

NWCCU Votes to Adopt New 2020 Standards for Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements

Mac Powell, Senior Vice President

August 26, 2019 saw the wrap-up of the Commission's year-long review of its Standards for Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements. The process of revision included solicitation of feedback from institutional leadership, faculty, staff, students, legislators, think tanks, foundations, and the general public. During the twelve-month review period, more than 700 written comments were received, and more than 1000 participants attended the in-person town halls and convenings to gather feedback.

All current Evaluators in the NWCCU database were sent an invitation to participate in a two-week period of reflection about evidence collection and process, and convenings were held around the region to seek feedback on how to best implement a Seven Year Cycle of accreditation that would reduce the burden on institutions, raise the value of the process, and more centrally focus the work of accreditation on Student Success.

A first draft of the Standards and ERs was issued in February 2019, and the Commission received over 200 written comments from stakeholders requesting additions, deletions, and edits. This feedback was utilized to produce a second draft issued to the public for general comment in July 2019, and on this draft, we received an additional 50 written comments.

The Commission reviewed all comments and produced a final version, which was forwarded to the 158 CEOs of our member institutions, along with a ballot for adoption. The adoption of the Standards and ERs was affirmed with a vote of 128-4 (one abstention).

Throughout the process of development and community engagement, NWCCU staff solicited feedback on the processes that would support the deployment of the new Standards and ERs.

Based on this iterative process and feedback from the vast array of stakeholders, the 2010 Eligibility Requirements and Standards have been greatly streamlined and the revised Standards (<https://www.nwccu.org/accreditation/standards-policies/>) now focus on *Student Success, with a specific focus on Student Learning and Student Achievement*.

The 2020 Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation take effect January 1, 2020, and all member institutions have been sent an update regarding their accreditation cycle and options available to them to be either continue with the previous ERs and Standards to complete their Year 7 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability evaluation or transition to the 2020 ERs and Standards.

NWCCU Staff will be holding a series of online and in-person trainings to answer questions and provide resources. Additionally, the NWCCU 2020 Handbook of Accreditation is being developed to provide explanations, models, templates, and rubrics to institutions and Evaluation Committees. All resources will be made available on the Tools and Resources pages on the NWCCU website (<https://www.nwccu.org/tools-resources/>). For more information on the

process of review, public comments, FAQs, and early drafts, please check out the Standards Review webpage at: <https://www.nwccu.org/accreditation/standards-review/>.

The Commission acknowledges the work of the NWCCU Bylaws, Standards, and Policies Committee, chaired by the Board of Commissioners' Secretary, Deneece Huftalin, and all of the Commissioners, staff, and volunteers who provided input.

Finally, the Commission extends its gratitude to the thousands of stakeholders who participated in the year-long process, and who helped create a model for our future work that places *Student Success* at the center of every conversation.