

Facilitating Change to a New Institutional Accreditor

NCAIR 2025

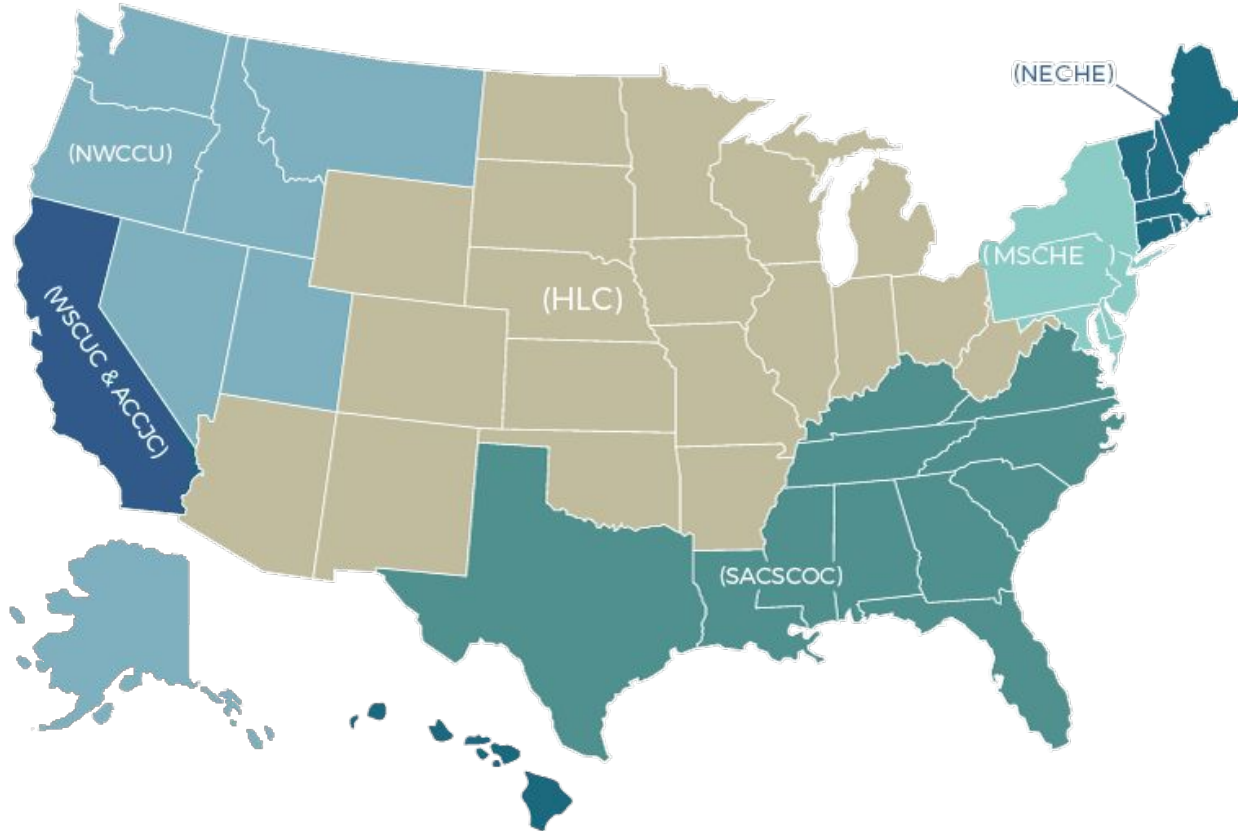
Christine Robinson (UNC Charlotte), Tony Artimisi (WSSU), Mitch Cottenor (UNC Charlotte)

Outline

- Background
- The Change Process
- Notification to Current Accreditor
- Estimated Cost Associated with Changing Accreditors
- Timeline
- HLC/MSCHE - SACSCOC Crosswalk
- Resources

Background

- The North Carolina Legislature passed [Session Law 2023-132 House Bill 8](#) that prohibits consecutive accreditation by an accrediting agency for UNC constituent institutions (§ 116-11.4) and community colleges (§ 115D-6.2)
- Exceptions
 - Institutions not granted candidacy status at least 3 years prior to expiration of its current accreditation.
 - Professional, graduate, departmental, or certificate programs that have specific accreditation requirements.
- Following adoption of the legislation, the UNC system submitted an RFI to the DoE-recognized institutional accreditors.



- 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)

<https://www.chea.org/regional-accrediting-organizations-accreditor-type>

The Change Process

- **“Prior to submitting an application to the new accrediting agency**, an institution must notify FSA in writing of its intent to change its primary accrediting agency or add a new accrediting agency. With its notification, the institution must submit to FSA documentation of its current accreditation and materials demonstrating reasonable cause for changing or adding an accrediting agency.”
(<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2022-07-19/procedures-institutions-seeking-approval-request-change-or-add-accrediting-agencies-updated-sept-26-2022>)
- Note: Approval with FSA can take up to 2 years (sometimes longer based on information shared by UNC system about Florida institutions' progress)
- Developing: CHEA has requested that the Department of Education remove this step for institutions that are in good standing with an institutional accreditor. CHEA on USDOE (<https://www.chea.org/chea-advocacy-action-issue-6>)

Notification to Current Accreditor

- SACSCOC - “Change in Membership” Policy Statement
- “If an institution chooses to change SACSCOC as its primary accrediting agency with the United States Department of Education (USDE) or voluntarily resign from SACSCOC membership, the institution is required to communicate their intent to change or voluntarily resign in writing to the SACSCOC President, along with an estimated timeline for implementation as soon as an institutional decision is made.”
- Our interpretation: this notification should be sent to SACSCOC at the same time as the FSA letter requesting authorization to change accreditors.
- Note: CHEA has requested that the Department of Education remove this step for institutions that are in good standing with an institutional accreditor.

UNC Charlotte

Accreditor Change Costs

	HLC		MSCHE	
Application Fees	Actual Fees	Estimated Fees	Actual Fees	Estimated Fees
	\$5,000 application	\$45,000 Total On-Campus Site Visit Fee (based on one site visit)	\$1,800 Pre-Applicant Inquiry Fee	\$30,750 Pre-Applicant On-Site Team Visit travel expenses and honoraria
	\$10,000 Preliminary Peer Review		\$3,000 Pre-Applicant On-Site Team Visit	\$30,900 Pre-Applicant Additional Location Site Visit travel expenses and honoraria
	\$2,650 Comprehensive Evaluation			
	\$6,000 Institutional Actions Council Hearing		\$1,000 Pre-Applicant Additional Location Site Visit	\$30,900 Candidate Assessment Team Visit
	\$23,650 Total		\$12,180 for Application for Candidate for Accreditation Status	\$30,825 Candidate Additional Location Site Visit travel expenses and honoraria
			\$2,500 Applicant Commission Liaison	\$123,375 Total (based four site visits)
			\$2,100 Candidate Additional Location Site Visit	* Additional location – 50% of program offered at site (UNC Charlotte has 9)
			\$9,240 Candidate Assessment Team Visit	
			\$31,820 Total	

WSSU Estimated
Accreditor Change
Costs

Application Fees	HLC		MSCHE	
	Actual Fees	Estimated Fees	Actual Fees	Estimated Fees
			\$8,000 + expenses	
	\$5,000 application	\$5,000	Pre-Application	\$13,000
	\$10,000 Preliminary Peer Review	\$10,000	\$1,000 Annual Review I Fee	\$1,000
			\$16,000 + Expenses	
	\$2,650 + Expenses Comprehensive Evaluation	\$7,650	Assessment of Candidate Readiness	\$21,000
	\$6,000 Institutional Actions Council Hearing	\$6,000	\$3,000 Review of subsequent reports	\$3,000
			\$1,000 Annual Review II Fee	\$1,000
	\$23,650 Total	\$28,650		
			\$6,000 + Expenses Self-study preparation fee	\$11,000
			\$13,000 + Expenses Self-Study Evaluation Fee	\$18,000
			\$48,000 Total	\$68,000

Timeline

- Higher Learning Commission: “The timeline for accelerated accreditation *[for those institutions who are in good standing with their current accreditor]* is roughly 18-24 months *[note: after authorization has been granted from FSA]*...Traditional process typically takes between 5 and 10 years.” – UNC Summary of Accreditation RFI Responses
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education: MSCHE has published a 26-30-month application and candidacy review cycle and monitoring process for institutions seeking candidate for accreditation status. (<https://www.msche.org/accreditation/application-and-candidacy/>).

Assessment Criteria for Accreditors

Current law requires accreditors to have standards in the following ten areas:

Student Achievement	Student support services
Curricula	Recruiting and admissions practices
Faculty	Program length and objectives
Facilities, equipment, and supplies	Student complaints
Fiscal and administrative capacity	Compliance with federal student aid program responsibilities

[20 U.S.C. § 1099b\(a\)\(5\)](https://dfipolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Should_College_Accreditation_Be_Replaced_or_Reformed_Gillen_Andrew_2_25_2025.pdf), and Gillen, Andrew. "Should College Accreditation Be Replaced or Reformed?" February 2025, p. 21 (https://dfipolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Should_College_Accreditation_Be_Replaced_or_Reformed_Gillen_Andrew_2_25_2025.pdf)

Accreditor Crosswalk

	HLC	MSCHE
# of Standards of Accreditation (SACSCOC has 72)	18 sub-criteria, 51 Assumed Practices, Total: 69	98
# of Standards that <u>do not align</u> with SACSCOC standards	*Apples and oranges?	2
# of Standards that <u>do not overlap</u> with SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report	*Apples and oranges?	54
# of Standards related to “Diversity,” “Equity,” or “Inclusion”	2	14
Length of time from Application to Approval	18 to 24-months	26-30 months

[Link to HLC/MSCHE Crosswalk](#)

HLC Resources

Assurance System Samples

(<https://www.hlcommission.org/sign-in/using-the-assurance-system/assurance-system-samples/>)

HLC Resources for Institutions:

<https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/cycles-and-processes/procedure-resources-for-institutions/>

Peer Resources

HLC Application Completion Timeline - David Onder (Haywood Community College)

Change of Accrediting Agency-U.S. Dept of Ed. Letter - Tim Letzring (University of Central Florida)

Initial SACSCOC-HLC Crosswalk - Cheryl Gater (University of Florida)

Questions