

Why Regional Accreditation Matters

Talking Points for Regional Accreditors

- **Regional accreditation helps ensure that students attending 3,000 accredited colleges and universities in the United States get the best education possible.** The public can feel confident that the colleges and universities we accredit are stable and deliver high quality student outcomes.
- **Peer review is rigorous review.** Regional accreditation is built around a rigorous peer-review process that helps ensure fiscal and educational integrity. We rely on experts in higher education, business, and management to analyze institutional performance using sophisticated tools and reliable data. Members of the public serve on every decision-making body. Regional accreditors employ 170 staff and manage the work of an additional 4,000 highly trained professional volunteers to assess the quality of all aspects of institutions, from teaching and learning to governance, management, and finance.
- **Regional accreditation is local control.** Rather than the federal government directly overseeing institutional quality, regional accreditation is a peer-review process led by those closest to the action—not bureaucrats in Washington.
- **Regional accreditation relies on firm but fair metrics to hold institutions accountable.** We challenge institutions to improve and to take action should they fail to meet our standards. Our first priority, however, is to help institutions that fail to meet standards produce better results for their students and thus avoid the need for a sanction.
- **America’s diverse system of higher education institutions is not well served by a one-size-fits-all approach to accreditation.** We believe America is best served by a higher education system that supports all types of students at all types of institutions. Careful judgment, along with the right mix of applied metrics that focus on multiple measures, is required to truly assess the quality of any institution. Ultimately, a thorough job of accreditation requires us to evaluate institutions in keeping with their distinctive missions and their current status of development; often this means some will require more attention than others during the accreditation process.
- **The current model of quality assurance is low cost, efficient, and effective.** Significant changes to accreditation—such as putting government in charge of quality control or eliminating peer-review—could raise more problems than they would solve, remove protections against government intrusion, and add additional costs that would be passed on to students and taxpayers.
- **Let us do the job we were created to do.** We are a crucial player in quality control, our role, however, is limited. Accreditors are responsible for institutional quality assurance. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is responsible for assuring the administrative and fiscal integrity of financial aid programs. State governments control licensing of institutions that operate in the state. Unfortunately, many policymakers and reporters get these roles confused and tend to assign responsibilities to regional accreditation that are supposed to be handled by ED and the states.
- **Listen to what others say about the importance of our work.** The biggest supporters of regional accreditation are people you can trust—the state officials who rely on us to ensure that member colleges meet standards; the vast majority of college presidents, provosts, and faculty who see accreditation as a net benefit to colleges and students; and the business leaders and finance experts who serve on our Commissions and have seen our work close up. They will tell you that, in addition to its quality guarantees, regional accreditation promotes autonomy and institutional diversity, two of U.S. higher education’s greatest strengths and a reason our system is the envy of the world.