

# GUIDE TO EVALUATING INSTITUTIONS

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission  
for Community and Junior Colleges*

*Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

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## Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

### A. Decision-Making Process

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.
  - What do the statements about institutional mission and goals reveal about the institution's commitment to student success and educational excellence?
  - Are the institution's goals and values clearly articulated and understood by all? Can college staff list what those goals and values are?
  - Can staff describe their roles in assisting the institution to achieve its goals?
  - What information about institutional performance is circulating and available to staff and students? How is the information kept current? Is it easily accessed, is it understandable? Is it regularly used in institutional dialogue and decision-making sessions?
  - Do the institution's processes for institutional evaluation and review, and planning for improvements, provide venues where the evaluations of the institution's performance are made available to all staff?
  - Do institutional planning efforts provide opportunity for appropriate staff participation?
  - How do individuals bring forward ideas for institutional improvement?
  - How does the institution articulate the responsibilities of individuals to develop ideas for improvements in their areas of responsibility?
  - How do individuals and groups at the institution use the governance process to enhance student learning?
2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their

constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

- a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.
    - What do institutional policies and procedures describe as the roles for each group in governance, including planning and budget development?
    - What evidence demonstrates that these policies and procedures are functioning effectively?
  - b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.
    - What documents describe the official responsibilities and authority of the faculty and of academic administrators in curricular and other educational matters?
2. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.
- Do the written policies on governance procedures specify appropriate roles for all staff and students? Do these policies specify the academic roles of faculty in areas of student educational programs and services planning?
  - Are staff and students well informed of their respective roles? Do staff participate as encouraged by these policies? Do the various groups work in collaborative effort on behalf of institutional improvements? Is the result of this effort actual institutional improvement?
  - Is there effective communication at the college - clear, understood, widely available, current communication?
  - Do staff at the college know essential information about institutional efforts to achieve goals and improve learning?
4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self evaluation, and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.
- What does documentation of the institution's past accreditation history demonstrate about integrity in its relationship with the Commission - has it

responded expeditiously and honestly to recommendations, are there citations indicating difficulty, etc.?

- Are the institution's communications of educational quality and institutional effectiveness to the public accurate?
  - What is the institution's evidence of compliance with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regulations?
5. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.
- What process does the institution use to evaluate its governance and decision-making structures? Are the results communicated within the campus community?
  - How does the institution use identified weaknesses to make needed improvements?

## Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard IV

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard IV. There may be many other sources relevant to each college's unique mission that institutions should provide and teams should consider.

### Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

#### A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

Evidence that demonstrates board and other governance policies and descriptions of the participation of constituencies in decision-making bodies

Evidence that includes documents showing the transmission of recommendations from faculty and academic administrators to decision-making bodies, and descriptions of the institution's information and decision-making process

Evidence that includes copies of governance policies and procedures, the composition of governance bodies, minutes of meetings, and documents showing the roles academic staff play in reviewing and planning student learning programs and services

Evidence that includes evaluations and analyses the institution conducts of its governing and decision-making processes, and the form of communication of same to the college community

Evidence that includes the policy manual, institutional statement of mission, vision or philosophy, and institutional planning documents