

COUNCIL FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION
ACCREDITATION

PRESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES SERIES

PRESIDENTIAL
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CHEA

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation will serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.

CHEA Mission Statement

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Introduction

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation *Presidential Guidelines Series* was developed during 2006-2007 as means to further engage presidents in the work of accreditation and to offer tools for presidential leadership in this important area. Six individual *Guidelines* were issued, each addressing a vital dimension of the president-accreditation relationship. The six pieces are now available in this single document.

CHEA

A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations.

I. Presidential Leadership in Accreditation

This Presidential Guidelines Series is the latest offering from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Presidents Project – a multi-year initiative to enhance presidential interest and investment in accreditation as a public policy issue. The series is an outgrowth of consultation with college and university presidents about the important role that accreditation plays at the institutional, state and federal level. The topics that are addressed emerged from various discussions, interviews and presentations on accreditation with chief executive officers representing all types of higher education institutions.

Quality in American higher education is...self-regulated, a condition that is highly appreciated and closely guarded by the higher education establishment.

This series is based on two beliefs. First, the success of accreditation for individual institutions and for the entire higher education enterprise is very much tied to presidential leadership and presidential engagement. Presidential leadership is critical to the preservation of the self-regulatory concept nationally,

and certainly presidential leadership is essential if institutions and programs are to achieve maximum benefit from the accrediting process. Second, accreditation is most effective when it is viewed as a partnership, an engagement of presidents, provosts and the campus community with accreditation professionals to assure and enhance the academic quality of an institution or program.

Background

Higher education accreditation in the United States is unique in the world as an approach to institutional development and quality assurance because it is essentially owned and governed by the institutions and professions it serves. Unlike most nations, the U.S. has no federal ministry of education that controls curricula and educational policy, thereby affording American higher education great diversity and the opportunity to respond to the needs and desires of society in timely fashion. Accreditation is also typically American in that it is conducted by peer volunteers. Every aspect of the process, from setting standards to institutional and program reviews to final accrediting decisions, is carried out by volunteers from colleges and universities, and in the case of program accreditation, often by volunteers from the professions as well.

Quality in American higher education is therefore self-regulated, a condition that is highly appreciated and closely guarded by the higher education

establishment. With self-regulation comes a responsibility for assuring that the process is sufficiently thorough and rigorous, while at the same time recognizing the extreme diversity of colleges and universities in mission, in size and type, in geographic setting and cultural environment and in the students served.

Leadership and Partnership

College and university presidents, and indeed faculty and other administrators on campuses, sometimes view accreditation as something that is “done to them” because it probes, it scrutinizes and it searches for weaknesses and shortcomings. The results of the process are extremely important to institutions, and there is a certain nervousness that accompanies it on any campus, if only because institutions are proud and never satisfied with anything less than a grade of “A.”

...the success of accreditation...is very much tied to presidential leadership and presidential engagement.

All of this is natural and to be expected in any quality assurance process. But American accreditation is more than just quality assurance; it also aims to support institutions in their efforts to improve, and it is successful in doing so if it is engaged with a set of expectations on the part of the institution.

Presidents can exert their leadership in preparing for accreditation if they help faculty and other campus leaders to develop a positive attitude about the process, from the beginning of the self study to the on-site visit and the response to a report. Accreditation should be viewed as a partnership between the institution or program and the accreditor, and any partnership is stronger and more beneficial if each partner understands the needs and desires of the other. It is thus essential that presidents and institutions be prepared to articulate their expectations of the process to accrediting organizations.

...accreditation is most effective when it is viewed as a partnership...

Topics to be Addressed

The *Presidential Guidelines Series* will assist presidents and their institutions in gaining the most benefit from the accrediting process, whether institutional or programmatic. The series will include brief, quick-to-digest suggestions on topics such as...

- *Presidential Leadership.* What is expected from the institutional leadership to make the accreditation process most effective? How does a

president influence those on campus who will be more directly involved in the process? What is the responsibility of presidents and chancellors in supporting accreditation beyond one's own institution?

- *Formulating Expectations.* What do presidents expect from the accreditation process? How can the accreditor help an institution? What are points of emphasis that should not be overlooked? What might be on a president's agenda that is not on the agenda of the faculty and staff?
- *The Self Study.* How do presidents approach the self study, assure broad participation and encourage a thorough, honest appraisal that will help the institution or program improve?
- *The Site Visit.* How do presidents prepare the campus, articulate the institution's expectations of the accreditation process and show hospitality appropriately?
- *Following Up After the Visit.* How does the institution respond to factual errors in the report, help take advantage of suggestions and separate suggestions for improvement from requirements for accreditation?
- *Reporting to a Governing Board and Others, e.g., Legislators, Donors.* How and how much should presidents engage the board in the process and in the follow-up?
- *Dealing with the Media.* What is to be reported, how and when?
- *Accrediting Internationally.* What is the relationship of U.S. accreditation to quality assurance of higher education in other nations?

II. The Value of Presidential Involvement and Commitment

This Guideline focuses on the crucial leadership that presidents play in accreditation: why accreditation needs this leadership and suggestions for providing such leadership on campus, at the state and regional level, nationally and internationally.

Why We Need Presidential Involvement And Leadership...

- *Presidents' and chancellors' commitment to accreditation as a means of institutional improvement has a great effect on the success of the process.* An executive investment enhances the thoroughness and effectiveness of the self-review because it strongly influences the attitude and involvement of faculty and staff who are essential to the process.
- *Knowledgeable and involved presidents and chancellors have primary responsibility to preserve self-regulation through ongoing explanation and defense of the system.* Our U.S. system of self-regulation is unique in the world because it is a process that is owned and operated by the institutions and their leaders, not by a federal ministry of education. However, despite its advantages and perhaps because it is mysterious to some, our system of voluntary peer review is not infrequently challenged from some quarter or other, and such challenges must be addressed by those who know the system best.
- *Presidential engagement in accrediting organizations is essential, including policy making and review and revision of standards and procedures.* Accrediting organizations also need presidential participation on site visit teams and the commissions that make accrediting decisions. As one president recently said, “I consider my service to accreditation an integral part of my role as a responsible member of the higher education community.”

“I consider my service to accreditation an integral part of my role as a responsible member of the higher education community”

– a president interviewed as part of the Presidents Project

Leadership On Campus – How You Can Provide It...

- First and foremost, *make the process a kind of partnership between the institution or program and the accrediting organization*. In order to gain the most from the investment of time and effort required by the process, know what your and the institution's expectations are.
- *Be an advocate* for accreditation in speeches or messages to faculty and staff in preparation for an upcoming review, emphasizing what the process can do for the institution. Fit accreditation into your agenda, and challenge the faculty to take accountability for student learning outcomes seriously.
- *Take an active role*, along with the provost or academic dean, in organizing the self-study and in establishing and charging the committees. As the self-study progresses, make time to meet occasionally with the committees. It is not necessary for a president or chancellor to be involved in every detail of the process, but the campus leader needs to make his/her leadership felt.
- *Encourage active participation* in the process of as many faculty members as possible. Involve appropriate staff members also, and include student representation. The success of the accreditation process in quality improvement is often dependent upon “buy-in” from faculty and staff, which in turn is dependent upon their opportunity to be engaged in the process.
- Accreditation is not about appearances or prestige—it is about institutional or program quality review and improvement. *Encourage all participants to be honest and thorough in their self-appraisal of the institution or program*. Encourage them to find the weak spots and to begin to address them before the site visit team arrives on campus.
- *Involve your governing board and members of the community* in the process, to the extent possible. Trustees and community members will be honored to be invited, they will learn a great deal about the institution, and they can add significantly to the process by bringing an “outside” voice.
- *Make it clear that you will follow up* on the findings of the self-study, the site visit team and the accrediting commission in order to take full advantage of the process.

Accreditation is not about appearances or prestige—it is about institutional or program quality review and improvement.

Involvement and Leadership Regionally and Nationally

- *Be informed about national issues involving accreditation* and speak out with your views. Be critical where appropriate, but constructively so.
- *Understand that decision makers in state and federal governments will be more influenced on educational policy matters by college and university presidents than any other group*, especially if they are convinced that you are sincere about recognizing shortcomings and addressing them in a timely fashion.
- *Be prepared to articulate the values of a quality assurance system that also aims to improve institutions and that is conducted by peers*—educators and professional practitioners who not only have the best insight into what represents educational quality but who also have interest in advancing the disciplines to keep up with technological progress and societal expectations.
- *Volunteer for service on site visit teams and accrediting commissions.* You will not only give important and much-needed service but you can expect to learn a great deal from such participation.

Presidents have primary responsibility to preserve self-regulation through ongoing explanation and defense of the system

III. Preparing for the Self Study – The President’s Role

This Guideline focuses on the appropriate role of the president or chancellor in providing leadership for the institutional or program self study in preparation for an accreditation review.

The self study is generally regarded as the most valuable element of the accreditation process. We also know, however, that when faced with an accreditation review, faculty and staff members on a campus rarely respond with overt enthusiasm! Attitudes are more likely to range from grudging acceptance to outright disdain. Some will view the accreditation process as a necessary evil, and many will avoid involvement to the extent possible. Conducting a self study is a great deal of extra work for faculty members who are already fully engaged, to be sure, but perhaps even more important as a reason for less-than-enthusiastic attitudes is that many on a campus do not think of accreditation’s value for institutional or program improvement. The president’s or chancellor’s role is therefore, first and foremost, to set the tone for a positive attitude about what the accreditation process can do for an institution and its future. Following are some specific suggestions for how you as president or chancellor can make accreditation a positive and beneficial experience for your institution.

“The self study is the most valuable element of the accreditation process.”

– a president interviewed as part of the Presidents Project

Set the Tone for Emphasis on Institutional Improvement

Before the self study begins...

- Insist that the self appraisal be rigorous, honest and forthright. Seek common agreement on the institution’s weaknesses—areas where there is clearly room for improvement—as well as on the institution’s strengths and points of pride.
- Send a signal to the campus by appointing highly respected faculty members—people who are not only outstanding academics but who are also good campus citizens—to lead the self study effort.
- Emphasize the importance of evaluating/measuring/observing student learning outcomes, over and over and over! Although we in higher education have talked about “outcomes assessment” for some years now, many faculty members have avoided addressing it because it is truly

difficult to do in many of the most important learning objectives. Even though it may often be impossible to quantify learning results, some observation, if not measurement, of learning outcomes is expected in the accountability to the public that we call accreditation. The accreditation process may be the stimulus needed on many campuses to attend to the issue of student learning outcomes.

- Make sure that the campus understands the quality improvement function of accreditation. Obviously, issues of compliance with accreditation standards must be addressed thoroughly and effectively, but for many institutions the greater challenge will be to approach the self study in a way that takes advantage of the required investment of time and effort to generate a climate of pride and commitment to improve.

Be certain that the self study process focuses on such critical issues as academic integrity and student learning outcomes.

What is the Appropriate Level of Involvement for the President or Chancellor?

Certainly it is neither possible nor appropriate for the campus leader to be involved in every detail of the accreditation self study process, but here are some specific actions that will be most helpful to a successful process.

- Take personal interest in appointing the leadership team or steering committee for the self study, along with your provost or academic dean. In order to attract the very best people for this task the president's or chancellor's personal invitation is important.
- Confer with the leadership team/ steering committee regarding the work plan for the self study process, including the number and makeup of committees and subcommittees, timelines, etc. Although the work plan should be developed by the steering committee, the president should take the time to be informed about it, to contribute to it, and to approve it.

The accreditation process may be the stimulus needed on many campuses to attend to the issue of student learning outcomes.

- Help the leadership group to formulate the desired outcomes of the self study so that it will become a useful document for future planning. Determining the key issues to be addressed in the self study is an area in which consensus between faculty and administration is especially important.

Sometimes one needs to be a cheerleader!

- Be certain that the self study process focuses on such critical issues as academic integrity and student learning outcomes.
- Assist with communication to the campus throughout the self study process, to encourage participation or invigorate people as needed. Sometimes one needs to be a cheerleader!
- As the self study progresses determine any key issues that you wish to bring to the attention of the site visit team when they arrive on campus, i.e., issues that may be on your agenda but not necessarily addressed thoroughly in the self study document.
- Provide brief progress reports to your governing board on a regular basis throughout the process so that they are informed and involved at the appropriate level.
- Make certain that the review process is supported with adequate resources, both in personnel and funding.
- Finally, take time to meet with accreditation teams when they visit your campus...to express your point of view and also to hear directly from them. You may not have time to participate in both introductory and exit interviews, but both are important.

IV. Preparing for the Site Visit – The President’s Role

This Guideline focuses on the site visit by an accrediting team—the president’s or chancellor’s role in selecting the team, preparing for a visit and hosting the visit.

A site visit is required by nearly every accrediting organization, occurring at least every 10 years and more frequently in some circumstances and for some organizations. The president or chancellor has the responsibility of assuring that the campus is ready for the visit and that all participants are properly informed and prepared to do their part in making the visit a success.

Every accrediting organization has its own guidelines and protocols for site visits. The comments and suggestions that follow, therefore, are not intended to supersede any suggestions or requirements of an accrediting organization. In each case the president or chancellor and the self study chair should be familiar with the policies and procedures of the visiting accreditor.

Presidents and chancellors play an essential role in establishing what counts as success for the site visit. What is the institution or program seeking to accomplish? How can accreditors provide assistance? Do faculty and administrators share the chief executive’s vision of success?

Presidential Leadership

Presidents and chancellors provide leadership to assure that all campus representatives who meet with the team are well informed about the purposes of accreditation in general and any specifics that have arisen as a result of the institutional or program self study. They encourage a climate of openness and candor in all interactions with the visiting team. The president or chancellor can show leadership by being well informed about the self study and its preparation, by demonstrating interest in the accrediting process as a means toward institutional or program improvement, and by showing appropriate hospitality to the site visit team.

Accreditation’s purpose is both to assure quality and to improve quality. A campus community should therefore be prepared to learn as well as to report during a site team visit.

Presidents and chancellors also play an essential role in establishing what counts as success for the visit. What is the institution or program seeking to accomplish? How can accreditors provide assistance? Do faculty and administrators share the chief executive's vision of success?

Attitude

Accreditation is a means by which an institution or program holds itself accountable for achieving its goals, serving society and serving its students. Its purpose is both to assure quality and to improve quality. A campus community should therefore be prepared to learn as well as to report during a site team visit. While preparation for a site visit can require a great deal of time and planning, most campuses are invigorated by the experience. It is, after all, a great opportunity to show the institution's strengths and aspirations to others and to benefit from their collective expertise.

Preparing the Campus

The president or chancellor should take the lead in setting the tone for the campus to make the most of the site team visit. Open meetings on the campus to review key points of the self study document prior to the team visit will be helpful, and anything the president or chancellor can do to encourage all personnel to be both friendly and open with the team is time and communication well spent.

The site visit is a great opportunity to show an institution's strengths and aspirations to others and to benefit from the site visit team's collective expertise.

The Timetable

Too early is better than late in setting the date for a site team visit. Most accreditors visit a number of institutions in any given cycle; therefore, it is wise to get on the calendar early. Furthermore, establishing the date early on the institutional calendar will help everyone on campus with their planning.

Team Selection

The appointment of team members is done by the accrediting organization, but the institution has the responsibility of checking the list and informing the accreditor of any perceived conflicts of interest. The institution also has an opportunity to reject team members on other grounds, e.g., the absence of fit between the experience of a team member and the institution or program

under review. The final decision about team makeup, however, rests with the accrediting organization.

Logistics

The first consideration in hosting the site visit is to make living and working as easy as possible for the team while it is on campus. That includes comfortable hotel arrangements (including a suitable, private meeting space in the hotel), appropriate meeting and work space on campus, internet access and an IT staff person to serve the team, and for larger campuses, guides to help the visitors find their way around.

Hospitality

Accrediting organizations do not expect lavish hospitality for site visit teams, but most institutions want to make a good impression. Any social activities should be restricted to the first evening of the visit, however, out of respect for the team members' time and the amount of work they need to do.

Follow-Up

The team leaving the campus triggers the next set of leadership responsibilities for a president or chancellor. These include working with the accrediting organization as it moves from team report to commission action, determining the extent to which the judgments of the accrediting organization will be publicly shared and using the final report and action as a basis for future planning and budgeting.

V. Using the Accreditation Visit to Benefit the Institution

This Guideline addresses the president's leadership responsibility in following up after the accreditation process: making best use of the findings; reporting to the campus, the board, other decision makers and the press.

Presidential leadership in the accreditation process continues, even as the visiting team departs the campus. Because preparing the self study and then hosting a visiting team were so time-consuming and intensive, faculty and staff members tend to put the matter out of mind once the site visit team leaves the campus. However, for the president, this is the optimum time to take advantage

The higher education community is often accused of not being accountable. Part of the reason for this is that we too seldom report accreditation findings thoroughly, nor do we explain how accreditation works.

of the findings of the self study and the observations of the site visit team. In some cases there is corrective work to be accomplished before the visiting team's report is transmitted to the accrediting commission, and in any case there is advantage for institutional improvement in addressing areas of weakness while the details are still fresh in people's minds.

The accreditation follow-up process might be characterized as three overlapping activities: studying the findings, reporting the findings and improving the institution or program.

Studying the Findings

Although the terminology varies among accrediting organizations, most make clear the distinction between *requirements* for gaining or maintaining accreditation and *suggestions* for institutional or program improvement. It is important to understand these distinctions because often steps can be taken to address accreditation requirements between the time of the site visit and the submission of the team report to the accrediting commission. It is advisable for the president or chancellor, along with the provost or academic dean, to hold a briefing with the accreditation steering committee to discuss findings of the self study regarding any institutional or program weaknesses, the observations of the site visit team as reported in the exit interview and the steps needed to address any serious deficiencies that might have been identified. Most accrediting commissions will look favorably upon quick and decisive action to address shortcomings that are recognized by both the site visit team and the institution.

Nearly every accrediting team report will make suggestions for improvement of the institution or program, and this is the optimum time to begin addressing those issues as well. There is great advantage in laying plans for improvement *before* reporting to the institution's board, to the campus as a whole and to the press.

Reporting the Findings

The higher education community is often accused of not being accountable. Part of the reason for this is that we too seldom report accreditation findings thoroughly, nor do we explain how accreditation works. Some institutions are even lax about reporting accreditation findings to their governing board. It is understandable that colleges and universities do not wish to expose their weaknesses, but most institutions and programs have more strengths to extol than weaknesses to admit, and an honest report that focuses on plans for improvement will be well received by the public

If improvement is to be realized from the accreditation process, it is because the institution's leadership takes advantage of all the findings and mobilizes the institution to action.

Reporting to the institution's governing board should occur throughout the process, and ideally some members of the board have been engaged in the self study and the site visit. A thorough (perhaps confidential, depending on the circumstance) report to the board immediately following the site visit is advisable, particularly if there are serious deficiencies. The same might be said about reporting to the campus as a whole, although many presidents and chancellors will find it preferable to develop preliminary plans for addressing shortcomings and improvements before reporting to the campus. The timing of the campus report therefore depends on the institutional circumstance, but it is important to take advantage of the accreditation process to mobilize an institution or program for quality improvement. The more time that passes from the end of the accreditation process to planning for improvement, the more momentum is lost.

Presidential leadership in the accreditation process continues, even as the visiting team departs the campus.

Many presidents and chancellors will be more concerned about how to report accreditation results to the media than to their internal constituencies. Accrediting organizations often have regulations about this. For example, most prohibit an institution's editing out any criticisms and reporting only positive findings,

but that seldom serves the institution well anyway. We can anticipate that the press will be interested in anything negative and will yawn at positive findings. Therefore, there may be more opportunity to extol the virtues of an institution or program if press releases about the results of accreditation point out both strengths and areas to be improved, with plans for improvement also described.

For all institutions, and perhaps especially for public institutions, it may be advantageous to report accreditation findings to decision makers such as state legislators. Few legislators at either the state or federal level understand how accreditation works. Therefore, reporting to them information about the process as well as findings and plans for improvement will usually serve the institution well, particularly for institutional accreditation or high-profile professional programs.

Improving the Institution or Program

Too often the site visit team's suggestions for institutional or program improvement are not taken as seriously as they might be. A team often has excellent observations about improvements that could or should be made, but of course some of their suggestions may not be as worthy or practicable as others. It therefore behooves the president or chancellor to appoint a follow-up study group to analyze the site visit team's suggestions thoroughly and recommend action where it is deemed appropriate. As mentioned above, it is advantageous to have these recommendations and plans *before* reporting accreditation findings to the public.

Sometimes the accreditation process will serve institutional leadership well by suggesting improvements that have been recognized by the president or chancellor but that have been resisted by the institution's faculty or staff for one reason or another. Immediately following the accreditation process is the best time—it may be the *only* time—for the leadership to get these items on the institutional agenda.

Conclusion

The value of institutional and programmatic accreditation as we conduct it in the United States is perhaps first and foremost realized through an institution's or program's self study. A self study that is well done identifies weaknesses as well as strengths. These findings are usually corroborated by a site visit team, and the team may also identify additional opportunities through which the institution could be more effective. But identifying issues and acting on them are two different matters. If improvement is to be realized from the accreditation process, it is because the institution's leadership takes advantage of all the findings and mobilizes the institution to action. Strong leaders also recognize that quality improvement is a *continuous* process that proceeds from one accreditation cycle to the next without interruption.

VI. What Presidents Need To Know About International Accreditation and Quality Assurance

This Guideline provides a brief overview on accreditation and quality assurance in the international arena. As more and more U.S. colleges and universities respond to the call to be internationally competitive, presidents and chancellors find themselves making important decisions about, e.g., establishing programs abroad, faculty exchange, research partnerships and even establishing new campuses in other countries. These judgments require that chief executives sustain a working knowledge of quality assurance and accreditation outside the United States. Absent this understanding, the integrity and reputation of their home institutions may be at risk.

Accreditation and Quality Assurance Outside the United States: What Countries Do

Outside the United States, accreditation or quality assurance (both terms are used) is typically a government-based activity, ordinarily carried out through a ministry of education. There is usually a single national quality assurance body, e.g., the Quality Assurance Agency in the U.K., the Danish Evaluation Institute in Denmark, the Council for Higher Education in South Africa. This contrasts with the United States, where accreditation is a nongovernmental activity carried out by private organizations.

Expansion of U.S. higher education into the international arena is an extraordinary opportunity, but one that carries risk – as well as gain – for U.S. colleges and universities.

The work of quality assurance agencies outside the United States is often centralized and coordinated with other government activities related to higher education, e.g., funding and economic development. U.S. accreditation, on the other hand, is characterized by its decentralization, with 81 recognized institutional and programmatic accreditors operating simultaneously.

While almost all countries have some quality assurance capacity, only about one-third sustain fully developed systems. For a number of these countries, this capacity has been developed only during the past 20 years or so. Remaining countries are in various stages of development, from enacting enabling legislation for quality review to implementing new structures for quality assurance. In contrast, the U.S. system is quite mature, with some accrediting operations dating back 100 years.

There are additional differences between quality assurance systems outside the United States and U.S. accreditation. Some countries undertake review of programs and not institutions. Some review practices are really a general evaluation, not involving specific standards and without a formal requirement of achieving accredited status.

U.S. presidents and chancellors will need to be well-informed about the scope and depth of quality review practices in other countries.

Finally, government-based quality assurance bodies in other countries are only slowly coming to grips with the need to address private as well as public institutions. Most higher education in other countries is public or church-related and quality review practices are geared to these institutions.

These countries do not sustain the large, successful, private nonprofit sector of higher education common in the United States, although this is changing. Private for-profit higher education is also beginning to establish itself in some countries.

An Emerging International Quality Assurance Context

Three factors are driving the overall direction of international quality assurance. First, quality assurance is becoming more competitive and robust. The capacity development described above will continue in a number of countries. Second, quality assurance is becoming regionalized. A number of regionally-based quality assurance initiatives are being established. The most prominent is in Europe through the quality efforts that are part of the Bologna Process. Other efforts are underway in South America and in the Gulf States. Third, there is an ongoing international dialogue about the need for an international quality assurance framework or mutual recognition and reciprocity across countries, led by multi-national organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Issues and Questions

The differences between accreditation and quality assurance in the United States and other countries are worthy of attention from chief executives. The government-based approach to quality assurance in most countries, significant gaps in capacity and experience among the quality assurance efforts in a number of countries, an emphasis on the public sector and limited attention to the private sector, and experience confined to only one type of accreditation (either institutional or programmatic) all mean that U.S. presidents and chancellors will need to be well-informed about the scope and depth of quality review practices in other countries. CEOs also need to be aware of rules and regulations

and sometimes cultural issues such as exchange of funds that may be involved in obtaining approval from authorities to operate a foreign-based program.

When engaging in international activity for their institutions, presidents and chancellors benefit from asking and answering such questions as:

- What is the quality assurance experience and capacity in the country in which my institution is operating? Is it peer-based? Are standards used? Whatever the similarities or differences to U.S. accreditation, what needs to be done to ascertain the reliability of the quality assurance body?
While almost all countries have some quality assurance capacity, only about one-third sustain fully developed systems.
- Given that the quality assurance body in another country is government-based, what relationship, if any, will my institution need to sustain with that government? What impact, if any, will this have on our institutional autonomy and our academic freedom?
- What responsibilities do I have to my U.S. institutional and programmatic accreditors if my institution begins to operate internationally? How does this activity affect my current accredited status? Do I need to contact these accreditors?
- As chief executive officer of a U.S. higher education institution, what role might I play in the ongoing international dialogue about quality?

Expansion of U.S. higher education into the international arena is an extraordinary opportunity, but one that carries risk—as well as gain—for U.S. colleges and universities. Accreditation and quality assurance play a significant confidence-building role for presidents and chancellors as they make vital decisions in this arena.

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