Steppingblocks

Leveraging Steppingblocks for Accreditation

June 2023

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Introduction

Being an accredited university is a significant achievement and a coveted distinction that colleges aspire to attain. It serves as a testament to the exceptional quality of education they offer to their students, alongside a myriad of other advantages, including access to scholarships and grants, as well as the flexibility to transfer credits seamlessly between institutions.

Once accredited, educational institutions undergo regular evaluations to ensure that they continue to meet the stringent criteria required for maintaining their accredited status. This eBook serves as a guide for university staff, empowering them in their Accreditation process by aligning the Steppingblocks platforms and their graduate outcomes data, and the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation.

> "Criteria for Accreditation (CRRT.B.10.010): Policies." *Higher Learning Commission*, www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html. Accessed 7 June 2023.

What is Steppingblocks

Steppingblocks is a data and analytics engine that provides workforce and educational outcome insights on over a 135 million people in the U.S.

Steppingblocks provides students and universities with the data-driven tools they need to promote career readiness and institutional success. With solutions for students, faculty, staff, and campus leadership, Steppingblocks makes it easy to explore alumni profiles, employer trends, average salaries, relevant skills, and more. The Steppingblocks team is here to help students build their career confidence, and to help institutions succeed.

[Click here to learn more about Steppingblocks!](#)

The WHY

The 5 Accreditation Criteria

In order for a university to be accredited, the school must meet 5 Criteria for Accreditation. They are:

Criterion 1: Mission
The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible conduct
The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support
The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Criterion 5: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources, and Planning
The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

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Why Get Accredited?

Accreditation provides prospective students with the confidence that they will embark upon a comprehensive and exceptional educational journey, one that will be acknowledged and respected by both prestigious institutions of higher learning and prospective employers as they transition from academia to the professional world. Being accredited signifies that an external organization has diligently assessed a school and its programs to ensure they meet benchmarks of quality, rigor, and adherence to elevated educational standards.

The How

How can Universities support their accreditation efforts?

Universities possess numerous avenues through which they can fortify their accreditation endeavors and demonstrate their fulfillment of the criteria written by accreditation agencies. Two prominent methods stand out as primary avenues for universities to accomplish this goal, namely:

Being Data Driven

&

Utilizing Graduate Outcomes Data

In the era of big data, the significance of leveraging the vast amount of information available has been recognized by companies, schools, and various organizations. They have come to appreciate the power of compiling and sharing this data to unveil the valuable insights and outcomes derived from their operations.

With the advent of advanced technology capable of efficiently sifting through and analyzing big data, organizations can discern the crucial elements and employ them to bolster their missions and visions within their respective domains.

For universities specifically, being able to utilize graduate outcomes data for their students once they leave, gives them the ability to prove their university's programs' effectiveness and educational rigor.

Click here to learn more about Big Data and Data Literacy!

The What

What can Universities use to Become Data Driven & Harness the power of Graduate Outcomes Data?

The task of compiling and sifting through the vast expanse of big data can appear daunting.

Steppingblocks has successfully developed several cutting-edge platforms specifically designed for universities. These platforms empower institutions with the ability to effortlessly access streamlined and organized graduate outcomes data, conveniently available at their fingertips.

Steppingblocks Digital Career Counselor for Students

Targeted at students, this dashboard allows students to jump right in and view career outcomes for their major, either nationally or just based on alumni from their home university. If a student isn't sure exactly what they want their career to be, they can use the tools to explore different career options based on interests, majors, or personality.

Steppingblocks Graduate Insights (Graduate Outcomes & Graduate Explorer) Platforms for Faculty and Staff

Graduate Outcomes - Along with Graduate Explorer, part of the Graduate Insights platform. This dashboard is designed to share career outcomes of graduates including industry, job title, salary, and more. It also allows for detailed review of employer hiring trends and skills analysis.

Graduate Explorer - Along with Graduate Outcomes, part of the Graduate Insights platform. This dashboard gets more granular than Graduate Outcomes allowing the user to view individual career outcomes. Users can view student-specific information such as names and contact information. In addition, there are additional filters and the ability to download a dataset.

Criterion 1: Mission
The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.C. The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

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Steppingblocks Digital Career Counselor

With Steppingblocks Student Facing Platform, The Digital Career Counselor, faculty and staff can encourage students to explore outcomes of graduates, the career paths they took to get to their jobs, and their skills outcomes.

By doing this, and supporting students along the way, students can make informed decisions regarding their curricular and cocurricular studies to be sure they are gaining the experience and skills necessary to be successful in not only the workplace, but in society after they graduate.

Click here to learn more about Steppingblocks' Digital Career Counselor

Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible conduct
The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.
1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

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Digital Career Counselor

With Steppingblocks' digital career counselor, students are able to see what their cost of college may look like during, and what their loan payments will look like after school, so they can visualize their return on investment for their degree.

Students can also see job outcomes for alumni from their school, showing them accurate outcomes for the degree path of their choosing.

Graduate Insights

With Steppingblocks' Graduate Insights platforms, university staff can explore, download and share real outcomes of their graduates, so they can showcase the evidence of their educational programs and learning experiences.

[Click here to learn more about how to navigate Steppingblocks' Graduate Insights](#)

Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support
The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A. The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.
1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.

3.B. The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
1. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
2. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.

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Digital Career Counselor

With Steppingblocks' digital career counselor, students can explore the skills that are being hired for, so they can plan their academic career to be sure they are gaining those skills that are important to have upon graduating and entering the workforce.

Graduate Insights

With Steppingblocks' quarterly updated data within the Graduate Insights platforms, university staff can monitor changes in skills that graduates are being hired for, and adjust their academic programs to be sure their programs are current and aligned to the job market, and that students are learning those skills necessary to be successful in society and the workforce.

Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support
The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.

3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning

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Digital Career Counselor

With Steppingblocks Digital career counselor, university staff can support students through the personality test, as well as exploring outcomes of graduates, in making the right decision when it comes to choosing courses and programs for which the student will enjoy and excel in.

Graduate Insights

With Steppingblocks' quarterly updated data within the Graduate Insights platforms, university staff can filter their data set to see who exactly is working for their university, and can explore their credentials and experience to be sure their students are getting their education from qualified and experienced professionals.

Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A. The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.
1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
3. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes.

4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.
1. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning

4.C. The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.
1. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.

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Steppingblocks Graduate Insights

With Steppingblocks' quarterly updated data within the Graduate Insights platforms, university staff can monitor their graduate outcomes by things like program or year, to regularly see what their students are accomplishing after graduation, to make informed decisions on their programs and changes that can be made to better serve its students.

University staff can also filter to specific years of graduates, so they can compare the number of students who enrolled, to that of who completed the program, to monitor their retention, persistence and completion rates of specific programs.

Criterion 5: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources, and Planning
The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A. Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
2. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
3. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

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Steppingblocks Graduate Insights

Universities can add as many people to the Graduate Insights Platform as they desire, allowing all of its internal constituencies the ability to explore their graduates outcomes, so they can all make data informed decisions in regard to their planning of academic programs and procedures.

Steppingblocks Graduate Insights platforms are an excellent resource for assessment, and can be cited as such when it comes to planning and improvement of programs. This platform allows universities to see how the economy and job market are evolving in relation to their graduates, which in turn allows them to improve its operations and programs to in turn lead to successful graduate outcomes.

Steppingblocks Resources

Steppingblocks has created a plethora of resources to help you leverage the platforms to the best of their ability. Click on the links below to explore those resources and see all that Steppingblocks can do to support your University

Steppingblocks Help Center .... **CLICK HERE**

Steppingblocks Graduate Insights Use Cases .... **CLICK HERE**

Steppingblocks Digital Career Counselor Use Cases .... **CLICK HERE**

Steppingblocks Blog .... **CLICK HERE**

Steppingblocks Podcast.. **CLICK HERE**

Steppingblocks eBooks and User Guides .... **CLICK HERE**

Read more about the Higher Learning Commission's ...... **CLICK HERE**
Criteria for Accreditation

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Steppingblocks Contact Information

Want to learn more, or have questions, comments or feedback? Reach out to the Steppingblocks team!

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