

BEYOND THE HORIZON

THE 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



VISION 2020



Dear Colleagues:

In the year 2020, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will be able to demonstrate continuous improvement in member services through a variety of initiatives implemented through the Beyond the Horizon strategic plan. This plan will model transparency to member colleges and universities, with strong outreach programming. HLC will provide exemplary communication to its members through written messages, face-to-face meetings, workshops, annual conferences, an innovation advisory council and satisfaction surveys.

Imagine a time when innovation flourishes and accreditors are seen as part of the solution—we can make this happen. HLC will prioritize inclusion, allowing for new ideas to grow. Innovative pilot projects will be administered by HLC, enabling institutions in the region to serve as centers of excellence for new ways to strengthen higher education. In some cases, these programs will be measurably successful; others may fail. But, in these cases, failure is for learning what works without retribution or punishment from the federal government, the accreditors or the court of public opinion. Students will be protected in all cases.

It will be a time when innovation is embraced as a necessary tool for American higher education. These initiatives will lead toward a stronger system of post-secondary education, with accountability and a measurable return on investment to the public, lawmakers, families and the most important stakeholder—the student.

Persistence and completion will improve based on new methods of measuring success and implementing the results of strong assessment programs to effect real change in the curriculum and all facets of an institution. Outcome measures will be an important part of reviewing any institution for accreditation. Despite the number of ways in which a student might attain a higher education credential, there will remain a deep understanding of the benefits of a liberal arts education. Accreditors will help lead the discussions about balancing a whole-person education and entering a career.

HLC will increase its outreach and be recognized as a national thought leader on higher education. With increased presence and renewed passion, a variety of stakeholders, including HLC Board members, staff and institutional representatives, will lead in and contribute to writing definitive narratives on quality assurance. Drawing on input from inside and outside of the academy, the portfolio of knowledge gained through HLC sponsorship will become a rich asset to those individuals and groups in key decision-making roles—those influencing the foundation of the next frontier in American higher education.

HLC will represent a new wave of advocacy through proactive leadership. To take liberty with the infamous words of Dylan Thomas, by 2020 we will be able to say that HLC did not go “gentle into that good night.” And in the end, everyone looked beyond the horizon to a better time for our institutions, our communities and our students.

Sincerely,

Barbara Gellman-Danley

President

BEYOND THE HORIZON

THE 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

VISTA OVERVIEW

Along with the institutions it serves, HLC finds itself in a new era of higher education in the United States. New disruptions to higher education's customs and traditions emerge routinely and require increased agility among institutions and accreditors alike. As such, perhaps more than in any earlier period of U.S. higher education, the present era necessitates thoughtful, collaborative and sustainable planning. Such planning not only celebrates and expands upon previous organizational successes; it must also seek to answer the question of "What's next?" Specifically, what must happen for an organization like HLC to serve its member institutions and fulfill its mission in this new era of higher education?

HLC began asking itself these questions relative to strategic planning in the fall of 2014. Through HLC's process of self-study and input offered by institutional members and peer reviewers, various strategic directions emerged, as did the unifying theme of "Beyond the Horizon."

Whereas horizons are ever in the distance, vistas are destinations reached along the journey. Conveniently, the strategic directions that emerged lent themselves well to the formation of the acronym VISTA. HLC's work over the past year progressed toward several vistas, promising to be transformative, and it kept a steady eye on a new horizon. *Beyond the Horizon: The 2020 Strategic Plan* conveys the "destinations" that will enable a century-old agency serving a voluntary membership to thrive in fulfillment of its

"Assessment of learning outcomes is the cornerstone of quality assurance. It remains key for HLC to expect robust assessment leading to continuous improvement for the institutions it accredits."

—HLC Membership Survey, 2015

mission now and in the future through Value to Members, Innovation, Student Success, Thought Leadership and Advocacy. Together, these strategic directions reaffirm HLC's mission, "Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning."

HLC's Board of Trustees is pleased with the efforts thus far in designing Beyond the Horizon and remains indebted to the many stakeholders who have offered advice and feedback, yet the Board recognizes that the journey has just begun.

HLC is thankful for all of the participation to date because the start of this journey, as with all steps yet to come, must be taken together.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TRENDS SUMMARY

HLC strives to be a responsive and active member of the higher education community. To do so HLC will position itself to respond to trends impacting higher education. In some cases, HLC will set relevant trends, in concert with other regional accrediting agencies. To do this well, HLC will listen closely to its membership of approximately 1,000 colleges and universities, as well as national higher education associations, elected officials and other stakeholders. On a regular basis, HLC will survey these constituencies and develop action strategies in response.

HLC surveyed its member institutions and held several listening sessions for attendees at its 2015 annual conference. Input was received subsequently when HLC attended local, regional, state and national conferences and meetings, visited institutions and met with political leaders at the state and national levels. Substantial information was gathered from a range of national press sources, higher education publications, journals and websites. The HLC Board of Trustees invited leaders of national associations to convene sessions and hold a Board seminar to help the Board explore and understand issues impacting accreditation.

Accreditation is facing an environment within and outside higher education that has never been more dynamic. Therefore, HLC is committed to updating trends regularly that impact colleges and universities, and specifically, accreditation. HLC's membership strongly voiced the

importance of not only staying ahead of the curve in higher education, but also serving as a trendsetter regarding accreditation. Following is a brief summary of the findings.

External Environment Findings

Bright Lines

Student success is a major trend discussed across all sectors of higher education and its stakeholders. Federal policymakers are examining institutional data focused on persistence and completion rates, job placement and other metrics. Congressional and state lawmakers are pushing for more accountability and improved affordability for students.

As a result, pressure is escalating for accrediting agencies to hold institutions accountable. There are increasing calls for “bright lines” to clearly outline performance metrics that address graduation rates and student debt, among other indicators. More often than ever, respected national press outlets are focusing on the role accreditation plays in the outcomes of a college education.

State Disinvestment

HLC findings also show that there is increased financial pressure on colleges and universities. State disinvestment in higher education is taking place at an exponential rate at the same time that many colleges and universities are experiencing declining or shifting enrollments. Combined, these factors result in precarious financial challenges for higher education.

Governance

Institutions are increasingly open to the potential of mergers and shared services, in what appears to be an ongoing process of recovery from the downturn during the recession. Governance structures are changing, and some boards are demonstrably more political.

Third-Party Providers and Unbundling the Faculty Role

Traditional institutions are seeing increased competition with a focus on innovation and the introduction of third-party providers.

“The academic issues that will have the greatest impact on higher education include the push for accountability, the college completion agenda, an increase of new methods of measuring outcomes ... and a growth of data analytics.”

—HLC Membership Survey, 2015

Many stakeholders are pushing for “training” instead of education, while at the same time passionate advocates emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education. Faculty roles are shifting to respond to what may appear to be conflicting expectations of the value of the post-secondary experience.

Teaching and learning appears to be evolving with the unpacking of the college degree, as demonstrated by the increasing popularity of certificate and micro-credential programs.

Technology and Big Data

Technology growth inside and outside the classroom continues to change the learning environment, with the introduction of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and devices like smartwatches and Google Glass. There are predictions that the new innovations in technology will outpace the ability of colleges and universities to respond.

The “Big Data” movement at colleges and universities provides opportunities to use improved tools and applications to mine new and massive data sets, including students’ academic footprints, to forecast enrollment trends through predictive analytics. Institutions will be able to more effectively determine persistence, retention and completion trends among their students.

Federal Government Encroachment

There is a wide array of proposals from the U.S. Department of Education and Congress on how to change regional accreditation. These proposals identify concerns about the current state of accreditation, but there appears to be consensus that it would be better to update the current model rather than replace it.

The proposals include a push for risk-managed accreditation and differentiated accreditation. Pressure for greater transparency continues.

Internal Trends Findings

While the study of current external environment factors is critically important to ensure HLC understands these issues and is responsive on behalf of its member institutions, it is equally important to listen to the priorities of what members want most. Following are some examples of members' priorities.

Guidance and Support

Quality assurance is the primary focus for HLC, and institutions clearly want that to remain the central purpose for regional accreditors. Member institutions encourage HLC to provide clear guidance regarding expectations of quality assurance. They want HLC to push back on the increased encroachment and perceived overreach of the federal government into accreditation matters.

Ideas from a Broader Look at Higher Education

Members need HLC to become a clearinghouse for new ideas to keep higher education relevant in the 21st century. They expect HLC to be an advocate for institutions with different missions and student populations and to advance innovation through partnerships with member institutions and pilot programs.

College and university representatives look to HLC to share best practices and provide more opportunities to actively engage with their peers.

“Institutions are concerned with increased federal regulation and intrusion into higher education.”

—HLC Membership Survey, 2015

Conclusion

The trends identified here help to describe the many and varied challenges facing higher education and the American accreditation system. The role of HLC continues to focus on quality higher education aligned with the emerging environment. All stakeholders demand to see a measurable return on investment for students and the economy.

As the agenda of the nation's largest regional accreditor, HLC's strategic plan is crafted to navigate the future of the higher education industry through Value to Members, support for Innovation and Student Success, Thought Leadership in higher education, and Advocacy on behalf of HLC's nearly 1,000 member institutions.

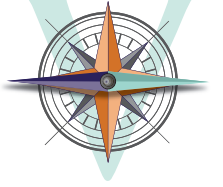
“HLC needs to be responsive to the accelerated pace of change.”

—HLC Membership Survey, 2015



“Innovation is
crucial to the
future of higher
education.”

– HLC Membership Survey, 2015



VALUE TO MEMBERS

QUESTIONS
ASSURANCE SYSTEM
 The Assurance System is a web-based technology that ensures compatibility on a variety of devices. For the ease of use, PDFs also allows the institution to upload documents. For the ease of use, PDFs also allows the institution to upload documents. For the ease of use, PDFs also allows the institution to upload documents.

ANSWERS
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CHANGES
 HLC announced previously that it would be changing its financial structure for the 2015-16 fiscal year. HLC considered a number of approaches to the financial needs of the new Pathways model and determined, after consultation with institutional CFOs and others, that a more evenly distributed financial structure was needed.

THIRD-PARTY COMMENT
 HLC seeks public comment about institutions as part of comprehensive evaluations and Comprehensive Quality Reviews. Institutions are responsible for publicizing the HLC evaluation and publishing invitations and information regarding third-party comment. HLC forwards all comments to the institution being reviewed and to the peer review team in their review of the institution.

PUBLIC INFORMATION
Mark of Affiliation
 As part of HLC's Obligations of Affiliation, each institution is required to display HLC's Mark of Affiliation on its website. The Mark of Affiliation reflects the institution's current accreditation status, and will direct viewers to the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status on HLC's website when clicked upon.

In 2015 HLC turned 120 years old. A core facet of HLC's mission always has been to assist member institutions in "assuring" adherence to stated criteria established by peer institutions and "advancing" the quality of academic offerings and operations through continuous improvement. Expectations related to this mission increased dramatically in 1952 when federal recognition of regional accreditors added to their responsibilities the oversight of various compliance matters related to the distribution of federal funding. Today, as these compliance responsibilities continue to increase, some regard the now-decades-old balance between affirming quality through assurance surveys and strengthening quality through advancement as untenable, particularly when regional accreditation remains voluntary. Yet, HLC continues to embrace the healthy tension between quality assurance and quality advancement, and seeks to capitalize upon it in partnership with members.

INCREASE HLC'S VALUE TO MEMBERS THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ADVANCEMENT.

HLC's Guiding Framework for Increasing Value to Members

1. In recognition of the fast-changing higher education landscape, HLC will continue to recognize and embrace the diversity of member institutions and will seek to ensure that all will benefit from interactions with HLC, the Peer Corps and one another.

Action Steps

- Ensure across all pathways that processes to strengthen (and thus advance) quality are sustainable and widely understood.
 - Seek ways to foster inter-institutional collaboration, whether across institutional types, pathways or strategic initiatives, so that institutions may more readily learn from one another.
 - Establish means through which member institutions can offer HLC input and participate in conversations about how best to respond to the challenges shared by institutions and accreditors alike.
2. HLC will strive to make accreditation requirements explicit and purposeful for member institutions of all types and missions and similarly significant to the stakeholders whom the institutions serve.

Action Steps

- In collaboration with members, communicate their successful institutional efforts at reaffirming accreditation to a wide audience of constituents.
 - Provide clear and consistent guidance to institutional members for satisfying quality assurance and other mandated compliance requirements.
 - Educate member institutions and the wider public about the purposes and value of peer review.
3. Working within the context of its expectations for accredited institutions along with federal requirements, HLC will streamline processes and procedures for member institutions.

Action Steps

- With input from member institutions, evaluate the Pathways for Reaffirmation of Accreditation (Standard, AQIP and Open) to ensure that the pathways model is accomplishing HLC's original goals, and make improvements where necessary.

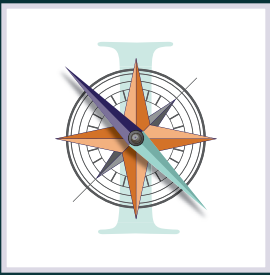
- Identify additional methods to increase contact between the HLC staff and institutional CEOs, CAOs and ALOs to ensure common understandings and identify areas for improvement in HLC's processes and procedures.
 - Develop appropriate technological tools and services to enhance information access, reporting and tracking for the benefit of institutions and peer reviewers alike.
4. HLC will continue to work aggressively to establish the finest Peer Corps it can, such that peer reviewers are astute in evaluating institutional performance yet able to provide valuable advice and guidance for institutional improvement.

Action Steps

- Improve the depth and breadth of training available to peer reviewers, particularly through online training in addition to periodic face-to-face training.
 - Recruit additional peer reviewers from an array of institutional types and representing a wide range of positions and functions to address sector-specific needs.
 - Develop and implement plans to increase the ethnic and racial diversity of the Peer Corps so that the corps represents the diversity reflected by the institutions that HLC serves.
 - Develop peer reviewers to identify and convey back to HLC topics and trend areas for additional Peer Corps training.
5. In further recognition of its role in helping institutions advance the quality of their instructional and support offerings, HLC will offer, identify and deliver additional enrichment events and services for institutional and public benefit.

Action Steps

- Conduct a needs analysis of events and services that will benefit the HLC membership.
- Build upon the existing academy/workshop model to increase topical offerings.
- Evaluate all HLC-sponsored events and services regularly and identify strategies for improvement.
- Continue to reinvent the HLC annual conference to enable more frequent and substantive interactions among institutions.



INNOVATION



FOCUS ON INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION AND HOW HLC WILL PURSUE SUCH INNOVATION WHILE MAINTAINING QUALITY ASSURANCE OVERSIGHT.

At the onset of the new millennium in 1999–2000, HLC, with the support of many long-time peer reviewers, began to explore a new model for accreditation. The goal was to create an accreditation process for “low-risk” institutions based upon continuous quality improvement activities in which HLC assisted accredited institutions in maintaining and advancing their operations, as opposed to inspecting for problems on a decennial basis. The idea evolved into the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). Later in the decade, HLC furthered this innovative thinking and developed the Pathways for Reaffirmation of Accreditation model that positioned the Standard and Open Pathways alongside AQIP. The innovative thinking that established AQIP, the pathways model, the online Assurance System and the low-risk accreditation activities to advance quality throughout the accreditation cycle has set HLC demonstrably apart from other accreditors, yet there is more innovative work for HLC to accomplish in collaboration with its members.

HLC’s Guiding Framework for Expanding Innovation With Members

1. In light of the current higher education climate, HLC will create avenues to better understand, articulate and act upon the multiple facets of innovation in the work it does.

Action Steps

- In collaboration with institutions, actively construct safe zones to innovate within various accreditation contexts without undue constraints or ex post facto consequences from either HLC or other oversight organizations.
- Partner with early adopters of new higher education trends and breakthroughs to determine how HLC can advance emerging practices and not become a barrier.
- Continue developing, implementing and fine-tuning processes for accreditation in response to members’ interests and needs.

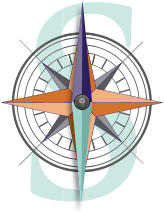
2. Given the constraints that sometimes exist between innovation and quality assurance, HLC will identify and overcome barriers to innovation that it may present as an accreditor, while being sensitive to the limits inherent in its role as a recognized Title IV gatekeeper.

Action Steps

- Seek early clarity from the U.S. Department of Education and state higher education offices regarding areas of institutional innovation so that member institutions are not unnecessarily delayed by misunderstandings among members of the Triad (comprised of the U.S. Department of Education, state higher education executive officers [SHEEOs] and accreditors).
 - As part of HLC’s regular and ongoing reviews of the Criteria for Accreditation and its other expectations, determine those that may block institutional innovation and pursue accommodations quickly whenever possible and when quality assurance is not negatively affected.
 - Acknowledge and respond accordingly in those instances where HLC cannot actively advance an innovation yet at the same time should not thwart it.
3. HLC will further enhance its processes and technologies to benefit member institutions and peer reviewers.

Action Steps

- Maintain and improve Peer Corps training through online offerings, webinars and self-assessments that demonstrate mastery of key concepts and requirements.
- Expand the Assurance System to accommodate the AQIP Pathway.
- Work with members of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) to identify and remedy possible issues to increase efficiency, consistency and quality in its work.



STUDENT SUCCESS



With the implementation of the revised Criteria for Accreditation in January 2013, HLC underscored its commitment to student success with specific reference to rigorous assessment of student learning, high-quality student support systems across instructional modalities, robust advising, and the provision of “enriched educational environment(s).” For the first time, expectations related to student retention, persistence and completion are also conveyed. The expectations on persistence and completion have since given rise to a second HLC Academy in this area. These efforts have dovetailed with more recent national calls for increased student success across all institutional types and modes of delivery. Within the Student Success portion of VISTA, HLC signals its commitment to increase its focus on student success in partnership with member institutions, and to do so with increased transparency so that students and those closest to them will know better the value of regional accreditation, whether their aims and purposes for higher learning are rooted in liberal education, career training or a combination of these.

ADVANCE THE STUDENT SUCCESS AGENDA THROUGH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND REVIEWS THAT SUPPORT QUALITY ASSURANCE.

HLC's Guiding Framework for Student Success

1. HLC will collaborate with member institutions to define “student success” in a way that is easily understood, sensitive to institutional mission and attentive to the reasons students seek higher education.

Action Steps

- Launch a student success indicator initiative and work in partnership with member institutions to develop HLC's definition of student success to include but not be limited to student goals, retention, and persistence and completion rates.
 - In consultation with member institutions, ensure that HLC's definition of student success and associated data collection account for the realities of student demographics, including first-generation students, the underserved, those focusing on workforce development, and the adult student population.
 - Pursue research strategies based upon HLC's updated definition of student success that best utilize the reported institutional data and provide analyses of emerging trends.
 - Engage in the current discourse on student success.
2. HLC will review the Criteria for Accreditation and related requirements to ensure sensitivity to institutional missions and student needs, whether these are focused on career preparation, pre-professional training, liberal education or a combination of these for the betterment of the individual and society.

Action Steps

- Build upon the annual review of the Criteria for Accreditation, the Assumed Practices, the Eligibility Requirements and the Obligations of Affiliation so that possible modifications in response to members' needs or those of HLC are considered in a timely fashion and broader revisions to the aforementioned items are made on a consistent and highly transparent cycle.
- Continue to evaluate the non-financial indicator (NFI) process as it relates to the student success indicators initiative.

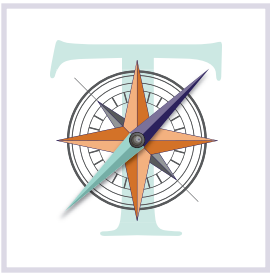
- Establish clearer boundaries in this area where the reach of a regional accreditor intersects with the reach of programmatic accreditors.
3. HLC will advance the agenda on assessment of student learning.

Action Steps

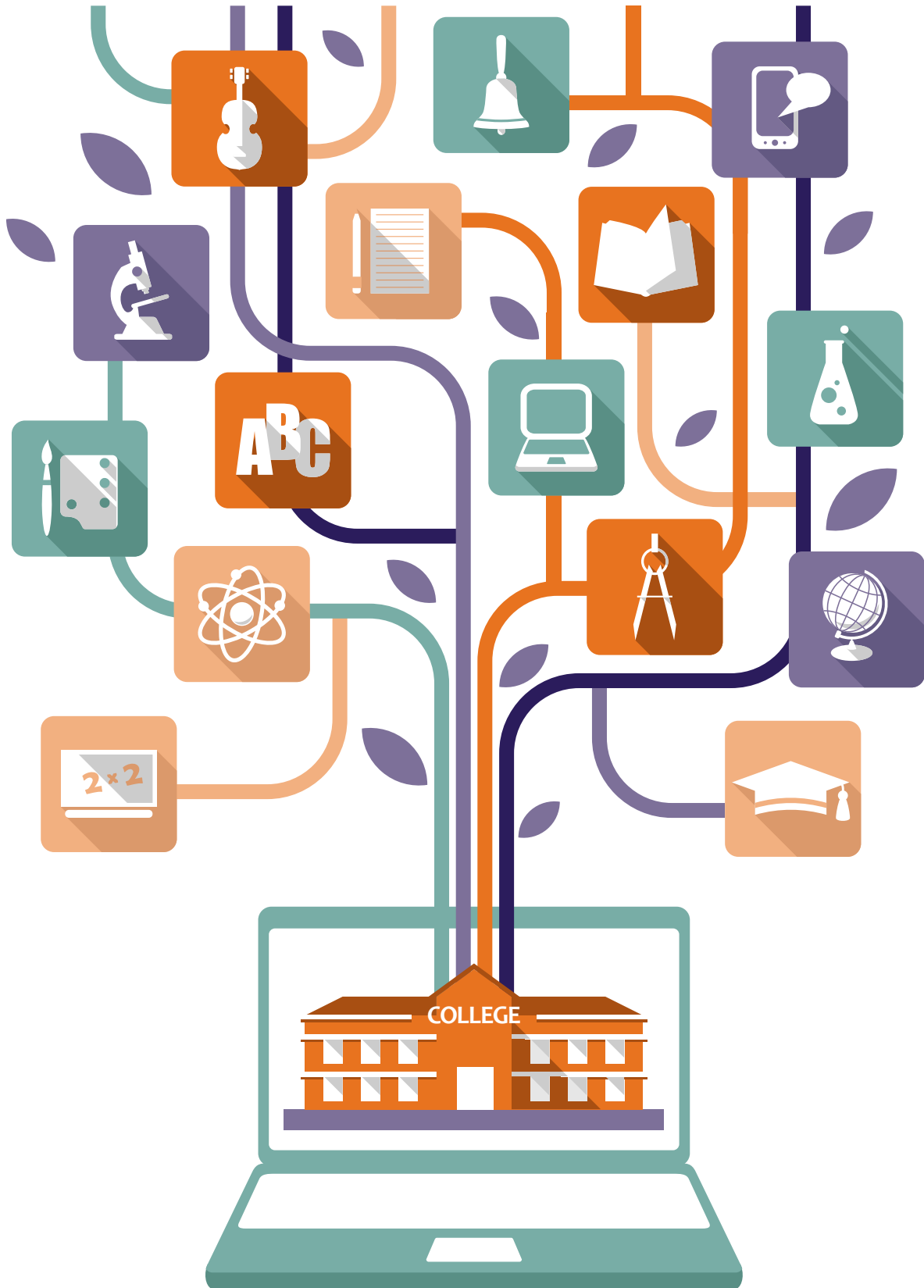
- Emphasize assessment of student learning as a broad, multi-faceted process to benefit students in demonstrable ways, as opposed to cyclical instances of data analysis that are of limited value.
 - Convey to institutional representatives and peer reviewers the importance of demonstrably connecting assessment of student learning to wider institutional improvement efforts.
 - Analyze institutional assessment activities to understand better the obstacles that prevent or undermine “closing the assessment loop.”
 - Connect member institutions that may benefit from one another's assessment strategies and lessons learned.
4. HLC will collect, organize and publish data on student success to better enable institutional decision making.

Action Steps

- Develop widespread understanding among institutions and peer reviewers related to student success in diverse instructional contexts, including competency-based education, direct assessment and other emerging modalities. Disseminate student success measures to influence the content of the HLC Academies and other institutional professional development activities.
- Build relationships among member institutions, the Triad and other organizations to promote student success for the common good.
- Collaborate with institutional members to explore the possibility of creating an assessment framework that identifies performance baselines and aspirational targets for institutions in various sectors and with various missions.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



PROVIDE ENRICHED CONTEXTS FOR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO PROMOTE THE VALUES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ADVANCEMENT.

This element of VISTA represents a turning point in HLC's thinking. Whereas Value to Members, Innovation as an accreditor, and a focus on Student Success have always been in some form inherent in HLC's work, this new tenet of Thought Leadership seeks to reposition the country's largest regional accreditor from an organization often focused on compliance issues to one that also fosters national conversations, dialog and debate on higher education topics and trends. This important work, for which HLC is uniquely positioned, need not be limited to its current geographical boundaries, but may rightly include voices from across the United States if not the world.

“Become the lead agency in developing new ways to accredit innovative ideas, not just entire institutions.”

—HLC Membership Survey, 2015

HLC's Guiding Framework for Providing Thought Leadership

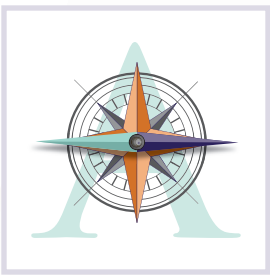
1. HLC will serve as a catalyst for thought leadership by encouraging innovative ideas and strategies pertaining to higher education topics and challenges, with a particular commitment to assuring academic quality.

Action Steps

- Form a blue-ribbon advisory committee that cuts across multiple sectors to guide HLC on emerging topics, trends and best practices in higher education.
 - Host meetings, conversations and periodic summits with other members of the Triad to foster deeper understanding of common challenges.
 - Identify and connect with other organizations that are engaging in national efforts to improve higher education in the United States.
 - Explore the possibility of creating HLC organizational subsidiaries for “thought leadership” and “advocacy” as described in VISTA.
2. HLC will disseminate information to promote and advance thought leadership in higher education.

Action Steps

- Through expansion of the HLC Visiting Scholars program and possible other venues, such as HLC's annual conference, call for and make publicly available white papers on higher education issues and challenges.
- In consultation with member institutions, catalog and enable easy access to quality advancement activities and work products, such as completed Open Pathway Quality Initiatives, AQIP Pathway Action Projects and other artifacts that foster institutional members' learning and benefit.



ADVOCACY



U.S. Department
of Education



HIGHER
LEARNING
COMMISSION



State
Government

ADVOCATE THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF ACCREDITATION TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, STATES, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON BEHALF OF HIGHER EDUCATION BROADLY AND HLC MEMBER INSTITUTIONS SPECIFICALLY.

Similar to the tenet of Thought Leadership, HLC seeks with Advocacy to provide new and robust leadership by moving the organization from a historical practice of reacting to external demands placed upon accreditors toward proactively establishing change agendas. This work will occur through partnerships and close working relationships with organizations that have in the past been either neglected or seen as outwardly adversarial to accreditation. This element of VISTA will establish a new tone that will enhance understandings among agencies and public bodies that are central to the success of U.S. higher education, while simultaneously dismantling boundaries and obstacles faced by institutions as they strive to serve their students.

HLC's Guiding Framework for Advocacy

1. HLC will promote widespread understanding of and support for accreditation and the effectiveness of peer review in assuring quality.

Action Steps

- Collaborate with the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), national associations, and other accreditors to strengthen colleges and universities through peer review and accreditation by means of processes and activities that are transparent and widely understood among higher education audiences.
- Develop a communications plan for helping the broader audience of students, parents, elected officials and the media understand the value of accreditation and peer review.

- Create avenues for member institutions to become more vocal supporters of accreditation at all times but particularly when its value is misunderstood or questioned.
 - Ascertain public recognition of HLC's name and both improve and capitalize upon such recognition to ensure broad understanding of the importance of accreditation to the long-term success of higher education.
2. HLC will work to revitalize the role and value of the Triad in the assurance of quality throughout higher education.

Action Steps

- Develop an annual government relations and advocacy strategy. Assure that HLC also advocates for higher education in general as the Higher Education Act Reauthorization is written and implemented.
- Better articulate and distinguish the role of each member of the Triad, which includes accreditors, the states and the federal government, and the means of communication that will foster progress for each. Incorporate strong communications with the other members of the Triad.
- Work to simplify review processes for institutions, for example, by supporting initiatives such as the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). In so doing, look for opportunities for collaboration, which assures quality without excessive duplication of efforts for institutions.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure mutual understanding of expectations and a timely exchange of new policies, procedures or experimental programs. Shared understanding and principles of operation will serve students and the public.

NEXT STEPS

The HLC Board of Trustees has charged the staff with making VISTA operational through the creation of a completed strategic plan that establishes timelines, allocates resources and identifies parties responsible for the next steps in this ongoing journey. Assisted by a representative Core Group, the HLC staff has subsequently engaged in a collaborative process to advance implementation of the plan. To ensure progress in operationalizing the VISTA elements, staff members will report to the Board at each Board meeting using an evaluation dashboard based upon the VISTA framework. As needed throughout each year, the Board's Committee on Strategy will also lead deeper Board conversations related to the strategic plan and progress in reaching milestones. With VISTA guiding

HLC through the year 2020, the Board has committed to renewing its strategic planning efforts in fall 2019 for a smooth transition into the next planning cycle.

The HLC staff has taken this charge with full recognition that future successes for an accreditation agency, as for the institutions it accredits, rely on achievable goals, thoughtful planning and a consistent gaze toward the horizon and beyond. The HLC Board and staff members alike thank all who continue to support and actively contribute to the success of this important journey.





HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street | Suite 7-500 | Chicago, Illinois 60604-1411

Phone: 800.621.7440 | hlcommission.org