

# Institutional Accreditation: The HLC and Shepherd

A Presentation to the Shepherd University Assembly (September 9, 2024)

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AVP, Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

# **The Need for Institutional Accreditation**

# Title IV of the Higher Education Act

Higher education institutions wishing to participate in Title IV federal student aid programs **must meet several requirements, including being accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education** as a reliable authority on the quality of the education being offered.

*Source: Congressional Research Service Report R43826 - An Overview of Accreditation of Higher Education in the United States. Updated March 23, 2017*

## Impact on Shepherd

**61.20% of our undergraduate students** receive Title IV federal student aid

**38.21% of our graduate students** receive Title IV federal student aid

# The Institutional Accreditors

## **Higher Learning Commission (HLC)**

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)

# **The Structure of Institutional Accreditation**

# Standard Pathway: 10-Year Cycle

Previous Cycle ended in AY 2021-22

- Best institutional result in 20 years!

New Cycle began in AY 2022-23

- Regular Monitoring (annual reporting)
- Mid-Cycle Comprehensive Evaluation in  
AY 2025-26

# Elements of accreditation

Federal Compliance

Assumed Practices

Criteria for Accreditation



# Comprehensive Evaluation

Assurance Argument

Student Opinion Survey

Federal Compliance Review

On-Site Visit

On-Site Visit by Peer Review Team

March 9-10, 2026

# **The Preparation for Institutional Accreditation**

What the Review Team Wants?

EVIDENCE

# Assurance Argument Sections (NEW as of September 1, 2025)

1. Mission

2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

3. Teaching and Learning for Student Success

4. Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

# Federal Compliance Overview

1. Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition
2. Institutional Mechanisms for Handling Student Complaints
3. Publication of Transfer Policies
4. Practices for Verification of Student Identity
5. Protection of Student Privacy
6. Publication of Student Outcome Data
7. Standing With State and Other Accrediting Agencies

# Ongoing Engagement for Institutional Accreditation

Encourage University-wide participation in the accreditation process and in the site visit



# Steering Committee

The primary responsibility of the HLC Steering Committee is to guide the assurance argument document and evidence, serving as liaisons, leaders, and resources for the campus and the HLC site visit team of peer reviewers.

CEO - Mary Hendrix

HLC ALO - Jason Best

We have done this.

We can do this.

We will do this.