



E A S T
CAROLINA
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1990-92 SACS Self-Study Newsletter

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The Important Aspects of the Self-Study Corner: As we begin the academic year, a brief overview of SACS reaffirmation of regional accreditation is in order. Here are five summary points about this important process where democratic society allows for evaluation, accountability, and quality-control in university education without state or federal involvement.

#1. The reaffirmation of regional accreditation is the signal peer review event in American higher education. There are six regional accrediting bodies in the United States, one of which is the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS includes 11 southern states: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Texas. Each college or University in the SACS region undergoes a reaffirmation study and visit every ten years.

#2. The standards of such evaluation are the **SACS criteria**, which are approved by the College of Delegates of the Commission on Colleges and Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Each college and university in the SACS region has a representative on this College of Delegates. Thus, both the reaffirmation judgement and the criteria on which it is based are produced by professional peers in American higher education.

#3. The SACS criteria are clustered within these five main areas: **institutional purpose, institutional effectiveness, education program, educational support services, and administrative processes**. Over 400 specific criteria apply within these areas and, as part of the required self-study process, each university must judge its own compliance prior to a SACS Visiting Committee compliance evaluation. The university's judgement is the self-study report which the institution produces.

#4. Each university's self-study report must be produced through a widely participative process which involves both faculty and administration **and** each university must develop for the Visiting Committee a response to its own self-study report to their visit. (**March 23-26, 1992**)

#5. Since 1985, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requires an **on-going** reporting process, such that recommendations, suggestions, and further planning considerations found in self-study report and those produced by SACS Visiting Committees are acted on and results reported on a continuing basis, making the institutional self-study a continuing process.

The Key to our Self-Study Process: It is fact #5 above which at once makes a university-wide planning process essential and which makes the four-fold analytic process of the accreditation process so central. Recall that four-fold process: at all levels of university activity from the most general level of university mission to, in a connected, integrated manner, individual courses and support activities we must state clear goals (expected educational results or specific support goals), develop mechanisms to

evaluate those goals and their achievement, do those evaluations, and apply the results of those evaluations to improve the process. **This is four-fold process is the basis for the ultimate judgement on the effectiveness of the institution.**

A point deserving repetition from the last newsletter:

The SACS Visiting Committee, as they interview Deans and Chairs next March 23-26th, will ask at least the following questions:

- may we see your written expected educational results?
- what means do you use to evaluate (assess) their achievement?
- what baselines of assessment information have you developed?
- how have you used that information to improve your programs?

Mark your calendars for March 23-26, 1991: The members of the Visiting Committee will conduct interviews with over 200 persons on campus, including the Chancellor, all the vice chancellors, deans, directors and most department chairs. It is important that these dates be reserved for those interviews. We will schedule those interviews in February, 1992.

What Should Offices be Doing Now for the Self-Study? The bulk of reporting was done during 1990-91 with the departmental and planning unit self-study reports. Since that time, the campus self-study committees have been at work drafting the actual self-study report. The next to final draft of that report will be distributed to all offices in October, prior to a University-wide forum where final reactions from the University community will be heard and subsequently considered. Here are relevant steps for the 1991-92 academic year:

- (1) **Reserve March 23-26, 1992 on your calendar.**
- (2) **Review the self-study report draft in October.**
- (3) **Prepare to integrate your office self-study goals & University Self-Study Report conclusions into your strategic and operational planning.**

Remaining SACS Self-Study Calendar:

Steering Committee drafting work:	June 1-September 30th
Campus Forum on the Report:	October
1990-92 ECU Self-Study Report mailed to SACS:	November 15, 1991
University response to Report recommendations:	September-December
University response sent to Visiting Committee:	February, 1992
SACS Committee Visit:	March 23-26, 1992
SACS Visiting Committee draft report:	May, 1992
SACS Vote on reaffirmation of accreditation:	December, 1992