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| **Trinity 2014-2016 Middle States Self-Study: Understanding MSCHE Standards and Fundamental Elements** | |
| *Below are the 14 Standards for Accreditation in Middle States and the “Fundamental Elements” we must satisfy.* | |
| *In the column to the right please make your notations about Trinity’s fulfillment of the standard.*  *Use these questions as a guide for your comments:*  *Does Trinity fulfill the standard? How well?*  *What evidence supports fulfillment of the standard? Evidence Aligned with Fundamental Elements?*  *Where is there exposure for lack of evidence or sub-par performance? Where is there evidence of excellence?*  *What recommendations can we make for improvement?* | |
|  | **YOUR COMMENTS** |
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| **Standard 1**  Mission and Goals  **The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context**  **of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what**  **it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals, consistent with**  **the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify**  **how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are**  **developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of**  **its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and**  **shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Mission and Goals**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  clearly defined mission and goals that:  guide faculty, administration, staff and governing bodies in making  decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and  curriculum development, and definition of program outcomes;  include support of scholarly and creative activity, at levels and of the  kinds appropriate to the institution’s purposes and character;  are developed through collaborative participation by those who  facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional improvement  and developments;  are periodically evaluated and formally approved;  are publicized and widely known by the institution’s members;  mission and goals that relate to external as well as internal contexts and  constituencies;  institutional goals that are consistent with mission; and  goals that focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional  improvement. |  |

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| **Standard 2**  Planning, Resource Allocation, and  Institutional Renewal  **An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based**  **on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and**  **utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal.**  **Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the**  **strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and**  **change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Planning, etc.**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated,  provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of  assessment results;  well defined decision-making processes and authority that facilitates  planning and renewal;  the assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of  accountability;  a record of institutional and unit improvement efforts and their results;  and  periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation,  and institutional renewal processes. |  |

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| **Standard 3**  Institutional Resources  **The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary**  **to achieve an institution’s mission and goals are available and**  **accessible. In the context of the institution’s mission, the effective and**  **efficient uses of the institution’s resources are analyzed as part of**  **ongoing outcomes assessment.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Institutional Resources**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of,  institutional resources required to support the institution’s mission and  goals;  rational and consistent policies and procedures in place to determine  allocation of assets;  an allocation approach that ensures adequate faculty, staff, and  administration to support the institution’s mission and outcomes  expectations;  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;  a comprehensive infrastructure or facilities master plan and  facilities/infrastructure life-cycle management plan, as appropriate to  mission, and evidence of implementation;  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;  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;  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;  an annual independent audit confirming financial responsibility, with  evidence of follow-up on any concerns cited in the audit’s accompanying  management letter; and  periodic assessment of the effective and efficient use of institutional  resources. |  |

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| **Standard 4**  Leadership and Governance  **The institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of**  **institutional constituencies in policy development and**  **decision-making. The governance structure includes an active**  **governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional**  **integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource**  **development, consistent with the mission of the institution.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Leadership and Governance**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies  outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and  readily available to the campus community;  written governing documents, such as a constitution, by-laws, enabling  legislation, charter or other similar documents, that:  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;  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;  provide for the selection process for governing body members;  appropriate opportunity for student input regarding decisions that affect  them;  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;  a governing body not chaired by the chief executive officer;  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;  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;  a governing body that assists in generating resources needed to sustain  and improve the institution;  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;  a procedure in place for the periodic objective assessment of the  governing body in meeting stated governing body objectives;  a chief executive officer, appointed by the governing board, with primary  responsibility to the institution; and  periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and  governance. |  |

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| **Standard 5**  Administration  **The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate**  **learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and**  **support the institution’s organization and governance.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Administration**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  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;  administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training  to carry out their responsibilities and functions;  qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of  the institution;  adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work  of administrative leaders;  clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority; and  periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and  services. |  |

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| **Standard 6**  Integrity  **In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and**  **the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to**  **ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for**  **academic and intellectual freedom.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Integrity**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation and dismissal of  employees;  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;  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;  a climate of academic inquiry and engagement supported by widely  disseminated policies regarding academic and intellectual freedom;  an institutional commitment to principles of protecting intellectual  property rights;  a climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and  administration for the range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and  perspectives;  honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements,  advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials and practices;  required and elective courses that are sufficiently available to allow  students to graduate within the published program length;  reasonable, continuing student access to paper or electronic catalogs;  when catalogs are available only electronically, the institution’s web page  provides a guide or index to catalog information for each catalog  available electronically;  when catalogs are available only electronically, the institution archives  copies of the catalogs as sections or policies are updated;  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;  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;  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;  institutional information provided in a manner that ensures student and  public access, such as print, electronic, or video presentation;  fulfillment of all applicable standards and reporting and other  requirements of the Commission; and  periodic assessment of the integrity evidenced in institutional policies,  processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented. |  |

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| **Standard 7**  Institutional Assessment  **The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process**  **that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and**  **goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Institutional Assessment**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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:  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);  systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative  and/or quantitative measures that:  maximize the use of existing data and information;  clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;  are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence  to inform decisions;  support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing  student learning and responding to assessment results;  clear realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate  investment of institutional resources;  sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be  sustainable;  periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the  institution’s assessment process;  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  written institutional (strategic) plan(s) that reflect(s) consideration of  assessment results. |  |

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| **Standard 8**  Student Admissions and Retention  **The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and**  **abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them**  **through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Student Admissions**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and  reflect the mission of the institution;  admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student  in making informed decisions;  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;  accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs,  including any required placement or diagnostic testing;  statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on  institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program  offered, available to prospective students;  accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate,  regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds;  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  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. |  |

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| **Standard 9**  Student Support Services  **The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary**  **to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Student Support Services**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  qualified professionals to supervise and provide the student support  services and programs;  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;  appropriate student advisement procedures and processes;  if offered, athletic programs that are regulated by the same academic,  fiscal, and administrative principles, norms, and procedures that govern  other institutional programs;  reasonable procedures, widely disseminated, for equitably addressing  student complaints or grievances;  records of student complaints or grievances;  policies and procedures, developed and implemented, for safe and secure  maintenance of student records ;  published and implemented policies for the release of student  information; and  ongoing assessment of student support services and the utilization of  assessment results for improvement. |  |

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| **Standard 10**  Faculty  **The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs**  **are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified**  **professionals.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Faculty**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  educational curricula designed, maintained, and updated by faculty and  other professionals who are academically prepared and qualified;  faculty and other professionals, including teaching assistants, who  demonstrate excellence in teaching and other activities, and who  demonstrate continued professional growth;  appropriate institutional support for the advancement and development  of faculty, including teaching, research, scholarship, and service;  recognition of appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student  learning, research, and service;  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;  carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented procedures and criteria  for reviewing all individuals who have responsibility for the educational  program of the institution;  criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review of teaching  effectiveness for part-time, adjunct, and other faculty consistent with  those for full-time faculty;  adherence to principles of academic freedom, within the context of  institutional mission; and  assessment of policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified  professionals to support the institution’s programs. |  |

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| **Standard 11**  Educational Offerings  **The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor,**  **and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission.**  **The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives,**  **including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Educational Offerings**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities. These elements also apply to all other educational  activities addressed within Standard 13.  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;  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;  program goals that are stated in terms of student learning outcomes;  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);  learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services,  and professional library staff adequate to support the institution’s  educational programs;  collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and  administrators in fostering information literacy and technological  competency skills across the curriculum;  programs that promote student use of a variety of information and  learning resources;  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;  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;  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;  consistent with the institution’s educational programs and student  cohorts, practices and policies that reflect the needs of adult learners;  course syllabi that incorporate expected learning outcomes; and  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). |  |
| **Additional Elements for Graduate and**  **Professional Education**  graduate curricula providing for the development of research and  independent thinking that studies at the advanced level presuppose;  faculty with credentials appropriate to the graduate curricula; and  assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the  goals and objectives of the graduate programs (including professional  and clinical skills, professional examinations and professional placement  where applicable) and the use of the results to improve student learning  and program effectiveness (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student  Learning). |  |

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| **Standard 12**  General Education  **The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and**  **demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential**  **skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific**  **and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and**  **technological competency.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of General Education**  An accredited institution offering undergraduate degrees and some graduate  institutions are expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or  activities:  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.)  a program of general education where the skills and abilities developed  in general education are applied in the major or concentration;  consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that  incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;  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;  general education requirements clearly and accurately described in  official publications of the institution; and  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. |  |

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| **Standard 13**  Related Educational Activities  **The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by**  **particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship**  **meet appropriate standards.** |  |
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| **Basic Skills**  Under prepared students may benefit from basic skills or developmental courses  provided by an institution as part of its educational offerings. When offered,  such pre-college level courses, taken prior to or concurrent with enrollment in  degree credit courses, can prepare the student for success in achieving his or her  educational goals.  **Fundamental Elements of Basic Skills**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  systematic procedures for identifying students who are not fully  prepared for college level study;  provision of or referral to relevant courses and support services for  admitted under-prepared students; and  remedial or pre-collegiate level courses that do not carry academic degree  credit. |  |
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| **Certificate Programs**  Certificate programs are postsecondary non-degree credentials including  pre-baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, post-masters, or post-doctoral level,  granted upon completion of a coherent, sequential program of study, usually for  credit. Such certificate programs and the courses included within them should  follow the institution’s usual development, approval, review, and assessment  processes; should include articulated expected student knowledge, skills, and  competency levels; and should comply with industry, national, or other  definitions of such credentials, where appropriate.  **Fundamental Elements of Certificate Programs**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  published program objectives, requirements, and curricular sequence;  program learning goals consistent with national criteria, as appropriate;  available and effective student support services; and  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. |  |

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| **Experiential Learning**  Experiential learning generally refers to knowledge or skills obtained outside of  a higher education institution. Recognition of college-level experiential learning,  which is derived from work, structured internships, or other life experience, may  facilitate a student’s progress without compromising an institution’s integrity or  the quality of its degrees. An institution’s policies and procedures should  provide appropriate consideration, consistent with good educational practice, for  the individual student who has gained college level learning from other sources.  However, procedures to assess learning for the award of academic credit  (especially where such credit is part of an accelerated degree program) should  define college-level learning and state clearly that credit is awarded for  demonstrated learning, and not merely for experience.  **Fundamental Elements of Experiential Learning**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  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;  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;  published and implemented procedures regarding the recording of  evaluated prior learning by the awarding institution;  credit awarded appropriate to the subject and the degree context into  which it is accepted; and  evaluators of experiential learning who are knowledgeable about the  subject matter and about the institution’s criteria for the granting of  college credit. |  |
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| **Non-credit Offerings**  Non-credit offerings may be offered on-site and through distance education  modalities. To the extent that non-credit offerings are an important part of an  institution’s activities, they should be consistent with its mission and goals.  Whether these offerings are internally or externally developed, appropriately  qualified professionals with responsibility to the institution should have  oversight for the design, delivery, and evaluation of such offerings. If non-credit  courses are potentially applicable to for-credit programs at the institution,  academic oversight should assure the comparability and appropriate  transferability of such courses.  **Fundamental Elements of Non-credit Offerings**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  non-credit offerings consistent with institutional mission and goals;  clearly articulated program or course goals, objectives, and expectations  of student learning that are designed, approved, administered, and  periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures;  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  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. |  |
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| **Branch Campuses, Additional Locations,**  **And Other Instructional Sites**  (Including Business/Corporate Locations and Study Abroad)  Educational offerings at branch campuses, additional locations, or other  instructional sites—including study abroad locations and business/corporate  locations—may extend learning opportunities to a variety of populations, some  of which are not otherwise served by the institution. Programs so delivered  should meet standards comparable to those of other institutional offerings.  **Fundamental Elements of Branches,**  **Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  activities and offerings at other locations meet all appropriate standards,  including those related to learning outcomes;  adequate and appropriate support services; and  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. |  |

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| **Distance Education, Distributed Learning, and**  **Correspondence Education**  Distance education or distributed learning is a formal educational process that  uses technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the  instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the  students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The  technologies may include the Internet, one-way and two-way transmissions  through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber  optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audioconferencing; or video  cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs if used in a course in conjunction with any of the  technologies listed.  Correspondence education differs from distance education. As defined in  Federal regulation, correspondence education is provided through one or more  courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional  materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the  materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between  the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is  primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically  self-paced.  Programs delivered through either distance education or correspondence  education modalities— whether by the Internet, television, video-conferencing,  or other means—should meet academic and learning support standards,  appropriate to the type of delivery, comparable to those offered in more  traditional formats within higher education. Student learning objectives and  outcomes should be consistent across comparable offerings, regardless of where  or how they are provided.  Institutions offering programs through distance education modalities also  should take appropriate steps to ensure that the student who registers in a  distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same  student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives  academic credit. Institutions may utilize various technologies or other means,  such as a secure login and passcode, proctored exams, or other technologies or  practices that are effective in order to verify student identity.  **Fundamental Elements of**  **Distance Education, Distributed Learning, and**  **Correspondence Education**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  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;  planning that includes consideration of applicable legal and regulatory  requirements;  demonstrated program coherence, including stated program learning  outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate  awarded;  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;  assurance that arrangements with consortial partners or contractors do  not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational  offerings;  validation by faculty of any course materials or technology-based  resources developed outside the institution;  a system of student identity verification that ensures that the student  who participates in class or coursework is the same student who registers  and receives academic credit; that students are notified at the time of  registration or enrollment of any additional student charges associated  with the verification of student identity; and that the identity verification  process protects student privacy;  available, accessible, and adequate learning resources (such as a library or  other information resources) appropriate to the offerings at a distance;  an ongoing program of appropriate orientation, training, and support for  faculty participating in electronically delivered offerings;  adequate technical and physical plant facilities, including appropriate  staffing and technical assistance, to support electronic offerings; and  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. |  |
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| **Contractual Relationships**  **And Affiliated Providers**  As institutions seek to improve the ways in which they provide education to  their students, they may find it more practical or efficient to enter into consortial  arrangements or contractual relationships with other institutions or  organizations to provide certain aspects of the education experience, including  faculty, recruitment of students, and course/program development. Because an  accredited institution is responsible for all activities carried out in the  institution’s name, the Commission’s accreditation standards, policies, and  procedures—including those on outcomes assessment, advertising, and  recruitment—are fully applicable to any contractual arrangements with another  regionally accredited institution or with a non-regionally accredited  organization. Contractual relations with for-profit firms or other institutions  require diligent care to protect an institution’s integrity and to avoid abuse of its  accredited status.  An affiliated provider may be a subsidiary, parent, “sister” or other entity  (for-profit or non-profit) legally related to the institution or unrelated (except  through contractual arrangement) to the accredited institution. Depending on  the specific relationship, such providers may or may not be included within the  scope of the institution’s accreditation. Relevant factors might include matters  such as use of the same or similar names, ownership, incorporation,  management, control of curricula, finances, acceptance of credits,  degree-granting authority, and extent of activities. However, whether or not the  affiliate is included within the scope of the institution’s accreditation, the nature  of the affiliation should be made clear both to the Commission and to the public,  with particular attention to such issues as whether the provider offers its own  programs or grants its own degrees; whether students are distinct from or  considered to be students of the parent institution; what student learning and  support services are available; and whether courses offered by the affiliated  provider are applicable to a degree program offered by the accredited institution.  Attention should be given to the impact of the affiliated entity on the  institution’s resources and the institution’s ability to fulfill its mission and goals.  **Fundamental Elements of Contractual**  **Relationships and Affiliated Providers**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities:  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;  consistency of any course or program offered via contractual  arrangement with the institution’s mission and goals; and  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. |  |

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| **Standard 14**  Assessment of Student Learning  **Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or**  **other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge,**  **skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate**  **higher education goals.** |  |
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| **Fundamental Elements of Assessment of Student Learning**  An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following  attributes or activities.  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:  appropriately integrated with one another;  consonant with the institution’s mission; and  consonant with the standards of higher education and of the relevant  disciplines;  a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate  and improve student learning that meets the following criteria:  systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative  and/or quantitative measures that:  maximize the use of existing data and information;  clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;  are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence  to inform decisions; and  include direct evidence of student learning;  support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing  student learning and responding to assessment results;  clear, realistic guidelines and timetable, supported by appropriate  investment of institutional resources;  sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be  sustainable; and  periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the  institution’s student learning assessment processes;  assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that  students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes;  evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and  discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching  and learning; and  documented use of student learning assessment information as part of  institutional assessment. |  |
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