THE FUTURE OF ACCREDITATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?

COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS
SUMMER WORKSHOP

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Council for Higher Education Accreditation
WILL DISCUSS....
ACCREDITATION AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT
ACCREDITATION TODAY
ACCREDITATION AND THE FUTURE
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
WHAT DO WE DO?
ACCREDITATION AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT

CREATED, OWNED AND MANAGED BY HIGHER EDUCATION

PERIODIC REVIEW FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – INSTITUTIONS, PROGRAMS

FOR GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC: “…RELIABLE AUTHORITY AS TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING…”

BY THE NUMBERS: +100; 8,300; 26,000; 85

KEY: PERVASIVE, ACCREDITATION = LEGITIMACY, FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP AND GATEKEEPING
HISTORY OF ACCREDITATION...

VALUABLE

SOMETIMES ANNOYING

ABSENCE OF ACCREDITATION A PROBLEM

PRIMARILY A HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUE: PEER REVIEW – ACADEMICS JUDGING ACADEMICS

SINCE THE 1950s: ALSO GOVERNMENT ISSUE

THE LAST 10 YEARS: THE GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT JUDGING ACADEMICS
TODAY….ACCREDITATION

DOUBTED AND CRITICIZED – “BROKEN”

INCREASING FEDERAL OVERSIGHT [AVALANCHE OF LAW AND REGULATION]

IMMEDIACY OF ACCOUNTABILITY AFFECTING ACCREDITATION

• SEXUAL ASSAULT [NEW YORK TIMES]
• RELIGIOUS FREEDOM [WHEATON (IL) AND GORDON]
• FOR-PROFIT [CORINTHIAN]

PRESSURE: PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND...STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, COMMON STANDARDS, TRANSPARENCY, RATINGS, ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ACCREDITATION, INNOVATION
“...I HAVE RAISED SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT THE ABILITY AND CAPACITY OF OUR ACCREDITATION SYSTEM...AND I’VE IDENTIFIED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST....WE HAVE SEEN TOO MANY INSTANCES OF STUDENTS AND TAXPAYERS SHOULDERING THE BURDEN AND CONSEQUENCES OF POOR OVERSIGHT.”

SENATOR TOM HARKIN, 12/12/13 HELP HEARING

I AM STRUCK BY THE COMMENT THAT ACCREDITATION HAS “...NO MINIMAL STANDARDS FOR OUTCOMES.....,” ...IF ACCREDITATION IS A GOOD HOUSEKEEPING SEAL, WE DON’T KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS...”...CONSUMERS ARE NOT GETTING GOOD INFORMATION...THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS “...IS STIFLING INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION....”

CONGRESSWOMAN VIRGINIA FOXX, 6/13/13 SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

THIS IS WHERE WE ARE NOW...
WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

WE NEED TO ADDRESS:

• POLITICS OF ACCREDITATION

• CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMPACT ON ACCREDITATION

• PRACTICE OF ACCREDITATION
POLITICS

REAUTHORIZATION: SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO ACCREDITATION [MARKED BY LARGER FEDERAL ROLE, NON-ACADEMIC QUALITY INDICATORS, KEEP GATEKEEPING AND MANAGE ACCREDITATION]

GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND MORE GOVERNMENT REGULATION [FEDERAL REVIEW AND 200 CRITERIA]

DIMINISHED INTEREST IN PEER REVIEW AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION: STATE, COURSE, INNOVATION

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF QUALITY JUDGMENT [NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS, NON-ACADEMIC INDICATORS]

GOVERNMENT: COLLEGE RATINGS SYSTEM
LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION: INNOVATION

NON-INSTITUTIONAL PROVIDERS: MOOCs, BADGES, PRIVATE COURSE PROVIDERS

“JUST-IN-TIME” EDUCATION [TARGET OFFERINGS BASED ON STUDENT NEEDS: KHAN ACADEMY, LYNDACOM, GENERAL ASSEMBLY]

FLEXIBLE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE: TIME AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
[STARTING LATER, ENDING SOONER, STOP-OUT: STANFORD AND SIX YEARS OF ACCESS. TUFTS AND “STRUCTURED GAP”]
RAISES ISSUES

IS THERE EXTERNAL REVIEW FOR THE QUALITY OF INNOVATION?

ACCREDITATION FOCUSES ON TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PROGRAMS AND DEGREES

SHOULD ACCREDITATION EXPAND TO EMBRACE THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE?

IS ACCREDITATION A “BARRIER TO INNOVATION”? 
IDEAS FOR PRACTICE OF ACCREDITATION

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION:
• CONTINUED NEED?
• CONSISTENT STANDARDS
• COMMON LANGUAGE

TIERED ACCREDITATION STATUS

DIFFERENTIATED REVIEWS

SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR BAD ACTORS

VARY STUDENT AID BASED ON ACCREDITED STATUS

FOCUS ON OUTCOMES

MORE TRANSPARENCY
WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON YOU?

ACCREDITATION VISITS MORE REGULATORY IN NATURE

ACCREDITATION MORE PRESCRIPTIVE [CREDIT HOUR, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES]

MORE REQUIRED DATA AND REPORTING [FEDERAL OBLIGATIONS]

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION MORE LIKE PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITATION?

• STANDARDS LESS ASPIRATIONAL?
• MORE “BRIGHT LINES”: GRADUATION RATES, TRANSFER, RETENTION?

TEAM REPORTS, ACTION LETTERS, SELF-STUDIES PUBLIC
CURRENT FEDERAL OBLIGATIONS – AN EXAMPLE

1. Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition
2. Institutional Records of Student Complaints
3. Publication of Transfer Policies
4. Practices for Verification of Student Identity
5. Title IV Program Responsibilities
   • General Program Responsibilities
   • Financial Responsibility Requirements
   • Default Rates
   • Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, Related Disclosures
   • Student Right to Know
   • Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies
   • Contractual Relationships
   • Consortial Relationships
CURRENT FEDERAL OBLIGATIONS – AN EXAMPLE - 2

6. **Required Information for Students and the Public**

7. **Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information**

8. **Review of Student Outcome Data**

9. **Standing with State and other Accrediting Agencies**

10. **Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment**

11. **Information on Contractual and Consortial Arrangements**
WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO YOU?

BECAUSE OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF WHAT COUNTS AS QUALITY

- ACCREDITATION HAS STOOD FOR QUALITY DEFINED IN ACADEMIC TERMS: FACULTY, CURRICULUM RESEARCH. QUALITY IS NOW BEING DEFINED IN NON-ACADEMIC TERMS: ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, DEBT AND DEFAULT

BECAUSE OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF WHO DECIDES QUALITY

- ACCREDITATION HAS STOOD FOR ACADEMICS DECIDING QUALITY. QUALITY IS NOW BEING DECIDED BY GOVERNMENT, THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC

BECAUSE OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROLE OF MONEY IN JUDGING QUALITY

- ACCREDITATION HAS STOOD FOR RESPECTING FISCAL RESOURCES BUT NOT BEING DEFINED BY THEM. QUALITY IS NOW JUDGED IN PART BY EARNINGS, RETURN ON INVESTMENT

ARE THESE TRANSFORMATIONS WHAT YOU WANT ACCREDITATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION TO BE AND DO IN THE FUTURE?
WHAT DO WE DO?

THREE OPTIONS:

• NOTHING: BELIEF THAT THIS WILL NOT AFFECT YOU

• TOLERATE MORE DEMANDING AND PRESCRIPTIVE ACCREDITATION VISITS AND REQUIREMENTS

• ENGAGE: AVOID THE LIKELY FUTURE FOR ACCREDITATION
  • STAND FOR THE ESSENTIALS THAT WE VALUE THAT ARE INHERENT IN ACCREDITATION

...DOING NOTHING AND TOLERATING THE SITUATION ARE LESS DESIRABLE THAN ENGAGING...
ENGAGING QUALITY ESSENTIALS - HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION

PEER REVIEW – CENTRAL TO DEFINING “QUALITY” IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY – BOTH THE DRIVER AND FOUNDATION FOR ROBUST ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

COMMITMENT TO MISSION – HAS PRODUCED THE VALUABLE AND DESIRED DIVERSITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ACADEMIC FREEDOM – AN IMPERATIVE FOR HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND RESEARCH. WITHOUT IT, NO “WORLD CLASS” COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
ENGAGING MEANS...

MAKE THE CASE FOR THESE ESSENTIALS – ON CAMPUS, IN CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES, EVERYWHERE

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE: WHY ACCREDITATION IS EFFECTIVE, NOT BROKEN

FIGHT FOR REGULATION REDUCTION FOR ACCREDITATION – IT’S REGULATORY REDUCTION FOR YOU

REMEMBER THAT FEDERAL LAW SAYS THAT ACCREDITATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR: “...SUCCESS WITH RESPECT TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN RELATION TO THE INSTITUTION’S MISSION, WHICH MAY INCLUDE DIFFERENT STANDARDS FOR DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS, AS ESTABLISHED BY THE INSTITUTION....” [NOT STANDARDIZATION, REGULATORY SAMENESS]
ENGAGING MEANS…

MAKING THE CASE:

• ACCREDITATION’S PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS EDUCATIONAL QUALITY
  • STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
  • INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

• ACCREDITATION’S ROLE:
  • HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN
  • IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY
  • PROMOTING QUALITY INNOVATION
BOTTOM LINE

THE CHANGES TO ACCREDITATION ARE CHANGING THE ROLE AND POSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS VIS-À-VIS STUDENTS, GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC

OVER TIME, THE DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES WILL MOVE TOWARD:

• A REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AT THE PRICE OF AN ENVIRONMENT OF PEER REVIEW AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
• NON-ACADEMIC INDICATORS REPLACING ACADEMIC INDICATORS OF QUALITY
• STANDARDIZATION AT THE PRICE OF DIVERSITY OF MISSION
• DIMINISHED ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THUS INTELLECTUAL CREATIVITY

...UNLESS WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT ACCREDITATION...
ACCREDITATION IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN ACCREDITATION
THANK YOU

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