Alternative Approaches to Quality Assurance in U.S. Higher Education
Problems

- Quality isn’t assured
- Consumers are harmed
- Barrier
  - To innovation
  - To entry
- Different types of institutions but one (or two) type of accreditation
- Binary nature of accreditation
Problem: Outcomes aren’t improving
On-time graduation rates at public 4-year colleges

[Graph showing trends from 2004 to 2013 for median, 90th percentile, 75th percentile, 25th percentile, and 10th percentile.]
Resources matter but not enough
On-time graduation rate at public 4-year colleges & instructional spending per student
Alternatives

- Be more explicit in law and regulations about what accreditors must do
- Encourage the development of an alternative accreditor that focuses on outcomes
- Permit institutions to receive aid while bypassing accreditation:
  - New entrants
  - Existing providers
- Use a rating system like mechanism to determine institutional eligibility and decouple
- Require adequate skin in the game
What Does Value Look Like in Higher Education?

Base institutional eligibility on performance using a rating system that considers:

- access,
- affordability,
- retention & graduation, and
- employment outcomes.

Illustrative Example

Center for American Progress, 2014