The Institutional Proposal and Beyond

Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

January 2010

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"Sir, the following paradigm shifts occurred while you were out."

Workshop Agenda

- WASC 101: The Institutional Review
- The Institutional Proposal (IP)
- The Institutional Proposal Review
- Organizing for the Proposal and Beyond

Workshop Outcomes

- Develop familiarity with 3-stage WASC review, Standards, and CFRs so you can present them to your home campus

- Understand the role of the IP as the foundation and plan for the review

- Understand the two possible approaches to the IP

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Workshop Outcomes, cont.

- Learn about WASC expectations for:

  - evidence-based self-review

  - outcomes-based assessment

  - quality assurance systems

- Acquire resources to support your on-campus review team

- Be prepared to lead a creative, inclusive, rigorous process of institutional self-review

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I. WASC 101

The Context: Regional Accreditation & Public Accountability

- Higher education policy
- Our constituencies: students, employers, the public
- Affordability and Access
- Student and institutional learning
- Global competitiveness
- Financial stability in tough times

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# What Does This Mean for Your Self-Review Process?

- Attention to student success: retention, graduation rates (disaggregated), enrollment management

- Beyond "closing the assessment loop," asking "What is good enough?" How do we know?

- Sustaining improvement through infrastructure – no longer a once-in-10-years "conversion experience"

- Opportunity for inquiry, engagement, and change within and across institutions
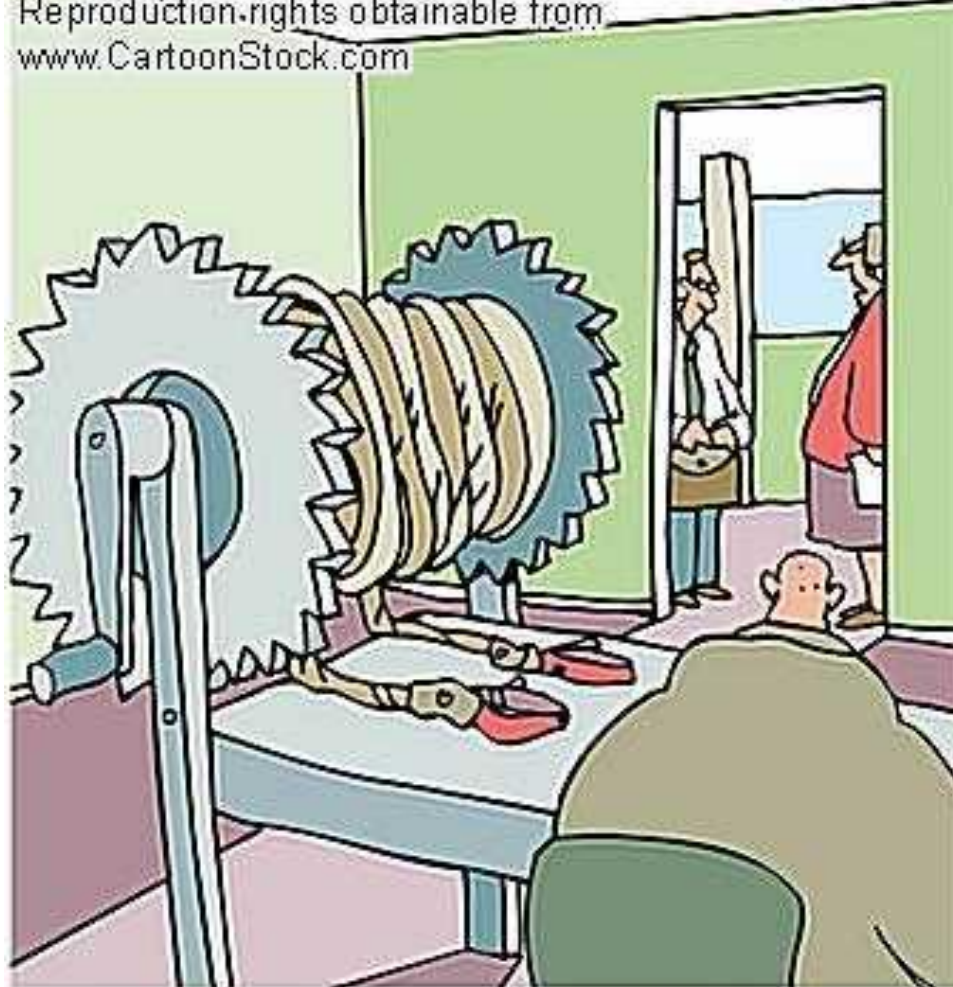
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"My assistant will show you the ropes."

WASC's Three-stage Institutional Review Process

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Exercise:
You Already Know a Lot

1. Tablemates should work as a team.
2. Organize the 3x5 cards on the timeline
3. Pair the WASC process with its definition

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The Three-Stage
Self-Review Process

1. **Institutional Proposal (IP)**

2. **Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR)**

3. **Educational Effectiveness Review (EER)**

Review Timeline:
Proposal → *2 yrs* → CPR → *1.5 – 2 yrs* → EER

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The Three Stages

1. **Proposal:** identifies priorities, needs, areas of emphasis, and outcomes. Aligns work, resources with institutional plans.

2. **Capacity & Preparatory Review:** focuses on capacity, needs, and readiness for educational effectiveness.

3. **Educational Effectiveness Review:** the culmination of the process; a focus on results.

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The Proposal's Critical Role

The proposal is an ***action plan*** that provides:

- explicit outcomes
- clear methodologies
- the foundation for CPR and EER

It focuses time and resources on institutional **priorities**

It leads to broad **involvement**, more **learning** for everyone

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The Proposal's Role, cont.

A well-designed proposal leads to:

- Greater **impact** on the institution

- A more **successful review**

It addresses multiple **audiences**:

- Your institution

- CPR and EER evaluation teams

- The WASC Commission

Focus of the Capacity and Preparatory (CPR) Review (RB p.81)**:**

- Review of resources, structures, processes

- Identification of gaps in infrastructure to support educational effectiveness, ways to fill them

- Status of preparation and research for the Educational Effectiveness Report (EER)

The CPR asks what the institution HAS or NEEDS: "Where are we now, where do we need to go, and how will we get there?"

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Focus of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) (RB p.81):

- How effectively students are learning – and whether this is *good enough*

- How effectively program review, other quality assurance systems (QA) function

- How effectively institutional learning occurs and is translated into improvement

- How effectively plans have been followed, goals met

The EER asks: "HOW WELL are our systems working? Is what we accomplish good enough? What do we need to do to improve?"

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What WASC has learned . . .

- Focus on specific outcomes; don't try to do too much

- Start preparations for the whole process, especially the EER, as soon as possible

- Involve campus constituencies from the beginning

- Clarify the difference--and connections-- between the CPR and EER reviews

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The Bottom Line: Meeting WASC's Core Commitments, Standards, and Criteria for Review (CFRs)

Core Commitments

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The institution functions with clear purposes, … integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution evidences…educational objectives and design at the institutional and program level…[It] employs processes of review … that assure … accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree … awarded.

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Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity

Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness

Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3	Standard 4
Defining institutional purposes and ensuring educational objectives	Achieving educational objectives through core functions	Developing and applying resources and organizational structures to ensure sustainability	Creating an organization committed to learning and improvement
CFRs	**CFRs**	**CFRs**	**CFRs**
• Institutional purposes • Integrity [guidelines]	• Teaching & learning • Scholarship & creative activity • Support for student learning [guidelines]	• Faculty & staff • Fiscal, physical & information resources • Organizational structures & decision-making processes [guidelines]	• Strategic thinking & planning • Commitment to learning & improvement [guidelines]

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The Standards/CFRs
in the Review Process

- Institutions must demonstrate compliance with the Core Commitments, Four Standards and 42 Criteria for Review.

- The proposal and two reviews generally focus on a subset of CFRs that align with the institution's chosen themes.

- The Guidelines are not required; they are examples of how some institutions choose to meet the CFRs.

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Revisions to Standards, CFRs (June 2008) (RB p.79):

Greater explicitness:

- 1.2: measures of student success; disclosure
- 1.9: material changes
- 2.3: learning outcomes, proficiency
- 2.7: program review
- 2.10: disaggregation of data
- 3.5: financial resources
- 3.6: alignment of finances with educational goals
- 3.10: full-time CFO
- 4.4: Comparative or benchmark data

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Revisions to Review Process (June 2008)

All institutional reviews must now address:

- Student success (CPR and EER), including
    - data on retention, completion
    - disaggregation of data
    - comparisons (internal, external)
    - plans for improvement
- Program review (EER), including
    - effectiveness of process
    - especially effect on learning
    - connection to planning, budgeting
- Sustainability of improvement after WASC (EER), including
   - Plan
    - Timeline

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And most recently (Fall 2009) . . .

All institutions' reviews (IP, EER, CPR) must now address:

- Effects of the economic downturn on their financial sustainability

- Short- and long-term financial planning to ensure stability, educational quality

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Team Exercise: "Preliminary Self-Review Under the Standards"** (RB p. 101)

1. With your team, begin a self-review under Standard II: "Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions"

2. Focus on a few key CFRs

3. What findings/reflections for Standard II did your review produce?

4. Questions and discussion: 11:30

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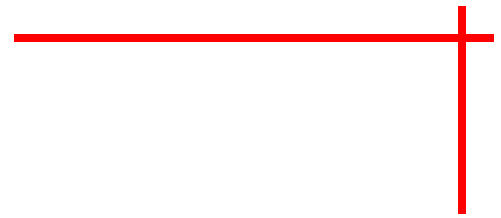
Working Lunch

(12 noon-12:45 p.m.)

***Team Discussion*:**

"What Really Matters on Your Campus?" (RB p. 120)

"The main question is to what level of data do we wish to stoop."

II. The Proposal

Structure
Two Approaches
Qualities of a Good Proposal
Expectations for Student Learning
Submission Using Livetext

Structure of the Proposal

Four Sections:

A: Institutional context; how the proposal relates to the Standards and CFRs

B: Issues / themes that frame and connect the CPR and EER

C: Work plan; engagement of key constituencies

D: Appendices (data tables, off-campus and distance ed programs, responses to earlier Commission actions, other)

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SECTION A:
Institutional Context

- Context statement: a *brief* description of the institution's background, emphasizing current strengths, challenges, and state of assessing student learning

- Self-review under the Standards & identification of key issues, especially related to learning, quality assurance (QA)

- Process for proposal development; leadership involvement

- Choice of approach (comprehensive, thematic)

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SECTION B:
Framing the Review to Connect CPR and EER

- Overview - goals for the review, connections between CPR and EER

- For the CPR:
  - Assessment of capacity, key issues, research questions, intended outcomes, indicators, organization of activities, relevant CFRs
  - Infrastructure to support EE; QA systems
  - Status of work on EER at time of the CPR visit

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SECTION B:
Framing the Review to Connect CPR and EER (cont.)

- For the EER:
  - Intended outcomes for this stage
  - For each issue / theme: research questions, methods, indicators, groups to be involved, relevant CFRs
  - Review of findings re: SLOs, QA systems; how findings will be analyzed for effectiveness
  - Plans for improvement of student, organizational learning

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SECTION C:
A Feasible Work Plan

- Work plan: for each stage, how work will be organized; structures, processes & key indicators for CPR, EER; products; internal deadlines

- Data gathering & analysis systems: effectiveness; how systems will be used (& improved) to support QA during / after review

- Commitment of resources: human, technological, and physical as well as financial; how they'll be managed, by whom; broad campus engagement

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SECTION D:
## Required Appendices
(for Proposal, CPR, EER)

- Data tables, Summary Data Form, others, presented in raw numbers and percentages showing 5-year historical trends

- Off-campus and Distance Education Degree Programs: explanation of how these will be part of review

- Response to prior Commission actions (can also be included in main body of proposal)

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Two Approaches to the Review Process
(RB p. 5)

Special Themes

Comprehensive
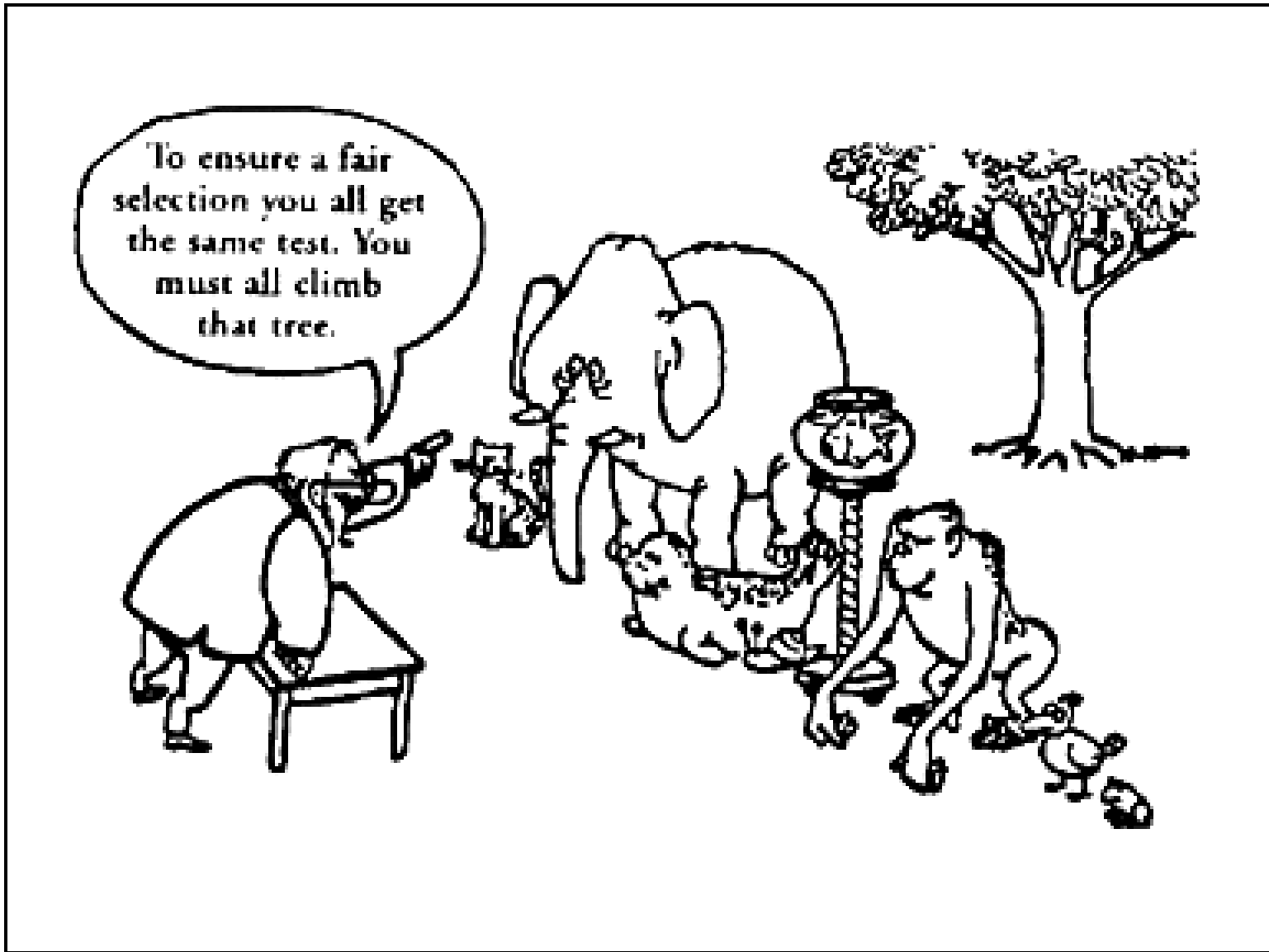
Special Themes Approach

Institution selects a limited number of topics for in-depth review

- **Strengths**: Institution can customize the review to own interests, priorities; most popular approach, so models readily available
- **Challenges**: Topics can be too broad ("reform and assess general education") or too narrow ("improve alumni database"); Standards can get lost

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Comprehensive Approach

The institution reviews itself based primarily on the Standards and CFRs

- **Strengths**: Institutions new to accreditation or undergoing major change can step back and take a comprehensive look at themselves

- **Challenges**: Achieving collective ownership of the process may be difficult; using the Standards can become a compliance exercise

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Table Discussion

- **What other advantages / disadvantages do you see?**
- **Which approach makes sense for your institution?**
- **Why?**

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What is the role of the Standards and CFRs in all this?

- The Standards / CFRs matter; the institution should meet them all. However, it need not directly address them all (unless in Candidacy).

- Point of departure varies for each approach:

  - **Themes:** the institution starts with its own priorities & questions, *then* connects to Standards

  - **Comprehensive:** the institution starts from the Standards, *then* identifies a few emphases

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Addressing the Standards While Focusing on Special Themes

Strategies:

- Hyperlinking to documents that explicitly address each CFR

- Citing specific CFRs in the narrative portion of proposal and reports

- Including the "Worksheet for Preliminary Self-Review Under the Standards" as an appendix to the IP, documenting evidence and evaluating compliance

A Good Proposal

- Reflects the institution's priorities – it's not formulaic & compliance-oriented

- Focuses on key topics, aims for impact

- Addresses challenging issues and outcomes critical to the institution's development – not just low-hanging fruit

- Reflects real inquiry – it's not just a series of descriptions and lists of activities

- Employs appropriate, creative methodologies

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A Good Proposal (cont.)

- Reflects good practices in assessment of student learning
- Provides evidence, not just data
- Contextualizes evidence with analysis and conclusions – it doesn't just make assertions
- Cites Standards / CFRs clearly in relation to outcomes
- Provides a plausible, detailed work plan with specific budget and organization
- Responds directly and fully to prior Commission actions

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Expectations Specific to Student Learning (RB p. 82)

CPR – Evidence includes:

- Published outcomes published, defined levels of proficiency

- Assessment and program review plans

- Curricular and co-curricular program review

- IR support of systems for student success

- Faculty support and resources for assessment and improvement of student learning

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Expectations Specific
to Student Learning, cont. (RB p. 82)

EER – Evidence of:

- Analysis of student learning – is it at expected levels, good enough? (And what happens when it's not?)
- Assessment – is it implemented as planned? Effective at achieving improvements?
- Program reviews – are they conducted as planned? Are results, analysis linked to resource allocation?
- Co-curricular SLOs – are they assessed? Achieved?
- Analysis of retention/completion, student success – who is/is not succeeding? Analysis of why? Plans to improve?
- Faculty – do they demonstrate responsibility for assessment and improvement of student learning? Is this work supported? Rewarded?

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Submitting Your Proposal via LiveText

- **Guide to Submitting Institutional Proposals via LiveText** (RB p. 49)
  - Follow the guide
- Length: 15 pages max (7,500 words), not including attachments
- Due October 15 or May 15
- www.livetext.com
- samples.wascsenior.org

Team Exercise: Student and Institutional Learning in a Sample Proposal

Review the Claremont McKenna Proposal.

Consider where and how the proposal shapes its inquiry, first into student learning and assessment, then into institutional learning (RB, p. 211):

1. What are the salient research questions?
2. Which CFRs do they address?
3. What are the expected outcomes?
4. Who is responsible for these outcomes?
5. How are they resourced?
6. How is this expressed in the work plan and timeline?

III. The Proposal Review Committee Perspective

Jackie Donath, Professor and Chair, Humanities, Sacramento State; member, WASC Proposal Review Committee

Proposal Review Committee Analysis

6 Proposals were submitted in 2008-2009. Of those, 50% were accepted without revision.

FALL 2008

Accepted	1	(33%)
Needed revisions	2	(66%)
Total	3	

SPRING 2009

Accepted	2	(66%)
Needed revisions	1	(33%)
Total	3	

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Top Reasons for Proposal Revision (2008-09)

- Vague topics for inquiry

- Poor alignment of topics with CPR and EER

- Poor alignment of topics with outcomes

- Unclear relationship between CPR and EER

- Insufficient data collection & analysis

- Work plan not sufficiently detailed; no deadlines, dedicated resources, responsible parties, etc.

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Top Reasons for
Proposal Revision (cont.)

- Insufficient attention to assessment (e.g., need to define SLOs, establish process, identify results)

- Capacity needs not fully recognized / prioritized

- Limited faculty & campus involvement in review and proposal development

- Plans too broad, ambitious; unsustainable

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IV. Organizing the Campus for the Review:
Seven Strategies from Santa Clara University

Diane Jonte-Pace, Vice Provost and ALO, Santa Clara University; member, WASC Proposal Review Committee
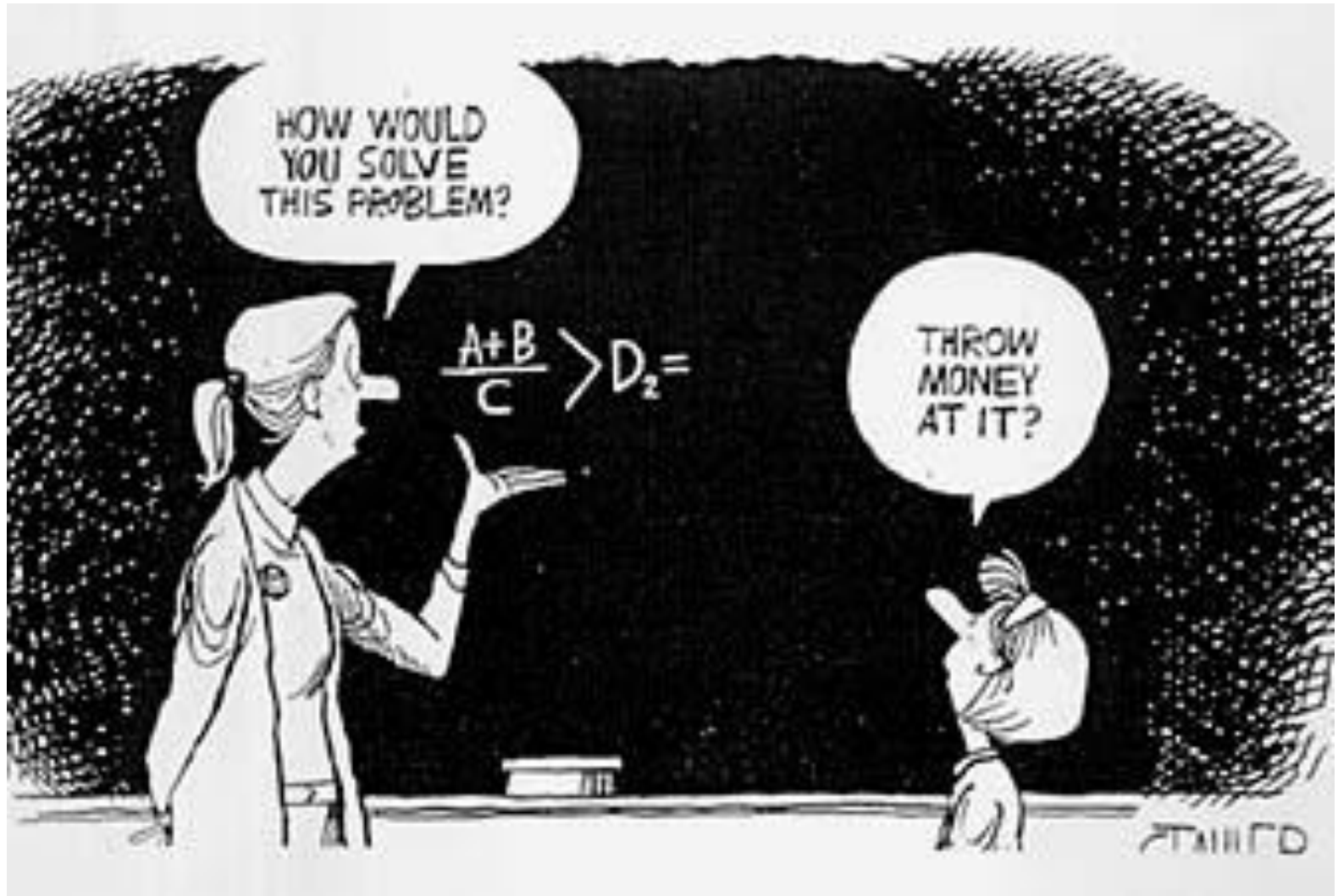
Overview
Seven Strategies, Three Topics

- People
  - Targeting a trustworthy team
  - Anticipating antagonists

- Content
  - Themes
  - Standards/CFRs
  - Previous WASC recommendations

- Process
  - Connecting CPR and EER
  - Discerning and distributing documents

Disclaimer: This presentation outlines strategies that Santa Clara University's WASC committees have found useful. The language and recommendations are not identical to language and recommendations in WASC's documents.

Targeting a Trustworthy Team

- Choose a team you can trust
  - A team that can write a "roadmap" or "syllabus" for a four year self study
  - A team with responsibility & credibility
  - A team that will appreciate and articulate the vision behind the WASC process

Anticipating Antagonists

- Some will not love WASC
- Be prepared to listen to resisters
- Respond by reiterating vision

  - *remind resisters of shared commitment to good teaching, good learning and good institutional practices*

- Consider including antagonists on team, or create consulting group
- Communicate frequently & in multiple ways

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Confirming Content

- Themes

- Standards/CFRs

- Response to Previous Team Report & Action Letter

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Selecting a Strategic Theme

- Selecting a strategic (and important!) theme
  - Engage the institution through themes

- Picking a practical (and important!) theme
  - must be addressed in CPR or EER
    - Assessment, program review
    - Student learning
    - Student success (retention, graduation rate)

Learning to Love the CFRs

- Integrate CFRs into reflective essays on themes

- Consider especially 1.2, 2.4, 4.5

- CFRs give clear guidance on vision for
    faculty engagement, learning outcomes,
    student success, institutional learning

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Connecting Capacity & Effectiveness

- Trace themes through CPR & EER

    Start EER work during CPR period

- CPR

    Audit + analysis

- EER

    Research + recommendations

- Hint

    Use data your institution already gathers

Connecting with the Past

- Follow up on previous visiting team report

- Follow up on previous action letter

- Location in IP
  - Appendix or body of text

- May be connected with themes, or may be distinct

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Discerning and Distributing Documents

- Distribute only *selected* WASC documents
    - but distribute them often

- Our favorites *(revise them to meet your needs)*
    - Worksheet for Preliminary Self Review
    - Expectations for Two Reviews
    - Four Rubrics
    - Educational Effectiveness Framework

Summary/Conclusion

- People
  - Team & Antagonists
- Content
  - Themes & CFRs/Standards
  - Past WASC recommendations
- Process
  - Capacity & Effectiveness
  - Documents
- Last words of advice
  - Attend conferences & workshops
  - Be realistic, be selective
  - Stay in touch with your WASC partner

WASC Resources

- WASC website: www.wascsenior.org
- Your staff liaison
- Academic Resource Conference (ARC)
- Educational programming
- Other institutions

Evaluation:
Please complete the evaluation form in your folder

Thank you!

"What does he know, and how long will he know it?"