



The State of Accreditation

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Who is ASPA?

- collaborative forum and collective voice for accreditors of specialized and professional higher education programs/schools in USA
- established 1993; 60 members (39 health related)
 - Nursing, architecture, engineering, physical therapy
 - >25,000 programs accredited
- recognition
 - Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) = 33
 - US Secretary of Education (ED) = 30; 16 have Title IV link; <2% of total federal aid \$
- ~75% in fields with some form of licensure/certification

What do programmatic accreditors do?

- conduct an in-depth assessment of specialized or professional programs at a college, university or independent institution
- connect the professions to academic programs by ensuring competency of graduates
- targeted evaluations of quality that relate directly to the student's learning and competence
- subject matter experts develop accreditation standards – practitioners, educators, employers, other communities of interest

Member Services

- networking
- professional development – spring/fall conferences – improving accreditation practice
- track developments and provide input on higher education legislation and regulation (recognition – ED and CHEA)
- educate legislators and regulators about the role and function of programmatic accreditors
- member education and support – reports, programming
- private member e-list and member portal

“Regulation” of Higher Education in United States

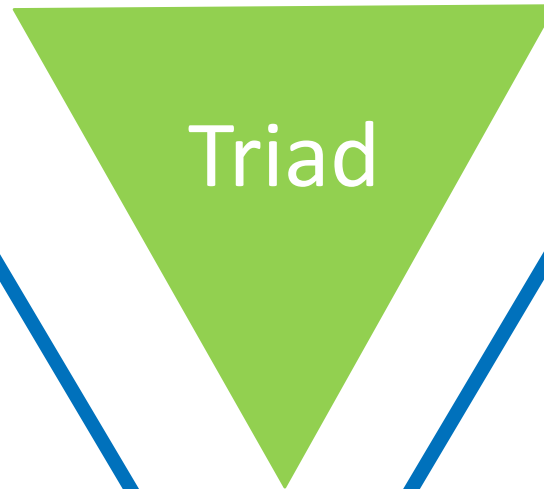
Federal Government

Higher Education Act funding programs and non-HEA “links” for recognition

- regulations
- guidelines/subregulation

States

- authorize institutions
- licensure and certification of professions



Triad

Congress

- statutes
- politics

Administration

Accreditors

Quality, continuous improvement

- institutional
 - regional
 - national
- specialized and professional

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- voluntary non-federal recognition

Current Issues

- What are accreditors doing to protect students?
 - why aren't accreditors looking more at outcomes and setting outcome benchmarks and bright lines?
 - students complete programs without skills that employers want/need; why aren't accreditors controlling job markets?
 - high cost of education; poor access; low completion
 - how can bad schools remain accredited up until they go out of business? (ACICS/Corinthian)
- Accreditors are not transparent!
 - students need more information to make informed decisions
 - more documentation should be available to the public
- Accreditors stifle innovation!

Reauthorization HEA - Senate

- February 2018 – Democrats - HEA Reauthorization Principles
 - affordability and student debt
 - accountability and transparency
 - access and success
 - protecting the rights and safety of students
- February 2018 – Republicans - White Paper - Higher Education Accountability
 - student aid issues
 - federal accountability requirements for Title IV participation – repayment rates
- General interest in a post secondary student data system?

HEA Reauthorization – PROSPER Act

- House Republicans - December 1, 2017 - H.R. 4508, “Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform
- accreditors must be “separately incorporated and independent”
- recognition standards focus on “student learning and educational outcomes” - requirements for accreditors to review resources, facilities, equipment and student support services would be eliminated
- accreditors required to demonstrate they have competency-based review capabilities; distance education requirements have been eliminated
- A focus on “religious mission”, with the onus on the accreditor to prove that any adverse action taken against an institution is not the result of the institution’s religious mission

HEA Reauthorization – Aim Higher Act

- House Democrats - July 24, 2018 - H.R. 6543
- completion and workforce participation are the most important student achievement outcomes
- ED must veto accreditation standards that the Secretary considers too low or insufficient and to set standardized consequences that all accreditors must adopt if their standards are not met
- requires accretor standards for competency-based education with proposed federal standards for a CBE demonstration project in the bill
- ED oversight through the recognition process is strengthened - taking into account similar accreditors when examining an individual accretor's effectiveness, and scrutiny of the effectiveness of accretor student achievement standards
- more disclosures and transparency - accreditors must publish their measures and standards for student achievement and the rationale for measures and standards

Separately incorporated and independent

- perception that accreditors are unduly influenced by parent and stakeholder associations and “separate incorporation” is the only remedy for this conflict of interest
- accreditors may not accept financial subsidy from the parent or other external entities
- accreditors may need to increase program fees to cover the full cost of the accreditation process (Some estimates: increase by up to \$3000/year per program.)
- accreditors may determine that recognition is not worth the effort if not enough programs or students benefit from the federal links (Title IV and non-Title IV)

Religious Mission

- onus on accreditor to prove that adverse actions are not based on religious mission
- should programs be allowed to cherry-pick curricula based on religious belief?
- several accreditors have diversity/inclusion requirements based on input/values of the profession
 - e.g. health providers should know how to take care of all people
- how to reconcile if a religious mission determines that certain groups can/should be excluded?

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- programs must provide reliable and easily accessible information to the public on student achievement
- accreditors must be autonomous in decision making and have independent authority and capacity to deploy resources in the service of their missions
- how far out of compliance can programs be before being subjected to adverse actions?

CHEA Recognition Policies – 2018 renewal

- programs must meet all standards to be accredited
 - Time frame allowed for compliance?
- 7-year recognition cycle (currently 10 years)
- focus on program performance (student learning) with less attention to inputs
- early detection of ineffective program performance and actions to be taken
- strong quality improvement capacity: both accreditors and programs
- attention to innovation

Going Forward

- accreditors need to do a better job of explaining what they do and the good outcomes that are achieved
- outcomes should be clearly explained in context – accreditors and institutions/programs
- competency-based education?

Questions

