

Review of Graduate Programs: Master's & Doctoral

*Council of Graduate Schools
Annual Meeting*

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OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

Panelists

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Questions that arise when planning and implementing a program review process

- What's the purpose of a graduate program review?
- What's the difference between a program review and a comprehensive review?
- What's the difference between a program review and an accreditation review?
- Who are the stakeholders essential to the process?
- How often should program reviews be conducted?
- What are the desired outcomes of program review?





Assessment
and Review of
Graduate Programs



Council of Graduate Schools



What's the purpose of a program review?

“The primary purpose of all program reviews is the improvement of graduate programs.... By creating a structured, scheduled opportunity for a program to be examined, program review provides a strategy for improvement that is well-reasoned, far-seeing, and as apolitical as possible. Changes in graduate programs that are made in the heat of the moment or in response to a particular event (e.g., annual budget decisions or turnover in faculty or administrators) are seldom based on the solid information, broad collegial involvement, and careful thought that are necessary for lasting program improvement.”*

*Marilyn J. Baker, Michael P. Carter, Duane K. Larick, and Margaret F. King, *Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs* (Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools, 2011), 2.



What's the difference between a program review and a comprehensive review?



“Institutions differ significantly as to whether they choose to review graduate programs alone or as part of an overall departmental review including undergraduate programs. There are clear advantages to either choice.”*

- Advantages/disadvantages of program review: “thorough, focused, in-depth review”/none identified**
- Advantages/disadvantages of comprehensive review: “pragmatic,” “efficient,” especially when resources are limited/reviewers “overwhelmed” by sheer amount of data***

*Baker et al, 6; **Baker et al, 6; ***Baker et al, 6-7



What's the difference between a program review and an accreditation review?

“Although reviews conducted by professional licensing or accrediting associations are also comprehensive in scope, they have special goals that may or may not coincide with those of a university or graduate school. Accreditation reviews are often narrowly focused on certain minimum standards required for licensure or accreditation. They do not necessarily embody the broad academic judgments and recommendations that should come out of a graduate program review.”*

“Although graduate program reviews should be separate processes from accreditation reviews, much is to be gained by conducting them in tandem, sequentially, or at least within the same academic year.”**

*Baker et al, 1; **Baker et al, 11.



Who are the stakeholders essential to the process?



“Regardless of who coordinates the reviews, the following principles apply:

- ...all reviews should involve the college or faculty dean in some way that is appropriate to the institution.
- The graduate dean should play a major leadership role in all graduate reviews, as either an initiator or key participant.
- The essential participants in any graduate program review are the chief academic officer, the college or faculty dean, the graduate dean, the department chair, the graduate program administrator, graduate program faculty, the review committee(s), and graduate students in the program.”*

*Baker et al, 9.



How often should program reviews be conducted?

“...it is recommended that every graduate degree program be reviewed regularly every five to ten years. To do so more often may create an unmanageable process and risk over-evaluation; to do so less often is to lose track of the content and quality of one’s graduate programs.”*

* Baker et al, 12.



What are the desired outcomes of program reviews?

“Periodic reviews help ensure the continuing quality of graduate programs. They help program faculty and university administrators determine whether programs are continuing to meet their original goals—or whether these goals and the nature of the programs themselves need to change, in light of changes in the discipline or in market demands for graduates. Periodic formal reviews identify areas in a program that need strengthening and suggest strategies for doing so.”*

“When done properly, formal graduate program review is an elaborate and often costly process, but it is necessary to assure the continuing quality of graduate programs and identify ways to improve them. There is no adequate substitute.”**

*Baker et al, 1; **Baker et al, 3.



Workshop Outcomes

- Divining models for program review
- Maintaining high levels of engagement among stakeholders
- Driving program review by strategic thinking/planning
- Moving toward more robust, ongoing assessment processes



Who are we?



- UTC
 - Located on the south side of the Tennessee River in Chattanooga, TN
 - Mid-size MS-granting institution
 - Recently changed Carnegie classification to *Doctoral/Professional University* with a subclassification as community engaged

Statistics

- Programs
 - Certificate programs: 13
 - Masters: 24 (w/64 concentrations)
 - Professional Doctoral: 6
 - PhD: 2 (w/5 concentrations)
- Demographics
 - Average age: 31 years old



Statistics (continued)

- Demographics
 - 74% white
 - 8% African American
 - 3% Hispanic
 - 4% Asian
 - >9% unidentified



UTC

- First advanced degree: 1886 (theology)
- Merged with University of Tennessee system: 1969



Community engagement

- Innovation District



Community engagement

- Health and Wellness Corridor



Community Engagement

- Graduate connections



- Cross/Blue Shield



UNIVERSITY

Freight Waves

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

- Almost 10,000 graduate students - ~7,500 on campus; ~2,500 on-line and certificate
- 10 Academic colleges
- 63 doctoral programs
- 100+ master's programs
- 75+ corporate, government and non-profit partners on Centennial Campus



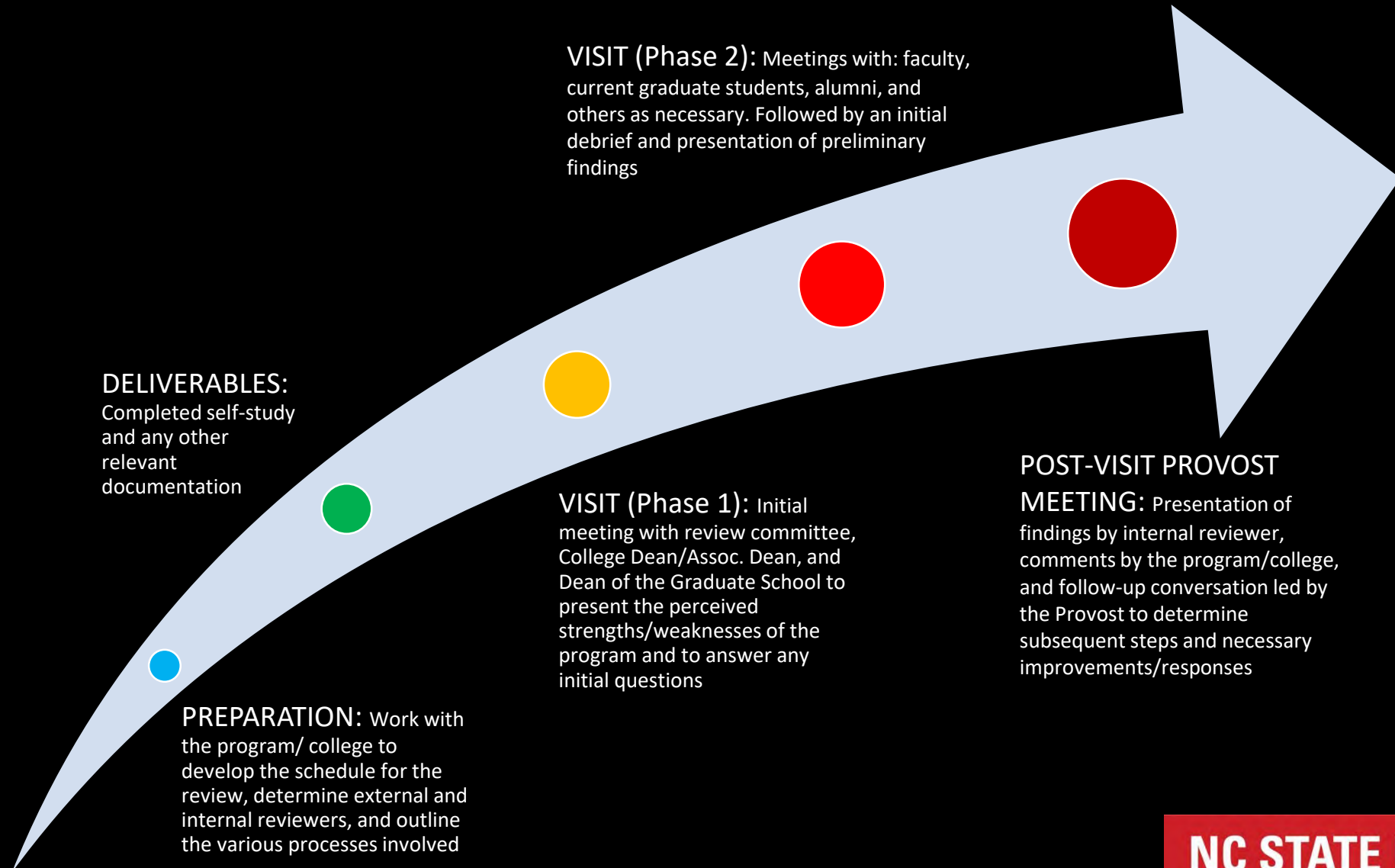
Old Dominion University at a glance



- General
 - Minority serving institution located in metropolitan Hampton Roads (S.E . Virginia)
- Carnegie Classification
 - Doctoral Univ.: Higher Research Activity (R-2)
 - Research Doctoral: Professional-Dominant
- Enrollments (fall 2018)
 - 24,176 students overall; 4,804 graduate
- Degree and Certificate Offerings
 - 22 doctoral degrees
 - 2 education specialist degrees
 - 44 master's degrees
 - Around 50 graduate-level certificates and licenses

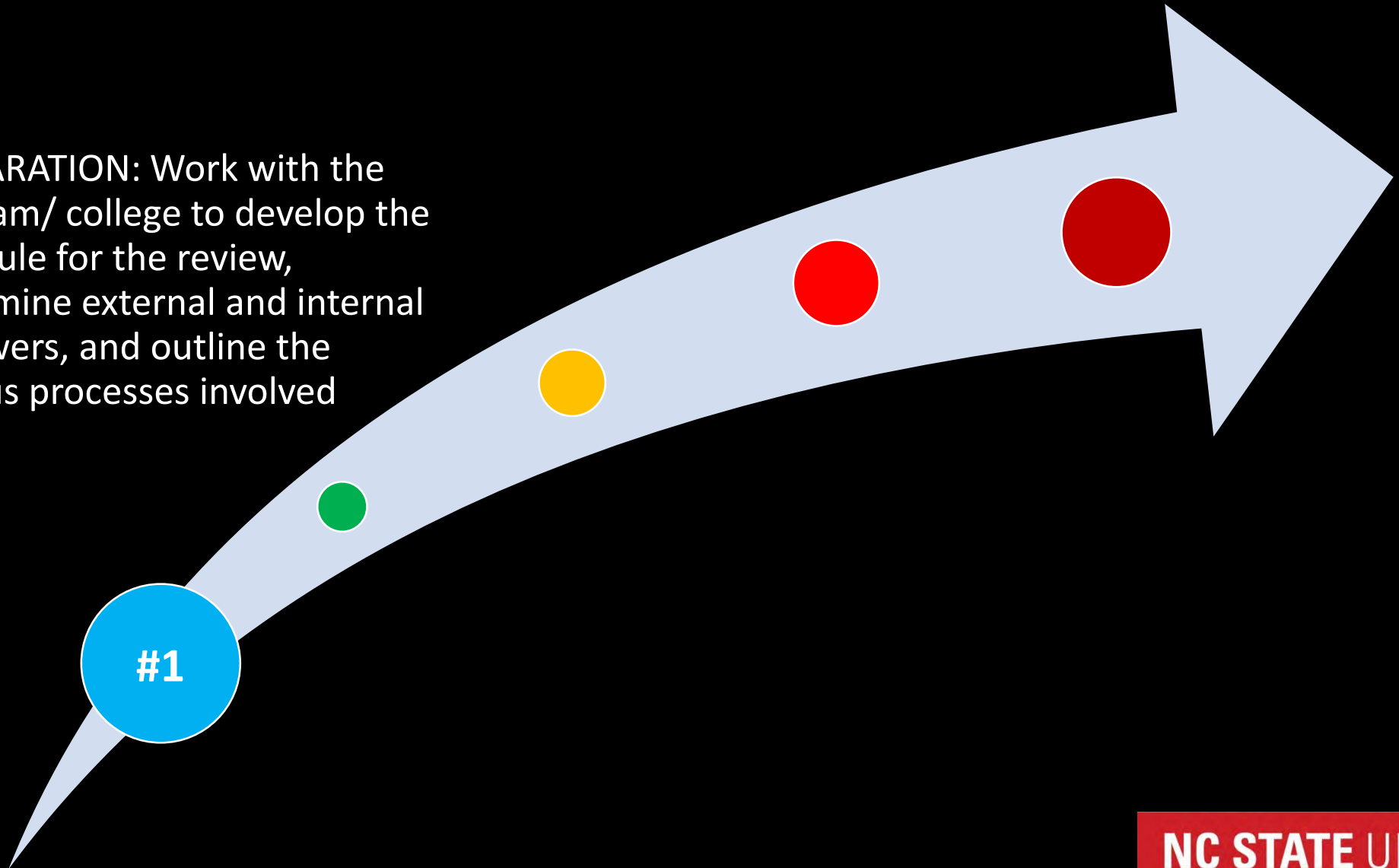


External Review Processes: Overview



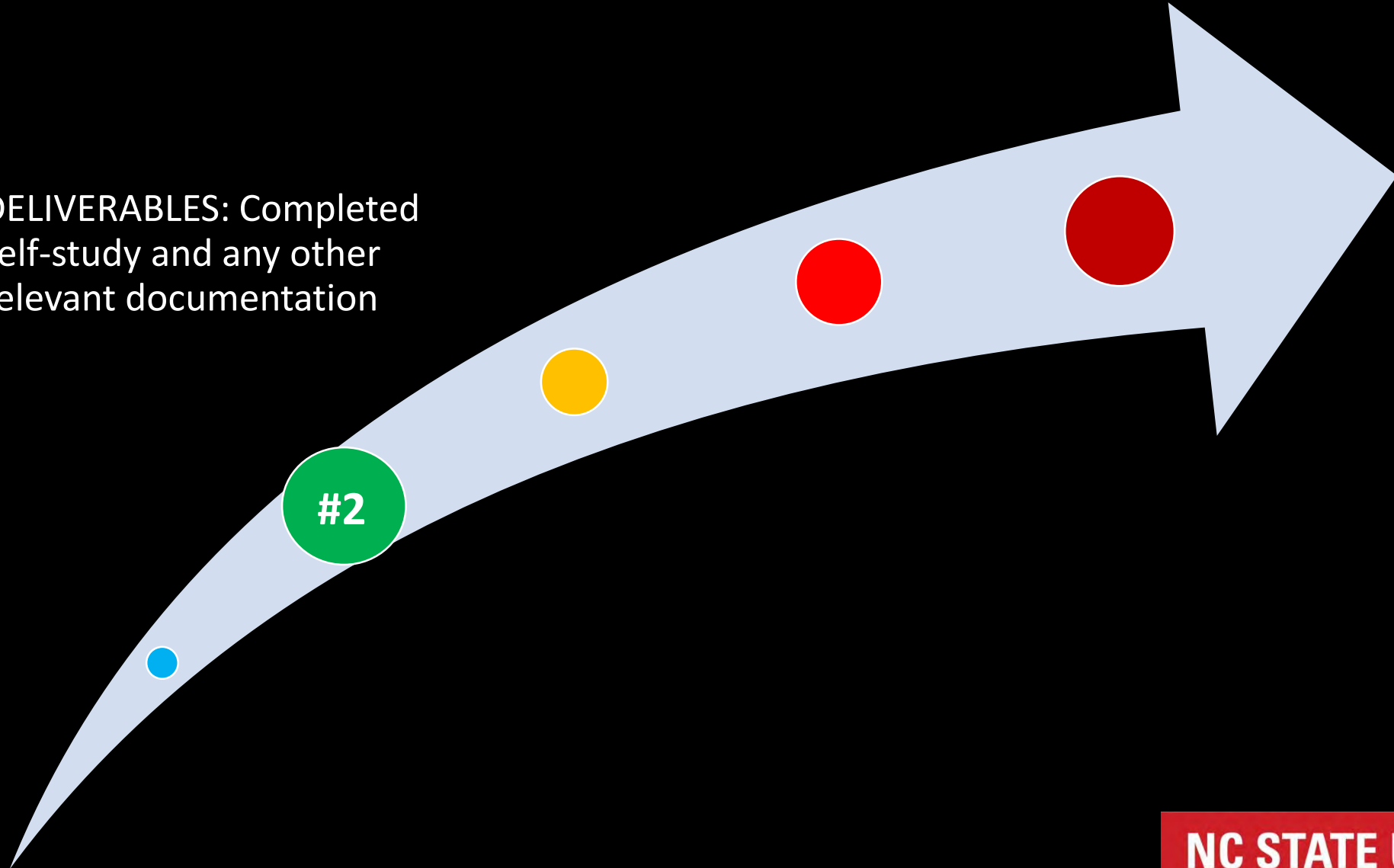
External Review Processes: Overview

PREPARATION: Work with the program/ college to develop the schedule for the review, determine external and internal reviewers, and outline the various processes involved

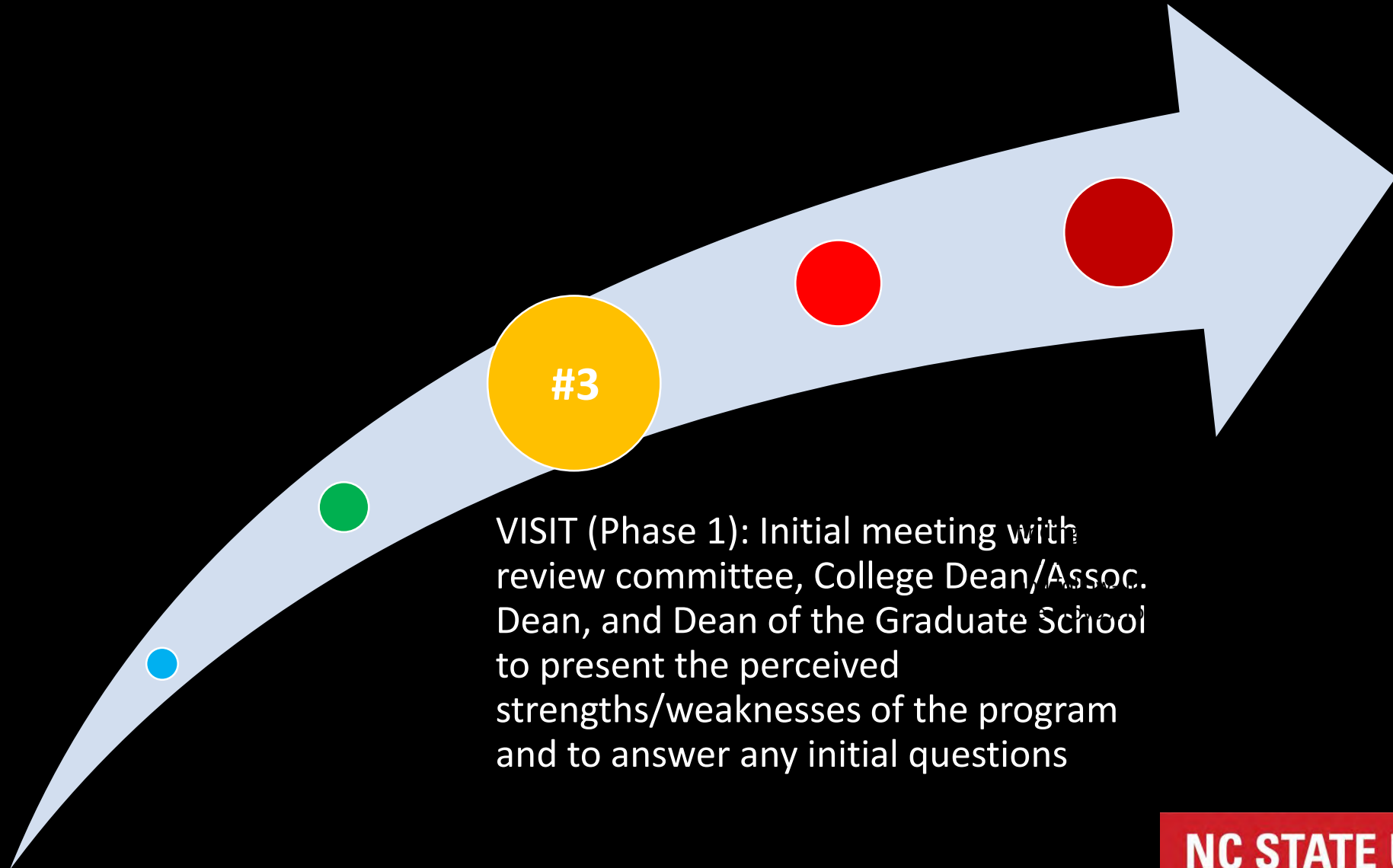


External Review Processes: Overview

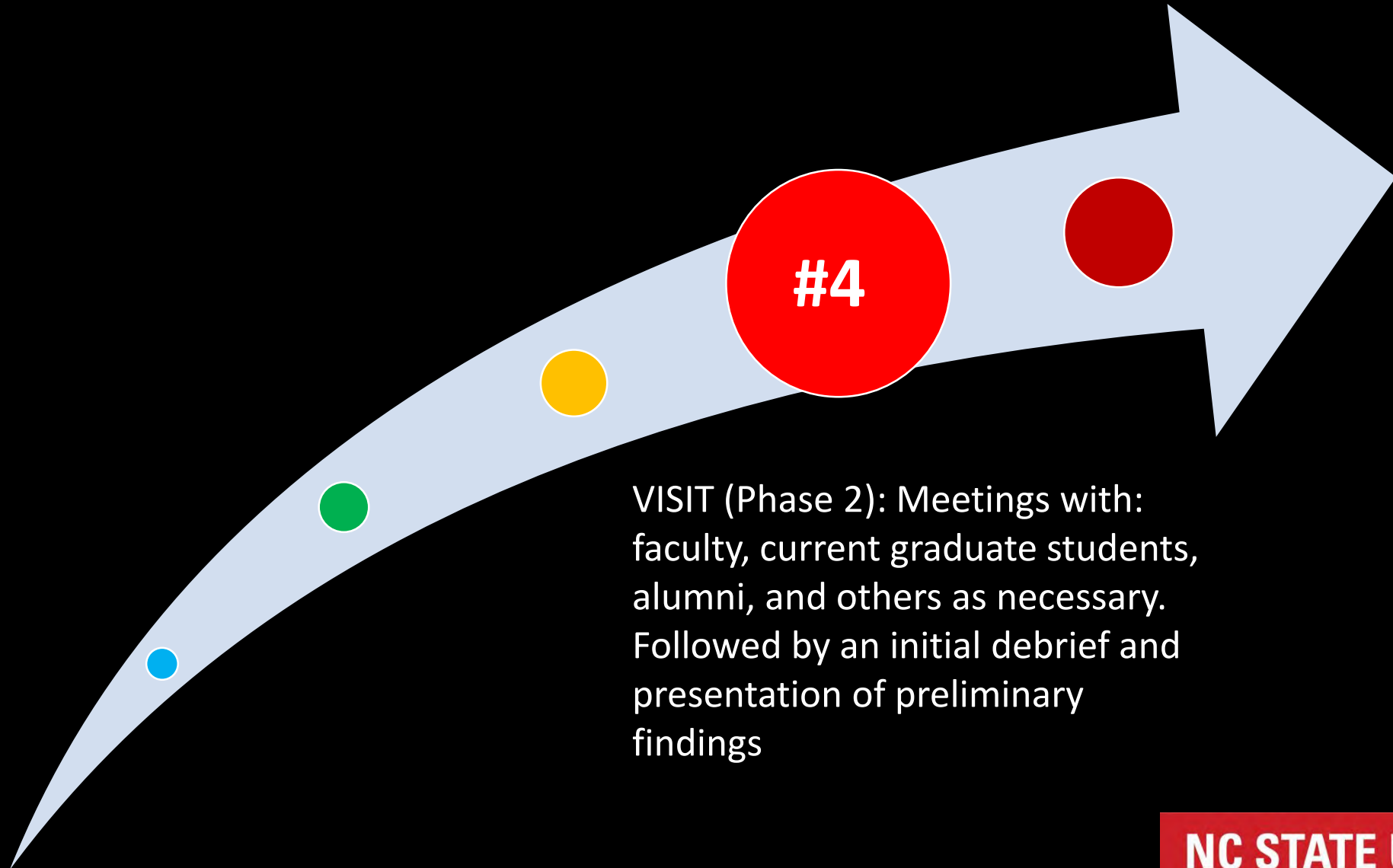
DELIVERABLES: Completed self-study and any other relevant documentation



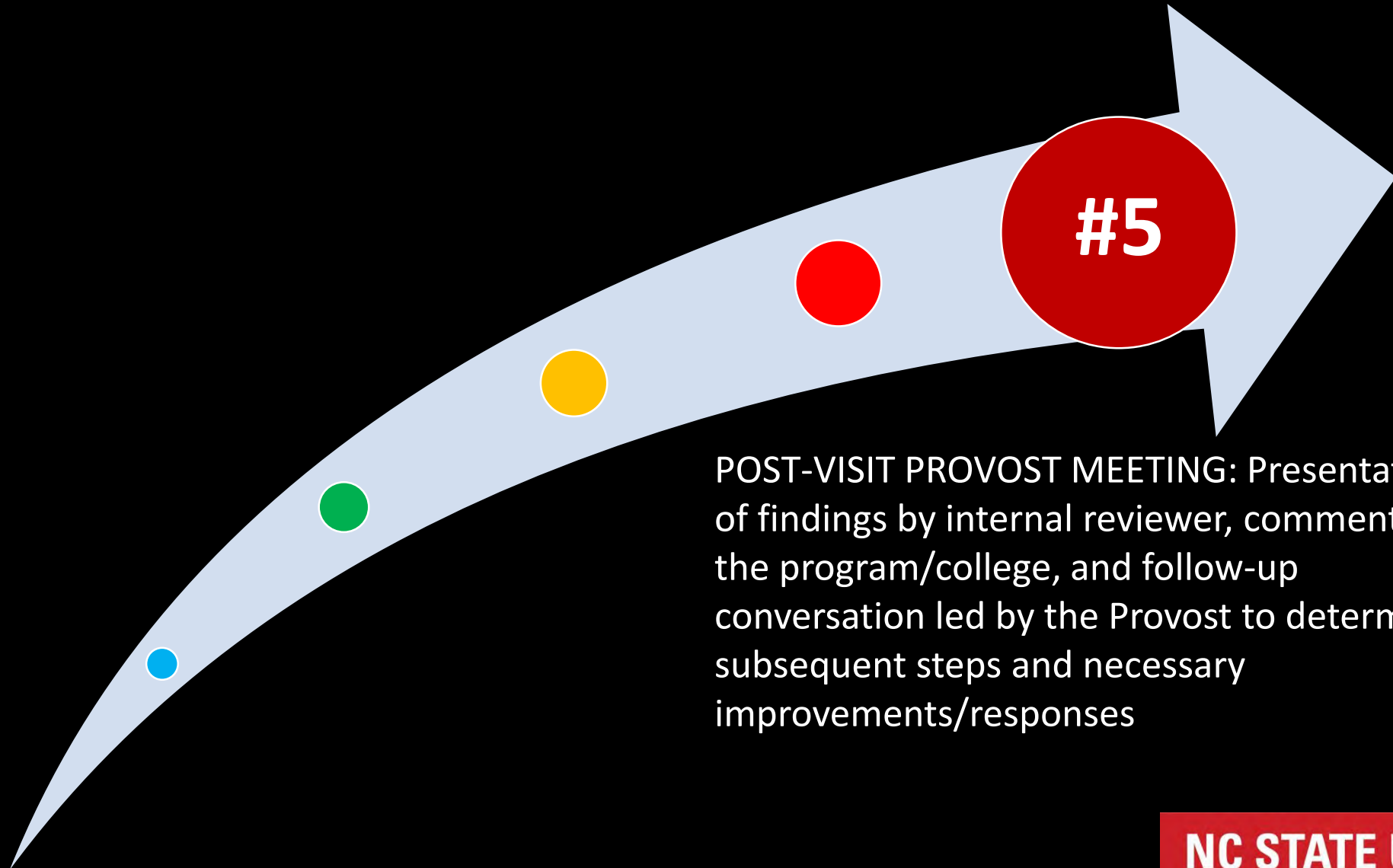
External Review Processes: Overview



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External Review Processes: Overview



POST-VISIT PROVOST MEETING: Presentation of findings by internal reviewer, comments by the program/college, and follow-up conversation led by the Provost to determine subsequent steps and necessary improvements/responses

Comments from the attendee discussions:

Part 1

- **Good Elements:**

- Having teams to work on it – and providing data in advance.
- Being able to align accreditation reviews with program reviews
- Benefitting from sharing data – especially the model where the strategic data manager is in the office of assessment, but reports to the graduate school
- Everyone agrees that program reviews are essential – and the process itself is beneficial.
- The outcome of increasing quality in the program being reviewed is very important. Should be the dean's focus.

- **Bad Elements:**

- Lengthy time between external program reviews – however, this can be mitigated by yearly/annual program reviews that can then be put together for the big review
- Seeing the same issues/discussions every year
- Lack of engagement – getting faculty and stakeholders to look at report findings and act upon them
- Comprehensive reviews are difficult – tend to concentrate on undergraduate programs. Numbers are not always right.
- Whose data are most accurate? Tend to have inconsistent datasets. Also – where does it reside for graduate programs?
- Unclear about reviews that are program based vs. departmentally based and the role of external reviews.
- What is important for the review – enrollment numbers or academic quality.

Assessment and Program Review

- Why do we do what we do?
 - Change is hard
- Each role is important: how do they support the unit and final outcomes?



Assessment at UTC

- History
 - Formerly “exercise in busy work”
 - It’s not about you – it’s all about us
 - Many are part of a comprehensive (departmental) review, however some are program specific (mix)

Assessment at UTC

- History
 - Many programs have external assessments other than SACSCOC
 - CAS
 - MPA
 - COB
 - MBA/MACC
 - CECS
 - CHEPS
 - MED/EDS/MSN/DNP/DPT/OTD/MSW



Assessment and Program Review

- Benefits to programs
 - Keep programs focused on scholarly activities
- Identifies college and graduate school priorities that may be separate from external accreditation agencies
- Identifies short and long term needs of graduate programs so the university may address them.

New Annual Assessment at UTC

- A component in the university's compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards (2018 POA Resource Manual)
- **Requirement 7.1.** The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systemic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. (Institutional Planning)
- **Requirement 8.2.a** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results... student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.

New Annual Assessment at UTC

1. Overview of the Program and Program Successes
2. Recruiting, Admissions, and Enrollment
3. Advising and Student Support
4. Program Assessment and Evaluation
5. Program Community and Climate
6. Funding
7. Career Services and Post-Graduation Outcomes
8. Overall Analysis of the Self-Study and the State of the Program

These are supposed to be relatively brief, but can be as involved as a program wants to make them. The reviews were completed online and will be aggregated and referenced.

Switch from program reviews to comprehensive reviews

- Decision made in 2017, following input from departments with large undergraduate programs
- Oversight assigned to Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment
- Coordination with college/school/department accreditations encouraged
- First comprehensive review (Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry) due to be completed by end of 2019



Strategic Directions

- Use for assessment
 - Identify programmatic needs for short term and long term success
 - Update programs to be competitive
 - Provide best practices for students/grads
 - Evaluate value of programs



Strategic Decision-Making driven by Program Review

- Key: Guiding reviewers to consider a range of elements beyond just the norm: faculty and space
- Different levels:
 - Departmental/Program use of the results to improve program
 - Common elements include: updating curriculum, rethinking faculty effort, considering stipends for graduate assistants, defining and determining foci
 - College-level engagement
 - Common elements include: consideration of faculty priorities, determining where the program fits within
 - Provost/University level
 - Understanding of strengths and weaknesses of a given program, considerations of strategic allocations

Maintaining Engagement

- Role of the College Dean and Chair/Head/Director
- Development of the Self Study → importance of a program-level process
- Setting the expectations → initial meeting with College and University representatives
- Meetings with numerous stakeholders → building rapport and support for review team
- End-of-review meetings → initial observations: strengths and areas for improvement
- Written report and program's response/action plan
- Final meeting with Provost → wrapping it up

Comments from the attendee discussions:

Part 2: Roadblocks and (possible) solutions

- Managing expectations among stakeholders. You can't have all the expensive solutions. Ask them to identify quality updates that might not be costly.
- Lags in approval time is a roadblock – especially at higher levels of change.
- Resources, resources, resources and lack thereof. Reviewers rarely make low-cost solutions.
- Faculty buy-in vs. defensiveness. There is often a lack of follow up/closing the loop. Faculty don't necessarily hear how change might be happening as a result.
- Getting information (useable information) from reviewers – e.g. real action items as opposed to a summary.
- The fear of program closure.
- Need for accountability – how does the followup occur? Are there 6 month milestones/ 1 year milestones based upon review outcomes?
- Some internal reviews are not thoughtful – but rather a showcase of accomplishments. Not necessarily what it is meant for.
- Performance indicators need to align with the strategic goals – and often don't. Many departments/programs fail to see how they contribute to the strategic plan.
- The idea of departmental/academic autonomy vs. the University goals
- Bean counters looking at very different performance indicators than the academicians.
- Frequent changes in leadership at the higher levels causes a consistency problem.