

## Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation and You

### What is HLC Again?

HLC, the Higher Learning Commission, is our regional accrediting body for the university. Regional accreditors are gatekeepers for the Department of Education and confirm compliance with federal law, which is important for many reasons, the most tacit of which is that compliance enables us to receive funding for student loans. (72.0% of students take out loans).

### Why is this important now?

We realize Fall 2020 is a unique semester and there is a lot happening, but we need to be prepared for an accreditation review by **March 2021**. So, we need to be planning now. (See below for more details on the timeline and the process).

### What does the Higher Learning Commission Look for?

All accredited schools are assessed on five criteria, in addition to review for compliance with key federal laws. The criteria are:

1. Mission
2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
5. Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

Everything is tied back to the mission and operating environment of the school, so the entire campus community's knowledge of who we are as an institution and how and your unit you contribute is important. You can learn more at <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/revised-criteria-for-accreditation.html>.

### And, how are we accredited?

We have gone through a periodic re-accreditation process since we were first accredited in 1913. Our last re-accreditation was in the 2010-2011 academic year. Per Department of Education requirements, HLC must review institutions at least every ten years, meaning 2020-2021 is the next academic year for our review. Planning ahead, HLC now requires a five-year review as well. Although our next comprehensive review probably won't be until 2030-2031, we will also have a five-year review in 2025-2026.

A team of staff, faculty, and administrators has been hard at work for over two years compiling our "Assurance Argument," a 35,000-word document with hundreds of pages of supporting evidence that will be made available to campus in draft form later this fall. This document will lay the groundwork for the next review in 2025 as well. (See fall milestones in "How should I prepare?" below for more information.)

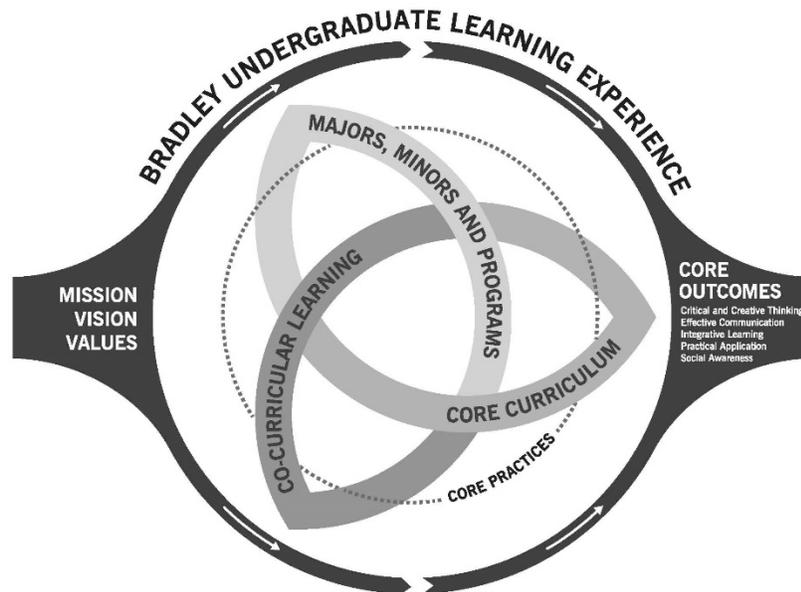
A team of Peer Reviewers is scheduled to visit campus on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. After a thorough review of our written Assurance Argument, they will request meetings with various units and segments of campus stakeholders. ***It is very likely you or someone in your department*** will be asked to participate in at least one of these meetings.

### Wow, I didn't realize that. How should I prepare?

First, as mentioned above, knowing who we are as an institution and how you and your unit contributes is important. Do you know the mission and vision of Bradley? Can you point to ways you contribute to it through your campus role?

MISSION: Bradley University empowers students for immediate and sustained success in their personal and professional endeavors by combining professional preparation, liberal arts and sciences, and co-curricular experiences. Alongside our dedication to students, we embrace the generation, application, and interpretation of knowledge.

VISION: Bradley University is the leader in student engagement.



Fall semester will be full of opportunities to learn more about the ways Bradley meets and exceeds accreditation requirements. For now, just be aware that accreditation is coming, so you can watch for opportunities and engage as we move toward our March 2021 Assurance Argument due date. Watch for:

- The release of the draft Assurance Argument: targeted for early October 2020
- Unit-level discussions about our strengths, opportunity areas, and the ways in which units support accreditation
- Town Hall opportunities
- A Spring Forum dedicated to what you can expect in the peer review team visit

**Okay! I understand. What can I be doing right now?**

- Ensure Learning Outcomes for your course are on your syllabus (Criterion 4)
- Ensure the date and time of class meetings is on your syllabus (Federal Compliance)
- Ensure your Digital Measures Activity Report is updated (Criterion 3)
- Make sure websites are updated and accurate, including committee websites, departmental or unit websites, and personal websites (Criterion 1)
- Make sure publications, such as Catalogs, Handbooks, Viewbooks, or other marketing and policy documents are updated and accurate (Criterion 2)
- Make sure you know your college or unit representative on the HLC Committees so you can ask questions if you have them