

# Charting the Future of Accountability: Is There a Middle Way?

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# Outline

- Creating a frame for the current accountability and accreditation debate
- Review of the past 15 months
- Steps WASC, Sr. is taking
- Recommendations for CAIR and IR Officers

# Current Context

- Spellings Commission -- One Year Later
- Failed Negotiated Rule Making
- Voluntary Association Efforts – VSA, NAICU template, AAC&U project
- ACTA Report – AEI Seminar
- Reauthorization Act – House and Senate Provisions

# Spellings Commission

- “Accreditation, the large and complex public-private system of federal, state and private regulators, has significant shortcomings. The growing public demand for increased accountability, quality and transparency coupled with the changing structure and globalization of higher education requires a transformation of accreditation.”

# Negotiated Rule Making

## Key Issues:

- Focus on graduation and placement rates
- Establishing and evaluating “levels of performance”
- Increased public reporting
- Increased definition of standards
- Expanded monitoring of institutions

# Voluntary Efforts

- VSA
- NAICU Template
- AAC&U Compact and LEAP Project
- Voluntary release of NSSE data

# ACTA and American Enterprise Institute

- Report “Why Accreditation Doesn’t Work and What Policy Makers Can Do About It?” ([goacta.org](http://goacta.org))

“Accreditation is giving students and parents a false sense of confidence that certified schools have passed a meaningful test when they have not. Today, accreditation is bad education policy that undermines the autonomy of our educational institutions while doing nothing to ensure academic quality.”

- AEI Seminar – “Alternatives to Accreditation”

# Reauthorization Act – House Bill

- “Respect” the stated mission of the institution...including religious missions
- Ombudsman to provide timely assistance to institutions of higher education, accrediting agencies and associations, and other participants in the accreditation process who may have grievances



# Student Achievement

- “success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution’s mission, **which may include different standards for different institutions or programs, as established by the institution,** including, as appropriate, consideration of State licensing examinations, course completion, and job placement rates;”

# Limitation of Secretary

- “Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit the Secretary to establish any criteria that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards that accrediting agencies or associations shall use to assess any institution’s success with respect to student achievement”

# Transfer of Credit

- Required disclosure of policy
- No substantive requirements on acceptance of credit

# Petri Amendment

- "to let schools opt out of the current system and maintain their accreditation if they report data on admissions requirements, affordability, and student success, among other consumer concerns."

# In This Swirl, Where's WASC (Sr.) Heading?

## ■ External Review findings

- tremendous impact of process in focusing on student learning
- simplify and clarify elements of process
- provide more support to teams and institutions
- provide more concrete exemplars
- assess staff capacity

# Response to External Review

## ■ Phase 1 Response (now to February '08)

- Update of CFR's and Guidelines
- Revisions to the visit process
- Revisions to Data Tables
- Revisions to a few policies

# Proposed changes to CFR's and Guidelines

- Public disclosure of retention and graduation rates, and student learning results, as appropriate
- Analysis and use of retention and graduation rates disaggregated by student groups, at the institutional and program levels
- More emphasis on faculty development and definition of faculty roles and responsibilities
- Development of comparisons in assessing data, where appropriate
- Assessment of student achievement in co-curricular programs

# Proposed Revisions to the Visit Process

- Shorten process timeline
- Clarify focus of each review
- Eliminate confusing options
- Create clearer approaches for institutions to use
- Have all institutions analyze retention and graduation data as a part of the accreditation review process



# Revisions to Data Tables

- Update and make current
- Rely more on IPEDS (data downloads?)
- Update financial reporting requirements
- Improve use of data by teams

# Phase 2 Response (April '08 – June '09)

- What accreditation model will we need for 2011 and beyond?
  - Dialogue on accountability
  - Structure of process
  - Timing of cycle
  - Focus on graduation rates
  - Improvement of learning results

# So What's Your Role? We need you!

- Assistance with revising our data tables
- Help with disaggregated graduation rate analysis
- Internal assistance with new WASC (Sr.) forms
- Creation of dashboard indicators
- Work with faculty on learning assessment and program review