

**Institute for Research and
Study of Accreditation
and Quality Assurance**

Accreditation and Accountability: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

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CHEA[®]

**The Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Mission Statement**

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation will serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.

—1996

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Accreditation and Accountability: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

A CHEA Report

INTRODUCTION

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has focused on a small but vital set of accreditation issues for the past ten years. Most were selected because they are at the heart of accreditation (student achievement, relationship with government). Others were selected because they represent major expansions of accreditation activity (distance learning, international reviews). All have the potential to fundamentally transform the enterprise as we have historically known it: a system for quality assurance and quality improvement led by the academic community and built on the core values of the primacy of institutional leadership and thus autonomy in the academic arena, a mission-based and thus diverse higher education enterprise and the centrality of freedom of inquiry as captured by the commitment to academic freedom. The issues are:

- [Public Accountability](#)
- [Student Achievement](#)
- [Information to the Public](#)
- [Relationship with Federal and State Government](#)
- [Distance Education](#)
- [International Accreditation and Quality Assurance](#)
- [Degree Mills and Accreditation Mills](#)
- [Transfer of Credit](#)
- [Financing Accreditation and Conflict of Interest](#)

CHEA's work in these areas has been based on four key principles:

- Responsible academic independence of institutions and academic freedom of faculty are essential to sustaining the quality and success of higher education.
- Self-regulation through accreditation, an independent, powerful peer/professional review capacity, is the most effective means to review and judge the complex set of educational experiences offered in our colleges and universities.
- A strong institution–accreditor relationship is central to assure that institutions, in carrying out their academic leadership responsibilities, are appropriately scrutinized with regard to achieving their goals.
- Acknowledging and acting on appropriate accountability is a key element in sustaining credibility to federal and state government, students and the public.

These issues have also captured the attention of the general academic community, with many faculty members, administrators and accreditors increasingly concerned that actions in these areas may alter how accreditation and higher education operate. What type of enterprise might emerge? What might happen to the traditional features of accreditation? What do we want to preserve and what might be changed? How do we sustain the core values on which higher education and accreditation are built, yet assure that accreditation continues to play its valuable and significant social role?

Beyond the academic community, federal and state governments, through their relationships with accreditation, are shaping approaches to accountability, to distance education and to transfer of credit, for example. International relationships are expanding, requiring accommodation with a range of approaches to quality assurance. How do we manage these relationships such that any change fits with the role that the academy wishes accreditation to play?

What follows is a compilation of key recommendations that CHEA has offered related to these issues during the past ten years. Many of these recommendations are the result of extensive outreach, consultation and communication with many constituents, especially CHEA institutional members, higher education associations and recognized accrediting organizations. The *CHEA Initiative*, a strategic multi-year examination of these issues and CHEA's most recent effort in this arena, has completed its third year ([See Appendix 1](#)).

A brief summary of CHEA's core recommendations on each issue is provided, followed by a selection of excerpts from various CHEA publications, advisory statements, letters and testimony. These excerpts provide additional detail and perspective as well as identify other material in which the reader may be interested. Both the issues and the recommendations have remained remarkably consistent, perhaps speaking to the challenge of realizing change in higher education and accreditation.

Links to all materials identified below are available in the electronic version of this document to be found at www.chea.org.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

CHEA's key recommendation in the treatment of accountability is that accreditation position itself to more directly serve the public interest, both by expanding the information about institutional and programmatic performance that accreditation provides to the public and requiring that institutions and programs provide additional evidence of their performance and what students learn. Accreditation has long viewed itself as primarily accountable to the institutions and programs it accredits, with accountability to the public considered important, but deriving from accountability to colleges and universities. This perception of responsibility for accountability is now seriously questioned, with more and more pressure on accreditation to answer directly to students, government and the public.

Testimony at NACIQI Meeting (February 3, 2011)

To further strengthen accountability, institutions and programs can 1) explore means to identify common expectations of what counts as desirable results from successful colleges and universities, 2) identify and share effective practices in transparency, 3) concentrate on building greater expertise among the thousands of peer review volunteers and 4) additionally strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of quality improvement.

Inside Accreditation Addressing Senator Harkin's Seminar: Hearing and Learning on Capitol Hill (August 10, 2010)

For institutions and programs:

- Undertake an internal audit. Start with those areas of greatest concern to government and the public – not only student recruitment and credit hour, but also student achievement and other accountability issues. Are you meeting accreditation standards you helped to create in these areas? Or, have things slipped?
- Take quick action in areas where standards are not fully met.

For accreditors:

- Initiate a targeted review of institutions and programs, focusing on the same areas of greatest concern.
- Where standards are not met, call for compliance and intensify enforcement as needed to protect students.
- Where standards are not sufficiently robust, strengthen them.

For all, be open about this effort – emphatic and clear to students and the public that this scrutiny is taking place. Provide information about the results of the work.

Inside Accreditation Addressing "Selling Accreditation" (June 14, 2010)

Even more muscular oversight of the purchase of accredited institutions can result in greater accountability from investors and institutions. Especially valuable practices here, some of which are currently employed, are to:

- Terminate accredited status of an institution in the event that a purchase has not been approved by the accreditor.
- Terminate accredited status in the event that the mission of the purchased institution is dramatically altered – and has not been approved by the accreditor.
- Assure that scrutiny of the purchase of an institution includes examination of an investor's history of prior purchase of institutions. What has happened to academic quality when this person or company previously acquired a college or university?
- Emphasize practices that assure seamlessness of accreditor oversight of purchase, starting with initial approval of the purchase through at least the first two years of operation of the purchased institution, including detailed academic and business plans. What is happening with faculty, curriculum, instructional delivery, finance, governance?

Finally, post a succinct statement to the public when a purchase is taking place, explicitly describing the oversight and monitoring and affirming that accredited status of an acquired institution does not automatically transfer to a new owner. Require that the institution post this statement as well.

[CHEA Board of Directors Resolution on Accreditation and Accountability \(April 27, 2010\)](#)

CHEA is committed to accountability and serving the public interest as central to effective accreditation and works with:

- Member institutions to encourage and support institutionally based efforts to address accountability, especially as this relates to defining and judging evidence of student achievement and transparency to the public.
- Accrediting organizations to assure and assist with efforts to enhance accountability such as those described in CHEA's 2010 *Statement on Effective Practices: The Role of Accreditation in Student Achievement*.
- Students and the public to increase understanding about the value and gains realized through accreditation.
- Higher education associations to support their national initiatives on quality and accountability, e.g., the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, the Voluntary System of Accountability and the University and College Accountability Network.

CHEA is committed to working with:

- The federal government to sustain a balance between the federal interest in accountability and responsible independence for institutions and accrediting organizations in reliable academic decision-making.
- State governments to establish greater clarity and efficiency in addressing accountability through constructive state-accreditation partnerships.
- International colleagues and organizations to further expand cooperative efforts to assure accountability for quality across borders.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing Accountability \(June 2, 2009\)](#)

The following suggestions preserve the voluntary, institutional basis for action that has characterized the academy's approach to accountability while addressing expectations of expanded information and public judgment about higher education performance.

- Higher education can use its institutional-based approach to accountability to bring together similar institutions and examine what each has achieved with regard to student learning and institutional performance. Institutions might work together to compare results. This has already been done by the Council of Independent Colleges using the CLA. Institutions could also pursue voluntary efforts within a state or several states working together.
- Institutions and accreditors can further enhance the value to the public of peer/professional review by expanding information about student learning and institutional performance and directly sharing this with the public through, e.g., profiles or templates.
- Institutions can use the current work associated with, e.g., Essential Learning Outcomes, VSA and the tests and surveys such as the CLA and MAPP, for example, to develop a platform to launch additional consideration of common expectations of what students are to achieve as a result of undergraduate education.
- Higher education can focus additional attention on national concerns about perceived or real diminution of student educational progress – aligning institutional and national interests, perhaps starting with a re-commitment to the critical societal role that colleges and universities play in building the future of the country.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing the Accreditation-Government Relationship \(August 20, 2007\)](#)

We need an even stronger response to calls for public accountability. Gatekeeping aside, we need to internalize that, more than any other single factor, what we do about accountability will drive the future credibility of accreditation, as well as confidence in our work. We are talking here about accountability for, e.g., evidence of student achievement, transparency, a willingness to engage comparability and ranking issues.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing Accreditation, Professional Interest and the Public Interest \(October 31, 2006\)](#)

Accrediting organizations need a public interest audit or checklist to:

- Assure that accreditation reviews are structured such that accredited institutions and programs meet the test of the five confidence-building indicators noted above: academic quality, value for money, efficiency and effectiveness, student protection and transparency.
- Assure engaged and energetic public involvement by balancing higher education community and professional interests in the participation on decision-making and governance bodies, site visit teams and the development of accreditation standards, thus going beyond minimal public engagement to substantial participation from the public.
- Avoid conflict of interest in finance and governance by acknowledging the fault lines of any self-regulatory system and, in response, assuring maximum transparency in key areas of decision making.
- Focus strategically on emerging public needs, e.g., how review of internationalization of higher education serves the public interest.
- Strengthen public confidence in accreditation by additional responsiveness to the current accountability climate, especially expanding information to the public by, for example:
 - Calling on institutions and programs to provide direct evidence of performance and student learning outcomes and
 - Providing succinct, clear descriptions of the reasons associated with granting or denying accredited status.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing Accreditation, Recognition and the Public Interest \(February 8, 2006\)](#)

Accreditation and recognition leaders can initiate and lead a public dialogue to create higher expectations and a climate of accountability.

[CHEA HEA Update #5 Addressing Congressional Action on Higher Education Act Reauthorization \(January 13, 2004\)](#)

CHEA has and will support reforms in the means of accountability. At the same time, we maintain that these reforms must reflect the primacy of mission-based institutional goals and the academic freedom of institutions to determine quality through peer-reviewed and voluntary accreditation.

[CHEA Reauthorization Agenda for Accreditation and Accountability Reform \(May 2003\)](#)

Advocate accountability reform in accreditation in the context of four principles on which accreditation operates:

- Accreditation is committed to the *efficacy of a national decentralized, mission-based approach* to higher education as well as to accreditation.
- Accreditation is a *private self-regulatory undertaking* and not a state actor or arm of the government.
- Accreditation has *primary responsibility for judgments about academic quality in higher education*.
- Accreditation is responsible for *judgments about the general fiscal and administrative soundness of institutions and programs*, but not for their compliance with Title IV (Student Assistance) of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

[Statement On Good Practices and Shared Responsibility In the Creation and Application Of Specialized Accreditation Standards \(September 2001\)](#)

The principles are intended to provide guidance to accreditors, members of accrediting commissions, provosts and presidents as they develop and apply specialized accreditation standards. They establish a framework of expectations about how standards will be used in accreditation reviews.

Recommendations found under each of these headings in the *Statement*:

-
- Educational Outcomes
 - Public Expectations
 - Institutional Commitment and Partnership
 - Requirements
 - Consistency
 - Accreditation, Law and Public Policy
 - Scope of Standards
 - Information to the Public
 - Organizational Structure, Resources and Program Personnel
 - Institutional Responsibility

“Taking a Look at Ourselves, Accreditation” (CHEA Letter from the President, September 2001)

What We Might Do in the Future:

- Expand the scope and type of work of accreditation.
- Make the accreditation process less time-consuming.
- Expand national capacity of regional accreditation.
- Expand international capacity of all U.S. accreditation.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Concern for evidence of student achievement is at the heart of public accountability concerns. Increasingly, government, the press and the public are looking to accreditation as an affirmation that institutions and programs produce acceptable results with regard to what students learn. Quality is what happens to students. CHEA has urged that institutions and programs (1) determine goals for student achievement in the context of mission, (2) develop evidence that these goals are achieved and (3) provide information to the public about student achievement in a manner that is easily accessible and readily understandable. In addition, CHEA has stressed the importance of clarifying the community use of “assessment,” citing the need to distinguish between focus on the processes that lead to student achievement – in contrast to focus on evidence of what students learn and can do.

Inside Accreditation Addressing “Accreditation 2.0” (January 18, 2010)

For the limited number of institutions that are experiencing severe difficulties in meeting accreditation standards but remain “accredited” for a considerable number of years, there can be a downside for students and the public. Students enroll, but may have trouble graduating or meeting other educational goals because of weaknesses of the institution that were identified in the accreditation review, even as the institution is trying to improve and remedy these difficulties. Accreditation 2.0 can include means to assure more immediate institutional action to address the weaknesses and prevent their being sustained over long periods of time.

Inside Accreditation Addressing the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (November 14, 2008)

Colleges and universities need to continue and accelerate their efforts to provide evidence of student achievement and transparency about institutional academic performance.

The academic and accreditation communities need to do more to engage the demands for some shared or common sense of student achievement and quality.

[Resolution of the CHEA Board of Directors Addressing Student Learning Outcomes \(May 1, 2007\)](#)

CHEA calls on institutions and programs to:

- Routinely provide students and prospective students with information about student learning outcomes and institutional and program performance in terms of these outcomes.
- Regularly report aggregate information about student learning outcomes to external constituents.
- Supplement this information with additional evidence about the soundness of institutional and program operations and overall effectiveness with respect to mission fulfillment, as well as concrete evidence of how institutions benefit students in other ways.

CHEA calls on accrediting organizations to:

- Establish standards, policies and review processes that visibly and clearly expect institutions and programs to discharge the above responsibilities with respect to public communication about student learning outcomes.
- Clearly communicate to accreditation's constituents the fact that accredited status signifies that student achievement levels are appropriate and acceptable.
- Provide information about specific proficiencies or deficiencies in aggregate student academic performance, if these played a role in an accreditation action or decision about an institution or program.

[Accreditation and Accountability: A CHEA Special Report \(December 2006\)](#)

Accrediting organizations need to establish standards and review processes that visibly and clearly expect accredited institutions and programs to regularly gather and report concrete evidence about what students know and can do as a result of their respective courses of study, supplement this evidence with information about other dimensions of effective institutional or program performance with respect to student outcomes, and prominently feature relevant evidence of student learning outcomes – along with other dimensions of effective institutional performance, as appropriate—in demonstrating institutional or program effectiveness.

Institutions and programs need to establish clear statements of student learning outcomes and of their approach to collecting, interpreting and using evidence of student achievement.

Accrediting organizations need to use evidence of student learning outcomes in making judgments about academic quality and accredited status.

Institutions and programs share responsibility with accrediting organizations to provide clear and credible information to constituents about what students learn.

This special report also includes templates providing examples of ways in which accrediting organizations, institutions and programs might present additional information to the public:

- The “Accreditation Summary” describes the formal action taken by an accrediting organization as well as a description of strengths and areas of improvement.
- The “Accreditation Management Letter” is a formal notice that a review has been completed, that specific standards have been met, that areas of institutional or programmatic operation are to be addressed, accompanied by an overview of the institution or program.
- The “Information Profile” describes key features of an institution or program as well as key performance indicators.
(See *Appendix 2*)

[**CHEA Letter from the President: Accreditation, Public Policy and Presidential Leadership \(May 2005\)**](#)

Presidents can provide additional leadership in accreditation's current efforts to meet the information needs of students and the public, especially about institutional performance and student achievement. If presidents will lend their prestige and importance to serving students through enhanced information about higher education performance, students may be able to make better choices about their education, leading to more success in their collegiate experiences.

[**CHEA Letter to the Senate HELP Committee Regarding HEA Reauthorization \(April 14, 2005\)**](#)

CHEA supports accretor and institutional attention to student achievement. This work needs to be based on the mission of each institution and the goals of its students. The means of measurement should be determined by the institution or program and may be designated by the accretor. Simple or solely quantitative measures of student achievement are often misleading and should not be mandated.

[**CHEA Letter to the U.S. House of Representatives on H.R. 4283, the College Access and Opportunity Act of 2004, to Reauthorize the Higher Education Act \(May 26, 2004\)**](#)

On student achievement, we support the idea that institutions should determine the proper measurement of learning outcomes, based on their own missions and needs of their student bodies. Thus, we support several of the student achievement changes in your bill, and further suggest clarifying changes. We oppose the specific HEA provision that schools publish their learning objectives for each program, and that accretors measure them, because this approach would federalize a central academic issue.

[**CHEA Presentation to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity \(December 8, 2003\)**](#)

CHEA supports higher education and accreditation doing more with student learning outcomes, provided that evidence of outcomes and success with regard to outcomes are determined by institutions and programs. We suggest that government rely on institutions, programs and accretors here rather than determining this evidence and success on its own.

[**CHEA Reauthorization Agenda for Accreditation and Accountability Reform \(May 2003\)**](#)

Expand development and use of evidence of student learning outcomes as well as evidence of institution and program performance in accreditation review in order that this evidence play an increasingly influential role in judgments about academic quality and accredited status.

[**Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: A Proposed Point of Departure \(CHEA Occasional Paper, September 2001\). Prepared for CHEA by Peter T. Ewell, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems**](#)

Three lines of collective action seem warranted.

- First, the accrediting community needs to develop a coherent and understandable way to explain its collective approach to the matter of evidence of student learning outcomes to outside stakeholders. This rationale must make it clear that there are appropriate differences among accretors in how they choose to engage student learning, but that all are doing so in appropriate and rigorous ways. But it must also make clear that they are requiring some measure of direct student attainment – not merely proxies for it – in their various approaches.
- Second, accretors need a language with which to talk to one another about what they are doing. This may or may not require the development of a common vocabulary. But it does require a common conceptual framework that allows varied members of the community to understand the key distinctions and similarities among their approaches.
- Third, all would benefit from the development of common resources. These might include sharing review approaches and techniques like standards of evidence or ways to “audit” institutional or program assessment efforts. It might also include more

fundamental research and development efforts directed toward creating better tools for examining learning or identifying best practices. There is a growing fund of experience to build on here, both within and outside the accreditation community. But the growing body of experience has not yet been effectively “rounded up” for use by the community in common.”

[The Competency Standards Project: Another Approach to Accreditation Review \(CHEA Occasional Paper, August 2000\) Prepared for CHEA by Peter T. Ewell, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems](#)

The primary message offered to traditional accreditation from this competency based accreditation review is that a competency-based approach can be of value to assure quality in distance learning and more fully address outcomes in both traditional institutions and nontraditional institutions. This requires:

- Institutional quality defined primarily by student achievement.
- Standards that more explicitly address outcomes.
- Standards focused on teaching and learning capacity of the institution (e.g., curriculum and faculty) as this capacity serves student achievement and outcomes.

INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

For accreditation, “informing the public” has two dimensions: (1) information that accreditors, as part of their standards and policies, expect institutions and programs to provide the public and (2) information that accreditors provide about accreditation process and, most important, the reasons and conditions associated with awarding or not awarding accredited status. CHEA has urged expansion of information provided the public in both areas. First, that institutions and programs, as a matter of meeting accreditation standards, routinely provide information to the public, especially about institutional performance and student achievement. Second, that accrediting organizations routinely provide more information to the public about the basis of their decisions to accredit or not accredit.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing “Accreditation 2.0” \(January 18, 2010\)](#)

Common practices to address transparency in Accreditation 2.0 require that accredited institutions and programs routinely provide readily understandable information to the public about performance. This includes, for example, completion of educational goals, including graduation, success with transfer, and entry to graduate school. Second, accrediting organizations would provide information to the public about the reasons for the accredited status they award in the same readily understandable style, perhaps using an audit-like instrument such as a management letter. A number of institutions and accreditors already offer this transparency. Accreditation 2.0 would mean that it becomes standard practice.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing the Futures Commission and the Future of Accreditation \(May 23, 2006\)](#)

Accreditation and higher education can agree to:

- Break the current impasse in our debate on additional transparency about accredited status, committing ourselves to more fully inform the public about what it means to be accredited.
- Build national capacity for comparability of the key features of accredited institutions and programs, agreeing to a small set of indicators of quality that the public can use to compare institutions.

[Statement Before the Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education \(April 6, 2006\)](#)

Accrediting organizations also need to expand the information they provide the public about their key decisions. This means going beyond the categorical “accredited” or “not accredited” indications of institutional status to a more expansive description of what it means to have earned accreditation.

Accrediting organizations and institutions need to explore and engage the growing interest in comparisons of quality across institutions as well as national and international rankings of the performance of institutions. Pilot efforts are needed to examine forms of comparability and rankings that might be acceptable to colleges and universities and to explore whether, ultimately, colleges and universities as well as accrediting organizations will need to move in this direction to remain nationally and internationally competitive.

[CHEA Letter to the Senate HELP Committee Regarding HEA Reauthorization \(April 14, 2005\)](#)

CHEA has advocated more public information on the results of accreditation reviews. This could be done with the collaboration of accreditors and their institutions or programs under review. Care should be taken to assure that additional information does not inappropriately damage institutions or programs, and that the information to the public can be understood. Accreditation is a complicated activity conducted among experts in a confidential and peer-based process. A balanced approach is needed, so that the desire for public information should not trample the confidentiality needed to make the accreditation process work.

[Accreditation and the Provision of Additional Information to the Public about Institution and Program Performance \(CHEA Occasional Paper, May 2004\) Prepared for CHEA by Peter T. Ewell, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems](#)

Accreditation will never be the only source of information about quality for higher education's external constituents. Particular accrediting organizations though, may decide that they have a role to play in this arena because of the specific areas of expertise that they command or some other factor. What seems clear from this discussion is that any public information role played by accreditors should build upon the functions that accreditation already performs extensively and well. Certainly, for a variety of reasons, the accreditation community should look beyond its current constituencies to seek new ways it might connect with the wider public. Finding a useful niche in disclosing accessible information about institutional or program quality may well be a way to do this.

[CHEA Letter from the President: Accreditation and Information to the Public About Quality \(March 2004\)](#)

The challenge of providing additional information to students and the public may indeed be an issue that higher education and accreditation can effectively address over the next several years. Three suggestions are offered here to respond to this challenge and the frequent questions from students and the public:

- Accrediting organizations and CHEA can test a baseline accreditation narrative with students and the public.
- Accrediting organizations, institutions and programs can explore a "Summary Report of Accreditation Review" to assist students and the public.
- Institutions and programs can explore an "Information Profile" to further assist students and the public.

[CHEA Chronicle: Advancing Quality Through Additional Attention to Results \(November 1998\)](#)

We [should] sustain our commitment to scrutinizing resources and processes, while adding an intensified scrutiny of results. Accreditation practice might then be viewed as an examination of three key aspects of institutional quality: resources invested, processes followed, and results achieved. A quality and results scenario, in other words, calls for additional attention to results, but not at the expense of attention to resources and processes.

Such an approach to accreditation might start with a review of resources available to an institution, including reasonable expectations of its particular student population. We would then set institutional goals that reflect the expected results of institutional efforts, given the mix of resources available. This would be followed by compiling the evidence – confirming the progress that is being made toward those goals over time. This evaluation of progress should ideally be informed by a comparison of similar institutions.

RELATIONSHIP WITH FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT

The federal government has long had a powerful impact on accreditation operation, standards and policies through the federal process of “recognition” or review of accreditors to assure that they are reliable authorities on academic quality. The federal government, in turn, relies on recognized accreditors as “gatekeepers”: An institution or program must be accredited by a federally recognized accreditor in order to be eligible for federal funds (e.g., student grants and loans and other funds). CHEA has stressed the importance of balance in the federal government-accreditation relationship, especially as this relates to accredited institutions and programs sustaining primary responsibility for leadership on academic matters.

There is significant variation with regard to the role of accreditation and its relationship with each state. CHEA has focused primarily on providing information about how various states operate and their expectations of accreditation. CHEA has worked to bring states and accreditors together to better understand their respective roles with regard to higher education, seeking to clarify where there is confusion and diminish duplication of effort.

Federal Government

[Testimony at NACIQI Meeting \(February 3, 2011\)](#)

We need a public-private partnership, defined around standards and regulations holding accreditors accountable for assuring that colleges and universities comprehensively and effectively address institutional performance indicators in the context of mission.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing the Accreditation-Government Relationship \(August 20, 2007\)](#)

We need a frank reappraisal of whether and how to sustain our gatekeeping relationship with the federal government going forward. As any number of accreditors have pointed out over the years, we may be faced with a situation in which this role is so much at odds with our primary thrust of quality improvement that gatekeeping is hollowing out accreditation as we know and value it. How can our credibility be sustained under these circumstances?

[CHEA Letter from the President: Accreditation, Public Policy and Presidential Leadership \(May 2005\)](#)

Presidents, working with accrediting organizations, can further influence and mold the relationship between accreditation and the federal government. At present, efforts to shape this relationship are mostly confined to periods of reauthorization of the Higher Education Act – points of political intensity when the federal government sometimes seeks to additionally regulate colleges and universities. Presidents can work to sustain an ongoing dialogue about self-regulation and government regulation. This dialogue can provide a valuable buffer to the intense political pressures associated with periodic reauthorization.

[Is Accreditation Accountable? The Continuing Conversation Between Accreditation and the Federal Government \(CHEA Monograph Series Number 1, 2003\)](#)

To bridge the divide between accreditation and government, four actions can be helpful:

- The accrediting community, institutions, and programs develop and share additional evidence of institution and program performance.
- The accrediting community, institutions, and programs develop and share additional evidence of student learning outcomes.
- The accrediting community shares additional information about the “findings” or results of accreditation reviews.
- The federal government affirms the principle of decentralization of judgments about academic quality based on performance and outcomes: Primary responsibility for defining expectations and evidence performance and student learning outcomes rests with the institutions and programs.

[*Distance Learning: Academic and Political Challenges for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA Monograph Series Number 1, 2001\)*](#)

Accreditors must attend to the bond of trust that has been created with government: In exchange for assurance about quality through voluntary accreditation, government honors the principle of self-regulation and institutional autonomy. This needs to be accompanied by attending to the public's growing demand for reliable information about quality.

[*CHEA Priorities for Higher Education Act Reauthorization and Testimony to U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, Training and Lifelong Learning \(July 1998\)*](#)

CHEA recommended that, in reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, Congress:

- Clarify the limitations of the federal government's regulatory authority over academic matters and re-affirm the role of accreditation in quality assurance for higher education.
- Eliminate State Postsecondary Review Entity program (SPRE) language.
- Distinguish and reaffirm the respective roles of the federal government (fiscal oversight), accreditation (quality assurance and improvement), and states (consumer protection) in ensuring educational, financial and administrative integrity in student aid programs.

Also, CHEA recommended additional language change to:

- Eliminate duplicate reporting between the higher education community and the federal government for Title IV.
- Clarify that new instructional sites of existing programs are not "branch campuses."
- Eliminate mandatory site visit requirements for accreditors for program changes (visits within six months) and vocational programs (unannounced visits).
- Affirm that public and private college trustees may participate as representatives of the public in accrediting associations.
- Change the language of USDE regulatory authority to "recognize" rather than "approve" the content of accreditation standards.

State Government

[*State Uses of Accreditation: Results of a Fifty-State Inventory \(September 2010\) Prepared for CHEA by Peter T. Ewell, Marianne Boeke and Stacey Zis*](#)

Several points emerge from this examination. First, although accreditation plays a major role in the decisions of all states with regard to higher education, there is no single model of how this role is carried out. Second, a greater understanding of the relationship between states and accreditation can result in a stronger partnership between the two, perhaps streamlining efforts to examine the effectiveness of institutions and programs. Third, with the current expansion of federal oversight of both accreditation and higher education, understanding the role of accreditation in the states is vital to addressing changes that may emerge – changes that may affect states as well as the operation of accrediting organizations, colleges and universities and the relationships among them.

[*CHEA Letter from the President: Accreditation, Public Policy and Presidential Leadership \(May 2005\)*](#)

- Presidents can work to strengthen the relationship among states, higher education institutions and accreditation. Presidents, working with accrediting organizations, can encourage state leaders to further acknowledge the value of accreditation as a resource for sound practice in maintaining the quality of a state's educational resources. Governors, state legislators or state higher education executive officers can turn to accreditation more frequently when seeking solutions to major state policy initiatives, e.g., higher education and economic development or higher education and enhanced public accountability. This can be preferable to, e.g., enacting additional state regulation of colleges and universities.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

CHEA focused on distance education as institutions began online offerings, working with accrediting organizations on effective practices to review these courses and programs, whether through modification of existing accreditation standards or the creation of standards directed explicitly to distance learning. CHEA has emphasized the importance of acknowledging that distance learning constitutes an important additional delivery mode of instruction and that accreditation review needs to be focused on what counts as evidence of quality in this environment.

[CHEA Letter to the Senate HELP Committee Regarding HEA Reauthorization \(April 14, 2005\)](#)

CHEA supports the expanded attention of accreditors to programs of distance education. As “distance” is a means of delivery, it is not a separate system of education. So the quality standards should be the same for every means of delivery. Accreditors can and do use different methods to review distance programs, but the quality standards should be the same and no additional standards should be placed in federal law. Accreditors should also take special care when distance programs expand rapidly, and should review institutional processes that assure the distance student is the one actually completing the program.

[CHEA Presentation to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity \(December 8, 2003\)](#)

CHEA urges higher education and accreditation to sustain and enhance assuring quality in distance learning. This is being done successfully under the current federal recognition standards. We suggest that government refrain from requiring duplicate accreditation reviews or a combination of redundant government and accreditation reviews.

[Distance Learning: Academic and Political Challenges for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA Monograph Series Number 1, 2001\)](#)

Accreditors must take the initiative in defining the differences in teaching and learning that distance learning brings – in order to sustain the quality of the higher education experience.

Distance-based teaching and learning must respond to similar expectations of quality that are comparable, even if they are not identical, to the expectations that have such a long and respected tradition in the site-based community. Attention to student achievement is central to these efforts.

Accreditors must attend to the bond of trust that has been created with government: In exchange for assurance about quality through voluntary accreditation, government honors the principle of self-regulation and institutional autonomy. This needs to be accompanied by attending to the public’s growing demand for reliable information about quality.

[Assuring Quality in Distance Education: A Preliminary Review \(April 1998\)](#)

We offer the following specific recommendations for steps that need to be undertaken by the accreditation community:

- Establish reliable and valid performance measurements for distance learning.
- Require providers to substantiate evidence of contact between faculty and students.
- Require evidence of effective instructional techniques.
- Promote systematic efforts for selecting and training faculty.
- Assure the availability of learning resources.
- Promote ongoing monitoring and enhancement of the technology infrastructure of institutions.
- Focus attention on the development of courseware and the availability of information.
- Examine alternatives to the traditional accreditation process.

INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

CHEA's work on international accreditation and quality assurance has centered in building bridges with other countries and their quality assurance organizations, participating in regional or international efforts to address quality assurance issues such as distance learning and degree mills. CHEA, through its recognition review, also focuses on the capacity of U.S. accreditors to operate internationally.

[***What Presidents Need to Know About International Accreditation and Quality Assurance \(CHEA Presidential Guidelines Series, July 2007\)***](#)

Expansion of U.S. higher education into the international arena is an extraordinary opportunity, but one that carries risk – as well as gains – for U.S. colleges and universities. U.S. presidents and chancellors will need to be well-informed about the scope and depth of quality review practices in other countries.

[***Internationalizing Quality Assurance in Higher Education \(CHEA Occasional Paper, July 1999\)***](#)

Coordination of the highly decentralized community of accreditation agencies is essential to internationalizing quality assurance. Oversight conducted through the United States Department of Education's recognition process has been limited. Excepting periodic initiatives aimed at accountability and consumer protection, the U.S. government honors accreditors' independence. Accrediting organizations' common concerns have been addressed primarily through voluntary cooperation. It is time for a collective initiative to deal with issues that cannot be addressed effectively by purely informal cooperation.

Responsibility for attention to import/export concerns in higher education must be vested in an identifiable and visible entity. Not all exporters from the United States are subject to recognized accrediting agencies. Some users overseas now engage in fruitless searches for authoritative information.

Students, academic credit, and degrees are transportable across international borders, and there is every reason to believe that this transportability will accelerate. A convenient and authoritative source of information about overseas quality assurance agencies and the institutions served by them would be useful to students considering overseas study, as well as to American entities considering admission or employment of persons with overseas qualifications.

DEGREE MILLS AND ACCREDITATION MILLS

CHEA's focus on degree mills and accreditation mills has centered on efforts to establish nationally accepted definitions of these terms, to encourage federal and state legislation that prevent the establishment of these mills and accreditation's responsibility to inform the public that mills may be harmful. CHEA has urged greater international action to address degree mills and accreditation mills. These efforts are intended to reduce or ultimately eliminate the harm of mills, especially as this affects students.

[***CHEA/UNESCO Statement on Effective Practice To Discourage Degree Mills in Higher Education \(June 24, 2009\)***](#)

Suggested actions to combat degree mills include:

- Create tools for the identification of degree mills.
- Use evidence of quality provided by acknowledged competent authorities on academic quality such as recognized accreditation and quality assurance bodies.
- Encourage providers of public and private funding for higher education to avoid funding of degree mills and their students.
- Inform the public about degree mills.
- Pursue legal action against degree mills and use of fraudulent credentials.
- Focus on cross-border degree mill operation.

[CHEA Statement on Suggestions for Effective Practice in Combating Site-Based and Distance-Based Degree Mills \(February 2007\)](#)

Know What Degree Mills Are: Create Tools for Identification

- Identify key characteristics and common practices of mills.
- Develop and apply definitions of degree mills.

Stop the Funding for Degree Mills: Deny Government or Private Sector Financial Support

- Assure that degree mills do not receive public (taxpayer) funds.
- Assure that students attending mills do not receive publicly-funded student aid.
- Assure that students attending mills do not receive employer-funded tuition assistance.

Inform the Public about Degree Mills: Educate for Awareness

- Routinely inform the public about how degree mills harm students and society.
- Assure that advertising of higher education is confined to legitimate providers and not degree mills.
- Identify and publicize questionable marketing and recruitment practices associated with degree mills.
- Educate the public about the role of the Internet in making distance-based degree mills readily available.

Pursue Legal Action Against Degree Mills

- Encourage and assist with the development of federal, state or local law that make establishing, licensing and operating degree mills illegal.
- Work to make the use of fraudulent degrees (e.g., for obtaining or upgrading employment) illegal.
- Encourage prosecution of degree mill providers and knowing users of fraudulent credentials where appropriate.

Use Evidence of Quality Provided by Recognized Accreditation and Quality Assurance Bodies

- Confirm that higher education providers are in good standing with recognized accreditation and quality assurance bodies.
- Use accreditation and quality assurance lists to identify reliable higher education institutions and programs.

Address Degree Mills Internationally: Contain the Expansion

- Establish cross-border agreements among countries that discourage the import and export of site-based and distance-based degree mills.
- Work with multinational and regional organizations to enhance awareness of degree mills and provide tools to identify and discourage their use.
- Develop reliable country-based lists of legitimate higher education providers.
- Develop an international list of degree mill characteristics, practices and providers.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT

CHEA has concentrated on the role of accreditation in enhancing or diminishing the likelihood of successful transfer. While transfer of credit is and should remain an institutional determination, CHEA has urged that focus only on the type of accreditation of an institution or program is not a satisfactory basis for deciding whether or not to consider transfer requests.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing Transfer of Credit \(November 4, 2005\)](#)

Presidents, provosts, deans and admissions officers at receiving institutions can take a fresh look at institutional transfer policy and practice. Yes, these are academic decisions, but has the transfer population increased or diversified over the years? If you are in a nonprofit, site-based institution, are you receiving more and more transfer requests from, e.g., students in for-profit schools or in distance learning schools? Is your transfer policy adequate to address the stop-in/stop-out student? When was the last time that your institution's catalog was reviewed, and what does it say about transfer? Given the continuing diversification and complexity of higher education, is it time for a transfer policy overhaul?

Similarly, are officials at sending institutions taking a fresh look at their transfer practices? Have curricula been reviewed to minimize the likelihood that transfer requests will be refused by a receiving institution? Do you have a small group of primary receiving institutions with which you are in regular contact? Do students receive adequate assistance when making transfer decisions, such as information about transfer options and designing a program to minimize if not eliminate any loss of transfer credits?

Accreditors can take a fresh look at their policies and standards as they relate to transfer. Are these appropriate for the current diverse and complex higher education environment? The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has long held a position that accredited status should not be the sole reason for refusal at least to consider transfer requests.

Most of all, we need to address the have/have-not mentality, going beyond notions such as “all nonprofit higher education is good” and “all for-profit higher education is suspect.” Or the notion that two-year education is consistently inferior to four-year education. Or the idea that distance learning invariably has less academic value than site-based learning. All of these notions require re-examination.

[CHEA Letter to the Senate HELP Committee Regarding HEA Reauthorization \(April 14, 2005\)](#)

The “CHEA transfer principle” states that institutions should consider transfer application on their merits and not discriminate solely on the basis of accreditation of the sending institution. Institutions should determine their academic programs, and no federal law should direct what credits should or should not be transferred. While CHEA does not favor new federal law in this area, CHEA suggests that any new federal rule embody the CHEA principle of nondiscrimination.

[Transfer and the Public Interest: A Statement to the Community \(November 2000\)](#)

CHEA believes that the three criteria of quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability offered in the 1978 Joint Statement remain central to assuring quality in transfer decision-making. The following additional criteria expand this list and are offered to assist institutions, accreditors and higher education associations in future transfer decisions. These criteria are intended to sustain academic quality in an environment of more varied transfer, assure consistency of transfer practice and encourage appropriate accountability about transfer policy and practice.

Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution. While acknowledging that accreditation is an important factor, CHEA believes that receiving institutions ought to make clear their institutional reasons for accepting or not accepting credits that seek to transfer. Students should have reasonable explanations about how work offered for credit is or is not of sufficient quality when compared with the receiving institution and how work is or is not comparable with curricula and standards to meet degree requirements of the receiving institution.

Consistency. Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently in the context of changing student attendance patterns (students likely to engage in more transfer) and emerging new providers of higher education (new sources of credits and experience to be evaluated). New providers and new attendance patterns increase the number and type of transfer issues that institutions will address – making consistency even more important in the future.

Accountability for Effective Public Communication. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices. The public has a significant interest in higher education’s effective management of transfer, especially in an environment of expanding access and mobility. Public funding is routinely provided to colleges and universities. This funding is accompanied by public expectations that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness and efficiency.

Commitment to Address Innovation. Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. Distance learning and other applications of technology generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities. Transfer is inevitably among these.

FINANCING ACCREDITATION AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A more recent challenge to accreditation has focused on its method of its financing. Accrediting organizations are funded by the institutions and programs they accredit, giving rise to questions about how an accreditor can be adequately rigorous and objective in the application of standards to an institution or program when the accreditor relies on payment from the college or university. And, obtaining funds from a college or university may be an incentive to accredit more institutions or programs, with the potential to undermine rigorous application of standards in an accreditation review. CHEA, while acknowledging that the funding approach needs to be carefully monitored, has not called for a shift away from current financing practice. However, CHEA has offered some alternatives to the prevailing funding model that accreditors, institutions and programs might wish to consider.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing “Accreditation 2.0” \(January 18, 2010\)](#)

Diversification of the ownership of accreditation can provide for additional approaches to the process and even additional constructive competition, as well as provide a response to allegations of conflict of interest. At present, most accrediting organizations are either owned and operated by the institutions or programs they accredit or function as extensions of professional bodies. However, there is nothing to stop other parties interested in quality review of higher education from establishing accrediting organizations and obtaining the legal authority to operate. Accreditation 2.0 can encourage exploration of this diversification that can be a source of fresh thinking about sustaining and enhancing quality in higher education. Private foundations or nonprofit citizen groups, for example, can make excellent owners of accrediting organizations.

Alternative financing models for accreditation call for separating the reviews of individual institutions and programs from the financing of an accrediting organization. In Accreditation 1.0, most accreditors are funded through the fees they charge individual institutions and programs for their periodic accreditation review and for the annual operating costs of the accrediting organization – with the latter a condition of keeping accredited status. This mode of financing is viewed by some as an inappropriate enticement to expand the organization’s numbers of accredited institutions and programs and by others as a conflict of interest or disincentive to impose harsh penalties on institutions that might diminish membership numbers. It can create problems for some accreditors, especially smaller operations.

In Accreditation 2.0, an “accreditation bank” might be established by a third party, neither the accrediting organization nor the party seeking accreditation. Institutions and programs interested in investing in the accreditation enterprise would pay into the bank annually, independent of individual reviews. Alternative sources of financing include third parties such as private foundations and endowments.

[Inside Accreditation Addressing “Accreditation, Professional Interest and the Public Interest: Conflict or Convergence” \(October 31, 2006\)](#)

The financing of accreditation by those who are accredited means that there is ongoing pressure on accreditation to avoid conflict of interest such as deriving financial benefit from expanding the number of accredited institutions or programs. Governing accreditation by those who are themselves accredited raises other conflict concerns, such as avoiding temptation to relax the rigor of quality standards in order to expand membership.

Accreditors would benefit from routinely asking themselves probing questions to determine how well they serve the public interest, building confidence and trust. Accrediting organizations need a public interest audit or checklist to [in part] avoid conflict of interest in finance and governance by acknowledging the fault lines of any self-regulatory system and, in response, assuring maximum transparency in key areas of decision making.

Appendix 1

THE CHEA INITIATIVE

THE FIRST THREE YEARS (2008-2011)

BACKGROUND

In Fall 2008, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) launched the *CHEA Initiative*, a multi-year national conversation on the future of accreditation. The *Initiative* seeks to (1) enhance accountability in accreditation and (2) sustain a balance and distinction between accountability to the federal government and the academic work of accreditation – its focus on institutional mission and independence, peer/professional review and quality improvement. Through the *Initiative*, CHEA is working to build consensus for action on the issues of greatest importance to the accreditation and higher education communities, as well as prepare for the anticipated reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2013 or thereafter.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS (2008-2010)

CHEA devoted the first two years of the *Initiative* to reaching out to member institutions, accrediting organizations, government, higher education associations and the public, conducting an unprecedented national conversation on accreditation. Staff and board members met with 21 accrediting commissions, hosted five CEO/CAO Roundtables with member institutions, held five national accreditation fora and conducted a student focus group on accreditation, for a total of 32 meetings involving some 1,500 colleagues.

This national conversation surfaced six major issues about the future of accreditation: advocacy for accreditation, its relationship with government, accreditation and accountability, its relationship with state governments, the relationship between institutions and accreditation and relationships among accrediting organizations. During the second year (2009-2010), two additional issues emerged: the international activity of institutions and programs and accreditation and the growth of for-profit education and its impact on accreditation.

HEARING FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

As the *CHEA Initiative* discussions began, participants spoke to the benefits and value of accreditation. At the same time, they expressed interest in some changes to accreditation policy and practices. For the most part, the interest was in incremental alterations over time. Many participants pointed to the importance of accreditation in responding effectively to the current societal emphasis on access and accountability for student success, on expanding the role of faculty and assuring that peer/professional review remains effective and efficient. There was little interest in any dramatic departure from current practice, e.g., eliminating federal review or the gatekeeping connection with government, rethinking the current structure of regional accreditation or realigning programmatic accreditation in some way.

The conversation about accreditation changed during the *Initiative's* second year. Higher education and accreditation began to feel the impact of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA). The revised law produced a heightened sense of urgency from government, especially with regard to accountability from accreditation. Changes in federal law as a result of passage of the HEOA were accompanied by additional rules developed during the two negotiated rulemakings that took place in 2009 and early 2010. This legislative and regulatory activity intensified the pressure on accreditation and, consequently, the institutions and programs that are accredited by recognized accrediting organizations. As a result, participants in the *Initiative's* conversation on accreditation raised more and more serious concerns about the expectations of the federal government and the role of accrediting organizations in carrying out these demands.

Key points made by participants about the eight issues.

1. **Advocacy for accreditation:** Accreditation is highly valued in the academic community. There is a need for even greater advocacy to sustain its respect and credibility, especially with government and the public.
2. **Accreditation's relationship with the federal government:** There is growing worry that the federal government is taking on academic issues and using accrediting organizations for this purpose, in contrast to turning to institutions to provide this leadership.
3. **Accreditation and accountability:** There is agreement that accreditors, institutions and programs have done a great deal – but, at the same time, more needs to be done. There is little consensus about what counts as successful accountability for all of higher education.
4. **Accreditation's relationship with state governments:** There is a perceived need to sort out the relationship between states and accrediting organizations and to achieve parity among types of accreditors as this relates to transfer of credit, licensure of schools and licensure of students.
5. **The relationship between institutions and accrediting organizations:** Accreditation is viewed as both valuable and burdensome, with the student achievement issue looming large. There is a need to enhance shared understanding about the evolving role of accreditation.
6. **The relationships among accreditors:** There are calls for more trust and sharing, more attention to effective practices and more working together.

Regarding the two additional issues that have emerged during the *CHEA Initiative's* discussions:

7. **International activity:** Many colleges and universities have expanded their international offerings, accompanied by additional scrutiny from accrediting organizations. Accreditors spoke to the desirability of sharing ideas and effective practices for accrediting internationally. There are calls for a single set of international standards for some fields.
8. **The growth of the for-profit sector:** As for-profit higher education continues to expand, there is a need to understand similarities and differences between this sector and nonprofit higher education. Considerable tension between the two sectors remains, indicating a need to examine this relationship.

Additional information about the conversations on the eight issues may be found at www.chea.org/About/CI/index.asp.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2010-2011

In the third year of the *CHEA Initiative*, the focus shifts to action. CHEA will host several national accreditation fora during which participants will review the national conversation to date and begin to frame action plans focused initially on steps that institutions and accrediting organizations can take in the eight areas that have been identified. This will also assist with preparation for the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. As in the past, participants will include institutional leaders, accreditors, students, government, the public and the press.

The action plan development will begin with a CHEA Fall Forum, followed by additional deliberation at the 2011 CHEA Annual Conference, a likely Spring Forum and completion of the action plans at the 2011 CHEA Summer Workshop. Information about these events will be forthcoming.

Become part of the CHEA Initiative conversation. Please email CHEA at CHEAInitiative@chea.org to offer your ideas and suggestions about the future of accreditation.

Appendix 2

Section 3. Additional Reporting to the Public: Examples for Accreditors, Institutions and Programs

There are various ways in which accrediting organizations, institutions and programs might present additional information to the public. Three examples are presented here.

Example 1

The "Accreditation Summary" describes the formal action taken by an accrediting organization as well as a description of strengths and areas of improvement.

ACCREDITATION SUMMARY REVIEW AND ACTION

Institution or Program: _____

Accrediting Organization: _____

Date of Review: _____

What formal action was taken by the accrediting organization as a result of the review? _____

What institutional or programmatic strengths were identified? _____

In what areas might the institution or program improve? _____

When will the next formal review take place? _____

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Letter from the President, *Balancing Competing Goods: Accreditation and Information to the Public About Quality*. March 2004. Retrieved December 3, 2006 from www.chea.org/pdf/presstr_informpublic_0304.pdf

Example 2

The "Accreditation Management Letter" is a formal notice that a review has been completed, that specific standards have been met, that areas of institutional or programmatic operation are to be addressed, accompanied by an overview of the institution or program.

ACCREDITATION MANAGEMENT LETTER

The (accrediting organization) reviewed (institution or program) during (time period) . The purpose of the review is to assure that (institution or program) meets the standards of the accrediting organization.

The review was conducted according to the established practices of U.S. accrediting organizations, based on the expectations of the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the two authorities in the United States that set standards for the conduct of institutional or programmatic accreditation.

The (institution or program) meets the standards of the (accrediting organization) as follows:

The (institution or program) is asked to address the following areas:

Other comments and recommendations:

Overview of Institution or Program

Mission: _____

Control and Governance: _____

Notable Programs: _____

Faculty: _____

Students: _____

Finances: _____

Facilities: _____

Significant Changes in the Past Academic Year: _____

Example 3

The "Information Profile" describes key features of an institution or program as well as key performance indicators.

INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION PROFILE*

Name of Institution

Accreditations

Institutional Accrerator: _____

Programmatic Accrerator(s): _____

Date of Next Institutional Review: _____

(If used electronically, can include: To learn more about the accredited status of the institution or a program, click on the accrediting organization's name.)

Institutional Context and Mission

Institutional Mission: _____

Institutional Goals: _____

Institutional Type: _____

Brief Description of Student Population: _____

Admissions Requirements: _____

Areas of Special Focus (e.g., liberal arts, vocational education): _____

Options for Institutional Indicators of Effectiveness with Undergraduates

(Indicators must be determined and defined by the institution. These are examples only.)

1. Graduates Entering Graduate School

Year: _____ # of Graduates: _____ # Entering Graduate School: _____

2. Job Placement

Year: _____ # of Graduates: _____ # Employed: _____

3. Annual Transfer Activity

Year: _____ # of Transfers: _____ Transfer Rate: _____

4. Persistence and Average Time to Certificate or Degree

1-Yr. Certificate: _____ 2-Yr. Degree: _____ 4-Yr. Degree: _____

5. Graduation

Year: _____ # of Graduates: _____ Graduation Rate: _____

6. Completion of Educational Goal (other than certificate or degree – if data collected)

of Students Surveyed: _____ # Completing Goal: _____

7. Other (describe)

Success in General Education: _____

Success in Major Field: _____

Success in Career Learning Outcomes: _____

Success in Licensure/Certification Exams: _____

Additional Indicators: _____

*May also be modified for use by programs.

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Letter from the President, *Balancing Competing Goods: Accreditation and Information to the Public About Quality*. March 2004. Retrieved December 3, 2006 from www.chea.org/pdf/presltr_informpublic_0304.pdf

A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations.

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