# Steps to Reaffirmation: A SACSCOC Journey to No Recommendations

**Bridget Dewees, PhD**
**Assistant Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness**

# Claflin University

**Assessment Institute in Indianapolis**

**October 29-31, 2023**

# Agenda

- Introduction- Claflin University and SACSCOC

- Claflin's Journey to Successful Reaffirmation
  - Understanding the Requirements
  - Engaging Stakeholders
  - Collaboration and Teamwork
  - Data Gathering and Documentation
  - Ensuring Consistency and Quality of Information

- Journey Amidst Challenges

- Transferable Strategies and Lessons

- Questions and Answers

# CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY
# AT-A-GLANCE

400 Magnolia St | Orangeburg, SC 29115 | (803) 535-5000 | www.claflin.edu

## The University

**History: Founded in 1869** and named in honor of Lee Claflin, a prominent Methodist layman from Boston, and his son William Claflin, then governor of Massachusetts.

**Location:** Orangeburg, South Carolina **50 miles** southeast of Columbia; **75 miles** northwest of Charleston

**Campus: 50-acre main campus**

**Colors:** Orange & Maroon

**Endowment: $48.6 million**

**Affiliation:** The United Methodist Church

**Accreditation:** Claflin University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award baccalaureate and masters degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Claflin University.
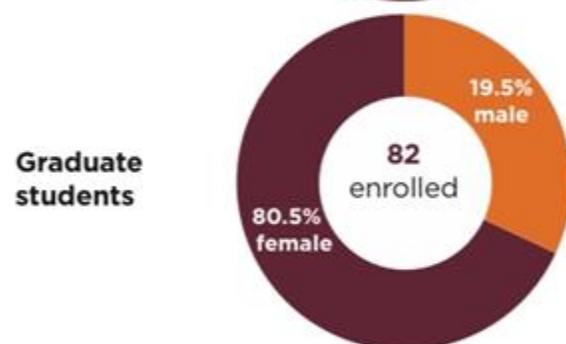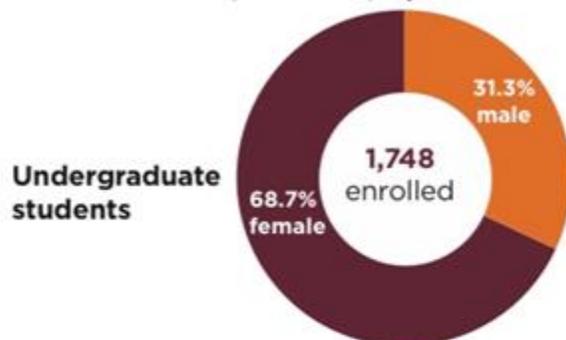
**Carnegie Class:** Baccalaureate Colleges - Arts and Sciences

**President:** Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack

## Enrollment & Admissions

**Total students (Fall 2022): 1,830**

**Undergraduate students**

1,748 enrolled
- 31.3% male
- 68.7% female

**Graduate students**

82 enrolled
- 19.5% male
- 80.5% female

**International Students: 2%**
**Student Distribution: 30** states and Washington D.C.;
**12** countries; **46** Counties in South Carolina
**Percentage of in-state students: 83.2%**
**Online Enrollment: 304**
**Acceptance Rate: 62%**
**Persistence Rate: 94%**
**Retention Rate: 79%**
**Pell Recipients: 72%**

## Academics

**Undergraduate majors (UG): 38**
**Graduate majors (GR): 5**
**Online degrees: 9 (4 UG, 5 GR)**
**Student to Faculty Ratio: 13:1**

**Average class size: 16**
**Instructional Faculty: 119** full time; 82% with terminal degrees.

**Top 5** Undergraduate majors: Biology, Psychology, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Mass Communications

**Core Curriculum:** Interdisciplinary, project-oriented approach with emphasis upon liberal arts, leadership, co-curricular engagement, and experiential learning activities

**Program Accreditations:** Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP); Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP); National Association of Schools of Music (NASM); American Chemical Society (ACS); Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET); and Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)

**100% of students complete a thesis or research project prior to graduation**

## Freshman Class Profile (2026)

- First-time/Full-time: **390**
- Average **SAT: 970**
- Average **ACT: 19**
- Average GPA Mid-Range: **3.5**
- Top 25% HS Rank: **28%**

# SACSCOC- Brief Background

**Definition**: The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states.

**Importance**:

- **Quality Assurance**: Ensures institutions meet high standards of quality in education, making their degrees more valuable and recognized.

- **Federal Funding**: Institutions accredited by SACSCOC are eligible to receive federal funds, including student financial aid.

- **Transferrable Credits**: It ensures that credits earned by students are recognized and transferable to other accredited institutions.

- **Continuous Improvement**: The process encourages institutions to improve continually through regular reviews and feedback.
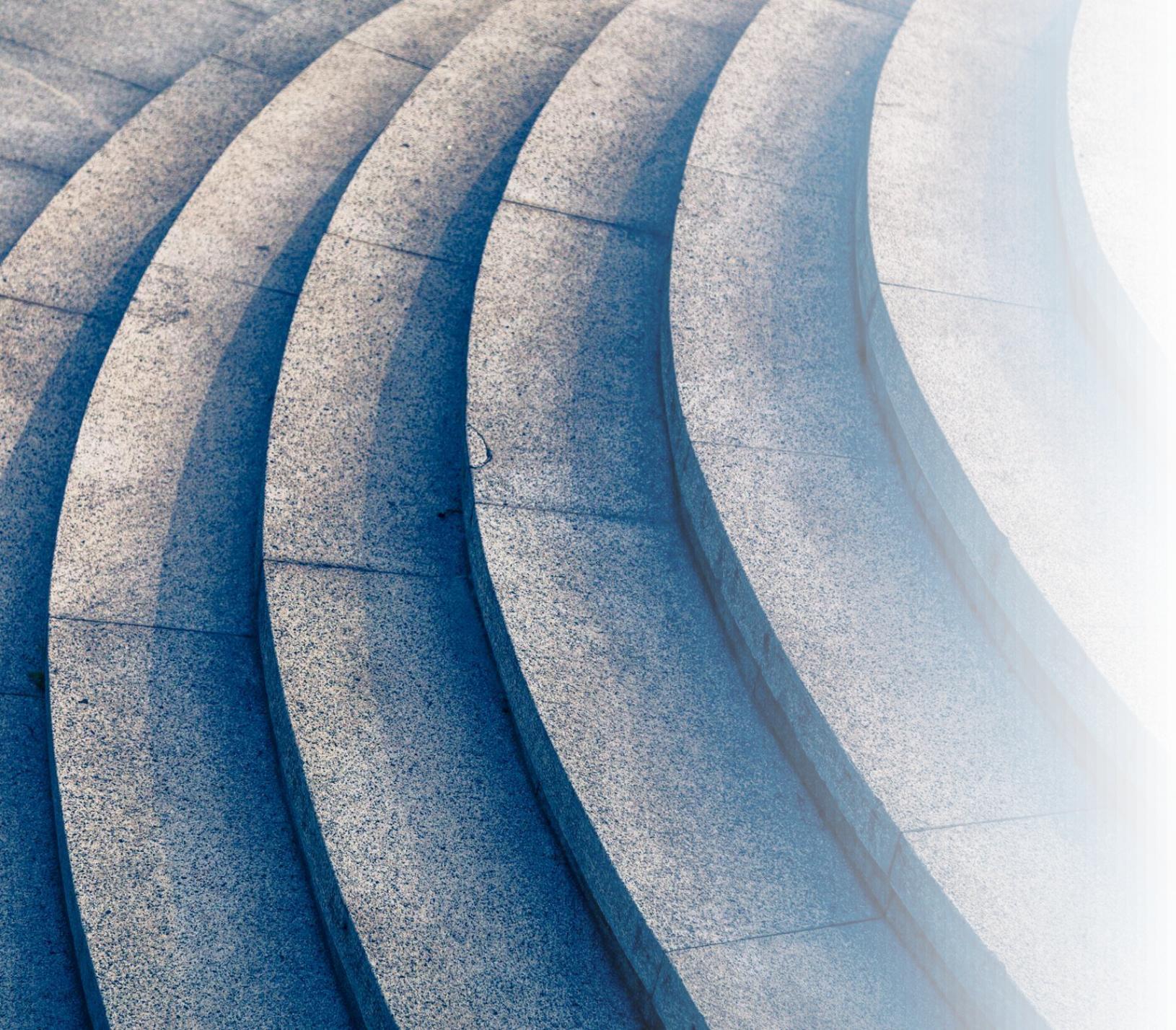
# Steps to Re-Affirmation

Feb 2019 – December 2022

# Original Plan of Action

| Objective | Responsibility | Time-Line |
|---|---|---|
| Appoint Steering Committee | President | February 2019 |
| Orientation Meeting | Steering Committee/ QEP Chair | February 2019 |
| Develop Reaffirmation Website | Department IE | March 2019 |
| Establish Team Leads (Subcommittees) | Steering Committee | March 2019 |
| Provide Oversight to Subcommittees | Steering Committee | Ongoing—Fall 2019 |
| First Draft of Compliance Report | Steering Committee | March 2020 |
| First Draft of QEP | QEP Committee | May 2020 |
| Second Draft of Compliance Report | Steering Committee | March 2021 |
| Second Draft of QEP | QEP Committee | March 2021 |
| Submit Final Compliance Certificate | Accreditation Liaison | Fall 2021 |

# The Journey Begins...

- February 2019 committee Formation
  - SACSCOC Steering Committee
  - QEP Committee
- Established Guidelines and Deadlines
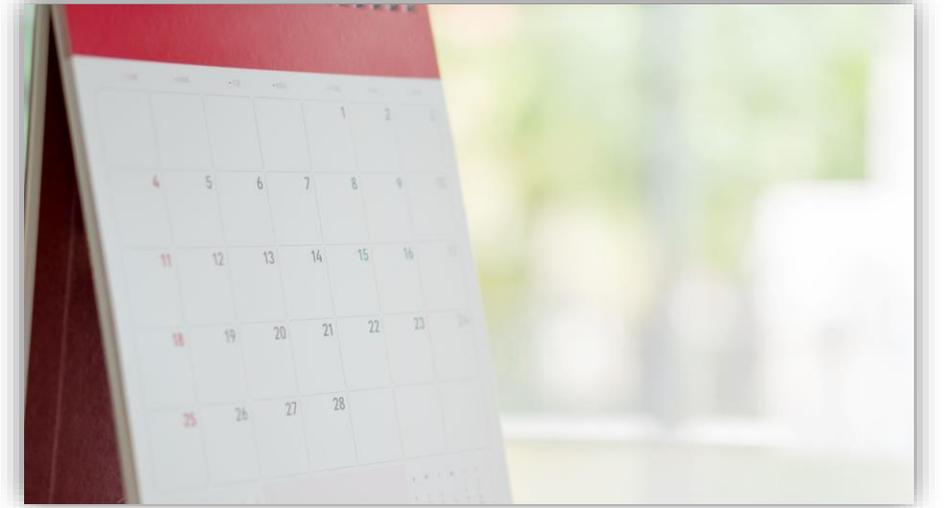
# Managing Two Committees

## SACS Steering Committee

- Plan of Action
- Website/ E-folders
- Subcommittees

## QEP Committee (separate goal)

- Select topic—broad based involvement

Teamwork is Key!

- Team **Leads per** Standard
- QEP Team work simultaneously
- SACS Criteria training
- Software training--Xitracs
- Implement regular check-ins via Steering Committee
- Teams start writing

# STOP

- 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic
- Campus Virtual
  March 2020-Fall 2021

# The Journey Amidst Changes—Pause

- New President
- New Strategic Plan
- COVID-19 and Campus Disconnect

# Compliance Certificate STILL due October 2021

- Used Xitracs to respond to 70+ items

- Zoom meetings, Virtual Protocol

- Smaller committee to enter final data

- Work closely with Xitracs representative

- Campus Policy Review to include updated handbooks, catalogs

# Offsite Findings / Response Report

- November 2021 —19 findings offsite team review

- Shared Findings with Senior Leaders via Response Action Plan

- Designated responsible person for each finding

- Finalized Response Report using Xitracs

# Focused Report Response Plan—Senior Leader Responsibility (sample)

| Standard | Finding | Plan | Responsible Person |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6.2 Justifies and documents the qualification of its faculty members. ( Faculty qualifications | ...however, the Off-site committee identified some faculty for whom more information is needed. | Justifications for faculty per list. | Provost |
| 8.2a Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. | ...the institution did not provide a clear rational for only providing a sample of their IE matrix plans. | Expand rational and provide larger sample size | VP/ AVP Institutional Effectiveness |
| 12.4 Written student complaints, evidence of implementation and record of complaints | ...not clear how complaints outside of three areas are handled, where are records stored/ no evidence of log | Share log of complaints and detailed examples | VP Student Support Services |

# Show Time – Shift from Offsite Response to SITE VISIT Preparation - April 2022
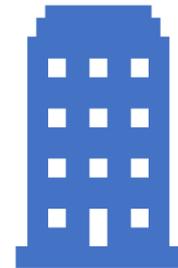
All hands on deck—no approved vacation

Share Master Schedule with Senior Leaders

Transportation/ Food Service

Hotel readiness to include meeting space

# Responding to Onsite Committee/ Prep for Site Visit

- Received Reaffirmation Committee List– opportunity to change if conflict

- Used Technology to set up shared folders for response and campus data collection

- Established additional Committees
  - Campus Readiness—weekly meetings
  - Trained all Front-Line Staff
  - IE team—onsite preparation ( meeting spaces, hotel, travel misc.)
  - Finalize Schedule

# Strategy for Communication

- Shared Folders
- Provided Just In Time Information
- Consistency
- Organization

# Campus Readiness

Data Sharing

Mock Interviews

QEP Melt Downs/ Videos

Posters/ Communication

# CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY
## ST★RS
STUDENTS · TRACKED · ADVISED · RETAINED · SUCCEED

Quality Enhancement Plan
The Primary Focus of Site Visit
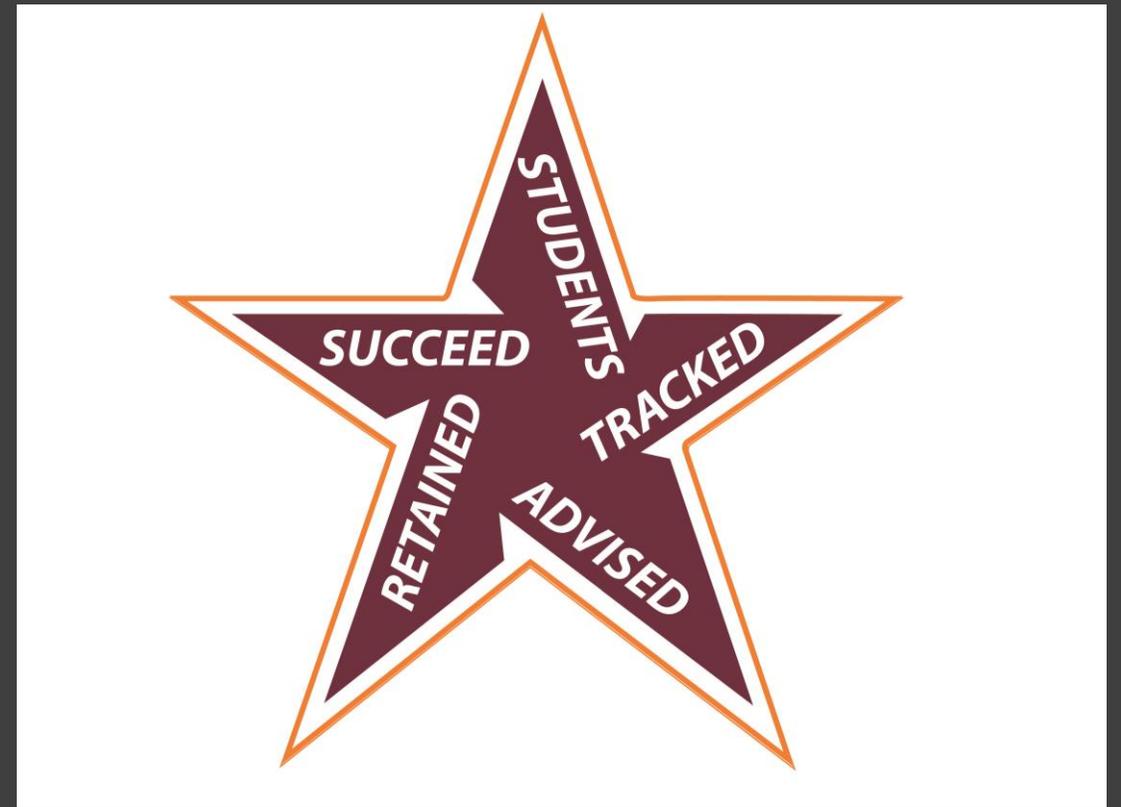
Campus Give Aways/ Training

**CU-STARS: A reorganization of key areas and redesign of the advising process to include effective use of coaches and technology to engage and track student learning and success.**

| **S**tudents | **T**racked | **A**dvised/Coached | **R**etained | **S**ucceed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students will identify clear academic goals and understand pathways to achieve learning for academic success. (vision) | Students, Faculty Staff will be proficient in coaching methods and use of technology to aid in student success. | Students will communicate with coaches as established to obtain academic goals. (engaged) AND understand the value of university support services and resources and demonstrate awareness through engagement and satisfaction. | Students will persist and achieve measurable progress towards timely completion of academic degrees. (progress, retained) | Students will find employment in field of study or admissions to graduate school. (placement) |

President Warmack—#1 Cheerleader!

Show Time!
Campus
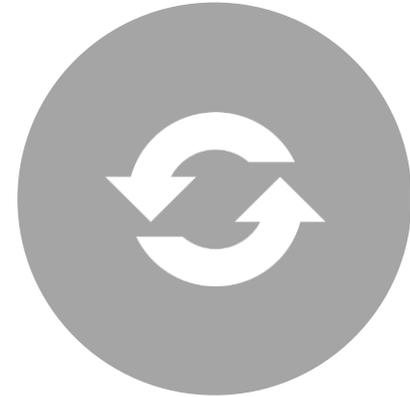Readiness
-Students
-Employees
-Board

# Reaffirmation Onsite Final Report April 2022



3 ITEMS LEFT TO CLARIFY WITH COMMITTEE

IE OFFICE FINALIZED RESPONSE REPORT

XITRACS THIRD CYCLE

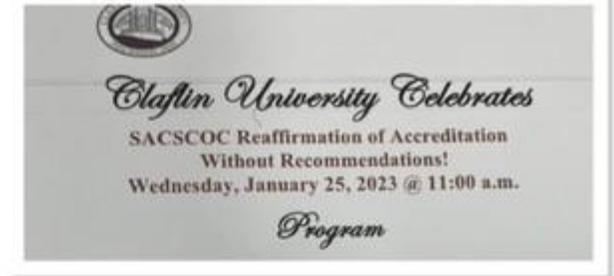# Annual Meeting-12/2022
# Final Decision
# 19-3-0

Claflin Reaffirmed
10 years without
recommendations!!

# Campus New Year Reaffirmation Celebration

- Issued Certificates of Appreciation
- A Good Meal
- Music
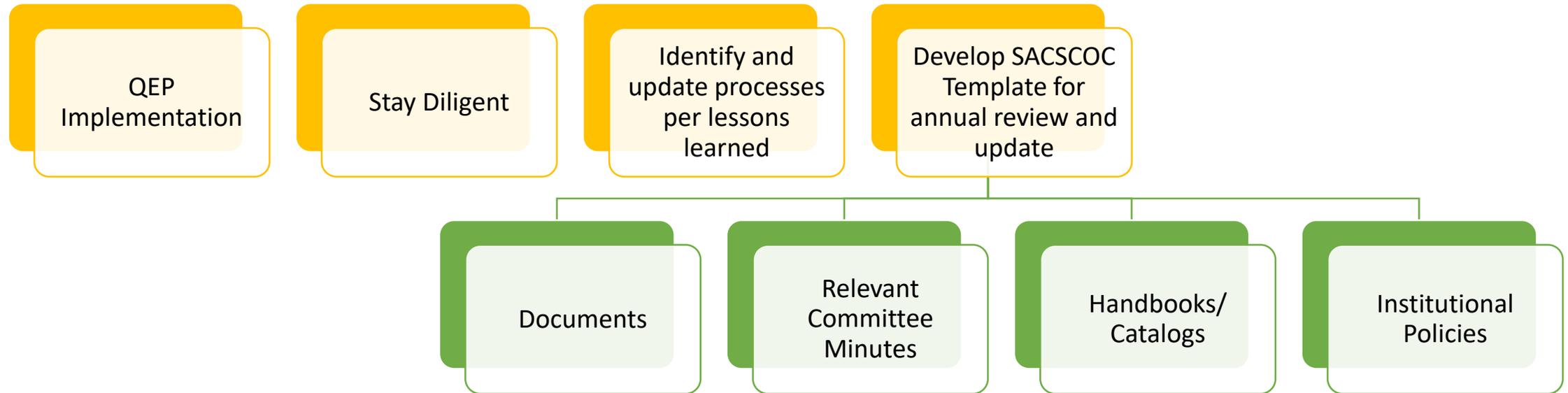- Fellowship

# Transferable Strategies (see handout)

| Strategy | Insights |
|---|---|
| **Committee Formation/ Training** | Clear delegation of tasks and responsibilities ensures that every aspect of the reaffirmation process is being overseen by dedicated teams. |
| **Established Guidelines** | Setting expectations and norms early on fosters efficient collaboration and reduces potential conflicts or misunderstandings. |
| **Embrace Technology** | Leveraging digital tools can centralize documentation, improve collaboration, and make monitoring progress easier. |
| **Detailed Document Review** | Leveraging digital tools can centralize documentation, improve collaboration, and make monitoring progress easier. |
| **Feedback Mechanisms** | Effective and timely feedback loops can expedite resolutions and ensure that issues are addressed promptly. |
| **Collaborative Platforms** | Encouraging collaborative work can pool expertise, distribute workload, and improve the quality of the output. |
| **Regular Check-ins** | Regular check-ins keep everyone aligned, informed, and ensures consistent progress. |
| **Preparedness for Site Visit** | Anticipating evaluations and preparing in advance can mitigate challenges during the actual evaluation. |
| **Addressing Feedback** | Dedicating focused teams to address feedback can ensure thorough and timely resolutions. |
| **Post Evaluation Actions** | The reaffirmation process doesn't end with approval. Have a clear plan to maintain standards and continuously improve. |
| **Celebrate Hard Work** | Celebrations can boost morale, recognize hard work, and motivate teams for future endeavors. |

# Significance of Achieving Reaffirmation Without Recommendation

- Trust and Credibility

- Demonstrated Excellence

- Positive Impact on Stakeholders

- Reduction in Administrative Overhead

- Opportunity to Set higher standards at the institution

# Next STEPS

| QEP Implementation | Stay Diligent | Identify and update processes per lessons learned | Develop SACSCOC Template for annual review and update |

| Documents | Relevant Committee Minutes | Handbooks/ Catalogs | Institutional Policies |

# The Journey Continues….



When they left…