WASC Senior Accreditation Redesign:
A report from the front lines

CAIR Conference
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External Concerns

- Accreditation does not:
  - Address low completion rates
  - Hold institutions to high standards of learning
  - Provide meaningful public accountability
  - Provide transparency about its process and actions
  - Catch and deal with abuses of for profits
  - Provide adequate consumer protection

Internal Dissatisfaction

- The three-stage process takes too long (4 ½-5 ½ years)
- The process is too labor intensive and expensive
- The process does not add enough value to offset these costs
- The three stages are not uniformly well understood
- The proliferation of support materials did not result in greater understanding

Goals of the Redesign Process
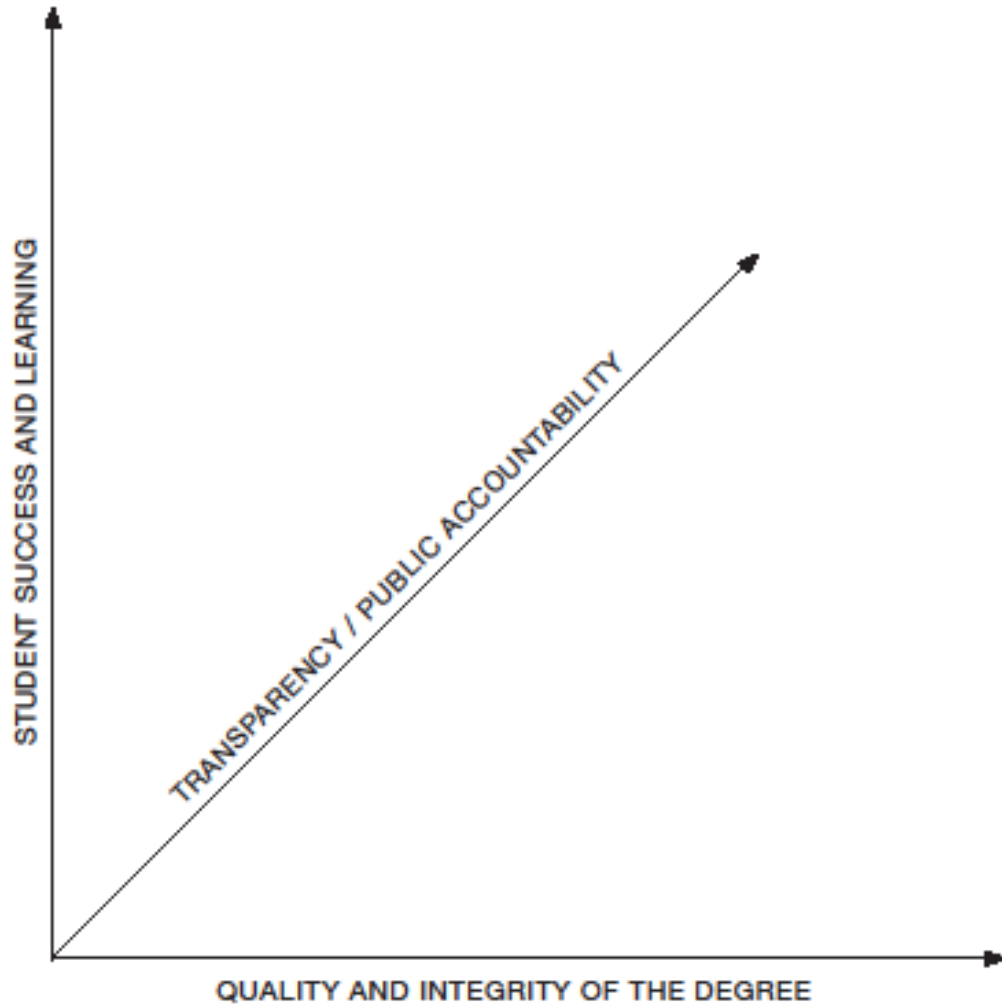
Principles of the Redesign

- <u>Institutional autonomy</u> in identifying and assessing graduation proficiencies
- Respect for <u>institutional mission</u> and context
- <u>Institutions and WASC learn together</u>, building on foundation of 2001 Handbook values
- Institutions and WASC share <u>commitment to society</u>: student success and the greater good of higher education

Core Principles of Accreditation

	Gate-keeping/ Compliance Centered	Improvement Centered	Public Accountability and Assurance
Scope of Review	All standards applied to assure compliance	Key areas selected and approved by accreditor for improvement	Specific areas identified for all reviews to address common policy issues i.e. retention/ graduation, student learning outcomes
Level of Judgment	Standards met at least minimum level	Simplify compliance review; primary emphasis on improvement	External validation with comparative indicators of institutional type
Public Reporting	Public announcement of accreditation	Reports internally circulated for improvement; accrediting action publicly reported	Meaningful and clear public reporting about institutional performance; Commission actions reported

Repurposing Accreditation
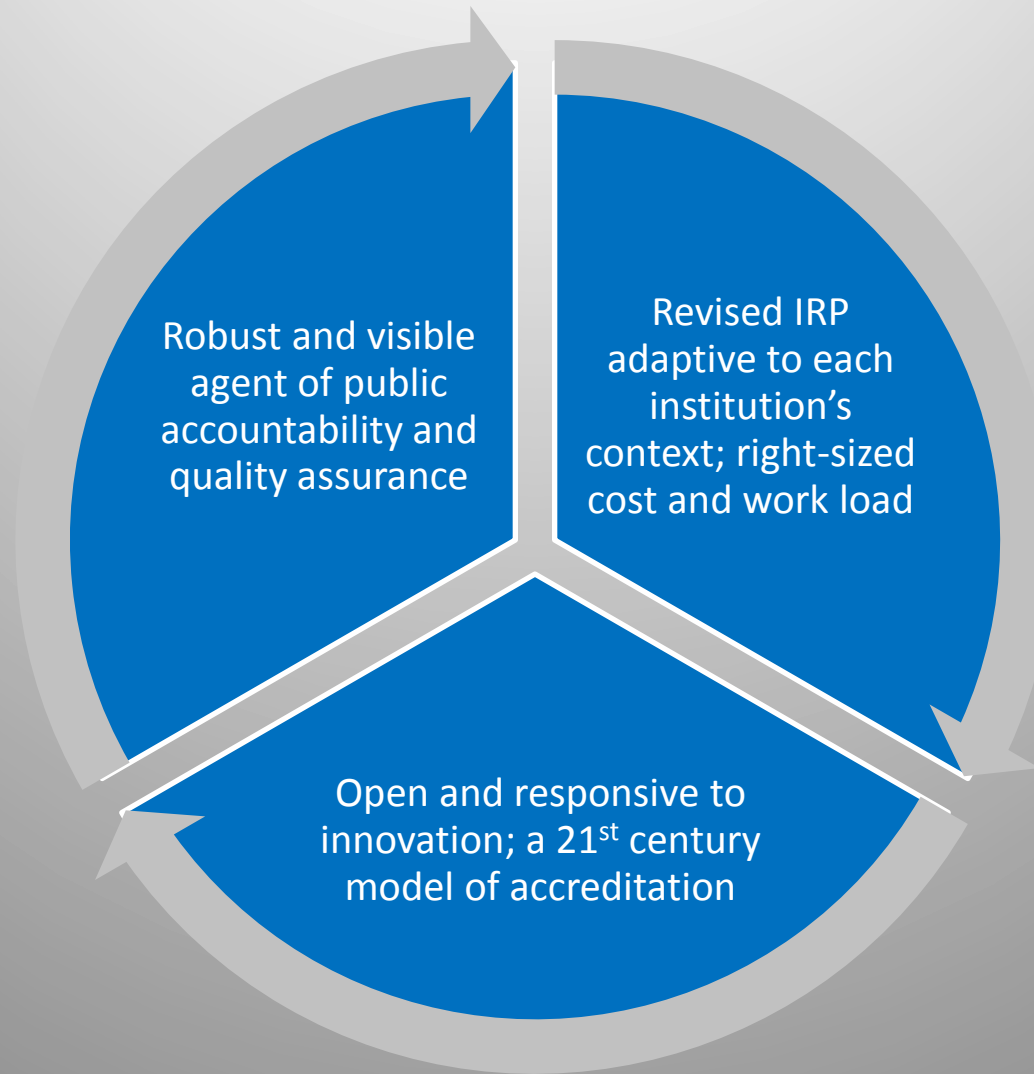
Key Elements of the Redesign

- Offsite Review, including pre-review examination of financials and retention and completion rates

- Onsite Review that is focused on key issues arising from off-site

- One Commission action following the Onsite Review

- Process completed within two years or less

Finance Review

- Triennially
- 3 panels: publicly funded, privately funded and for-profit
- Based on key indicators that do not require extensive new reporting
- Results folded into the review process

Retention and Graduation Review

- Narrative and numbers
  - Graduation rates disaggregated
  - Deficiencies and disparities identified
  - Benchmarking, targets, plans and timelines established
- Associate's and Bachelor's degrees in 2013 and 2014
- Graduate degrees in 2014 and 2015

Revised Institutional Review Process (IRP)
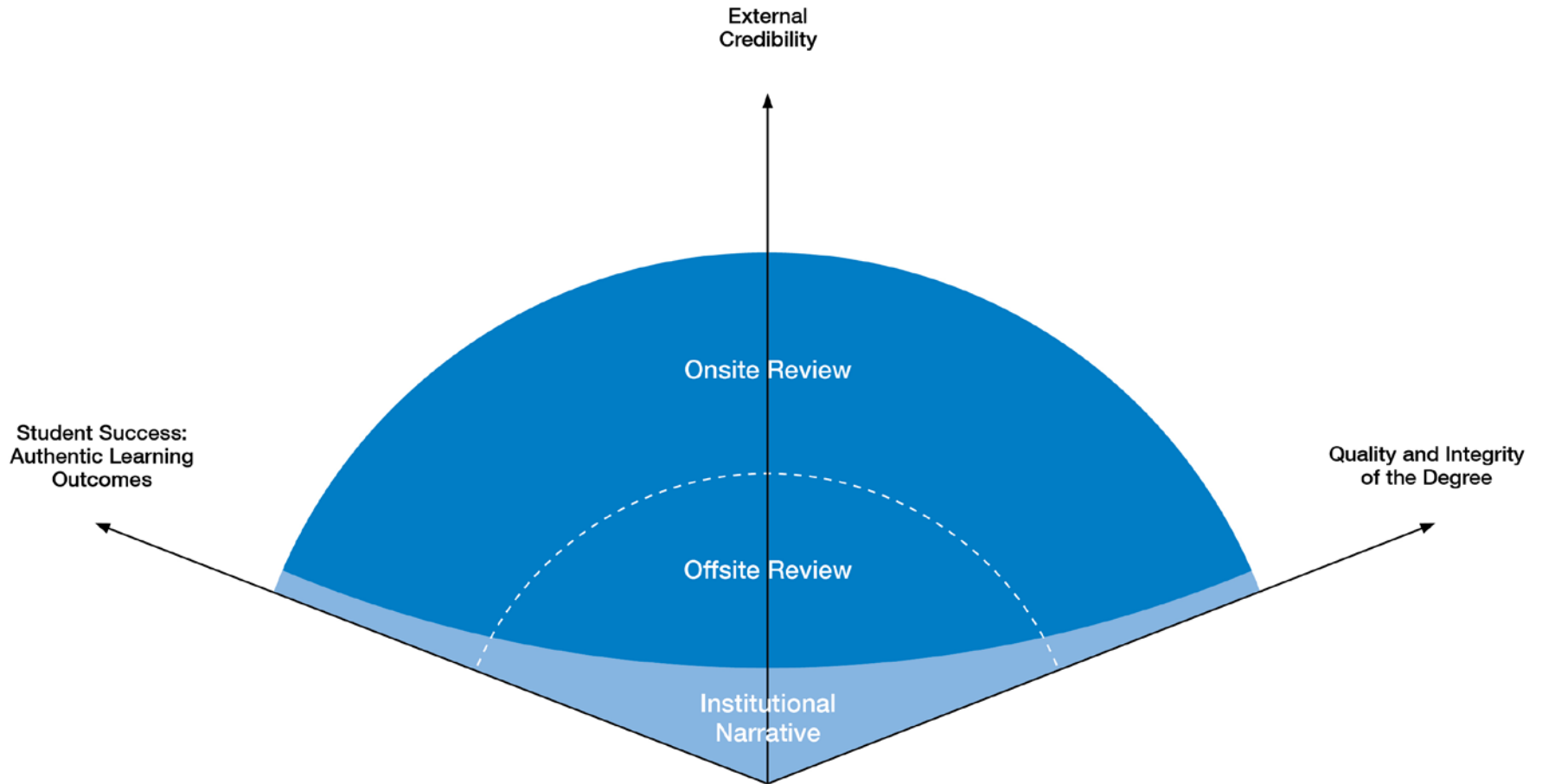
Elements of the Institutional Review Process: The Institutional Narrative

Response to previous Commission Action

Response (as needed) to the Finance Review

Response (as needed) to the Retention and Graduation Review

Narrative should discuss:
- The meaning and rigor of degrees offered
- How the institution assures the achievement of the five undergraduate degree outcomes specified in CFR 2.2 and other areas identified by the institution
- How the institution defines and assures student success with the distinctive elements of the institution's mission and goals
- How the institution assures the sustainability of its operations and responds to the changing ecology of learning

Institutional Requirements re Graduation Proficiencies

- In the comprehensive review process, the institution will be required to:

    – demonstrate that students meet the five proficiencies in CFR 2.2(a) at graduation

    – demonstrate learning in additional institutionally selected proficiencies

CFR 2.2a

Baccalaureate "programs ensure the development of core learning abilities and competencies including, but not limited to, college-level written and oral communication; college-level quantitative skills; information literacy; and the habit of critical thinking."

Cohorts on Graduation Proficiencies

WASC will help organize voluntary cohorts around the graduation proficiencies:

- Written and oral communication

- Quantitative skills

- Critical thinking

- Information literacy

These cohorts can discuss best practices and can help with external validation.

Emphasis on the Meaning of the Degree

CFR 2.2: "All degrees-undergraduate and graduate-awarded by the institutions are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and **in terms of levels of student achievement** necessary for graduation that represents more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits."
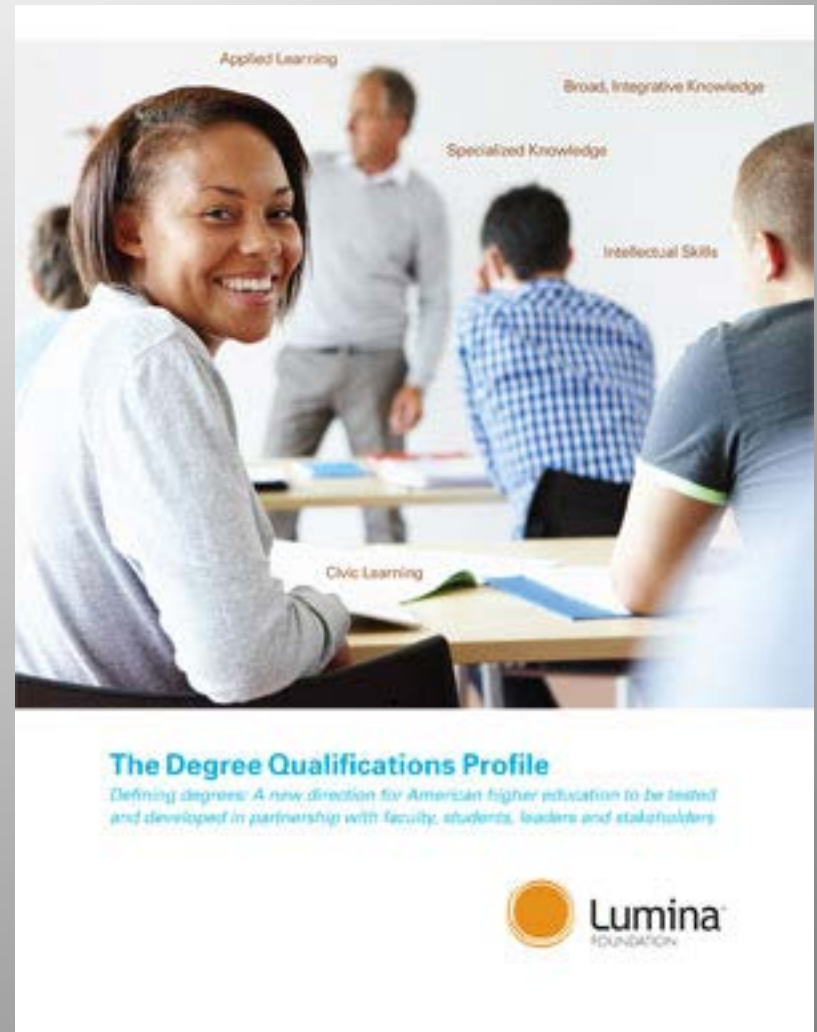
"The Commission sees value in exploring the DQP as a potential tool to define degree outcomes and seeks to engage a broad array of institutions in exploring its usefulness through a series of piloting activities."

Working with the DQP

…WASC is convening learning communities to pilot the DQP.

…Institutions can pilot the DQP internally within the institution, cross-institutionally or use it as a framework within the accrediting process.

…Teams will also pilot its use as a framework during the review.

The Degree Qualifications Profile
Defining degrees: A new direction for American higher education to be tested and developed in partnership with faculty, students, leaders and stakeholders

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DQP Pilot - Interested Institutions

University of Hawai'i System – Multiple Foci • Cross-system • Cross-institutional with other Hawai'i and South Pacific schools • Individual campus based	Small Faith-based Institutions • The Master's College • Point Loma Nazarene University • Marymount College • Holy Names University • Cal Lutheran
UC Santa Cruz (School of Humanities) Golden Gate University	Brandman University FIDM
University of San Diego	CSUs Fresno, East Bay, Stanislaus
University of LaVerne	Occidental College
Ashford University	California Lutheran University
Hawai'i Pacific University	Academy of Art University
National University	National Hispanic University
Vanguard University	Pacifica Graduate Institute

Transparency

- Phase I: Effective June 2012, action letters and team reports starting with Spring 2012 reviews will be made <u>publicly available</u> on WASC website.

- Phase II: WASC will develop a <u>quality matrix</u> with key indicators of quality by which institutions will be rated.

Resource Fairs

Explore assessment tools to measure graduation proficiencies in CFR 2.2

- January 19th (Northern California)
- January 20th (Southern California)

Examples of vendors:

Things Yet to Be Done

- Review/revision of processes/forms
- Review/revision of the Standards
- Review/revision of WASC policies
- Training of evaluation panels and teams/guides for reviews
- Finalizing narrative guidance and templates for retention/graduation

Q & A