

ACCREDITATION & COMPLIANCE

When Every Day Is A Site Visit

*Building a Culture of Accreditation
and Compliance on Your Campus*

Transforming Compliance from an Event into a Way of Life

THE ACCREDITATION REALITY



18–24

Months of prep time
typically consumed



60%

Of institutions report
staff anxiety spikes



3x

More likely to pass
with daily habits



The most prepared campuses don't treat accreditation as a one-time event — they build it into how they operate every single day.

TWO VERY DIFFERENT CULTURES

REACTIVE CULTURE

- Scrambles to gather documents at review time
- Staff unaware of standards until deadline
- Data lives in silos, hard to retrieve
- Leadership pushes compliance top-down
- High anxiety, staff feel unprepared
- Evidence is thin or missing

VS

PROACTIVE CULTURE

- Documentation is ongoing and organized
- All staff know standards relevant to their role
- Data systems are integrated and accessible
- Ownership is distributed across departments
- Confidence comes from everyday practice
- Evidence portfolio is rich and current

THE 5 PILLARS OF AN ACCREDITATION-READY CULTURE

1



Shared Ownership

Every staff member understands their role

2



Continuous Documentation

Evidence built daily, not at deadline

3



Data-Driven Decisions

Use metrics to prove improvement

4



Leadership Alignment

Top-down commitment and support

5



Training & Awareness

Ongoing education on standards

PILLAR 1: LEADERSHIP SETS THE TONE



Leadership Alignment

Model the Behavior

Leaders who visibly engage in documentation, attend compliance trainings, and talk about accreditation standards normalize the behavior for everyone else.

Make It a Standing Agenda Item

Include accreditation status updates in every cabinet, department, and faculty senate meeting — not just before a site visit.

Allocate Real Resources

Dedicated staff time, technology tools, and professional development signal that compliance is a genuine institutional priority.

Celebrate Progress

Recognize departments and individuals who maintain excellent documentation and demonstrate continuous improvement.

PILLAR 2: DOCUMENTATION AS DAILY PRACTICE

"If it isn't documented, it didn't happen."



Create Living Documents

- Use shared drives or LMS for real-time updates
- Assign document owners to each standard
- Set quarterly review reminders
- Version-control all policy documents



Organize Evidence Strategically

- Map every piece of evidence to a standard
- Tag files by accreditation cycle year
- Build a master evidence inventory
- Use naming conventions consistently



Automate Where Possible

- Schedule automated data pulls
- Use surveys with built-in reporting
- Set calendar alerts for annual reviews
- Connect systems to reduce manual entry

PILLAR 3: BUILDING A SHARED OWNERSHIP MODEL



Each unit owns its evidence, knows its standards, and reports directly to the accreditation coordinator — compliance is everyone's job.

PILLAR 4: TRAINING & ONGOING AWARENESS

ANNUAL ACCREDITATION AWARENESS CYCLE

FALL

- New staff onboarding
- to accreditation standards
- Department-level standards workshops

WINTER

- Mid-year data review
- and gap analysis
- Evidence audit
- and quality check

SPRING

- Mock site visit
- activities
- Peer review of department portfolios

SUMMER

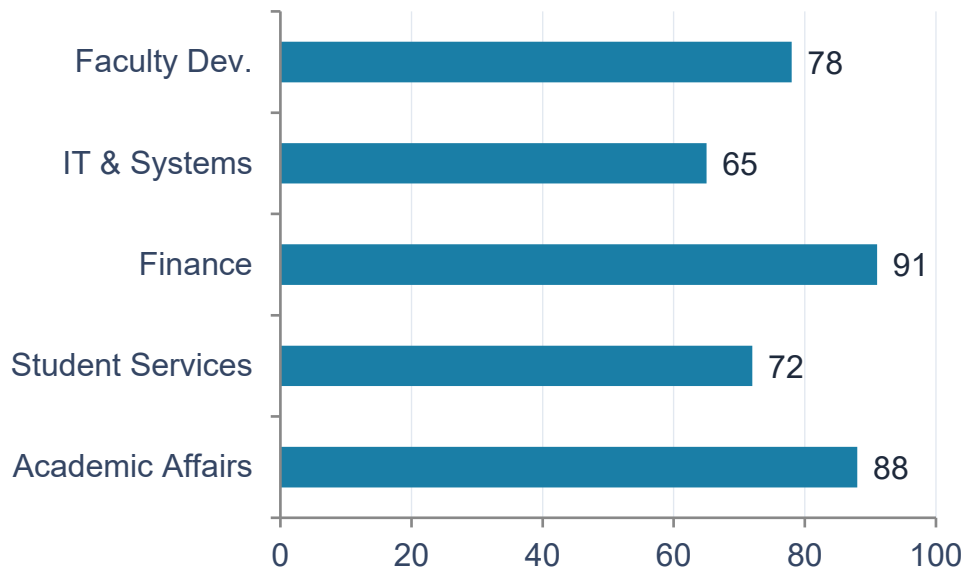
- Leadership retreat
- on accreditation strategy
- System and process updates for next cycle



Pro Tip: Micro-training (5–10 min) embedded in regular meetings is more effective than annual all-day compliance sessions.

PILLAR 5: DATA-DRIVEN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Sample: Dept. Evidence Completion Rate



Track Completion by Standard

Build a dashboard showing % of evidence gathered per accreditation standard across units.

Use Trend Data

Year-over-year comparisons show improvement — your best story for accreditors.

Identify Gaps Early

Monthly gap reports prevent the last-minute scramble by flagging weak areas six months ahead.

Close the Loop

Key Principle: *Data doesn't just satisfy accreditors — it helps your campus make better decisions year-round.*

COMMON PITFALLS — AND HOW TO AVOID THEM



The 'One Person Show'

If one staff member holds all compliance knowledge, a departure puts the entire institution at risk.



Compliance Theater

Creating documents and checklists that look good but don't reflect actual practice.



Ignoring Non-Academic Areas

Finance, IT, HR, and Facilities are often unprepared — but accreditors will look there too.



Not Involving Students

Students are your strongest accreditation story — but they're rarely prepared to speak to outcomes.



FIX: Cross-train at least 2–3 people per major standard; document all processes.



FIX: Evidence must match reality. Conduct internal audits to verify alignment between policy and practice.



FIX: Assign compliance liaisons in every operational unit, not just academic departments.



FIX: Brief student leaders regularly; ensure student voices are part of your evidence portfolio.

YOUR 90-DAY ACTION PLAN: QUICK WINS

Days 1–30

ASSESS & ORGANIZE

- Audit current evidence holdings against each standard
- Map which department owns which standards
- Identify top 3 compliance gaps campus-wide
- Schedule kick-off meeting with dept. liaisons

Days 31–60

BUILD & TRAIN

- Launch shared documentation platform (Drive, SharePoint)
- Deliver 30-min standards overview to all dept. heads
- Assign evidence owners to every accreditation standard
- Create campus accreditation calendar for the year

Days 61–90

PRACTICE & REFINE

- Conduct first internal mini-audit of top 5 standards
- Run a mock 'surprise site visit' in one department
- Review data systems for gaps and automation
- Report progress to leadership and celebrate wins

THE BOTTOM LINE



Every day is your site visit.

Accreditation isn't a destination — it's a reflection of how well you serve students every single day.

Build shared ownership

Document continuously

Lead with data

Start today. The site visit is already happening.
www.juliebasler.com

