

## CHEA Annual Conference - 2007

### PRESIDENTS AND ACCREDITATION

**Tuesday, January 30, 10:15 a.m.**

This session on Presidents and Accreditation emanates from CHEA's Presidents Project, which began in January 2005 and which has focused on engaging and informing college and university presidents about accreditation. Many people in higher education, including presidents and chancellors, take accreditation for granted, or perhaps as something that is done *to* them. CHEA, through the Presidents Project, has tried to advance the notion that accreditation is a partnership with important dual purposes—to improve quality in higher in American higher education as well as to assure quality. And if quality improvement is to be realized, then presidents and chancellors must be informed about and engaged in the accreditation process. Furthermore, if voluntary accreditation by peer review is to be maintained as the principal means of assuring quality in American higher education, particularly in the face of calls for greater accountability, then presidents and chancellors must be more knowledgeable about and more committed to the accreditation process as we know it. In this session you will hear two outstanding presidents offer their views about accreditation and its role in quality improvement and quality assurance in higher education.

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Let me first introduce our two guests. Our first presenter this morning is the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., president of DePaul University in Chicago. Father Holtschneider's leadership and expertise stem from a broad range of higher education experiences. He was an administrator with St. John's University in Queens, N.Y., specifically as assistant dean of Notre Dame College and associate dean of the University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Concurrently he served as an assistant professor of higher education in the St. John's Graduate School of Education.

Father Holtschneider gained a university-wide perspective as executive vice president and chief operating officer at Niagara University in Niagara Falls, N.Y., where he directed the university's strategic planning efforts and daily operations of the campus. Adding research to experience, he led two national studies that examined trends in governance and leadership in Catholic colleges and universities in America.

Father Holtschneider is a member of the advisory board of the American Council on Education and the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, which promotes excellence and best practices in management, finances and human resource

development of the Catholic Church in the U.S. In addition, he is a member of Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago 2016 Evaluation Committee, which is preparing a bid to bring the Olympics to Chicago. He continues to teach and serve on the board of Boston College's Summer Institute for Administrators in Catholic Higher Education.

Following President Holtschneider we will hear from Dr. Charlene R. Nunley. Dr. Nunley has been president of Montgomery College in Montgomery County, Maryland, since 1999, and previously she served that institution with distinction in several capacities since 1979. Montgomery College is a three-campus institution of more than 20,000 credit and 15,000 continuing education students. As president, for three consecutive years Dr. Nunley has led Montgomery College into the top five community colleges nationally in private fundraising. A psychologist by discipline, her distinguished career in educational administration includes academic administration, planning, finance, budgeting, and resource development at Montgomery College and several other institutions.

Dr. Nunley is an articulate voice for community colleges, and she has been a particularly staunch advocate for preserving the open access mission of community colleges, and indeed, access to all of higher education. Her efforts and views on this topic have been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *Community College Times* and the *Gazette Newspaper*, among others.

It is particularly good to have President Nunley with us for this session, because as many of you probably already know, during the past year she was one of the 24 education, business, and government leaders who served on the U.S. Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, the "Spellings Commission." I'm sure she will have some things to report from that experience that will be informative and helpful to us.

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Let me begin this session by giving a brief report of the activities and accomplishments of the Presidents Project during its second phase in 2006. CHEA focused primarily in four areas of activity during the past year: outreach to new presidents; assistance to member institutions; telephone interviews with presidents and chancellors (a continuing effort from 2005); and what we have called "enhancing the credibility of accreditation and value to the public."

Outreach to new presidents was simply a special effort to communicate with those who are first-time presidents or chancellors and also those with presidential experience but who were newly arrived at another institution. We sent informative materials about accreditation and about CHEA to 194 new presidents during the year, and also engaged some of these presidents in our telephone interviews.

In an effort to provide assistance to member institutions, the Presidents Project is publishing a set of brief "Presidential Guidelines to Accreditation." The first piece, distributed in

September 2006, was an introduction to the series, followed by a document on the presidential leadership role in accreditation (November 2006) and a third Guideline on conducting the self study, which has just been distributed in January. We plan three additional Guideline publications in February through May of 2007: “Hosting the Site Visit,” “Following Up an Accreditation Review,” and finally, “International Accreditation.”

Under the rubric of “assistance to member institutions” the Presidents Project has also planned a consultative service to complement the current CHEA Mediation Process. We have not had time to implement that part of the Presidents Project, but our intent is for it to be an informal service to 1) assist presidents and other institutional executives as they prepare for an accreditation review, 2) assist institutions and accrediting organizations to better understand each other’s roles and perspectives and 3) aid communication between institutions and accreditors.

Telephone interviews with a selected group of presidents and chancellors, from a variety of sizes and types of institutions, were a key feature of the CHEA Presidents Project in its first year, and we have continued that effort during 2006. Those interviews were informative and they were also instructive to CHEA in assessing its own activities. The results of the first 30 interviews, conducted during 2005, were published in April of 2006 and, mostly through the diligence of President Judith Eaton, the Presidents Project has conducted another 32 interviews during 2006.

CHEA has recognized for some time that it should invest more time and effort to enhance the credibility of accreditation and its value to the public. As one means of accomplishing that, during the past year we have developed a CHEA “brand” (below) that has been sent to each member institution with the request that the college or university display the brand in its official publications or on its website.



Also as part of this particular effort, CHEA has hired a Director of Communications to strengthen its visibility as a reliable authority on accreditation and to emphasize its role, its value and its importance to students, to government and to society.

The CHEA Presidents Project will continue in 2007 with some of the same activities and with some important new ones.

Now let us hear from Father Holtschneider and then from President Nunley.