

## Appendix C: List of Numbered Fundamental Elements

### Standard 1: Mission and Goals

- 1.1 clearly defined mission and goals that:
  - a. guide faculty, administration, staff and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curriculum development, and definition of program outcomes;
  - b. include support of scholarly and creative activity, at levels and of the kinds appropriate to the institution's purposes and character;
  - c. are developed through collaborative participation by those who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional improvement and developments;
  - d. are periodically evaluated and formally approved;
  - e. are publicized and widely known by the institution's members;
- 1.2 mission and goals that relate to external as well as internal contexts and constituencies;
- 1.3 institutional goals that are consistent with mission; and
- 1.4 goals that focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional improvement.

### Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

- 2.1 goals and objectives or strategies, both institution-wide and for individual units that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels;
- 2.2 planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results;
- 2.3 well defined decision-making processes and authority that facilitates planning and renewal;
- 2.4 the assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of accountability;
- 2.5 a record of institutional and unit improvement efforts and their results; and
- 2.6 periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes.

### Standard 3: Institutional Resources

- 3.1 strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of, institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals;
- 3.2 rational and consistent policies and procedures in place to determine allocation of assets;
- 3.3 an allocation approach that ensures adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations;
- 3.4 a financial planning and budgeting process aligned with the institution's mission, goals, and plan that provides for an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments; utilizes planning and assessment documents; and addresses resource acquisition and allocation for the institution and any subsidiary,

- affiliated, or contracted educational organizations as well as for institutional systems as appropriate;
- 3.5 a comprehensive infrastructure or facilities master plan and facilities/infrastructure life-cycle management plan, as appropriate to mission, and evidence of implementation;
  - 3.6 recognition in the comprehensive plan that facilities, such as learning resources fundamental to all educational and research programs and the library, are adequately supported and staffed to accomplish the institution's objectives for student learning, both on campuses and at a distance;
  - 3.7 an educational and other equipment acquisition and replacement process and plan, including provision for current and future technology, as appropriate to the educational programs and support services, and evidence of implementation;
  - 3.8 adequate institutional controls to deal with financial, administrative and auxiliary operations, and rational and consistent policies and procedures in place to determine allocation of assets;
  - 3.9 an annual independent audit confirming financial responsibility, with evidence of follow-up on any concerns cited in the audit's accompanying management letter; and
  - 3.10 periodic assessment of the effective and efficient use of institutional resources.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

- 4.1 a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and readily available to the campus community;
- 4.2 written governing documents, such as a constitution, by-laws, enabling legislation, charter or other similar documents, that:
  - a. delineate the governance structure and provide for collegial governance, and the structure's composition, duties and responsibilities. In proprietary, corporate and similar types of institutions, a separate document may establish the duties and responsibilities of the governing body as well as the selection process;
  - b. assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making, including a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making;
  - c. provide for the selection process for governing body members;
- 4.3 appropriate opportunity for student input regarding decisions that affect them;
- 4.4 a governing body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest and of an appropriate size to fulfill all its responsibilities, and which includes members with sufficient expertise to assure that the body's fiduciary responsibilities can be fulfilled;
- 4.5 a governing body not chaired by the chief executive officer;
- 4.6 a governing body that certifies to the Commission that the institution is in compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation, accreditation standards and policies of the Commission; describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies; communicates any changes in its accredited status; and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities, including levels of governing body compensation, if any;
- 4.7 a conflict of interest policy for the governing body (and fiduciary body members, if such a body exists), which addresses matters such as remuneration, contractual relationships,

employment, family, financial or other interests that could pose conflicts of interest, and that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution;

- 4.8 a governing body that assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution;
- 4.9 a process for orienting new members and providing continuing updates for current members of the governing body on the institution's mission, organization, and academic programs and objectives;
- 4.10 a procedure in place for the periodic objective assessment of the governing body in meeting stated governing body objectives;
- 4.11 a chief executive officer, appointed by the governing board, with primary responsibility to the institution; and
- 4.12 periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance.

#### **Standard 5: Administration**

- 5.1 a chief executive whose primary responsibility is to lead the institution toward the achievement of its goals and with responsibility for administration of the institution;
- 5.2 a chief executive with the combination of academic background, professional training, and/or other qualities appropriate to an institution of higher education and the institution's mission;
- 5.3 administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions;
- 5.4 qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of the institution;
- 5.5 adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders;
- 5.6 clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority; and
- 5.7 periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services.

#### **Standard 6: Integrity**

- 6.1 fair and impartial processes, published and widely available, to address student grievances, such as alleged violations of institutional policies. The institution assures that student grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably;
- 6.2 fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation and dismissal of employees;
- 6.3 sound ethical practices and respect for individuals through its teaching, scholarship/research, service, and administrative practice, including the avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all its activities and among all its constituents;
- 6.5 equitable and appropriately consistent treatment of constituencies, as evident in such areas as the application of academic requirements and policies, student discipline, student evaluation, grievance procedures, faculty promotion, tenure, retention and compensation,

- administrative review, curricular improvement, and institutional governance and management;
- 6.6 a climate of academic inquiry and engagement supported by widely disseminated policies regarding academic and intellectual freedom;
  - 6.7 an institutional commitment to principles of protecting intellectual property rights;
  - 6.8 a climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration for the range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives;
  - 6.9 honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials and practices;
  - 6.10 required and elective courses that are sufficiently available to allow students to graduate within the published program length;
  - 6.11 reasonable, continuing student access to paper or electronic catalogs;
  - 6.12 when catalogs are available only electronically, the institution's web page provides a guide or index to catalog information for each catalog available electronically;
  - 6.13 when catalogs are available only electronically, the institution archives copies of the catalogs as sections or policies are updated;
  - 6.14 changes and issues affecting institutional mission, goals, sites, programs, operations, and other material changes are disclosed accurately and in a timely manner to the institution's community, to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and to any other appropriate regulatory bodies;
  - 6.15 availability of factual information about the institution, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education annual data reporting, the self-study or periodic review report, the team report, and the Commission's action, accurately reported and made publicly available to the institution's community;
  - 6.16 information on institution-wide assessments available to prospective students, including graduation, retention, certification and licensing pass rates, and other outcomes as appropriate to the programs offered;
  - 6.17 institutional information provided in a manner that ensures student and public access, such as print, electronic, or video presentation;
  - 6.18 fulfillment of all applicable standards and reporting and other requirements of the Commission; and
  - 6.19 periodic assessment of the integrity evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

- 7.1 documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services; achievement of institutional mission, goals, and plans; and compliance with accreditation standards that meets the following criteria:
- 7.2 a foundation in the institution's mission and clearly articulated institutional, unit-level, and program-level goals that encompass all programs, services, and initiatives and are appropriately integrated with one another (see Standards 1: Mission and Goals and 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal);
  - a. systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that:

- i. maximize the use of existing data and information;
    - ii. clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;
    - iii. are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions;
  - b. support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results;
  - c. clear realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources;
  - d. sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable;
  - e. periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution's assessment process;
- 7.3** evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and used in institutional planning, resource allocation, and renewal (see Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal) to improve and gain efficiencies in programs, services and processes, including activities specific to the institution's mission (e.g., service, outreach, research); and
- 7.4** written institutional (strategic) plan(s) that reflect(s) consideration of assessment results.

#### **Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

- 8.1** admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and reflect the mission of the institution;
- 8.2** admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions;
- 8.3** programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution's qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes at appropriate points;
- 8.4** accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including any required placement or diagnostic testing;
- 8.5** statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, available to prospective students;
- 8.6** accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate, regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds;
- 8.7** published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college level learning that state the criteria established by the institution regarding transfer of credit; and
- 8.8** ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention, that evaluates the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution's mission and programs, and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies.

#### **Standard 9: Student Support Services**

- 9.1 a program of student support services appropriate to student strengths and needs, reflective of institutional mission, consistent with student learning expectations, and available regardless of place or method of delivery;
- 9.2 qualified professionals to supervise and provide the student support services and programs;
- 9.3 procedures to address the varied spectrum of student academic and other needs, in a manner that is equitable, supportive, and sensitive, through direct service or referral;
- 9.4 appropriate student advisement procedures and processes;
- 9.5 if offered, athletic programs that are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles, norms, and procedures that govern other institutional programs;
- 9.6 reasonable procedures, widely disseminated, for equitably addressing student complaints or grievances;
- 9.7 records of student complaints or grievances;
- 9.8 policies and procedures, developed and implemented, for safe and secure maintenance of student records ;
- 9.9 published and implemented policies for the release of student information; and
- 9.10 ongoing assessment of student support services and the utilization of assessment results for improvement.

**Standard 10: Faculty**

- 10.1 faculty and other professionals appropriately prepared and qualified for the positions they hold, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined, and sufficiently numerous to fulfill those roles appropriately;
- 10.2 educational curricula designed, maintained, and updated by faculty and other professionals who are academically prepared and qualified;
- 10.3 faculty and other professionals, including teaching assistants, who demonstrate excellence in teaching and other activities, and who demonstrate continued professional growth;
- 10.4 appropriate institutional support for the advancement and development of faculty, including teaching, research, scholarship, and service;
- 10.5 recognition of appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning, research, and service;
- 10.6 published and implemented standards and procedures for all faculty and other professionals, for actions such as appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline and dismissal, based on principles of fairness with due regard for the rights of all persons;
- 10.7 carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented procedures and criteria for reviewing all individuals who have responsibility for the educational program of the institution;
- 10.8 criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time, adjunct, and other faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty;
- 10.9 adherence to principles of academic freedom, within the context of institutional mission; and
- 10.10 assessment of policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified professionals to support the institution's programs.

## **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

- 11.1** educational offerings congruent with its mission, which include appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the programs or degrees offered;
- 11.2** formal undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs—leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential—designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning;
- 11.3** program goals that are stated in terms of student learning outcomes;
- 11.4** periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of any curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences that the institution provides its students and utilization of evaluation results as a basis for improving its student development program and for enabling students to understand their own educational progress (see Standards 9: Student Support Services and 14: Assessment of Student Learning);
- 11.5** learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff adequate to support the institution’s educational programs;
- 11.6** collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and administrators in fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum;
- 11.7** programs that promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources;
- 11.8** provision of comparable quality of teaching/instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of the institution’s courses and programs regardless of the location or delivery mode;
- 11.9** published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit that describe the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credits earned at another institution. The consideration of transfer credit or recognition of degrees will not be determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with those of the receiving institution’s curricula and standards. Such criteria will be fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated;
- 11.10** policies and procedures to assure that the educational expectations, rigor, and student learning within any accelerated degree program are comparable to those that characterize more traditional program formats;
- 11.11** consistent with the institution’s educational programs and student cohorts, practices and policies that reflect the needs of adult learners;
- 11.12** course syllabi that incorporate expected learning outcomes; and
- 11.13** assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the undergraduate programs and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning).

## **Standard 12: General Education**

- 12.1** a program of general education of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth, and equivalent to at least 15 semester hours for associate degree programs and 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs; (An institution also may demonstrate how an alternative approach fulfills the intent of this fundamental element.)

- 12.2 a program of general education where the skills and abilities developed in general education are applied in the major or concentration;
- 12.3 consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;
- 12.4 institutional requirements assuring that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline;
- 12.5 general education requirements clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution; and
- 12.6 assessment of general education outcomes within the institution's overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

- 13.1 systematic procedures for identifying students who are not fully
- 13.2 prepared for college level study;
- 13.3 provision of or referral to relevant courses and support services for
- 13.4 admitted under-prepared students; and
- 13.5 remedial or pre-collegiate level courses that do not carry academic degree
- 13.6 credit.
- 13.7 certificate programs, consistent with institutional mission, that have clearly articulated program goals, objectives and expectations of student learning and that are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures;
- 13.8 published program objectives, requirements, and curricular sequence;
- 13.9 program learning goals consistent with national criteria, as appropriate;
- 13.10 available and effective student support services; and
- 13.11 if courses completed within a certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution, academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses.
- 13.12 credit awarded for experiential learning that is supported by evidence in the form of an evaluation of the level, quality and quantity of that learning;
- 13.13 published and implemented policies and procedures defining the methods by which prior learning can be evaluated and the level and amount of credit available by evaluation;
- 13.14 published and implemented policies and procedures regarding the award of credit for prior learning that define the acceptance of such credit based on the institution's curricula and standards;
- 13.15 published and implemented procedures regarding the recording of evaluated prior learning by the awarding institution;
- 13.16 credit awarded appropriate to the subject and the degree context into which it is accepted; and
- 13.17 evaluators of experiential learning who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and about the institution's criteria for the granting of college credit.
- 13.18 non-credit offerings consistent with institutional mission and goals;

- 13.19** clearly articulated program or course goals, objectives, and expectations of student learning that are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures;
- 13.20** academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses, if courses completed within a non-credit or certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution; and
- 13.21** periodic assessment of the impact of non-credit programs on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.
- 13.22** offerings at branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites (including study abroad locations and programs offered at business/corporate sites) that meet standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness comparable to those of other institutional offerings;
- 13.23** activities and offerings at other locations meet all appropriate standards, including those related to learning outcomes;
- 13.24** adequate and appropriate support services; and
- 13.25** periodic assessment of the impact of branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.
- 13.26** distance education or correspondence education offerings (including those offered via accelerated or self-paced time formats) that meet institution-wide standards for quality of instruction, articulated expectations of student learning, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness. If the institution provides parallel on-site offerings, the same institution-wide standards should apply to both;
- 13.27** consistency of the offerings via distance education or correspondence education with the institution's mission and goals, and the rationale for the distance education delivery;
- 13.28** planning that includes consideration of applicable legal and regulatory requirements;
- 13.29** demonstrated program coherence, including stated program learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded;
- 13.30** demonstrated commitment to continuation of offerings for a period sufficient to enable admitted students to complete the degree or certificate in a publicized time frame;
- 13.31** assurance that arrangements with consortial partners or contractors do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational offerings;
- 13.32** validation by faculty of any course materials or technology-based resources developed outside the institution;
- 13.33** a system of student identity verification that ensures that the student
- 13.34** who participates in class or coursework is the same student who registers
- 13.35** and receives academic credit; that students are notified at the time of
- 13.36** registration or enrollment of any additional student charges associated
- 13.37** with the verification of student identity; and that the identity verification
- 13.38** process protects student privacy;
- 13.39** available, accessible, and adequate learning resources (such as a library or other information resources) appropriate to the offerings at a distance;
- 13.40** an ongoing program of appropriate orientation, training, and support for faculty participating in electronically delivered offerings;
- 13.41** adequate technical and physical plant facilities, including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support electronic offerings; and

- 13.42** periodic assessment of the impact of distance education on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.
- 13.43** contractual relationships with affiliated providers, other institutions, or organizations that protect the accredited institution's integrity and assure that the institution has appropriate oversight of and responsibility for all activities carried out in the institution's name or on its behalf;
- 13.44** consistency of any course or program offered via contractual arrangement with the institution's mission and goals; and
- 13.45** adequate and appropriate accredited institutional review and approval of work performed by a contracted party in such functional areas as admissions criteria, appointment of faculty, content of courses/programs, instructional support resources (including library/information resources), evaluation of student work, and outcomes assessment.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

- 14.1** clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes (see Standard 11: Educational Offerings), at all levels (institution, degree/program, course) and for all programs that aim to foster student learning and development, that are:
  - a.** appropriately integrated with one another;
  - b.** consonant with the institution's mission; and
  - c.** consonant with the standards of higher education and of the relevant disciplines;
- 14.2** a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve student learning that meets the following criteria:
  - a.** systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that:
    - i.** maximize the use of existing data and information;
    - ii.** clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;
    - iii.** are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions; and
    - iv.** include direct evidence of student learning;
  - b.** support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results;
  - c.** clear, realistic guidelines and timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources;
  - d.** sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable; and
  - e.** periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution's student learning assessment processes;
- 14.3** assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes;
- 14.4** evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning; and
- 14.5** documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment.