

Spirit of SACS Past, Present, and Future: *Role of the Institutional SACS Liaison*

**2011 SACSCOC Annual Meeting
December 3-6, 2011**



Dr. Diane Z. Chase

Executive Vice Provost for
Academic Affairs
University of Central Florida
diane.chase@ucf.edu

Dr. Denise Young

Associate Vice President for
Cocoa and Palm Bay Campuses
University of Central Florida
denise.young@ucf.edu

Dr. Linda Miedema

Interim Vice President for
Planning and Assessment
Brevard Community College
miedemal@brevardcc.edu

Mr. Kurt Ewen

Assistant Vice President, Assessment and
Institutional Effectiveness
Valencia College
kewen@valenciacc.edu

Expected Outcomes

- learn the key aspects of being successful liaisons, with discussion of barriers and challenges to success
- take away advice on successful initiatives and strategies employed by seasoned liaisons to survive and succeed
- understand the large responsibility of the position, but feel that it can be done, and done well
- learn the value of partnerships in developing the systems and processes for the reaffirmation process

Active learning strategies or ways in which participants will be engaged

Presenters will:

- poll participants about key challenges and leadership styles
- provide solutions that worked for them
- provide opportunity for networking for later in-depth discussions

Key areas to be addressed today

- ranking of key issues – what keeps you up at night?
- list of institutional culture and support conditions
- support from the top and empowerment
- What makes a successful liaison? How do you build confidence and competence: surviving and thriving?
- over-communication
- liaison as process and product czar
- the power of networking

The ghost of SACS past



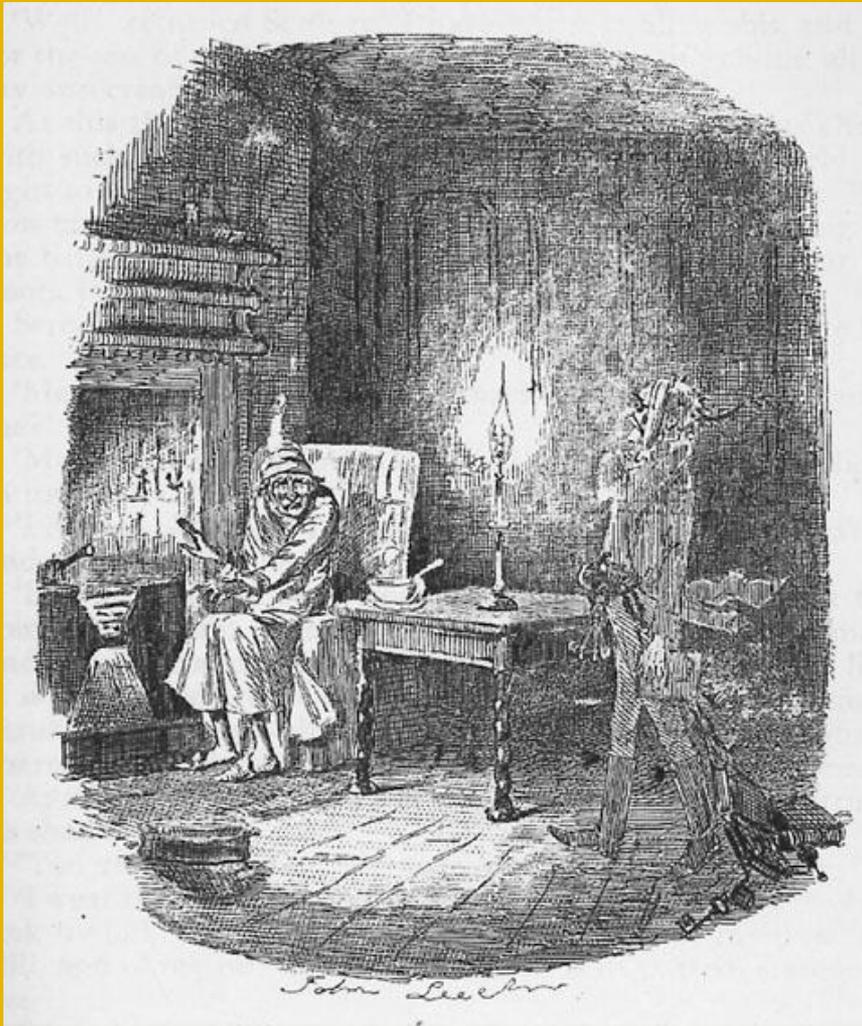
You no longer serve as SACS liaison, but you still have a role as *liaison emeritus*.

How many of you have completed or are soon to complete your service as SACS liaison? (show of hands)

How many years did you serve?

- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- more than 10 years

The ghost of SACS present



You recently received a visit and were asked to serve as the SACS liaison – ***Scary!***

How many of you wonder HOW you will do it?

How many of you wonder WHY you will do it?

The ghost of SACS present (cont'd)



The looming specter of SACSCOC reviews and reaffirmations of the present.

How many of you are serving as liaisons?

How long have you served?

- brand new
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- more than 10 years

The ghost of SACS future



Don't make me look!

Are the worries and responsibilities of being the SACS liaison swirling around in your head?

We are here today to share our experiences and advice as SACS liaisons to help past, present, and future liaisons!

Ranking of scariest issues

Clicker question 1: What is your primary area of concern for ongoing SACSCOC mandates? (Other than the BIG tasks of the five- and ten-year reviews)

- A. evaluating and documenting faculty qualifications
- B. institutional effectiveness (QEP, SLO's, etc.)
- C. effectively **predicting** substantive changes (e.g., new sites and programs, international programs, distance learning)
- D. other

Ranking of scariest issue

Clicker question 1: What is your primary area of ongoing SACSCOC mandates? (Other than the B five- and ten-year reviews)



- A. evaluating and documenting faculty qualifications
- B. institutional effectiveness (QEP, SLO's, etc.)
- C. effectively predicting substantive changes (e.g., new sites and programs, international programs, distance learning)
- D. other

Ranking of scariest issues (cont'd)

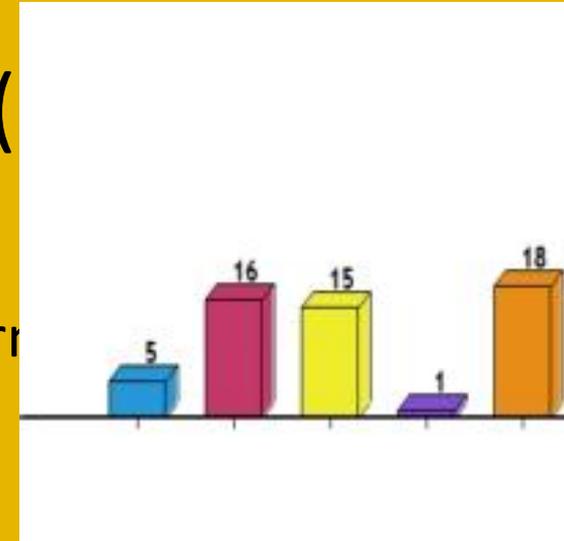
Clicker question 2: What is your area of concern related to institutional support provided to the liaison?

- A. commitment of top leadership
- B. adequacy of on-campus procedures
- C. effective staffing
- D. IT support for institutional effectiveness
- E. sufficient data collection and analysis

Ranking of scariest issues (

Clicker question 2: What is your area of concern regarding institutional support provided to the liaison?

- A. commitment of top leadership
- B. adequacy of on-campus procedures
- C. effective staffing
- D. IT support for institutional effectiveness
- E. sufficient data collection and analysis



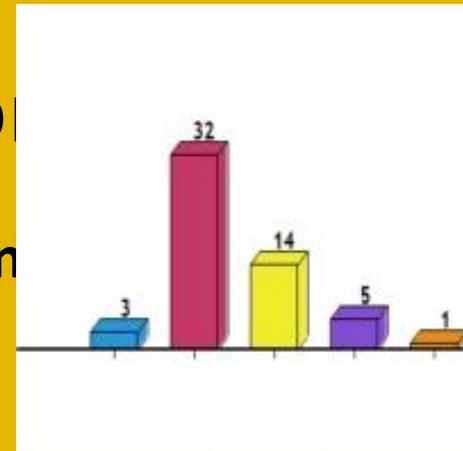
Ranking of scariest issues (cont'd)

Clicker question 3: What is your **primary area of concern** in your institution's culture?

- A. unsupported mandate – leadership has not empowered and supported your efforts
- B. apathy or perception of redundancy – folks don't understand SACSCOC requirements or feel they already strive for excellence (local processes, discipline accreditation, etc.) and are not energized by the acronym "SACSCOC"
- C. weak infrastructure – institution lacks adequate data and analysis support you need for efforts
- D. hostility – backlash against accreditation and external demands, resources, etc.
- E. other

Ranking of scariest issues (cont)

Clicker question 3: What is your **primary area of concern** with your institution's culture?



- A. unsupported mandate – leadership has not empowered and supported your efforts
- B. apathy or perception of redundancy – folks don't understand SACSCOC requirements or feel they already strive for excellence (local processes, discipline accreditation, etc.) and are not energized by the acronym "SACSCOC"
- C. weak infrastructure – institution lacks adequate data and analysis support you need for efforts
- D. hostility – backlash against accreditation and external demands, resources, etc.
- E. other

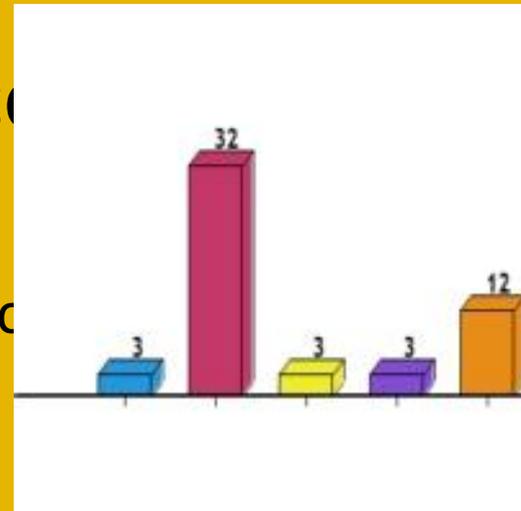
Ranking of scariest issues (cont'd)

Clicker question 4: What is your primary area of concern related to your ability to do the job?

- A. reductions in resources make it a challenge
- B. one of many hats I have to wear – not enough hours in the day
- C. lack of experience and/or lack of experienced people at institution to develop and implement processes
- D. charged but not empowered to do what I need to do
- E. others perceive it is *your problem* – “you’re our representative, you fix it”

Ranking of scariest issues (cont.)

Clicker question 4: What is your primary area of concern related to your ability to do the job?



- A. reductions in resources make it a challenge
- B. one of many hats I have to wear – not enough hours in the day
- C. lack of experience and/or lack of experienced people at institution to develop and implement processes
- D. charged but not empowered to do what I need to do
- E. others perceive it is *your problem* – “you’re our representative, you fix it”

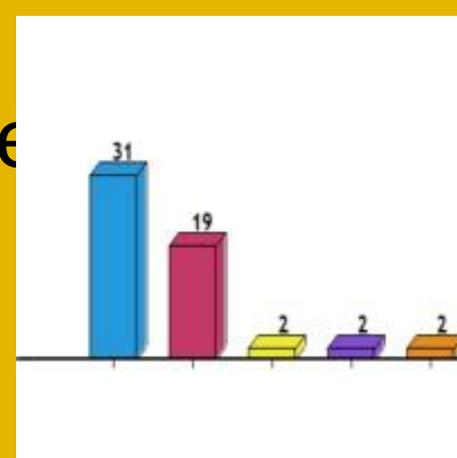
Key issue: are you empowered?

Clicker question 5: Pick your leader (pick one):

- A. fully supportive, understands accreditation, clearly states priority to all institutional leaders, and provides adequate resources
- B. supportive, doesn't understand accreditation but trusts you to handle it and provides some support and sometimes mentions it to institutional leaders
- C. somewhat supportive but ambivalent, rarely mentions it
- D. doesn't support it, understand it, or like it; doesn't want to hear about it, but you better make it go away
- E. other

Key issue: are you empowered

Clicker question 5: Pick your leader (pick one):



- A. fully supportive, understands accreditation, clearly states priority to all institutional leaders, and provides adequate resources
- B. supportive, doesn't understand accreditation but trusts you to handle it and provides some support and sometimes mentions it to institutional leaders
- C. somewhat supportive but ambivalent, rarely mentions it
- D. doesn't support it, understand it, or like it; doesn't want to hear about it, but you better make it go away
- E. other

What is the role of the SACS Liaison in addressing areas of concern?

Serves as a bridge (with two way traffic) between the commission and the institution

- receives and assigns responsibility for internal responses to SACSCOC
- prepares and transmits responses to SACSCOC requests directly or through the president

Provides oversight for ongoing compliance for all SACSCOC mandates

- internal point person – monitors all key areas internally and acts as the strategist, translator, energizer, coordinator, judge, and synthesizer
- collects, produces, and transmits information to SACSCOC

Sets the tone and serves as ‘the authority’

- committed to quality assurance through peer evaluation
- anticipates that even simple conversations with colleagues will have SACS connotations
- informed and knowledgeable about all SACSCOC processes
- strives to secure commitment of top leadership

Our advice – general

All these conditions can influence your ability to get the job done, but the lynch pin to success as a liaison is empowerment through commitment from the top leadership.

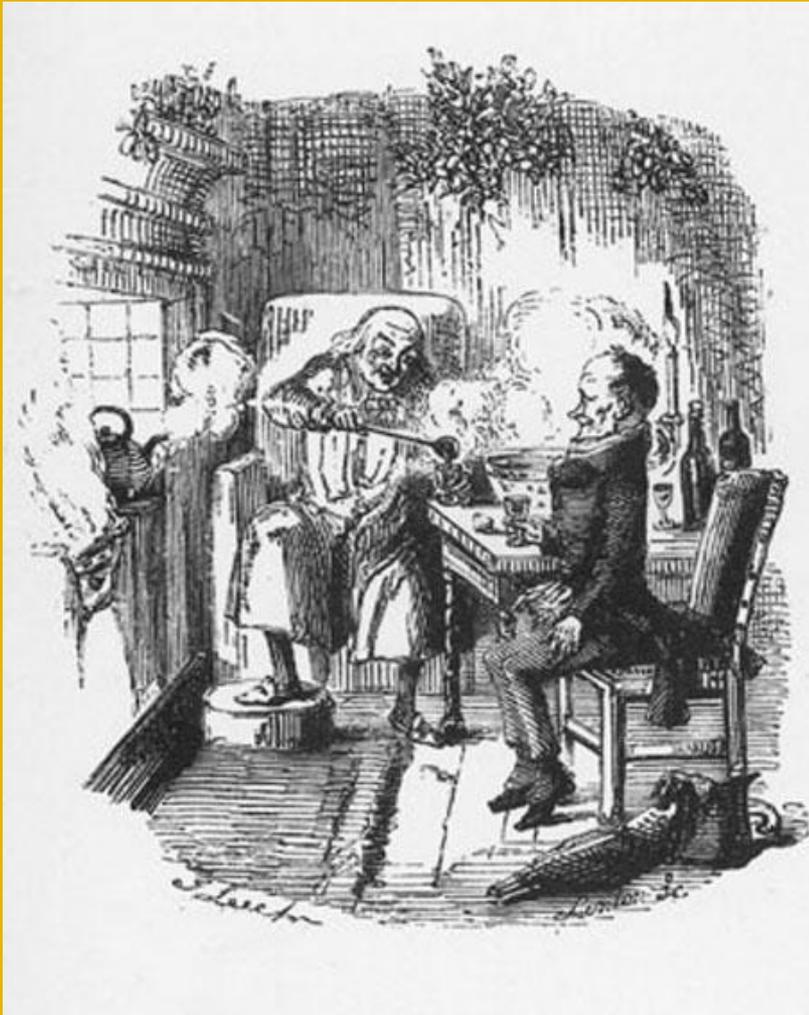
Secure support at the highest level, and all else will fall into place.

Our advice—nuts and bolts

Secure support at the highest level

- encourage participation in SACSCOC before you need the support
- clearly delineate the task at hand so it is understood by key administrators
- don't try to suppress bad news and warts--communicate and don't let administrators be surprised by problems you find
- ask for resources if necessary to do the job
- ensure faculty leaders assist in adoption of key process such as institutional effectiveness (it can't be something ***done to*** them)

What kind of person would take this job, and why?



In this slide, Scrooge tells Cratchit: “I am doubling your salary” – we are pretty sure that won’t happen at your institution!

So, what are the motivations and rewards of being a liaison?

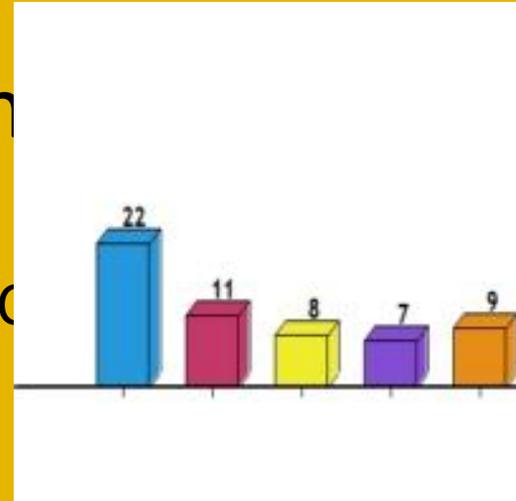
Reasons liaisons accepted the role

Clicker question #6: Why are you serving as SACSCOC liaison?

- A. I was volunteered; no one else to do the job
- B. I enjoy accreditation and quality enhancement and gravitate to these tasks
- C. I am not drawn to accreditation, but I feel I can make a unique and significant contribution in ensuring my institution is reaffirmed
- D. opportunity for advancement
- E. other

Reasons liaisons accepted the

Clicker question #6: Why are you serving as SACSCOC



- A. I was volunteered; no one else to do the job
- B. I enjoy accreditation and quality enhancement and gravitate to these tasks
- C. I am not drawn to accreditation, but I feel I can make a unique and significant contribution in ensuring my institution is reaffirmed
- D. opportunity for advancement
- E. other

In your opinion, which styles makes the best liaison leaders?

- (a) act first, think and reflect later; or (b) think and reflect first and then act
- (a) use common sense; or (b) use your imagination
- (a) like data to be clear and concrete; or (b) comfortable with ambiguity and fuzzy data
- (a) plan in advance; or (b) plan on the go
- (a) focus task by task; or (b) multitask
- (a) working ahead of deadlines; or (b) work well under pressure
- (a) use targets; or (b) prefer flexible schedule
- (a) work individually; or (b) work in teams

Answer. All of the above; embrace dichotomous leadership!

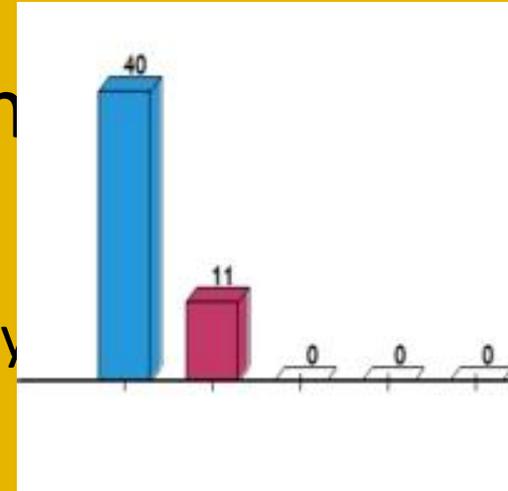
Liaison as communicator: how?

Clicker question 7: What is your communication style? (pick one)

- A. high-touch; low-tech:** in-person, relationship-based, phone calls and voicemail, meet for coffee people person at heart who loves to communicate directly
- B. high-tech; low-touch:** large virtual meetings; maximum coverage, geek at heart who loves to communicate through technology

Liaison as communicator: h

Clicker question 7: What is your communication style?



- A. **high-touch; low-tech:** in-person, relationship-based, phone calls and voicemail, meet for coffee people person at heart who loves to communicate directly
- B. **high-tech; low-touch:** large virtual meetings; maximum coverage, geek at heart who loves to communicate through technology

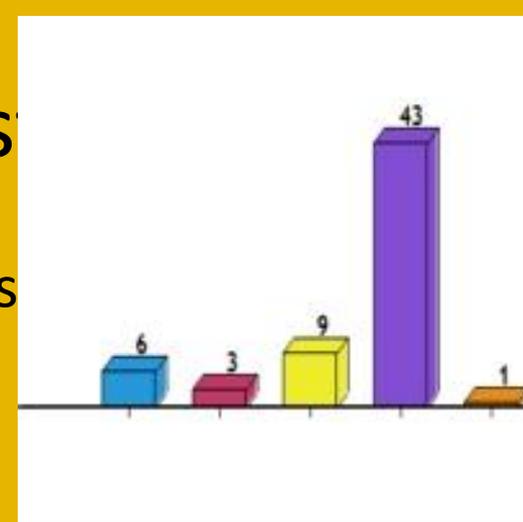
Liaison as communicator: style?

Clicker question 8: My communication style most closely resembles (pick one):

- A. KISS: write or give simple oral instructions and expect people will follow them, check in on the deadline for product
- B. shotgun: repeat instructions and requests as many times as possible to make sure the message gets across
- C. methodical: develop timed messages and communicate with multiple stakeholder groups on consistent schedule
- D. mixed-mode: use all of the above to hit all styles of communicators
- E. other

Liaison as communicator: s

Clicker question 8: My communication style most resembles (pick one):



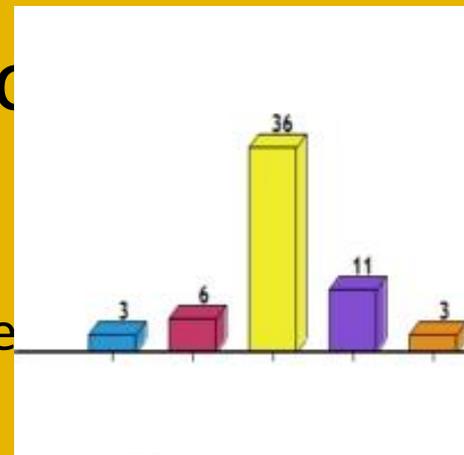
- A. KISS: write or give simple oral instructions and expect people will follow them, check in on the deadline for product
- B. shotgun: repeat instructions and requests as many times as possible to make sure the message gets across
- C. methodical: develop timed messages and communicate with multiple stakeholder groups on consistent schedule
- D. mixed-mode: use all of the above to hit all styles of communicators
- E. other

Liaison as bureaucrat: process, production, and product czar

Clicker question 9: My bureaucratic style most closely resembles(pick one):

- A. none – I am a faculty member who refuses to become a petty bureaucrat; we can produce the report through normal academic processes and committees
- B. synthesizer – gather input from all stakeholders and synthesize results to write report without editing or questioning
- C. capture and create – gather documentation, draft initial report, then get stakeholder input/revisions
- D. lots of control – develop precise systems of tracking required information on all items and integrate them into key university processes with complete centralized oversight; use unique viewpoint to refine materials through tough questions
- E. other

Liaison as bureaucrat: process, product and product czar



Clicker question 9: My bureaucratic style most closely resembles

- A. none – I am a faculty member who refuses to become a petty bureaucrat; we can produce the report through normal academic processes and committees
- B. synthesizer – gather input from all stakeholders and synthesize results to write report without editing or questioning
- C. capture and create – gather documentation, draft initial report, then get stakeholder input/revisions
- D. lots of control – develop precise systems of tracking required information on all items and integrate them into key university processes with complete centralized oversight; use unique viewpoint to refine materials through tough questions
- E. other

What is your preferred work style?

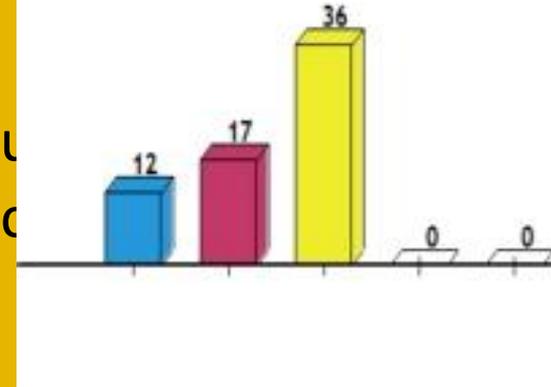
Clicker question 10: Pick the style closest to your own when you must meet deadlines and produce products (pick one):

- A. alone; groups and process get in the way
- B. in teams/groups; participating in all activities directly, chairing and monitoring each directly
- C. group of direct report team leaders who meet with the various committees and report back to me

NOTE: size and complexity of your institution, and the fact that you are a human being with limitations, will impact effectiveness and time constraints

What is your preferred work

Clicker question 10: Pick the style closest to you
must meet deadlines and produce products (pic



- A. alone; groups and process get in the way
- B. in teams/groups; participating in all activities directly, chairing and monitoring each directly
- C. group of direct report team leaders who meet with the various committees and report back to me

NOTE: size and complexity of your institution, and the fact that you are a human being with limitations, will impact effectiveness and time constraints

Effective liaisons are effective cultural travelers

Goldstein and Sanaghan offer these criteria for identifying effective cultural travelers:

- a reputation for credibility on campus
- hard-workers
- a passion for the institution
- a knack for problem-solving, but not necessarily joined with concern about getting the credit
- relationship builders
- great listeners
- a proven record for coordinating efforts, resources, and staff (whether formally or informally) across multiple offices

Our advice – general

To be a nimble and effective liaison, you must be able to react appropriately to situations that will need all these styles. You will develop *liaison intuition* through experience.

Understand your leadership and communication styles, build a team with complementary styles, practice comprehensive leadership, and be an effective cultural traveler.

Our advice on communication (nuts and bolts)

- over-communicate (without over-doing it)
- create a communication plan
- create patterns
- communicate clearly, then message check, often
- create ways to acknowledge participation
- use multiple forms, modes, and formats
- observe individual preferences when possible (e.g., VP who won't read email)
- don't over use your preference (high- low-tech; high-low-touch)

Our advice on communication (nuts and bolts cont'd)

- Communicate a vision: it's essential that each person in your organization understands how they can contribute to this vision.
- Fill the void...communicate often – you must be seen and heard and hear and see. Let each person know where they stand.
 - ✓ talk about their fears
 - ✓ listen
 - ✓ explain your plan of action
 - ✓ dispel negativity
 - ✓ inspire calm

Note: You are the only one who thinks about this topic everyday and you are the only one who truly wants to communicate about it, so your communication must be extensive and superlative.

Our advice to the czar

- clearly communicate to key players exactly what is required and their role
- ensure each unit owns and is accountable for compliance
- gather input from stakeholders
- provide assistance in compliance as necessary
- use existing processes whenever possible (revising and augmenting as necessary to meet compliance requirements)
- editor extraordinaire: serve as the final reader and return materials that aren't correct, concise, and compliant to the writer
- divide areas of responsibility so you can focus on overall orchestration

NOTE: No one will know more about every nook and cranny of your institution than you do; you will judge the final product for every area.

Our advice on work style

You are not alone! Don't be a martyr. Don't be a one person band. You have individuals who can help within your institution. SACSCOC compliance is a collective responsibility.

- build-up vs. burn-out
- create a network and keep past leaders active while cultivating new ones
- increase the number of people who feel they have a stake in the process (compliance should never be just **your** job)
- develop great data support by someone other than you
- clarify for everyone at every level that you are a facilitator not miracle maker; you can only represent what is there

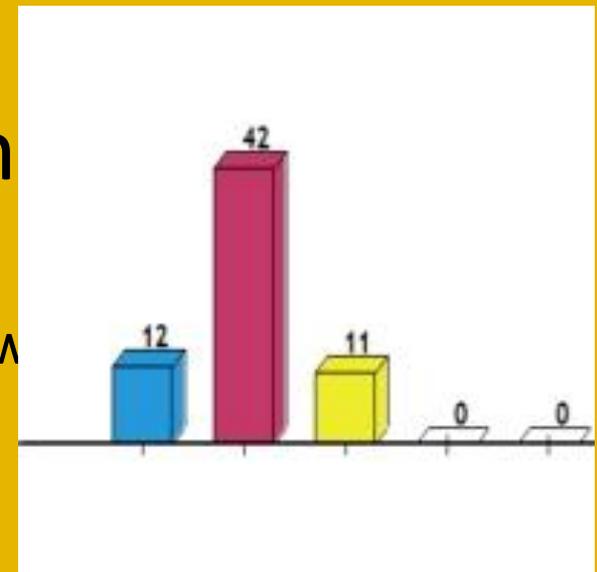
The confidence-competence factor

Clicker question 11: rate your comfort level with your ability to serve as an effective liaison

- A. I am experienced, completely informed, and completely prepared for this role
- B. I have things more-or-less under control, but could use more development
- C. I don't know much and I can't learn it all fast enough!!!!!!!

The confidence-competen

Clicker question 11: rate your comfort level w
to serve as an effective liaison



- A. I am experienced, completely informed, and completely prepared for this role
- B. I have things more-or-less under control, but could use more development
- C. I don't know much and I can't learn it all fast enough!!!!!!!

Our advice—becoming competent

Build confidence and competence by developing a strategy to learn as much as you can as fast as you can:

- volunteer to become part of a reaffirmation committee
- ask questions and document answers; there's *no such thing as a stupid question*
- attend seminars, Webinars, and other training
- bring teams to training and conferences on key issues
- ask for necessary support
- create an internal cadre of experts, then divide leadership for key areas and provide oversight
- study the SACSCOC Web site often and link to VP's sites
- link to liaisons at other institutions to exchange information
- create/participate in groups, e.g. LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UHD.EDU

Spirit of the future and SACS



- Don't hide your head in your hands – go back to your institutions knowing you can do it and do it well.
- Remember, there is no way to get your questions answered or get support without asking for help.
- Practice the 12 steps for liaisons (see appendix)
- Network and share contact information while you are here – Just do it!

Spirit of SACS Past, Present, and Future: *Role of the Institutional SACS Liaison*

**2011 SACSCOC Annual Meeting
December 3-6, 2011**



Dr. Diane Z. Chase

Executive Vice Provost for
Academic Affairs
University of Central Florida
diane.chase@ucf.edu

Dr. Denise Young

Associate Vice President for
Cocoa and Palm Bay Campuses
University of Central Florida
denise.young@ucf.edu

Dr. Linda Miedema

Interim Vice President for
Planning and Assessment
Brevard Community College
miedemal@brevardcc.edu

Mr. Kurt Ewen

Assistant Vice President, Assessment and
Institutional Effectiveness
Valencia College
kewen@valenciacc.edu

Twelve Steps for SACS Liaisons

1. We admitted we were powerless over the demands of being the SACS liaison — that our lives had become unmanageable, so we sought out advice at a session with others with our affliction.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves (experienced liaisons) could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our energies over to follow the advice we were given, as we understood it.
4. We made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves to understand why we accepted this job and how we lead and work.
5. We admitted to ourselves and to others (anonymously via clickers) the exact nature of our true leadership tendencies.
6. We are now entirely ready to create a team that will fill in the gaps and compensate for any potential defects of character.
7. We will humbly ask our institutional members to follow us, despite our shortcomings (unless they prefer to do it).
8. We will make a list of all persons we have to include and determined to over-communicate with them all.
9. We will make direct, frequent, effective contacts with people wherever possible, except when to do so would be counterproductive.
10. We will continue to take personal inventory and when we re headed in the wrong direction, promptly admit it and correct course.
11. We will constantly (OK regularly) study the SACS Web site and meditate on ways to improve our knowledge of our role, as we understand it, hoping to develop liaison intuition and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had an awakening as the result of these steps, we will try to carry this message to other liaisons, network with colleagues we have met today, and to practice these principles in all our daily operations and activities.

Resources for Liaisons

The Accreditation Liaison

The Commission on Colleges and its candidate and member institutions share responsibility for maintaining a relationship whereby both are fully informed of current accreditation issues and requirements and how those requirements are applied. In order to facilitate close and effective communication, the Commission has assigned a staff member to each candidate and member institution. This staff member establishes a working relationship with the leaders of the institution, consults with the institution during its reviews, answers questions or receives comments from the institution, maintains the Commission file on the institution, and, in general, develops a familiarity with the operations of the institution, to the extent possible.

Responsibilities of the Accreditation Liaison

The Accreditation Liaison is responsible for the following:

1. Ensuring that compliance with accreditation requirements is incorporated into the planning and evaluation process of the institution.
2. Notifying the Commission in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accord with the substantive change policies of the Commission.
3. Familiarizing faculty, staff, and students with the Commission's accrediting policies and procedures, and with particular sections of the accrediting standards and Commission policies that have application to certain aspects of the campus (e.g., library, continuing education) especially when such documents are adopted or revised.
4. Serving as a contact person for Commission staff. This includes encouraging institutional staff to route routine inquiries about the Principles of Accreditation and accreditation policies and processes through the Accreditation Liaison, who will contact Commission staff, if necessary, and ensuring that email from the Commission office does not get trapped in the institution's spam filter.
5. Coordinating the preparation of the annual profiles and any other reports requested by the Commission.
6. Serving as a resource person during the decennial review process and helping prepare for and coordinating reaffirmation and other accrediting visits.
7. Ensuring that electronic institutional data collected by the Commission is accurate and timely.
8. Maintaining a file of all accreditation materials, such as, reports related to the decennial review; accreditation committee reports; accreditation manuals, standards, and policies; schedules of all visits; and correspondence from accrediting offices.

How to Become an Effective Accreditation Liaison

Effective communication between member institutions and Commission staff is the key to ensuring that institutions are kept informed of current accreditation issues and requirements and that the Commission is made aware of institutional perspectives and concerns that touch accreditation issues. To develop an effective relationship between the institution and the Commission staff member, the Accreditation Liaison may want to

1. Learn about the Commission on Colleges and the way it works by reviewing the following sections of the its Website (www.sacscoc.org):
 - general information about the Commission
 - the *Principles of Accreditation*
 - policies and publications of the Commission
 - institutional resources, including handbooks, manuals, and guides
 - upcoming meetings and events
2. Maintain contact with the Commission staff member assigned to your institution.
3. Get involved in Commission activities by attending the annual meeting and serving as a peer evaluator.
4. Become acquainted with the institution's accreditation history by reviewing past correspondence with the Commission and materials stemming from previous reaffirmation or substantive change reviews.
5. Ensure that reports to the Commission and significant correspondence from the Commission are archived for future reference.