



Accreditation 101

Understanding Our Accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission

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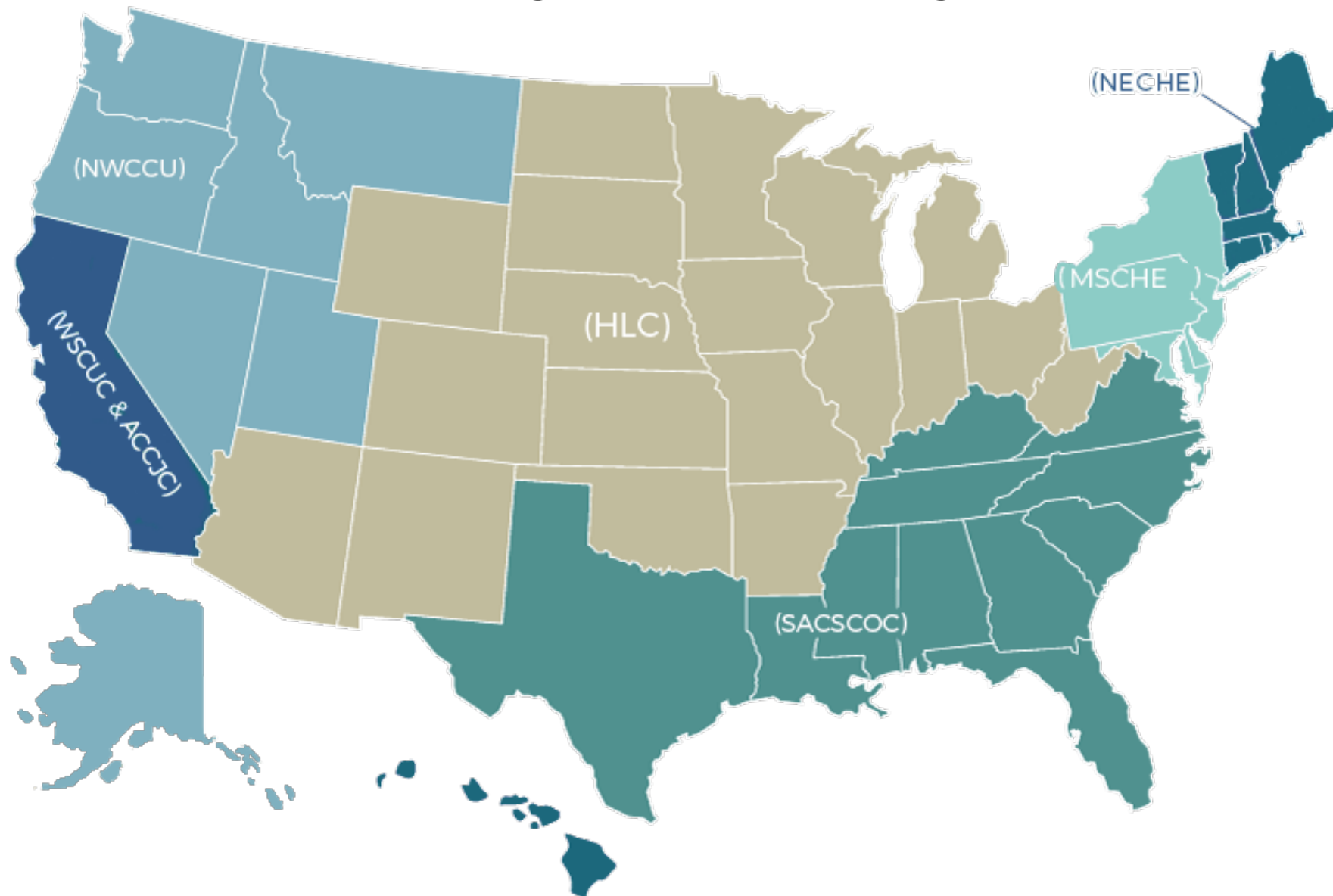
Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs

Accreditation... Why do we need it?

- “gatekeeper” agency for US Dept. of Education (Title IV Federal Financial Aid funds)
- “The Triad” – HLC, ODHE, Fed. Gov’t / US Dept. of Education
 - ❖ (3-legged regulatory system)
- Don’t forget about our state governing body –
 - ❖ Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE)
 - ❖ (formerly OBR – Ohio Board of Regents)
- CHEA (non gov’t agency) – coordinates accreditation in the US
- Higher Education Act – law that governs financial aid

Regional Accrediting Agencies for Educational Institutions in the US

C-RAC – Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions



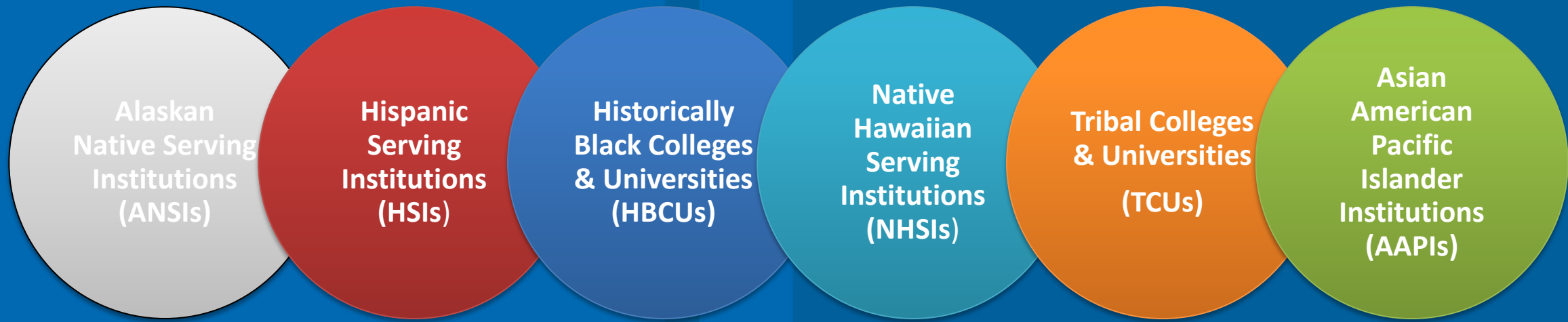
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Higher Learning Commission** (HLC)
- WASC Senior College and University Commission* (WSCUC) & Accrediting Commission For Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC)

- Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education*** (MSCHE)
- New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE)

Accreditation... the Basics

- Changing to “Institutional” Accreditors
- North Central Association dissolved in 2014 (HLC was higher ed. division of NCA)
- 19 states in HLC – about 850 colleges –
 - ❖ private / independent
 - ❖ public
 - ❖ for profit
 - ❖ MSIs [TCUs(75% in HLC region), HBCUs, HSIs]
- About 100 institutions in Ohio accredited by HLC
 - https://www.hlcommission.org/component/directory/?Itemid=&form_submitted=TRUE&institution=&lang=en&showquery=&siteOrg=&state=OH&submit=Search
 - ❖ Any HBCUs, TCUs or HSIs in Ohio?

Minority Serving Institutions



Accreditation... and SSCC

- SSCC accredited since 4-24-81
- 75-'78 – Southern State General and Technical College
- Colleges can be on Open or Standard Pathway model
- Every institution is required to have an HLC Accreditation Liaison Officer (that's me! I'm also a long-time HLC Peer Reviewer) and HLC assigns VP liaison to each institution
- Institutional Status & Requirements Report (ISR report)
- Note the chair of the board of HLC is Dr. Jo Alice Blondin, Clark State.

Accreditation... Open vs. Standard Pathways

- Two options institutions have for maintaining their accreditation with HLC.
- Both follow a 10-year cycle
- Both pathways focus on quality assurance and institutional improvement.
- The **Open Pathway** is unique in that its improvement component, the Quality Initiative, affords institutions the opportunity to pursue improvement projects that meet their current needs and aspirations.
 - Yr. 4 Assurance review (no visit)
 - YR 5-9 Quality Initiative (Valuing Learning Assessment Project)
 - Yr. 10 – Assurance filing, comprehensive evaluation with visit
- The **Standard Pathway** improvement topics are integrated into comprehensive evaluations conducted during the cycle, as well as through interim monitoring (addressing past concerns), as required.
 - Yr 4 & 10 comprehensive reviews with visits

HLC Criteria for Accreditation

- Criterion One – Mission
- Criterion Two – Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
- Criterion Three – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
- Criterion Four – Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
- Criterion Five – Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness
- 18 Core components
- Assumed Practices

HLC Criteria for Accreditation

- top most cited core components

- **4B** - “The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.”
- **5 A, B, C** – institutional resources, planning and improvement... to fulfill its mission
- **4A** – quality of educational offerings
- **3C** – faculty & staff issues

SSCC & the HLC

- Most recent reaffirmation of accreditation: 2015 - 2016
- Next reaffirmation of accreditation: 2025 – 2026
- Recent Reviews
 - Multi-Location visit – Fall 2023, 2018
 - Assurance Review – 6-2020
 - Interim Reports – 2019, 2017
 - Monitoring, Financial Indicators – 2021, 2019, 2017, 2015
- Complete an annual filing of the Institutional Update (on organizational health) in Late February/ Early March. ALO completes institutional survey in Fall.
- Annual monitoring of financial and non-financial indicators.

HLC Non-Financial Indicator Conditions

Note: "Small Institutions" are those with less than 1,000 students while "large institutions" are those with 1,000 students or more.

Significant Enrollment Changes – Three-year increase or decrease of 80 percent or more in enrollment for small institutions or 40 percent or more for large institutions.

Degrees Awarded – Three-year increase or decrease of 75 percent or more in degrees awarded for small institutions and 65 percent or more for large institutions.

Full-time Faculty Changes – Three-year decrease of 75 percent or more for small institutions or 50 percent or more for large institutions in the headcount of full-time faculty (not full-time equivalent).

Student Default Rates - Three-year student loan default rate of 30 percent or more for 2-year institutions or 25 percent or more for other institutions.

Minimal Full-time Faculty - The headcount of full-time faculty (not full-time equivalent) divided by the number of degree programs offered is less than one.

Student to Teacher Ratio - The number of undergraduate full-time equivalent students divided by the number of undergraduate full-time equivalent faculty is greater than or equal to 35.

Financial Indicators for Public Colleges (adopted from Dept. of Education)

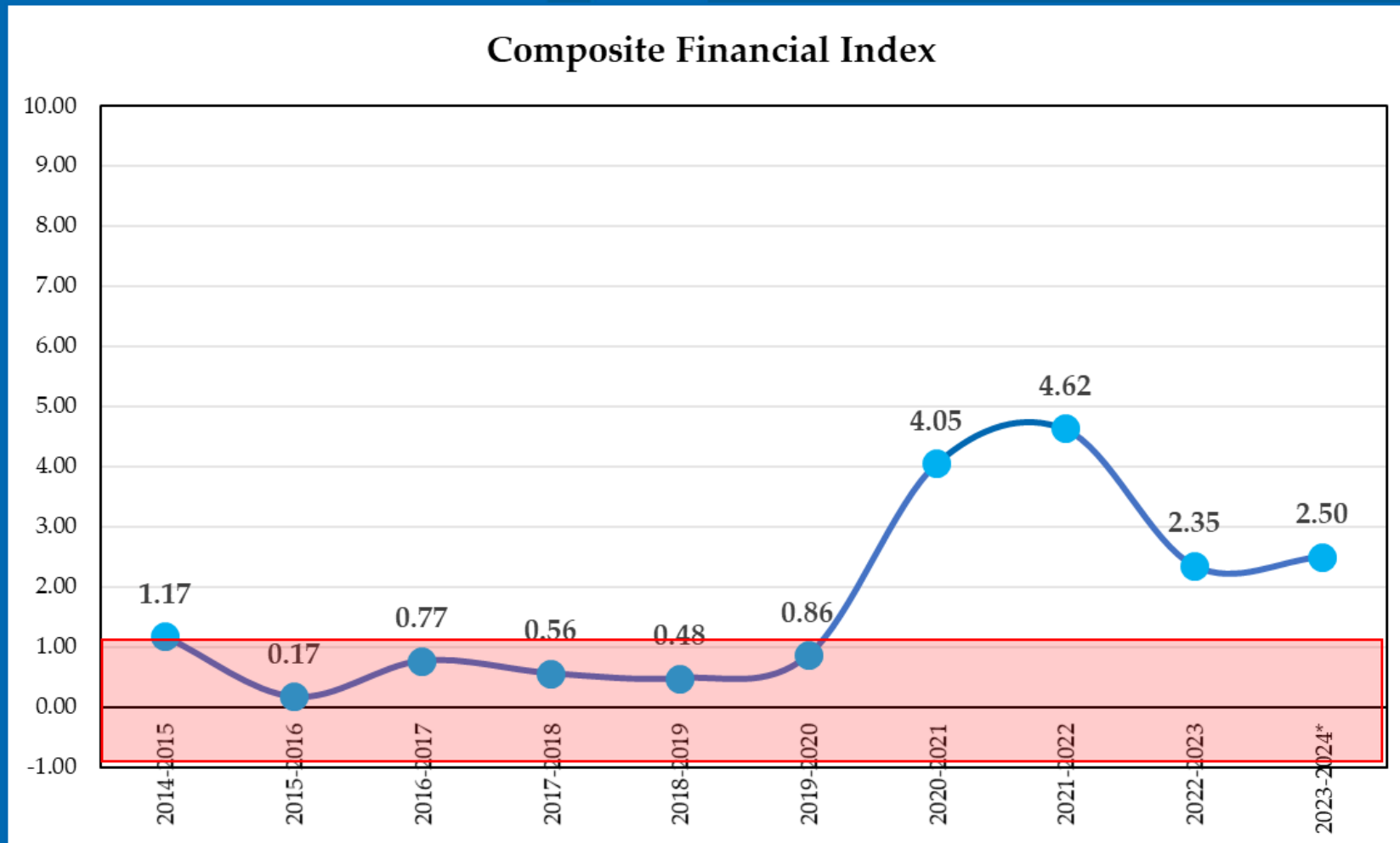
HLC Composite Financial Index (CFI) - Financial Health of the Institution

Individual component ratios:

- primary reserve ratio
- net operating revenue/net income ratio
- return on net assets ratio
- viability ratio

Composite Financial Index

slide courtesy of Dr. Steven Hinshaw, VP of Business & Finance



- <1.1 is “in the zone,” which requires additional HLC oversight.
- FY21 and FY22 included one-time federal Covid-19 HEERF revenue.
- FY23 and beyond expected to be above 2.0.

Preparing for our April 2026

Comprehensive HLC visit

“Reaffirmation of Accreditation”

- Will establish HLC Assurance Review committee to gather evidence and complete report
- Use web-based platform called an Assurance System to file its “Assurance Argument”
- Other components in addition to report: evidence file, federal compliance documents, student opinion online survey, 3rd party comment, multi-campus report, embedded change/interim report
- **April 13 & 14, 2026** – Comprehensive visit (lock date **March 16, 2023**)– 1 ½ days –typically 5 Peer Reviewers (meet admin, staff, faculty, students, board) - **Oct. '25** Federal Compliance Review due
- Peer Review team chair submits report to Institutional Actions Council (IAC) for final approval. (Some things need HLC board approval as well)



Important Takeaways

- Know our mission: to provide accessible, affordable and high quality education to people in Southern Ohio.
- How do you and/or your department fulfill our mission?
- Know the basics of accreditation
- Get involved in some aspect of the HLC Comprehensive visit.

Thank You!

Any Questions?



New Year's Eve was cattle shows with the kids...

Happy New Year!



Nap time for everyone...

