

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

TALKING POINTS

ACCREDITATION, STUDENTS AND SOCIETY

(July 2008)

WHAT ACCREDITATION IS

“Accreditation” is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education institutions and programs in the United States. Active for the past 100 years, this private, voluntary system of self-examination and peer review has been central to the creation of a U.S. higher education enterprise that is outstanding in many respects.

TEN WAYS IN WHICH ACCREDITATION SERVES STUDENTS, SOCIETY AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Accreditation is

1. ***The primary public symbol of legitimate higher education for over 100 years***
 - A key litmus test of threshold academic quality
 - 7,000 higher education institutions and 17,000 programs are accredited
2. ***The primary “reliable authority” for federal and state governments funding for higher education***
 - Accreditation required for student access to federal and state grants and loans
 - Accreditation required for institution and program access to
 - Other federal funds for research and programs and
 - State funds for operating
3. ***The primary reliable authority for private sector financial support for higher education***
 - Accreditation required to obtain private foundation support
 - Accreditation required to obtain corporate support: gifts, research and tuition assistance
4. ***A major source of protection against fraud and abuse for students and consumers***
 - Primary bulwark against degree mills and accreditation mills
5. ***Successful in encouraging major innovation while maintaining quality over the years, such as***
 - The development of community colleges
 - The advent of distance learning
 - The growth of for-profit higher education
6. ***Cost-efficient in the use of resources to achieve its goals***
 - Expended \$70 million in 2004-2005
 - Operated 81 recognized accrediting organizations with 650 full- and part-time staff
 - Involved 16,000 volunteers
 - Took major action with regard to approximately 1,200 institutions and 3,800 programs

7. Central to states carrying out licensure of the professions

- Many states require that professional programs are accredited
- Many states require that individuals who sit for licensure examinations in the professions have graduated from accredited programs

8. Essential to international mobility

- Vital to international students, governments and higher education institutions for
 - Judgments about transfer of credit
 - Judgments about recognition of qualifications and degrees
 - Judgments about entry to U.S. higher education from other countries

9. Responsive to current climate of accountability

- Equipped to meet current challenges
 - Significant progress with student learning outcomes
 - Significant progress with institutional performance
 - Major progress in greater transparency
 - Major progress with transfer of credit

10. Vital to maintaining key features of higher education that have contributed to the enterprise as among the best in the world

- A diverse array of institutions
- A mission-based system
- Responsible institutional independence for academic judgment
- Responsible academic freedom

Accreditation is

- A highly successful and well-tested system of quality assurance and quality improvement
- An outstanding example of an effective public-private partnership
- An outstanding example of reliable and responsible self-regulation

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