



Benchmarks for Excellence

2024 Edition

**Transnational Association of
Christian Colleges and Schools**

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The Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is recognized by the United States Department of Education (ED), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as a national accrediting agency for Christian postsecondary institutions that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees, including Distance Education.

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Introduction

The Accreditation Commission and staff of Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) believe that the Benchmarks system, developed as an outcome of the Reliability-Validity study, provides a valuable tool in the overall accreditation process and in institutional development.

The Benchmarks set forth in this publication contain relevant behavioral examples or indexes of varying levels of performance on each of the TRACS Accreditation Standards. Benchmarks are written for each of the scale values:

- 4 - Exceeds the Standard
- 3 - Meets the Standard
- 2 - Falls Below the Standard
- 1 - Fails to Meet the Standard

The behavioral examples are developed to reflect the various performance levels for each of the Benchmark indicators.

These Benchmarks serve several purposes. They are important to ensure the consistent application of the TRACS Accreditation Standards, in providing the members of an Evaluation Team a common behavioral frame of reference for the evaluation of the institution's compliance level with each of the Standards, and for gauging the educational performance of a particular institution. The institution will also find these Benchmarks valuable in the self-evaluation process and for indicating quality characteristics in critical areas of institutional improvement

The ultimate outgrowth of the use of these Benchmarks would be to lead the institution in assessing the accomplishment of its Mission.

Benchmark Designations

- **4 - Exceeds the Standard** - Results and attained goals consistently exceed TRACS Standards and substantially contribute to the institution's effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mission.
- **3 - Meets the Standard** - Results and attained goals consistently meet TRACS Standards and allow the institution to demonstrate effectiveness and fulfill its mission.
- **2 - Falls Below the Standard** - Results and attained goals consistently fall below TRACS Standards in one or more key areas thus calling into question the institution's effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mission.
- **1 - Fails to Meet the Standard** - Results do not meet the expectations of TRACS Standards in numerous key areas thus affecting the institution's overall effectiveness and preventing the institution from fulfilling its mission.

I. Accreditation Requirements (Standard Areas 1-16)

1. Faith Statement

The Faith Statement of an institution defines its Christian nature by affirming those primary doctrinal matters that are held by the institution. Institutions are not required to duplicate the TRACS Biblical Foundations Statement, but the institution's Faith Statement should identify it as part of the evangelical protestant tradition in higher education. It is to be written so as to conform to the historic creeds and statements of Christianity, and thus reflect a careful and precise theological statement, but also accurately state the current position of the institution as set forth by the institution's Board and administration. In addition, it should be written lucidly in order to inform prospective students, faculty, administrators, and Board members, as well as external constituencies, regarding the religious identity of the institution.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The Faith Statement is well written and comprehensive. Administrators, faculty, board members, and students have indicated agreement with the statement which is available in writing in most printed publications such as the Catalog(s) and Handbooks. It affirms the TRACS Faith Statement and it is approved by the institution's Board. Students, faculty, board members and administrators clearly indicate that they have read, understand, and respect the Statement.

3 - Meets the Standard - The written Faith Statement is satisfactory and is printed in some of the institution's key publications such as the Catalog(s) and other critical documents. The Statement affirms the TRACS Faith Statement; and is approved by the institution's Board. Most students, faculty, board members, and administrators indicate that they have read, understand, and respect the Statement.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The Faith Statement is written using vague terms and is not available in the institution's key publications. It is not wholly compatible with the TRACS Faith Statement and is not approved by the Board. There is no evidence that students, faculty, administrators, and board members have indicated agreement with the Statement.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - No written or published Faith Statement is available. Administrators and faculty are not able to articulate the Statement or basic tenants of the institution. The focus of education is not biblical. The Board shows no interest in developing a Faith Statement.

2. Mission and Name

The institution's Mission is appropriate to Christian higher education, is consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and is implemented in a manner that complies with accreditation expectations. The institution's mission gives direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness. The mission sets forth the specific educational role of the institution with regard to its intended audience.

The name of the institution is accurate, descriptive, and appropriate for its stated purpose. The use of "institute," "college," "university," "seminary," "theological school," "graduate school," et al., is in keeping with the general and national use of such nomenclature (and appropriate to the programs approved by TRACS) in order to enable a consumer to correctly understand the scope and nature of the institution.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The Mission is well worded and appropriate to Christian postsecondary education. All faculty, administrators, board members and students have read and endorsed the Mission. The Mission is available in writing and appropriate printed publications such as the Catalog(s) and other critical documents. The institution's name, with reference to the programs offered, is consistent with national norms in naming an educational institution.

3 - Meets the Standard - The Mission is satisfactory and appropriate to Christian postsecondary education. The majority of the faculty, administrators, board members and students have read and endorsed the Mission. The Mission is available in the institution's key publications. The institution's name, with reference to the programs offered, is somewhat consistent with national norms in naming an educational institution.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution has a Mission which is not well written or which is not clearly appropriate to Christian postsecondary education. The majority of the faculty, administrators, board members and students are unfamiliar with the Mission. The Mission is not available in appropriate publications. The institution's name, with reference to the programs offered, is not consistent with national norms in naming an educational institution.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not have a clearly stated Mission or its Mission is incomplete and not appropriate to Christian postsecondary education. The faculty, administrators, board members and students are unfamiliar with the Mission. The Mission is not available in appropriate publications. The institution's name, with reference to the programs offered, is inappropriate and inconsistent with national norms in naming an educational institution.

3. Institutional Objectives

Institutional Objectives are formulated which are consistent with the institution's Mission, its scope of recognition with TRACS, and its Faith Statement.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The Institutional Objectives are measurable and achievable within the scope of the institution and are consistent with TRACS Standards. The Objectives have been approved by the Board as reflected in minutes. There is a regular review of the Objectives and a systematic evaluation of institutional level outcomes. The institution has been utilizing assessment data for institutional planning, change, and development through an on-going cycle of assessment with evidence of institutional improvement. These processes are overseen by a competent individual assigned to these tasks.

3 - Meets the Standard - The Institutional Objectives include some goals that are measurable and generally achievable within the scope of the institution and are consistent TRACS Standards. The Objectives have been approved by the Board as reflected in minutes. There is a periodic review of the Objectives and a systematic evaluation of institutional level outcomes. The institution is receiving assessment data for feedback and input. These processes are overseen by an individual assigned to these tasks.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The Institutional Objectives are not written in measurable terms, may not be achievable within the scope of the institution and are not necessarily consistent with TRACS Standards. The Objectives may have been approved by the Board but such approval may not be reflected in the minutes. There is a cursory review of the Objectives and an inconsistent evaluation of institutional level outcomes. The institution has developed and implemented an Assessment Plan, but there is little evidence that data has yet been produced. The institution does not have an individual assigned to oversee such processes or the individual is not appropriately engaged.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The Institutional Objectives are not written in measurable terms, are not achievable within the scope of the institution and are not consistent with TRACS Standards. The Objectives have not been approved by the Board. There is no Assessment Plan and no assessment activity is taking place. The institution does not have an individual assigned to oversee such processes.

4. Institutional Integrity

The institution defines itself by a set of values which are central to its mission and objectives. These values and standards result in institutional operations that exemplify integrity.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution operates under a clearly defined set values which exemplify a commitment to operate with integrity in its dealings with its constituents, appropriate governmental agencies, and with TRACS. These values are biblically based and are displayed by the institution's consistent and institutionally initiated transparency in all operational areas.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution operates under a set values which demonstrate a commitment to operate with integrity in its dealings with its constituents, appropriate governmental agencies, and with TRACS. These values are biblically based and are displayed by the institution's transparency in all operational areas.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution demonstrates an inconsistent commitment to operate with integrity in its dealings with its constituents, appropriate governmental agencies, and with TRACS. This deficiency is displayed by the institution's lack of consistent transparency in its operations. This is evidenced by inconsistent application of institutional policies and procedures

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution consistently demonstrates a lack of commitment to operate with integrity in its dealings with its constituents, appropriate governmental agencies, and with TRACS. This deficiency is displayed by the institution's consistent lack of transparency in its operations. There is evidence of inaccurate or misleading information in institutional publications, reporting, or other public disclosures.

5. Operational Authority

The institution has the legal authority to operate an institution of higher education including authorization to offer its courses and programs via Distance Education when applicable.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has legal authorization to operate, complies with all Federal and State regulations where it is located, for both on-campus and Distance Education programs, and is proactive in educational leadership within their educational community. Those institutions located outside the United States have the authorization to operate and to grant degrees from the government of the country in which it is located.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has legal authorization to operate, complies with all Federal and State regulations where it is located, for both on-campus and Distance Education programs. Those institutions located outside the United States have the authorization to operate and to grant degrees from the government of the country in which it is located.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution's legal authority to operate is unclear or in jeopardy, or the institution has periodically failed to comply with Federal or State regulations where it is located, for either on-campus or Distance Education programs. The legal authority to operate or to grant degrees for those institutions located outside the United States is unclear or in jeopardy.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution has no legal authorization to operate, fails to comply with Federal or State regulations where it is located, for both on-campus and Distance Education programs. Those institutions located outside the United States have no authorization to operate or to grant degrees from the government of the country in which it is located.

6. Organizational Structure

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and objectives and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and, where appropriate, research activity. Such governance assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component. The institution has sufficient independence from any external entity, such that it is solely accountable for meeting accreditation requirements.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has legally constituted and effective Board responsible for establishing policy, appointing and evaluating the Chief Executive Officer, establishing and maintaining financial stability and overseeing the effective pursuit of the stated Mission and Objectives of the institution. The institution exhibits a strong leadership team headed by full-time properly qualified Chief Executive Officer and Chief Academic Officer. Lines of authority are well defined. Written administrative job descriptions are available and are used for annual evaluations. There is a strong support staff sufficient in number and competence to support the administrative, academic, and support functions of the institution. The support staff effectively and consistently provides services to students, faculty, and administrators.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has legally constituted Board responsible for establishing policy, appointing and evaluating the Chief Executive Officer, establishing and maintaining financial stability and overseeing the effective pursuit of the stated Mission and Objectives of the institution. The institution exhibits a competent leadership team headed by full-time qualified Chief Executive Officer and Chief Academic Officer. Written administrative job descriptions are available and are used for evaluations. There is a capable support staff sufficient in number and competence to support the administrative, academic, and support functions of the institution.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution's legal authority is in question. The Board is not regularly involved in establishing policy, and their role in the appointment and evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer and the establishment and maintenance of the financial stability of the institution is uncertain. The institution exhibits a weak leadership team, or is not headed by a full-time properly qualified Chief Executive Officer and / or Chief Academic Officer. The support staff is inadequate to support the administration and academic functions of the institution. The support staff is not providing the basic services to students, faculty, and/or administrators.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The Board is not legally established and / or is not assuming its responsibilities. The institution fails to exhibit an adequate leadership team. There is not adequate support staff in place to support adequately the administrative and academic functions of the institution.

7. Publications and Policies

The institution produces and maintains current, accurate, and consistent publications (including its website) which appropriately reflect the institution's mission and operations.

The institution develops and implements policies which are comprehensive and provide the guidance necessary for the institution to function appropriately.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution's publications are excellent, consistent with the Mission and Objectives, are regularly and consistently reviewed, and approved by the Board annually. They are well written, readily available to all appropriate constituents in all available formats, and are current, clear, and factually accurate. Policies are well written, comprehensive in scope, and are consistent with the other publications. The Board approves all institutional policies.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution's publications are consistent with the Mission and Objectives and are approved by the Board on a regular basis. They are well written, readily available to all appropriate constituents in all available formats, and are current, clear, and factually accurate. Policies are comprehensive in scope, and are consistent with other publications. The Board approves all institutional policies.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution's publications are not always consistent with the Mission and Objectives and are not approved by the Board on a regular basis. They are poorly written, not always available to appropriate constituents, and may not be current, clear, and factually accurate. Policies are poorly written, not comprehensive in scope, and are often inconsistent with other publications. Board approval of policies is inconsistent.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution's publications are not consistent with the Mission and Objectives and are not approved by the Board. They are poorly written, not available to appropriate constituents, and are not current, clear, and/or factually accurate. Policies are poorly written, not comprehensive in scope, and are contradictory between publications. Board approval of policies is lacking.

8. Educational Programs

The institution's educational program(s), whether offered face-to-face, via Distance Education, or by hybrid modalities, have as their principle focus the education and academic preparation of students within a distinctly Christian context. Educational programs are derived from recognized fields of study normally found at the postsecondary level and require designated courses of study with clearly outlined procedures for completing the programs successfully.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate programs consistently reflect the Mission and Objectives, is reviewed annually and is adequately supported by the institution. The educational environment encourages learning and the facilities, learning materials, faculty, and support services are superior. Faculty lead in the process of curriculum development, approval, review, modification, and assessment. Clearly defined student learning outcomes are established and reflected at all levels. Course and program objectives are well written in reference to measurable learning outcomes and are regularly assessed through student achievement and competency.

3 - Meets the Standard - The curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate programs reflect the Mission and Objectives, is reviewed regularly and is supported by the institution. The educational environment enables learning and the facilities, learning materials, faculty, and support services are adequate. Faculty lead in the process of curriculum development, approval, review, modification, and assessment. Student learning outcomes are established and reflected at all levels. Course and program objectives are written in reference to measurable learning outcomes and are regularly assessed through student achievement and competency.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The curriculum may not reflect the Mission and Objectives, is not reviewed consistently and is not appropriately supported by the institution. The educational environment does not consistently enable learning and the facilities, learning materials, faculty, and support services are inadequate. Faculty are not involved appropriately in the process of curriculum development, approval, review, modification, and assessment. Student learning outcomes are not established. Course and program objectives are not written in reference to measurable learning outcomes and are not regularly assessed.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The curriculum does not reflect the Mission and Objectives, is not reviewed consistently and is not appropriately supported by the institution. Curriculum may not be appropriate for the respective levels. The educational environment does not enable learning and the facilities, learning materials, faculty, and support services are inadequate. Faculty are not involved appropriately in the process of curriculum development, approval, review, modification, and assessment. Student learning outcomes are not established. Course and program objectives do not exist and are not regularly assessed.

9. Faculty

The institution employs dedicated and qualified faculty who possess the appropriate academic credentials and professional experience. The fundamental contribution of the faculty is to provide effective instruction and advice and to do so in a manner that makes the curriculum vital, with reference to the mission and objectives of the institution. An additional function of the faculty is to advise the administration and board in the formulation of academic policies involving such matters as curriculum, admissions, advising, student services, and faculty welfare.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution employs sufficient academically and spiritually qualified faculty member for the programs offered. These faculty members perform all required responsibilities. The institution maintains detailed faculty documentation and provides faculty members many opportunities for professional and spiritual development. The institution has an outstanding faculty organization, ensures academic freedom, and evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member with the results of the evaluations utilized for the improvement of individual faculty members and the institution as a whole.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution employs sufficient academically and spiritually qualified faculty members for the programs offered to teach and perform related duties. These faculty members perform required responsibilities appropriately. The institution maintains faculty documentation and provides faculty members opportunities for development. The institution has a faculty organization, ensures academic freedom, and evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member with the results of the evaluations utilized for the improvement of individual faculty members and the institution as a whole.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - It remains uncertain that the institution employs sufficient academically and spiritually qualified faculty member for the programs offered to teach and perform related duties. The institution may not meet expectations regarding the adequacy and competence of its faculty. Faculty members inconsistently perform required responsibilities. The institution maintains inadequate or incomplete faculty documentation and irregularly provides faculty members opportunities for development. The institution has a poorly developed or inactive faculty organization, may ensure academic freedom, and inconsistently evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member. Results of evaluations are infrequently utilized.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not employ sufficient faculty for the programs offered to teach and perform related duties. The institution fails to meet expectations regarding the adequacy and competence of its faculty. Faculty members do not perform required responsibilities. The institution fails to maintain faculty documentation and does not provide faculty members opportunities for development. The institution does not have a faculty organization, does not ensure academic freedom, and does not evaluate the effectiveness of each faculty member. The academic qualifications of the faculty are inadequate, undocumented, and/or the institution is over-reliant on faculty deemed qualified through equivalency.

10. Student Services

The institution provides the services necessary to promote the spiritual, intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students and offers the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve such success.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has more than adequate numbers of competent and highly qualified staff to provide an array of superior student services programs. Student services are administered in accordance with a stated plan and information gathered from the assessments of the student services programs has been utilized for program improvement. The institution provides an orientation program which covers all of the major areas and provides information needed by students. Student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized, readily available, and are fairly and consistently administered. Student advising is available as appropriate. Financial aid services, headed by a qualified individual, are provided. The institution provides superior facilities and equipment for services support functions.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has an adequate number of staff to provide an array of student services programs. Student services are administered in accordance with a stated plan and assessment data is gathered and utilized. The institution provides an orientation program which covers the major areas and provides information needed by students. Student rights and responsibilities are publicized, available, and are fairly and consistently administered. Student advising is available as appropriate. Financial aid services are provided. The institution provides adequate facilities and equipment for services support functions.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution does not have an adequate number of staff to provide student services programs. Student services are inconsistently administered and assessment data is lacking. The institution does not provide an orientation program to provide information needed by students. Student rights and responsibilities are not clearly stated or are inconsistently administered. Student advising is not available. Financial aid services are not appropriately provided. The institution fails to provides adequate facilities and equipment for services support functions.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution fails to meet expectations regarding the adequacy and competence of its student services programs. Student services are inadequate and administered and assessment data is lacking. The institution does not provide an orientation program to provide information needed by students. Student rights and responsibilities are not inadequate and are inconsistently administered. Student advising is not available. Financial aid services are not appropriately provided. The institution fails to provide adequate facilities and equipment for services support functions.

11. Financial Operations

The institution will exhibit financial stability and integrity as a means of demonstrating the viability of the institution. The institution's financial resources will be adequate to carry out its mission and support its programs and activities for the foreseeable future.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution consistently demonstrates that its financial resources are more than adequate to carry out its Mission and support its current programs now and in the future. This is evidenced in a balanced budget and a positive cash flow. The financial operation of the institution is highly organized and is well staffed by competent professionals. Accounts payable are current; income is in excess of expenses for the years reviewed; budget allocations are sufficient for current operational expenses; a satisfactory contingency plan is in place. A plan listing future projections of income and expenses is available and approved by the Board. Financial Reports demonstrate financial integrity with no serious accounting errors. An external opinioned audit with management letter is completed each year on time. The Institution consistently meets Title IV Requirements.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution demonstrates that its financial resources are adequate to carry out its Mission and support its current programs. This is evidenced in a balanced budget and a positive cash flow. The financial operation of the institution is well organized and is staffed by appropriate professionals. Income is in excess of expenses for the years reviewed; budget allocations are sufficient for current operational expenses; a contingency plan is in place. A plan listing future projections of income and expenses is available and approved by the Board. Financial Reports demonstrate financial integrity with few accounting errors. An external opinioned audit with management letter is completed each year. The Institution meets Title IV Requirements.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution inconsistently demonstrates that its financial resources are adequate to carry out its Mission and support its current programs. A balanced budget and a positive cash flow are infrequently demonstrated. The financial operation of the institution is poorly organized and is not staffed by appropriate professionals. Income often falls below expenses; budget allocations are insufficient for current operational expenses; and no contingency plan is in place. No plan listing future projections of income and expenses is available or is not approved by the Board. Financial Reports fail to demonstrate financial integrity or contain accounting errors. External opinioned audits are lacking or insufficient. The Institution inconsistently meets Title IV Requirements.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not demonstrate that its financial resources are adequate to carry out its Mission and support its current programs. The budget is not balanced and a positive cash flow is not demonstrated. The financial operation of the institution is inadequate and is not staffed appropriately. Expenses routinely exceed Income; budget allocations are insufficient for operational expenses; and no contingency plan is in place. No plan listing future projections of income and expenses is available. There is no evidence of financial integrity and serious accounting errors persist. External opinioned audits are lacking. The Institution does not meet Title IV Requirements.

12. Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive *Assessment Plan* as a means of evaluating its effectiveness in accomplishing its mission and objectives. The *Assessment Plan* describes the processes utilized in the evaluation of all foundational and operational areas of the institution and includes the identification of outcomes, assessments to determine the extent to which these outcomes are achieved, and evidence of institutional improvement based on an analysis of assessment results.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has written and implemented an exemplary *Assessment Plan* which includes all aspects of the institution. Assessment data is regularly used in revising the Plan and is incorporated into planning processes. The Plan is continuously reviewed and approved by the Board. The institution provides a model process for the evaluation of program outcomes and student learning. These processes include the thorough analysis of retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and student success rates on state and other licensing exams with utilization of multiple approaches (qualitative and quantitative methods and direct and indirect measures) for assessing information which is both internal and external to the institution. The results of the evaluation of student learning are provided to both internal and external stakeholders, readily available to the public in a clear format, and includes regular curriculum reviews which ensure the content is consistent with national norms. Assessment results are reviewed on an ongoing basis with new goals regularly established which result in revisions made to the curriculum based on assessment results. The institution continuously evaluates its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the student services programs to support the Mission. Information obtained through the evaluation is actively used to improve achievement of student services programs goals. The institution systematically evaluates its fiscal condition and monitors the processes of its financial management of the fiscal operation including all internal and external mechanisms. The institution focuses on ensuring its financial stability and utilizes the results of financial evaluations for financial planning. The institution continuously evaluates the adequacy of facilities and equipment and of its Library and Learning Resources.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has written and implemented an *Assessment Plan* which includes all aspects of the institution. Assessment data is used in revising the Plan and is incorporated into planning processes. The Plan is appropriately reviewed and approved by the Board. The institution provides a process for the evaluation of program outcomes and student learning. These processes include the analysis of retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and student success rates on state and other licensing exams with utilization of multiple approaches (qualitative and quantitative methods and direct and indirect measures) for assessing information which is both internal and external to the institution. The results of the evaluation of student learning are provided to stakeholders appropriately, readily available to the public, and includes curriculum reviews which ensure the content is consistent with national norms. Assessment results are reviewed with new goals established which result in revisions made to the curriculum based on assessment results. The institution evaluates its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the student services

programs to support the Mission. Information obtained through the evaluation is used to improve achievement of student services programs goals. The institution evaluates its fiscal condition and monitors the processes of its financial management of the fiscal operation. The institution focuses on ensuring its financial stability and utilizes the results of financial evaluations for financial planning. The institution evaluates the adequacy of facilities and equipment and of its Library and Learning Resources.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution's *Assessment Plan* does not include all aspects of the institution. Assessment data is inconsistently used in revising the Plan and is may not be incorporated into planning processes. The Plan is not appropriately reviewed or approved by the Board. The institution does not provide a regular process for the evaluation of program outcomes and student learning. The institution does not adequately collect and analyze data concerning retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and student success rates on state and other licensing exams. The results of the evaluation of student learning are not provided to stakeholders appropriately, are not readily available to the public, and do not include curriculum reviews. Assessment results are not regularly reviewed; thus new goals are not regularly established regarding revisions to the. The institution does not appropriately evaluate its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the student services programs to support the Mission; thus no information is available to be used to improve achievement of student services programs goals. The institution inconsistently evaluates its fiscal condition and inadequately monitors the processes of its financial management of the fiscal operation. The institution does not focus on ensuring its financial stability and utilizes the results of financial evaluations for financial planning. The institution does not evaluate the adequacy of facilities and equipment and of its Library and Learning Resources.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not have a written *Assessment Plan*. Administrative personnel and faculty do not have job descriptions. The student learning and program outcomes are assumed to be appropriate to its educational mission and the approach without supporting data. The institution has no plans on how to admit and retain students or the effectiveness of student services. The institution's fiscal condition is in jeopardy without plans to improve financial management, budgeting, and/or fund raising. The institution does not possess adequate facilities, equipment, Library and Learning Resources.

13. Strategic Planning

The institution's planning processes are all-inclusive in nature and lead to the development of a comprehensive institutional *Strategic Plan*. The *Strategic Plan* will address such factors as educational programs, student enrollment, staffing projections, finances, facilities, equipment, and policies and procedures for operation.

The strategic planning processes include both short-range (1-2 years) and long-range (3-5 years) projections and goal setting. These processes will identify priorities, set goals and timelines, and identify individuals responsible for implementation.

The institution utilizes the results of assessments in broad-based continuous planning and evaluation processes, and incorporates them into overall strategic planning processes.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has developed and implemented an exemplary *Strategic Plan* based on both internal and external factors. The persons responsible for implementation of goals and timetables have demonstrated effectiveness in completing action steps and meeting targets set for the accomplishment of goals. The financial resources required for meeting the goals have been provided and in some cases goals have been accomplished ahead of the timetable. The Plan is approved and reviewed annually by the Board. The planning process takes into account both income and expenditure categories for at least five years based upon sound research, an analysis of assessment data, and involves all appropriate constituencies of the institution. The Plan is an integral part of the institution's on-going cycle of planning, budgeting, and assessment. The college makes excellent use of assessment data and subsequent revisions with adjusted or new goals are utilized to implement changes.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has developed and implemented a *Strategic Plan* based on both internal and external factors. Persons responsible for implementation of goals and timetables are engaged appropriately in completing action steps and meeting targets set for the accomplishment of goals. The financial resources required for meeting the goals have been provided and in, general, goals have been accomplished according to the timetable. The Plan is approved and reviewed appropriately by the Board. The planning process takes into account both income and expenditure categories, is based upon sound research and an analysis of assessment data, and involves appropriate constituencies of the institution. The Plan is a part of the institution's on-going cycle of planning, budgeting, and assessment. The college makes use of assessment data and subsequent revisions with adjusted or new goals are utilized to implement changes.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - Evidence of the implementation of the *Strategic Plan* is lacking. Timetables, persons responsible for implementation and/or the financial resources required for meeting the goals are missing or incomplete. The Plan is approved by the Board, but the review cycle is irregular. The plan for maintaining and upgrading facilities is inadequate. Goals are not prioritized for each area of the institution. The planning process does not include both income and expenditure categories for at least five years. The research and analysis of assessment data is not evident, nor does it involve all appropriate constituencies of the institution. Minutes of

planning committee meetings are incomplete. The utilization of the Plan in the institution's on-going cycle of planning, budgeting, and assessment is not evident as a basis of change and self-improvement for the institution.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution has no Strategic Plan or the plan is not adequate, does not provide for at least five years of income, and/or expenditures. The maintenance of facilities, personnel required for implementation of plans and goals, or other significant areas of institution are not addressed. The process for the development of a Plan does not include all the constituents. Minutes were not provided or were nonexistent. The institution does not utilize a Plan in the institution's on-going cycle of planning, budgeting, and assessment is not evident as a basis of change and self-improvement for the institution.

14. Library and Learning Resources

The institution maintains library and learning resources (including physical as well as digital resources) which are adequate to support the mission of the institution, the educational programs offered, and to promote the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural development of faculty and students. Additionally, the institution provides appropriate access to these learning resources and to relevant facilities, equipment, supplies and services. The institution employs sufficient and qualified library staff.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution provides superior Library and Learning Resources, technology and services. State-of-the-art instructional technology is available to fully support the institution's Mission, Objectives, academic programs, and administrative functions. Sound strategic, operational, and financial planning is in place and utilized for the improvement of the Library and Learning Resources. The institution provides abundant and consistent financial support for the Library and Learning Resources and utilizes exceptional instructional technology applications to achieve its academic mission regardless of the modes of delivery of its academic programs. The institution employs an abundant number of highly qualified Library and Learning Resources staff and provides outstanding training and support to faculty, staff, and students. The institution maintains continuous access and availability to Library and Learning Resources for all students, regardless of program location or mode of delivery.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution provides Library and Learning Resources, technology and services; and instructional technology appropriate to support its Mission, Objectives, academic programs, and administrative functions through strategic, operational, and financial planning. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for Library and Learning Resources and utilizes instructional technology appropriate to its academic mission regardless of the modes of delivery of its academic programs. The institution employs an adequate number of professionally qualified Library and Learning Resources staff and provides appropriate training and support to faculty, staff, and students. The institution ensures appropriate access and availability to Library and Learning Resources for all students, regardless of program location or mode of delivery.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution provides minimal Library and Learning Resources, technology and services; and instructional technology in support of its Mission, Objectives, academic programs, and administrative functions. The institution has insufficient and inconsistent financial support for Library and Learning Resources services and utilizes instructional technology which is not appropriate to its academic mission and/or the modes of delivery of its academic programs. The institution employs an inadequate number of professionally qualified Library and Learning Resources staff and/or provides insufficient training and support to faculty, staff, and students. The institution provides minimal access and availability to Library and Learning Resources for students

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution provides no Library and Learning Resources, technology and services. Instructional technology in support of its Mission, Objectives, academic programs, and administrative functions. The institution has

minimal financial support for Library and Learning Resources services and fails to utilize instructional technology which is appropriate to its academic mission and/or the modes of delivery of its academic programs. The institution fails to employ any professionally qualified Library and Learning Resources staff and/or to provide training and support to faculty, staff, and students. The institution provides insufficient access and availability to Library and Learning Resources for students.

15. Facilities and Equipment

The institution maintains physical facilities and necessary equipment which are adequate to serve the institution's mission and objectives. Facilities, regardless of location, meet all state and local requirements and provide an atmosphere for safe and effective learning.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution provides and maintains superior facilities and state-of-the-art equipment which surpass the usual needs of comparable institutions and educational programs. The institution controls the use of its facilities and has realistic plans in place and funds available to meet the facility needs into the future.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution provides and maintains adequate and appropriate facilities and equipment to serve the needs of the institution and its educational programs. The institution controls the use of its facilities.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution provides inadequate and/or inappropriate facilities and equipment to serve the needs of the institution and its educational programs. The maintenance of facilities and/or equipment is subpar. The institution only partially controls the use of its facilities.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not provide facilities and equipment necessary to serve the needs of the institution and its educational programs. The maintenance of facilities and/or equipment is nonexistent. The institution does not control the use of its facilities.

16. Health and Security

The institution provides a healthy, safe, and secure environment for the institution's personnel and students, regardless of location.

4 - Exceeds the Standard - The institution has an exceptionally detailed emergency plan which is appropriately posted and published. Extensive security measures are in place for all campus facilities and events. All procedures for handling hazardous material or dangerous equipment exceed local, State, and Federal laws.

3 - Meets the Standard - The institution has an appropriately posted and published emergency plan. Security measures are appropriate for all campus facilities. All procedures for handling hazardous material or dangerous equipment conform to local, State, and Federal laws.

2 - Falls Below the Standard - The institution has an inadequate emergency plan and/or its plan is not posted and published, as necessary. Security measures are inadequate for campus facilities. Procedures for handling hazardous material or dangerous equipment do not consistently conform to local, State, and Federal laws.

1 - Fails to Meet the Standard - The institution does not have an emergency plan and/or its plan is not posted and published. The institution lacks security measures for campus facilities. Procedures for handling hazardous material or dangerous equipment do not conform to local, State, and Federal laws.

II. Federal Requirements (Standard Area 17)

In addition to its obligation to demonstrate and maintain compliance with the Accreditation Requirements, any institution that holds Candidate or Accredited status must also demonstrate that it meets the specified Federal Requirements regardless of whether the institution participates in Title IV programs. Institutions not participating in Title IV programs are not required to meet Title IV requirements.

Unlike the Accreditation Requirements (Standard Areas 1-16) which are evaluated utilizing the 1-4 Benchmark designations, institutions are either deemed “In Compliance” or “Not In Compliance” with applicable Federal Requirements (Standard Area 17).

TRACS staff, peer evaluators, (Evaluation Teams and / or Focus Teams) and the Accreditation Commission will determine whether or not an institution demonstrates compliance with Federal Requirements based on the expectations as presented. Failure to comply with Federal Requirements will be reported to the United States Department of Education and will trigger an Institutional Staff Review per TRACS policy.