

SACS REAFFIRMATION NEWSLETTER



August 8, 2008

The University of Louisiana at Monroe

Volume 1, Issue 3

30 Days and Counting

Eric Pani, Associate Provost and SACS Liaison

When you receive this newsletter on August 11, we will have 30 days left until we must submit our compliance certification report to the Commission on Colleges (CoC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

By September 10, 2008, we will be submitting proof that ULM is in compliance with the 12 Core Requirements, 14 Comprehensive Standards, and seven Federal Requirements that the CoC requires of all institutions it accredits. That proof consists of narratives that many faculty and staff have written over the past year. Documentation such as Board of Regents and University of Louisiana System policies and procedures, our catalogs and strategic plan, and data from our assessment system help shape the arguments presented in the narratives and provide evidence that support our assertion of compliance.

Other faculty and staff have been reviewing this information and critiquing the narratives to assure our arguments are sound and accurate. Since our report will be an electronic submission, additional faculty and staff are verifying that the embedded hyperlinks work correctly. Finally, Dr. Chris Harris, Assistant Professor of English and Director of First-Year Composition, is editing the document. Just before we lock down our website, we will again check and re-check hyperlinks.

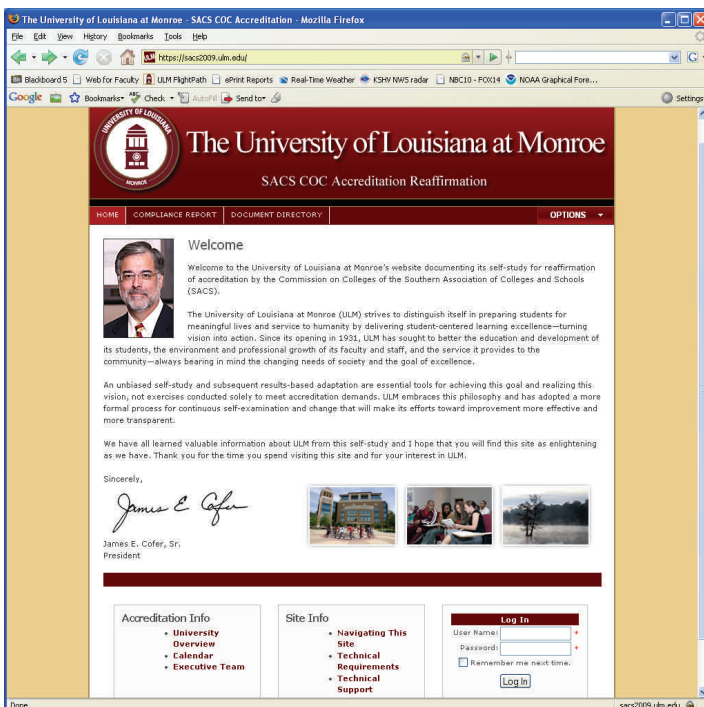
A team of off-site reviewers will be looking at our compliance report and meeting in early November to write a report of their findings. This team will consist of a chair and evaluators for finance, institutional effectiveness, organization and administration, student support services, and learning support services, along with two or three people for educational programs. They access our report by logging in to our reaffirmation website located at <https://sacs2009.ulm.edu/>. Because our docu-

mentation contains information such as resumes, curriculum vitae, and transcripts (with birth date, Social Security numbers, and student identification numbers removed), the SACS Leadership Team decided that access to this site will be limited by requiring a login with a username and password. Each dean has been given this information and asked to provide it to department heads. Similarly, each vice president has the same information and has been asked to share it with department heads in his division. If you would like to review the site and see it just as the reviewers will, please contact your department head and ask for the SACS website username and password. Please do not share this information with others outside the university so that we may preserve the security of the website.

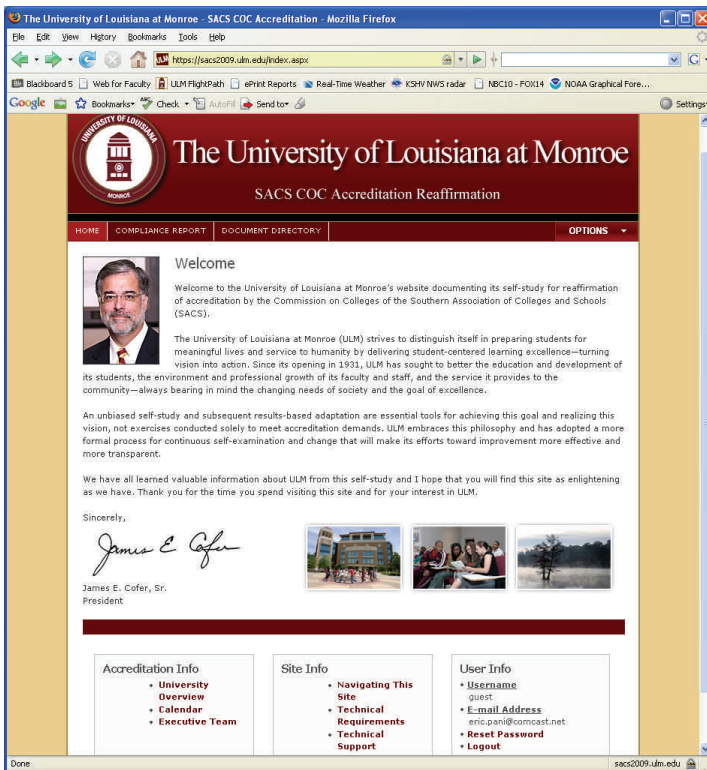
Navigation of the site is straightforward.

- Login information is entered in the fields provided at the lower right of the website. (See Window image 1.)
- The page to which you are taken has the following links. (See the Window image 2.)
 - Compliance Report: the narratives and supporting documentation for the requirements and standards
 - Document Directory: links to commonly-used electronic documents (e.g., catalogs and manuals)
 - Accreditation Info: links to an overview of ULM, our accreditation calendar, and the Leadership Team
 - Site Info: information to help you navigate the website
 - Options: links to logout or to access a help facility or the faculty roster
- Clicking on the COMPLIANCE REPORT tab just below the header will take you to the majority of the information. The page presented will list each of the standards and requirements by number and with a brief title. The standard's number is a hyperlink that will take you to the narrative and supporting documentation used to make the case for compliance.
- Each standard's website is formatted with a common template. (See Window image 3.)
 - The standard's number and title are displayed at the top of the page.
 - The standard's statement is listed next and is followed by a judgment of the degree to which we are in compliance with that statement.
 - The narrative follows next. Items that are formatted in bold text are hyperlinks to supporting documents.
 - Finally, the documents used for support in the narrative are hyperlinked in the Sources section.
- You can navigate to other standards using the Next or Previous links on each page or by clicking on the COMPLIANCE REPORT tab and selecting the item you want to see.
- When you are ready to logout, move your mouse over the OPTIONS tab in the page's banner and select the LOGOUT link in the drop-down menu.

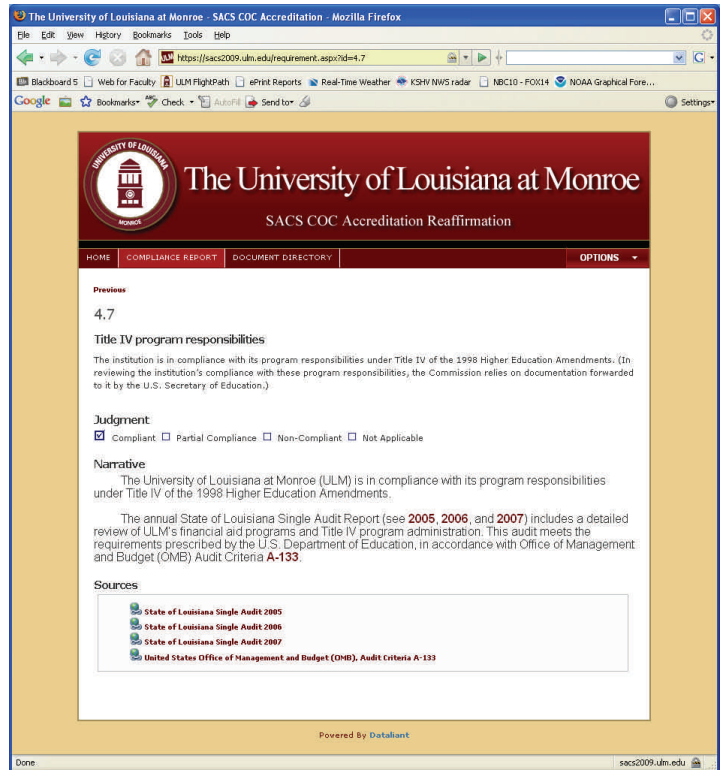
If you find errors in the document, email me at pani@ulm.edu and Chris Harris at charris@ulm.edu. Tell us the standard number in which the error occurs, describe where the error is located in sufficient detail for us to find it, and describe the problem as you see it.



Window image 1. Login screen.



Window image 2. First page provided after login.



Window image 3. Sample standard narrative page.

I am very pleased with our compliance report and do not foresee any problems with our review. We are in compliance with every standard and requirement that will be reviewed at this point in the process.

After the off-site review team submits their report to the CoC, we will get a copy of it and will have the opportunity to respond to their comments. The Focused Report we will submit will also be in electronic form and must be provided to the CoC before February 2, 2009.

At the same time, we must also submit our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). You may recall that input from the ULM community last year resulted in the selection of a QEP whose purpose is “to increase student engagement in learning through course redesign, incorporating best practices of instructional strategies and technologies.” Dean Jeffrey Cass, chairman of the QEP Steering Committee, along with many faculty and staff have been working on the plan over the summer, and it is progressing nicely. They have a draft that provides the readers with

- background information about the research done on student engagement and learning,
- current information about student learning and engagement at ULM,
- a list of research-based activities that will be undertaken during the plan’s five-year span,
- reasonable assessments that will determine

if those activities have improved student engagement and learning, and

- a preliminary budget.

Look for an update on the QEP from Dean Cass soon.

An on-site team will then examine our compliance report, the focused report, and the QEP before they visit campus on March 24-26, 2009. Prior to the visit, they will try to resolve any questions not answered for them in the reports. During that visit, the team members will investigate our compliance with several standards they are federally mandated to examine and address any standards they feel still need clarification. Most of their time, however, will be devoted to discussing the QEP with the Steering Committee and the Leadership Team. Afterwards, they will submit a report to the CoC and will identify any areas in which they feel ULM is not in compliance with the standards. We will then have several weeks to formulate and submit a response before the CoC meets in early December 2009 to issue its findings.

We are about to take the next big step on the road to reaffirmation. I will continue to update you about the process through newsletters and emails, but please feel free to stop me when you see me, give me a call, or send me an email if you have any questions. Finally, remember that reaffirmation is about the integrity of the institution and its quest for continuous improvement.



Important Dates

September 10, 2008
Compliance Certification Due

October 3, 2008
Draft Quality Enhancement Plan

November 3-6, 2008
Off-site Peer Review

February 2, 2009
Quality Enhancement Plan Due

March 24-26, 2009
On-site Peer Review

August 1, 2009
Response to On-site Team Report

December 5-8, 2009
Commission on Colleges Review

