



## **TALKING POINTS**

### **ACCREDITATION AND 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 23,000 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**.

#### **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.



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