

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

2006 CHEA RECOGNITION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

PROPOSED REVISIONS

4/01/10

Deletions are indicated by strike-through and additions by underlined and capitalized text. The proposed revisions include attention to:

- Page 3: International activity – authority to award degrees (Eligibility Standards)
- Page 4: Time period between attempts to achieve CHEA eligibility (Eligibility Process)
- Page 6: Transparency – additional information (Recognition Standards)
- Page 6: International activity – consistency and comparability (Recognition Standards)
- Page 6: Degree mills and accreditation mills – informing the public (Recognition Standards)
- Page 8: Independence – financial decision-making (Recognition Standards)
- Page 9: Interim reporting – major accreditor changes (Recognition Process)
- Page 9: Meeting with CHEA – issue with an accredited institution or program (Recognition Process)
- Page 10: Time periods between withdrawal and re-application (Recognition Process)
- Page 10: Consideration of Eligibility – deferral of eligibility (Recognition Process)
- Page 14: Time period between attempts to achieve CHEA recognition (Recognition Process)

RECOGNITION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

1. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed in 1996 following an extensive and searching debate about the appropriate role for a national organization concerned with accreditation of higher education institutions and programs. Presidents of American universities and colleges established CHEA to strengthen higher education through strengthened accreditation of higher education institutions. As its mission statement provides, “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 accreditation bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.”
2. CHEA carries forward a long tradition that recognition of accrediting organizations should be a key strategy to assure quality, accountability, and improvement in higher education. Recognition by CHEA affirms that standards and processes of accrediting organizations are consistent with quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established. CHEA will recognize regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations.
3. Accreditation, as distinct from recognition of accrediting organizations, focuses on higher education institutions. Accreditation aims to assure academic quality and accountability, and to encourage improvement. Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental peer review process by the higher education community. It extends the tradition of collegial governance within the decentralized and diverse higher education enterprise. The work of accrediting organizations involves hundreds of self-evaluations and site visits each year, attracts thousands of higher education volunteer professionals, and calls for substantial investment of institutional, accrediting organization, and volunteer time and effort. Appendix A more extensively defines accreditation.
4. Recognition by CHEA shall be understood to convey only that the organization meets CHEA’s recognition standards. Such recognition is not in any way intended to

infringe on the right of any academic institution to determine for itself whether it should affiliate with any accrediting organization.

Recognition and accreditation occur in the context of other reviews. The federal government, through the United States Department of Education, also recognizes accrediting organizations. Federal, as distinct from CHEA, recognition aims to assure that the standards of accrediting organizations meet expectations for institutional and program participation in federal initiatives, such as student aid. State licensure reviews, too, serve important public purposes, including consumer protection in the higher education field.

CHEA RECOGNITION PURPOSES AND REQUIREMENTS

5. CHEA recognition of accrediting organizations has three basic purposes:

- **TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC QUALITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that advance academic quality in higher education; that those standards emphasize student achievement and high expectations of teaching and learning, research, and service; and that those standards are developed within the framework of institutional mission.
- **TO DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that assure accountability through consistent, clear, and coherent communication to the public and the higher education community about the results of educational efforts. Accountability also includes a commitment by the accrediting organization to involve the public in accreditation decision making.
- **TO ENCOURAGE, WHERE APPROPRIATE, SCRUTINY AND PLANNING FOR CHANGE AND FOR NEEDED IMPROVEMENT.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that encourage institutions to plan, where appropriate, for change and for needed improvement; to develop and sustain activities that anticipate and address needed change; and to stress student achievement.

6. CHEA acknowledges, respects, and is committed to the enhancement of the mission of accrediting organizations. CHEA has responsibility to advance, through the recognition process, the quality and public understanding of accreditation and of recognized accrediting organizations.

7. CHEA's primary focus is quality assurance and quality improvement. Accrediting organizations that seek CHEA recognition must demonstrate the quality of their activities and the pertinence and value of their activities to higher education and the public interest.

8. Accrediting organizations seek to demonstrate that they meet CHEA eligibility and recognition standards.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS

9. **ELIGIBILITY.** To be eligible for CHEA recognition, the accreditation organization:
- A. demonstrates that the organization's mission and scope are consistent with the *CHEA Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy* (Appendix B), including that a majority of the institutions and programs accredited by the organization grant higher education degrees. The *Policy* provides, in part, that the recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accrediting organizations in assuring academic quality of institutions or programs;
 - B. is non-governmental;
 - C. accredits institutions OR PROGRAMS IN INSTITUTIONS that have legal authority to confer higher education degrees, WHETHER U.S. OR NON-U.S. INSTITUTIONS.*
 - D. accredits institutions or programs at generally accepted higher education levels;
 - E. has written procedures that describe, officially and publicly:
 - 1. the organization's decision-making processes, policies, and procedures that lead to accreditation actions, and
 - 2. the scope of accreditation that may be granted, evaluative criteria (standards or characteristics) used, and levels of accreditation status conferred;
 - F. has procedures that include a self-evaluation by the institution or program and on-site review by a visiting team, or has alternative processes that CHEA considers to be valid;
 - G. demonstrates independence from any parent entity, or sponsoring entity, for the conduct of accreditation activities and determination of accreditation status; and
 - H. is operational, with more than one completed accreditation review, including action by the accreditation decision-making body at each degree level, or for each type of program, identified in the statement of proposed recognized scope of accreditation.

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***FOR NON-U.S. INSTITUTIONS IN COUNTRIES IN WHICH LEGAL AUTHORITY TO AWARD DEGREES IS NOT AVAILABLE, THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION MEETS THIS REQUIREMENT IF IT DEMONSTRATES THAT IT ACCREDITS ONLY THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE STANDING AND SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OR OTHER COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST.**

. AN ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION THAT HAS PREVIOUSLY SOUGHT ELIGIBILITY FOR CHEA RECOGNITION AND HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL CANNOT RE-APPLY UNTIL ONE FULL YEAR FROM THE DATE OF OFFICIAL DENIAL OF ELIGIBILITY BY THE CHEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

SCOPE OF RECOGNITION

10. *RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.* As part of eligibility and recognition reviews, applicants for recognition will supply information to enable CHEA to determine whether recognition is warranted and what the recognized scope of accreditation will be, including:

- a clear statement of proposed scope of accreditation activity;
- a clear statement of the accrediting organization's purposes and why those purposes are in the public interest; and
- a description of the accrediting organization and its activities; the quality, pertinence, and value of those activities; and the ways in which those activities serve higher education and the public interest.

When providing this information, applicants demonstrate that:

- the statement of proposed scope addresses the types of institutions, the programs to be reviewed, degree levels, and the geographic boundaries of accreditation activity, including the extent of non-U.S. accreditation, if any;
- the statement of proposed scope is consistent with organizational mission statements, charters, bylaws, candidacy requirements, and other requirements for accreditation and affiliation; and
- the accrediting organization has had consultation with appropriate constituencies.

11. *CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.* The CHEA Committee on Recognition ("Committee") will review requests for change of recognized scope of accreditation that occur outside of the regular recognition review. An accrediting organization:

- A. notifies the Committee of its intent, including a rationale, the authorization from the accreditation decision-making body, and a time frame for conducting reviews;
- B. conducts pilot reviews to demonstrate capacity to carry out accreditation reviews under the new recognized scope of accreditation; and
- C. submits a formal request for change of recognized scope of accreditation.

RECOGNITION STANDARDS

12. RECOGNITION STANDARDS. The following six standards are applied to accrediting organizations seeking CHEA recognition:

- A. advances academic quality;
- B. demonstrates accountability;
- C. encourages, where appropriate, self-scrutiny and planning for change and for needed improvement;
- D. employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision making;
- E. demonstrates ongoing review of accreditation practices; and
- F. possesses sufficient resources.

12A. ADVANCES ACADEMIC QUALITY. Advancing academic quality is at the core of voluntary accreditation. “Academic quality” refers to results associated with teaching, learning, research, and service within the framework of institutional mission. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has:

- 1. a clear description of academic quality in the context of institutional or program mission;
- 2. standards or policies that the institutions or programs will have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met;
- 3. standards or policies that include expectations of institutional or program quality, including student achievement, consistent with mission;
- 4. standards or policies that focus on educational quality while respecting the institution’s responsibility to set priorities and to control how the institution or program is structured and operates, and that incorporate an awareness of how programs function within the broader purposes of the institution; and
- 5. standards or policies designed to foster desired or needed student achievement and that refer to resources only to the extent required for students to emerge from institutions or programs appropriately prepared, or to address health and safety in the delivery of programs.

12B. DEMONSTRATES ACCOUNTABILITY. The accrediting organization demonstrates public accountability in two ways. It has standards that call for institutions to provide consistent information about academic quality and student achievement and thus to foster continuing public awareness, confidence, and investment. Second, the accrediting organization itself demonstrates public involvement in its accreditation activities for the purpose of obtaining perspectives independent of the accrediting organization. Representatives of the public may include students, parents, persons from businesses and the professions, elected and appointed officials, and others. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented:

1. accreditation standards or policies that require institutions or programs routinely to provide reliable information to the public on their performance, including student achievement as determined by the institution or program;
2. accreditation standards or policies that focus only on the institutions or programs seeking accreditation and do not extend to other offerings;
3. accreditation standards or policies that require institutions to distinguish accurately between programs that have achieved accredited status and those that have not;
4. policies and procedures that include representatives of the public in decision making and policy setting;
5. policies or procedures, as developed by the accrediting organization through appropriate consultation with institutions or programs, to inform the public of decisions on accreditation status AND THE REASONS FOR THESE DECISIONS;
6. policies or procedures that call for substantive and timely response to legitimate public concerns and complaints;
7. policies or procedures that call for appropriate consultation regarding, and resolution of conflicts between, accreditation standards and state or local laws governing the institution or program seeking accreditation; and
8. standards, policies, or procedures that, when the accrediting organization engages in international activities, assure reasonable efforts to communicate and consult with appropriate governmental and nongovernmental accreditation or quality assurance entities in other countries.
9. POLICIES THAT, WHEN THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION ENGAGES IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, CALL FOR CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF STANDARDS AND POLICIES TO U.S. AND NON-U.S. INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS ALIKE.
10. PROCEDURES THAT CALL FOR ALERTING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE HARM OF DEGREE MILLS AND ACCREDITATION MILLS.

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12C. ENCOURAGES, WHERE APPROPRIATE, SELF-SCRUTINY AND PLANNING FOR CHANGE AND FOR NEEDED IMPROVEMENT. The accrediting organization encourages, where appropriate, ongoing self-examination and planning for change. Such self-scrutiny and planning entail thoughtful assessment of quality (especially student achievement) in the context of the institution's mission. Encouragement of such self-scrutiny and planning should not be confused with solely a demand for additional resources, but rather should enable institutions and programs to focus on effective ways to achieve their institution and program goals. Such self-scrutiny and planning are means to enhance the usefulness of accreditation to institutions and programs. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented standards or policies that:

1. stress self-examination and self-analysis by institutions or programs for planning, where appropriate, for change and for needed improvement, in the context of institutional mission;
2. enable institutions and programs to be creative and diverse in determining how to organize themselves structurally, how best to use their resources, and what personnel and other policies and procedures are needed to attain their student achievement goals;
3. encourage institutions or programs to innovate or experiment; and
4. require the accrediting organization to distinguish clearly between actions necessary for accreditation and actions that are considerations for improvement.

12D. EMPLOYS APPROPRIATE AND FAIR PROCEDURES IN DECISION MAKING. The accrediting organization maintains appropriate and fair policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances. The accreditation process includes ongoing participation by higher education professionals and the public in decision making about accreditation policies and procedures. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented standards, policies, or procedures that:

1. require participation by higher education professionals and the public;
2. foster reasonable consistency in reviews of institutions or programs while respecting varying institution or program purposes and mission;
3. assure that the process to deny or remove accreditation is specified and fair, and inform the institution or program about the process to be used and actions that may be taken; and
4. assure a specified and fair appeals process when there is an action to deny or remove accreditation; inform the institution or program about the process by which the appeal will be conducted, the grounds for appeal, and any costs associated with an appeal; and continue the current accreditation status of the institution or program until an appeal decision is rendered.

12E. DEMONSTRATES ONGOING REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION PRACTICES. Even as higher education institutions and programs undertake ongoing self-scrutiny to maintain and improve quality, accrediting organizations need self-scrutiny of their accrediting practices. Such review should also include examination of the accreditor's impact on institutions and responsiveness to the broader accreditation and higher education community. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it sustains ongoing:

1. critical self-review that can further responsiveness, flexibility, and accountability when the accrediting organization works with institutions, programs, and the public;
2. initiatives that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services to institutions or programs;

3. review of its value to the institution in its entirety and to the higher education community; and
4. review, within its resources, of the impact of its standards and procedures on institutions or programs.

12F. POSSESSES SUFFICIENT RESOURCES. Accreditors must have and maintain predictable and stable resources if they are to meet the expectations of institutions, programs, and the public. To be recognized, the accrediting organization presents evidence that it:

1. has adequate financial, staff, and operational resources to perform its accreditation functions efficiently and effectively; ~~and~~
2. conducts ongoing review of its capacity to support its accreditation mission AND
3. SUSTAINS ONGOING INDEPENDENCE FROM ITS PARENT ENTITY OR SPONSORING ENTITY IN ITS FINANCIAL DECISION-MAKING.

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COMMITTEE ON RECOGNITION

13. MEMBERSHIP. The Committee is appointed by the CHEA Board of Directors (“Board of Directors”) upon recommendation by the President of CHEA in consultation with CHEA-recognized accrediting organizations. The Committee is responsible for considering the eligibility and recognition status of new and continuing accrediting organizations. The Committee is accountable to the Board of Directors and forwards its recommendations for eligibility and recognition to the Board. The Committee will consist of nine (9) members, each serving a three (3)-year term. The Committee will include public members, members from regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations, and members from colleges and universities. CHEA will seek participation that reflects the diversity of the accrediting community and higher education institutions.

14. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS. The Committee, in consultation with the President of CHEA, will establish the time, place, and procedures for its meetings. The Committee will consider all materials it deems pertinent that are generated by the recognition review. The Committee will review an accrediting organization at regularly scheduled meetings.

15. COMMITTEE RELATIONSHIP TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Committee advises the Board of Directors concerning eligibility, recognition, and change of recognized scope of accreditation of accrediting organizations. With due regard for the Committee’s advice, the Board of Directors reviews the Committee’s reports and recommendations and makes final determinations as to eligibility, recognition, and change of recognized scope of accreditation of accrediting organizations. Members of the Board of Directors are not eligible for service on the Committee.

RECOGNITION PROCESS

16. ***FREQUENCY OF RECOGNITION REVIEW AND INTERIM REPORTS.*** At a minimum, the accrediting organization will undergo a recognition review every ten years.

17. ***INTERIM REPORTS.*** Recognized accrediting organizations will provide interim reports, normally at the end of the third and sixth years. The reports focus on major changes IN, e.g., governance, FINANCE, relationships with sponsoring entities, standards, policies or procedures, that relate to CHEA eligibility and recognition standards and that demonstrate that the organization continues to meet the standards. **IN THE EVENT THAT THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION EXPERIENCES A MAJOR CHANGE OUTSIDE THE INTERIM REPORT TIMETABLE, THE ORGANIZATION WILL PROVIDE CHEA WITH AN ADDITIONAL, FOCUSED REPORT ON THIS CHANGE.**

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MEETING WITH CHEA. IN THE EVENT THAT CHEA RECEIVES INFORMATION THAT ONE OR MORE ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OR PROGRAMS OF AN ORGANIZATION ARE EXPERIENCING A MAJOR DIFFICULTY, CHEA MAY REQUEST TO MEET WITH THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION TO FURTHER REVIEW THIS ISSUE.

18. ***REVIEW OUT OF SEQUENCE.*** CHEA may elect to review a recognized accrediting organization out of sequence when:

- A. the accrediting organization proposes to change the scope of its recognition or other fundamental aspects of its organization or accreditation activities, including major changes in governance, relationships with sponsoring entities, standards, policies, or procedures that may affect the ability of the organization to meet CHEA eligibility or recognition standards; or
- B. there has been a pattern of documented concerns related to CHEA eligibility or recognition standards from institutions or programs following accreditation reviews by the accrediting organization over time, and received by CHEA, and the institutions or programs have utilized the accrediting organization's procedures for addressing complaints; or
- C. there have been documented concerns that, in its judgment, the Committee believes indicate that the organization may not be meeting one or more of the CHEA eligibility or recognition standards.

19. ***WITHDRAWAL OF APPLICATION.*** Organizations may withdraw an application for eligibility or recognition at any time in the recognition process up to consideration by the CHEA Board of Directors. If an application is withdrawn before Committee action, the Committee and the Board of Directors will be informed in executive session. If an

application is withdrawn after Committee action, the withdrawal and the Committee's action will be reported at the next public CHEA Board of Directors meeting.

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IF AN ORGANIZATION WITHDRAWS AN APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY, IT CANNOT REAPPLY UNTIL ONE FULL YEAR FROM THE DATE OF WITHDRAWAL OF THE APPLICATION. IF AN ORGANIZATION WITHDRAWS AN APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION, IT CANNOT REAPPLY UNTIL TWO FULL YEARS FROM THE DATE OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE APPLICATION.

20. ***CEO LETTER OF INTENT TO CHEA.*** The chief executive officer of the accrediting organization will send a letter with an application fee to CHEA. CHEA staff will acknowledge the letter of intent and supply information about the recognition process, a schedule, and a copy of the *CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures*. The Committee will be informed of the letter of intent.

21. ***CONSIDERATION OF ELIGIBILITY.*** An accrediting organization seeking recognition by CHEA demonstrates to the Committee that it meets CHEA's eligibility standards. The Committee will review an accrediting organization's documentation and consider whether such documentation satisfies eligibility standards.

22. The Committee will make its recommendation to the Board of Directors as to the eligibility of an accrediting organization and will notify the accrediting organization within thirty (30) days after the recommendation. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the notice will include a statement of the reasons for that recommendation and will identify the specific eligibility standards that the accrediting organization does not meet.

23. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should be considered eligible for CHEA recognition and the Board of Directors determines that the organization is eligible, the recognition process will proceed.

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24. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should **BE DEFERRED OR SHOULD** not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the accrediting organization may request that the Board of Directors review the recommendation of ineligibility. The accrediting organization must submit a request for review in writing to the President of CHEA within 30 days after receipt of notice of the Committee's recommendation. The request for review must address any alleged procedural errors in the recognition process and any alleged errors of fact or interpretation in the Committee's recommendation and include any additional information that addresses the concerns raised by the Committee. The Committee will cease the recognition process unless, after review by the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization is determined to be eligible for CHEA recognition. The Board of Directors will review the Committee's recommendation under the procedures described below at Paragraphs 34-40.

25. Before the Committee and the Board of Directors act on the accrediting organization's application for CHEA recognition, they will confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility for CHEA recognition.

26. **COSTS.** Applicant organizations will bear all fees and costs of the recognition review. These include a fee for the review, observation visit expenses, duplication, mailing, and all related costs.

27. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT.** Upon confirmation of eligibility and payment of the review fee, CHEA will make public through CHEA publications that the accrediting organization has requested a recognition review. The notice will be sent to the accrediting organization for publication. CHEA will also announce the date and location of the accrediting organization's public presentation to the Committee.

28. **SELF-EVALUATION.** A self-evaluation that demonstrates that the applicant meets the six standards set forth in Paragraph 12A through Paragraph 12F is required for CHEA recognition. CHEA will consider a range of processes for conducting the self-evaluation and for providing expected evidence.

29. **OBSERVATION VISITS.** The Committee will require that during the recognition review there be an observation visit to a decision-making meeting of the accrediting organization. The purposes of the visit are to observe the organization's decision-making activities as these relate to CHEA eligibility and recognition standards, and to report relevant information to the Committee.

Visitor(s), identified by CHEA staff and satisfactory to the Committee, will be chosen by CHEA in consultation with the accrediting organization. The accrediting organization will have the opportunity to review any visit report and attach comments. The full report of any visit, with comments, will be distributed to the Committee. Reports of observation visits are expected to be confidential to CHEA and the accrediting organization unless otherwise required by law.

30. **THIRD-PARTY COMMENT.** Third-party comment may be either oral or written and is limited to the accrediting organization's efforts to meet the CHEA recognition standards. All third parties requesting the opportunity to make comment related to an accrediting organization's recognition review are to notify CHEA staff and provide the names and affiliations of the persons requesting the opportunity to make third-party comment and a description of the organization(s) they represent. CHEA staff will review third-party requests for oral or written comment for completeness and applicability to eligibility and recognition standards.

Third parties who wish to appear for oral comment before the CHEA Committee on Recognition are to provide an outline of the proposed oral comment. Where in the judgment of the Committee doing so may be useful, the Committee may invite third parties to appear before the Committee. The accrediting organization will receive the outline of the proposed oral comment of third parties invited to appear. Accrediting organizations will have the opportunity to review and respond to proposed oral comment.

Third parties wishing to make written comment are to provide the text of the third-party comment. After review by CHEA staff, written comment will be provided to the Committee and the accrediting organization. Accrediting organizations will have the opportunity to review and respond to written comment.

Third parties are to provide an outline of their oral comment or the text of their written comment in sufficient time to provide for review by CHEA staff, review and response by the accrediting organization, and for the outline or text to be provided to the Committee.

CHEA staff will notify all concerned parties of the location, date, and time of the public presentation.

31. PUBLIC PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE. The Committee will hold a public meeting at which the accrediting organization, and, where applicable, third parties that have met the requirements of Paragraph 29 above may make oral presentations concerning the qualification of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition. Committee members may ask questions of the accrediting organization and third parties, who will have an opportunity to respond. If, in the judgment of the Committee, participation by observation visitors would be useful, the Committee may ask observation visitors to attend and respond to questions related to the visit report. The accrediting organization will have the opportunity to respond to any observation visitor comment. The Committee will make a transcript of the public meeting. The accrediting organization should ordinarily be represented by the executive officer of the accrediting unit and the chair of the decision-making body.

32. COMMITTEE ACTION ON APPLICATIONS FOR RECOGNITION OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. For applications for recognition, following the public presentation by the accrediting organization, the Committee will meet in executive session to confirm the continuing eligibility of the accrediting organization and consider the qualifications of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition based on the record before the Committee. For applications for change of recognized scope of accreditation, the Committee will review the application materials submitted by the accrediting organization. The Committee will take one of the following actions concerning the accrediting organization:

- A. recommend recognition or acceptance of change of recognized scope of accreditation of the accrediting organization;
- B. recommend recognition or acceptance of change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization with a requirement of one or more written reports to the Committee that address one or more of the CHEA recognition standards and, if pertinent, the change of CHEA recognized scope of accreditation procedures;
- C. recommend deferral of action on recognition or on change of recognized scope of accreditation pending receipt and review of, and action by CHEA on, additional information from the accrediting organization. The information required will be clearly specified by the Committee and related

to one or more of the six CHEA recognition standards, and, if pertinent, the CHEA change of recognized scope of accreditation. The deferral will be accompanied by deadlines for receipt of information and for a response by the Committee; or

- D. recommend denial of recognition or of change of recognized scope of accreditation, including reasons for the denial in accordance with applicable CHEA policy.

33. *WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE COMMITTEE.* The Committee will notify the accrediting organization of the Committee's recommendation related to the actions described in Paragraph 31, and provide the complete text of the Committee's recommendation, including a statement of the reasons for its recommendation. If an accrediting organization does not meet one or more of the recognition standards, the statement of reasons will identify the recognition standards that the accrediting organization does not meet and the reasons for that determination. If a change of recognized scope of accreditation is not recommended, the complete text of the Committee's recommendation, including the reasons for the recommendation, will be provided. Any suggestions for improvement or other commentary by the Committee will be distinguished from requirements for recognition under the CHEA recognition standards. Notification to the accrediting organization will be sent within thirty (30) days following the Committee meeting.

34. *ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION RESPONSE.* The accrediting organization will forward its written response to the CHEA office within thirty (30) days from receipt of the report. The response may:

- A. address any asserted procedural errors in the recognition process;
- B. address any asserted factual errors or errors of interpretation in the report; and
- C. include additional information that addresses concerns raised by the Committee.

35. *REVIEW BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS.* The Board of Directors will act on a recommendation of the Committee as to eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation by:

- A. accepting the recommendation;
- B. rejecting the recommendation;
- C. returning the matter to the Committee for further consideration; or
- D. taking such other action as the Board of Directors deems appropriate.

36. *PRESUMPTION OF REGULARITY.* In considering the eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization, the Board of Directors will consider the recommendation of the Committee, the response of the accrediting organization, and the record before the Committee. The Board of Directors

will presume that the factual findings of the Committee are accurate unless the accrediting organization demonstrates that a factual finding material to the Committee's recommendation is clearly erroneous based on the record before the Committee. If the accrediting organization wishes to provide additional information concerning any factual determinations of the Committee, the Board of Directors may return the matter to the Committee for further consideration.

37. ACTIONS TO ACCEPT OR DEFER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY, RECOGNITION, OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. The Board of Directors may accept or defer action on a recommendation of the Committee that an accrediting organization be deemed eligible, be recognized, or change its recognized scope of accreditation, without any further submission or appearance by the accrediting organization other than such submission or appearance as the Board may require to confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility.

38. ACTIONS TO DENY ELIGIBILITY, RECOGNITION, OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. The Board of Directors will not act on a recommendation of ineligibility, or non-recognition, or denial of change of recognized scope of accreditation or reject a recommendation of eligibility, of recognition, or of change of recognized scope of accreditation before providing the accrediting organization with notice and an opportunity to appear before the Board of Directors. The appearance of an accrediting organization will include an opportunity to present its written response to the recommendation of the Committee and any supplement to that response that the accrediting organization may wish to submit. At the request of the accrediting organization and with the concurrence of the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board of Directors. The accrediting organization may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board of Directors, but not to speak unless requested to do so by the Board of Directors.

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____ . AN ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION THAT HAS PREVIOUSLY SOUGHT CHEA RECOGNITION AND HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL CANNOT RE-APPLY UNTIL TWO FULL YEARS FROM THE DATE OF OFFICIAL DENIAL OF RECOGNITION BY THE CHEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

39. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Board of Directors will notify accrediting organizations of its action on the recommendations of the Committee as to eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation, within thirty (30) days after taking such action. If the Board of Directors recognizes an accrediting organization, the notice will specify the scope of the accrediting organization's recognition (including, where indicated, the geographic area, the types of higher education institutions or programs that the accrediting organization may accredit, and the degrees and certificates awarded by higher education institutions accredited by the accrediting organization) and the recognition period. If the action is to deny eligibility, recognition, or change of the recognized scope of accreditation of the accrediting organization, the notice will include a statement of the reasons for that action. The statement of reasons will identify the eligibility or recognition standards that the

accrediting organization does not meet, or the reasons that the change of recognized scope of accreditation is not accepted.

40. RECONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Within thirty (30) days following the action taken by the Board of Directors on a recommendation by the Committee, the accrediting organization may request, in writing, reconsideration by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will determine in its discretion whether reconsideration is warranted, and ordinarily will not reconsider a matter unless, in its judgment, the accrediting organization has demonstrated substantial reason to believe that there was plain and material error in the review, abuse of process, or both. In the event the Board of Directors reconsiders an action, the accrediting organization will be invited to submit a written statement of its position and will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board, and may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board of Directors, but not to speak unless requested to do so by the Board of Directors.

41. PUBLIC NOTICE. All decisions of the Board of Directors to recognize, not recognize, or defer recognition of an accrediting organization, including initial and continued recognition of accrediting organizations and change of recognized scope of accreditation, will be public information. CHEA will publish the action of the Board of Directors, including a summary of the reasons for these decisions.

42. WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION. CHEA may withdraw recognition of an accrediting organization for sufficient cause, including a determination by CHEA that the accrediting organization no longer meets the requirements for eligibility or the standards for recognition. CHEA will withdraw recognition in accordance with procedures deemed sufficient by CHEA to afford the accrediting organization appropriate notice and opportunity to respond.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

43. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. CHEA upholds the principle that members of the Committee, the Board of Directors, and consultants such as readers and observation site visitors (collectively, for purposes of this paragraph, "CHEA representatives") will be impartial and objective in considering the eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations.

- A. When there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest, CHEA expects its representatives to recuse themselves as a matter of personal and professional integrity from consideration of an accrediting organization. The CHEA representative will have primary responsibility for compliance with this policy.
- B. CHEA representatives will recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition where the CHEA representative receives monetary compensation from the accrediting

organization as an employee or consultant or otherwise, or holds a position of authority or governance role with the accrediting organization, such as commission member, director, or officer, whether paid or unpaid.

- C. In addressing conflicts of interest, CHEA representatives will take into account whether they (i) had in the recent past, or expect to have, a financial relationship or governance role with the accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition; (ii) are participating in an accreditation review by the applicant for CHEA recognition; (iii) have a financial relationship or governance role with an accrediting organization that is a direct competitor of an applicant for CHEA recognition; (iv) have or have expressed a predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition that would impair objectivity in the recognition process; (v) have a close relative with a pertinent relationship, role, or predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition; and (vi) other considerations they deem pertinent.
- D. In the event a CHEA representative, with respect to an apparent or actual conflict of interest, does not voluntarily recuse himself or herself, the Board of Directors may take such action as the Board of Directors considers appropriate.

44. **PERSONAL GAIN.** In the course of their CHEA service, CHEA representatives will observe high standards of personal integrity. For example, CHEA representatives will not solicit or accept, for themselves or any other person, gifts, gratuities, entertainment, loans, or other consideration from persons who are associated with an applicant for CHEA recognition, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of an applicant, or any other third party that the CHEA representative knows intends to comment on the applicant in the recognition review; provided that this paragraph does not bar acceptance of items of insubstantial value, consistent with personal integrity, in the ordinary course of service as a CHEA representative.

45. **COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY.** CHEA representatives will maintain the confidentiality of information pertaining to the recognition process. During the recognition process a CHEA representative will not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for CHEA recognition with the applicant, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of the applicant, or any other third party that intends to comment on the applicant, except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the CHEA representative in the recognition review. CHEA representatives will refer inquiries concerning the recognition process to CHEA staff. CHEA will communicate the results of the recognition review to the applicant and the public as provided in Paragraphs 38 and 40.

46. **AMENDMENT.** CHEA reserves the right to amend this *Recognition Policy and Procedures* from time to time when, in its judgment, the interests of sound and reliable accreditation, recognition of accreditors, or CHEA administration are served by doing so.

Appendix A

Accreditation Defined

Accreditation in higher education is defined as a collegial process based on self- and peer assessment for public accountability and improvement of academic quality. Peers assess the quality of an institution or academic program and assist the faculty and staff in improvement. An accreditation of an academic program or an entire institution typically involves three major activities:

- The faculty, administrators, and staff of the institution or academic program conduct a self-study using the accrediting organization's set of expectations about quality (standards, criteria) as their guide.
- A team of peers, selected by the accrediting organization, reviews the evidence, visits the campus to interview the faculty and staff, and writes a report of its assessment, including a recommendation to the commission of the accrediting organization (group of peer faculty and staff, professionals, and public members).
- Guided by a set of expectations about quality and integrity, the commission reviews the evidence and recommendation, makes a judgment, and communicates the decision to the institution and other constituencies if appropriate.

Accreditation is an integral part of our system of higher education. Our system consists of both public and private institutions with a wide range of types of missions, from national research universities and regional comprehensive institutions to liberal arts colleges and very small faith-related colleges to community colleges and vocational institutions. The genius of this system is that, unlike other countries, we do not have mandatory national curricula for colleges; we do not have a national ministry of education that regulates academic standards; and students are free to choose the type of education that they pursue, depending on their ability, financial resources, and educational goals. Because it developed from this diverse set of institutions, accreditation is a flexible and adaptive process. Institutions that seek accreditation can do so from a wide range of accrediting organizations – from national bodies that are oriented to a particular type of institution, to regional organizations that encompass a wide range of types of institutions, to specialized organizations that focus on a single discipline or profession.

Appendix B

Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy¹

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.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) invites participation by degree-granting institutions of higher education that are accredited by a CHEA-recognized accreditation organization.

The goals of CHEA recognition are to advance quality assurance through accreditation to serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers. All eligible organizations must meet the general standards enunciated in this recognition process. The recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accreditation organizations in assuring the academic quality of institutions and programs through standards, policies, and procedures that address appropriate rigor, degree nomenclature, and at the undergraduate level, a general education program designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and at all levels, advanced intellectual inquiry.

Recognition will be determined in accordance with established standards and rules of good practice that ensure fair treatment, promotion and maintenance of academic quality, and respect for institutional autonomy.

Organizations that accredit institutions will be eligible to apply for recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation if the majority of their accredited institutions are degree-granting. Organizations that accredit programs will be eligible to apply for recognition by CHEA if the majority of the accredited programs are degree-granting. An accreditation organization is responsible for providing assurance of the percentage of degree-granting units within its constituency and demonstrating its general support with the goals of CHEA recognition.*

¹ In pursuit of its mission to advance higher education, and in light of knowledge and experience, CHEA reserves the right to amend the foregoing and/or grant recognition to such accrediting entities that in CHEA's judgment warrant such recognition.

*Policy approved by the CHEA Board of Directors on May 12, 1997.

Appendix C

Steps in Recognition Review

The sequence of recognition review will normally be as follows:

- Accrediting organization files letter of intent and review fee to apply for CHEA recognition.
- CHEA sends accrediting organization recognition review materials.
- Accrediting organization returns eligibility portion of application to CHEA.
- Committee makes recommendation on eligibility for Board of Directors' consideration and notifies accrediting organization.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation on eligibility and, if indicated by CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*, provides accrediting organization with opportunity to appear before the Board.
- CHEA and accrediting organization mutually agree on visitor(s) and schedule for observation visit to be carried out during the recognition review.
- Accrediting organization completes recognition self-evaluation and forwards to CHEA staff. If requested by the accrediting organization, CHEA staff will provide consultation.
- Observation visit reports are due in CHEA office and forwarded to accrediting organization for comment.
- Third party comment, if any, is due in CHEA office and forwarded for comment to accrediting organization as indicated by CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*.
- Accrediting organization's response to observation visit reports and third-party comment is due in CHEA office. Accrediting organization response and recognition self-evaluation are forwarded to Committee.
- Accrediting organization makes public presentation to Committee, Committee sends recommendation on recognition to Board of Directors, and Committee notifies accrediting organization of recommendation.
- Accrediting organization response, if any, is due to Committee.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation and, if necessary, provides accrediting organization opportunity to appear before the Board.
- Board of Directors reconsiders recognition, if requested.

In developing the schedule, CHEA staff will make reasonable accommodations for the accrediting organization's internal review procedures pertinent to the recognition process.

Appendix D

Glossary for CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures

Note to all Users: This Glossary defines key terms in the CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures. The definitions apply only to the Recognition Policy and Procedures and are not intended for use with any other statement or policy.

Academic Quality: The results associated with teaching, learning, research, and service within the context of institutional or program mission.

Accountability: The responsibility of an accrediting organization to have standards, policies, or procedures that institutions and programs provide information to the public about academic quality and student achievement and for the accrediting organization to provide information about accreditation processes and results.

Accreditation: A collegial process based on self- and peer review for quality assurance, accountability, and improvement of academic quality in higher education.

Accreditation Status: The decision made by the accrediting organization as a result of a review of an institution or program that identifies the level of accreditation of the institution or program, e.g., candidate, accredited, denial, probation, termination, withdrawal, suspension.

Accrediting Organization: A private, non-governmental association organized to evaluate institutions or programs and render judgments about the accredited status of the institution or program.

Change of Recognized Scope of Accreditation: A change in the range of accreditation activities, e.g., type of program or institution, geography, level of degrees, by a CHEA-recognized accrediting organization where the organization has completed the CHEA change of scope process.

Committee Action: Recommendations about eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation made by the CHEA Committee on Recognition to the CHEA Board of Directors.

Conflict of Interest Policy: CHEA's procedures to provide that its representatives are impartial and objective in considering the eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations.

Deferral: Decision to postpone action on an eligibility, recognition, or change of scope application until receipt of additional information.

Eligibility Standards: Requirements set by CHEA that an accrediting organization must meet in order to be considered for recognition.

Favorable Action: Approval of CHEA eligibility, recognition or change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization as determined by the CHEA Board of Directors.

Letter of Intent: Formal statement submitted by the chief executive officer of an accrediting organization to CHEA stating interest in pursuing eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation.

Non-governmental: The status of an accrediting organization as a privately incorporated organization.

Observation Visit: A visit by CHEA representatives to a meeting of an accrediting organization decision-making body during a recognition review.

Recognition: The status granted by the CHEA Board of Directors after an accrediting organization successfully completes the CHEA recognition review process.

Recognition Standards: The basis on which CHEA considers an application for recognition and renders its decision.

Reconsideration: Review by the CHEA Board of Directors of its decision to deny or remove eligibility or recognition.

Self-Evaluation: The accrediting organization's review of its accrediting activities in relation to the CHEA eligibility and recognition standards during its recognition review.

Student Achievement: Student performance as determined by an institution or program in keeping with the institution or program mission.

Third-Party Comment: Oral or written statements of parties (other than CHEA and the applicant) seeking to address an accrediting organization's efforts to meet CHEA's recognition standards.

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