

**Executive Summary and Call to Action in Response to the
2006 CHEA Recognition Policies and Procedures
Proposed Changes to the 4/01/10 Draft One
Draft Two Revisions released by CHEA on 6/2/10:**
<http://www.chea.org/pdf/Changes%20to%202010%20Proposed%20Revisions.pdf>

For more background details please see the ASPA Analysis at –
http://www.aspa-usa.org/principles_aspa.asp.

Dear Institutional Leader:

As you consider ASPA's ongoing concerns about proposed revisions in the CHEA recognition criteria for accreditors, **please ask yourself these three questions:**

- 1) Has your institution been consulted by CHEA about whether you desire to have the basis of your accreditation decisions made public?
- 2) Do you believe the revised CHEA language on public disclosure of accreditation decisions will have positive consequences for your institution? What if the language requires accreditors to make information public about an accreditation decision that you would prefer be kept confidential?
- 3) Do you believe that the public, the press, and competing institutions having more information about the basis of your accreditation decisions, would result in more good than harm for your institution?

If you answered "No" to any of these questions, we encourage you to read on...

1. Public Information. Accreditors and institutions already provide much information to the public. Today, the locus of control for most of the existing public information regarding the results of accreditation reviews rests almost exclusively with institution and their accreditors. The proposed CHEA language would change the locus of control to CHEA. The locus of control is very important. This is not a mere technical change. CHEA proposes in draft two to require CHEA-recognized accrediting organizations "to inform the public of final decisions to grant, reaffirm, deny, or withdraw accreditation, **accompanied by a description of the basis for these decisions.**"

The accreditors who work with these matters on a daily basis believe that this proposed requirement, will **negatively impact** those institutions that are accredited by CHEA-recognized accrediting agencies in the following ways:

- Loss of control over the publication of critical information that will shape public images and perceptions of the institution and/or its accredited program(s).
- Increase the risk of potentially harmful media articles regarding the institution and/or program(s). For example, the current practice of posting public sanctions by WASC-Jr. has led to criticisms that "local news media generally write articles that some community college officials believe unfairly worry students and their parents, who may not know much about the accreditation process". (<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/06/07/california>, published June 7th, 2010).
- Negatively impact student and faculty recruitment, alumni support, fundraising and all other efforts tied to institutional and program image. The proposed change allows no "private time" for programs or institutions to address relatively minor matters that are often in the notification letter but are likely to be quickly resolved.
- Loss of a balanced relationship with accrediting organizations due to the increased public relations leverage being proposed for accreditors.

- Shift the focus of accreditation to public sanctions. This will discourage candor and openness about problems and efforts towards improvement; it threatens to reduce the accreditation process to a public relations based exercise. (<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/06/07/california>, published June 7th, 2010)

This CHEA proposal also invites federal intervention to implement the increased regulatory oversight that the higher education and accreditation community fought successfully in the recent higher education act reauthorization.

In summary, much information about accredited programs and institutions is already made public by agreements between accreditors and the institutions or programs they accredit. Although some accrediting organizations publish Institutional Profiles or Snapshots, this information does not include specific details for all final accreditation decisions. In the current environment no external recognition body should make decisions for accreditors and their institutions or programs about how best to provide useful information about educational quality to their stakeholders.

2. Requirement for “Meeting with CHEA”: While CHEA currently has the ability to “meet” with recognized accreditors, the proposed revisions include meeting to “obtain more information” on accreditation actions.

- The higher education and accreditation community fought successfully against a similar proposal in the recent reauthorization of the higher education opportunity act. If this CHEA proposal is accepted, proposals for similar federal intervention in these matters will reappear and be approved. Whether it is CHEA or the USDE, the involvement being proposed would undermine the conduct of accreditation reviews to the detriment of both institutions and their accreditors.

3. Accreditation and Degree Mills. The proposal would require accreditors to “inform the public about the harm of degree and accreditation mills.”

- In his June 7, 2010 letter, John Wiley, current chair of the CHEA Board, said that speaking against this proposal is tantamount to supporting degree mills or accreditation mills. To be crystal clear, ASPA members have always worked against degree mills and accreditation mills. We are just as opposed to both as is CHEA. We believe that this is an important issue, but one that can – and should – continue to be addressed **outside of the recognition process**.

Next Step

ASPA’s comprehensive analysis explains in depth our concern with the language in CHEA’s draft one. These basic ideas remain the same in draft two. CHEA needs to hear from its member institutions that the proposed changes, even as modified, remain unacceptable.

Please take a few minutes to let your voice be heard. Share your views with CHEA. If you have time, consider sharing them also with your colleagues at other institutions, and with ACE, or NAICU, or the Washington-based higher education association where your institution holds membership.

The CHEA comment form is available at: <http://www.chea.org/Changes06.02.10.htm> CHEA’s deadline for receipt of comments is June 16, 2010. Action by the CHEA Board is scheduled for June 28, 2010.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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