Thanks to all who joined AIR in Seattle for the 48th Annual Forum! The 2008 Forum was a record breaking conference with 1,738 higher education decision makers in attendance, premier educational opportunities, and national media coverage.

Plenary by Judith Eaton - Accreditation, Adaptability and the Future

How must accreditation, acknowledged by colleges and universities as the primary means of assuring and improving quality in higher education, adapt to meet the challenges of the future? The greatest challenge to accreditation at this time emerges from federal and state government, the press and the public. These parties are pressuring the accreditation enterprise to be more responsive to public calls for accountability and serving the public interest. How is the accreditation enterprise responding? What else needs to be done? What is the impact on higher education if accreditation cannot meet these challenges?

Judith S. Eaton, Ph.D., is the President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Dr. Eaton currently serves on 11 different boards and has authored numerous books and articles on a range of higher education and accreditation issues. She is often asked to speak on higher education issues, both in the United States and internationally.

Accreditation, Adaptability and the Future
IS THERE A CHOICE ABOUT CHANGE?

Judith S. Eaton, President
Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Association for Institutional Research • Annual Forum
Seattle, Washington
May 25, 2008
THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP AMONG INSTITUTIONS, ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENT
TO ADDRESS THIS TOPIC....

BACKGROUND: HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION

ELEMENTS OF CHANGE

A LIKELY FUTURE
BACKGROUND
BACKGROUND: HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

7,000 ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

ACCESS, DIVERSITY, QUALITY

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

SELF-REGULATED

“BEST IN THE WORLD”? 
BACKGROUND: ACCREDITATION

• CREATED BY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES MORE THAN 100 YEARS AGO

• PRIVATE AND NONGOVERNMENTAL

• DECENTRALIZED: 81 RECOGNIZED ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

• $69 MILLION IN 2004-2005

• VALUES-BASED: AUTONOMY, FREEDOM, MISSION
BACKGROUND: ACCREDITATION - 2

A STANDARDS-BASED, EVIDENCE-BASED, JUDGMENT-BASED, TRUST-BASED SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

NO OTHER COUNTRY USES THIS APPROACH TO ASSURING AND IMPROVING QUALITY
BACKGROUND: ACCREDITATION AND FEDERAL LAW

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS RELIED ON ACCREDITATION SINCE 1952

ACCREDITATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN SUBJECT TO SOME FEDERAL SCRUTINY

1948-52: SIX STANDARDS AND NO REGULATIONS

THE 1965 HIGHER EDUCATION ACT CODIFIED THIS RELATIONSHIP

IN CURRENT LAW: 10 STANDARDS AND 75 PAGES OF REGULATIONS

PERIODIC REVIEW: EVER FIVE YEARS

WHAT HAPPENS TO ACCREDITORS HAPPENS TO INSTITUTIONS
ACCREDITATION AND FEDERAL LAW - 2

- A GOVERNMENT/ACCREDITATION PARTNERSHIP – BUT UNEQUAL BECAUSE OF GREATER POWER TO GOVERNMENT

- PROHIBITION OF FEDERAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION (1958)

- SLOW BUT STEADY EXPANSION OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY OVER ACCREDITATION
ELEMENTS OF CHANGE
ELEMENTS OF CHANGE

A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

THE NATIONAL CLIMATE OF OPINION

FEDERALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY
“CHANGE” IS A POLITICAL TERM

“AGENT OF CHANGE FOR 35 YEARS”

(Source: hillaryclinton.com)
“CHANGE” IS A POLITICAL TERM

“I’VE MADE THE GREATEST CHANGE….”
(Source: johnmccain.com)
“CHANGE” IS A POLITICAL TERM

“CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN”
(Source: barackobama.com)
CANDIDATES ON HIGHER EDUCATION: SIMILAR POSITIONS/FAMILIAR ADVISORS

CLINTON

• AFFORDABILITY: TAX CREDITS, LARGER PELL GRANT, SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SERVICE, LOW-INCOME ACCESS

• ACCOUNTABILITY: ONLINE COLLEGE COST CALCULATOR, GRADUATION AND EMPLOYMENT RATE INDEX, TRUTH IN TUITION DISCLOSURE

(Source: hillaryclinton.com)
A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - 2

MCCAIN
- FISCAL RESTRAINT, NO EARMARKS
- FORMER USDE OFFICIALS: BUSH 41 AND 43
  (Source: Insidehighered.com)

OBAMA
- AFFORDABILITY: $4,000 TAX CREDIT, SIMPLIFY FINANCIAL AID, EXPAND PELL, END BANK-BASED LENDING
- ACCOUNTABILITY: EARLY ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS
  (Source: barackobama.com)
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - 3

LOTS OF RHETORIC ABOUT CHANGE

LITTLE NOTION OF WHAT IT WOULD BE

PRICE AND ACCESS CLEARLY A FACTOR

ACCOUNTABILITY TIED TO PRICE
THE NATIONAL CLIMATE

- ERA OF LIMITED TRUST AND GREATER PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
- 4 C’S
- THE END OF PRIVACY – INSTITUTIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL
- THE URGENCY OF “TRANSPARENCY”
- FEDERALIZED (CENTRALIZED) SOLUTIONS ARE FASHIONABLE
THE NATIONAL CLIMATE - 2

HIGHER EDUCATION DEMAND AND HIGHER EDUCATION PRICE - BOTH CAUSING ANXIETY
NATIONAL CLIMATE - 3

HIGHER EDUCATION IS ABOUT PRIVATE GAIN
WE DON’T GET IT
FEDERALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

SPELLINGS COMMISSION (2005-07)

NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING (2007)

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT (2003 - )
SPELLINGS, HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION

• “…ENTRENCHED STAKEHOLDERS OF THE STATUS QUO”

• ACCREDITATION “LEAVES STUDENTS AND THE TAXPAYERS IN THE DARK ABOUT WHAT THEY’RE ACTUALLY GETTING FOR THEIR MONEY….”

• THE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM IS “…PLAGUED WITH CONFLICTS OF INTEREST….”

• THE PROCESS IS “…INSULAR, CLUBBY, AND ACCOUNTABLE TO NO ONE BUT THEMSELVES.”

(Source: The Politico, February 6, 2008)
SPELLINGS AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

HEY RICK—I BOUGHT THESE AMERICAN SUSPENDERS TODAY....
FEDERALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY - REAUTHORIZATION

EVER-ENLARGING FEDERAL FOOTPRINT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

THE ACADEMIC BUSINESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS FEDERAL BUSINESS

- TRANSFER OF CREDIT
- ARTICULATION
- MONITORING GROWTH
- TRANSPARENCY
- FEDERALLY REQUIRED DISCLOSURES (300-400 NEW)
  - TUITION
  - TUITION INCREASES
  - PRIVATE LOANS
  - GOVERNANCE
  - ENDOWMENTS
  - FIRE SAFETY
  - TEXTBOOKS  

GOING BEYOND WHERE WE ARE NOW
FUNDAMENTALS OF FEDERALIZING

• A SHIFT FROM SELF-REGULATION TO GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF ACADEMIC QUALITY

• A SHIFT FROM GOVERNMENT HOLDING HIGHER EDUCATION ACCOUNTABLE FOR QUALITY TO GOVERNMENT DEFINING AND JUDGING QUALITY

• ESTABLISHING, OVER TIME, A MINISTERIAL APPROACH TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES
FEDERALIZING: THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP

ACCREDITATION A MAJOR VEHICLE FOR DIRECT GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY OVER INSTITUTIONS

ACCREDITATION LESS OF A PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENT AND MORE OF A SUBORDINATE

GOVERNMENT NOW IN THE ACADEMIC QUALITY BUSINESS
FEDERALIZING

GOVERNMENT DRIVES
ACCREDITATION

GOVERNMENT DRIVES
ACCOUNTABILITY
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES REACT TO FEDERALIZING
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES REACT TO FEDERALIZING - 2

- FIGHTING THE LEGISLATION
- MORE FEDERAL CONTROL IS OK
- THIS TOO SHALL PASS
- REASSERTION OF INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP
- VSA, U-CAN, CLA
ACCREDITORS REACT TO FEDERALIZING
ACCREDITORS REACT- FEDERALIZING - 2

- FIGHTING THE LEGISLATION
- GATEKEEPING: CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
- IT’S OK
- OPERATING OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT
A LIKELY FUTURE
A LIKELY FUTURE....

**DIMINISHING** SELF-REGULATION AND INDEPENDENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**EXPANDING** AREAS OF GOVERNMENT SCRUTINY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**GROWING** GOVERNMENT *PRESCRIPTION* WHAT COUNTS AS ACADEMIC QUALITY
LIKELY FUTURE....2

EXTENSIVE AND INTRUSIVE NEW LAW AND REGULATION FOR INSTITUTIONS AND ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT ABOUT HOW HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION ARE TO OPERATE

CONTINUED DEPRECATORY VIEW OF ACCREDITATION NOT CONFINED TO THE ADMINISTRATION
UNLESS.....OUR COMMUNITY

- TAKES ACCREDITATION OUT OF THE HANDS OF GOVERNMENT

- GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ON OUR OWN

- COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BOARDS CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT USURPATION OF THEIR AUTHORITY

- RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN SELF-REGULATION AND ATTENDANT VALUES: ACADEMIC FREEDOM, INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY, A MISSION-DRIVEN SYSTEM
UNLESS.....OUR INSTITUTIONS

DEVELOP INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AGENDAS

PROTECT FACULTY ROLE IN ACADEMIC DECISION-MAKING

DO TRANSPARENCY AUDITS

INVEST IN MORE RIGOROUS ACCREDITATION
MYTHS ABOUT THE FUTURE

THE DEMOCRATS WILL BE BETTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION THAN THE REPUBLICANS

ACCOUNTABILITY WON’T MATTER AFTER THIS REAUTHORIZATION

THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ALL THAT INTERESTED IN CONTROLLING HIGHER EDUCATION
SO....

THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP AMONG INSTITUTIONS, ACCREDITORS AND GOVERNMENT IS IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF ACADEMIC QUALITY

DRIVEN BY THREE ELEMENTS OF CHANGE: ELECTION, NATIONAL CLIMATE AND FEDERALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

WE WILL ENJOY THE LIKELY FUTURE ONLY IF WE TAKE BACK ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCREDITATION
IS THERE A CHOICE ABOUT CHANGE?

YES.

THANK YOU