Accreditation in the United States- Overview of History, Guidelines and Processes.

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Types of Accreditation in the US

University-wide

Discipline or Program
University Wide Accreditation

“The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality”*

* US Department of Education, 2010
University-Wide Accrediting Bodies

- **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)**
  Established: 1885, Location: Massachusetts, Web: www.neasc.org

- **North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS)**
  Established: 1895, Location: Illinois, Web: www.ncahlc.org

- **Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)**
  Established: 1917, Location: Washington, Web: www.nwccu.org

- **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**
  Established: 1912, Location: Georgia, Web: www.sacscoc.org

- **Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)**
  Established: 1962, Location: California, Web: www.wascsenior.org

- **Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS)**
  Established: 1919, Location: Pennsylvania, Web: www.msche.org
Council for Higher Education Accreditation

• A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation,

• 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations.

Oversight and watchdog agency.
What about:

- Community Colleges?
- Ivy league schools?
- Institutes?
- For profit colleges?

The Higher Learning Commission - HLC “accredits” most of them and a number of other, usually small, institutions.
Brief History of Accreditation

- Started before WWII
- Real impetus was GI Bill and funding for students
University-Wide Accreditation Focus
US Dept. of Education Guidelines- to ~1992

• Appropriateness of the institutional mission and objectives

• Effectiveness of the institution in meeting its mission and objectives

• Adequacy of financial and physical resources library, classrooms, labs, offices

• Quality of faculty

• Effectiveness of management, administrative structure and function

• Adequacy of personnel and student services offered by the institution.
1992 Changes to Accreditation Assessment Criteria*

- academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising
- curricula
- faculty
- facilities, equipment, and supplies
- student support services
- recruiting and admissions practices
- fiscal and administrative capacity as appropriate for the scale of the institution
- program length and tuition and fees and the objectives of the degree
- measures of program length in clock hours or credit hours
- student outcome measures
- default rate
- record of student complaints received by the accrediting association or state agency
- compliance with program responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act

*Adapted from 1992 Higher Education Act
1992 Changes to Accreditation

.... And “adjusted” repeatedly ever since.....

No accreditation; no Federal funding for students or for research.

Not good
Programmatic Accreditation

The initial accreditations in the United States were for specific programs, not University-wide.
History of Programmatic Education in the US

• 1904 - Council on Medical Education and Hospitals in 1904. (AMA)
• 1918- Dental education standards
• 1923-Legal education
• 1936- Engineering education
• 1940- Pharmaceutical education
• Etc, etc
The US Government Does Not “Approve” Program Specific Accrediting Bodies, They “Recognize” Them

• Government recognition is not mandatory for an association to accredit a discipline or program.

• Over 100 agencies or associations are recognized as accreditors.

• Certain accreditations have legal underpinnings. Example: Medicine
Program specific accreditation defines the profession to a large extent.
Major Shift ~2005

Course/Credit hour based → “Outcomes-Based”
Thank You