



The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools



Statements of Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Priorities

Mission

Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning

Vision

The Commission will be an organization known for its distinctive strengths of integrity, flexibility, creativity, responsiveness, and risk-taking, and for its commitment to work for the common good of society. Its transformed accreditation processes and its broadened range of services will support affiliated organizations in meeting new regional, national, and international expectations for higher learning.

The Commission will pursue this vision by:

- Conducting its work with such openness, excellence, and integrity that it earns a national and international reputation for leadership in defining quality in the rapidly changing educational marketplace;

- Promoting flexibility in accrediting processes that utilize peer review in new and creative ways and serve higher education's diverse stakeholders;
- Ensuring that its systems of peer review are discerning, objective, and accepted as effective and valid by its communities of interest;
- Responding to innovative educational models based on new knowledge about learning such as those incorporating on-line learning, collaborative initiatives, and distributed learning environments;
- Providing new services responsive to the needs of its stakeholders that:
 - share effective models of learning and of professional and organizational development,
 - disseminate lessons learned from innovative initiatives, and
 - demonstrate leadership in exploring ways for member institutions to grapple with the complexities of a fast-changing society;
- Making accreditation a learning experience that supports an institution's ability to sustain excellence, foster assessment and improvement, and demonstrate integrity and accountability; and
- Creating new ways to work in partnership with stakeholders from higher education and the public to foster a culture of assessment, provide essential resources to members, and maintain an environment and ethic of accountability.

30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400 | Chicago, IL 60602-2504
312-263-0456 | 800-621-7440 | Fax: 312-263-7462
www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org

Core Values

Guiding the work of the Commission into the future will be the core values of quality, integrity, innovation, diversity, inclusiveness, service, collaboration, and learning, each being of equal weight and importance.

Quality: The Commission will have a positive impact on the quality of higher education by continuing to hold to a strong commitment to high standards that sustain and advance excellence in higher learning. For many, quality defines a process as well as provides a judgment of excellence. Therefore the Commission's processes will support colleges and universities in demonstrating their ability to make continuous improvement in the quality of the educational activities, experiences, and learning outcomes they provide.

Integrity: The Commission will place fairness, honesty, and objectivity at the forefront as it assesses its own policies, practices, and behaviors to ensure that they make credible the actions taken to enhance quality improvement in higher learning. At the same time, the Commission will implement accreditation processes that establish integrity as central to educational and institutional quality within and among higher education organizations.

Innovation: The Commission will be a responsible advocate of creativity in a world marked by rapid change. Through its own innovative policies and processes, it will serve as a catalyst for imaginative, appropriate risk-taking on the part of its members who seek to incorporate new forms of collaboration, new knowledge, new technology, and new educational approaches into their pedagogical processes.

Diversity: The Commission will recognize the value of diversity among its institutions, the learners in them, in its peer review processes, and the society that higher education serves. The Commission's criteria, requirements, and organizational processes will encourage its affiliated institutions to address the vital role that diversity plays in the pursuit of their respective missions of preparing students to live successfully in a global society. Moreover, the Commission's staff and peer review processes will reflect and honor this diversity.

Inclusiveness: The Commission will build its future by recognizing that quality higher learning can be achieved in many types and configurations of institutions. It strengthens its commitment to inclusiveness by developing structures and processes that enable it to listen constantly to and respond to a broad range of higher education providers and stakeholders of accreditation.

Service: The Commission's Board and staff will continue their commitment to providing excellent service to member organizations by maintaining strong, supportive relationships that are flexible and responsive to institutional need and to the interests of the broader public.

Collaboration: The Commission will work aggressively with other organizations committed to sustaining and advancing quality higher learning. In addition to its members, these affiliations may include businesses that share the Commission's values as well as other higher education associations and agencies at local, state, regional, national, and international levels.

Learning: The Commission will enhance its operations as a learning organization by seeking continuous feedback and insight from its members. It will use the collected information to improve its operation and support teamwork, and to provide learning opportunities for its staff, peer review bodies, and other stakeholders. At the same time, the Commission will work with its members to foster an environment that promotes shared learning.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority One: Increase focus of accreditation on the quality of higher learning and thereby extend the potential for affiliation to include a variety of organizations offering higher learning.

Goal: The Commission will assure the quality of a broad variety of educational opportunities for learners through its criteria, requirements, and processes that are accepted by its member organizations and valued by its communities of interest.

Strategic Priority Two: Provide multiple Commission accreditation processes that place emphasis on the institutions' own processes of quality assurance and quality improvement and accredit based on the integrity of those processes and their results.

Goal: The educational organization seeking accreditation will use its own mission, purposes, needs, processes, and results to demonstrate its educational effectiveness and institutional integrity and will be able to choose from among a variety of processes the one best suited to it.

Strategic Priority Three: Expand the Commission's range of services to assure and advance quality in higher learning.

Goal: The Commission will implement processes that identify and deliver responsive, non-duplicative services addressing unmet needs of its stakeholders and promoting quality in higher learning.

Strategic Priority Four: Share effective practices and lessons learned in order to promote quality in higher learning.

Goal: The Commission will both share its learning about quality higher learning and facilitate the sharing of such learning by and among institutions and other stakeholders.

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