Summary of Accreditation RFI Responses

On December 20, 2023, the UNC System Office, in conjunction with the NC Community Colleges System Office, issued a joint Request for Information (RFI) to regional accrediting agencies to determine whether these agencies are willing to accredit North Carolina’s institutions of higher education consistent with changes made in Session Law 2023-132 requiring institutions to change accreditors at the completion of each accrediting cycle. Below is a summary of the responses received.

- Higher Learning Commission
  - Willing to accept North Carolina higher education institutions as clients.
  - Prefer requirement that institutions switch accreditors at the end of every accreditation cycle be removed from statute, but willing to start accreditation process.
  - Accelerated accreditation process possible for institutions currently accredited by a historically regional accreditor.
    - The timeline for accelerated accreditation is roughly 18 months.
  - Traditional process typically takes between 5 and 10 years.
  - Willing to accredit systems but encourage institutions to seek individual accreditation before system-wide approval.

- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
  - Willing to accept North Carolina higher education institutions as clients.
  - Mentioned continuous switching requirement but did not make a statement on whether it is problematic.
  - The timeline for accreditation is dependent on the institution’s level of readiness. Did not mention how quickly accreditation can be received, but the typical reaccreditation cycle is 8 years.

- New England Commission on Higher Education
  - Informed us that they will not be submitting information in response to the RFI for the following reason:
    - Issue with continuous switching requirement.

- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
  - Informed us that they will not be submitting information in response to the RFI for the following reasons:
    - Issue with continuous switching requirement.
    - Taking on this number of institutions would require a significant increase in staffing and resources.

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
  - Issued detailed response to RFI.
  - Would be interested in accepting NC Community Colleges if the continuous switching requirement is removed.

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission
  - Informed us that they will not be submitting information in response to the RFI.