



Real-time assessment and accreditation reports in minutes vs. weeks

The challenge

When Bliss Adkison acquired the role of Associate Director for Academic Affairs and SACSCOC Liaison at the University of North Alabama, the institution had been cited for non-compliance for institutional effectiveness assessment. The institution had a “homegrown” data collection system for its institutional effectiveness reporting, a method, Adkison said, “that was a very clunky, non-transparent data import system.”

It took Adkison two weeks to create a single report. “It was very manual, using unstructured data from Excel sheets and PDFs,” Adkison said. “There was lots of room for error because someone other than me was interpreting the data.”

To track the status of reports, administrators had to log in and check individual forms for blank fields. “I would do an initial spot check, and then I’d follow up with the department,” Adkison said. “Then, we would tell their Dean or direct report. And then, it got lost in the shuffle.”

Lack of transparent data made it difficult to have quality conversations with faculty. “We have a process where we would sit down with the department chair for 30 minutes to an hour every year to review their annual report, but those conversations haven’t been very in-depth.”

The solution

Adkison’s team implemented Planning & Self Study in early 2020 to handle the university’s annual and program reviews and assessment. She launched the solution and trained faculty in just three months while managing a transition to remote teaching and learning due to the pandemic.

The wins

87% of faculty completed annual reporting on time: “The buy-in to Planning & Self Study was high because the system was more transparent,” said Adkison. “As one person said, ‘You can’t hide in this system.’ And it’s true. If someone hasn’t started, I can see, and so can their Dean.”

Real-time reports take minutes vs. weeks: “Reports that used to take a couple of weeks to pull together, I can do in a few minutes,” said Adkison. “It gives me peace of mind. It also allows for data-driven decision making regarding institutional effectiveness in a more efficient way.”

Annual conversations focused on action items and outcomes: “We’ve been able to have some good quality conversations,” Adkison said. “I’ve never had the outcomes breakout for our core competencies at my fingertips before. Now I can see which core competencies have unmet outcomes, and we can immediately discuss them. Being able to have those conversations now and at that depth is the most major university-wide impact of using the system.”

Administrators view status and follow up only on incomplete reports: “The fact that I can look in one spot to see if a report is complete or in progress is worlds above where we were,” Adkison said.

Track multiple streams of data for numerous reporting requirements: Adkison is already using Planning & Self Study to track data for the university’s 2023 SACSCOC reaffirmation report.

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Bliss Adkison
Associate Director for Academic Affairs and SACSCOC Liaison
University of North Alabama

Institution snapshot

University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama

Institution Type: Public
Master’s University

Total full-time students:
8,400

Total full-time faculty: 257

Number of campuses: 1



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