

SACS Annual Meeting Report

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I attended the First Time Attendees Orientation, two General Sessions, six Concurrent Sessions, and a Round Table. I have summarized all sessions and have bolded highlights that are pertinent to my role as Library Director and Compliance Chair in the summaries below.

Orientation for First-Time Attendees

Salient points:

- **There will be no postponement of SACS evaluation process due to the failing economy.**
- SACS is the most rigorous of the regional accrediting bodies
- COC, CASI and V-TECS are separately incorporated
- If a recommendation on a Core Requirement, cannot be reaffirmed
- If a recommendation on a Comprehensive Standard, may be reaffirmed
- Focused report is an opportunity to clean up issues
- For the peer-review process, teams are from like-institutions

Concurrent Sessions

CS-7 Library and Learning Resources

Presented by SACS Director of Institutional Support

This was a useful though rather dry, fact-based presentation on how to comply with CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.

2.9 would be non-compliant only with egregious deficiency, 3.8 with less serious deficiencies

2.9

- Need compelling narrative for non-librarians; don't use jargon
- Resource manual will help (didn't point out it is dated)
- Narrative needs to link documentation to judgment
- Need to show what measurements are used for support in all degree areas
- Caveat: ask about distance learning and off-campus instructional sites for all areas of documentation
- Need to cover formal agreements, access, adequate collection (review collection development policy, collection analysis-new Bowker collection analysis tool-age analysis-acquisitions data for past 10 years- ILL borrowing/lending)
- Consistent with degrees offered-strength of collections for each program, faculty involvement in collections/weeding
- Questioned certificate programs-no collections required for programs that do not have research component-demonstrate faculty contact that program doesn't require (CNA, Elec Dist, may require manuals, codes)
- Address dual enrollment-students have access to college collections
- Strength in print or electronic (one should be strong)

3.8

- List complementary services offered by LC
- Facilities-Include building plans-description of square feet, allocation by function- user surveys and reactions-begin counts by time of day by service area-lab, classroom, study areas, include door counts-several times per day to identify peak times-age and renovation history

- Services-hours of availability, including reference, telephone assistance-user surveys, benchmarking (LibQual or ALS), go out of state
- Instruction, if website, how do students know to go there?-document with schedules and handouts, electronic tutorials, evaluation of tutorials, faculty evaluations
- Sufficient staff-list ALA accredited graduates, support staff training, show links between job descriptions and training (show Raechels's progression in Tech Services, R.J.'s in media)
- Hours of opening with staff coverage-note times with no professional librarian coverage, when student coverage, Leesburg is backup-use reference data to show we have adequate staff to provide reference coverage, tech services backlog to show adequate staff
- Address libraries' role in
 - 2.5 ongoing research-based planning
 - 3.3.1 expected outcomes assessment
 - 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
 - 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
 - 3.3.1.4 research with educational mission, if appropriate
 - 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission

CS-39 Community College Benchmarking Tools and Applications

Presented by IE director at Johnson County Community College in Kansas and academic VP from Nashville State Community College (Level 1), this was a useful session for someone not deeply knowledgeable about benchmarking.

- Defined benchmarking, discussed types of benchmarking in higher education (internal, generic, competitive). **Internal usually a bad idea, comparing cost of programs is not useful.**
- Benchmarks can be at three levels: threshold or minimum standard, aspirational goal (don't care what peers achieve), or definition of the norm (based on peers).
- Limitations of culture
 - QEP and benchmarking are both codes for change; we are resistant
 - Need to be willing to challenge institutional truths, which are usually unexamined, often some areas are not ever examined esp. in comparison with other colleges
 - Needs to be done in continuous quality improvement effort that includes closing the loop and re-measuring
 - Local nature of community colleges is a barrier—we think we are unique (though with 1200 in US, must be another like)
 - No demand for comparative ranking to attract students
- Limitations of data
 - Clear, standard data definitions are necessary, sometimes issues with local data if comparing with national/regional standards
 - Different state funding formulas
 - Instructional cost comparison must have multiple variables
- Benchmarking tools
 - ACT Enrolled Student Satisfaction
 - Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey
 - CCSSE
 - IPEDS
- Two national benchmarking projects
 - Kansas study-No cost-used more by academic VPs, FIPSE grant funded-analyzes faculty workload and instructional cost at academic discipline level-data collection by excel spreadsheets, annual reports available for peer

comparison (real-time)—measures FT vs. adjunct faculty %, FTE Students/FTE faculty, salaries/benefits direct instructional costs, helps meet SACS CR 2.8, 2.11, 3.4.9

- National CC Benchmarking Project-Cost \$1,000-data at institutional level so is easier to administer-used more by college presidents- used for strategic planning, program improvement, accreditation compliance, based on multiple college characteristics-8 colleges in Florida

CS-47 *Documenting Institutional Effectiveness in Five Steps*

Presented by IE Director and Nursing Professor from North Georgia College & State University (Level IV institution), covered the basics of institutional assessment, not especially relevant information, though several good points were made.

- Fundamentals of assessment-purposes demonstrate achievement of outcomes, improvement of program/service, external accrediting bodies and funding sources, internal constituents such as students, faculty administration, governing board-SACS CR 2.5 and 3.3.1
- 5 steps for documenting institutional effectiveness
 1. Define entity's purposes
 2. Identify intended outcomes—**must be aggressive but attainable** (if make goals are assured of meeting how will you improve?)
 3. Determine appropriate assessment methods—**one good quality measure is better than several quantity measures**
 - include direct evidence of learning, including research projects, presentation, written work, scores on final exams (not course grade), portfolios of student work, scores and pass rates on licensure/certificaiton exams or other standardized tests, rating sof students by field supervisory, student reflections of values, attitudes, beliefs, student diaries
 - include indirect evidence of learning including student-reporting ratings of knowledge skills, job placement rates, admission reates into upper-level programs, student/alumni satisfaction with learning
 4. Collect data and summarize results
 - Report with appropriate rigor-80% of what?
 - Include time period, number of subjects, etc.
 - Outside reader should be able to understand the degree to which outcome was attained
 - Remove names, id numbers, individual identifiers
 5. User results to make improvements
 - Show how results were used to improve learning, programs, or services, must show a change to close the loop
- Technical issues—developed an internal assessment database, chose web-based for ease of use, more easily updated though security is an issue. Includes spell-checker, reports, text formatting in results section, document uploading, sorting.
- Demonstrated use of the database

CS-75 *The Compliance Certification & Focused Report: A Case Study*

Presented by VP at Louisiana Tech University, from a larger (Level VI) institutional point of view, this presentation focused on building teams, which are important because they demonstrate institutional review and approval of compliance documentation, and ensure bread-based awareness of and participation in the review process.

- Stressed Cabinet and Board need to be involved
- Team approach needs to be apparent in the narrative, all points need to be linked
- A big picture person needs to be in charge

- Management team throughout the institution needs to collect data
- Team leaders need to have specific knowledge of and experience with the standard(s) assigned to them (**note: we did this well**)
- Created templates
 - Technical specifications, webmaster
 - Data collection template specifies format (Word, Excel), reiterates the requirement/standard, space for narrative, list of documentation, person responsible (**our form similar**), Requirements/standards in outline form
 - Compliance review template, final report, conveys messages about the institution through format, aesthetics, white space, organization, color schemes, institutional image, etc. -overriding principle is "clean", uncluttered space, concise nomenclature, intuitive search capabilities (**Compliance Assist does this for us**)—**Tip: make links in the narrative, not in a separate list of documentation!**
- Minimize scanning of paper documents, implies shift to electronic record keeping, **revise collection and storage of data, make it all electronic. (We should make sure Intranet is up-to-date with committee minutes and other data! (How to provide access to teams?)**
- Narrative on its own will not convince, give enough documentation reviewers can mine as deeply as they want
- Don't use future tense, "we plan to do", will result in recommendation—**show a plan!**
- **Pattern of evidence should be two or three cycles!**

CS-90 Compliance Report Writing 101

Presented by Vice Provosts at University of Texas at San Antonio, a Level VI institution, whose compliance structure is more complex than for a Level I community college.

Nevertheless, LSCC has already implemented many of the tips provided by this presentation. Recommended using an outline format on the Compliance Forms, which may have been useful.

- This team recommended beginning the Compliance process 4 years out, which gives time for planning, a compliance audit (snapshot), and fixing issues.
- Warned the SACS manuals are dated and should be used carefully.
- Compliance Team should be "doers" not "talkers"
- Team should have first-hand knowledge or the authority/credibility to get needed information
- Used an early audit to get a snapshot (this is being handled by our first draft)
- Trained report authors, focusing on definitely, probably, unsure, probably not and definitely not in compliance; audit involved little writing
- Provided team with a CD containing reports from three "sister" institutions (we provided links on website)
- Provided strict format for writing the narrative: MS Word, font, spacing, margins, using template provided
- Proscribed using links in the narratives rather than footnotes (we need to decide on a format)
- **Used an outline format for the requirement/standard (we could do that when committee members misunderstand or are incomplete)**
- Write the narrative for outsiders, using concise language, avoiding jargon, acronyms, maintaining consistency in terms

CS-109 A Committee Approach to Creating a Compliance Certification Report

Presented by East Texas Baptist University staff

- Compliance leader sought for experience in accreditation process, research, writing , editing
- Team included Chair, IE Director, IR Analyst, Library Director, VP Enrollment, Humanities Dean, Academic VP, Institutional Advancement VP, IT Director, Admin VP, President & his assistant, VP spiritual development, student services VP, retired faculty member
- Committee Handbook was prepared, sections on process, assignments, timeline, writing guidelines, documentation guidelines
- First draft due **TWO WEEKS** after assignment, very rough, no documentation required, reviewed and returned
- Second draft due **THREE WEEKS** later, documentation required, reviewed by small groups, record of comments kept
- Group review included small group, whole committee, individual reviews, all suggestions given to authors; this constituted beginning of third draft
- Editing team consisted of 5 people, worked for four months, read each narrative aloud (interesting!), reviewed documentation, revised, rewrote
- Final draft sent to 2 external readers (experienced SACS reviewers) and an English editor, who were each given a \$1,000 stipend and a month to complete reading and evaluation-readers gave a written report
- Final report sent to Leadership Team for approval
- Documentation linked in narrative and notes
- Faculty roster involved a form, review of all faculty transcripts, electronic vita, covered the **three most recent semesters**, linked to relevant narratives
- Strengths of committee approach include more thorough evaluation and criticism, experienced people used, no excessive work for one person, more thorough evaluation and criticism
- Weaknesses include some people procrastinate, multiple personalities and agendas, **some reluctant to ask for assistance**, inconsistency in writing styles, absence of one voice (importance of editing team)

General Sessions

First General Session: Dr. Henry Cisneros "*Essentials of Leadership for the 21st Century*"

Dr. Cisneros gave an energizing speech focusing on projected changes in U.S.

demographics; essential components of leadership will include a thorough understanding of diversity, recognition of our interconnectedness and the value of helping others. His view is strongly and essentially capitalistic, based on the view the more material goods, the better the society.

Second General Session: Dr. Judith Eaton "*Accreditation after the 2008 Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act*"

Dr. Eaton spoke of the dangers of federalizing higher education as recommended by Louis

V. Gerstner in a recent Wall Street Journal opinion column (article attached). Gerstner

recommends abolishing local school districts and establishing a national curriculum. Dr.

Eaton states the Higher Education Act moves toward this nationalized scenario and

questioned whether the recommendations could be extended to higher education. She

pointed out some of the dangers of this approach, including the philosophical shift to higher

education as a function of government rather than a social institution. She thinks we have

the data to prove that the accreditation process measures quality. She made five points in

her summary:

1. Institutional leadership is worth preserving though we cannot take it for granted.
2. Only we (within higher education) can be champions for core values and must make the case for academic freedom.
3. We may be at a choice point for accreditation-can we maintain the system?

4. The financial crisis will intensify accountability.
5. We need to think of other ways of producing efficiency.

Round Table

R-13 Creating a User-Friendly Compliance Certification Document

The session was presented by East Texas Baptist University IE department, focused on creating an easily navigable certification document using Adobe PDF rather than HTML. The discussion included instructions in how to create a CD based on the Adobe format. The presenters made a strong point that Internet Explorer has problems with Adobe PDF bookmarks, which I will need to test with Compliance Assist.

- Their faculty roster in Excel, converted to PDF
- Names blocked out on evaluation forms, positions left—marked out in Word, then converted to PDF so can't be restored by viewer
- Printed copy of Compliance Report is tabbed, 2" notebook, had tabs professionally printed, only the off-site committee received
- Auto-run on CD, automatically opens
- Opened all documents in a new window
- Used footnote numbers in the text, at bottom of each page

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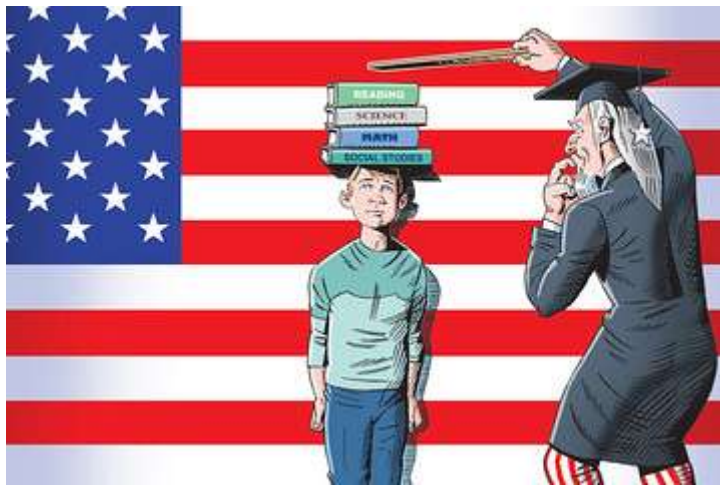
OPINION

Lessons From 40 Years of Education 'Reform'

Let's abolish local school districts and finally adopt national standards.

By LOUIS V. GERSTNER JR.

While the economic news has most Americans in a state of near depression, hope abounds today that the country may use the current economic crisis as leverage to address some longstanding problems. Nowhere is that prospect for progress more worthy than the crisis in our public education system.



Martin Kozlowski

So, from someone who realized rather glumly last week that he has been working at school reform for 40 years, here is a prescription for leadership from the Obama administration.

We must start with the recognition that, despite decade after decade of reform efforts, our public K-12 schools have not improved. We can point to individual schools and some entire districts that have advanced, but the system as a whole is still failing. High school and college graduation rates, test scores, the number of graduates majoring in science and engineering all are flat or down over the past two decades. Disappointingly, the relative performance of our students has suffered compared to those of other nations. As a former CEO, I am worried about what this will mean for our future workforce.

It is most crucial for our political leaders to ask why we are at this point -- why after millions of pages, in thousands of reports, from hundreds of commissions and task forces, financed by billions of dollars, have we failed to achieve any significant progress?

Answering this question correctly is the key to finally remaking our public schools.

This is a complex problem, but countless experiments and analyses have clearly indicated we need to do four straightforward things to bring fundamental changes to K-12 education:

- 1) Set high academic standards for all of our kids, supported by a rigorous curriculum.
- 2) Greatly improve the quality of teaching in our classrooms, supported by substantially higher compensation for our best teachers.
- 3) Measure student and teacher performance on a systematic basis, supported by tests and assessments.
- 4) Increase "time on task" for all students; this means more time in school each day, and a longer school year.

Everything else either does not matter (e.g., smaller class sizes) or is supportive of these four steps (e.g., vastly improve schools of education).

Lack of effort is not the cause of our 30-year inability to solve our education problem. Not only have we had all those thousands of studies and task forces, but we have seen many courageous and talented individuals pushing hard to move the system. Leaders such as Joel Klein (New York City), Michelle Rhee (Washington, D.C.) and Paul Vallas (New Orleans) have challenged the system, and elected officials from both sides of the political spectrum have also fought valiantly for change.

So where does that leave us? If the problem isn't "what to do," nor is it a failure of commitment, what is stopping us?

I believe the problem lies with the structure and corporate governance of our public schools. We have over 15,000 school districts in America; each of them, in its own way, is involved in standards, curriculum, teacher selection, classroom rules and so on. This unbelievably unwieldy structure is incapable of executing a program of fundamental change. While we have islands of excellence as a result of great reform programs, we continually fail to scale up systemic change.

Therefore, I recommend that President-elect Barack Obama convene a meeting of our nation's governors and seek agreement to the following:

- Abolish all local school districts, save 70 (50 states; 20 largest cities). Some states may choose to leave some of the rest as community service organizations, but they would have no direct involvement in the critical task of establishing standards, selecting teachers, and developing curricula.
- Establish a set of national standards for a core curriculum. I would suggest we start with four subjects: reading, math, science and social studies.
- Establish a National Skills Day on which every third, sixth, ninth and 12th-grader would be tested against the national standards. Results would be published nationwide for every school in America.
- Establish national standards for teacher certification and require regular re-evaluations of teacher skills. Increase teacher compensation to permit the best teachers (as measured by advances in student learning) to earn well in excess of \$100,000 per year, and allow school leaders to remove underperforming teachers.
- Extend the school day and the school year to effectively add 20 more days of schooling for all K-12 students.

I can predict that three questions will be raised about these measures:

First, how can we set national standards when we have a strong tradition of local school autonomy? The answer is that the American people are way ahead of our politicians here: Poll after poll shows they support national standards.

Second, won't this take many years to implement? No, if we follow a focused, pragmatic approach. While ideally we want all 50 states to participate, we can get started with 30. The rest will be driven to abandon their "see no evil" blinders by their citizens as the original group achieves momentum and success. Moreover, we do not have to start from scratch on the national standards. Experts can quickly develop an initial set just by drawing on existing domestic and foreign programs.

Third, how do we pay for all of this? In three ways: We will save billions by consolidating the operations of 15,000 school districts. The U.S. Department of Education can direct all of its discretionary funds to this effort. And we need to drive into the consciousness of every American politician that education is not an expense. It is, rather, the most important investment we can make as a country.

H.G. Wells remarked that "history is a race between education and catastrophe." For the first time in America's history, we may be losing that race. We can win, but we have to act quickly and decisively.

Mr. Gerstner, a former CEO of IBM, was chairman of the Teaching Commission (2003-2006), which reported on ways to improve the quality of public school teaching.