
“I consider my service to accreditation an integral part of my role as a responsible member of the higher education community.”

—a president interviewed as part of the Presidents Project

Accreditation is not about appearances or prestige—it is about institutional or program quality review and improvement.

Presidents have primary responsibility to preserve self-regulation through ongoing explanation and defense of the system.

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.

CHEA Mission Statement, 1996

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.



CHEA

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

One Dupont Circle, NW • Suite 510
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 202-955-6126 • Fax: 202-955-6129

E-mail: chea@chea.org • URL: www.chea.org



Council for
Higher Education
Accreditation

Presidential Leadership

Presidential
Guidelines
Series, Vol. 2

CHEA[®]

This Guideline focuses on the crucial leadership that presidents play in accreditation: why accreditation needs this leadership and suggestions for providing such leadership on campus, at the state and regional level, nationally and internationally.

Why We Need Presidential Involvement And Leadership...

- *Presidents' and chancellors' commitment to accreditation as a means of institutional improvement has a great effect on the success of the process.* An executive investment enhances the thoroughness and effectiveness of the self-review because it strongly influences the attitude and involvement of faculty and staff who are essential to the process.
- *Knowledgeable and involved presidents and chancellors have primary responsibility to preserve self-regulation through ongoing explanation and defense of the system.* Our U.S. system of self-regulation is unique in the world because it is a process that is owned and operated by the institutions and their leaders, not by a federal ministry of education. However, despite its advantages and perhaps because it is mysterious to some, our system of voluntary peer review is not infrequently challenged from some quarter or other, and such challenges must be addressed by those who know the system best.
- *Presidential engagement in accrediting organizations is essential, including policy making and review and revision of standards and procedures.* Accrediting organizations also need presidential participation on site visit teams and the commissions that make accrediting decisions. As one president recently said, "I consider my service to accreditation an integral part of my role as a responsible member of the higher education community."

Leadership On Campus – How You Can Provide It...

- First and foremost, *make the process a kind of partnership between the institution or program and the accrediting organization.* In order to gain the most from the investment of time and effort required by the process, know what your and the institution's expectations are.
- *Be an advocate* for accreditation in speeches or messages to faculty and staff in preparation for an upcoming review, emphasizing what the process can do for the institution. Fit accreditation into your agenda, and challenge the faculty to take accountability for student learning outcomes seriously.
- *Take an active role*, along with the provost or academic dean, in organizing the self-study and in establishing and charging the committees. As the self-study progresses, make time to meet occasionally with the committees. It is not necessary for a president or chancellor to be involved in every detail of the process, but the campus leader needs to make his/her leadership felt.
- *Encourage active participation* in the process of as many faculty members as possible. Involve appropriate staff members also, and include student representation. The success of the accreditation process in quality improvement is often dependent upon "buy-in" from faculty and staff, which in turn is dependent upon their opportunity to be engaged in the process.
- Accreditation is not about appearances or prestige—it is about institutional or program quality review and improvement. *Encourage all participants to be honest and thorough in their self-appraisal of the institution or program.* Encourage them to find the weak spots and to begin to address them before the site visit team arrives on campus.

- *Involve your governing board and members of the community* in the process, to the extent possible. Trustees and community members will be honored to be invited, they will learn a great deal about the institution, and they can add significantly to the process by bringing an "outside" voice.
- *Make it clear that you will follow up* on the findings of the self-study, the site visit team and the accrediting commission in order to take full advantage of the process.

Involvement and Leadership Regionally and Nationally

- *Be informed about national issues involving accreditation* and speak out with your views. Be critical where appropriate, but constructively so.
 - *Understand that decision makers in state and federal governments will be more influenced on educational policy matters by college and university presidents than any other group*, especially if they are convinced that you are sincere about recognizing shortcomings and addressing them in a timely fashion.
 - *Be prepared to articulate the values of a quality assurance system that also aims to improve institutions and that is conducted by peers*—educators and professional practitioners who not only have the best insight into what represents educational quality but who also have interest in advancing the disciplines to keep up with technological progress and societal expectations.
 - *Volunteer for service on site visit teams and accrediting commissions.* You will not only give important and much-needed service but you can expect to learn a great deal from such participation.
-