USING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS TO PROMOTE LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES

Coalition for Networked Information
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Accreditation

- Process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement
- Federal and state governments consider accreditation to be a reliable authority on academic quality

Types of Accrediting Organizations

- Regional accreditation – six regions, accredit all types of institutions
- National faith-related accreditors – religiously affiliated institutions
- Nation career-related accreditors – for-profit, career based single purpose institutions
- Programmatic accreditors – accredit specific programs, professions and free-standing schools

Roles of Accreditation

- Assuring quality
- Access to federal and state funds
- Engendering private sector confidence
- Easing transfer between institutions

Accreditation Process

- Standards approved by the accrediting body
- Self-study by the institution based on the standards
- Peer review – faculty and administrative peers
- Site Visit – review of the organization
- Judgment by accrediting organization – decision on accreditation

Changes in Accreditation

- Are we prepared to provide data to support current accreditation standards that emphasize student learning outcomes, assessment of services, and digital access to information and services rather than the number of computers and the size of the library collection?

Influence of Accreditors on Higher Education

- Changed from input based standards to outcomes and outputs
- Standards among the 6 regional accrediting bodies
  - Student learning outcomes, program level learning outcomes
  - Assessment of learning outcomes
  - Information literacy standards
  - Planning for how technology support provided to students will change
  - Systematic planning processes

Change in Standards among Programmatic Accrediting Agencies

- Summary of standards from 25 programmatic accrediting bodies – 20 or more included the following:
  - Meet the standards of the regional accrediting agency (25)
  - Assessment of student learning outcomes, program learning outcomes (20)
  - Support services, support for technology (emphasize services rather than inputs) (20)
  - Sufficient resources to support the program (25)

Examples of Standards on Libraries and IT

- HLC – emphasizes planning
- SACS - quality
- WACS – adequate resources
- Middle States – information literacy
- ABET – learning outcomes
- CoJMC – adequate digital support

Addition of a Quality Initiative Program

- Regional accrediting bodies that include a quality initiative or information literacy plan as part of the accreditation process:
- WACS - institutions will be asked to address the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile - program level learning outcomes
- Middle States – incorporate quality in information literacy standards
- HLC – Quality Initiative – a campus wide program or project to improve quality, emphasizing student learning outcomes
- SACS - Quality Enhancement Plan - campus wide quality program or project

Working with programs on accreditation

Often the person heading the program accreditation review for the unit did not lead the last review

Too often programs will copy university level information from one self-study to another without updating the content or asking for an update

The program will likely contact the library or IT unit for information shortly before the information is due leaving little time to prepare data

Working with Programs on Accreditation

- Review the campus schedule for program accreditation visits because the programs are not likely to be thinking of including others in their process
- Review the criteria from the accrediting agency to find out what the latest standards are – programs may not understand all the ways the library and IT support students
- Volunteer for campus committees involved in accreditation

Working with Programs on Accreditation

- Address how the library and IT support student learning outcomes even if the program does not ask for that data
- Provide assessment data on services even though the program may not ask for the data
- Address both on-campus and online programs – accrediting bodies want to ensure that quality services are available regardless of the delivery mode for instruction

University of Miami

- Next, Yolanda Cooper, Deputy University Librarian at the University of Miami, will describe the Quality Enhancement Plan implemented in 2009 by the University of Miami – a program centered in the Libraries partnering with instructional technology units.