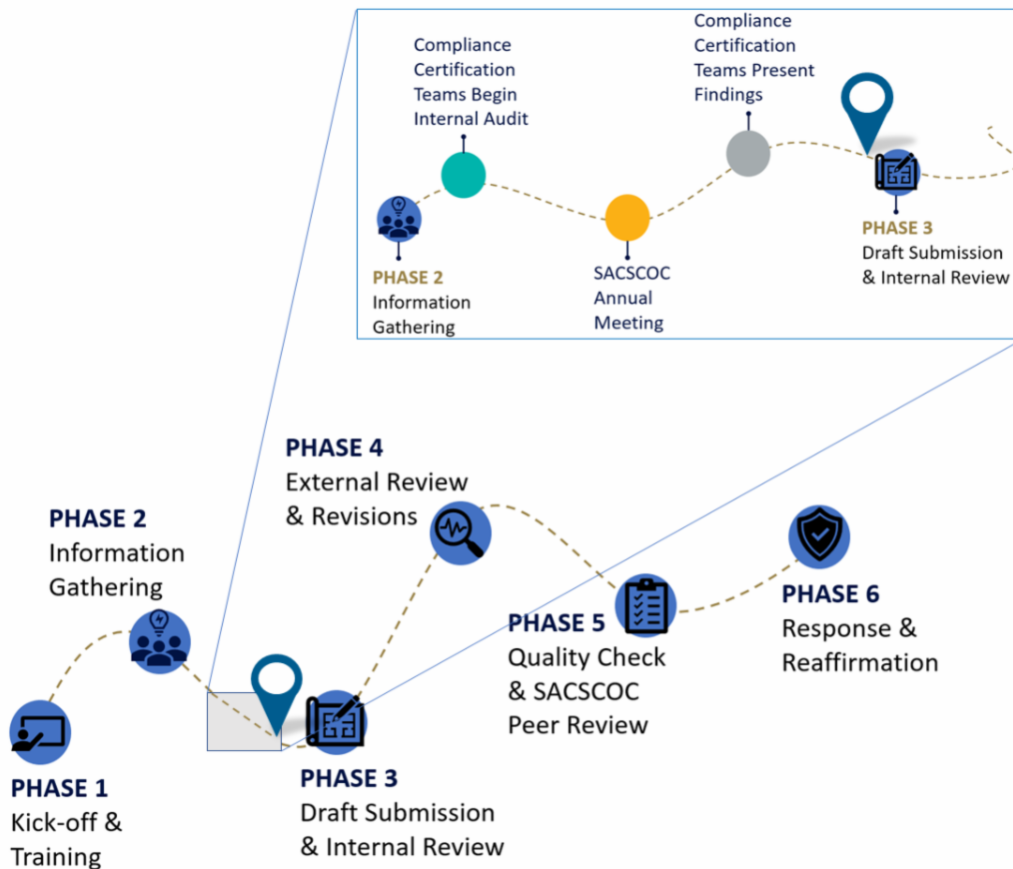
### PHASE 6: RESPONSE & REAFFIRMATION



Phase 6 includes the final review by the Board of Trustees and announcement of reaffirmation at the SACSCOC Annual Meeting.

**Status: We are moving into Phase 3, Draft Submission & Internal Review.**

**Compliance Certification teams are identifying and gathering potential evidence to support compliance. Teams will soon be introduced to Weave, our accreditation software for drafting narratives.**



**Building a Case for Compliance:**

# A Word from the Faculty Fellow

Greetings!

Now that the lightning talks are complete, we are moving into Phase 3 of the reaffirmation process. We will enact team recommendations and use evidence identified during the internal audit to build the case for compliance. What do we mean by “build a case for compliance?” This is when we construct a narrative to showcase how Georgia Southern University’s practices align with SACSCOC’s Principles of Accreditation.



SACSCOC standards are similar to building codes. They are requirements that must be met, but they do not dictate the final form. Although flexibility of specific standards vary, many are designed to adapt to the unique mission and values of SACSCOC institutions. To build our case for compliance, we must conceptualize SACSCOC standards in terms of Georgia Southern’s mission and the populations it serves. This requires an astute understanding of both the standards and our mission.

So far, we have only begun collecting the materials we need to start building our case, but evidence without a narrative is a pile of bricks with no shape or form. As compliance with SACSCOC standards is dependent on an institution's mission and goals, evidence in and of itself is not sufficient for compliance with SACSCOC standards. Institutions may be found non-compliant or partially compliant on standards for which they have strong institutional practices but do not clearly illustrate how those practices align with their mission and SACSCOC standards. This is why the narrative is key. It provides the blueprint for our case by showing how the pieces connect and explaining how they align with all essential components of SACSCOC standards. It is our vision, but to get the permit we must demonstrate to evaluators that everything we do is up to code.

Just as a blueprint stands alone as an image of a finished building, the narratives we construct should be able to stand alone in presenting our case for compliance. An effective narrative must highlight key examples to help evaluators envision how Georgia Southern practices align with SACSCOC standards. This enables evaluators to understand our argument for compliance without having to see all materials. Supporting evidence still will be reviewed. So, to achieve reaffirmation, a key component of our narratives is the clear presentation and accessibility of all links and evidence, not unlike a contractor who, in order to win the bid, must demonstrate she has access to the materials necessary to construct the proposed building.

Until Next Time,

Barbara King  
IAA Faculty Fellow

## Did You Know?

Did you know SACSCOC and other accrediting bodies must be accredited too? Just like Georgia Southern must show evidence of compliance with practices, policies, and standards, accrediting agencies must show evidence that they accurately and reliably judge the quality

of institutions they accredit. In fact, accrediting bodies undergo a rigorous review in short increments of 5 years or less to ensure they remain compliant with the Department of Education. As the Department's regulations change on an ongoing basis, SACSCOC must promptly reflect those changes in the accreditation requirements for their member institutions. This is important because only accrediting agencies that are nationally recognized by the Secretary for Education can provide access to federal student aid.

## Section 8: Student Achievement



**8.2.c** The institution *identifies expected outcomes*, *assesses the extent* to which it achieves these outcomes, and *provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results* for **academic and student services** that **support student success**.

### Essential Components for Compliance:

- identifies outcomes
- assesses outcomes
- provides evidence of seeking improvement
- based on analysis of the results
- academic and student services
- student success

## Excellence in Assessment: Enrollment Management

Over the last several months many units across campus have been working diligently to enhance assessment practices that focus on outcomes for administrative units (Standard 7.3) and building structures to effectively assess practices of academic and student services that support student success (Standard 8.2.c).



Enrollment Management is one of the units doing exceptional work to systematize and strengthen assessment practices for continuous improvement. In early March, Enrollment Management launched its inaugural Assessment Champions Kick-Off. Assessment Champions, assessment leaders from each unit within the division of Enrollment Management, came together to refine their outcomes and assessment processes. The kick-off began with an overview of the importance of assessment for accomplishing shared goals and outcomes. Drawing inspiration from their divisional mission of "...providing support services to promote student success from application to graduation," they collectively identified desired outcomes. This collaborative, mission-driven process for identifying outcomes is considered a best practice in assessment. Enrollment Management has also developed a divisional timeline and other resources for developing and implementing their assessment strategies across their units.

Following the kick-off, Assessment Champions began refining student services outcomes within their units and participated in an *Introduction to Student Services Outcomes Assessment* series hosted by IAA. These sessions provided an overview of our university-wide [student services outcomes assessment](#) approach, a reflective process for student and academic support units to define meaningful outcomes to measure the effectiveness of their co-curricular educational programming, services, and activities for continuous improvement. Enrollment Management has provided a strong foundation for refining their strategic focus, improving desired outcomes, and achieving shared goals. For those of you who don't know, **GS-EM Team Blue** is also in the top 10 out of all USG teams in the USG Walking Challenge with over 4 million steps. Enrollment Management is clearly focused on continuous improvement, and they are maintaining their stride!

## Upcoming Events

### NEXT ALL-TEAM COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION MEETING

April 26th, 2022

11:00 - 12:30 PM

*And our April newsletter winner is ...*

***Theresa Duggar!***

Email [assessment@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:assessment@georgiasouthern.edu) within 30 days to claim your prize.

## SACSCOC Accreditation Resources

As we work together to prepare for our Compliance Certification and on-site review, keep in mind the resources provided by SACSCOC:

[The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

*In addition to providing all the standards and sub-standards for accreditation, this document provides an overview of the philosophy, purpose, and process of accreditation.*

[Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

*This document provides additional guidance regarding requirements and recommendations for each standard and includes a list of guiding questions and possible evidence that could be used to support compliance in the Compliance Certification narrative.*



Institutional Assessment and Accreditation (IAA) works collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administration to ensure the quality of the programs and educational experiences offered by the university, addressing the unique assessment needs of courses, departments, colleges, or units through individual and group consultations, professional development workshops, recommendations for technology implementation, and best practice reference materials.



IAA website

Assessment Services Request

*Enter to win a prize by answering a few quick questions.*

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