

# SACS facts

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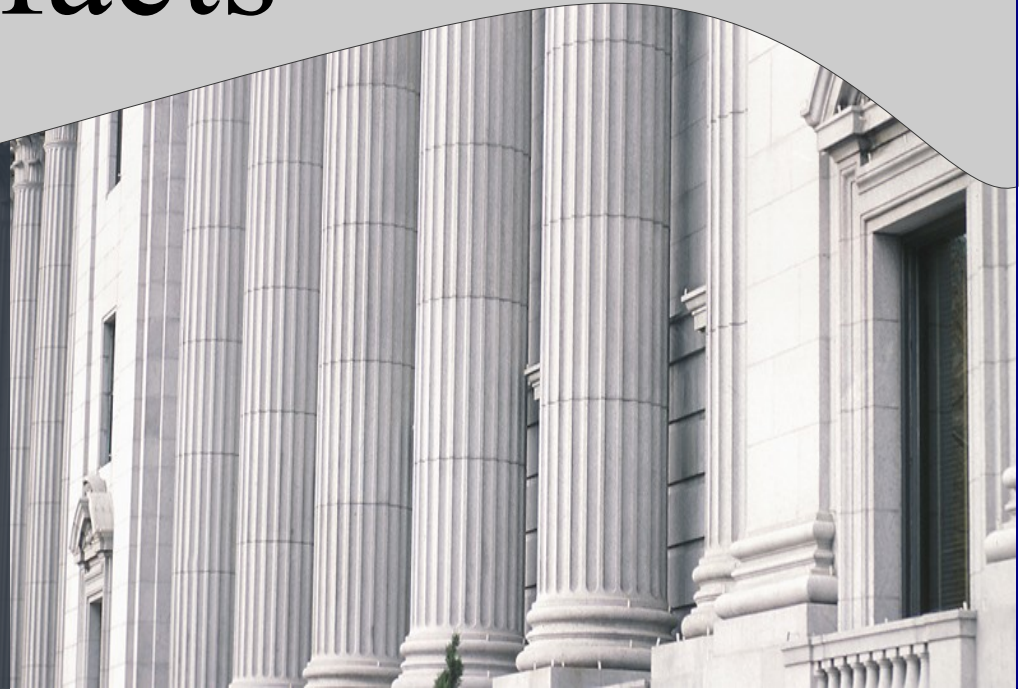
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Newsletter Editors

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## ***COUNTDOWN:***

***Compliance Certificate submitted!*** The report was submitted March 1st and will be reviewed by an off-site SACSCOC team in April and May. Submitting the Compliance Certificate to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the first formal step in the process of applying for reaffirmation. Additional requirements involved in the application are submission of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and the on-site visit.

***5 months to submit the QEP document***  
***7 months till the on-site visit***



# SACSCOC - Did you know?

## *College Programs*

The College offers a total of 152 degrees or certificates! In addition to the associates degree, there are 51 program tracks that lead to either an A.S. or an A.A.S. degree, 42 that lead to a College Credit Certificate (CCC), 47 that lead to a workforce certificate (PSAV), and five that lead to a bachelor's degree. Six program tracks lead to other certificates or degrees such as an Advanced Technical Certificate (ATC). All of these areas participate either directly or indirectly in the assessment of learning outcomes, an important part of the accreditation process.



## *SACSCOC Region*

SACSCOC is the accrediting agency for higher education institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Latin America, and other international sites. All institutions in this region that are accredited by SACSCOC must meet the same criteria, including the development of a QEP and the application of reaffirmation every ten years.

## *Strategic Planning*

“Strategic planning” is tied to accreditation. It occurs every few years and includes faculty/instructors, staff, students, administrators, alumni, and business partners. The strategic plan includes the College mission, vision, and beliefs. The current plan (2009-2012) includes five goals, each with two objectives, that call for attention to teaching and learning, community needs, ethics, sustainability, and enrollment management.

## *Don't forget! The SACSCOC site visit is October 11-13, 2011.*

- Be on campus during the visit.
- Know the mission of the College.
- Know that QEP stands for Quality Enhancement Plan.
- Know that **our** QEP will improve student learning by focusing on critical thinking both in the classroom and on campus.

## *Mission of the College*

Palm Beach State College, founded in 1933 as Florida's first public community college, is a diverse, comprehensive institution dedicated to serving the educational needs of Palm Beach County. Integrally linked to the community through strong partnerships, the College provides associate and baccalaureate degrees, professional certificates, workforce development and lifelong learning.

Palm Beach State College's mission is to create and sustain a dynamic teaching and learning environment that provides a high-quality, accessible, affordable education, preparing students to contribute and compete ethically and successfully in a diverse global community.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ACCREDITATION AND THE REAFFIRMATION PROCESS, [click here](#).

# Assessment

## *Revised general education program philosophy and student learning outcomes*

### **General Education Philosophy:**

*The General Education program at Palm Beach State College prepares students for lifelong intellectual pursuit and responsible participation in a complex global society through a core curriculum of courses that incorporate values, shape attitudes and offer students a depth and breadth of learning that transcends the content of any one specific discipline.*

### **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

- **Communications:** Develop effective communication skills for a variety of audiences.
- **Global Awareness:** Exhibit a sense of social, cultural and global responsibility.
- **Critical Thinking:** Engage in purposeful reasoning to reach sound conclusions.
- **Information Literacy:** Demonstrate the ability to find, evaluate, organize and use information.
- **Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning:** Apply mathematical and scientific principles to solve real-world problems.
- **Ethics:** Demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions based on ethical principles and reasoning

The learning outcome on personal development was removed.



## *Palm Beach State participates in national assessment project*

As a member of the National Community College Benchmark Project, Palm Beach State College now can provide valuable peer comparison data to faculty, administrators and the community.

The NCCBP, an initiative of the National Higher Education Benchmark Institute at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, has been providing colleges with a standardized method of institutional comparison since 2004. In the most recent administration, 268 community colleges and multi-college districts participated in

NCCBP by providing data on an array of topics, including course retention and success, completion and transfer rates, term-to-term persistence, and student services staff. Member colleges can compare their institutions with others of similar size, diversity, budgets and other characteristics.

In 2011, Palm Beach State will participate in this endeavor for the fourth time. Our most recent report compares our 2010 benchmarks with the previous year's, as well as those of 13 peer institutions in 11 states, selected for their similarity to Palm Beach State in terms of size, structure and service area. This report can be found on the [Research Reports and Surveys](#) page located on the Institutional Research & Effectiveness website.

MORE ABOUT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT, PLEASE VISIT:  
<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/LearningOutcomes.xml>

# Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

**QEP DEFINITION OF CRITICAL THINKING:** *using the skills needed to explore, evaluate, express, and engage in purposeful reasoning in order to reach sound conclusions, decisions, positions, and/or solutions. (definition reached by College-wide consensus, September, 2010)*



## *How do we teach and assess critical thinking skills?*

This will be a primary focus of professional development when QEP implementation begins next spring. A team of faculty will meet regularly this fall (2011) to design workshops and collaboration opportunities that can be offered to all instructional staff beginning 2012. We will strive to create useful tools and resources to support faculty and instructors in their efforts to help students acquire, develop, and apply critical thinking skills. One goal of this effort will be to identify effective strategies for both teaching and assessing these skills and to showcase instructors who are using the methods.

## *QEP document being prepared for preliminary review*

Plan goals and strategies have been formulated into a well-written, five-year plan. Faculty have met and worked together with administrators to create a document that will be acceptable to the SACS review team. But just as importantly, they worked to represent the voice of constituents, writing a plan that addressed issues raised during the College-wide conversation that took place in 2009 and 2010 at QEP focus groups and forums. Jackie Berg, Dan McGavin, and Carleton Chernekoff all served on the QEP committee last fall, but kept their sleeves rolled up this semester as they stayed on to help complete the writing phase.

## *Sharing the plan*

The QEP goals and strategies will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of *SACS facts*. They will also be widely communicated to the College in the fall term to prepare for the SACS site visit in October. Once the written plan has been deemed acceptable by the SACS review team, the QEP document will be available online.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE QEP, PLEASE VISIT OR CALL:  
<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/QEP.xml> ~ 561-868-3325