

TALKING POINTS

THE FUTURE FACE OF ACCREDITATION: SERVING THE PUBLIC INTEREST



WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

1. The **oldest and most pervasive form of quality review** of higher education in the United States and in the world, with more than 7,600 institutions and 23,500 programs currently accredited.
2. The nation's most **powerful signal** to students and the public that they can have confidence in a college or university, serving the nation and higher education well for more than 100 years.
3. A **central feature** of a U.S. higher education enterprise that is among the strongest in the world, with an outstanding record of providing access and quality.
4. Vital to providing access to student grants and loans as well as other state and federal funds to students and institutions, with **federal funds totaling \$170 billion annually**.



WHAT DO WE SAY TO CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Accreditation is committed to:

1. The **public interest**, serving students, government, business and the public as well as higher education.
2. **Protection of students and the public** through ongoing and thorough scrutiny of colleges, universities and programs.
3. Responsiveness to the call for **effective accreditation** from Congress and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).
4. Greater **rigor** through, for example:
 - Establishing more demanding accreditation standards, especially for initial accreditation.
 - Requiring that all standards be fully met to achieve and sustain accreditation.
 - Tightening quality improvement requirements and timetables.

5. **Leadership in innovation**, for example:

- Establishing alternative paths to accredited status for new providers, e.g., provisional accreditation for new types of degree-granting institutions that have operated for a short time.
- Revising standards that can be met by new, innovative, non-institutional providers and not solely by traditional institutions.

6. **Public accountability and transparency**, for example:

- Routinely providing information from institutions about what happens to students: completion of educational goals, employment, graduation and transfer.
- Routinely providing information from accrediting organizations about how well institutions meet accreditation standards and any limitations institutions may need to address.



WHAT IS NOT NEEDED FROM CONGRESS OR USDE AT THIS TIME

7. Congress or USDE setting **bright lines** for accreditation performance or managing accrediting organizations from Washington DC. Accountability is best achieved through holding accreditation to expectations in law and regulation, not micromanaging accreditation through law and regulation.
8. Congress or USDE creating law or regulation that **undermines the unique strengths of accreditation** and its ongoing contribution to higher education: peer review as a key means to assure quality, a mission-based higher education enterprise that assures access and the wide diversity of educational opportunity and institutional autonomy – essential to effective leadership from our colleges and universities.



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