

Preparing for Our WSCUC Accreditation Site Visit

Campus Visit Dates: September 25-27, 2024

What is WSCUC, and why is the peer evaluation team visiting?

WSCUC – the [WASC Senior College and University Commission](#) – is UC Berkeley’s regional accrediting agency, which oversees our campus compliance with Department of Education policies and standards. As part of the accreditation process, the campus undergoes regular review by WSCUC-appointed peer reviewers to ensure that our academics, and supporting programs and structures, align with [WSCUC’s Standards of Accreditation](#). During the upcoming site visit in September, the peer evaluation team will meet with a wide variety of campus stakeholders, evaluate all aspects of the campus in relation to the WSCUC standards, and make a recommendation on reaffirming our accreditation.

Why does accreditation matter?

Maintaining our accreditation assures the educational community and the general public that UC Berkeley has met high standards of quality and effectiveness. In addition, we must be accredited in order to receive federal funds, such as federal research grants, and in order to award federal financial aid to students.

What do I need to do?

Please consider sharing your feedback by: participating in the session relevant to your stakeholder group (see [slide deck](#)), sending feedback through leadership in your unit, or emailing the peer reviewers confidentially at this address: berkeley@wscuc.org. The more participation, the better! It is very important for the campus community to engage with the peer reviewers to provide a complete picture of UC Berkeley. [Sign up here!](#)

What will happen during the site visit?

The peer evaluation team will meet with a wide variety of campus stakeholders and ask questions regarding campus programs, infrastructure, and operations. Details about the visit schedule may be found on the slides titled “Visit by Peer Evaluation Team” of this [slide deck](#).

What happened before the site visit?

Prior to the site visit, we have submitted [extensive documentation](#) to WSCUC about UC Berkeley. The review takes place over the course of several years in four distinct steps: (1) the development and submission of a [Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation \(TPR\) proposal](#), (2) a comprehensive self-review [Institutional Report](#) and supplemental compliance documentation, (3) an in-person visit by the WSCUC peer evaluation team, and (4) a review of the peer evaluation team’s recommendation and a formal decision regarding our reaffirmation of accreditation by the WSCUC [Commission](#). UC Berkeley submitted our institutional report and compliance documentation in summer 2024, and we are now preparing for the site visit.

What happens after the site visit?

At the end of the September visit, the peer evaluation team will draft a report about their findings and provide an opportunity for campus leadership to comment. In February 2025, at a standing meeting of the WSCUC Commission, a decision will be made on whether to accept or reject the peer evaluation team’s recommendations. It is common for all institutions to receive recommended actions for improvement, which generally become the basis for self-review in the next accreditation reaffirmation period.

I'm not sure what to talk to the reviewers about. What did Berkeley focus on in our report?

The theme of our [institutional report](#) is “Promoting Student Success Through Discovery and Engagement.” In meetings with the reviewers, you may wish to consider how this theme intersects with your role and experiences on campus. In the report, we examine the most effective ways to engage our students in the research enterprise and consider how to prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter as engaged citizens. Some of the questions we pose and answer include:

- What are our definitions of “Discovery” and an “undergraduate Discovery experience”?
- What percentage of students reported having the awareness, interest, and resources to pursue a Discovery experience?
- What are the best practices for supporting graduate students and promoting the success of undergraduate students, with particular attention to students from non-traditional and under-resourced backgrounds?
- What are the best practices for faculty in designing and delivering a Discovery course or a Discovery experience?
- What do the data show about student success related to engagement with advising, cohort group programs, graduate students, and faculty?

Additional details on the Discovery Initiative can be found on the [Berkeley Discovery website](#).

Should I prepare a presentation to deliver to the peer evaluation team?

No. The team has already reviewed extensive documentation from UC Berkeley, and they are eager to engage in conversation with you. Expect that meetings with the reviewers will begin with their questions.

Who are the members of the peer evaluation team, and what are their credentials?

The peer evaluation team is composed of five senior leaders from peer institutions, accompanied by a WSCUC VP. We are very grateful to these leaders for devoting their time to our campus:

- **Jay Hartzell**, President, University of Texas, Austin, *Chair*
- **Kelly Wahl**, Assistant Dean, UCLA Summer Sessions and Strategic Initiatives, *Vice Chair*
- **Paul Kang**, Associate Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer, Institutional Planning, UC Irvine
- **Elaine Treharne**, Senior Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Stanford University
- **Clare Shinnerl**, Vice Chancellor for Finance, Operations and Administration, UC Davis
- **Mark Goor**, Vice President, WASC Senior College and University Commission, *ex officio*

How can I send confidential feedback to the peer evaluation team?

You may email the peer evaluation team confidentially at this address: berkeley@wscuc.org. All comments are received only by the peer reviewers and WSCUC staff.

I've always heard our accreditor called “WASC.” Is “WSCUC” the same thing?

The WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) was formally created in 2012-13 when three education commissions under the umbrella of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) – Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS) – reincorporated as separate entities. They now use the same “WASC” acronym but are three separate 501(c)(3) organizations with independent scopes and governance structures.

What if I have more questions?

Please contact the office of Vice Provost Oliver O'Reilly at vpue@berkeley.edu.

What is the modality of the meetings – in person or online?

In general, the site visit meetings are in person and do not have a Zoom dial-in option. The members of the peer evaluation team have traveled from around the country to connect with us on our campus face-to-face.

What if I need disability-related accommodations in order to participate in the site visit?

If you require an accommodation for effective communication (ASL interpreting, CART captioning, alternative media formats, etc.) or information about mobility access in order to fully participate in this event, please contact [Catherine Cronquist Browning](#) with as much advance notice as possible. The [RSVP form](#) for the open forum sessions also includes an option to request disability-related accommodations.

NOTE: What follows below is information for community members based on affiliation. While we cannot know exactly what questions the peer evaluation team will ask during their one-on-one and open forum meetings, we provide the examples below as a starting point to get you thinking about what you might wish to share with the reviewers.

Information for Faculty

Event: Open forum | Wednesday, September 25 | 2:45 - 3:45 pm | **Tilden Room, MLK Student Union**

Faculty are encouraged to participate in an hour-long open forum that will be hosted by the WSCUC peer evaluation team. This is an opportunity for the reviewers to hear directly from all faculty about the range of faculty experiences on campus. Consider the questions listed on page 1 as a starting point for discussion in this forum. Additionally, we expect that the reviewers will have questions tailored to you, which may include:

1. What do you see as UC Berkeley's greatest strengths? Greatest challenges?
2. What changes have you seen on the campus in the past decade?
3. As members of the faculty, in what ways does UC Berkeley support you in terms of your research, teaching, service, and professional development?
4. How would you characterize the communication between the administration and faculty? Between the Senate and faculty?

Information for Students

Event: Open forum | Wednesday, September 25 | 4:00 - 5:00 pm | Undergraduates: **ASUC Senate Chambers, 510 Eshleman Hall** | Graduates: **Tilden Room, MLK Student Union**

Students are encouraged to participate in an hour-long open forum that will be hosted by the WSCUC peer evaluation team. There will be one session for undergraduates in the ASUC Senate Chambers and, at the same time, a separate session for graduates and postdoctoral fellows in the Tilden Room. This is an opportunity for the reviewers to hear directly from students and postdocs about the range of their experiences on campus. Consider the questions listed on page 1 as a starting point for discussion in this forum. Additionally, we expect that the reviewers will have questions tailored to you which may include:

1. Why did you choose UC Berkeley? What made it feel like a place you wanted to attend college?
2. What are some specific experiences you have had here that have helped you succeed?
3. What are some specific experiences you have had that have been problematic or challenging?
4. What are the most important issues at Berkeley from a student perspective?

Information for Staff

Event: Open forum | Wednesday, September 25 | 2:45 - 3:45 pm | **East Pauley Ballroom, MLK Student Union**

Staff are encouraged to participate in an hour-long open forum that will be hosted by the WSCUC peer evaluation team. This is an opportunity for the reviewers to hear directly from staff about the range of the staff experiences on campus. Consider the questions listed on page 1 as a starting point for discussion in this forum. Additionally, we expect that the reviewers will have questions tailored to you which may include:

1. What is the best thing about working at UC Berkeley?
2. What is the most challenging or frustrating thing about working at Berkeley?
3. What changes would you make at Berkeley to make it a better place to work?
4. From a staff perspective, what are the most important issues facing Berkeley?

Information for Campus Leaders

A series of one-on-one meetings have been scheduled with key functional areas for the peer evaluation team reviewers to meet directly with the leaders and staff from each area. Please be prepared to highlight two to three initiatives or current projects from your office that demonstrate the integrity of the academic mission of the University. Many of WSCUC's Standards of Accreditation relate to the resources and infrastructure we have in place to support the learning and development of our students. Even if you are not in a student-facing unit, you have a role in contributing to our mission. The following groups have scheduled meetings already on their calendars (list may not be comprehensive):

- Chancellor and EVCP
- Chancellor's Cabinet and the WSCUC Steering Committee
- Division of Equity & Inclusion
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Finance
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
- Division of Undergraduate Education
- Graduate Division
- Council of Deans
- Academic Senate
- Division of Academic Planning & Vice Provost for the Faculty Division
- Division of Student Affairs
- Berkeley Discovery
- Office of the Vice Chancellor, University Development and Alumni Relations

Further Resources:

- [WSCUC Slideshow](#)
- [Institutional Accreditation website](#)