

HLC Institutional Accreditation: The March to March

A Presentation to the Shepherd University Assembly (September 8, 2025)

Prepared by: Dr. Jason Best
HLC Accreditation Liaison Officer and HLC Peer Corps Reviewer

**What is
institutional
accreditation?**

What Accreditation Is

Institutional status required for -

Federal Financial Aid

State Operational Authorization

That sounds *incredibly*
important. Is it really
that important?

YES!

Existential Issue
Everyone's Issue

What is HLC?

What HLC Is

HLC = Higher Learning Commission

The largest of the nation's
institutional accreditors

Shepherd is a member of HLC

**Why are we hearing
about this now?**

Why Now

10-Year Cycle

Mid-Cycle Eval: Year 4

Reaffirmation Eval: Year 10

Reaffirmation in 2021-2022: Clean

**So this is all building up
to something.**

What is it?

The March to March

HLC Peer Review Team Site Visit

Monday and Tuesday, March 9-10, 2026

Team of 5 Peer Corps Reviewers

Full scope of access and authority

**How are we preparing
for this evaluation?**

How We Are Preparing (I)

Assurance Argument

Written to Specified Criteria (as of Sept 1)

Mission, Integrity, Teaching and Learning,
Planning

40,000 Word Limit (+Evidence)

Existence, Use, Effectiveness

How We Are Preparing (II)

Campus Engagement

Governance Structures

Operating Units (Academic, Administrative)

Ad-hoc Efforts

**What are the
concerns?**

The Concerns

The Old Big Two...and a New Big One

Faculty: Assessment of Student Learning

Admin: Integrated Planning and Alignment

Federal Landscape

**What can we do
between now and then
to be ready?**

Being Ready

Stay informed – HLC expects this

Shepherd HLC Accreditation page:
www.shepherd.edu/accreditation/

Arrange a conversation between me and
your administrative or academic units

Talk with each other. Ask me questions.
Respond quickly.

We have done this.

We can do this.

We will do this.