

Appeal No. 07-56864

**In the United States Court of Appeals
for the Ninth Circuit**

O'CONNELL, *et al*,

Appellant / Cross-Appellees,

v.

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY,

Appellee / Cross-Appellant.

BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE:

American Council on Education;

Council for Higher Education Accreditation;

American Association of Community Colleges;

American Association of State Colleges and Universities;

Association of American Universities;

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities; and

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

IN SUPPORT OF APPELLEE / CROSS-APPELLANT

AND IN SUPPORT OF AFFIRMANCE

On Appeal from
the United States District Court for the Central District of California
THE HONORABLE PHILIP S. GUTIERREZ PRESIDING
U.S.D.C. Case No. SA CV 04-01256-PSG-RC

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**AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION'S
RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS
AND FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, American Council on Education
makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

/s/ Ada Meloy
Signature of Attorney

**COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION'S
RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS AND
FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, Council for Higher Education

Accreditation makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

/s/ Ada Meloy
Signature of Attorney

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES'
RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS
AND FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, American Association of
Community Colleges makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

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Signature of Attorney

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES' RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE
AFFILIATIONS AND FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, American Association of State
Colleges and Universities makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

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**ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES’
RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS
AND FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, Association of American
Universities makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

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**ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC AND LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES'
RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS AND
FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

/s/ Ada Meloy
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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES' RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE
AFFILIATIONS AND FINANCIAL INTEREST**

Pursuant to 9th Circuit Rule 26.1, National Association of
Independent Colleges and Universities makes the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation?

No.

If the answer is YES, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party: NA.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has financial interest in the outcome?

No.

If the answer is YES, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest: NA.

Dated: June 3, 2009

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Signature of Attorney

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STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 29(a), amici curiae American Council on Education (“ACE”), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (“CHEA”), American Association of Community Colleges (“AACC”), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Association of American Universities (“AAU”), Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (“APLU”), and National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (“NAICU”) (collectively, “amici”) submit this brief in support of the Appellee/Cross-Appellant Chapman University and in support of affirmance.¹

Amici collectively represent a variety of higher education constituencies. ACE is a major coordinating body for approximately 1,800 of the nation’s higher education institutions and related organizations. CHEA, the principal higher education organization in the accreditation field, is the largest institutional higher education membership association in the United States, with approximately 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and sixty recognized institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. AACC is the primary advocacy organization for the nation’s community colleges, representing nearly 1,200 two-year associate-degree-

¹ All parties to the appeal have consented to the filing of this brief by amici curiae.

granting institutions. AASCU is an association of more than four hundred public colleges and universities throughout the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. AAU is an association of the leading public and private research-intensive universities. APLU is an association of more than two hundred state universities, land-grant universities, and state-university systems. NAICU is an association of nearly 1,000 member colleges and associations which represents the interest of private colleges and universities, including traditional liberal arts colleges, major research universities, comprehensive universities, church- and faith-related institutions, historically black colleges, single-sex colleges, art institutions, two-year colleges, and schools of law, medicine, engineering, business and other professions.

As shown below, to adopt the unprecedented and unwarranted expansion of False Claims Act coverage that Appellants propose would severely disrupt and compromise the accreditation process for amici and their members.

ARGUMENT

The decision below accords with the deference that courts give academic judgment in the higher education accreditation context. Consistent with that deference, the district court was chary to evaluate statements

Chapman University made in the accreditation process, nor did it second-guess the accreditor's judgment that the university met accreditation standards. Appellants urge a reading of the False Claims Act that would require courts to do just that. To subject the accreditation of colleges and universities to judicial reconstruction would conflict with courts' recognition that accreditation in higher education entails paradigmatic educational judgment.

I. ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENTAILS PARADIGMATIC EDUCATIONAL JUDGMENT.

Accreditation in higher education is a collaborative process based on voluntary assessment by scholars from every academic discipline. Its main objectives are academic quality assurance and public accountability.

Accreditation typically entails three major activities: First, faculty, college and university administrators, and institutional staff conduct a prescribed self-study that is closely guided by the accrediting organization's quality criteria. That process depends on a healthy willingness to engage in candid self-criticism. Second, a team of independent academic personnel selected by the accrediting organization and acting pursuant to specified standards, reviews detailed evidence, visits the campus to interview faculty and staff, and reports its assessment and recommendations to the accrediting organization's responsible commission, which comprises academics, staff,

other professionals, and public members. Third, the accreditation commission, pursuant to extensive criteria, reviews the evidence and site-team recommendation, decides whether to accredit, and communicates the decision to the institution and other constituencies. CHEA, Recognition of Accrediting Organizations: Policy and Procedures, at 19 (2006) (Addendum A). The accreditor's role is thus to "determine . . . whether an institution has clearly defined appropriate objectives, whether it has established conditions under which it can reasonably be expected to obtain them, and whether it appears to be obtaining them." Marjorie Webster Junior Coll., Inc. v. Middle States Ass'n of Colls. & Secondary Schs., Inc., 432 F.2d 650, 657 (D.C. Cir. 1970) (citation omitted).

Such reviews necessitate highly specialized determinations, according to academic experience, standards, and more. See Parsons Coll. v. N. Cent. Ass'n of Colls. & Secondary Schs., 271 F. Supp. 65, 73 (N.D. Ill. 1967).

The "professional judgment[s]" that reviewers render in the course of accreditation involve the most fundamental types of educational issues. Wilfred Acad. of Hair & Beauty Culture v. S. Ass'n of Colls. & Schs., 957 F.2d 210, 214 (5th Cir. 1992). Accreditation requires advanced knowledge in such areas as curricula, appropriateness of student-faculty ratio to institutional or program mission, adequacy of educational facilities to the

mission, professional competency of the faculty in relation to curricula, adequacy of physical plant, effect on educational quality of demands on faculty such as teaching loads, and evaluation of student competency. See, e.g., NEASC, Commission on Institutions of Higher Educ., Standards for Accreditation (2005) (Addendum B). Teams of educators are assembled to review an institution for accreditation because the knowledge and judgment needed for the entire task exceed the proficiency of any one individual, even the wisest professor. Because accreditation decisions rest on a complex web of evaluative academic judgments, courts have long recognized that the accreditation process goes “to the heart of the concept of education itself.” Marjorie Webster, 432 F.2d at 655.

In higher education, accreditation requires — even beyond the capacity to gauge academic merit — a deep understanding of what makes a college, university or higher education program thrive. An accrediting body not only relies on “measure[s] of educational quality,” but also “seek[s] to foster . . . [an] atmosphere of academic inquiry.” Id. at 657. In that sense, the dialectical aspect of accreditation is itself educational for the subject of the review. Accreditors are drawn from the academic community because, in part, as educators they have a trained capacity to assess how to nurture the academic environment of institutions and programs. Accreditors also are

thus expected to appreciate subtle but material differences among institutional missions, and, rather than prescribing a uniform blueprint, to assure that those they accredit are meeting the standards that the mission connotes. “Accreditation . . . is as involved with educational philosophy as with yardsticks to measure the ‘quality’ of education provided.” Id.

In the United States, the role of accreditation in advancing higher education quality is critical, partly because our higher education system is so decentralized and pluralistic. The benefits of such a system were foreseen as long ago as Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 17 U.S. 518 (1819), in which Chief Justice Marshall encouraged a healthy, even rivalrous, competition between public and independent higher education institutions. Our higher education system has become unique in the world in the variety of institutions and educational missions. We have national research universities, small liberal arts colleges, sectarian colleges, community colleges, specialized schools and institutes, vocational institutions, and a host of variations. Without a shackling national curriculum and the centralized education ministry found in other countries, students here choose among a nearly dizzying array of academic programs.

To accommodate a system of so many choices, higher education accreditation, too, has needed to be decentralized, supple, and substantively

diverse. CHEA, Recognition of Accrediting Organizations: Policy and Procedures, at 19 (Addendum A). Institutional or program quality is assured by accreditors of various types, from national bodies oriented to a particular curriculum to regional organizations that accredit a spectrum of institutions ranging from comprehensive universities to schools that teach one discipline; and a university, for example, is subject to reviews by multiple accreditors in relation to its sundry programs. Id. Courts have refused to require accrediting agencies to adhere to inflexible standards; “[s]trict guidelines would strip from [accrediting] officials the discretion necessary to adequately assess the multitude of variables presented by different schools.” Med. Inst. of Minn. v. Nat’l Ass’n of Trade & Technical Schs., 817 F.2d 1310, 1314 (8th Cir. 1987). Accreditation standards “are not guides for the layman but for professionals in the field of education. Definiteness may prove, in another view, to be arbitrariness.” Parsons Coll., 271 F. Supp. at 73.

The district court decision in this case is consistent with the proposition that higher education accreditation is fundamental educational judgment.

II. COURTS APPROPRIATELY GIVE DEFERENCE TO EDUCATIONAL JUDGMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION ACCREDITATION.

In cases that present a question of the merit of educational judgments, courts have been very reluctant to review such judgment. For example, the courts “refus[e] . . . to extend common law rules of liability to colleges where doing so would interfere with the college administration’s good faith performance of its core functions.” J. Peter Byrne, Academic Freedom: A Special Concern of the First Amendment, 99 Yale L.J. 251, 323 (1989). The principle is bedrock law. “[T]he consistency of result and invocation of the need for judicial restraint whenever internal university decisions are challenged by an unhappy student or professor has been sufficiently impressive that a competent practitioner today would advise such a student or professor that her chances of success are low or nil.” Id.

This principle of deference to educational judgment applies forcefully to higher education accreditation decisions. First, accreditation decisions implicate academic freedom. Accreditors review an institution’s performance on such fundamental matters as faculty composition (“who may teach”), curricula (“what may be taught”), modes of instruction (“how it shall be taught”), and composition of the student body (“who may be admitted to study”). Cf. Sweezy v. New Hampshire, 354 U.S. 234, 263

(1957) (Frankfurter, J., joined by Harlan, J., concurring in the result) (The academy depends on “‘four essential freedoms’ of a university — to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study.”). See In re Nasson Coll. (Nasson Coll. v. New England Ass’n of Schs. & Colls., Inc.), 80 B.R. 600, 606 (Bankr. D. Me. 1988) (“One of the distinctive features of American Education [sic] is that the development and maintenance of educational standards are the responsibilities of nongovernmental, voluntary accrediting associations.”). Self-regulation in matters of educational quality is indispensable to academic freedom.

Second, courts are not well positioned to review highly specialized accreditation decisions made on academic grounds. “Judicial noninterference is especially appropriate” here because accrediting agencies are “[s]pecialized bodies” that “are better suited than are courts to evaluate the effectiveness of a[n] [academic] program.” Gupta v. New Britain Gen. Hosp., 687 A.2d 111, 119-20 (Conn. 1996); Cruz Berrios v. Accreditation Council for Graduate Med. Educ., 218 F. Supp. 2d 140, 143-44 (D.P.R. 2002).

Third, sound, judicially enforceable standards would be hard to conceive and apply in the accreditation context. Ambrose v. New England

Ass'n of Schs. & Colls., Inc., 252 F.3d 488, 499 (1st Cir. 2001) (citing “the lack of a satisfactory standard of care by which to evaluate educators’ professional judgments and the patent undesirability of having courts attempt to assess the efficacy of the operations of academic institutions”). Application of accreditation standards to particular circumstances — the main task of the accrediting organization — requires nuanced judgment of educators trained for the task. See Med. Inst., 817 F.2d at 1314; Parsons Coll., 271 F. Supp. at 73; Wilfred Acad., 957 F.2d at 214. And, as shown above, accreditation criteria necessarily must be adapted to the type of institution or program and the particular institution’s mission. (Different accreditation criteria apply, for example, to a small liberal arts college than to a large research university.).

With these and related considerations in mind, courts understandably have accorded accreditors’ academic determinations great deference. Ambrose, 252 F.3d at 195; Wilfred Acad., 957 F.2d at 214. They do so mindful that accreditation is essentially the amalgam of educational judgment.

A certain amount of flexibility in fashioning accrediting standards long has been recognized as a virtue. . . . This makes perfect sense: after all, benchmarks for accreditation are not intended as reference points for laymen. To the contrary, their *raison d’etre* is to guide professionals in a particular field of endeavor (here, education).

Ambrose, 252 F.3d at 495. “Consequently, courts are not free to conduct a de novo review or to substitute their judgment for the professional judgment of the educators involved in the accreditation process.” Wilfred Acad., 957 F.2d at 214 (citations omitted). Courts will not second-guess an accrediting body’s decision to employ a set of standards or “prob[e] into the association’s motives behind its rules.” Id. at 215.

In sum, amici believe that were the accreditation process in higher education converted from a collegial discipline in self-improvement to a more adversarial and guarded encounter, neither judges nor educators, nor the public interests to which judges and educators are accountable, would be well served.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, amici urge that the judgment of the district court be affirmed.

Dated: June 3, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ada Meloy

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RULE 32(A)(7) CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32(a)(7)(C)(i), I certify that the foregoing *Brief of Amici Curiae* was prepared using Microsoft® Office Word 2003, that it uses a proportionately-spaced typeface of 14 points or more, and that it contains 2096 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32(a)(7)(B)(iii).

/s/ Ada Meloy
Ada Meloy

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on June 3, 2009, I electronically filed the foregoing *Brief of Amici Curiae* with the Clerk of the Court for the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit using the Court's CM/ECF system. I further certify that on June 3, 2009, I served copies of the foregoing *Brief of Amici Curiae* on the following individuals via the Court's CM/ECF system or via U.S. Mail as indicated:

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ADDENDUM

A

**Council for
Higher Education
Accreditation**

**Recognition of
Accrediting Organizations

Policy and Procedures**

*Approved by the CHEA Board of Directors
September 28, 1998
Revised by the CHEA Board of Directors
January 23, 2006*

CHEA

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RECOGNITION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

1. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed in 1996 following an extensive and searching debate about the appropriate role for a national organization concerned with accreditation of higher education institutions and programs. Presidents of American universities and colleges established CHEA to strengthen higher education through strengthened accreditation of higher education institutions. As its mission statement provides, “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 accreditation bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.”
2. CHEA carries forward a long tradition that recognition of accrediting organizations should be a key strategy to assure quality, accountability, and improvement in higher education. Recognition by CHEA affirms that standards and processes of accrediting organizations are consistent with quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established. CHEA will recognize regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations.
3. Accreditation, as distinct from recognition of accrediting organizations, focuses on higher education institutions. Accreditation aims to assure academic quality and accountability, and to encourage improvement. Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental peer review process by the higher education community. It extends the tradition of collegial governance within the decentralized and diverse higher education enterprise. The work of accrediting organizations involves hundreds of self-evaluations and site visits each year, attracts thousands of higher education volunteer professionals, and calls for substantial investment of institutional, accrediting organization, and volunteer time and effort. Appendix A more extensively defines accreditation.

4. Recognition by CHEA shall be understood to convey only that the organization meets CHEA's recognition standards. Such recognition is not in any way intended to infringe on the right of any academic institution to determine for itself whether it should affiliate with any accrediting organization.

Recognition and accreditation occur in the context of other reviews. The federal government, through the United States Department of Education, also recognizes accrediting organizations. Federal, as distinct from CHEA, recognition aims to assure that the standards of accrediting organizations meet expectations for institutional and program participation in federal initiatives, such as student aid. State licensure reviews, too, serve important public purposes, including consumer protection in the higher education field.

CHEA RECOGNITION PURPOSES AND REQUIREMENTS

5. CHEA recognition of accrediting organizations has three basic purposes:

- **TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC QUALITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that advance academic quality in higher education; that those standards emphasize student achievement and high expectations of teaching and learning, research, and service; and that those standards are developed within the framework of institutional mission.
- **TO DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that assure accountability through consistent, clear, and coherent communication to the public and the higher education community about the results of educational efforts. Accountability also includes a commitment by the accrediting organization to involve the public in accreditation decision making.
- **TO ENCOURAGE, WHERE APPROPRIATE, SCRUTINY AND PLANNING FOR CHANGE AND FOR NEEDED IMPROVEMENT.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that encourage institutions to plan, where appropriate, for change and for needed improvement; to develop and sustain activities that anticipate and address needed change; and to stress student achievement.

6. CHEA acknowledges, respects, and is committed to the enhancement of the mission of accrediting organizations. CHEA has responsibility to advance, through the recognition process, the quality and public understanding of accreditation and of recognized accrediting organizations.

7. CHEA's primary focus is quality assurance and quality improvement. Accrediting organizations that seek CHEA recognition must demonstrate the quality of their activities and the pertinence and value of their activities to higher education and the public interest.

8. Accrediting organizations seek to demonstrate that they meet CHEA eligibility and recognition standards.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS

9. **ELIGIBILITY.** To be eligible for CHEA recognition, the accreditation organization:
- A. demonstrates that the organization's mission and scope are consistent with the CHEA *Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy* (Appendix B), including that a majority of the institutions and programs accredited by the organization grant higher education degrees. The *Policy* provides, in part, that the recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accrediting organizations in assuring academic quality of institutions or programs;
 - B. is non-governmental;
 - C. accredits institutions that have legal authority to confer higher education degrees;
 - D. accredits institutions or programs at generally accepted higher education levels;
 - E. has written procedures that describe, officially and publicly:
 - 1. the organization's decision-making processes, policies, and procedures that lead to accreditation actions, and
 - 2. the scope of accreditation that may be granted, evaluative criteria (standards or characteristics) used, and levels of accreditation status conferred;
 - F. has procedures that include a self-evaluation by the institution or program and on-site review by a visiting team, or has alternative processes that CHEA considers to be valid;
 - G. demonstrates independence from any parent entity, or sponsoring entity, for the conduct of accreditation activities and determination of accreditation status; and

- H. is operational, with more than one completed accreditation review, including action by the accreditation decision-making body at each degree level, or for each type of program, identified in the statement of proposed recognized scope of accreditation.

SCOPE OF RECOGNITION

10. **RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.** As part of eligibility and recognition reviews, applicants for recognition will supply information to enable CHEA to determine whether recognition is warranted and what the recognized scope of accreditation will be, including:

- a clear statement of proposed scope of accreditation activity;
- a clear statement of the accrediting organization's purposes and why those purposes are in the public interest; and
- a description of the accrediting organization and its activities; the quality, pertinence, and value of those activities; and the ways in which those activities serve higher education and the public interest.

When providing this information, applicants demonstrate that:

- the statement of proposed scope addresses the types of institutions, the programs to be reviewed, degree levels, and the geographic boundaries of accreditation activity, including the extent of non-U.S. accreditation, if any;
- the statement of proposed scope is consistent with organizational mission statements, charters, bylaws, candidacy requirements, and other requirements for accreditation and affiliation; and
- the accrediting organization has had consultation with appropriate constituencies.

11. **CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.** The CHEA Committee on Recognition ("Committee") will review requests for change of recognized scope of accreditation that occur outside of the regular recognition review. An accrediting organization:

- A. notifies the Committee of its intent, including a rationale, the authorization from the accreditation decision-making body, and a time frame for conducting reviews;

- B. conducts pilot reviews to demonstrate capacity to carry out accreditation reviews under the new recognized scope of accreditation; and
- C. submits a formal request for change of recognized scope of accreditation.

RECOGNITION STANDARDS

12. RECOGNITION STANDARDS. The following six standards are applied to accrediting organizations seeking CHEA recognition:

- A. advances academic quality;
- B. demonstrates accountability;
- C. encourages, where appropriate, self-scrutiny and planning for change and for needed improvement;
- D. employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision making;
- E. demonstrates ongoing review of accreditation practices; and
- F. possesses sufficient resources.

12A. ADVANCES ACADEMIC QUALITY. Advancing academic quality is at the core of voluntary accreditation. “Academic quality” refers to results associated with teaching, learning, research, and service within the framework of institutional mission. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has:

- 1. a clear description of academic quality in the context of institutional or program mission;
- 2. standards or policies that the institutions or programs will have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met;
- 3. standards or policies that include expectations of institutional or program quality, including student achievement, consistent with mission;
- 4. standards or policies that focus on educational quality while respecting the institution’s responsibility to set priorities and to control how the institution or program is structured and operates, and that incorporate an awareness of how programs function within the broader purposes of the institution; and

5. standards or policies designed to foster desired or needed student achievement and that refer to resources only to the extent required for students to emerge from institutions or programs appropriately prepared, or to address health and safety in the delivery of programs.

12B. DEMONSTRATES ACCOUNTABILITY. The accrediting organization demonstrates public accountability in two ways. It has standards that call for institutions to provide consistent information about academic quality and student achievement and thus to foster continuing public awareness, confidence, and investment. Second, the accrediting organization itself demonstrates public involvement in its accreditation activities for the purpose of obtaining perspectives independent of the accrediting organization. Representatives of the public may include students, parents, persons from businesses and the professions, elected and appointed officials, and others. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented:

1. accreditation standards or policies that require institutions or programs routinely to provide reliable information to the public on their performance, including student achievement as determined by the institution or program;
2. accreditation standards or policies that focus only on the institutions or programs seeking accreditation and do not extend to other offerings;
3. accreditation standards or policies that require institutions to distinguish accurately between programs that have achieved accredited status and those that have not;
4. policies and procedures that include representatives of the public in decision making and policy setting;
5. policies or procedures, as developed by the accrediting organization through appropriate consultation with institutions or programs, to inform the public of decisions on accreditation status;
6. policies or procedures that call for substantive and timely response to legitimate public concerns and complaints;
7. policies or procedures that call for appropriate consultation regarding, and resolution of conflicts between, accreditation standards and state or local laws governing the institution or program seeking accreditation; and

8. standards, policies, or procedures that, when the accrediting organization engages in international activities, assure reasonable efforts to communicate and consult with appropriate governmental and nongovernmental accreditation or quality assurance entities in other countries.

12C. ENCOURAGES, WHERE APPROPRIATE, SELF-SCRUTINY AND PLANNING FOR CHANGE AND FOR NEEDED IMPROVEMENT. The accrediting organization encourages, where appropriate, ongoing self-examination and planning for change. Such self-scrutiny and planning entail thoughtful assessment of quality (especially student achievement) in the context of the institution's mission. Encouragement of such self-scrutiny and planning should not be confused with solely a demand for additional resources, but rather should enable institutions and programs to focus on effective ways to achieve their institution and program goals. Such self-scrutiny and planning are means to enhance the usefulness of accreditation to institutions and programs. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented standards or policies that:

1. stress self-examination and self-analysis by institutions or programs for planning, where appropriate, for change and for needed improvement, in the context of institutional mission;
2. enable institutions and programs to be creative and diverse in determining how to organize themselves structurally, how best to use their resources, and what personnel and other policies and procedures are needed to attain their student achievement goals;
3. encourage institutions or programs to innovate or experiment; and
4. require the accrediting organization to distinguish clearly between actions necessary for accreditation and actions that are considerations for improvement.

12D. EMPLOYS APPROPRIATE AND FAIR PROCEDURES IN DECISION MAKING. The accrediting organization maintains appropriate and fair policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances. The accreditation process includes ongoing participation by higher education professionals and the public in decision making about accreditation policies and procedures. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it has implemented standards, policies, or procedures that:

1. require participation by higher education professionals and the public;

2. foster reasonable consistency in reviews of institutions or programs while respecting varying institution or program purposes and mission;
3. assure that the process to deny or remove accreditation is specified and fair, and inform the institution or program about the process to be used and actions that may be taken; and
4. assure a specified and fair appeals process when there is an action to deny or remove accreditation; inform the institution or program about the process by which the appeal will be conducted, the grounds for appeal, and any costs associated with an appeal; and continue the current accreditation status of the institution or program until an appeal decision is rendered.

12E. DEMONSTRATES ONGOING REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION PRACTICES. Even as higher education institutions and programs undertake ongoing self-scrutiny to maintain and improve quality, accrediting organizations need self-scrutiny of their accrediting practices. Such review should also include examination of the accreditor's impact on institutions and responsiveness to the broader accreditation and higher education community. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it sustains ongoing:

1. critical self-review that can further responsiveness, flexibility, and accountability when the accrediting organization works with institutions, programs, and the public;
2. initiatives that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services to institutions or programs;
3. review of its value to the institution in its entirety and to the higher education community; and
4. review, within its resources, of the impact of its standards and procedures on institutions or programs.

12F. POSSESSES SUFFICIENT RESOURCES. Accreditors must have and maintain predictable and stable resources if they are to meet the expectations of institutions, programs, and the public. To be recognized, the accrediting organization presents evidence that it:

1. has adequate financial, staff, and operational resources to perform its accreditation functions efficiently and effectively; and
2. conducts ongoing review of its capacity to support its accreditation mission.

COMMITTEE ON RECOGNITION

13. **MEMBERSHIP.** The Committee is appointed by the CHEA Board of Directors (“Board of Directors”) upon recommendation by the President of CHEA in consultation with CHEA-recognized accrediting organizations. The Committee is responsible for considering the eligibility and recognition status of new and continuing accrediting organizations. The Committee is accountable to the Board of Directors and forwards its recommendations for eligibility and recognition to the Board. The Committee will consist of nine (9) members, each serving a three (3)-year term. The Committee will include public members, members from regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations, and members from colleges and universities. CHEA will seek participation that reflects the diversity of the accrediting community and higher education institutions.

14. **CONDUCT OF MEETINGS.** The Committee, in consultation with the President of CHEA, will establish the time, place, and procedures for its meetings. The Committee will consider all materials it deems pertinent that are generated by the recognition review. The Committee will review an accrediting organization at regularly scheduled meetings.

15. **COMMITTEE RELATIONSHIP TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Committee advises the Board of Directors concerning eligibility, recognition, and change of recognized scope of accreditation of accrediting organizations. With due regard for the Committee’s advice, the Board of Directors reviews the Committee’s reports and recommendations and makes final determinations as to eligibility, recognition, and change of recognized scope of accreditation of accrediting organizations. Members of the Board of Directors are not eligible for service on the Committee.

RECOGNITION PROCESS

16. **FREQUENCY OF RECOGNITION REVIEW AND INTERIM REPORTS.** At a minimum, the accrediting organization will undergo a recognition review every ten years. Recognized accrediting organizations will provide interim reports, normally at the end of the third and sixth years. The reports focus on major changes, e.g., governance, relationships with sponsoring entities, standards, policies or procedures, that relate to CHEA eligibility and recognition standards and that demonstrate that the organization continues to meet the standards.

17. REVIEW OUT OF SEQUENCE. CHEA may elect to review a recognized accrediting organization out of sequence when:

- A.** the accrediting organization proposes to change the scope of its recognition or other fundamental aspects of its organization or accreditation activities, including major changes in governance, relationships with sponsoring entities, standards, policies, or procedures that may affect the ability of the organization to meet CHEA eligibility or recognition standards; or
- B.** there has been a pattern of documented concerns related to CHEA eligibility or recognition standards from institutions or programs following accreditation reviews by the accrediting organization over time, and received by CHEA, and the institutions or programs have utilized the accrediting organization's procedures for addressing complaints; or
- C.** there have been documented concerns that, in its judgment, the Committee believes indicate that the organization may not be meeting one or more of the CHEA eligibility or recognition standards.

18. WITHDRAWAL OF APPLICATION. Organizations may withdraw an application for eligibility or recognition at any time in the recognition process up to consideration by the CHEA Board of Directors. If an application is withdrawn before Committee action, the Committee and the Board of Directors will be informed in executive session. If an application is withdrawn after Committee action, the withdrawal and the Committee's action will be reported at the next public CHEA Board of Directors meeting.

19. CEO LETTER OF INTENT TO CHEA. The chief executive officer of the accrediting organization will send a letter with an application fee to CHEA. CHEA staff will acknowledge the letter of intent and supply information about the recognition process, a schedule, and a copy of the CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*. The Committee will be informed of the letter of intent.

20. CONSIDERATION OF ELIGIBILITY. An accrediting organization seeking recognition by CHEA demonstrates to the Committee that it meets CHEA's eligibility standards. The Committee will review an accrediting organization's documentation and consider whether such documentation satisfies eligibility standards.

21. The Committee will make its recommendation to the Board of Directors as to the eligibility of an accrediting organization and will notify the accrediting organization within thirty (30) days

after the recommendation. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the notice will include a statement of the reasons for that recommendation and will identify the specific eligibility standards that the accrediting organization does not meet.

22. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should be considered eligible for CHEA recognition and the Board of Directors determines that the organization is eligible, the recognition process will proceed.

23. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the accrediting organization may request that the Board of Directors review the recommendation of ineligibility. The accrediting organization must submit a request for review in writing to the President of CHEA within 30 days after receipt of notice of the Committee's recommendation. The request for review must address any alleged procedural errors in the recognition process and any alleged errors of fact or interpretation in the Committee's recommendation and include any additional information that addresses the concerns raised by the Committee. The Committee will cease the recognition process unless, after review by the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization is determined to be eligible for CHEA recognition. The Board of Directors will review the Committee's recommendation under the procedures described below at Paragraphs 34-40.

24. Before the Committee and the Board of Directors act on the accrediting organization's application for CHEA recognition, they will confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility for CHEA recognition.

25. **COSTS.** Applicant organizations will bear all fees and costs of the recognition review. These include a fee for the review, observation visit expenses, duplication, mailing, and all related costs.

26. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT.** Upon confirmation of eligibility and payment of the review fee, CHEA will make public through CHEA publications that the accrediting organization has requested a recognition review. The notice will be sent to the accrediting organization for publication. CHEA will also announce the date and location of the accrediting organization's public presentation to the Committee.

27. **SELF-EVALUATION.** A self-evaluation that demonstrates that the applicant meets the six standards set forth in Paragraph 12A through Paragraph 12F is required for CHEA recognition. CHEA will consider a range of processes for conducting the self-evaluation and for providing expected evidence.

28. OBSERVATION VISITS. The Committee will require that during the recognition review there be an observation visit to a decision-making meeting of the accrediting organization. The purposes of the visit are to observe the organization's decision-making activities as these relate to CHEA eligibility and recognition standards, and to report relevant information to the Committee.

Visitor(s), identified by CHEA staff and satisfactory to the Committee, will be chosen by CHEA in consultation with the accrediting organization. The accrediting organization will have the opportunity to review any visit report and attach comments. The full report of any visit, with comments, will be distributed to the Committee. Reports of observation visits are expected to be confidential to CHEA and the accrediting organization unless otherwise required by law.

29. THIRD-PARTY COMMENT. Third-party comment may be either oral or written and is limited to the accrediting organization's efforts to meet the CHEA recognition standards. All third parties requesting the opportunity to make comment related to an accrediting organization's recognition review are to notify CHEA staff and provide the names and affiliations of the persons requesting the opportunity to make third-party comment and a description of the organization(s) they represent. CHEA staff will review third-party requests for oral or written comment for completeness and applicability to eligibility and recognition standards.

Third parties who wish to appear for oral comment before the CHEA Committee on Recognition are to provide an outline of the proposed oral comment. Where in the judgment of the Committee doing so may be useful, the Committee may invite third parties to appear before the Committee. The accrediting organization will receive the outline of the proposed oral comment of third parties invited to appear. Accrediting organizations will have the opportunity to review and respond to proposed oral comment.

Third parties wishing to make written comment are to provide the text of the third-party comment. After review by CHEA staff, written comment will be provided to the Committee and the accrediting organization. Accrediting organizations will have the opportunity to review and respond to written comment.

Third parties are to provide an outline of their oral comment or the text of their written comment in sufficient time to provide for review by CHEA staff, review and response by the accrediting organization, and for the outline or text to be provided to the Committee.

CHEA staff will notify all concerned parties of the location, date, and time of the public presentation.

30. PUBLIC PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE. The Committee will hold a public meeting at which the accrediting organization, and, where applicable, third parties that have met the requirements of Paragraph 29 above may make oral presentations concerning the qualification of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition. Committee members may ask questions of the accrediting organization and third parties, who will have an opportunity to respond. If, in the judgment of the Committee, participation by observation visitors would be useful, the Committee may ask observation visitors to attend and respond to questions related to the visit report. The accrediting organization will have the opportunity to respond to any observation visitor comment. The Committee will make a transcript of the public meeting. The accrediting organization should ordinarily be represented by the executive officer of the accrediting unit and the chair of the decision-making body.

31. COMMITTEE ACTION ON APPLICATIONS FOR RECOGNITION OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. For applications for recognition, following the public presentation by the accrediting organization, the Committee will meet in executive session to confirm the continuing eligibility of the accrediting organization and consider the qualifications of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition based on the record before the Committee. For applications for change of recognized scope of accreditation, the Committee will review the application materials submitted by the accrediting organization. The Committee will take one of the following actions concerning the accrediting organization:

- A.** recommend recognition or acceptance of change of recognized scope of accreditation of the accrediting organization;
- B.** recommend recognition or acceptance of change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization with a requirement of one or more written reports to the Committee that address one or more of the CHEA recognition standards and, if pertinent, the change of CHEA recognized scope of accreditation procedures;
- C.** recommend deferral of action on recognition or on change of recognized scope of accreditation pending receipt and review of, and action by CHEA on, additional information from the accrediting organization. The information required will be clearly specified by the Committee and related to one or more of the six CHEA recognition standards, and, if pertinent, the CHEA change of recognized scope of accreditation. The deferral will be accompanied by deadlines for receipt of information and for a response by the Committee; or

- D. recommend denial of recognition or of change of recognized scope of accreditation, including reasons for the denial in accordance with applicable CHEA policy.

32. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE COMMITTEE. The Committee will notify the accrediting organization of the Committee's recommendation related to the actions described in Paragraph 31, and provide the complete text of the Committee's recommendation, including a statement of the reasons for its recommendation. If an accrediting organization does not meet one or more of the recognition standards, the statement of reasons will identify the recognition standards that the accrediting organization does not meet and the reasons for that determination. If a change of recognized scope of accreditation is not recommended, the complete text of the Committee's recommendation, including the reasons for the recommendation, will be provided. Any suggestions for improvement or other commentary by the Committee will be distinguished from requirements for recognition under the CHEA recognition standards. Notification to the accrediting organization will be sent within thirty (30) days following the Committee meeting.

33. ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION RESPONSE. The accrediting organization will forward its written response to the CHEA office within thirty (30) days from receipt of the report. The response may:

- A. address any asserted procedural errors in the recognition process;
- B. address any asserted factual errors or errors of interpretation in the report; and
- C. include additional information that addresses concerns raised by the Committee.

34. REVIEW BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Board of Directors will act on a recommendation of the Committee as to eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation by:

- A. accepting the recommendation;
- B. rejecting the recommendation;
- C. returning the matter to the Committee for further consideration; or
- D. taking such other action as the Board of Directors deems appropriate.

35. PRESUMPTION OF REGULARITY. In considering the eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization, the Board of Directors will

consider the recommendation of the Committee, the response of the accrediting organization, and the record before the Committee. The Board of Directors will presume that the factual findings of the Committee are accurate unless the accrediting organization demonstrates that a factual finding material to the Committee's recommendation is clearly erroneous based on the record before the Committee. If the accrediting organization wishes to provide additional information concerning any factual determinations of the Committee, the Board of Directors may return the matter to the Committee for further consideration.

36. ACTIONS TO ACCEPT OR DEFER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY, RECOGNITION, OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. The Board of Directors may accept or defer action on a recommendation of the Committee that an accrediting organization be deemed eligible, be recognized, or change its recognized scope of accreditation, without any further submission or appearance by the accrediting organization other than such submission or appearance as the Board may require to confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility.

37. ACTIONS TO DENY ELIGIBILITY, RECOGNITION, OR CHANGE OF RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION. The Board of Directors will not act on a recommendation of ineligibility, or non-recognition, or denial of change of recognized scope of accreditation or reject a recommendation of eligibility, of recognition, or of change of recognized scope of accreditation before providing the accrediting organization with notice and an opportunity to appear before the Board of Directors. The appearance of an accrediting organization will include an opportunity to present its written response to the recommendation of the Committee and any supplement to that response that the accrediting organization may wish to submit. At the request of the accrediting organization and with the concurrence of the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board of Directors. The accrediting organization may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board of Directors, but not to speak unless requested to do so by the Board of Directors.

38. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Board of Directors will notify accrediting organizations of its action on the recommendations of the Committee as to eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation, within thirty (30) days after taking such action. If the Board of Directors recognizes an accrediting organization, the notice will specify the scope of the accrediting organization's recognition (including, where indicated, the geographic area, the types of higher education institutions or programs that the accrediting organization may accredit, and the degrees and certificates awarded by higher education institutions accredited by the accrediting organization) and the recognition period. If the action is to deny eligibility, recognition, or change of the recognized scope of accreditation of the

accrediting organization, the notice will include a statement of the reasons for that action. The statement of reasons will identify the eligibility or recognition standards that the accrediting organization does not meet, or the reasons that the change of recognized scope of accreditation is not accepted.

39. RECONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Within thirty (30) days following the action taken by the Board of Directors on a recommendation by the Committee, the accrediting organization may request, in writing, reconsideration by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will determine in its discretion whether reconsideration is warranted, and ordinarily will not reconsider a matter unless, in its judgment, the accrediting organization has demonstrated substantial reason to believe that there was plain and material error in the review, abuse of process, or both. In the event the Board of Directors reconsiders an action, the accrediting organization will be invited to submit a written statement of its position and will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board, and may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board of Directors, but not to speak unless requested to do so by the Board of Directors.

40. PUBLIC NOTICE. All decisions of the Board of Directors to recognize, not recognize, or defer recognition of an accrediting organization, including initial and continued recognition of accrediting organizations and change of recognized scope of accreditation, will be public information. CHEA will publish the action of the Board of Directors, including a summary of the reasons for these decisions.

41. WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION. CHEA may withdraw recognition of an accrediting organization for sufficient cause, including a determination by CHEA that the accrediting organization no longer meets the requirements for eligibility or the standards for recognition. CHEA will withdraw recognition in accordance with procedures deemed sufficient by CHEA to afford the accrediting organization appropriate notice and opportunity to respond.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

42. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. CHEA upholds the principle that members of the Committee, the Board of Directors, and consultants such as readers and observation site visitors (collectively, for purposes of this paragraph, "CHEA representatives") will be impartial and objective in considering the eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations.

- A. When there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest, CHEA expects its representatives to recuse themselves as a matter of personal and professional integrity from consideration of an accrediting organization. The CHEA representative will have primary responsibility for compliance with this policy.
- B. CHEA representatives will recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition where the CHEA representative receives monetary compensation from the accrediting organization as an employee or consultant or otherwise, or holds a position of authority or governance role with the accrediting organization, such as commission member, director, or officer, whether paid or unpaid.
- C. In addressing conflicts of interest, CHEA representatives will take into account whether they (i) had in the recent past, or expect to have, a financial relationship or governance role with the accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition; (ii) are participating in an accreditation review by the applicant for CHEA recognition; (iii) have a financial relationship or governance role with an accrediting organization that is a direct competitor of an applicant for CHEA recognition; (iv) have or have expressed a predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition that would impair objectivity in the recognition process; (v) have a close relative with a pertinent relationship, role, or predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition; and (vi) other considerations they deem pertinent.
- D. In the event a CHEA representative, with respect to an apparent or actual conflict of interest, does not voluntarily recuse himself or herself, the Board of Directors may take such action as the Board of Directors considers appropriate.

43. **PERSONAL GAIN.** In the course of their CHEA service, CHEA representatives will observe high standards of personal integrity. For example, CHEA representatives will not solicit or accept, for themselves or any other person, gifts, gratuities, entertainment, loans, or other consideration from persons who are associated with an applicant for CHEA recognition, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of an applicant, or any other third party that the CHEA representative knows intends to comment on the applicant in the recognition review; provided that this paragraph does not bar acceptance of items of insubstantial value, consistent with personal integrity, in the ordinary course of service as a CHEA representative.

44. COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY. CHEA representatives will maintain the confidentiality of information pertaining to the recognition process. During the recognition process a CHEA representative will not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for CHEA recognition with the applicant, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of the applicant, or any other third party that intends to comment on the applicant, except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the CHEA representative in the recognition review. CHEA representatives will refer inquiries concerning the recognition process to CHEA staff. CHEA will communicate the results of the recognition review to the applicant and the public as provided in Paragraphs 38 and 40.

45. AMENDMENT. CHEA reserves the right to amend this *Recognition Policy and Procedures* from time to time when, in its judgment, the interests of sound and reliable accreditation, recognition of accreditors, or CHEA administration are served by doing so.

Appendix A

Accreditation Defined

Accreditation in higher education is defined as a collegial process based on self- and peer assessment for public accountability and improvement of academic quality. Peers assess the quality of an institution or academic program and assist the faculty and staff in improvement. An accreditation of an academic program or an entire institution typically involves three major activities:

- **The faculty, administrators, and staff of the institution or academic program conduct a self-study using the accrediting organization's set of expectations about quality (standards, criteria) as their guide.**
- **A team of peers, selected by the accrediting organization, reviews the evidence, visits the campus to interview the faculty and staff, and writes a report of its assessment, including a recommendation to the commission of the accrediting organization (group of peer faculty and staff, professionals, and public members).**
- **Guided by a set of expectations about quality and integrity, the commission reviews the evidence and recommendation, makes a judgment, and communicates the decision to the institution and other constituencies if appropriate.**

Accreditation is an integral part of our system of higher education. Our system consists of both public and private institutions with a wide range of types of missions, from national research universities and regional comprehensive institutions to liberal arts colleges and very small faith-related colleges to community colleges and vocational institutions. The genius of this system is that, unlike other countries, we do not have mandatory national curricula for colleges; we do not have a national ministry of education that regulates academic standards; and students are free to choose the type of education that they pursue, depending on their ability, financial resources, and educational goals. Because it developed from this diverse set of institutions, accreditation is a flexible and adaptive process. Institutions that seek accreditation can do so from a wide range of accrediting organizations – from national bodies that are oriented to a particular type of institution, to regional organizations that encompass a wide range of types of institutions, to specialized organizations that focus on a single discipline or profession.

Appendix B

Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy^{*}

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.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) invites participation by degree-granting institutions of higher education that are accredited by a CHEA-recognized accreditation organization.

The goals of CHEA recognition are to advance quality assurance through accreditation to serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers. All eligible organizations must meet the general standards enunciated in this recognition process. The recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accreditation organizations in assuring the academic quality of institutions and programs through standards, policies, and procedures that address appropriate rigor, degree nomenclature, and at the undergraduate level, a general education program designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and at all levels, advanced intellectual inquiry.

Recognition will be determined in accordance with established standards and rules of good practice that ensure fair treatment, promotion and maintenance of academic quality, and respect for institutional autonomy.

Organizations that accredit institutions will be eligible to apply for recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation if the majority of their accredited institutions are degree-granting. Organizations that accredit programs will be eligible to apply for recognition by CHEA if the majority of the accredited programs are degree-granting. An accreditation organization is responsible for providing assurance of the percentage of degree-granting units within its constituency and demonstrating its general support with the goals of CHEA recognition.**

^{*} In pursuit of its mission to advance higher education, and in light of knowledge and experience, CHEA reserves the right to amend the foregoing and/or grant recognition to such accrediting entities that in CHEA's judgment warrant such recognition.

^{**}This policy was approved by the CHEA Board of Directors on May 12, 1997 and revised by the board of directors on January 23, 2006.

Appendix C

Steps in Recognition Review

The sequence of recognition review will normally be as follows:

- Accrediting organization files letter of intent and review fee to apply for CHEA recognition.
- CHEA sends accrediting organization recognition review materials.
- Accrediting organization returns eligibility portion of application to CHEA.
- Committee makes recommendation on eligibility for Board of Directors' consideration and notifies accrediting organization.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation on eligibility and, if indicated by CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*, provides accrediting organization with opportunity to appear before the Board.
- CHEA and accrediting organization mutually agree on visitor(s) and schedule for observation visit to be carried out during the recognition review.
- Accrediting organization completes recognition self-evaluation and forwards to CHEA staff. If requested by the accrediting organization, CHEA staff will provide consultation.
- Observation visit reports are due in CHEA office and forwarded to accrediting organization for comment.
- Third party comment, if any, is due in CHEA office and forwarded for comment to accrediting organization as indicated by CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*.
- Accrediting organization's response to observation visit reports and third-party comment is due in CHEA office. Accrediting organization response and recognition self-evaluation are forwarded to Committee.
- Accrediting organization makes public presentation to Committee, Committee sends recommendation on recognition to Board of Directors, and Committee notifies accrediting organization of recommendation.
- Accrediting organization response, if any, is due to Committee.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation and, if necessary, provides accrediting organization opportunity to appear before the Board.
- Board of Directors reconsiders recognition, if requested.

In developing the schedule, CHEA staff will make reasonable accommodations for the accrediting organization's internal review procedures pertinent to the recognition process.

Appendix D

Glossary for CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*

This Glossary defines key terms in the CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures. The definitions apply only to the Recognition Policy and Procedures and are not intended for use with any other statement or policy.

Academic Quality: The results associated with teaching, learning, research, and service within the context of institutional or program mission.

Accountability: The responsibility of an accrediting organization to have standards, policies, or procedures that institutions and programs provide information to the public about academic quality and student achievement and for the accrediting organization to provide information about accreditation processes and results.

Accreditation: A collegial process based on self- and peer review for quality assurance, accountability, and improvement of academic quality in higher education.

Accreditation Status: The decision made by the accrediting organization as a result of a review of an institution or program that identifies the level of accreditation of the institution or program, e.g., candidate, accredited, denial, probation, termination, withdrawal, suspension.

Accrediting Organization: A private, non-governmental association organized to evaluate institutions or programs and render judgments about the accredited status of the institution or program.

Change of Recognized Scope of Accreditation: A change in the range of accreditation activities, e.g., type of program or institution, geography, level of degrees, by a CHEA-recognized accrediting organization where the organization has completed the CHEA change of scope process.

Committee Action: Recommendations about eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation made by the CHEA Committee on Recognition to the CHEA Board of Directors.

Conflict of Interest Policy: CHEA's procedures to provide that its representatives are impartial and objective in considering the eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations.

Deferral: Decision to postpone action on an eligibility, recognition, or change of scope application until receipt of additional information.

Eligibility Standards: Requirements set by CHEA that an accrediting organization must meet in order to be considered for recognition.

Favorable Action: Approval of CHEA eligibility, recognition or change of recognized scope of accreditation of an accrediting organization as determined by the CHEA Board of Directors.

Letter of Intent: Formal statement submitted by the chief executive officer of an accrediting organization to CHEA stating interest in pursuing eligibility, recognition, or change of recognized scope of accreditation.

Non-governmental: The status of an accrediting organization as a privately incorporated organization.

Observation Visit: A visit by CHEA representatives to a meeting of an accrediting organization decision-making body during a recognition review.

Recognition: The status granted by the CHEA Board of Directors after an accrediting organization successfully completes the CHEA recognition review process.

Recognition Standards: The basis on which CHEA considers an application for recognition and renders its decision.

Reconsideration: Review by the CHEA Board of Directors of its decision to deny or remove eligibility or recognition.

Self-Evaluation: The accrediting organization's review of its accrediting activities in relation to the CHEA eligibility and recognition standards during its recognition review.

Student Achievement: Student performance as determined by an institution or program in keeping with the institution or program mission.

Third-Party Comment: Oral or written statements of parties (other than CHEA and the applicant) seeking to address an accrediting organization's efforts to meet CHEA's recognition standards.

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B

Standards for Accreditation

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Standards adopted 2005

Copies of the Commission's Standards are available on-line at
<http://cihe.neasc.org/>

Print copies may be ordered from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education,
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201, Bedford, MA 01730. Single copies are free; the charge for multiple copies
is \$5.00 per copy.

Standards for Accreditation

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Standards for Accreditation

Preamble

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., one of six regional accrediting bodies in the United States, is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization having as its primary purpose the accreditation of educational institutions. Through its evaluation activities, carried out by six commissions, the Association provides public assurance about the educational quality of those schools and colleges that seek or wish to maintain membership, which is synonymous with accreditation.

Institutions of higher learning achieve accreditation from the New England Association through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education by demonstrating they meet the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and comply with its policies. The Standards for Accreditation establish criteria for institutional quality. In addition, the Commission adopts policies that elucidate the Standards and relate to their application. Moreover, the Commission expects affiliated institutions to work toward improving their quality, increasing their effectiveness, and continually striving toward excellence. Its evaluative processes are designed to encourage such improvement.

Each of the eleven Standards articulates a dimension of institutional quality. In applying the Standards, the Commission assesses and makes a determination about the effectiveness of the institution as a whole. The institution that meets the Standards:

- has clearly defined purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning;
- has assembled and organized those resources necessary to achieve its purposes;
- is achieving its purposes;
- has the ability to continue to achieve its purposes.

The Commission recognizes that some aspects of an institution are always stronger than others. Meeting the Standards does not guarantee the quality of individual programs, courses, or graduates, but serious weaknesses in a particular area may threaten the institution's accreditation.

The Commission deals with institutional differences in ways designed to protect both educational quality and individual philosophy and practice. The Standards are essentially qualitative criteria that measure the institution's current state of educational effectiveness. They allow the Commission to appraise a wide variety of collegiate institutions, differing in purpose, size, organization, scope of program, clientele served, support, and control. By design, the Standards as explicated do not preclude perceptive and imaginative innovation aimed at increasing the effectiveness of higher education.

Institutions whose policies, practices, or resources differ significantly from those described in the Standards for Accreditation must present evidence that these are appropriate to higher education, consistent with institutional mission and purposes, and effective in meeting the intent of the Commission's Standards. The existence of collective bargaining agreements, in and of

Preamble

themselves, does not abrogate institutional or faculty obligations to comply with the Standards for Accreditation.

Self-regulation is an essential element in the success of accreditation. Thus, the Standards for Accreditation were developed through a lengthy participatory process involving the membership in articulating the dimensions of quality required of institutions of higher education deserving of the public trust. Indeed the public as well was invited to participate in this process in recognition of the importance of higher education to the individual and collective well being of our citizenry and for our economy. Thus, the Standards represent the accrued wisdom of over 200 colleges and universities and interested others about the essential elements of institutional quality, and they offer a perspective that stresses the public purposes of higher education. The Commission continually evaluates the effectiveness of its Standards and its processes for applying them, and makes such changes as conditions warrant.

Self-regulation obliges institutions to adhere to the Standards as a condition of their accredited status; accredited colleges and universities demonstrate their integrity through their continued voluntary compliance to these criteria. Adherence to the Standards is periodically reviewed through peer evaluations that are preceded by self-studies directed toward demonstrating that the institution meets the Standards and that it has effective means to ensure institutional improvement. This system of accreditation is based on institutions agreeing to participate in and to accept and profit by an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses.

Each of the eleven dimensions of institutional quality has a Statement of the Standard set forth in bold type. The considerations in determining the fulfillment of the Standard are articulated in numbered paragraphs below the Statement of the Standard, including in each case a final paragraph directing the institution's attention toward institutional effectiveness; these considerations provide a basis for institutions to undertake self study as well as a basis for institutional evaluation by visiting teams and the Commission. Because the eleven Standards represent dimensions of institutional quality, they are necessarily inter-related. Thus, considerations found in one Standard may also have application for another; for example, while there is a Standard on Integrity, considerations related to integrity may also be found in several of the other Standards.

Additional information about accreditation and the Commission may be found at its website <http://cihe.neasc.org>

January 12, 2005

Standard One

Mission and Purposes

The institution's mission and purposes are appropriate to higher education, consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and implemented in a manner that complies with the Standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The institution's mission gives direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness.

- 1.1 The mission of the institution defines its distinctive character, addresses the needs of society and identifies the students the institution seeks to serve, and reflects both the institution's traditions and its vision for the future. The institution's mission provides the basis upon which the institution identifies its priorities, plans its future and evaluates its endeavors; it provides a basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission's Standards.
- 1.2 The institution's mission is set forth in a concise statement that is formally adopted by the governing board and appears in appropriate institutional publications.
- 1.3 The institution's purposes are concrete and realistic and further define its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service. Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves.
- 1.4 The mission and purposes of the institution are accepted and widely understood by its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. They provide direction to the curricula and other activities and form the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed by the institution's individual units.

Institutional Effectiveness:

- 1.5 The institution periodically re-evaluates the content and pertinence of its mission and purposes, assessing their usefulness in providing overall direction in planning and resource allocation. The results of this evaluation are used to enhance institutional effectiveness.

Standard Two Planning and Evaluation

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

- 2.1 Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts.

Planning

- 2.2 The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities.
- 2.3 The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning.

Evaluation

- 2.4 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- 2.5 The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives.
- 2.6 Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 2.7 The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives.

Standard Three

Organization and Governance

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and where appropriate research and creative activity. It assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component.

- 3.1 The authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff are clearly described in the institution's by-laws, or an equivalent document, and in a table of organization that displays the working order of the institution. The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth in the institution's official documents and are provided with the appropriate information to undertake their respective roles. The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them.
- 3.2 The governing board is the legally constituted body ultimately responsible for the institution's quality and integrity. The board demonstrates sufficient independence to ensure it can act in the institution's best interest. The composition of the board includes representation of the public interest and reflects the areas of competence needed to fulfill its responsibilities. Fewer than one-half of the board members have any financial interest in the institution, including as employee, stock-holder, or corporate director. Members of the governing board understand, accept, and fulfill their responsibilities as fiduciaries to act honestly and in good faith in the best interest of the institution toward the achievement of its purposes in a manner free from conflicts of interest.
- 3.3 The board has a clear understanding of the institution's distinctive mission and purposes. It exercises the authority to ensure the realization of institutional mission and purposes. The board sets and reviews institutional policies; monitors the institution's fiscal solvency; and approves major new initiatives, assuring that they are compatible with institutional mission and capacity. These policies are developed in consultation with appropriate constituencies. The board assures that the institution periodically reviews its success in fulfilling its mission and achieving its purposes.
- 3.4 The board systematically develops and ensures its own effectiveness. The board enhances its effectiveness through periodic evaluation.
- 3.5 Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains appropriate and productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community. Its role and functions are effectively carried out through appropriate committees and meetings.
- 3.6 The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution. The board delegates to the chief executive officer and, as appropriate, to other constituencies the requisite

Organization and Governance

- authority and autonomy to manage the institution compatible with the board's intentions and the institutional mission.
- 3.7 The chief executive officer through an appropriate administrative structure effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purpose and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and the administration consult with faculty, students, other administrators and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives.
- 3.8 The institution's academic leadership is directly responsible to the chief executive officer, and in concert with the faculty is responsible for the quality of the academic program. The institution's organization and governance structure assure the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered. Off-campus, continuing education, distance education, international, evening, and week-end programs are clearly integrated and incorporated into the policy formation, and academic oversight, and evaluation system of the institution.
- 3.9 In multi-campus systems organized under a single governing board, the division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution is clear. Where system and campus boards share governance responsibilities or dimensions of authority, system policies and procedures are clearly defined and equitably administered.
- 3.10 Faculty exercise an important role in assuring the academic integrity of the institution's educational programs. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise.
- 3.11 The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views and judgments in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 3.12 The effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review.

Standard Four The Academic Program

The institution's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program.

- 4.1 The institution's programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution offers collegiate-level programs consisting of a curriculum of studies that leads to a degree in a recognized field of study and requires at least one year to complete. The institution for which the associate's degree is the highest awarded offers at least one program in liberal studies or another area of study widely available at the baccalaureate level of regionally accredited colleges and universities.
- 4.2 Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered.
- 4.3 Each educational program demonstrates coherence through its goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission and retention; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement. The institution offering multiple academic programs ensures that all programs meet or exceed the basic quality standards of the institution and that there is a reasonable consistency in quality among them. The institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve its academic programs.
- 4.4 The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered.
- 4.5 Degree programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning.
- 4.6 The institution ensures that students use information resources and information technology as an integral part of their education. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction and support in information literacy and information technology appropriate to the degree level and field of study.
- 4.7 Students completing an undergraduate or graduate degree program demonstrate collegiate-level skills in the English language.
- 4.8 The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its degree programs under effective institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters.

The Academic Program

- 4.9 The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The evaluation of existing programs includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives.
- 4.10 Institutions undertaking the initiation of degrees at a higher level, off-campus programs, programs that substantially broaden the scope of the academic offerings, distance learning programs, academic programs overseas, or other substantive change demonstrate their capacity to undertake such initiatives and to assure that the new academic programming meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards and policies. The institution recognizes and takes account of the increased demands on resources made by programs offered at a higher degree level.
- 4.11 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements for enrolled students so that they may complete their education with a minimum of disruption.
- 4.12 If the institution depends on resources outside its direct control (for example, classrooms, information resources, information technology, testing sites), provision is made for a clear, fixed understanding of that relationship that ensures the reasonable continued availability of those resources. Clear descriptions of the circumstances and procedures for the use of such resources are readily available to students who require them.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

- 4.13 Undergraduate degree programs are designed to give students a substantial and coherent introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, plus in-depth study in at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements in official publications and in student records.
- 4.14 Each undergraduate program includes a general education requirement and a major or concentration requirement. At the baccalaureate level, curricula include substantial requirements at the intermediate and advanced undergraduate level, with appropriate prerequisites. Wherever possible, the institution also affords undergraduate students the opportunity to pursue knowledge and understanding through unrestricted electives.

General Education

- 4.15 The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn.
- 4.16 The general education requirement in each undergraduate program ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics,

- and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another.
- 4.17 The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete at least the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate's degree program in general education.
- 4.18 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.

The Major or Concentration

- 4.19 The major or area of concentration affords the student the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in a specific disciplinary or clearly articulated interdisciplinary area above the introductory level through properly sequenced course work. Requirements for the major or area of concentration are based upon clear and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, information resources, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry. Through the major or area of concentration, the student develops an understanding of the complex structure of knowledge germane to an area of inquiry and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry. For programs designed to provide professional training, an effective relationship exists between curricular content and effective practice in the field of specialization. Graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice, its principal information resources, and its interrelatedness with other areas.

Graduate Degree Programs

- 4.20 Graduate degree programs are designed to give students a mastery of a complex field of study or professional area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements, in relevant official publications, and in the demonstrated learning experiences of graduates. Learning objectives reflect a high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization.
- 4.21 Graduate programs are not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field. Information resources, information technology, and as appropriate physical resources should exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field.
- 4.22 Institutions offering graduate degrees have an adequate staff of full-time faculty in areas appropriate to the degree offered. Faculty responsible for graduate programs are sufficient by credentials, experience, number, and time commitment for the successful accomplishment of program objectives and program improvement. The scholarly expectations of faculty exceed those expected for faculty working at the undergraduate level. Research-oriented graduate programs have a preponderance of active research scholars on their faculties. Professionally-oriented programs include faculty who are experienced professionals making scholarly contributions to the development of the field.

The Academic Program

- 4.23 Students admitted to graduate degree programs are demonstrably qualified for advanced academic study.
- 4.24 The institution's graduate programs have cohesive curricula and require scholarly and professional activities designed to advance the student substantially beyond the educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program. The demands made by the institution's graduate programs on students' intellectual and creative capacities are also significantly greater than those expected at the undergraduate level; graduate programs build upon and challenge students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence acquired at the undergraduate level. The institution offering both undergraduate and graduate degree programs assesses the relationship and interdependence of the two levels and utilizes the results for their individual and collective improvement.
- 4.25 Degree requirements of the institution's graduate programs take into account specific program purposes. Research-oriented doctoral programs, including the Ph.D., and disciplinary master's degree programs are designed to prepare students for scholarly careers; they emphasize the acquisition, organization, utilization, and dissemination of knowledge. Doctoral degree programs afford the student substantial mastery of the subject matter, theory, literature, and methodology of a significant field of study. They include a sequential development of research skills leading to the attainment of an independent research capacity. Students undertake original research that contributes to new knowledge in the chosen field of study. Disciplinary master's programs have many of the same objectives but require less sophisticated levels of mastery in the chosen field of study than does the research doctorate. While they need not require students to engage in original research, they do provide an understanding of research appropriate to the discipline and the manner in which it is conducted.
- 4.26 Professional or practice-oriented programs at the doctoral or master's degree levels are designed to prepare students for professional practice involving the application or transmission of existing knowledge or the development of new applications of knowledge within their field. Such programs afford the student a broad conceptual mastery of the field of professional practice through an understanding of its subject matter, literature, theory, and methods. They seek to develop the capacity to interpret, organize, and communicate knowledge, and to develop those analytical and professional skills needed to practice in and advance the profession. Instruction in relevant research methodology is provided, directed toward the appropriate application of its results as a regular part of professional practice. Programs include the sequential development of professional skills that will result in competent practitioners. Where there is a hierarchy of degrees within an area of professional study, programs differ by level as reflected in the expected sophistication, knowledge, and capacity for leadership within the profession by graduates.
- 4.27 Programs encompassing both research activities and professional practice define their relative emphases in program objectives that are reflected in curricular, scholarly, and program requirements.
- 4.28 Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

- 4.29 The institution's degrees and other forms of academic recognition are appropriately named, following practices common to American institutions of higher education in terms of both length and content of the programs.
- 4.30 The institution offers required and elective courses as described in publicly available print and electronic formats with sufficient availability to provide students with the opportunity to graduate within the published program length.
- 4.31 The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials. These responsibilities include course content and the delivery of the instructional program; selection, approval, professional development, and evaluation of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit. The institution retains, even with contractual or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credit or degrees are awarded. The institution awarding a joint degree demonstrates that the student learning outcomes meet the institution's own standards and those of the Commission, and that graduates are suitably prepared for employment and for further study in regionally accredited institutions.
- 4.32 The evaluation of student learning or achievement and the award of credit are based upon clearly stated criteria that reflect learning objectives and are consistently and effectively applied. They are appropriate to the degree level at which they are applied.
- 4.33 The award of credit is based on policies developed and overseen by the faculty and academic administration. There is demonstrable academic content for all experiences for which credit is awarded, including study abroad, internships, independent study, and service learning. Credit awards are consistent with the course content, appropriate to the field of study, and reflect the level and amount of student learning. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study.
- 4.34 Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only at the undergraduate level with appropriate oversight by faculty and academic administration. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students.
- 4.35 The institution publishes requirements for continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its academic programs that are compatible with its educational purposes. Graduation requirements are clearly stated in appropriate electronic and print publications and are consistently applied in the degree certification process. The degrees awarded accurately reflect student attainments.
- 4.36 Faculty, with administrative support, ensure the academic integrity of the award of grades, where applicable, and credits for individual courses. The institution works to

The Academic Program

- prevent cheating and plagiarism as well as to deal forthrightly with any instances in which they occur.
- 4.37 The institution offering programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods or via distance learning demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities. Programs and courses are designed to ensure an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter and the identification, analysis and evaluation of information resources beyond those provided directly for the course.
- 4.38 Courses and programs offered for credit off campus, through technologically mediated instruction, or through continuing education, evening or week-end divisions are consistent with the educational objectives of the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus. They receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs. Students have ready access to and support in using appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality. (See also 3.8)
- 4.39 On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs. Students enrolled in off-campus courses and/or distance learning courses have sufficient opportunities to interact with faculty regarding course content and related academic matters.
- 4.40 Institutions offering certificates based on courses offered for credit ensure the coherence and level of academic quality are consistent with its degree programs.
- 4.41 In accepting undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, the institution applies policies and procedures that ensure that credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to the student's program. The institution's policies for considering the transfer of credit are easily available to students and prospective students. The institution does not erect barriers to the acceptance of transfer credit that are unnecessary to protect its academic quality and integrity, and it seeks to establish articulation agreements with institutions from which and to which there is a significant pattern of student transfer. Such agreements are made available to those students affected by them.
- 4.42 Students complete at least one fourth of their undergraduate program, including advanced work in the major or concentration, at the institution awarding the degree. In accepting transfer credit, the institution exercises the responsibility to ensure that students have met its stated learning outcomes of programs at all degree levels. The acceptance of transfer credit does not substantially diminish the proportion of intermediate and advanced coursework in a student's academic program.
- 4.43 The institution accepts graduate credit in transfer on a strictly limited basis to preserve the integrity of the degree awarded.

Assessment of Student Learning

- 4.44 The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through

- understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The approach provides useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning, improve the experiences provided for students, and assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. Institutional support is provided for these activities.
- 4.45 The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students.
- 4.46 Expectations for student learning reflect both the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study. These expectations include statements that are consistent with the institution's mission in preparing students for further study and employment, as appropriate. (See also 1.4 and 2.6)
- 4.47 The institution's approach to understanding what and how students are learning and using the results for improvement has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty. (See also 3.10)
- 4.48 The institution's system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students learn as a result of the program. (See also 2.5, 4.8 and 4.9)
- 4.49 The institution ensures that students have systematic, substantial, and sequential opportunities to learn important skills and understandings and actively engage in important problems of their discipline or profession and that they are provided with regular and constructive feedback designed to help them improve their achievement.
- 4.50 The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Inquiry may focus on a variety of perspectives, including understanding the process of learning, being able to describe student experiences and learning outcomes in normative terms, and gaining feedback from alumni, employers, and others situated to help in the description and assessment of student learning. The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide information useful in the continuing improvement of programs and services for students.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 4.51 The institution's principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings and student learning.

Standard Five Faculty

The institution develops a faculty that is suited to the fulfillment of the institution's mission. Faculty qualifications, numbers, and performance are sufficient to accomplish the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty competently offer the institution's academic programs and fulfill those tasks appropriately assigned them.

- 5.1 Faculty categories (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct) are clearly defined by the institution as is the role of each category in fulfilling the institution's mission and purposes. Should part-time or adjunct faculty be utilized, the institution has in place policies governing their role compatible with its mission and purposes and the Standards of the Commission.
- 5.2 The preparation and qualifications of all faculty are appropriate to the field and level of their assignments. Qualifications are measured by advanced degrees held, evidence of scholarship, advanced study, creative activities, teaching abilities, and relevant professional experience, training, and credentials. (See 4.22)
- 5.3 There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities of teaching faculty include instruction and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include such functions as student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance.
- 5.4 The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity. Faculty selection reflects the effectiveness of this process and results in a variety of intellectual backgrounds and training. Each prospective faculty member is provided with a written contract that states explicitly the nature and term of the initial appointment and, when applicable, institutional considerations that might preclude or limit future appointments.
- 5.5 Where graduate teaching assistants are employed, the institution carefully selects, trains, supervises, and evaluates them.
- 5.6 Faculty are accorded reasonable contractual security for appropriate periods consistent with the institution's ability to fulfill its mission. Salaries and benefits are set at levels that ensure the institution's continued ability to attract and maintain an appropriately qualified instructional staff whose profile is consistent with the institution's mission and purposes.
- 5.7 Faculty assignments and workloads are consistent with the institution's mission and purposes. They are equitably determined to allow faculty adequate time to provide

- effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, contribute to program and institutional assessment and improvement, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, creative activities and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution. Faculty workloads are reappraised periodically and adjusted as institutional conditions change.
- 5.8 The institution avoids undue dependence on part-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants to conduct classroom instruction. Institutions that employ a significant proportion of part-time, adjunct, clinical or temporary faculty assure their appropriate integration into the department and institution and provide opportunities for faculty development.
- 5.9 In a faculty handbook or in other written documents that are current and readily available, the institution clearly defines the responsibilities of faculty and the criteria for their recruitment, appointment, evaluation, promotion, and, if applicable, tenure. Such policies are equitable and compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution; they provide for the fair redress of grievances, and they are consistently applied and periodically reviewed.
- 5.10 Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of faculty appointments, performance, and retention. The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of faculty, e.g., teaching, advising, assessment, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service. The institution has equitable and broad-based procedures for such evaluation applying to both full- and part-time faculty, in which its expectations are stated clearly and weighted appropriately for use in the evaluative process.
- 5.11 Faculty accept the responsibility for ensuring that the content and methods of instruction meet generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations, and that considerations of program improvement are informed by a shared understanding of what and how students are learning in the program.
- 5.12 The institution provides its faculty with substantial and equitable opportunities for continued professional development throughout their careers. Such opportunities are consistent with and enhance the achievement of the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty accept the obligation to take advantage of these opportunities and otherwise take the initiative in ensuring their continued competence and growth as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.
- 5.13 The institution protects and fosters academic freedom of all faculty regardless of rank or term of appointment.
- 5.14 The institution has a statement of expectations and processes to ensure that faculty act responsibly and ethically, observe the established conditions of their employment, and otherwise function in a manner consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution.

Teaching and Advising

- 5.15 Instructional techniques and delivery systems, including technology, are compatible with and serve to further the mission and purposes of the institution as well as the learning

Faculty

- goals of academic programs and objectives of individual courses. Methods of instruction are appropriate to the students' capabilities and learning needs. Scholarly and creative achievement by students is encouraged and appropriately assessed. Students in each program are taught by a variety of faculty in order to ensure experience in different methods of instruction and exposure to different viewpoints.
- 5.16 The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning wherever and however courses and programs are offered. It encourages experimentation with methods to improve instruction. The effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures; the results are used to improve instruction. Faculty collectively and individually endeavor to fulfill their responsibility to improve instructional effectiveness. Adequate support is provided to accomplish this task. (See also 8.2)
 - 5.17 The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery.
 - 5.18 With the administration, the faculty work systematically to ensure an environment supportive of academic integrity.

Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

- 5.19 All faculty pursue scholarship designed to ensure they are current in the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their discipline or profession. The institution defines the scholarly expectations for faculty consistent with its mission and purposes and the level of degrees offered. Scholarship and instruction are integrated and mutually supportive.
- 5.20 Where compatible with the institution's purposes and reflective of the level of degrees offered, research is undertaken by faculty and students directed toward the creation, revision, or application of knowledge. Physical, technological, and administrative resources together with academic services are adequate to support the institution's commitment to research and creative activity. Faculty workloads reflect this commitment. Policies and procedures related to research, including ethical considerations, are established and clearly communicated throughout the institution. Faculty exercise a substantive role in the development and administration of research policies and practices.
- 5.21 Scholarship, research, and creative activities receive encouragement and support appropriate to the institution's purposes and objectives. Faculty and students are accorded academic freedom in these activities.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 5.22 The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for the faculty and the effectiveness of the faculty in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution's mission.

Standard Six Students

Consistent with its mission, the institution defines the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve and provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity.

Admissions

- 6.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution enrolls a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve. The institution has an orderly and ethical program of admission that complies with the requirements of legislation concerning equality of educational opportunity. Its admission and retention policies and procedures are clear, consistent with its mission and purposes, and available to all students and prospective students electronically and through other appropriate publications.
- 6.2 Standards for admission ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional objectives. Individuals admitted demonstrate through their intellectual and personal qualifications a reasonable potential for success in the programs to which they are admitted. If the institution recruits and admits individuals with identified needs that must be addressed to assure their likely academic success, it applies appropriate mechanisms to address those needs so as to provide reasonable opportunities for that success. Such mechanisms receive sufficient support and are adequate to the needs of those admitted. The institution endeavors to integrate specifically recruited populations into the larger student body and to assure that they have comparable academic experiences.
- 6.3 The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to identify deficiencies and offers appropriate developmental or remedial support where necessary to prepare students for collegiate study. Such testing and remediation receive sufficient support and are adequate to serve the needs of students admitted. (For admission of graduate students, see 4.23.)

Retention and Graduation

- 6.4 The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. It ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their academic goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their academic success.
- 6.5 Decisions about the continuing academic standing of enrolled students are based on clearly stated policies and applied by faculty and academic administrators.
- 6.6 The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform

Students

recruitment and the review of programs and services. Rates of retention and graduation are separately determined for any group that the institution specifically recruits, and those rates are used in evaluating the success of specialized recruitment and the services and opportunities provided for the recruited students.

Student Services

- 6.7 The institution systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its student population and then makes provision for responding to them. The institution's student services are guided by a philosophy that reflects the institution's mission and special character, is circulated widely and reviewed periodically, and provides the basis on which services to students can be evaluated.
- 6.8 The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students. The Commission recognizes the variations in services that are appropriate at branch campuses, remote instructional locations, and for programs delivered electronically. The Commission also recognizes the differences in circumstances and goals of students pursuing degrees. In all cases, the institution provides academic support services appropriate to the student body, takes reasonable steps to ensure the safety of students while on campus or at another physical instructional location, and provides available and responsive information resources and services, information technology, academic advising and career services and complaint and appeal mechanisms. It assists students to resolve educational and technological problems in using institutional software. Where appropriate, it assists students regarding their personal and physical problems. In providing services, in accordance with its mission and purposes, the institution adheres to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and its own goals for diversity.
- 6.9 Institutions with full time or residential student bodies provide an array of services that includes access to health services and co-curricular activities consistent with the mission of the institution.
- 6.10 A clear description of the nature, extent, and availability of student services is easily available to students and prospective students. Newly enrolled students are provided with an orientation that includes information on student services as well as a focus on academic opportunities, expectations, and support services.
- 6.11 Student financial aid is provided through a well-organized program. Awards are based on the equitable application of clear and publicized criteria.
- 6.12 As appropriate, the institution supports opportunities for student leadership and participation in campus organizations and governance.
- 6.13 If the institution offers recreational and athletic programs, they are conducted in a manner consistent with sound educational policy, standards of integrity, and the institution's purposes. The institution has responsibility for the control of these programs, including their financial aspects. Educational programs and academic expectations are the same for student athletes as for other students.
- 6.14 The institution ensures that individuals responsible for student services are qualified by formal training and work experience to represent and address the needs of students

- effectively. Facilities, technology, and funding are adequate to implement the institution's student service policies and procedures.
- 6.15 The institution has identified, published widely, and implemented an appropriate set of clearly stated ethical standards to guide student services. Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized and readily available, and fairly and consistently administered.
- 6.16 The institution has policies regarding the kinds of information that will be included in the permanent record of students as well as policies regarding the retention, safety and security, and disposal of records. Its information-release policies respect the rights of individual privacy, the confidentiality of records, and the best interests of students and the institution.
- 6.17 Institutions with stated goals for students' co-curricular learning systematically assess their achievement.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 6.18 Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these goals and services and improve their achievement.

Standard Seven
Library and Other Information Resources

The institution demonstrates sufficient and appropriate information resources and services and instructional and information technology and utilizes them to support the fulfillment of its mission.

- 7.1 The institution articulates a clear vision of the level and breadth of information resources and services and of instructional and information technology appropriate to support its academic mission and its administrative functions. Through strategic, operational, and financial planning, it works to achieve that vision.
- 7.2 Institutional planning and resource allocation support the development of library, information resources and technology appropriate to the institution's mission and academic program. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the library and the effective maintenance and improvement of the institution's information resources and instructional and information technology.
- 7.3 The institution uses instructional technology appropriate to its academic mission and the modes of delivery of its academic program.
- 7.4 Professionally qualified and numerically adequate staff administer the institution's library, information resources and services, and instructional and information technology support functions.
- 7.5 Faculty, staff, and students are provided appropriate training and support to make effective use of library and information resources, and instructional and information technology.
- 7.6 The institution establishes and applies clear policies and procedures and monitors and responds to illegal or inappropriate uses of its technology systems and resources.
- 7.7 Through ownership or guaranteed access, the institution makes available the library and information resources necessary for the fulfillment of its mission and purposes. These resources are sufficient in quality, level, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the institution's academic offerings. They support the academic and research program and the intellectual and cultural development of students, faculty, and staff.
- 7.8 The institution demonstrates that students use information resources and technology as an integral part of their education, attaining levels of proficiency appropriate to their degree and subject or professional field of study. The institution ensures that students have available and are appropriately directed to sources of information appropriate to support and enrich their academic work, and that throughout their program students gain increasingly sophisticated skills in evaluating the quality of information sources. (See also 4.6)
- 7.9 The institution ensures appropriate access to library and information resources and services for all students regardless of program location or mode of delivery.

- 7.10 The institution's physical and electronic environments provide an atmosphere conducive to study and research.
- 7.11 The institution uses information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 7.12 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy, utilization, and impact of its library, information resources and services, and instructional and information technology and uses the findings to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services.

Standard Eight Physical and Technological Resources

The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes. It manages and maintains these resources in a manner to sustain and enhance the realization of institutional purposes.

- 8.1 The institution's physical and technological resources, including classrooms, laboratories, network infrastructure, materials, equipment, and buildings and grounds, whether owned or rented, are commensurate with institutional purposes. They are designed, maintained, and managed at both on- and off-campus sites in a manner that serves institutional needs. Proper management, maintenance, and operation of all physical facilities, including student housing provided by the institution, are accomplished by adequate and competent staffing.
- 8.2 Classrooms and other facilities are appropriately equipped and adequate in capacity. Classrooms and other teaching spaces support teaching methods appropriate to the discipline. Students and faculty have access to appropriate physical, technological, and educational resources to support teaching and learning. (See also 5.16)
- 8.3 Facilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment with consideration for environmental and ecological concerns.
- 8.4 The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution.
- 8.5 The institution demonstrates the effectiveness of its policies and procedures in ensuring the reliability of the systems, the integrity and security of data, and the privacy of individuals.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 8.6 The institution's ongoing evaluation of its physical and technological resources in light of its mission, current needs and plans for the future is a basis of realistic planning and budget allocation.

Standard Nine Financial Resources

The institution's financial resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future. The institution demonstrates through verifiable internal and external factors its financial capacity to graduate its entering class. The institution administers its financial resources with integrity.

- 9.1 The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its academic and other activities. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.
- 9.2 The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support. The institution's governing board retains appropriate autonomy in all budget and finance matters; this includes institutions that depend on financial support from an external agency (state, church, or other private or public entity).
- 9.3 The institution's multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students. The governing board reviews and approves the institution's financial plans.
- 9.4 All or substantially all of the institution's revenue is devoted to the support of its academic purposes and programs. The institution's financial records clearly relate to its educational activities.
- 9.5 The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution's financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution's mission and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve.
- 9.6 The institution ensures the integrity of its finances through prudent financial management and organization, a well-organized budget process, appropriate internal control mechanisms, risk assessment, and timely financial reporting, providing a basis for sound financial decision-making.
- 9.7 The institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, information and technology and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives.
- 9.8 The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as

Financial Resources

- necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit.
- 9.9 Opportunities identified for new sources of revenue are reviewed by the administration and board to ensure the integrity of the institution and the quality of the academic program are maintained and enhanced. The institution planning a substantive change demonstrates the financial capacity to ensure that the new initiative meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards.
- 9.10 Institutional and board leadership ensure the institution's ethical oversight of its financial resources and practices.
- 9.11 The institution's financial resources and transactions are audited annually by an external auditor in accord with the generally accepted auditing standards for colleges and universities as adopted by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Board policies and institutional practices ensure the independence and objectivity of the auditor and the appropriate consideration of the audit by the governing board. For public and independent institutions part of a larger system or corporation, the audit provides sufficient information about the institution's finances to support a determination regarding the sufficiency and stability of the institution's financial resources. In all cases, the audit and management letter are appropriately reviewed by the institution's administration and governing board who take appropriate action on resulting recommendations or conclusions.
- 9.12 The institution directs its fund-raising efforts toward the fulfillment of institutional purposes and conducts them in accordance with clear and complete policies that stipulate the conditions and terms under which gifts are solicited and accepted. The institution accurately represents itself and its capacities and needs to prospective donors and accurately portrays the impact that their gifts can reasonably be expected to have. Gifts are promptly directed toward donors' intentions.
- 9.13 All fiscal policies, including those related to budgeting, investments, insurance, risk management, contracts and grants, transfers and inter-fund borrowing, fund-raising, and other institutional advancement and development activities, are clearly stated in writing and consistently implemented in compliance with ethical and sound financial practices.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 9.14 The institution has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management and to maintain its integrity. The institution uses the results of these activities for improvement.

Standard Ten

Public Disclosure

In presenting itself to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public, the institution provides information that is complete, accurate, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution.

- 10.1 The information published by the institution on its website is sufficient to allow students and prospective students to make informed decisions about their education. The institution's website includes the information specified elsewhere in this Standard (10.2 – 10.13).
- 10.2 The institution informs the public of the information available about itself and how inquiries can be addressed. It is also responsive to reasonable requests for information about itself. The institution provides notice as to the availability upon request of its publications and its most recent audited financial statement or a fair summary thereof.
- 10.3 The institution's current catalogue describes the institution consistent with its mission statement and sets forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. The catalogue or other authoritative publications present information relative to admission and attendance. Institutions relying on electronic catalogues ensure the availability of archival editions sufficient to serve the needs of alumni and former and returning students.
- 10.4 All institutional publications, print and electronic, and communications are consistent with catalogue content and accurately portray the conditions and opportunities available at the institution.
- 10.5 The institution publishes its mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other available educational opportunities; and academic policies and procedures and the requirements for degrees or other forms of academic recognition.
- 10.6 The institution publishes a list of its current faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation, distinguishing between those who have full- and part-time status, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them. The names and positions of administrative officers, and the names and principal affiliations of members of the governing board are also included.
- 10.7 The institution publishes the locations and programs available at branch campuses, other instructional locations, including those overseas operations at which students can enroll for a degree, along with a description of the programs and services available at each location.
- 10.8 The institution clearly indicates those programs, courses, services, and personnel not available during a given academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years that will not be taught during the third consecutive year.

Public Disclosure

- 10.9 The institution publishes a description of the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, the availability of academic and other support services, the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students; and those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit.
- 10.10 The institution publishes statements of its goals for students' education and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. As appropriate, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published.
- 10.11 The institution publishes information about the total cost of education, including the availability of financial aid and the typical length of study. The expected amount of student debt upon graduation is provided to help students and prospective students make informed decisions.
- 10.12 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.
- 10.13 The institution's statements about its current accredited status are accurately and explicitly worded. An institution placed on probation by the New England Association discloses this status in its catalogue and recruitment materials and in any other publication, print or electronic, in which the institution's accreditation is mentioned, as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 10.14 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its print and electronic publications are complete, accurate, available, and current. The results of the review are used for improvement.

Standard Eleven

Integrity

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

- 11.1 The institution expects that members of its community, including the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students, will act responsibly and with integrity; and it systematically provides support in the pursuit thereof. Institutional leadership fosters an atmosphere where issues of integrity can be openly considered, and members of the institutional community understand and assume their responsibilities in the pursuit of integrity.
- 11.2 Truthfulness, clarity, and fairness characterize the institution's relations with all internal and external constituencies. Adequate provision is made to ensure academic honesty. Appropriate policies and procedures are in effect and periodically reviewed for matters including intellectual property rights, the avoidance of conflict of interest, privacy rights, and fairness in dealing with students, faculty, and staff. The institution's educational policies and procedures are applicable and equitably applied to all its students.
- 11.3 The institution is committed to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It assures faculty and students the freedom to teach and study a given field, to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, and to be guided by the evidence of scholarly research.
- 11.4 The institution observes the spirit as well as the letter of applicable legal requirements. It has a charter and/or other formal authority from the appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to grant all degrees it awards; it has the necessary operating authority for each jurisdiction in which it conducts activities; and it operates within this authority.
- 11.5 The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds.
- 11.6 The institution manages its academic, research and service programs, administrative operations, responsibilities for students and interactions with prospective students with honesty and integrity.
- 11.7 The institution is responsible for conferences, institutes, workshops, or other instructional or enrichment activities that are sponsored by the institution or carry its name. These activities are compatible with the institution's purposes and are administered within its organizational structure. The institution assumes responsibility for the appropriateness and integrity of such activities.

Integrity

- 11.8 The institution has established and publicizes clear policies ensuring institutional integrity. Included among them are appropriate policies and procedures for the fair resolution of grievances brought by faculty, staff, or students.
- 11.9 In its relationships with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the institution demonstrates honesty and integrity, and it complies with the Commission's Standards, policies, Requirements of Affiliation, and requests.
- 11.10 In addition to the considerations stated in this Standard, the institution adheres to those requirements related to institutional integrity embodied in all other Commission Standards.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 11.11 The pursuit of institutional integrity is strengthened through the application of findings from periodic and episodic assessments of the policies and conditions that support the achievement of these aims among members of the institutional community.