Q: Why is a new committee structure being proposed? Isn’t this just creating one more committee, and what was wrong with the old committees anyway?

A: The proposal for the new committee structure is the result of a process of assessment that looked at current committee structure and function, as well as the need to approach both accreditation and assessment in a more comprehensive and coordinated way. This assessment was prompted in part by the College’s recent accreditation report, but is also pro-active, helping the College function more effectively in the future. The new component, the Campus Council on Institutional Effectiveness (CCIE), will provide that broad overview and coordination (working with the Comprehensive Assessment Planning Calendar), but the majority of the work will continue to be done by the task forces focused on accreditation or assessment, and the working groups that they form.

The CCIE is a new committee, intended to provide coordination through collaborative decision-making, but the task forces are updates of existing committees. (A comparison that would be relevant would be the modifications that have been made to the General Education Board—with its various sub-boards—and its relationship to the Committee on Programs and Curricula.)

Proposing a change to the existing committees for accreditation and assessment is based, as noted, on an evaluation of the way they are working now—that is not saying they have failed, nor is it saying they should be done away with, but rather that they could be working better, with clearer duties and less redundancy. It should be stressed also that both of the current committees (the Accreditation Oversight Committee and the Assessment Committee) have endorsed these changes.

Q: It looks like this is going to be controlled by Administration. Are they going to hand-pick members too?

A: To say that this new committee structure will be controlled by administration is simply not correct. The CCIE is designated as a “J3” committee, which means it will answer jointly to the FSEC, the SSEC, and administration. The administration thus does not have a majority voice, though ultimately administration and specifically the Chancellor are responsible for the wellbeing of the College. The current accreditation and assessment committees are “J2,” or jointly responsible to the FSEC and the SSEC. Adding administration means that all constituents of the College community will be formally engaged, and the administrative perspective will be more visible at the outset of any discussion. Administration will contribute to the conversation, not dominate it.

In terms of membership selection, the Charters of the CCIE and its sub-committees (the task forces) clearly spell out how members are selected, which is virtually the same as it is
now, since both the current committees focused on accreditation and assessment have appointed rather than elected members. Members may serve ex officio, be selected by the specific body they represent, or be selected through consensus by representatives of the three units to which they are responsible (administration, FSEC, SSEC), based on volunteers who express an interest in service by responding to the questionnaire distributed by the Committee on Committees each Spring.

**Q: Shouldn’t there be more representatives of the academic divisions on the accreditation and assessment task forces?**

A: There are two key things to consider here. First, although assessment is usually thought of in the context of instruction, it should be understood as a requirement for all aspects of college function, and applicable to all units of college structure. The current proposal seeks to rebalance the committees so that other units, such as academic support or administrative services, are also represented. If the goal is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students, then everyone needs to work toward that goal.

Second, with the revised committee structure, faculty will be able to work more directly on things that are most meaningful to them, and where they will have more control. It is important to keep in mind that while the CCIE and the task forces are intended to ensure that accreditation stays on track, and that key tasks related to assessment are accomplished each year, they do not mandate to faculty how assessment will be done, or what standards will apply—it will continue to be the responsibility of faculty to identify student learning outcomes (SLOs), identify means of assessing those SLOs, and then use the results of the analysis of assessment to refine and improve instruction.

**Q: It looks like the same small group of people will be on both committees. Doesn’t that exclude a lot of people who should be involved?**

A: Although most of the titles are comparable in both task forces (e.g., “representative of academic support”), it makes sense to have different individuals filling that position in each—both to make the work more manageable, and to broaden the field of participation. This was not specified in the committee charters in order to provide units the flexibility to manage representation as they felt was most appropriate. More people will also be involved through the working groups.

Another important thing to keep in mind is that the Charters of the CCIE and the Task Forces mandate robust communication with the campus at large, both in terms of informing the campus of meeting schedules and agendas, but also in terms of posting minutes, reports and other evidence of their work. Any member of the campus community should feel free to attend any meeting in which they have any interest.

As with other committees, it is also assumed that those who are members of the CCIE and the Accreditation and Assessment Task Forces will keep their constituents well informed.
Q. Why does Academic Support have two representatives—one for “academic support” per se, and one specifically for Institutional Research?

A: Academic Support is a large and diverse unit that includes a number of areas, including Policy, Planning and Institutional Research (PPIR.) Because so much of both accreditation and assessment are evidence-based, and so much evidence is quantitative in nature, separate representation for IR specifically was considered to be important so that the right kind of research questions could be formulated, and evidence could be gathered more effectively.

Q. What’s with the new nomenclature? What’s wrong with calling these groups “committees”?

A: New names were suggested to signal, in part, a new approach to doing things. The Campus Council on Institutional Effectiveness (CCIE) utilizes language that is directly drawn from the language of accreditation (“institutional effectiveness”) that is in widespread use in higher education. The sub-committees of the CCIE are called “task forces” to connote both the task orientation that may differ from year to year, depending on campus priorities (utilizing the Comprehensive Assessment Planning Calendar), but also the fact that they are flexible and able to respond more quickly and effectively to those priorities.

Q: How are the so-called “working groups” supposed to operate? What authority, if any, will they have?

A: Some tasks and priorities will remain constant—for example, we need to do course-level assessment every semester, every year, though different SLOs may be assessed each time. However, because some tasks and priorities will change from year to year, the working groups will include members of administration, faculty and/or staff who are most knowledgeable about and most responsible for a given task. Working groups are the foundation, the “grass roots” of the work of accreditation and assessment. As one example, when the College begins preparing its self-evaluation in 2015 for the next comprehensive visit in 2018, the committees that form to gather evidence and assess the requirements of each standard will function as “working groups” (which should include a representative cross-section of constituencies.) As another example, if Admissions and Records is scheduled for a focused assessment as part of Student Services, a working group might include, among others, the Dean of Student Services (administration), the Registrar (staff), and one or more academic counselors (faculty.)

Q: Have other questions? Please direct them to Sterling Foster (Campus Chair, FSEC), Steven Shigemoto (Chair, SSEC), or Marcia Roberts-Deutsch (Accreditation Liaison Officer.)