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NEWSLETTER

December 2016

News from the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors

## Accreditation News

With a **new Administration and Congress** in 2017, many are wondering about the impact on accreditation and higher education. Some speculation and some things that we do know:

The markets seem to expect that the current administration's **regulatory focus on for-profit colleges will be limited or ended**. For instance, the new President could attempt to change the "gainful employment" rules around students' earnings after graduation. Public and nonprofit private colleges may see some easing of government oversight, such as the new rules for teacher preparation and pending regulation on state authorization of distance education programs.

North Carolina Republican Virginia Foxx, will chair the **House Committee on Education and the Workforce**. She replaces Minnesota Republican John Kline, who is retiring at the end of the 114th Congress. Her priorities appear to include repealing regulations and scaling back the size of the Department of Education. Representative Bobby Scott, a Virginia Democrat, will stay on as ranking member.

For the **Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee**, Tennessee Republican Lamar Alexander will continue as Chair and Washington Senator Patty Murray will remain as the ranking member. These two lawmakers have a history of cooperation on the committee to pass legislation and are expected to tackle the **reauthorization of the Higher Education Act** at some point in the next Congress.

## Upcoming Events



### Spring Conference

April 2 - 4, 2017 in Chicago  
*Sessions will include:*

- Orientation to ASPA
- Recognition Round-table
- Accreditation in a Virtual Environment
- Annual business meetings
- Where's the Data?
- Handling Complaints
- Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative
- Professional Development:

### Program Outcomes and Communicating the Value of Accreditation

- Identifying program and student achievement outcomes that are relevant to the profession
- Establishing expected levels of achievement for quantitative and qualitative indicators, and communicating supporting rationales to stakeholders

The President-elect has chosen Betsy DeVos as **Secretary of Education**. Ms. DeVos served as chair of the Michigan Republican party from 1996-2000 and has a track record of promoting charter schools and school vouchers. Her priorities for the higher education sector remain to be seen.

ASPA will continue to monitor and keep its members apprised of the latest issues.

- Determining next steps when programs do not achieve thresholds
- Communicating good outcomes achieved through accreditation

Full Program and Registration

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## Association Updates

### New Member

The Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA) joined ASPA this fall. Welcome!

### Fall Conference 2016

The ASPA Fall Conference was held in Arlington, VA this past September and was well attended and received excellent reviews. The professional development component - **Stakeholder Relations in Accreditation** - examined good practices for: providing technical assistance and advice to programs; staff relations with the profession and our publics; managing the standards revision process; and determining outcome indicators and setting benchmarks.

ASPA conferences provide great networking opportunities for programmatic accreditors, as well as invaluable information about good accreditation practice. Information about upcoming conferences is provided in another section of this newsletter.

### Strategic activities

ASPA's strategic plan has three areas of focus: advocacy, member services/education and relationship building. Some of our recent activities include:

- Meeting with Congressional staff in October
- Participating in the Government Accountability Office's Expert Workshop on the US Higher Education Accreditation System in September
- Providing commentary to the Education Department on its proposed requirements: Accrediting Agencies Reporting Activities for Institutions and Programs in November
- Appointing a task force to develop good practice guidelines for site visitor recruitment, training and evaluation

## Save the Date

### Fall Conference 2017

September 10-12 in Arlington  
*Tentative Program:*

### Leading the Standards Revision Process

How does an accrediting agency plan for a potential multi-year process, establish strong rationales for revisions, and ensure compliance among programs that may perceive or face challenges in adapting to new standards? Our program will address:

- Demonstrating validity and reliability in standards
- Evidence-based approaches to data collection in the standards revision process
- Effectively planning, managing resources, and leveraging technology
- Communicating goals and employing effective communication strategies before, during, and after the revision process
- Implementing new standards—from coaching programs to enforcing compliance

Make sure to **mark your calendars** and stay tuned for more information about the fall conference in subsequent issues of the ASPA Newsletter.

## About ASPA



The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors provides a collaborative forum and a collective voice for the community of 60 member accreditors that assess the quality of programmatic higher education programs and schools in the United States. We are the only organization that promotes the importance of specialized and professional accreditation.

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