
Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions

Assuring Quality through Accreditation During COVID-19

How C-RAC Members are Supporting Institutions and Students during the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unanticipated and unprecedented challenges for higher education institutions nationwide. C-RAC members are working diligently to uphold their fundamental obligations and standards to assure postsecondary quality despite these unusual circumstances.

C-RAC members have taken several steps in recent months to provide additional support to institutions and, in turn, students, during the pandemic while also implementing new protocols to continue accreditors' evaluative responsibilities. Examples include:

- **Surveying Institutions:** Each C-RAC member is conducting surveys and collecting data from member institutions to better understand COVID response plans, changes to instructional activity, insights into online / remote instruction evaluation strategies, and potential challenges that need to be addressed.
- **Distance Education:** Since the advent of the COVID pandemic, accreditors and institutions have been provided increased flexibility by the U.S. Department of Education for easing the transition of programs to online platforms while ensuring institutions are able to adapt and innovate to serve students during this challenging time. Throughout this period, each C-RAC member continues to hold institutions accountable for carrying out their individual missions and providing quality educational opportunities for students, regardless of modality, and effective results under the circumstances.
- **Maintaining the Vital Role of Peer Review through Virtual Visits:** C-RAC members continue to evaluate institutions and conduct peer reviews virtually and have implemented new strategies to gather insights from virtual visits necessary to assure quality for students.
- **Providing Resources for Institutions:** C-RAC members have developed new resources, webinars, broadcasts and reports to help inform and educate institutions as they work to continue educational programming and provide appropriate supports for faculty, staff, and students in order to uphold quality and rigor.
- **Monitoring Financial Health:** C-RAC members are keeping close watch on the financial stability of institutions and continue to analyze data to identify early warning signs and require additional actions and interventions as needed.

- **Collaborating with States and the U.S. Department of Education:** C-RAC members remain in close contact with state higher education leaders and the U.S. Department of Education to ensure adequate action and intervention can be taken quickly and effectively as members of the regulatory triad.
- **Protecting Students:** C-RAC members are aware that the financial duress experienced by some institutions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic may ultimately force closures or other dramatic shifts. Each accreditor has a process in place to protect students in the event an institution is facing such a challenge. Those processes include requiring vulnerable institutions to establish plans and strategies that allow students options to complete their studies at other institutions in the event of closure and protecting access to student records.

C-RAC members have each developed special pages on their websites to outline their COVID response efforts, share resources for institutions, and detail any related policy or procedural changes. The links to this content on each member website can be found below:

- [Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges \(ACCJC\)](#)
- [New England Commission of Higher Education \(NECHE\)](#)
- [Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\)](#)
- [Middle States Commission on Higher Education \(MSCHE\)](#)
- [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities \(NWCCU\)](#)
- [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges \(SACSCOC\)](#)
- [WASC Senior College and University Commission \(WSCUC\)](#)