



# Still Striving

What HBCU Boards of Trustees  
Need to Know About the  
SACS Accreditation Process



[www.southerneducation.org](http://www.southerneducation.org)

## The Southern Education Foundation

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF), [www.southerneducation.org](http://www.southerneducation.org), is a non-profit organization comprised of diverse women and men who work together to improve the quality of life for all of the South's people through better and more accessible education. SEF advances creative solutions to ensure fairness and excellence in education for low-income students from pre-school through higher education.

SEF depends upon contributions from foundations, corporations and individuals to support its efforts. SEF develops and implements programs of its own design, serves as an intermediary for donors who want a high-quality partner with whom to work on education issues in the South, and participates as a public charity in the world of philanthropy.

### SEF's Vision

We seek a South and a nation with a skilled workforce that sustains an expanding economy, where civic life embodies diversity and democratic values and practice, and where an excellent education system provides all students with fair chances to develop their talents and contribute to the common good. We will be known for our commitment to combating poverty and inequality through education.

### SEF's Timeless Mission

SEF develops, promotes and implements policies, practices and creative solutions that ensure educational excellence, fairness and high levels of achievement among African Americans and other groups and communities that have not yet reached the full measure of their potential.

### SEF's Values and Principles

SEF is committed to:

- top quality work, assessment and continuous improvement to achieve high impact
- collaborative efforts that draw on the best of diverse institutions and communities in support of educational excellence
- creative problem solving
- integrity, accountability and transparency
- adaptability, flexibility and future-oriented approaches, and
- honest and intelligent advocacy to achieve results

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## Foreword

The year 2007 marks the 140th year of the founding of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF). SEF is the nation's oldest education philanthropy.

SEF's history and that of the South's 77 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are intertwined. From its founding in 1867 until now, SEF has supported HBCUs in diverse ways to help these important and resilient institutions succeed in their important mission: to provide their students with quality higher education opportunities and the skills to move up and on, societal racism, segregation, poverty and exclusion notwithstanding.

In the Information Age into which the world has moved, propelled by the revolution in technology, HBCUs continue to fulfill a vital function, although they are no longer the only means by which African Americans now secure higher education. HBCUs still graduate almost one quarter of African Americans who annually receive four-year degrees and forty percent of those who receive such degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

But HBCUs are more than places of higher learning. They are repositories of Black history and culture, exemplars of African American achievement, servants to the communities of which they are a part, and engines of economic progress and employment. Their existence serves as a constant reminder that progress through hard work and learning is possible. HBCUs are places where students, many of them low-income or first-generation college attendees, gain the nurture and support they need to excel. HBCUs embrace diversity in education and have always been open to students of all ethnicities. They also have among the most diverse faculties of all institutions of higher education in the nation. In short, HBCUs are places of leadership, uplift and preparation for life's many challenges.

Thousands of students have entered HBCUs from modest circumstances and emerged ready and able to compete with anyone, anywhere, anytime with skills, values and good habits of heart and mind. If HBCUs did not exist, we would be trying to create them!

Today, HBCUs are buffeted by an array of market forces and developments that require new practices and policies. The greatest challenge that many HBCUs face is the challenge to become contemporary. The "business of higher education" today requires attentiveness to issues of institutional niche, marketing and resources, excellence in teaching, governance and student learning outcomes, solid finances and a culture of institutional assessment, accountability, transparency and evaluation.

HBCUs must continue to have first rate leaders as their executives and board members in order to remain on the "cutting edge" of quality and innovation. Creativity, vision and courage are the keys to future success.

Trustees of extraordinary achievement and capacity have brought HBCUs "thus far along the way." Most have given generously of their time, talent and treasure.

In 2005, SEF began a dialogue with HBCU presidents and trustees about ways in which SEF might be able to help trustees become even more well equipped to provide stellar guidance and stewardship, especially in the area of accreditation. To this end, SEF convened an Exemplary Trustees Group to provide counsel about what Trustees know, need and want to know to be more effective in this regard.

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As a result of the guidance received, in March 2007, SEF initiated its first HBCU Presidents and Trustees Seminar on Governance and Accreditation. Organized in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Institute for Education Management, the seminar brought together a remarkable group of leaders from eleven HBCUs to exchange information and ideas about accreditation preparation and reflect on how presidents and trustees can work more effectively together in pursuit of shared ends.

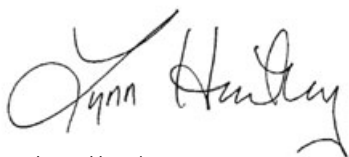
At the meeting, SEF was proud to have Dr. June Hopps, Chair *Emeritus* of the Spelman College Board of Trustees; Dr. Charles Willie, Professor *Emeritus* of the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Dr. Belle Wheelan, President of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, as keynote speakers. The insight that they shared with candor, passion and good humor were capstones of the event.

One of the presenters at that event who also merits special recognition is Dr. Leroy Davis, the author of this monograph. An expert in accreditation, Dr. Davis is a veritable fount of knowledge for all eager to learn how to achieve positive outcomes. There were many other wonderful presenters at the Seminar — too numerous to list here — but all did a great job of challenging, inspiring, edifying and encouraging trustees to be all that they can be.

As the seminar ended, SEF was given a mandate by participants to continue in this line of work — it will be our pleasure. At the end of the day, there is enough work for all of us to do to help our cherished HBCUs continue aggressive pursuit of their missions. And, as the old saying goes, "no one of us knows what all of us knows."

SEF especially hopes that this publication and others under development will help HBCU leaders come to terms with accreditation challenges and find fresh ways to use their individual and collective intelligence, clout and leadership to help their cherished institutions succeed. Trustees and presidents are in a real sense "keepers of the dream of freedom" that our forebears sought through education.

It is our watch now. We must not fail.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lynn Huntley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lynn" and last name "Huntley" clearly distinguishable.

Lynn Huntley

President

The Southern Education Foundation



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LEROY DAVIS SR.

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### Introduction

The roles and responsibilities of college and university boards of trustees are well defined in principle but overlap in practice (Ingram, 1993). While known as institutional policymakers, board members have many other duties and responsibilities (Fain, 2007). Some of these include setting the institution's mission and purpose; appointing, supporting and evaluating the president; promoting strategic planning; and ensuring adequate financial resources for the institution (Nason, 1989).

Several of these responsibilities are closely aligned with the expectations of boards in the accreditation process. This paper focuses on the role of boards of trustees at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and examines their policymaking and oversight responsibilities in the accreditation process. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is used as the accreditation model because more than eighty-five percent of HBCUs are located in the Southern region of the United States. The paper also provides board members with practical and useful information about SACS accreditation policy and practice.

### The Importance of Accreditation

Accreditation in the United States is the primary means used by government and a host of other groups and individuals to determine the overall quality and effectiveness of discrete institutions of higher education. The accreditation process is conducted by private, non-profit, non-governmental organizations or accrediting bodies, including those that focus specifically on institutions located in a defined geographic region (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). SACS is the regional body which accredits institutions in eleven Southern states.

Because there is no national governmental agency that manages higher education accreditation, each accrediting body, with approval from the U.S. Department of Education, establishes its own norms and standards for members (Eaton, 2003). In general, these standards are derived from best practices in higher education.

Institutions that meet and adhere to these standards are granted "accredited" status. In many respects, accreditation is viewed by many as the equivalent of a "Good Housekeeping seal of approval" for institutions of higher education. In fact, many institutions use their accreditation status to demonstrate their attainment of high standards of excellence.

Institutions that are regionally accredited also benefit by being eligible to participate in the student financial aid programs of the U.S. Department of Education. This is especially important to HBCUs which have traditionally enrolled large numbers of students who depend on federal financial aid to attend college (Evans, 2002) and often rely on tuition proceeds to operate. For HBCUs, accreditation is essential for the maintenance of student enrollment and in many cases, financial viability.

Accreditation by regional accrediting bodies such as SACS is also a prerequisite for institutional membership in specialized and programmatic accrediting bodies (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2002). For example, for an institution to have special accreditation for its business, chemistry, computer science or engineering programs, it must first obtain membership in a regional accrediting body.

In demonstrating the strength and quality of their academic programs, most institutions find it necessary to also have each academic program separately accredited by the appropriate programmatic accrediting body. For example, in most states, teacher training programs must be approved at the state level. Programmatic accreditations for

teacher education programs are also required. Programmatic or specialized teacher education accrediting bodies include the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). Any institution that offers a state-approved teacher training program must also be accredited by a regional accrediting organization.

Overall, accreditation is designed to provide assurances to consumers and other stakeholders that accredited institutions are operating at an acceptable level of educational quality. Therefore, the benefits derived from being accredited are well worth the time, effort and resources required.

## Areas of Institutional Operation Reviewed by SACS

Like all regional accrediting associations, SACS accreditation standards are broad and encompass almost all aspects of institutional operations. The primary areas of institutional operations reviewed by SACS include:

- The Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and the President
- Programs for Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness
- Educational Programs (Undergraduate and Graduate)
- Faculty Qualifications and Roles
- Library and Other Learning Resources
- Student Affairs and Services
- Financial Resources
- Physical Resources

*(Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2007).*

*The Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement* is the publication which sets forth Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards and Federal Requirements to delineate expectations and standards for the areas listed above. Institutions subject to SACS' oversight are required to provide appropriate documentation to demonstrate compliance with these provisions. Every trustee should own a copy of this publication and understand its provisions, scope and intent.

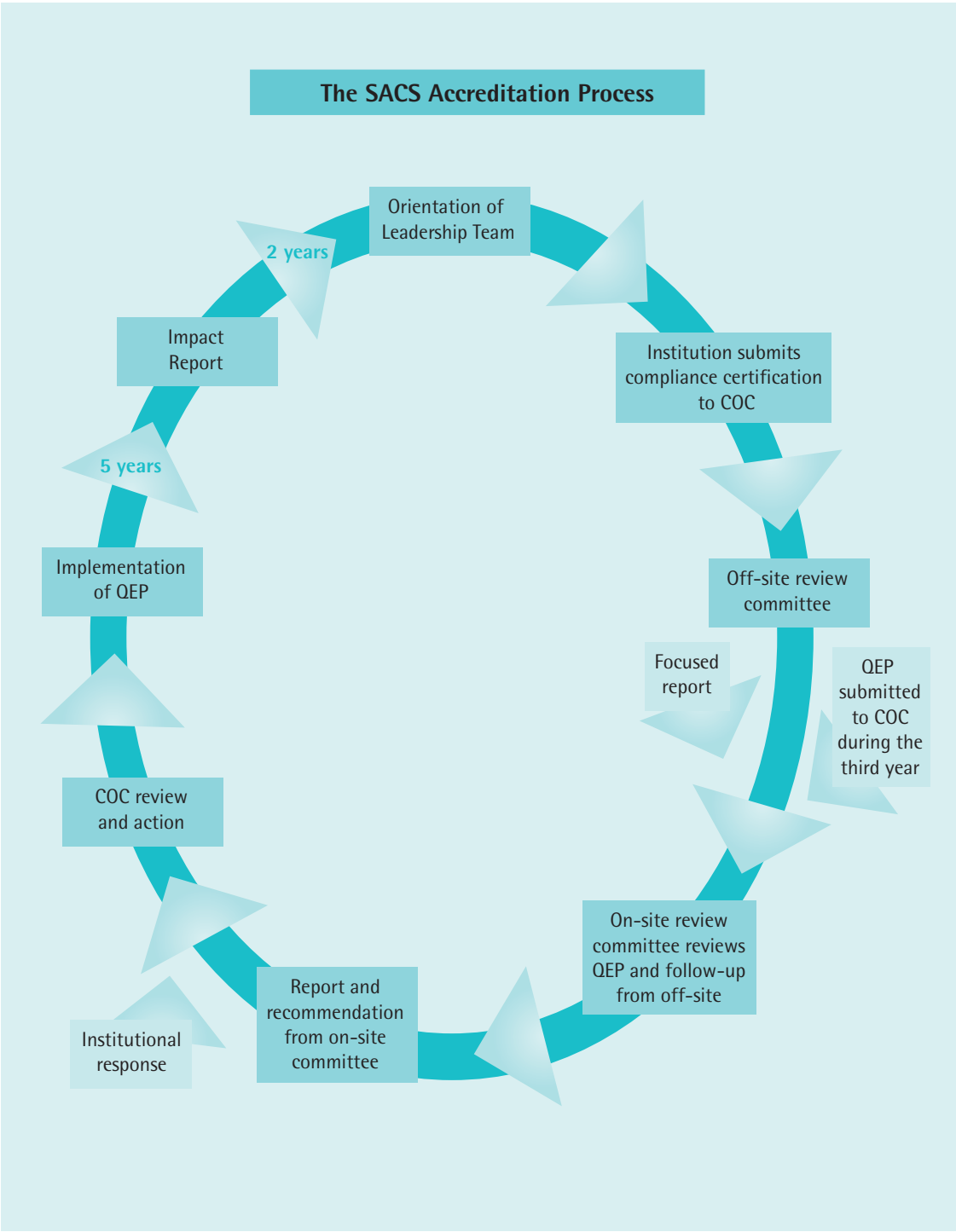
## How the SACS Accreditation Process Works

SACS Commission on Colleges (COC) is a voluntary association of more than 750 member institutions. Institutions seeking initial membership in SACS must petition the COC, apply for candidacy and engage in a comprehensive self assessment (Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2005a). If the institution meets all of the membership requirements and demonstrates compliance with all of the standards as provided in the handbook, *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement*, membership will be granted.

Member institutions are required to adhere to the standards or principles of accreditation. They are also required to engage in a renewal or reaffirmation of their accreditation status every ten years. The reaffirmation process requires several years to complete. It is important for institutional officers and board members to have a basic understanding of the mechanics of the process and to know their specific roles and responsibilities.

# What HBCU Boards of Trustees Need to Know About the SACS Accreditation Process

The SACS reaffirmation process can be separated into eleven distinct steps. Some of these steps are overlapping and others occur simultaneously. The COC periodically makes revisions and changes to its accreditation process and standards. Below, the steps of the accreditation process are outlined.



## **Orientation of the Leadership Team**

At least 3–4 years prior to the date of an institution's reaffirmation, the president should appoint a Leadership Team of institutional officers, faculty and other constituents. The primary purpose of the Team is to provide direction and guidance for the reaffirmation process. The Team essentially functions as a steering committee. The president, key administrators and others generally constitute this group of 5–15 persons.

Three years prior to reaffirmation, the COC will invite the Leadership Teams for all of the institutions in a particular reaffirmation class for an orientation session at an off-campus location. The COC will provide an overview of the reaffirmation process, emphasize due dates for reports, describe the available resources for institutions, and define roles and responsibilities in the process. The orientation of the Team, in many respects, signals the official beginning of the reaffirmation process.

## **Submission of Compliance Certification Report to COC**

The Compliance Certification report is a comprehensive document that certifies the institution's status of compliance with the accreditation requirements. Detailed evidence and supporting documentation must be provided by the institution for each requirement. The preparation of this document is usually coordinated by the Leadership Team or a Special Committee. Its preparation requires input from departments throughout the institution. It is not uncommon for an institution to spend 12 to 18 months preparing the Compliance Certification report. Prior to submission, the authenticity and correctness of the report must be certified by the president. Other accrediting bodies refer to a similar type of document as a "self-study" report. The Compliance Certification report is submitted to SACS for consideration by an Off-Site Review Committee.

## **Off-Site Review Committee**

The Off-Site Review Committee consists of peer reviewers from SACS member institutions. Its primary function is the review of the Compliance Certification report in order to ensure that applicable requirements have been met. On each compliance issue the Committee may conclude "full compliance," "partial compliance," "non-compliance" or "unable to determine."

This Committee is unique because it works at a neutral off-site location and reviews the reports of not one but all of the institutions in a given class or year. The Committee's report is provided to the COC and the On-Site Review Committee.

## **Submission of Focused Report**

The report of the Off-Site Review Committee is provided to the institution under review by the COC. The institution is given the opportunity to respond to the Committee's findings through submission of a focused report. This non-mandatory report gives the institution under review a chance to provide additional information and explanations to help resolve compliance issues identified by the Off-Site Review Committee.

## **Submission of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**

The QEP is the second major accreditation document prepared by the institution. Its primary purpose is to engage the institution in addressing one or more issues that contribute to institutional improvement and the enhancement of student learning. The plan should involve the entire institutional community and be clearly framed, succinct and well-researched. The QEP, implemented over time, will keep the institution engaged in the accreditation process for most of the 10-year cycle.

### **On-Site Review Committee**

The On-Site Review Committee, comprised of peer reviewers from COC member institutions, visits the college or university campus. Its two major functions are to evaluate the appropriateness and quality of the QEP, and address and resolve compliance issues identified by the Off-Site Review Committee. The Committee remains on campus for 2 or 3 days and spends most of that time reviewing the QEP.

### **On-Site Committee Report and Recommendation**

Using data gathered from their own review and that of the Off-Site Review Committee, the On-Site Committee prepares a report for the COC with a recommendation on the accreditation status of the institution.

### **Submission of Institutional Response**

Once the On-Site Review Committee's report is received by the COC, the institution is provided a summary of the findings. The institution may choose to submit a written response to the Committee's report. The Committee's report and the institution's response are used by the COC in deciding the institution's accreditation status.

### **COC Review and Action**

The COC meets two times per year to make decisions on reaffirmation of accreditation. Its final decision may be to reaffirm accreditation, continue accreditation, or withdraw accreditation from the institution.

Under some circumstances an institution's accreditation status may be continued on a conditional basis and the institution afforded time to correct any lingering areas of non-compliance. If an institution loses its accreditation after the prescribed period of time, there is an appeal process to address challenges to the COC disposition.

### **Implementation of the QEP**

Assuming that the institution is reaccredited, work begins on the Quality Enhancement Plan. Results and findings are closely monitored over the next five years.

### **Submission of Impact Report**

At the end of the fifth year after reaffirmation, the institution is required to submit to the COC a report describing the impact of the QEP on student learning and institutional quality.

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The SACS accreditation model is dependent on institutional integrity, compliance with prescribed standards, and the enhancement of institutional quality and student learning (Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2004). It is a process and product-oriented model that seeks evidence of compliance in all areas covered by applicable standards. As a central component in the process, the QEP requires institutional involvement throughout the decennial cycle and ensures that accreditation is an ongoing process, rather than a periodic event. The engagement of all constituencies (including the president and Leadership Team, board, faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders) in this process is the hallmark of those institutions that are successful in the accreditation process.

## How Boards Fulfill Their Roles and Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process

Board oversight of the accreditation process is essential in light of its importance to institutional viability. To be effective in this capacity, boards must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. It is especially important for HBCU board members whose institutions are subject to SACS' requirements to be knowledgeable about what is expected.

Presidents and their staffs can and should play a major role in preparing board members to fulfill their accreditation-related duties. Under all circumstances, board members should be proactive in seeking information and training in order to ensure that accreditation processes are being managed effectively by the president and his/her Leadership Team.

The COC has many resources to assist in planning for reaffirmation. These sources include handbooks, resource manuals, on-line resources, meetings and conferences. Trustees and other institutional leaders will benefit from these resources and can gain a full understanding of accreditation through study. There are a number of ways in which presidents and their staffs can assist boards in this regard:

- *Periodic board training sessions related to the accreditation process will help orient board members to what is required.* Training should be comprehensive and may be provided through a workshop or seminar organized by internal staff or outside presenters. Conducting such training annually or on a biennial basis is a good way of ensuring that all board members, including those who are new, are able to attend.
- *At least four years prior to reaffirmation, the administration should prepare a reaffirmation action plan for board review.* This plan should serve as an accreditation road map and include timelines and deadlines for reaching milestones throughout the entire process. Such a plan can facilitate oversight of progress and direct the board's attention toward matters requiring attention and engagement.
- *Board members should be provided with COC accreditation literature, such as The Principles of Accreditation and The Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.* These may be provided as resources and references used in the trustee training workshops.
- *Board members should use committee structures to periodically review institutional compliance with specific standards, especially those related to finances (resources), academics, planning and evaluation, and student affairs.* It is best for the institution if accreditation-related problems are identified early. By periodically asking the question, "Are we in compliance?" panic and surprise can be avoided during the reaffirmation process. Boards are encouraged to use their standing committees to ask this important question.
- *Board members and presidents should discuss and allocate funds for reaffirmation expenses as part of the budget planning process.* The board should insist that the budget includes funds for planning and executing such reaffirmation activities as preparing the Compliance Certification report and developing a QEP. Additionally, Leadership Team expenses should be anticipated and included in the budget. Attention should also be given to the costs associated with implementing the QEP in the post-reaffirmation years.

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Some boards or board members may seek to avoid becoming engaged and delegate responsibility to the president and administration. Some presidents may be willing to assume full responsibility for institutional accreditation with little or limited oversight from the board. However, there are dangers in adopting either position and neither is advisable. At the end of the day, *both the board and the president* bear responsibility for ensuring that the institu-

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tion is fulfilling its mission, enhancing the quality of student learning, providing quality programs and services, and meeting the standards of quality established by the higher education community. They must work together. The importance of accreditation to the institution and its stakeholders requires both the president and board to find common ground in defining roles and responsibilities in the process. SACS has very precise expectations in the area of governance.

Institutions seeking reaffirmation from SACS must demonstrate that they are in compliance with the published standards or principles set forth in the handbook, *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement*. Several of these requirements are directly related to boards of trustees. Therefore, in addition to overseeing the entire accreditation process, boards must also ensure that they are complying with the board-related principles established by SACS. These board-related expectations from SACS may be summarized as follows:

**THE BOARD MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS AN ACTIVE POLICYMAKING BODY.** SACS expects boards to be active bodies that are primarily engaged in policymaking for the operation of the institution. SACS reviewers often examine minutes of board meetings. Minutes should be written with the review in mind and demonstrate board engagement in policymaking activities and functions.

**THE BOARD MUST BE COMPRISED OF AT LEAST FIVE MEMBERS.** While SACS attempts not to be too prescriptive, practice suggests that SACS frowns upon boards of less than five members. Boards with five members or more are less likely to be dominated by a single individual or a small group. Furthermore, the complexity of institutions requires a board large enough to accommodate a number of individuals with diverse talents and experiences.

**THE BOARD MUST ENSURE THAT THE INSTITUTION HAS ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES.** Resource development is a major board function. While some boards seek to minimize this responsibility, the importance of the board and the president working together to insure adequate financial resources cannot be overstated. Board members should have the personal means or the ability to acquire resources for the institution. Boards also need to consider fundraising capability in the selection of a president or CEO.

The challenge of insuring adequate financial resources is a major concern for the boards of many HBCUs. Lacking large endowments, many HBCUs may operate with very modest resources.

SACS is very clear in its expectation that boards are the ultimate bearers of the responsibility to ensure adequate financial resources to ensure compliance. Without adequate resources, an institution cannot fulfill its mission and purpose at an acceptable level of quality. Boards must understand the importance of this accreditation requirement. A significant number of SACS-imposed sanctions on institutions (especially HBCUs) have in the past been related to inadequate financial resources.

**THE BOARD MUST BE INDEPENDENT.** A board must be free to exercise its legal authority without undue influence from external organizations and individuals. It is realistic to assume that institutions, such as those with religious affiliations, will inevitably experience some degree of engagement with denominational and other related entities. However, that influence should not and cannot usurp the legal and policymaking authority of the board. SACS expects board members to be free and independent to make decisions that are in the best interest of the institution. Board bylaws should also contain policies that protect the freedom and independence of members.

**THE BOARD SHOULD HAVE A POLICY ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST.** SACS discourages board members from having contractual, employment, personal or financial interests in their institution. Institutional bylaws should contain a policy that addresses conflict of interest issues. The development and approval of such policies should be reflective of the needs of specific boards. Once developed and approved, SACS will hold the board accountable for enforcing the policy.

**THE BOARD CHAIR SHOULD NOT SERVE CONCURRENTLY AS THE INSTITUTION'S PRESIDENT OR CEO.**

Board chairs should not be presidents, and presidents should not be board chairs. The clear and distinct roles of the chief executive officer and the presiding officer of the board should be defined in bylaws, policy manuals and other institutional documents. Even the perception that the presiding officer of the board is performing the duties of the president is dangerous and inconsistent with best practice.

**THE BOARD SHOULD HAVE A FAIR PROCESS FOR DISMISSING MEMBERS.** This rule was included by SACS to ensure that boards do not inappropriately dismiss some of its members to alter the balance of power. Institutional bylaws should contain policies that address conditions under which board members can be dismissed.

**THE BOARD SHOULD APPROVE AND PERIODICALLY REVIEW THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION STATEMENT.**

Institutions are expected to have a mission statement which defines its specific educational role or purpose. The mission statement represents the official posture and practice of the institution. Review of an institution's mission statement should occur periodically and involve a broad swath of stakeholders.

The board's role in the process is two-fold. First, the board should approve the mission statement in its final form. Minutes of the board are often used as documentation for board approval. Second, the board should review the mission statement periodically (every few years, in most cases) to ensure that the programs and operations of the institution are aligned with it. While there are no prescribed time periods for developing or reviewing a mission statement, the collective judgment of the board and administration must be used to make such determinations. When contemplating major internal or programmatic changes, the board should make a review of the mission statement a part of the decision-making process. The institution should be able to demonstrate that in theory and practice, the mission statement serves as the foundation for all of its operations, programs and services.

**THE BOARD MUST SELECT AND EVALUATE THE PRESIDENT OR CEO.** Two of the most important functions of boards are the selection and evaluation of the president or CEO (Ingram, 1996a,b). Both processes should be clear and well-defined in bylaws and other appropriate documents. Board minutes can usually provide documentation of the selection and evaluation of the president or CEO. SACS does not prescribe to the board the exact processes for selecting and evaluating the CEO. However, it is expected that both processes will be consistent with best practices in the higher education community.

Documenting the evaluation of the president or CEO is an area that boards sometimes neglect. It is best to have a formal, written evaluation process that can be readily used as evidence of compliance. Some boards have developed evaluation protocols and instruments with input from the CEO and external consultants.

**THE BOARD SHOULD FOCUS ON POLICYMAKING, NOT ADMINISTRATION OF POLICY, WHICH IS THE DOMAIN OF THE ADMINISTRATION.** The practice of the board should reflect its policymaking role. The roles and responsibilities of the board should be clearly defined in bylaws and policy manuals.

The administration and faculty should be free to implement policy without undue intrusion or influence from the board. A synergistic relationship between the president and board chair can often alleviate problems of this nature. Ultimately, there must be mutual respect for the roles of the board and the administration.

## Conclusion

After more than a century of leadership and service, HBCUs continue to be portals of access to higher education for many Americans. The boards of these venerable institutions are challenged today in ways never before imagined. HBCUs must compete for students and financial resources; strengthen the quality of programs and services;



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assess teaching and learning outcomes; recruit competent and committed faculty and staff; and improve campus facilities. These are but a few of the issues that HBCU leaders must address to keep the institutions under their care and protection striving and flourishing.

The accreditation process permits an institution to take an introspective view of all of its programs and services in relation to its mission statement and align its operations with best practices in the higher education community. For HBCUs, accreditation is not only a validation of institutional quality, it is also an essential element in the struggle for survival in a rapidly evolving and highly competitive higher education arena.

While the boards of HBCUs are tasked with many demanding responsibilities, understanding and participating in the accreditation process is a first-order level of priority. For HBCUs to thrive in the twenty-first century, they need the collective support of all of their stakeholders and the wisdom and guidance of their governing boards.

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## About the Author

Dr. Leroy Davis Sr. is the primary consultant for the Southern Education Foundation's Center to Serve Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He is a retired president of South Carolina State University where he also served in a number of academic and administrative posts over a thirty-year career. He has been active with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) where he chaired more than twenty visiting accreditation committees and also served as a SACS commissioner. His work on accreditation has earned him wide-spread recognition and honors, including the coveted SACS Distinguished Service Award.

As a molecular biologist and educator, Dr. Davis has authored more than a dozen technical and scientific articles as well as several other scholarly publications. He has served on a number of national, regional and local boards of directors, including the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the South Carolina Governors School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM) and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund.

He is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including honorary degrees from Purdue University, South Carolina State University, Francis Marion University and Tuskegee University. He is also the recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian award.

In addition to his work with SEF, Dr. Davis is also the Executive Director of the Center of Excellence in Rural and Minority Health and Distinguished Professor of Biology at Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina.

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*Dr. Darryl Peterkin  
Director, Center to Serve Historically Black Colleges and Universities  
135 Auburn Avenue, N.E., Second Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303*

*(404) 523-0001, Extension 106  
[dpeterkin@southerneducation.org](mailto:dpeterkin@southerneducation.org)*

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