

# **COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION**

## **STATEMENT ON GOOD PRACTICES AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CREATION AND APPLICATION OF SPECIALIZED ACCREDITATION STANDARDS\***

September 2001

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### ***Preamble***

This statement provides a foundation for institutions and accreditors as they develop and apply specialized accreditation standards. It is addressed to presidents, provosts and accreditors as they work together to sustain and enhance quality in higher education while preserving institutional flexibility and creativity in a time of significant change.

Two competing issues increasingly define the environment of higher education decision-making at colleges and universities and potentially undermine the stability and governability of institutions: (1) long-term, structural constraints on the availability of funding that are forcing institutions to make difficult choices about priorities for investment in programs and services and (2) persistent demands of the public, students and employers for expansion of the size and diversity of programs and services.

Both of these institutional issues present a challenge to specialized accreditors whose responsibility is to vigorously assure high quality in the programs and schools they review and, when specialized accreditors review single purpose institutions, these operations as well. In this context, accreditors must focus even more intently on the broader institutional context in which the programs and schools they accredit operate and presidents and provosts must affirm their commitment to the role of specialized accreditation in assuring quality in their institutions.

### ***Principles***

The principles are intended to provide guidance to accreditors, members of accrediting commissions, provosts and presidents as they develop and apply specialized accreditation standards. They establish a framework of expectations about how standards will be used in accreditation reviews.

*Principle 1 (Educational Outcomes).* Standards should be designed to produce desired or needed educational outcomes for a profession and should refer to resources only to the extent required for graduates to emerge from programs intellectually prepared for their professional lives.

*Principle 2 (Public Expectations).* Standards are to reflect consideration of public expectations of a profession within the context of an ongoing commitment to quality.

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\*This statement is not part of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation *Recognition Policy and Procedures*.

**Statement (con't)**

*Principle 3 (Institutional Commitment and Partnership).* Accreditors will apply their standards with an awareness that the accredited program or school functions within the broader purposes of the institution. Standards will focus on educational quality while respecting an institution's responsibility to set priorities and control how the institution is structured and operates.

*Principle 4 (Requirements).* Standards are to clearly identify what is required of programs and schools as distinct from what might be desirable for these operations.

*Principle 5 (Consistency).* Standards are to be applied consistently across institutions while respecting institutional purposes and mission.

*Principle 6 (Accreditation, Law and Public Policy).* Standards that address issues of law or public policy must show that the issue contributes to effective student outcomes. Institutions must inform accreditors of any potential conflict between a standard and state or local laws. Institutions normally may not be held to individual accrediting standards for which such conflicts exist.

*Principle 7 (Scope of Standards).* Standards are to focus on programs or schools currently under review and not to extend to courses or other programs offered by an institution.

*Principle 8 (Information to the Public).* Institutions are to be explicit about programs and schools that have accredited status in an effort to protect the public against misinterpretation about non-accredited programs and schools.

*Principle 9 (Organizational Structure, Resources and Program Personnel).* Standards and the application of standards that address structure, resources and program personnel are to enable institutions, schools and programs to be creative and diverse in determining how to organize themselves structurally, how best to use their resources and what personnel and other policies and procedures are needed to achieve student learning outcomes. Such standards are appropriate only if they impact the adequate preparation of students to practice in a particular field.

*Principle 10 (Institutional Responsibility).* Institutions are responsible for active participation in the development of standards of an accrediting organization, including responses to calls for comment by accreditors as standards are modified or introduced and, as requested, service on panels developing standards.

*Approved by CHEA Board of Directors September 25, 2001*