



Item: IX.

Monday, September 19, 2022

**SUBJECT: MOVEMENT FROM SACS ACCREDITATION BODY TO THE HIGHER
LEARNING COMMISSION (HLC)**

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approval of the Plan for Eventual Movement from SACSCOC Accreditation Body to The Higher Education Learning Commission (HLC) according to proposed timeline.

BACKGROUND INFORMATON

In order to meet the new accreditation requirements of the State of Florida, BOG staff guided the SUS accreditation liaisons through a series of summer meetings to evaluate all of the accreditors of higher education institutions and discuss feasible timelines for changing accreditors without jeopardizing current accreditation with SACSOC. The accreditation liaisons are recommending an eventual movement to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) immediately following the next trigger event with SACSCOC. FAU will continue with 2024 reaffirmation (trigger event) plans with SACSCOC while preparing for the transition to HLC.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

BOG staff estimates the cost of changing accreditors likely will not significantly change annual university expenses once the transition is made.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/DATE

SACSCOC 2024 Reaffirmation Packet Submission September 2023. Process for transition to HLC should occur after December 2024, when SACSCOC reaffirmation is confirmed.

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JBL-0532
higherlearningcommission



Overview of Accreditation Change Activities

March - April

- Board staff began background research
- Bi-weekly meetings of university accreditation liaisons began mid-April

May

- Chancellor & Florida College System staff had initial meetings with leaders of potential accreditors
- Board staff collaborated with university staff to develop questions for accreditors

June - July

- Chancellor met with U.S. Department of Education Undersecretary
- University staff compiled & submitted information on costs & processes
- Completed follow-up meetings with staff from potential accreditors
- University liaisons evaluated standards
- Vice Chancellor met with U.S. Department of Education staff

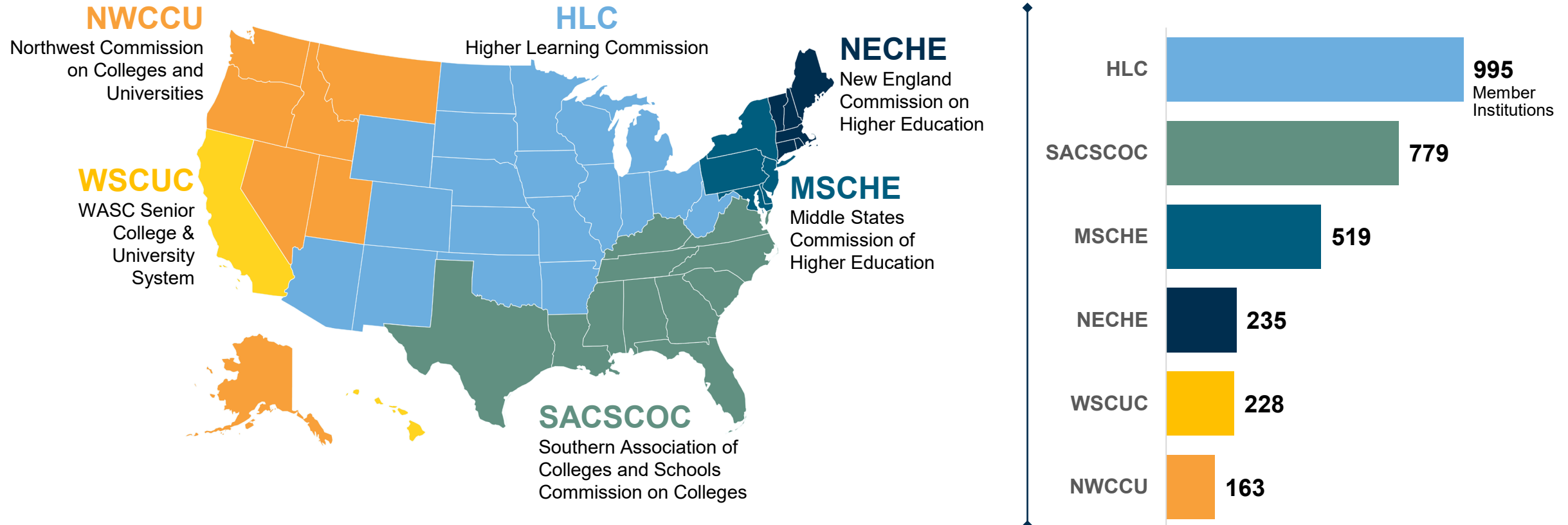
August

- Collaborated with university liaisons to finalize report

Regional Accreditors



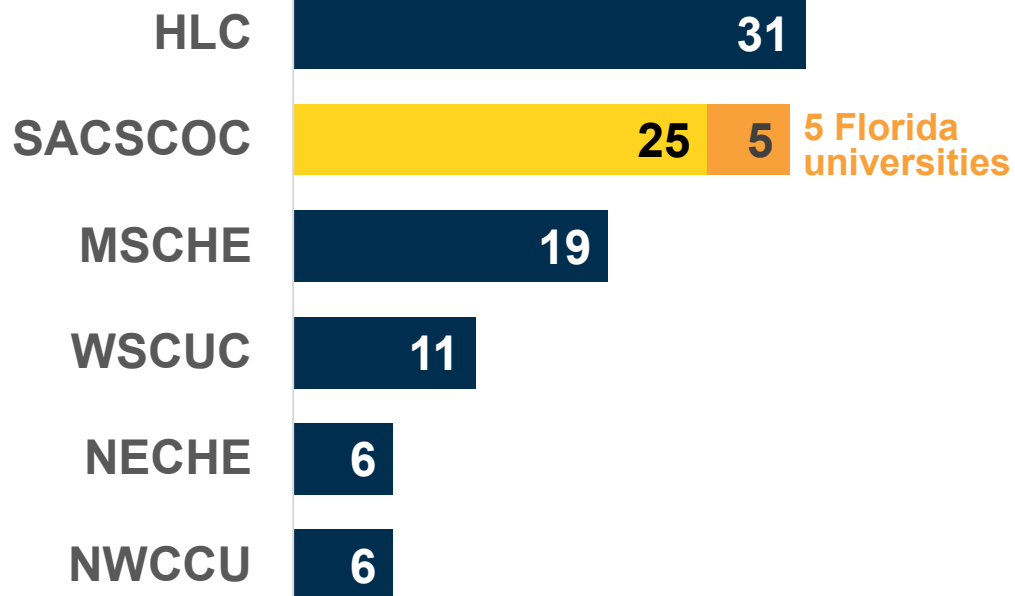
In 2020, Federal Rule changed to allow accreditors to work with universities outside of the traditional regional boundaries



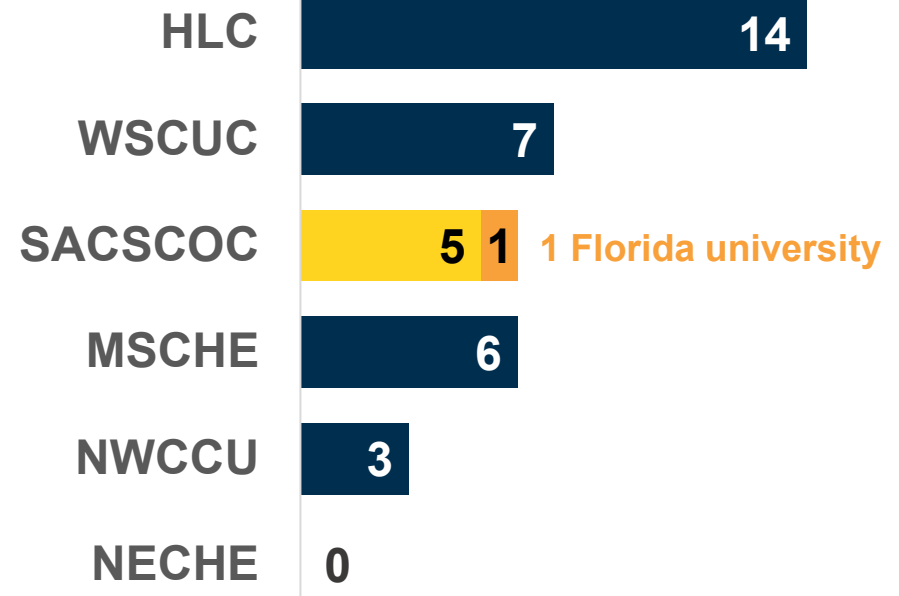
Accreditor Member Universities



U.S. News & World Report Top 100 Public Universities*



Association of American Universities



*Total number of institutions exceeds 100 due to ties in the rankings.

Final Observations



State University System accreditation liaisons note there is a beneficial synergy to having all universities accredited by the same accreditor



Each accreditor's governing board determines the extent to which an accreditor can expand membership

	HLC	MSCHE	NECHE	NWCCU	WSCUC
Member Institutions	995	519	235	163	228
High-quality Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10+ Member Institutions in National Leadership Positions	✓	✓			✓
Planning for Substantive Growth	✓	✓	^	^	✓
Accelerated Process	✓	In development	✓	✓	✓
Estimated Accreditation Cycle Fees*	\$2.7M	\$2.4M	\$5M	\$2.4M	\$6.6M

Multiple pathways for universities to improve efficiency



Does not accredit institutions whose primary mission is to grant associate degrees

*This does not include university expenses such as personnel, consultants, site visits, & software.

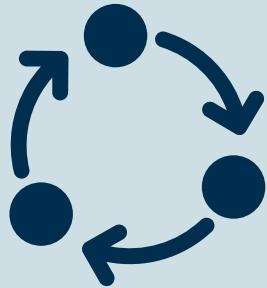
^Because of their current size, NECHE & NWCCU may expand beyond traditional regional boundaries at a more moderate pace than the others.

Major Takeaways from Summer Meetings

*SUS Accreditation Liaisons wish to move to same accreditor as we share best practices and learn from one another.

*Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is the best fit for Florida SUS institutions

*Move to HLC on a timeline that in no way jeopardizes our SACSCOC accreditation



Changing accreditors is a multi-step process

U.S. Department of Education provides initial approval & final acknowledgment

Process

- 1 Universities must receive approval from the U.S. Department of Education to switch accreditors. Universities must provide
 - ✓ accreditation & preaccreditation materials
 - ✓ reasonable cause
- 2 Apply for membership with a different accreditor while maintaining SACSCOC accreditation
- 3 Receive membership from a different accreditor & notify U.S. Department of Education
- 4 Maintain accreditation with SACSCOC until the U.S. Department of Education has provided written notice that it acknowledges the change in accreditor

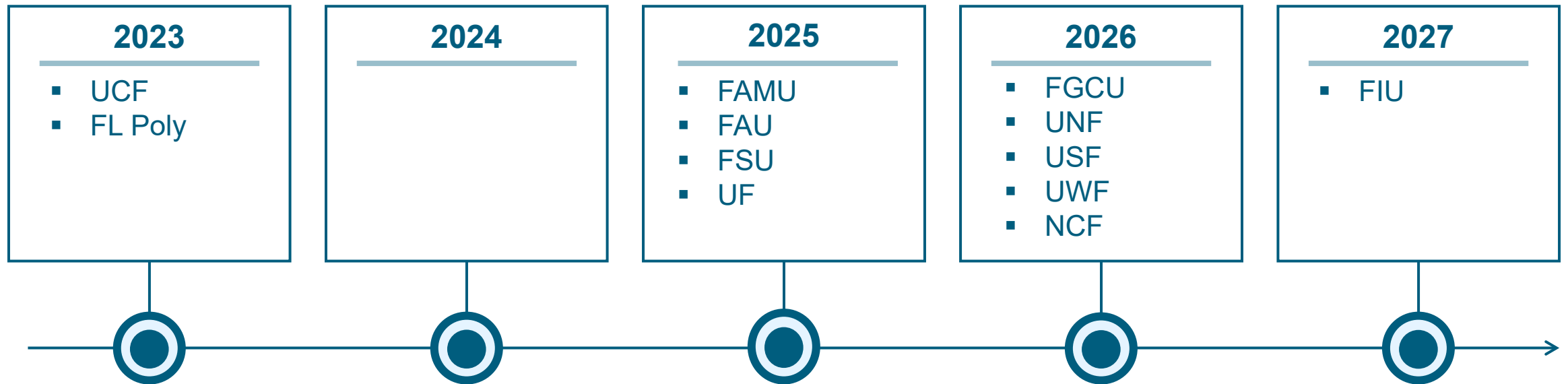
Voluntary Membership

U.S. Department of Education only recognizes accreditors with voluntary membership



Next Steps: Timeline & Activities

Universities will begin the process of switching accreditors after their next reaffirmation or fifth-year review*



Universities will provide regular reports to the Board & participate in regular meetings with Board staff

*Dates universities will initiate the change in accreditor are dependent upon the outcome of each university's review & are subject to change.

What does this mean for FAU?

Next SACSCOC Reaffirmation is 2024

- Compliance Report due in 2023
- Site Visit in Spring 2024
- Reaffirmation Confirmed in December 2024
- Accreditation-Safe until 2030 (SACSCOC 5-Year Review)

Action Year is 2025

- Accreditation with HLC should occur between 2025 and 2030

SACSCOC Reaffirmation

- Finalize Draft Report for External Reviewer (2022)
- Finalize QEP (2022)
- Finalize Compliance Certification Report and Submit (2023)
- Prepare Focused Report for Site Visit (2024)
- Site Visit (April 2024)

HLC Affirmation

- Study HLC Standards to Understand Compliance Criteria (2023)
- Make Necessary FAU Policy Changes (2023)
- Apply to DOE for Permission to Seek Change (2024)
- Apply to HLC (2024-2025)

Action Item for BOT Consideration

We seek approval for the eventual move of FAU from accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) along the suggested timeline in order to meet the Florida regulation while not jeopardizing FAU accreditation.