

**Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?
Who will guard the guardians?**

Assessing Quality

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on University Assessment**

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Overview of Presentation

1. Who assures the quality (“recognizes”) accreditors in the United States?
2. What are the two systems of recognition? How are they alike and how are they different?
3. What other methods does NEASC use to assess its effectiveness?
4. What are the implications of these quality assurance processes for institutions outside the United States?

Quick review of U.S. higher education and accreditation

1. States and the federal government
2. Large, diverse, serving a mobile society, promoting choice
3. Voluntary associations
4. Treasured autonomy of colleges and universities
5. Balancing autonomy with accountability

System? What system?

Recognition: Some context

- Accreditation has developed through evolution – not design.
- Accreditation is tied to the federal government – after decades of development – and serves a “gatekeeper” function for federal financial aid.
- Universities want to participate in the selection of the evaluators who assess the quality of their work.
- Accreditation is under scrutiny: university degrees are more necessary and university attendance is more expensive.

Dual purposes of accreditation

Assure
quality



Foster
improvement

Recognition assures that accreditation fulfills both purposes

Two purposes, two systems of recognition

- **Public** – access to federal funds, principally financial aid

U.S. Department of Education – government regulation based on law

- **Private** – accreditation serves institutions: order is preserved and enhanced; value is gained

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) – self-regulation from a university-created body

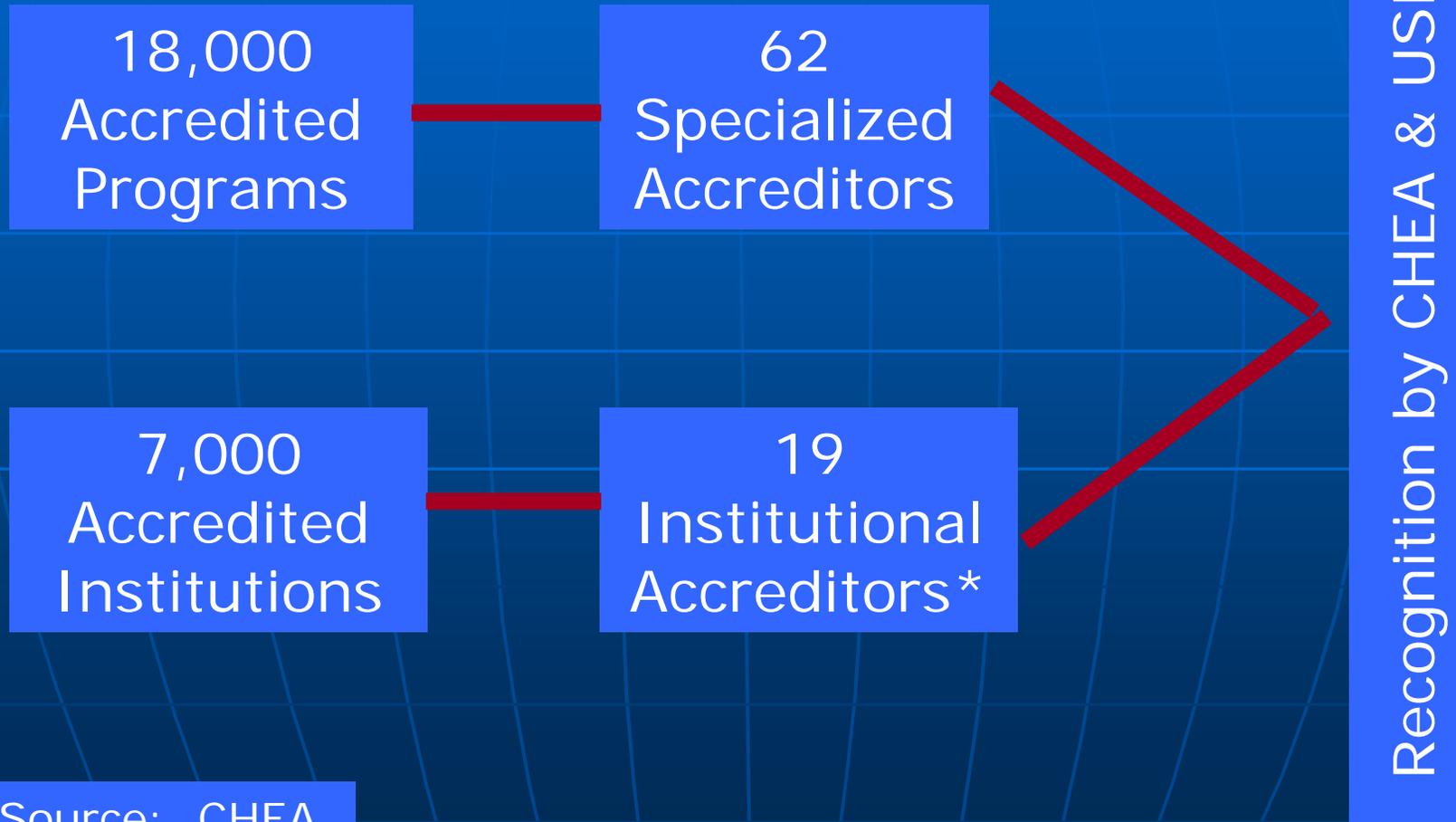
Recognition parallels accreditation

Periodic review based on a set of requirements for accreditors:

1. Report by accreditor on how the requirements are met
2. Review and recommendation by a committee
3. Decision by an authority

Who accredits the accreditor?

Size of the enterprise



Source: CHEA

Accreditors Recognized by CHEA & USDOE

	Regional	Faith-Based	Private Career	Specialized & Professional
CHEA-recognized	8	4	2	46
USDOE-recognized	8	4	7	41
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Total Organizations	8	4	7	62

As of February, 2006. Source: CHEA

CHEA and USDOE: Common features

- Academic quality is key
- Public trust is important; public involvement in process is required
- Accreditation should be voluntary
- Accrediting organizations should be autonomous
- Capacity of accrediting organization is important
- Periodic self-evaluation is important for accrediting organizations



Differences between CHEA and USDOE

- Language: amount and tone
- Length of cycle
- Appointment of committee
- Role and voice of accreditors
- Scope and international activity
- Focus of the review
- Orientation (improvement or compliance)
- Role of the mission of institution

Some features of CHEA

- Institutional Membership (largest in U.S.) – 3,000 colleges and universities
- Recognizes accreditors with majority of degree-granting institutions
- Advocate for voluntary accreditation
- Educates legislators and general public about accreditation

CHEA Recognition Standards – 2006

- Advances academic quality
- Demonstrates accountability
- Encourages, *where appropriate*, self scrutiny and planning for change and needed improvement
- Employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision making;
- Demonstrates ongoing review of accreditation practices
- Possesses sufficient resources

emphasis added

Some features of USDOE recognition

USDOE – not a ministry, but a politically appointed Secretary

NACIQI – In law since 1992 – members represent or are knowledgeable about postsecondary education

Accreditor is “reliable authority regarding the quality of education”

“Gatekeeper” as a required function since 1991

U.S. activity only - in the “scope”

Regulatory – pre-accreditation, branch campuses, change in ownership, financial aid default rates

Some areas covered by USDOE not addressed by CHEA

- Substantive change, including branch campuses, distance learning
- “Pre-accreditation” – candidacy
- Conflict of interest in accreditation
- Monitoring and enforcement
- Standards must address: curricula; faculty; facilities, equipment and supplies; fiscal and administrative capacity; student support services; recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising; measures of program length and the objectives of the degree or credential offered; record of student complaints; record of compliance with Title IV.

CHEA and USDOE: Some illustrative differences

Dimension	CHEA	USDOE
Expectations for student learning	"Students emerge appropriately prepared"	Course completion, state licensing examination, and job placement rates
Notifying public of accreditation decisions	Has "policies and procedures to notify the public" of its decisions	Requirements for notification described in 373 words – includes prompt notification of government authorities

Some current issues in recognition

1. CHEA has new Standards
2. USDOE regulations are “in motion”
3. Higher Education Act is being re-authorized
4. Expectations for use of learning outcomes are increasing
5. Expectations for transparency and public disclosure are increasing
6. Role of recognition: a reflection of current good practice or a lever for change in higher education?

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

- 239 colleges and universities
- 23 commissioners
- 8 staff members
- *hundreds* of volunteers



NEASC

Other quality assurance mechanisms

- Standards are revised periodically
- Institutions, team leaders, and team members are asked to complete surveys to evaluate the accreditation experience
- 2006 study of the effectiveness of the accreditation process: *The Impact of Accreditation on the Quality of Education*



NEASC

Standards Revision

- Comprehensive revision once every ten years; mid-course revision five years later.
- 2005 Standards Review process involved extensive consultation with representatives of member institutions and “interested others”
- Changes highlight “heightened emphases” in U.S. higher education – institutional capacity, academic quality, public disclosure, role of the governing board, assessment and institutional effectiveness

NEASC: Evaluation of accreditation process

- Institutions evaluate: self-study workshop; self-study process; appointment of evaluation team; site visit; meeting with Commission; printed materials and communication from Commission and its staff
- Team leaders and members evaluate: orientation workshop; preparation of institution for site visit; composition of the visiting team; printed materials and communication from Commission and its staff; effectiveness of team and chair
- Results used: to update printed materials; improve training sessions; enhance office procedures; determine composition and leadership of teams

NEASC: 2006 Study of Effectiveness

- Survey sent to schools and universities that had undergone a comprehensive evaluation with three years. 279 institutions responded, including 35 colleges and universities.
- Major findings from universities:
 - Strong belief in the “soundness” of the accreditation process
 - Process clarifies important strengths and concerns; leads to valid and thorough recommendations
 - Process is a strong educational tool for the governing board
 - Accreditation benefits institutional improvement in both the short- and long-term

What survey respondents had to say ...

"The process provides some assurances of quality to the general public and enhances transfer opportunities for graduates."

"Accreditation focuses the attention of the institution on improvement."

"Evaluating our status against the standards is a healthy exercise and promotes healthy discussion campus-wide."

"Colleagues benefit from the collaboration process if many teams are working to produce the self-study."

"Accreditation holds an institution up to public scrutiny in a fair and honest manner."

Implications for institutions outside the United States



- “It depends”
- Analogous to relationship between Commission and state higher education agencies
- During initial visit by Commission staff, ask to meet with national minister of education to discuss relationship between NEASC accreditation and local quality assurance
- Encourage representative of local ministry to attend NEASC evaluation as an observer

Thank you!

**I look forward to your
questions and comments
at the end of the session**

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