Accreditation Matters

Why is accreditation important?

When thinking about where to go to college and what to study, the college and program accreditation can affect your career and future opportunities. Many professions—from nursing to engineering—often require that your degree be from an accredited program. It’s important to find out if a program is accredited before you decide to go there.

Accreditors verify that an academic program offers a quality education, so that you are prepared for your career. There are two kinds of accreditation:

- **institutional accreditation** means the college or university, as a whole, meets broad overall organizational quality standards, and

- **specialized, professional or programmatic accreditation** means an academic program at the college or university is approved by the accrediting body that sets educational standards for that particular profession.

Even if your degree is from an accredited college or university, there may be employment requirements for accreditation of the program.

Questions you should ask the college:

- **Is your program accredited? If so, by which agency or organization?**
  (Make sure the college specifies whether it has institutional or programmatic accreditation, or both—you can go to the accreditors’ websites to verify this information.)

- **If your program is not accredited, will I be able to work in this or any other state after I graduate?**
  (You may want to verify the individual state requirements for the profession you are considering.)

- **Is there a required exam or certification to work in this field? If so, does graduating from your program mean I can take this exam or be eligible for certification?**

- **How important is program accreditation to the employers in this field?**

- **Does this program’s accreditation make me eligible for federal student aid?**

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