CHEA Workshop on Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes

Peter Ewell
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)
Background on the Issue: What’s Pushing This Issue?

- Increased Emphasis from DOE

- Escalating Stakeholder Interest (Citizens, Employers, Students)

- New Kinds of Institutions and Programs
The Challenge to Accrediting Bodies: What is Needed?

- Coherent and Understandable Way to Explain Our Position(s)

- A Language to Communicate About the Issue Inside the Community

- Common Resources for Agencies and Institutions
A Taxonomy of Terms Commonly Used in Connection with the “Assessment” of Student Learning Outcomes

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Exercise 1: Types of Evidence

- Rate Each Example of Evidence in Terms of its Appropriateness to Demonstrating the Quality of Student Learning Outcomes

- Comment Briefly Why You Rated the Item as You Did

- Review Your Ratings/Comments with Your Group
Sources of Evidence: Direct Assessment

- “Capstone” Performances
- Professional/Clinical Performance
- Third-Party Testing (e.g., Licensure)
- Faculty-Designed Examinations
Sources of Evidence: Indirect Assessment

- Portfolios and Work Samples
- Follow-Up of Graduates
- Employer Ratings of Performance
- Self-Reported Growth by Graduates
Four Principles for Judging Evidence

- **Comprehensiveness**: Submitted evidence should cover knowledge and skills taught throughout course or program.
- **Multiple Judgments**: Submitted evidence should involve more than one source or involve multiple judgments of student performance.
- **Multiple Dimensions**: Submitted evidence should provide information on multiple dimensions of student performance—i.e., they should yield more than single summative grade.
- **Directness**: Submitted evidence should involve at least one type based on direct observation or demonstration of student capacities—i.e., they should involve more than simply a self-report.
General Characteristics of Good Evidence

- Relevant
- Verifiable
- Representative
- Cumulative
- Actionable
Dimensions of Policy Choice

- **Prescription of Outcomes**: The extent to which an accreditor specifies particular learning outcomes

- **Unit of Analysis**: The extent to which an accreditor is concerned about either individual student attainment or overall program effectiveness

- **Focus of Review**: The extent to which an accreditor examines direct evidence of student achievement or the adequacy of the processes used to assure particular levels of student attainment
Three Dimensions of Policy Change

- Complete Institutional Discretion
- Prescription of Outcomes
- Outcomes Dictated by Accreditor

- Competency Attainment for Individuals
- Unit of Analysis
- Overall Program/Institutional Effectiveness

- Processes for Quality Assurance
- Focus of Review
- Direct Evidence of Student Achievement
Program Assessment

- Complete Institutional Discretion
- Competency Attainment for Individuals
- Processes for Quality Assurance

Prescription of Outcomes

Unit of Analysis

Focus of Review

Direct Evidence of Student Achievement

Outcomes Dictated by Accreditor

Overall Program/Institutional Effectiveness
Academic Audit

- Complete Institutional Discretion
- Competency Attainment for Individuals
- Processes for Quality Assurance

 Prescription of Outcomes

 Unit of Analysis

 Focus of Review

 Outcomes Dictated by Accradiator

 Overall Program/Institutional Effectiveness

 Direct Evidence of Student Achievement
Auditing Academic Standards

- Complete Institutional Discretion
- Prescription of Outcomes
- Outcomes Dictated by Accrider
- Competency Attainment for Individuals
- Unit of Analysis
- Overall Program/Institutional Effectiveness
- Processes for Quality Assurance
- Focus of Review
- Direct Evidence of Student Achievement
Third-Party Certification

- Complete Institutional Discretion
- Competency Attainment for Individuals
- Processes for Quality Assurance

Prescription of Outcomes
- Unit of Analysis
  - Focus of Review
  - Direct Evidence of Student Achievement
  - Overall Program/Institutional Effectiveness
- Outcomes Dictated by Accradiator
Exercise 2: Policy Choices

- Sketch Your Organization’s Current “Policy Profile” Regarding Student Learning Outcomes Now and in Five Years

- What are the Implications of These Choices?

- Review Your Answers with Your Group
Some Enduring Issues

- What is Acceptable Evidence of Student Learning?
- Should Accreditors Assess Student Growth or Only Outcomes Attained?
- What Relative Weight Should an Accreditor Place on Outcomes?
- How Much Should Accreditors Look at the Use of Results for Improvement?
- How Much Should Accreditors Emphasize Faculty Involvement?
Next Steps

■ What Might Promote a More Proactive Collective Position for Accreditors on this Issue?

■ What Resources Need to be Developed (and for whom)?

■ What Can CHEA do to Help?