

Washington State University Year Seven Comprehensive Accreditation Visit

What is accreditation and why is it important?

- Washington State University is federally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).
 - NWCCU is one of six regional accrediting bodies for all U.S. institutions of higher education.
 - NWCCU works with the U. S. Department of Education
 - NWCCU oversees all schools in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington;
 - Our Liaison to NWCCU is Vice Provost Erica Austin.

- Institutional accreditation is required for a number of reasons:
 - Non-accredited institutions cannot receive federal or state financial aid for students;
 - Employers are skeptical of degrees earned from non-accredited institutions;
 - Graduates of non-accredited institutions cannot stand for licensing exams;
 - Researchers at non-accredited institutions are usually ineligible to compete for research funds;
 - Professional accrediting organizations will not consider degree programs that are housed in non-accredited institutions;
 - Transfer of credit is almost impossible without it.

- Other Valuable aspects of Accreditation:
 - Helps align priorities with mission and strategic goals;
 - Helps direct resources to identified priorities.

When is WSU's year seven comprehensive accreditation visit scheduled?

- April 9 – 11, 2018

What is the review process?

- As an accredited institution, the upcoming review is to reaffirm our accreditation.
 - A complete university review cycle is seven years based on expectations for continuous improvement.
 - The 7-year review includes an on-site evaluation.

- At several points during the 7-year cycle, the institution writes a self-study report that addresses required performance standards.
 - WSU's 7-year report was prepared during 2016-17 academic year, and coordinated through the Office of the Provost.
 - The report is oriented around WSU's Strategic Plan and advancement toward institutional goals.
 - The report emphasizes the educational mission of WSU, and also includes research and outreach.
 - The Accreditation Report will be available at <https://accreditation.wsu.edu/>.

- NWCCU assembles a review team that reads the self-study report and visits campus.
 - The review team will visit WSU April 9-11, 2018.
 - The review team consists of administrators, can include staff and faculty from similar institutions (peers).
 - The review team gathers information to elaborate on topics in the self-study report.



- The review team can meet with whomever they like while on campus.
 - All campus groups should be prepared for a meeting request.
 - WSU administrators may not be present at certain meetings.
 - WSU's accreditation team will provide training in advance on relevant self-study content.
- Following the site visit, the review team will discuss immediate reactions with President Schulz. The review team will follow up with formal report/recommendation to NWCCU.
 - WSU is given the chance to fact-check the review team's report before it is submitted.
 - NWCCU meets with President Schulz; makes the final decision on renewal of accreditation and notifies the U. S. Department of Education.
- NWCCU requires all member institutions to meet five performance standards:
 - Mission and Core Themes: The institution's activities are guided by a mission statement that includes essential themes.
 - Resources and Capacity: The institution has adequate resources and capacity to fulfill its mission and accomplish core theme objectives.
 - Planning and Implementation: The institution has formal, flexible, and participatory planning and implementation processes.
 - Effectiveness and Improvement: The institution regularly collects data on clearly defined indicators of achievement, analyzes those data, and uses the results to improve performance.
 - Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability: The institution publishes evidence-based evaluations of its performance.

Does WSU need to worry about the potential loss of accreditation?

- WSU must maintain high standards in its academic enterprise to maintain accreditation. Loss of accreditation is an unlikely outcome of the site review process, but WSU must display its mission fulfillment in the accreditation report, and be well-prepared in all areas for the site visit.
- WSU may receive, and has received, Recommendations from NWCCU.
 - Recommendations are problem areas or issues that need immediate attention.
 - Progress must be documented by a specified date.
 - If progress on a Recommendation is not made, NWCCU can increase demands and/or implement oversight, and/or impose an adverse status (warning or probation).
 - Addressing Recommendations can require re-prioritization of resources and suspension of university initiatives.
- Recommendations can be disruptive; WSU wants to avoid them if at all possible.
- WSU also can receive, and has received, Commendations for things we are doing exceptionally well.
 - Commendations are a matter of public record and are shared with the legislature, so they are valuable to earn.
- Preview reports and evaluations can be found at accreditation.wsu.edu/

Additional Information

For more information on WSU's accreditation process, visit accreditation.wsu.edu or contact the Office of the Provost at (509) 335-5581 or provosts.office@wsu.edu.

