

## Recognition of Accreditation in the U.S.

CHEA International Commission: 2007  
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## Overview of Presentation

1. Who recognizes accreditors in the U.S. How does this state of affairs reflect our country?
2. What are the two systems of recognition? How are they alike and how are they different?
3. What are the additional confusions about accreditation that make recognition important?
4. What are some current issues in recognition?

## Quick review of U.S. higher education and accreditation

### System? What system?

1. States and the federal government
2. Large, diverse, serving a mobile society, promoting choice
3. Voluntary associations
4. Treasured autonomy of colleges and universities
5. Balancing autonomy with accountability

## Recognition: Some context

- Accreditation has developed through evolution – not design.
- Accreditation is tied to the federal government after decades of development – and serves a “gatekeeper” function for federal financial aid.
- Universities want collective role in who comes to their campus to accredit and the quality of their work.
- Accreditation is under scrutiny: University degrees are more necessary and university attendance is more expensive.

## What is the issue? the problem?

### Two issues, two systems of recognition

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Public</b> – access to federal funds, principally financial aid</li><li>• <b>Private</b> – accreditation serves institutions: order is preserved and enhanced; value is gained.</li></ul> | <p><b>U.S. Department of Education</b> – government regulation based on law</p> <p><b>Council for Higher Education Accreditation</b> – self-regulation from a university-created body</p> |
|--|---|

## Recognition parallels accreditation

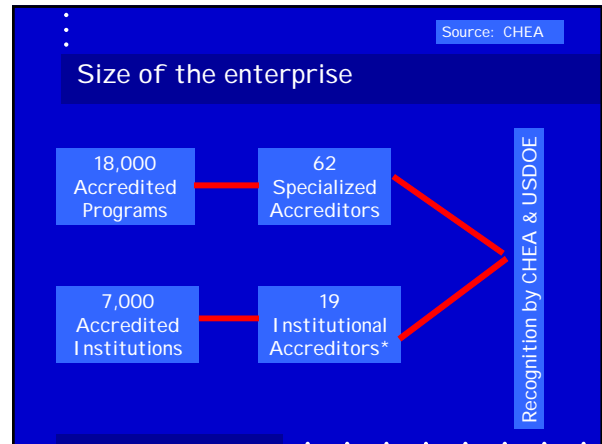
Based on a set of requirements for accreditors:

1. Report by accreditor on how the requirements are met
2. Review and recommendation by a committee
3. Decision by an authority

Who accredits the accreditor?

### U.S. Features that Help Define Recognition

1. Historical: Recognition came after decades of accreditation
2. Balance government role and voluntary association (private) role
3. Higher education is not really a system
4. Anyone can start an accreditation agency



### Accreditors Recognized by CHEA & USDOE

	Regional	Faith-Based	Private Career	Specialized & Professional
CHEA-recognized	8	4	2	46
USDOE-recognized	8	4	7	41
<b>Total Organizations</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>62</b>

As of November, 2005. Source: CHEA

- ### CHEA and USDOE: Common features
- Public trust is important; public involvement is required.
  - Basics of the process (standards, self-evaluation, review, judgment, periodic review)
  - Important role for academics in the process
  - Accrediting organizations should be autonomous
  - Accreditation should be voluntary
  - Academic quality is key
  - Capacity of accreditor is important
  - Periodic self-evaluation is important for accreditors

- ### Differences between CHEA and USDOE
- Language: amount and tone
  - Length of cycle
  - Appointment of Committee
  - Role and voice of accreditors
  - Scope and international activity
  - Focus of the review
  - Improvement oriented?
  - Mission of institution and accreditor?

- ### Some features of CHEA
- Institutional Membership (largest in U.S.) - 3,000 colleges and universities
  - Degree-granting institutions and recognizes accreditors with majority degree-granting institutions
  - Successor to COPA and CORPA
  - Advocate for voluntary accreditation

### CHEA Recognition Standards – 2006

- Advance academic quality
- Demonstrate accountability
- Encourage, *where appropriate*, self-scrutiny and planning for change and needed improvement
- Employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision making
- Demonstrate ongoing review of accreditation practices
- Possess sufficient resources

*emphasis added*

### Some features of federal recognition

**USDOE** – not a ministry, but a politically appointed Secretary

**NACIQI** – In law since 1992 – members represent or are knowledgeable about postsecondary education

Accreditor is ‘reliable authority’ regarding the quality of education’

“Gatekeeper” as a required function since 1991

**U.S. activity only** -- in the ‘scope’

**Regulatory** – pre-accreditation, branch campuses, change in ownership, Title IV default rates.

### Some areas covered by USDOE not addressed by CHEA

- Substantive change, including branch campuses, distance learning
- “Pre-accreditation” – candidacy
- Conflict of interest in accreditation
- Monitoring and enforcement
- Standards must address: curricula; faculty; facilities, equipment and supplies; fiscal and administrative capacity; student support services; recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising; measures of program length and the objectives of the degree or credential offered; record of student complaints; record of compliance with Title IV.

### CHEA and USDOE: An important difference

Dimension	CHEA	USDOE
Institutional Resources to be considered in the accreditation process	Resources sufficient for student achievement or health and safety	Curricula; faculty; facilities, equipment and supplies; fiscal and administrative capacity, student support services, recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs and publications; measures of program length and objectives of degrees or credentials offered; record of student complaints received by or available to the agency

### CHEA and USDOE: An important difference

Dimension	CHEA	USDOE
Expectations for student learning	“Students emerge appropriately prepared”	Course completion, state licensing examination, and job placement rates

### CHEA and USDOE: An important difference

Dimension	CHEA	USDOE
Notifying public of accreditation decisions	Has “policies and procedures to notify the public” of its decisions	Requirements for notification described in 373 words – includes prompt notification of government authorities.

### Complexities related to recognition

1. Scope statements
2. Multiple accreditors in a field
3. Federal recognition limited to gatekeepers
4. Anyone can start an accrediting association

### Scope Statements: Accreditors that are both specialized and institutional\*

Art, music, dance, theatre	Midwifery
Acupuncture and oriental medicine	Montessori teacher education
Health education schools	Nurse anesthesia
Chiropractic	Osteopathic
Cosmetology arts and sciences	Podiatry
Funeral service	Theology
Law	
Liberal education	

\*per federal recognition

### Two or more accreditors in a field

- Business
- Teacher education
- Nursing

Illustrates the private nature of accreditation

### Fields No Longer Eligible for Federal Recognition, Recognized by CHEA

Business	Landscape Architecture
Engineering**	Interior Design
Journalism	Social Work
Culinary	Architecture
Construction	Industrial Technology
Library Science	Forestry

\*\* ABET withdrew from federal recognition

### Some Un-recognized Accreditors\*

Accrediting Commission International (in Beebe, Arkansas)  
American Association of Bible Colleges  
American Council on Education  
Council for Distance Education Accreditation  
European Council for Distance and Open Learning  
Middle States Accrediting Board  
Regional Education Accreditation Commission  
United States Distance Learning Association  
World Association of Colleges and Universities (in Nevada)

\*from the 95 listed in Wikipedia.com

### Some current issues in recognition

1. CHEA has new Standards
2. USDOE regulations are "in motion"
3. Higher Education Act is up for re-authorization
4. Expectations for use of learning outcomes are increasing
5. Expectations for transparency and public disclosure are increasing
6. Should recognition reflect current good practice or be a lever for change in higher education?

