

ACCREDITATION

SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

FAQ

Q: What is our current Accreditation status?

A: Southwestern has been continuously accredited since 1961. The last action to reaffirm accreditation with no sanctions was in 2011.

Q: Why does the college undergo accreditation?

A: Accreditation provides assurance to the public that the education provided at our college meets acceptable levels of quality and rigor. It is also required to receive federal and state funding, including student loans.

Q: What actions can the accreditation commission take following a site visit?

A: The actions the commission can make are:

- Reaffirm Accreditation
- Reaffirm Accreditation and Require Follow-Up Report
- Issue Warning
- Impose Probation
- Mandate Show Cause

The accredited status of the college continues during any of the above sanctions for a period of time to address recommendations.

Q: What if the college receives less than “Reaffirm Accreditation?”

A: If the college receives a Reaffirm Accreditation and Require Follow-Up, the institution is required to submit a Follow-Up Report demonstrating it has resolved all cited deficiencies. The Commission will specify the issues to be addressed and the due date of the report, with or without an evaluation team visit. We may have up to 18 months, but most likely a year, to fix any problems or rectify deficiencies. Upon successful completion of the reaffirmation with a follow-up period, the college will qualify for reaffirmation for the remainder of the seven-year accreditation cycle and will be required to submit a Midterm Report.

If the college receives one of the sanctions of warning, probation or show cause, the Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve the deficiencies and demonstrate compliance, generally 12 to 18 months. During the sanction period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. The accredited status of the college continues during the sanction period.

Q: What is the accreditation cycle?

A: The full accreditation cycle is now seven years (previously it was six years). Two years prior to the visit, Southwestern College began preparing a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The SER is sent to the visiting team 60 days prior to the visit. The team visits the college for four days and prepares a site visit report.

Q: What is included in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER)?

A: The SER outlines how the college is meeting the four accreditation standards, eligibility requirements and Commission policies and provides evidence for meeting each area. The SER also responds to previous recommendations and how the recommendations have been resolved. Finally, the SER is the college's opportunity to identify Actionable Improvement Plans (AIP). The AIPs are areas the college has outlined as challenges and specific action steps to improve those areas.

Q: What did Southwestern College list as Actionable Improvement Plans (AIP)?

A: After the college completed a thorough institutional Self Evaluation, we deemed that it met standards in the following areas, but that they needed additional attention. The college chose to place particular attention on these areas to ensure continued improvement in the quality of student learning, achievement and success. We submitted three Actionable Improvement Plans:

- Campus Morale
- Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
- Distance Education (training and regular effective contact compliance)

continued



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Q: What were the areas of concern expressed by the Accreditation Visitation Team during the exit interview which may lead to formal recommendations?

A: The areas the team outlined during the exit interview included:

- One Mission Statement only
- Student Learning Outcomes and Assessments must be more accessible and used for Program Improvement
- Distance Education not in compliance with Authentication, Accessibility and Substantive Contact
- Performance evaluations must include SLOs and be completed on cycle
- Resolve Total Cost of Ownership issues for facilities and maintenance
- All legally required policies and procedures need to be developed and approved
- Increase staffing and professional development at Higher Education Centers
- Resolve fiscal area issues, including filling vacant positions

Q: What is the college doing to address these concerns?

A: A key group of staff members, led by the Superintendent/President, began reviewing the Self Evaluation Report and notes from site visit interviews to verify evidence and implement changes that address the deficiencies. They worked diligently for six weeks and have now transferred the responsibility for follow-up to the Accreditation Oversight Committee (AOC). The work done in each of the categories cited above will be highlighted in weekly electronic newsletters called "Accreditation in Action." There have already been two e-newsletters distributed. The archive of e-newsletters and resources can be found on the district website [HERE](#)

Q: The college has been working diligently on outcomes and assessment. Why was this listed as a recommendation?

A: The Accreditation Visitation team was unable to access electronic SLO assessment data during their visit. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has generated summary reports that verify existence of all Outcome, Data and Evidence sheets in program review snapshots as well as comprehensive program reviews in Fall 2014. We are working to improve our processes and accessibility to this data.

