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CONTACT:

Morgan Alexander

media@AGB.org

202-776-0853

AGB and CHEA Issue Joint Statement on Higher Education Accreditation and Governing Boards

WASHINGTON, DC (March 30, 2022)—The [Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges](#) (AGB), the premier organization advocating strategic board leadership in higher education, and the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#) (CHEA), an advocacy leader in assuring institutional and academic quality, today issued a [Joint Advisory Statement on Accreditation and Governing Boards](#).

Accreditation is a critical tool for quality assurance and accountability for higher education, signaling an institution’s commitment to academic quality and fiscal integrity. AGB and CHEA published this statement to help board members better understand the importance of accreditation and the board’s role in the process.

Accreditation in the United States is a voluntary, nongovernmental, periodic, peer-based system of review of higher education institutions and programs. Since 1952, the federal government has required that institutions or programs be accredited by a federally recognized accrediting organization in order to be eligible to receive federal funds, including federal student financial aid. Accrediting bodies review public and private, two-year and four-year, nonprofit and for-profit institutions, and a wide range of academic programs.

“Accreditation can be used as an opportunity to assess institutional or programmatic impact and success, as well as to leverage change,” said Cynthia Jackson-Hammond, CHEA president. “Accreditation is not a singular process. It is designed to foster engagement by institutional stakeholders to improve academic quality and financial integrity, centered on student success. I’m pleased that CHEA and AGB could collaborate on such an important topic.”

AGB and CHEA published an initial statement in 2009. Since then, however, the higher education landscape has significantly changed, and the need to reemphasize board involvement has become evident.

The updated statement offers leading practices to foster effective governance strategies as board members, chief executives, and other staff work collaboratively with accrediting organizations. It highlights many suggestions for boards and their members, such as:

- Establish an ongoing orientation or accreditation education program for board members, with particular attention to the way in which accreditation relates to such

core values as mission, institutional independence, educational quality, and academic freedom.

- Monitor the institution's accreditation status (institutional and programmatic) on an annual basis by the appropriate board committee, paying particular attention to where the institution is in the various accreditation cycles, preparation for self-studies and site visits, progress in addressing issues raised in past reports, and any concerns institutional leadership may have about upcoming accreditation reviews.
- Develop, in collaboration with the chief executive officer, a plan for ongoing governing board involvement in accreditation reviews.
- Create clear expectations of board leaders to work with the president on the accreditation process, including opportunities to meet with the visiting team, and an expectation that the visiting team's final report will be available to the full board.

"Boards' engagement in the accreditation process is critical to overseeing the vitality and fiscal integrity of the institutions they govern, and we could not ask for a better partner than CHEA to highlight this important component of strategic board governance," said Henry Stoeber, AGB president and CEO. "Accreditation is also intended to ensure institutional commitment to academic quality—to ensure that students graduate with the skills, knowledge, and experience to be engaged, successful individuals. Understanding the board's role in the accreditation process can help affirm and strengthen the board's responsibilities in assuring the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the institution it oversees."

The joint advisory statement can be found at [AGB.org/AccreditationStatement](https://www.agb.org/AccreditationStatement) and at [www.CHEA.org](https://www.chea.org).

About AGB

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) is the premier membership organization that strengthens higher education governing boards and the strategic roles they serve within their organizations. Through our vast library of resources, educational events, and consulting services, and with 100 years of experience, we empower 40,000 AGB members from more than 2,000 institutions and foundations to navigate complex issues, implement leading practices, streamline operations, and govern with confidence. AGB is the trusted resource for board members, chief executives, and key administrators on higher education governance and leadership.

About CHEA

A national advocate and institutional voice for academic quality through accreditation, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is an association of degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA recognition indicates that an accrediting organization has met rigorous standards for the promotion of academic quality, institutional improvement, and advancement of student success. Since its founding in 1996, CHEA has been the primary advocate for higher education accreditation and is the only nongovernmental organization that recognizes U.S. accrediting organizations.