Questions to Use in Institutional Evaluation

This *Guide* is designed to provoke thoughtful dialogue and judgment about institutional quality by college communities engaged in self-evaluation and by external evaluation teams assigned to affirm the quality of institutions. As either group seeks to evaluate an institution’s ability to meet the Accreditation Standards, inquiry — asking questions and seeking answers — is necessary before judgment is made. The following questions are designed to provoke thoughtful reflection about institutional quality and may be asked by either the institution engaged in self-reflection for self-evaluation, or by the External Evaluation Team that visits the college. The *Guide* also provides a list of possible sources of evidence that can be used to develop answers to the questions raised through the process of inquiry.

The questions, and lists of possible evidence, are designed to inform discussions of student achievement, such as number of graduates, number of transfer students, retention rates, course completion rates, job placement rates; institutional performance such as the presence and effective use of institutional resources, structures, and policies, to achieve the institutions educational mission; and student learning outcomes such as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that the institution intended students to learn and which are defined by the institution as the intended learning outcomes. There may be many other questions that institutions and team members can and should ask in order to assess institutional quality and effectiveness.
Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

- What does the institution's mission statement say about its educational purposes? Are these purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning?
- Who are the college's intended students? How does the institution determine its intended population? Is the identified population a reasonable match for the institution's location, resources, and role in higher education?
- What processes does the institution use to foster college wide commitment to student learning? Does the mission statement express this commitment?

1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.
   - Have discussions been held among key constituents regarding the relevance of the mission statement to student learning?
   - What statements about student learning are included in the mission statement? How do these statements make explicit the purposes of the institution?
   - How does the institution know that it is addressing the needs of its student population?
   - What assessments of institutional effectiveness are undertaken?

2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.
   - When was the current mission statement approved by the board?

3. Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.
   - How effective is the institution's process for periodic review of the mission statement? Does the process allow for incorporating the interests of the institutions' stakeholders?
   - How does the institution know that the way the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders is effective? What circumstances prompt changes to the statement?
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   - How effective is the institution’s process for periodic review of the mission statement? Does the process allow for incorporating the interests of the institutions’ stakeholders?
   - How does the institution know that the way the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders is effective? What circumstances prompt changes to the statement?
4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.
   - How effectively does the mission statement prompt planning and decision making? To what extent is the mission statement central to the choices the college makes?
Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard I

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard I. There may be many other sources that institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

☐ Evidence that analysis of how the institutional mission and goals are linked to the needs of the student population has taken place

☐ Evidence of analysis of how the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders

☐ Evidence of analysis of the process used for the periodic review of the institution's mission; evidence that the process is inclusive

☐ Evidence that the mission statement provides the preconditions for setting institutional goals

☐ Evidence of analysis of how the cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation relates to the mission and is used for institutional improvement