

# Council for Higher Education

## Accreditation... *Strengthening higher education through strengthening accreditation*

*The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a private, nonprofit national organization that coordinates accreditation activity in the United States.*

### CHEA At•A•Glance

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- Largest institutional higher education membership organization in the United States with approximately 3,000 colleges and universities.
- More than 60 participating national, regional, and specialized accrediting organizations.
- Governed by a 17-person board of college and university presidents, institutional representatives, and public members.

### CHEA Purposes

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#### Advocacy

- Primary national voice for voluntary accreditation and quality assurance to U.S. Congress and U.S. Department of Education.
- Primary national voice for voluntary accreditation to the general public, opinion leaders, students, and families.
- A representative of U.S. accreditation community to international audiences.

#### Service

- National leader in identifying and articulating emerging issues in quality assurance.
- National forum to address issues of mutual interest and concern in voluntary accreditation.
- Authoritative source of data and information about regional, national, and specialized accreditors.
- Projects and initiatives to strengthen accreditation.
- Conferences and meetings.
- Mediation and dispute-resolution service.
- Good Practices Database.

#### Recognition

Recognition is the scrutiny and certification of the quality of regional, national, and specialized accrediting organizations. CHEA is the only nongovernmental higher education organization that undertakes this scrutiny. The federal government, through the U.S. Department of Education, conducts governmental recognition reviews.

### Council for Higher Education Accreditation

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# CHEA

## CHEA Recognition Standards\*

- *Advance academic quality.* Accreditors are required to have a clear definition of quality and clear expectations that the institutions or programs they accredit have process to determine whether quality standards are being met.
- *Demonstrate accountability.* Accreditors are required to have standards that call for institutions and programs to provide consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement to foster continuing public confidence and investment.
- *Encourage purposeful change and needed improvement.* Accreditors are required to encourage planning for purposeful change and scrutiny for needed improvement through ongoing self-examination in institutions and programs.
- *Employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making.* Accreditors are required to maintain appropriate and fair organizational policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances.
- *Continually reassess accreditation practices.* Accreditors are required to undertake self-scrutiny of their accrediting activities.

## United States Accreditation

Accreditation in higher education is a collegial process of self-review and peer review for improvement of academic quality and public accountability of institutions and programs. This quality review process occurs on a periodic basis, usually every three to 10 years. Typically, it involves three major activities:

- A self-evaluation by an institution or program using the standards or criteria of an accrediting organization
- A peer review of an institution or program to gather evidence of quality.
- A decision or judgment by an accrediting organization to accredit, accredit with conditions, or not accredit an institution/program.

## CHEA Principles

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CHEA's commitment to the coordination and improvement of quality review is based on seven principles. These principles provide the foundation for the CHEA mission statement, the organizational functions described in the CHEA Bylaws, and the CHEA Recognition Policy .

- *Quality Assurance.* CHEA will apply its recognition standards and sustain ongoing review of its participating accrediting organizations to assure high quality of organizational performance.
- *Leadership.* CHEA will provide thoughtful leadership to formulate issues related to quality assurance; to develop needed tools and strategies to sustain the value of quality assurance to institutions, accreditors, and students; and to advance change and needed improvement in quality assurance in higher education.
- *Advocacy.* CHEA will be a forceful and articulate advocate for voluntary accreditation of higher education to the public, government, and other interested individuals, groups, and countries.
- *Service.* CHEA will consistently provide high-quality research, policy analysis, and service to its member institutions, accrediting organizations, students, and the public.
- *Core Values.* CHEA will maintain the core academic values central to higher education and quality assurance. These include, for example, the values of general education, collegiality, and academic freedom.
- *Independence.* CHEA will be an independent and authoritative voice for the strengthening of accreditation to strengthen higher education
- *Inclusion.* CHEA will sustain an environment of active consultation and participation among its member institutions and participating organizations, as well as encourage cooperation and exchange throughout the higher education and quality assurance communities.

*(Adopted by CHEA Board of Directors, January 2000)*

\*This language illustrates the recognition standards and is not the full or official policy statement. Please consult the CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org) for the formal policy language that is used in CHEA recognition reviews.