

SITE VISIT TIPS

The best thing an institution facing a site visit can do is to prepare all institutional stakeholders. This includes administrators, faculty, staff and students. A hospitable and friendly atmosphere will go a long way in contributing to a successful site visit.

1. Be positive about the upcoming review. Share with all stakeholders that this is a great time to celebrate accomplishments and achievements and to learn what the institution can do better. This is also a good time to conduct a self-evaluation or self-study.
2. Assign a committee to review standards by which the institution will be graded. Members of this committee should be well-versed on the standards and be able to thoroughly discuss them with the reviewers.
3. Stress the extreme importance of the documentation process. In most cases, when an institution experiences a negative review, it is because they did not properly document or did not present requested documentation. Make sure all documents contain required statements regarding diversity, etc.
4. Make sure documents are organized in a logical fashion. Make it easy for the reviewers to find what they are looking for. If possible, a requested documents web page should be added to the institutions website. This allows the reviewers an opportunity to review many of the documents before the visit. The review team will really appreciate this.
5. The devil is in the details. Make sure the area where the review team will be working is uncluttered, neatly organized, brightly lit and accommodating. Prior to their visit, ask if your institution needs to provide laptops, notebooks and printers for their use. If possible, provide the review team with water, coffee, soft drinks, etc. A hospitable and accommodating attitude goes a long way in contributing to a successful visit.
6. Spread the word. Make sure that all institutional stakeholders (administrators, faculty, staff and students) know that you are having a site visit. A good idea is about a month before the visit; send out some type of weekly communication to the entire institutional community. For example, you could send an update email telling everyone how things are progressing, meet with groups of people to see if they have any questions or suggestions, etc.
7. Debrief those who participated in the review. Site teams typically interview a lot of people. Meet with these people and ask for their feedback, impressions and thoughts. Make sure you make note of good suggestions and incorporate these good suggestions into your site review handbook or manual. Don't have a site review handbook or manual? Well, it's a good idea to develop one because guess what?
8. One day there will be another site visit. The time to prepare is right now – for the next site visit. Also, some bear in mind that some accrediting agencies perform unannounced visits.

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