



# 1990-92 SACS Self-Study Newsletter

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**The "Important Aspects of the Self-Study Corner":** Now that we are a full year into the self-study process, the office self-study reports are finished, and the working committees are submitting their reports of chapter drafts for the actual self-study, we want to instigate a new feature in the newsletter — an "important aspects of the Self-Study corner." What we will convey here each month now through next March will be emphasis on what we believe are central ideas in the nature of the Self-Study process, whether in general or ECU-specific, and on what we see as primary and specific tasks which we as a University must accomplish more successfully to ensure unquestionable compliance with SACS criteria. We hope this feature will be interesting and helpful.

This month we focus on **assessment**. Without trying to summarize national movement, we want to emphasize the role assessment plays for SACS. Here, in our judgement, are the five most important points on assessment from the perspective of the SACS criteria:

(1) Assessment is a synonym for evaluation and while not all evaluation is quantitative, much can be and is quantitative. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and their visitation committees believe that a **mixture** of kinds of evaluation is important and that a **running base-line** is essential. Both are required for serious, on-going **evaluation**.

(2) The single most important characteristic of East Carolina University which the Visiting Committee will **evaluate** is institutional effectiveness. We must not jump immediately, in other words, to a discussion of the assessment of student learning. That follows eventually, but only as a function of **institutional effectiveness**. Their primary task is to **assess** the institutional effectiveness of East Carolina University.

(3) This is where the four-step analysis which we have discussed many times comes in: institutional effectiveness is assessed by evaluating the degree to which we:

- i) state in writing our goals
- ii) state in writing how we will achieve those goals
- iii) evaluate (**assess**) how well we achieve those goals
- iv) use the results of that assessment to improve achievement

Moreover, this four-step process should be evident at every level of the University from Mission Statement to specific office actions.

(4) A necessary condition for the four-step process to succeed is that serious and thorough planning be done at all levels of the University and that that planning be tied to budget allocation.

(5) In academic units and departments, since teaching, research and creative productivity, and service are part of all missions and visions, those three kinds of activities are foremost among what must be assessed. Finally we come, then, to the assessment of student learning. **But please notice that such an assessment has meaning only in the setting that is generated by all five of our important points.** Whether in general education, in the majors, at the undergraduate or the graduate levels, the assessment of student learning, which must involve more than course grades, must be tied to University, School or College, and department goals. We will report more about assessment of student learning in the May newsletter.

## Remaining SACS Self-Study Calendar:

Working committees submit their reports:	April 1-June 1
Steering Committee produces self-study report draft:	June 1-September 1
University-wide forum for further input:	September-October
1990-92 ECU SACS Self-Study report mailed to SACS:	November 1, 1991
University response to Self-Study recommendations:	September-December
ECU's follow-up report sent to Visiting Committee:	February 15, 1992
SACS Committee Visit:	March 23-26, 1992
Visiting Committee Exit Report (on campus):	March 26, 1992
SACS Visiting Committee submits draft:	May, 1992
SACS Vote on ECU reaffirmation of accreditation:	December, 1992