

CHEA

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

CHEA seeks ideas and suggestions on this draft effort to describe effective practices in accreditation when addressing student achievement. The draft will be revised based on the responses and shared with the higher education and accreditation communities.

Please click the link at the end of the document to offer your comments.

The deadline is November 20, 2009.

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF ACCREDITATION IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT*

Student achievement in higher education is a major national and international interest and concern. The academic and accreditation communities, the federal government, state governments and employers in the United States as well as organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have all identified major gains in student achievement as essential to the future of nations, the well-being of societies and the world economy. This statement describes valuable practices associated with the role of accreditation in addressing student achievement as part of self-regulation and peer/professional review of higher education quality.

Background

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has focused on the role of accreditation in student achievement since the publication of its 2001 [Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: A Proposed Point of Departure](#). Student achievement has remained central to CHEA research and policy analysis, as well as interviews and surveys with member institutions, conferences and meetings, the [CHEA Award for Outstanding Institutional Practice in Student Learning Outcomes](#) and ongoing scrutiny of the standards and practices of accrediting organizations that have achieved CHEA recognition. CHEA, in addition to its own activities, has been part of many national and international conversations, working with colleagues to identify solutions and build consensus about moving forward with student achievement.

Institutional and programmatic accreditation are central to undertakings to address student achievement. Accreditation reflects the academic community's longstanding commitment to assessment as part of robust self-regulation and peer/professional review of higher education quality. CHEA scrutiny of accrediting organizations (recognition) reflects an expectation that accrediting organizations focus on student achievement as fundamental to judgment about academic quality.

The federal government, in its oversight role of accrediting organizations (federal recognition), expects that accreditation will robustly address student achievement. State emphasis on performance funding, including considerable attention to student achievement, has reinforced the work of accreditation. The private sector, e.g., employers or foundations, expects accredited status to signal confidence in the work of an institution or program as this relates to what students learn.

As accreditation plays a vital role in addressing student achievement, the following practices emerge as especially effective in driving this important work. These practices are reflected in the activities of many accrediting organizations that are successful in their efforts with student achievement with institutions and programs. This does not mean that all accreditors employ all practices.

Effective Practices: The Role of Accreditation in Student Achievement

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Accreditation plays an effective role in addressing student achievement when:

1. *(Partnership)* Accrediting organizations are key partners as institutions and programs address student achievement, assisting as college and university leaders establish goals for student achievement, collect evidence of student achievement and make judgments about their effectiveness.
2. *(Peer/Professional Review)* Accreditation focuses the strength of its peer/professional review on addressing student achievement, offering institutions and programs valuable advice on quality improvement from colleagues in the academic community and from the public.
3. *(Clear Accreditation Standards and Policies)* Accreditation standards and policies provide clear expectations that serve as useful and important means to help organize and clarify the work of colleges and universities on student achievement.
4. *(Informing the Public)* Accrediting organizations work with institutions and programs to provide the public with easily accessible, understandable and comprehensive information about student achievement, assisting colleges and universities to meet accountability expectations.
5. *(Engagement)* Accrediting organizations acknowledge, as they deem appropriate in the context of accreditation review, the results of institutional participation in national student achievement initiatives such as the Essential Outcomes of AAC&U, U-CAN, VSA, CLA, NSSE – aiding institutional leadership in moving forward.**
6. *(Role of Faculty)* Accrediting organizations work to broaden faculty participation in accreditation review, especially as this relates to deciding and judging goals and evidence for student achievement.
7. *(Strengthen Student Attainment)* Accrediting organizations, working with institutions and programs, acknowledge and focus attention on the challenges associated with strengthening student attainment nationally and internationally.
8. *(Exploring Change)* Accrediting organizations are open to exploration of new or alternative approaches to student achievement such as common standards and inter-institutional cooperation and comparisons.

* *This discussion of effective practices is not part of the CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures' standards for CHEA recognition.*

** *The Essential Outcomes of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities' University-College Accountability Network, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities' Voluntary System of Accountability, the Council for Aid to Education's Collegiate Learning Assessment and the National Survey of Student Engagement.*

Click [here](#) for comment form.



One Dupont Circle NW • Suite 510
Washington DC 20036-1135
(tel) 202-955-6126
(fax) 202-955-6129
chea@chea.org