From:	Jason Best
To:	Jason Best
Subject:	[HLC] HLC March 9-10 Site Visit Schedule Available - Your Guide to Understanding the Visit
Date:	Wednesday, February 25, 2026 4:17:56 PM
Attachments:	image001.png

Hello Campus Community,

The HLC March 2026 Site Visit Schedule has been approved by the HLC Review Team Chair, and is now posted on the Shepherd University Accreditation website (https://www.shepherd.edu/accreditation).

This email is your guide to understanding the schedule and how to prepare for participation in the sessions. Please note that additional resources to support the Visit are on the Accreditation website, including the Assurance Argument.

GENERAL PREPARATION

During the HLC Review Team's visit, members of the Team will meet with members of the campus community, per the schedule. In each session, the Review Team members will be asking questions to verify, clarify, and contextualize information Shepherd has presented in the Assurance Argument and in other documents made available to the HLC and to the public.

Given space and time limitations related to the accreditation process, there will be additional or updated information that is not available to the Team prior to their arrival on campus. The Site Visit is a chance for the Team to obtain that information.

For any session in which you participate, it is important that you understand what is presented in the Assurance Argument, so you can speak about those items and provide other information that may further demonstrate how Shepherd meets the Criteria for Accreditation used to evaluate the institution. The first step is to read the Assurance Argument found on the Shepherd University Accreditation Website. You can search the Argument PDF file using appropriate keywords to find items that may be most relevant to your campus experience.

The Review Team wants to hear from a range of people, so please be prepared to contribute if they ask. Your contributions will help them to better understand Shepherd and to evaluate the University, and the ways in which we serve our students.

It is important to answer their questions succinctly and factually, without unprovable overelaboration - we must be able to document anything that we claim. It is also important not to go beyond your knowledge or experience; there will be dozens of people in the room, so no one person should try to answer every question. See who is in the room – often the person who can provide the best answer will be there. Let them answer first, then support as needed! Accreditation colleagues who have recently gone through this process (either as reviewers or members of a campus being reviewed) have offered direct advice on this topic, including:

- "An HLC team session is a courtroom, not a classroom, not a confession booth."
- "Speak to the Team's questions, not to your own issues."
- "Say what you *need* to say…what you *need* to say…and sit down!"
- "The Review Team has studied for us! We should make sure we have also studied for us!"
- "Help the Team understand what we do, and why we do it. Help them understand how you are living the mission, and why that mission matters."
- "This is a time to commend the good works we have done, not to complain about what we have not yet done! And we have accomplished a lot of good works!"

SPECIFICS ON SESSION TYPES

There are three types of sessions:

- Criterion Sessions
- Constituent Open Sessions
- Specialty Sessions

Criterion Sessions

The Criterion Sessions focus on the four HLC Criteria for Accreditation. The Assurance Argument is specifically aligned with those Criteria.

ATTENDEES:
Criterion Sessions are open to all members of the campus community. That being said, there are specific people who will need to participate in specific Criterion Sessions, based on their roles at the institution. For each Criterion Session, I will be sending a separate email to those people on behalf of President Hendrix. If you receive one of these emails, please make sure that you attend that session, even if it requires cancelling class or other events on your calendar at the time of the session.

Constituent Open Sessions

Constituent Open Sessions are designed to explore the institution across all criteria.

ATTENDEES:
Constituent Open Sessions are limited to specific constituents (faculty, staff, students).

Furthermore, in order to encourage dialogue, the HLC specifically excludes administrators and supervisors above a certain level from attending any of these sessions. I will be sending an email to those people on behalf of President Hendrix, asking them *not* to attend any of these sessions. There will be no exceptions to this.

In addition to that exclusion list, the HLC Team has also specifically asked for me to encourage specific groups to attend certain Open Sessions, as described below.

- Faculty Open Session: All faculty may attend; HLC encourages all current and former members and officers of the Faculty Senate to attend.
- Staff Open Session: All staff may attend; HLC encourages all current and former members and officers of the Classified Employees Council to attend.
- Student Open Session: All students may attend. I have already communicated with Deans and Chairs/Directors regarding specific requests from the HLC for this session.

Specialty Sessions
Specialty Sessions are designed to explore specifically-designated functional areas of the institution.

ATTENDEES:
Specialty Sessions are limited to individuals in specific functional roles as outlined to me by the HLC Review Team Chair. For each of these sessions, I will be sending a separate email to those people on behalf of President Hendrix – if you receive one of these emails, please make sure you attend. Student Government Associate President Tyler Furbee and I have already discussed the Student Government Session, which is separate from the Student Open Session.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

This is the most tumultuous time in higher education in a generation. As many of you have found, when we are at our best, we rise to meet the moment, whatever that moment holds.

This HLC Site Visit is a chance for us to proudly celebrate our accomplishments, honestly acknowledge our challenges, and openly share how we are addressing those challenges in order to provide our students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need to shape their futures.

When it comes to engaging with institutional accreditation, please remember:

We *have* done this.
We *can* do this.
We *will* do this.

Thank you all.

JB

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