



SACS Compliance Certification

R. Jon Ackley

Virginia Commonwealth University

Class of 2004

About VCU

- Classified as Carnegie Doctoral/Research University-Extensive Institution
- Located on two downtown campuses in Richmond, VA (including VCU Medical Center); enrollment of 26,000+
- Off-campus sites in Northern VA (MSW) and Doha, Qatar (BS, Fashion, Graphic, and Interior Design)
- College of Humanities and Sciences and Schools of Allied Health Professions, Art, Business, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Graduate Studies, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Social Work
- 160+ undergraduate, graduate, first professional, and doctoral programs
- 40 programs unique to VA and 20 graduate/professional programs ranked in top 50 nationally by U.S. News and World Report

Initial Planning

- Informal Group
 - Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
 - Vice Provost for Academic Administration
 - Director, Office of University Accreditation
 - Director, Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation (IRE)
 - Senior Associate, Office of IRE
 - Assistant to the Provost for Academic Affairs

Early Initiatives

- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs & Director, University Accreditation Meet with Provost
- Establish "SACS Preliminary Planning Committee"
- Establish "SACS Liaison Committee"
- Meet with Council of Deans to Present New Accreditation Guidelines and Request Meetings with Staffs

SACS Preliminary Planning Committee

- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
- Director, University Accreditation
- Director, Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation
- Director of Assessment (formerly Assistant to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs)
- Director, Quality Enhancement Plan

Purpose of SACS Preliminary Planning Committee

- Oversee the development of the Compliance Certification, including writing various portions
- Oversee the initial efforts related to the QEP
- Brainstorm approaches to addressing Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards as well as types of documentation to support persuasive arguments
- Identify individuals who could provide information and documentation for Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards
- Coordinate with various individuals and groups as necessary
- Recommend to the President possible members of the Leadership Team

VCU Leadership Team

- Dr. Eugene P. Trani, President and Chair of the Team
- Ms. Anne E. Petera, VCU Board of Visitors
- Dr. Roderick J. McDavis, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Hermes A. Kontos, Vice President for Health Sciences
- Mr. Paul W. Timmreck, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Dr. Robert L. Andrews, President, VCU Faculty Senate
- Dr. Donna R. Brodd, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

VCU Leadership Team

- Ms. Teresa A. Atkinson, Associate Vice Provost for Finance
- Dr. Henry G. Rhone, Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services
- Dr. Phyllis C. Self, Vice Provost for Academic Technology
- Mr. John E. Ulmschneider, Executive Director, VCU Libraries
- Dr. Stephen D. Gottfredson, Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences
- Dr. Nancy F. Langston, Dean, School of Nursing

Leadership Team Responsibilities

- Coordinate and manage the internal review process
- Oversee the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan
- Oversee the institutional review of compliance with SACS Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards
- Ensure that the institutional community is engaged in the review process and is informed of the review
- Ensure the timely completion of the Compliance Certification and Quality Enhancement Plan
- Ensure the appropriate follow-up activities are in place to address compliance issues and monitor the successful implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan

SACS Liaison Committee

- Director, University Accreditation
- President's Office Representative
- VCU Health Sciences Representative
- Office of Research Representative
- Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Representative
- Office of Finance and Administration Representative
- Division of University Outreach Representative
- Office of University Advancement Representative
- Office of Government and Community Relations Representative
- Academic Technology Representative
- University Libraries Representative
- Faculty Representatives from Academic Campus and Medical Center Campus
- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (*ex officio member*)

Purpose of SACS Liaison Committee

- Represent respective executive areas by providing input into the reaffirmation process as needed
- Provide guidance on the framework for the reaffirmation effort
- Serve as the primary communication liaison to respective executive area regarding the reaffirmation process and progress
- Provide information and documentation for Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards relevant to respective executive area

Interactions with Various Constituencies

- Director of Accreditation and Director of Assessment Meet Informally with Representatives of College and Schools on Academic Campus
- Directors Meet with *Ad Hoc* SACS Advisory Committee on VCU Medical Center Campus
- Identify Applicable Constituencies to Solicit Input on Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards and Submit Requests (August 2002) for Narratives and Documentation (due by December 2002)

Draft Core Requirements/Comprehensive Standards

- Narratives and Documentation List Submitted by Applicable Constituencies (generally SACS Liaison Committee members, Academic Unit contacts, and other relevant individuals; e.g., Director of Center for Teaching Excellence, University Counsel, Athletics, etc.)
- Director of Accreditation Primarily Responsible for Refining Narratives on Core Requirements/Comprehensive Standards
- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Director of IRE, and Director of Assessment Draft Core Requirement 5
- Director of Assessment Drafts Comprehensive Standard 16 (IE) and Comprehensive Standard 15 (UG Programs)

Faculty Credentials Project

- Identified instructor of record for each section taught in Fall 2002 and Spring 2003
- Matched faculty records from HRS with each instructor and course assignment from Student Information System
- Schools/departments verified accuracy and completeness of all course and instructor data
- Each faculty member's academic preparation compared with his/her course assignments
- Roster of Instructional Staff prepared that presents faculty academic preparation, course assignments, and any additional notes that support experience or ability to teach assigned courses

Reviewing, Editing, and Finalizing Narratives

- First Drafts of Narratives Sent to Applicable Constituencies and Various Administrators for Review and Edit
- Second Drafts Prepared by Director of Accreditation and Resubmitted to Applicable Constituencies and Administrators
- Final Review by SACS Preliminary Planning Committee

General Suggestions

- Small planning committee worked well for organizing the approach to Compliance Certification
- Liaisons from various relevant areas provided access to information necessary for narratives
- Individual meetings with academic contacts with on-going interactions maintain their involvement throughout the drafting and editing phases

CAVEATS

- Don't put all your eggs in one basket—don't rely on having one person hold all the cards
- Plan for delays; expect delays; and then expect more
- Not everyone sees the process as clearly as you—nor sees it as important as you see it
- Ask nicely when you need something
- Give adequate lead-time for responses