Better Conversations, Better Data: Lumina Foundation Initiative

During fall 2020, WSCUC implemented a peer benchmarking pilot project as part of the Lumina Foundation funded initiative, “Better Conversations, Better Data.” WSCUC is making peer data available in its Key Indicator Dashboard (KID) for WSCUC institutions and peer reviewers. Peer data is not a part of the WSCUC public portal on the website at this time. Institutions included in KID are accredited institutions that report to IPEDS and have undergraduate programs.

WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and Handbook Review

WSCUC is undertaking a periodic review of its governing Standards of Accreditation and Criteria for Review (CFRs). After consideration of significant input and analysis gathered from members of WSCUC institutions, as well as Commissioners, staff, and external constituents, WSCUC staff recommended in September 2021 that the Commission expand the scope of the project to embrace the Handbook, including the Institutional Report and its Components, not just the Standards themselves. Further, staff recommended recasting the work of Standards revision into two phases.

The first phase, called “Targeted Updates” (TU), were approved by the Commission at its November meeting and are posted on the WSCUC website as the 2013 Handbook (revised 2021). The TUs reflect actions already taken by either the Commission or the Department of Education that had not been added to the Handbook of Accreditation.

The second phase, called “Standards and Handbook Review” (SHR), will include further, and potentially more substantive, revisions to the Standards as well as a revision of the Institutional Report process to eliminate confusion between the Standards and the Components. This phase will be an expansion of the work that the Commission has already undertaken and will integrate changes based on discussions, consultations, and conclusions received so far or gathered from additional consultation and comment during the winter and spring. While the basic schema of the Standards will be retained, areas of overlap and confusion in the organization and presentation of the CFRs will also be addressed.

The goal is to have a fully revised Handbook to be brought to the Commission for its consideration in June 2022, with distribution to the membership for comment following the June 2022 Commission meeting. Final action is planned for the November 2022 meeting.
Commission Retreat

At its November 2021 retreat meeting in San Diego the Commission spent a productive session on effective inquiry around equity and inclusion to develop questions to help institutions and teams carry out their self-assessment and reviews; received a report from its outsourcing work group, which is considering policy, information, and guidance relating to business arrangements with unaccredited entities; and used the luxury of the retreat time to look at “big ideas,” trends and challenges affecting students, higher education, institutions, and accreditation. This meeting was the first opportunity for the full Commission, including two classes of new commissioners, to meet in person since the start of the pandemic.

Spring 2022 WSCUC Visits and Offsite Review Formats

Informed by both medical guidelines and institutional practice, the Commission determined that Spring 2022 visits will be conducted as in-person reviews whenever possible and will also maintain flexibility in scheduling to accommodate specific circumstances. The exception to this practice is the Offsite Review (OSR—the first stage of the reaffirmation process); the Commission learned during the last twenty months that this one-day review is well-suited for remote collaboration, and all future OSRs will be conducted remotely.

2022 Academic Resource Conference (ARC): San Francisco

WSCUC’s annual Academic Resource Conference (ARC) is scheduled for April 2022 in San Francisco. Themes will include equity, evidence into action, and coming back together through keynotes and concurrent sessions.

WSCUC Fellowships

Four projects have been selected for WSCUC’s first Fellowship Program, three led by individuals and one consisting of a team from the California Association of Institutional Research. Fellows will present their work at the ARC2022 and at future Educational Programs workshops and webinars.