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**PRESS CONTACT:** Richard Porter, CHEA  
202.955.6126

## **CHEA Board Issues Resolution Of Support; Reiterates Alternative To Department Of Education Mandates Concerning Accreditation And Learning Outcomes**

**Washington** — At its regularly scheduled spring board and annual meeting held in Washington, the Board of Directors of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) today issued a resolution supporting the actions of its President, Judith Eaton, at the latest U.S. Department of Education negotiated rulemaking session, which was held last week. At that session, Eaton dissented to a proposal concerning making transfer of credit subject to federal regulatory control, rather than institutional authority, and was also a dissenter to a proposal that would require accreditors – instead of the institutions themselves – to be responsible for setting “brightline indicators,” that must be approved by the Department of Education and would be used to judge what counts as successful institutional performance.

The board also reiterated CHEA’s long-standing commitment to place the responsibility for student learning outcomes in the hands of the individual institutions, working with accreditors. The current negotiated rulemaking sessions threaten this successful institution-accreditor relationship, that has helped to make the U.S. higher education system a model for the world.

“An important and delicate balance is shifting. In an ideal world, accreditation standards are the product of consultation between institutions and the accrediting organizations that institutions have created. Institutions agree that these standards will be used for judgments about institutional quality. The proposed rules upend this ideal world by asserting that accreditation standards, however determined, must meet the test of federal acceptance—thereby federalizing accreditation,” said Eaton.

Specifically, from CHEA’s perspective, the proposed rules would:

- Establish the federal advisory committee as a “Ministry of Quality” with comprehensive authority to judge academic programs and disciplines on campuses throughout the country.
- Position accrediting organizations as government contractors imposing government standards of quality.
- Insist on a “one-size-fits-all,” bureaucratic approach to quality that ignores the diverse missions of institutions and sets tangible benefits of a collegiate experience as the primary indicator of higher education effectiveness.
- Constitute an unprecedented federal usurpation of authority to make academic judgments – heretofore the province of colleges and universities.

## **2 – 2 – 2 CHEA Board Issues Resolution, Cont'd.**

Over the past five years, CHEA has published 13 papers, advisories and commentaries that provide suggestions and tools to address student learning outcomes and institutional performance. The recommendations would both satisfy calls for institutional accountability and preserve the institution – accreditor relationship.

CHEA calls on institutions and programs to:

- Routinely provide students and prospective students with information about student learning outcomes and institutional and program performance in terms of these outcomes.
- Regularly report aggregate information about student learning outcomes to external constituents.
- Supplement this information with additional evidence about the soundness of institutional and program operations and overall effectiveness with respect to mission fulfillment, as well as concrete evidence of how they benefit students in other ways.

CHEA calls on accrediting organizations to:

- Establish standards, policies and review processes that visibly and clearly expect institutions and programs to discharge the above responsibilities with respect to public communication about student learning outcomes.
- Clearly communicate to accreditation's constituents the fact that accredited status signifies that student achievement levels are appropriate and acceptable.
- Provide information about specific proficiencies or deficiencies in aggregate student academic performance, if these played a role in an accreditation action or decision about an institution or program.

The board agrees that there is a legitimate federal interest in higher education effectiveness and accountability, but this does not require federal intervention in the institution – accreditor relationship. To view the resolution, go to [http://www.chea.org/pdf/CHEA\\_board\\_of\\_directors\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.chea.org/pdf/CHEA_board_of_directors_resolution.pdf). For more information on CHEA's proposals concerning outcomes, read *Accreditation and Accountability: A CHEA Special Report*, which is located at [http://www.chea.org/pdf/accreditation\\_and\\_accountability.pdf](http://www.chea.org/pdf/accreditation_and_accountability.pdf).

### **About CHEA:**

*A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. For more information, visit CHEA's Web site at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).*