



Case Study

Supporting at Scale:

The Secrets of How **SNHU** Aligns Training, Accreditation, and Student Success



**Southern
New Hampshire
University**

This case study explores how Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) leveraged IACET accreditation to formalize and scale its faculty training and development programs, strengthen instructional quality across a large and distributed adjunct workforce, and support measurable improvements in student outcomes. By embedding IACET's standards into course design, program evaluation, and governance systems, SNHU established a consistent, repeatable framework that ensures faculty are prepared to deliver engaging, accessible, and outcomes-driven online learning experiences.

In doing so, accreditation did not redefine the institution's mission of learner success. Instead, it provided the operational structure needed to deliver faculty development more consistently, align training with real instructional needs, and maintain quality at scale. The result is a sustainable system that supports both instructor effectiveness and student achievement across thousands of online classrooms.

Overview

About IACET

The International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the global quality of continuing education and training. IACET developed the original Continuing Education Unit (CEU) and is the premier standards-setting body for quality in training and education. Organizations that earn IACET accreditation have demonstrated their commitment to excellence through adherence to rigorous, research-based standards that promote continuous improvement and learner success.

Learn more at www.iacet.org

About SNHU

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution that has served learners for more than 93 years. Winner of the top spot in Training Magazine's 2026 Training MVP Awards, SNHU provides access to workforce-relevant education with an emphasis on serving veterans, working adults, and non-traditional learners. Along with its 4,000 campus students, SNHU serves more than 200,000 online learners who are taught by an extensive network of 11,000 adjunct faculty across approximately 200 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs. Behind that faculty network is the IACET-accredited Faculty Training and Development team—formerly the Center for Online Learning and Teaching (COLT)—that exists to prepare and support instructors so they can effectively and holistically support their students.

The team's mission aligns directly with the university's broader commitment to learner success, and the accredited unit focuses on providing the adjunct faculty with the knowledge, skills, tools, and confidence needed to teach in a fully online environment. When faculty feel prepared and supported, students benefit from clearer instruction, stronger engagement, and more consistent learning experiences. This strengthens the student experience across programs with the goal of increasing successful course completion, retention, and degree attainment.

Learn more at www.snhu.edu

“We put a lot on our faculty to support our students as people, not just learners. We make sure that we weave [skills building to connect with learners] into all of our programming and all of our professional development.”

— Emma Lynch, Sr. Director, Faculty Training & Development

Accreditation Context

The Faculty Training and Development Team's decision to pursue IACET accreditation was based on two main reasons: the added benefit to faculty and process improvement. The first reason was the benefit to the faculty. As IACET's standards and guidelines are recognized across multiple fields and disciplines, it was common sense for SNHU to ensure alignment with the globally recognized framework, given that the transferability of accredited, non-industry-specific CEUs was attractive to the diverse faculty. Additionally, due to the unique nature of the adjunct faculty working environment, professional development is offered as an optional benefit. CEUs are an additional benefit to encourage faculty to take advantage of these learning opportunities, ultimately benefiting both students and faculty.

"Accreditation provided a way to formally acknowledge faculty learning, increase the perceived value of voluntary professional development, and further support faculty growth while respecting the realities of their time and professional commitments."

— Emma Lynch, Sr. Director, Faculty Training & Development

Second, leadership wanted to strengthen quality assurance processes. While strong programs were already in place, formal accreditation helped standardize documentation, governance, and review practices, regardless of whether the course was CEU-bearing or not. This holistic approach has led to fewer unplanned changes, better support for the faculty, and ensures that students experience consistent instructional quality across their courses.

The Edward S. Wolak Library Learning Commons serves as a collaborative academic hub, providing students and faculty with research support, learning resources, and technology-enhanced study spaces.



The IACET Solution

Before accreditation, the Faculty Training and Development team delivered a wide range of webinars, facilitated courses, and self-paced learning experiences. As participation grew, the team recognized the need for stronger standardization and system and program review. Accreditation introduced several key practices that strengthened consistency and governance:

- Annual course review checklists aligned to IACET standards
- Documented program effectiveness audits
- Structured needs analysis and course design documentation
- Centralized CEU calculation and tracking
- Periodic internal review of the full ANSI/IACET Standard

The Faculty Training and Development team recognizes that its adjunct faculty often balance their teaching responsibilities with external commitments. The accreditation process has allowed it to focus on providing the training that the faculty actually needs, not what the team “thinks” the faculty needs. The team is committed to providing its faculty with innovative learning opportunities and continually improving the course offerings. Ms. Lynch explains that the regular review process ensures everything presented to faculty is “...accurate and timely on a consistent basis for them to meet the needs of their students, which is priority number one.” An additional, unexpected benefit occurred; by ensuring the technical and job-specific training needs were met, there was now an opportunity for the team to go beyond providing only what the faculty needed for training and explore what was desired for growth.

Students cross campus between classes, supported by faculty whose ongoing training ensures consistent, high-quality learning experiences across programs.



The current focus of internal reviews is to create reliable systems that support instructors while protecting the student experience. For example, each annual course review verifies learning objectives, assessment alignment, accessibility compliance, CEU calculations, and award criteria. The reviews also enable the team to check for faculty training needs. Updates and improvements are documented, implemented, and signed off by accountable staff.

At the program level, program effectiveness audits review participant feedback, completion rates, and operational compliance. These reviews ensure adherence across all categories of the IACET Standard, that faculty training remains relevant and supports student success, and that documented remediation is provided where needed. As a result of these changes to course and program audits, faculty development has moved from informal practices to documented, repeatable, and auditable best practices.

“IACET accreditation helped formalize and strengthen practices that support both instructional quality and long-term sustainability.”

— Emma Lynch, Sr. Director, Faculty Training & Development

Even during leadership transitions, required compliance documentation is completed to maintain continuity and oversight. Altogether, these practices reflect a dependable system designed to support long-term accreditation and consistent program quality.

Signature Programs – Structure and Consistency in Action

As SNHU's online student population and programs expanded, the university required a structured approach to strengthening teaching effectiveness across adjunct faculty, particularly in fostering inclusive and engaging online classrooms that support student persistence and success. Program ADJ 390: Mastering Effective Online Teaching Strategies at SNHU was developed to deepen faculty's instructional skills, particularly in these critical areas.

The Academic Center houses classrooms, advising, and academic support services, reinforcing SNHU's integrated approach to teaching excellence and faculty engagement.



Given the size and distributed nature of SNHU's adjunct faculty population, onboarding required a scalable and consistent mechanism to prepare instructors for the online teaching environment. Variation in faculty background, experience, and familiarity with learning management systems created a risk of inconsistency in student experience. Online Faculty Training and Assessment (ADJ 101 and ADJ 104) provide structured onboarding information aligned to instructional standards. Modules address platform navigation, communication expectations, grading practices, accessibility, and academic integrity. Faculty can build on the foundational concepts learned in these courses to focus and expand on the specific skills they need for continued growth and to support their learners.

Program Impact

Impact data from program ADJ 390 compared trained and untrained faculty demonstrate measurable improvements in student outcomes:

- 2.2% increase in student submission rates
- 5.9% increase in student success rates
- 1.9% decrease in drop, fail, and withdrawal rates
- 5% increase in student persistence

These comparisons account for prior courses taught, isolating the impact of training participation. Although many factors affect student outcomes, these results resonated within the greater university system, suggesting that structured faculty development supports improved student performance.

Faculty participate in a collaborative workshop, reflecting SNHU's commitment to continuous improvement and structured professional development.



Participation and Delivery Evolution

Between 2020 and 2023, participation data reflected shifts in delivery preference, particularly a significant increase in self-paced completions in 2022.

While broader environmental factors likely influenced modality preferences, the 2022 increase in asynchronous engagement coincided with formalized CEU processes and expanded self-paced offerings within the accredited framework.

However, accreditation did not dictate a shift in delivery preference. Rather, it provided the framework—time-on-task verification, outcome alignment, and documentation standards—that allowed self-paced offerings to expand responsibly. Faculty gained flexibility without sacrificing CEU integrity or learning quality.

	2021*	2022	2023	2024	2025
Webinar attendees	6174	4760	5850	5618	4289
Self-paced training completions	1466	7745	4084	10533	10007

*The year prior to accreditation and CEU availability.

CEU Volume and Learner Reach

Participation growth has been accompanied by sustained CEU issuance across multiple reporting years. Variations in total CEUs awarded reflect differences in program length and time-on-task requirements rather than fluctuations in quality or demand. The accredited framework ensures that CEU calculations remain consistent and traceable to documented learning outcomes and completion criteria. As delivery formats evolve, the governance model remains stable.

	2023	2024	2025
Self-paced training completions	5447	5442	4764
Number of participants	2928	3126	1817
Number of unduplicated learners	2928	3126	1817

While many variables influence student outcomes, the comparison suggests that structured, standards-aligned faculty development correlates with measurable improvements in learner performance. In this context, accreditation functioned not just as a quality symbol but rather as a mechanism that supports instructional consistency while strengthening student success across thousands of online classrooms.

Overall Impact

The impact of accreditation at Southern New Hampshire University's Faculty Training and Development unit is visible not only in operational scale but also in measurable learning outcomes and instructional reach. Rather than focusing solely on program counts, the team tracks participation patterns, CEU volume, faculty interactions, and student-level impact to understand how accredited systems translate into meaningful results. The team also partners with support and engagement teams to ensure that courses are offered across functions.

Excellence is demonstrated through strong systems and oversight rather than formal awards. Accreditation status serves as meaningful validation that CEUs are awarded through documented processes with verified time-on-task, measurable outcomes, and regular review. The consistent reporting of "No substantive changes" across annual reports reflects stable governance and dependable infrastructure that supports both faculty and students. That consistency speaks to an organization that is steady, organized, and committed to maintaining quality year after year.

The team is receiving many positive comments on the new programs:

- **Facilitated Training Courses** – "I feel much better equipped after completing this course. The strategies around empathy-centered feedback, forward-facing coaching, and inclusive assessment practices have strengthened my ability to support learners with diverse identities and lived experiences."
- **Webinars** – "This training is very helpful for new faculty because it provides practical tools, institutional knowledge, and guidance needed to confidently begin our teaching responsibilities."
- **Self-Paced Training Courses** – "This training was efficient and extremely helpful. I appreciated the organization, the breadth of content, and the multiple ways of learning, including videos, PDFs, and interactive features. The guidance on providing substantive, objective-aligned feedback was especially valuable."

The Edward S. Wolak Library Learning Commons anchors SNHU's campus as a center for scholarship, innovation, and faculty-student collaboration.



Looking Ahead

The Faculty Training and Development team is exploring ways to extend CEU opportunities to additional audiences, such as SNHU staff, while maintaining internal quality standards. Future growth will continue to rely on refined needs analysis, documented course design, accessibility standards, measurable evaluation, and periodic full-standard review.



Faculty participate in a collaborative workshop, reflecting SNHU's commitment to continuous improvement and structured professional development.


The recent departmental transition showed organizational maturity. Systems remained stable, responsibilities were updated, and compliance oversight continued without disruption. Accreditation at SNHU is embedded in the process, ensuring continued support for faculty and students.

One of the most significant initiatives that the team has implemented as an accredited provider is the development of the faculty badging program. There are currently two active badges with two more planned to be rolled out in the coming year.

"Because we are an IACET-accredited provider, we are able to pair these badges with CEUs, giving them additional credibility, portability, and value for the faculty."

— Emma Lynch, Sr. Director, Faculty Training & Development



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