State Uses of Institutional Accreditation: Results of a Fifty-State Inventory

Peter Ewell
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

CHEA Annual Conference
Washington, DC
January 26, 2010
Background to the Inventory


- Scope Limited to Institutional Accreditation (Mostly) Despite Knowledge that Programmatic Accreditation Frequently Plays a Role in Licensing Individuals to Practice a Profession

- Methodology: SHEEO Contact to Identify Relevant Agencies → Web Scan → Writeup → Verification
Agencies that Authorize Institutions to Operate

- Agencies Identified in 49 States
- 15 States Have More than One Agency (One has 3)
- SHEEO Agency is the Only or One of Several Agencies Involved in All but 14 States
- Some Institutional Sectors Not Authorized or Regulated (and Some are Banned)
What Do State Agencies Do and What Do They Call It?

- 6 States Say they “Accredit” Institutions, 14 “Approve,”
  4 “Authorize, 3 “Certify,” 1 “Oversees,” 1 “Registers,”
and the Remainder “License”
Does the State “Accredit” Institutions?

Legend
- Green: Yes
- Orange: No
- White: N/A
Does the State “Recognize” Accreditors?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- N/A
What Do State Agencies Do and What Do They Call It?

- 6 States Say they “Accredit” Institutions, 14 “Approve,” 4 “Authorize, 3 “Certify,” 1 “Oversees,” 1 “Registers,” and the Remainder “License”

- States that Say they “Accredit” Behave Like Non-Governmental Accreditors, but the Conduct and Time Between Re-Reviews Vary

- Only One of these Agencies is a USDOE-Recognized Accreditor (Regents of the University of the State of New York)
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Authorization

- 21 States Require Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited in Order to be Authorized, 10 More Only for Degree-Granting Institutions, 2 More for Vocational
Is Accreditation Needed for License?

Legend
- Green: Yes
- Orange: No
- Yellow: Degree Only
- Light Green: Vocation Only
- Light Blue: Out-of-State Only
- White: N/A
Is Accreditation Needed to Operate?
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Authorization

- 21 States Require Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited in Order to be Authorized, 10 More Only for Degree-Granting Institutions, 2 More for Vocational

- Requirements Sometimes Differ by Sector

- Varying Rules on How Long a Candidate Institution Can Operate While It Seeks Accreditation

- All but 5 States Require the Accreditor to be USDOE Recognized, 9 Either USDOE or CHEA, and 9 Require Both
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Authorization

- 21 States Require New Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited in Order to Authorized, 11 More Only for be Degree-Granting Institutions
Is Accreditation Required for New Non-Public Institutions?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Degree Only
- N/A
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Authorization

- 21 States Require New Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited in Order to Authorized, 11 More Only for Degree-Granting Institutions

- All But 6 States Require Out-of-States to Be Accredited to Operate in the State, But They Sometimes Require Additional State Agency Review
Is Accreditation Required for Out-of-State Institutions?

Legend:
- Green: Yes
- Orange: No
- Light Green: Degree Only
- White: N/A
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Authorization

- 21 States Require New Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited in Order to Authorized, 11 More Only for be Degree-Granting Institutions

- All But 6 States Require Out-of-States to Be Accredited to Operate in the State, But They Sometimes Require Additional State Agency Review

- Public Institutions are Authorized to Operate by their Charters, but Most Have Additional Regulations or Statutes Requiring them to be Accredited
Accreditor Can Be Recognized by Either USDOE or CHEA

Legend
- Yes
- No
- N/A
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Other State Activities

- 28 States Require Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited to Receive State Funds, 7 Have No Linkage, 6 Report that It Depends on the Funding Program… the Rest Do Not Provide State Funds to Non-Public Institutions at All
Is Accreditation Required for Institution to Access State Funds?

Legend:
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Depends**
- **N/A**
Relationship Between Institutional Accreditation and Other State Activities

- 28 States Require Non-Public Institutions to be Accredited to Receive State Funds, 7 Have No Linkage, 6 Report that It Depends on the Funding Program…the Rest Do Not Provide State Funds to Non-Public Institutions at All

- 16 States Have Transfer Policies Affecting All Institutions, Half of Which Require Accreditation

- 22 States Have Transfer Policies Affecting Only Public Institutions, None of Which Require Accreditation

- 5 States Require Programmatic Accreditation for Credits to Transfer in Accreditable Disciplines
Type of State Transfer Policy

Legend:
- **Statewide**
- **Publics Only**
- **Institution Decides**
Is Accreditation Required by Policy for Credits to Transfer?

Legend:
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Regional**
- **Specialized**
- **Yes + Specialized**
- **Regional + Specialized**
**State Use of Specialized Accreditation**

- Agencies Included in the Inventory for the Most Part Not Involved in Decisions About Individual Licensure to Practice

- Nevertheless, Most Respondents Report that They Believe There Is a Linkage in Regulated Professions

- Specialized Accreditation Required for Single-Discipline Institutions in an Accreditable Discipline to Be Authorized to Operate in 5 States

- 5 States Require Programmatic Accreditation for Credits to Transfer in Accreditable Disciplines
Conclusions

- There is huge variation in practice regarding how states use accreditation in authorization and policy.

- This probably impedes efficient operations for the National “System” of Quality Assurance and likely confuses the public.

- More study and discussion of this situation and its impacts are warranted.

- CHEA [and SHEEO] are in a good position to coordinate next steps.