NWCCU Accreditation Self-Study Subcommittee
STANDARDS 2.A.21-29

Institutional Integrity and Academic Freedom

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About NWCCU

NWCCU is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the authority on the educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. The Commission also recognizes higher education institutions internationally, including Canada. The Commission oversees regional accreditation for 162 institutions.

Institutional Responsibilities

NWCCU operates as a self-regulatory, peer-reviewed system. The effectiveness of this system requires the institutional members to be involved and committed to the accreditation process. To that end, institutions are required to:

- Participate in the decision-making process of the Commission
- Adhere to all policies and procedures
- Conduct analytical self-evaluations at regular intervals
- Accept peer evaluation of the institution with regard to the accreditation criteria of the Commission
- Maintain integrity in the pursuit of knowledge, relationships with constituents and other institutions, and with the Commission
- Provide the Commission with access to all aspects of its operation
- Comply with Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended

Definitions

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY: Integrity, essential to the purpose of higher education, functions as the basic contract defining the relationship between the accrediting commission and each of its member institutions. It is a relationship in which all parties agree to deal honestly and openly with their constituencies and with one another. Integrity in the accreditation process is best understood in the context of peer review, professional judgment by peers of commonly accepted sound academic practice, and the conscientious
application of mutually agreed upon standards for accreditation. The Commission’s requirements, policies, processes, procedures, and decisions are predicated on integrity.

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM:** The success of American higher education, including the high regard in which it is held worldwide, is explained in good measure by the observance of academic freedom. This freedom is manifested institutionally as colleges and universities seek to conduct their educational missions without inappropriate influence from external centers of power – public and private. It is manifested professionally as faculty seek to test and disseminate knowledge, to instill independence of mind and to engage in debate over institutional and public policies.

Resources

Reference Guide: nic.libguides.com/NWCCU

Timeline

Initial Team Meetings, September 17-21, 2018

Ongoing Self-Study, September 17, 2018 – March 1, 2019

Written reports due to executive committee, March 8, 2019

Institutional Integrity Policies 2.A.21-26

2.A.21 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

**CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures/ for reviewing publications that assures integrity**

1. All web, print, and marketing materials are reviewed regularly for accuracy, clarity, and consistency.
   a. Who reviews and approves announcements, statements and publications?
   b. Annual review process?
   c. How reviewed?

2. NIC represents itself as an academic institution through a variety of announcements, statements and publications, electronic and printed.
   a. What are these publications? E.g., catalog, faculty handbook, student handbook.
      Students web pages, employee resources, NIC policy manual, Administrative Services Operational guidelines Manual, etc.
i. Description of college catalog. Upcoming change in online presentation? E.g.,
not pdf so it can be updated throughout the year.
ii. How does NIC regularly update employees and the community about Board
adopted changes, college achievements, and other typical/atypical items?
   b. Include statement on campus bulletin boards and displays, print media (local
newspapers and other publications). Mailing lists, such as a list of classes offered each
semester to all homes in its service area?
   c. What are the primary publications used to communicate information about NIC
programs, policies, procedures, etc.
   d. Primary avenue for information about NIC through its website?
   e. Also, are there admission and financial aid publications disseminated on a regular or as-
needed basis?
   f. How do we respond to media requests?
   g. Open dialogue and internal communication with faculty, staff, and students...ways to
keep them informed, e.g., NICNow, public forums? Other communication vehicles?
3. Are program requirements clearly defined?
   a. Academic program requirements are published in ______, reviewed and updated
annually
4. Public-facing statement that demonstrates that academic programs can be completed in a
timely fashion?
   a. Retention and graduation rates published?
   b. Represents itself to the public through numerous state, federal and proprietary surveys,
data submissions and reporting requirements?
   c. Degree programs include a listing of courses needed for each program and a “suggested
course sequence” that indicates how students can complete the program within a two-
year period for degrees?
   d. Required courses available to students even if the course has a low enrollment?
   e. How often are programs reviewed? Who reviews?

2.A.22 The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in managing
and operating the institution, including its dealings with the public, the Commission, and external
organizations, and in the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and
other constituencies. It ensures complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair and timely manner.

CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances

1. College has instituted and follows ethical standards in the management and operations of the
college. Demonstrate how?
   a. Adheres to federal and state laws and regulations? What are these?
   b. Any committees that review regularly to assure compliance?
   c. Adopts appropriate policies and procedures?
   d. Policies which outline expectations of ethical behavior?
      i. Faculty, staff, and students are treated fairly and equitably
      ii. Fair and equitable treatment in its teaching practices and policies?
      iii. Appeal and grievance procedures
iv. Orientation review ethical requirements
v. HR Specialized training in areas of ethics, conduct?
vi. Conflict of interest audits?
vii. Student Handbook conduct?
viii. Ethical conduct of faculty...how addressed?
   1. Ethics codes of specific disciplines?
   2. Ethics courses as part of academic program?
ix. Code of Conduct for student athletes?
x. Reference in college catalog?
xi. Academic honesty?
xii. Appeal or grievance policies and procedures?
   1. Guidelines?
   2. Online forms?
   3. Reporting requirements?
xiii. Faculty handbook statements?
xiv. FERPA, Title IX, Civil Rights Act of 1964, specific Idaho ethics laws?
xv. Sexual harassment policies
xvi. Statements regarding access to college facilities by external groups?
e. Complaints and grievances addressed NIC Policy 3.02.23
f. List of key legal statutes, NIC policies, standards, and trainings which guide the college system-wide?

2.A.23 The institution adheres to a clearly defined policy that prohibits conflict of interest on the part of members of the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. Even when supported by or affiliated with social, political, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy. If it requires its constituencies to conform to specific codes of conduct or seeks to instill specific beliefs or world views

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CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members, ensures educational autonomy, and provides notice if the institution requires constituents to conform to a specific code of conduct

1. NIC Policy 3.02.15 clearly prohibits conflict of interest
2. State Board of Education policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of Board members, administrators, faculty, and staff.
3. Idaho state law concerning ethical conduct by public employees.
4. As a public institution does not have unusual conduct requirements nor does it seek to instill specific beliefs or world views.
5. Policy on expression of personal views? Professional conduct standard?
6. Any signed statements affirming that there are no conflicts of interest?
7. Faculty handbook statements?
8. Board handbook?
9. Nepotism statements?
10. Code of conduct statements re: financial aid employees?
11. Employee standards of conduct?
12. Faculty-student or supervisor-subordinate relationships
13. Statements of professional ethics: membership in professional organizations

2.A.24 The institution maintains clearly defined policies with respect to ownership, copyright, control, compensation, and revenue derived from the creation and production of intellectual property.

CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures clarifying ownership, copyright, control, compensation, and revenue derived from the creation and production of intellectual property

1. Policies we have on intellectual property
2. No established copyright policy
   a. Library provides guidance and advice on copyright in relation to fair use issues
   b. Library copyright policy on library website
   c. Upholds patrons rights to privacy and confidentiality
   d. FERPA compliance
3. Research guide: Copyright, fair use, and creative commons licensing for educators
4. NIC library supports the principles of intellectual freedom and resists all efforts to censor library resources: ALA Library Bill of Rights, etc.
5. NIC library complies with U.S. Copyright Law and amendments. Support fair use section.
6. List of library policies on copyright and fair use?
7. Faculty handbook statement on intellectual property or patents?
8. Committee on intellectual property?
9. Distance education policy with respect to ownership, copyright control, and compensation for online courses?

2.A.25 The institution accurately represents its current accreditation status and avoids speculation on future accreditation actions or status. It uses the terms “Accreditation” and “Candidacy” (and related terms) only when such status is conferred by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

1. Where is accreditation status published, as well as self-studies, evaluation reports, reaffirmation letter(s)? website? Catalog?
2. Other program-specific accreditations published and where?

2.A.26 If the institution enters into contractual agreements with external entities for products or services performed on its behalf, the scope of work for those products or services, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, is stipulated in a written and approved agreement that contains provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution. In such cases, the institution ensures the scope of the agreement is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, adheres to institutional policies and procedures, and complies with the Commission’s Standards for Accreditation.

CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures related to contractual agreements with external entities
1. Contractual agreements policies? (Chris Martin will provide)
2. Reviewed by controller?
3. Oversight for large contracts? Over $ amount?
4. Contracting controlled centrally through...?
5. Review and approval procedures for purchases
6. Delegated authorities to VPs to sign and execute contracts?
7. Employment contracts?
8. Chief Information Officer involved with technology contracts?
9. Contracts accompanied by statements of work that define scope, roles, and responsibilities?
10. Other departments on campus with ability to enter into contracts? (library as an example)
11. Contracts reviewed by legal counsel?
12. Internal audit of contracts?

Academic Freedom 2.A.27-29

2.A.27 The institution publishes and adheres to policies, approved by its governing board, regarding academic freedom and responsibility that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

CHECKLIST ITEMS: Academic freedom policies/procedures

1. List academic freedom and tenure policies in NIC Policy Manual
2. Other academic freedom statements that protect constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.
   a. Faculty handbook?
   b. Mission statement?
   c. Student handbook and freedom of expression? Other?
   d. Harassment and discrimination policy?
   e. Committee on academic freedom and tenure?
3. Trainings, online materials?
4. Grievance policies offer further protection against inappropriate external influences?

2.A.28 Within the context of its mission, core themes, and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to examine thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Moreover, they allow others the freedom to do the same.

CHECKLIST ITEMS: Academic freedom policies/procedures
2. Commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge
   a. Variety of clubs and organization through ASNIC are examples
3. Support the rights and responsibilities of faculty and staff
4. ALA statements on academic freedom?

2.A.29 Individuals with teaching responsibilities present scholarship fairly, accurately, and objectively. Derivative scholarship acknowledges the source of intellectual property, and personal views, beliefs, and opinions are identified as such.

**CHECKLIST ITEMS: Policies/procedures prohibiting plagiarism by faculty and staff**

1. Equivalent statement of code of professional ethics that reinforces the expectation of objectivity in scholarship, e.g., faculty members, guided by deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. Their primary responsibility to their subject is to seek and state the truth as they see it. They practice intellectual honesty.
2. Intellectual property, research, and entrepreneurial activity statements? Faculty Handbook?
3. Policies related to research and ethics?
4. Faculty values statements?