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To many of our publics, higher education equals little more than the taking of courses and the compiling of credits to achieve graduation. Education's critics have pointed out that all too often, students are awarded degrees primarily for persistence and seat time and not for significant learning. Throughout its history, public higher education has faced the forces of social, economic and political pressure. But these changes that seemed to reach a pinnacle in 1987 went beyond new institutional structures, the redefining of curriculum or the expanding of access for under-represented groups. It went right to the heart of the institution, the improvement of teaching and learning. And while this need to assess education may be unfounded, it was the perception of need that helped fuel the 1987 National Governors' Conference recommendation calling for all public institutions to have formalized measurement systems.

Many schools scrambled to find methods of showing this ever-increasing number of critics that education was doing a good job. However, there already existed one mechanism of showing academic worth of a program – accreditation. Undergraduate and graduate degree programs within departments or divisions accredited by specialized (discipline-specific) accreditation bodies like the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication seemed better prepared to face public criticism.

Specialized accreditation groups had placed on their institutions a mandate that the unit's own statement of purpose and goals had to drive their objectives for student learning, and that learning had to be measured by the institution's global Mission and Goal statements and published educational purposes.

During the past six years I served as one of six Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication representatives to the 31-member Accrediting Council. It was a sobering experience to participate in the process that led to a campus visit by a site-team, and then validation by the Accrediting Committee and Council. This issue of *Insights* looks at accreditation and changes it may face.

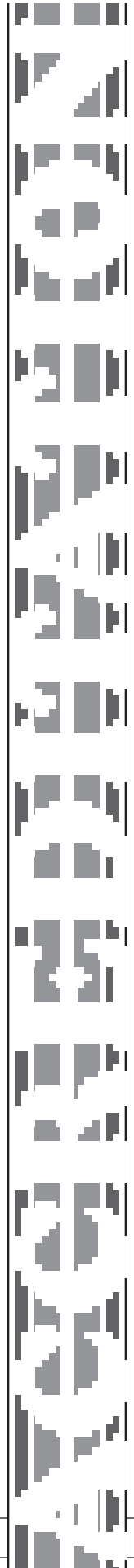
Future issues of *Insights* will focus on blending department structures, scholastic journalism, and service learning. Each of these issues will be designed to provide practical ideas, professional advice, updates on research and news of ASJMC initiatives.

manuscripts on related topics should be submitted to:

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SPECIALIZED

ACCREDITATION - friend or

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SPECIALIZED ACCREDITATION, LIKE IT OR NOT, IS HERE TO STAY. COUNT ON IT! Many college and university presidents, provosts, and vice presidents for academic affairs wish it would go away. You can count on that too! But specialized accreditation is too important to American higher education and to the preparation of professionals in dozens of disciplines to be dismissed lightly. Furthermore, for the prestige value alone, holding accredited status is dear to the faculties of professionally oriented disciplines, so we can safely predict that it is here to stay. But why the resistance? Why the controversy? Why the tension? Whether specialized (a.k.a. programmatic or professional) accreditation is friend or foe depends on what role you play in higher education. Like so many other controversial topics, on this issue “where you stand depends on where you sit.”

Before we get to the specifics about specialized accreditation, perhaps it is appropriate to provide some background about accreditation in general. Accreditation is the process by which we assure the public about quality in higher education; it is the means by which we assure the federal government about minimum quality standards for the purpose of determining which institutions are eligible for Title IV funds and other government programs. It is also one of the principal methods through which we collectively try to improve higher education. Institutional accreditation, which is much less controversial with university administrators than specialized, looks at entire institutions. It is most commonly represented by the regional accrediting associations – New England, Southern, North Central, et.al. – but there are also national institutional accreditors such as the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) and the Association of Theological Schools of the United States and Canada, that examine total institutions.

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All specialized accreditors are national in scope, but they, of course, examine specific disciplines or professional programs. Occasionally these programs are single-discipline, free-standing schools, and in the health professions they sometimes exist in hospitals or other settings, but for the most part the programs that are the subject of specialized accreditation are components of larger colleges and universities. Thus, specialized accreditation relates to just part of an institution, and attitudes about it tend to vary among individuals in the same institution.

ACCREDITATION IS AN AMERICAN INVENTION – in fact, it is uniquely American. It is a peer-review process carried out by volunteers and, at least as originally conceived, it is voluntary and nongovernmental, so it is not only American by invention but in principle as well. Like American democracy, it is not a perfect system, but also like American democracy, no one has found a better way to do what it does. To our knowledge, every other nation in the world has a federal ministry of education that governs who shall teach what, and often who shall study what at what level. That we in the United States rely on a nongovernmental, voluntary system of quality assurance is partly because our founding fathers rejected the notion of a federal educational system. They respected choice and they recognized the importance in an ideal democratic society that the intelligentsia not be controlled by the government.

The glory of the American system, then, is partly in its diversity. American post-secondary education is offered by myriad types of institutions, publicly and privately supported, residential and commuter-

oriented, from large research universities and regional comprehensive universities to liberal arts colleges and small faith-related religious institutions, and from single-purpose professional schools to community colleges and technical or vocational schools. Americans have more choice and more opportunity for education beyond secondary school than any other society in the world, and many of us would contend that our system of nongovernmental accreditation is largely responsible for fostering and maintaining that diversity.

Accreditation must accommodate and serve all these diverse institutions with their diverse missions. It therefore must be flexible and adaptive. It cannot set one common standard that applies to all institutions or programs, whether in one region of the country or in one single discipline. This adaptability is sometimes seen as a weakness by those who believe that accreditation is not rigorous enough, but it is certainly a strength if one considers the varying interests and abilities of the students that higher education in the U.S. serves. Most accreditation decisions are made not on the basis of some absolute standard, but according to the declared mission and purposes that each institution states for itself. In other words, accreditation, in order to be flexible and adaptive, must to some extent function with “floating standards.” Does the North Central Association expect a small church college in the Midwest to hold the same academic standards as the University of Chicago? Of course not. Does the New England Association expect a regional state college to function the same as M.I.T.? No! But do the small church college and the regional state

college serve their clientele as well as Chicago or M.I.T.? Perhaps – it is certainly possible.

As an aside, academics in general could benefit from adopting the attitude about “worthiness” that accrediting organizations must maintain because of the diversity of their clientele. An institution should be respected for fulfilling its mission well, and faculty within institutions should take pride in their own schools for performing well within the parameters of their stated missions. Community colleges needn't aspire to be baccalaureate-degree-granting, and regional universities needn't aspire to be research universities in order for the society to be well served or for institutions to distinguish themselves. Different strokes for different folks! . . . and different college experiences for different backgrounds and aspirations. In the example above, the two regional accrediting associations have the challenge of providing a “value-added” service for both types of institutions, while at the same time determining for the public and the federal government whether acceptable minimum standards of education are met. In fact, they can perform a creditable service for both types of institutions because they draw from volunteer visitors to fit the institutions being reviewed. Likewise, their accrediting commissions represent the broad spectrum of their memberships, and their commissions have public representatives who bring broad perspectives as well.

FROM ITS ORIGINS approximately a hundred years ago, accreditation has played two very major roles in the interest of the public. The first is to detect, eliminate, and prevent fraud and abuse. Without some nationally recog-

nized assurance of quality, consumers of higher education could be vulnerable to all sorts of false claims by the purveyors of educational services. The unsuspecting could invest heavily for little or no return of worth. While that seems a remote possibility among most of today's colleges and universities, it is still a risk in some vocational programs and it is very much a risk in the new order of distance education. The second purpose is to assure adequate standardization of what an academic credit represents in order to facilitate transfer of credits from one institution to another. Because institutions are so different in their approaches and in their understandings of appropriate academic rigor, it is important that some consistent terminology and understanding exist with regard to what constitutes a “credit.” Accreditation's original purposes – elimination of fraud and certification of credit – are still pertinent today.

Through the years various approaches have been taken to recognize and coordinate the activities of accrediting organizations. The present approach is two-fold. In the private sector, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in Washington, D.C., now has authority, granted by colleges and universities collectively, to recognize officially those accrediting groups whose standards and practices have been determined to be sound and effective. The federal government, through the U.S. Department of Education, also recognizes accrediting agencies for the purpose of assuring eligibility for Title IV and other government programs. There are some differences in the two approved lists. USDE recognizes *only* those accreditors whose approval is essential to an institution for

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eligibility determination. CHEA recognizes only those accreditors who deal with degree-granting institutions and programs. An organization whose accredited members are not primarily degree-granting is not eligible for CHEA recognition.

Determining a standard for minimal acceptability in the interest of the public is one of two functions that accreditation serves. The other is to provide an external review process designed to improve the institution and program. Accreditation's task would be much simpler if its role were either of those tasks but not both. This is at the heart of why accreditation is controversial. Accreditation serves the public as a kind of consumer advocate providing a "good house-keeping seal" to those institutions and programs that meet minimal standards while also attempting to serve as a "colleague" to the institution or program in the interest of fostering improvement.

This dilemma is exacerbated in specialized and professional accreditation by the added dimensions of the interests of the program versus the interests of the whole institution. Should an accreditation visit to a "good" program insist that a program be "excellent" or "outstanding"? Or is "good" good enough? Is that a decision that should be made by the program or the institution? Certainly it is not one that should be made by the accreditor. These are some of the sticky and fundamental questions raised by the specialized accreditation process.

A large, complex institution is likely to be visited by multiple specialized accrediting organizations, each with its suggestions for improvement. Large research institutions may hold specialized accreditation from 20 or 30

or more different specialized accreditors. The cost of maintaining membership in that number of organizations alone causes concern for provosts and presidents and, of course, central administrators are leery of recommendations from specialized accrediting teams regarding allocations – more faculty positions, more space, equipment, library facilities, etc. Specialized visiting teams have often acted as lobbying groups for the profession and for their colleagues on the faculty of the program being visited. In fact, it is anticipated that specialized accreditors will behave in that manner, although in fairness it must be stated that this is probably less true today, in this time of limited resources for all institutions, than was the case a decade or more ago. In any case, the provost of an institution with multiple accreditations must keep the interests of the institution and the mission of the whole in mind as he/she makes decisions about allocations and suggestions for improvement from specialized accreditors.

BALANCE BETWEEN THE INTERESTS of a particular program or discipline and those of the institution as a whole is the source of the healthy tension that specialized accreditation represents in American higher education. No one would argue that the perspective of the total institution is important, nor would one argue that an academic program preparing students for a particular profession should not meet the standards established by the practitioners of that profession. However, if both the accreditor and the administration of the subject institution do not understand or appreciate the need for an appropriate

balance, there will be tension. The tension is certain to be present when:

- standards for program accreditation are based on input or resource measures only, with little regard for or measurement of what students achieve;
- standards are excessively quantitative, with no stated rationale for why specific numbers must be met (student-faculty ratios, volumes in the library, faculty salary levels, etc.);
- accreditation is not voluntary, i.e., when it is required by the state for graduates to practice the profession; and/or
- the accreditor uses its authority to intrude in the internal organization or workings of the institution, e.g., demanding a change in structure to accommodate the program in question.

An accrediting organization's standards are a product of the thinking and philosophy of those who set them. Accrediting standards do not descend from on high – they are developed and modified over the years by people in the accrediting organizations, usually with the involvement of institutions but perhaps not. It is reasonable to expect that an organization made up of practitioners will set standards of a somewhat different nature from those made by an association of educators. Specialized accrediting groups are as different as the disciplines they represent, but even more than that, they are different according to the internal makeup or politics of their organization. Some specialized accrediting groups are made up entirely of member schools, that is, all of their member representatives, and thus those who develop

their accrediting standards and procedures are educators. Other specialized accrediting groups are complex organizations of professional societies; thus the people who establish their standards may be mostly professional practitioners. And of course, many are a combination of educators and practitioners. Thus it is difficult to generalize about the behavior or attitude of specialized accreditors as a group – there are significant differences among them.

Likewise, the teams of volunteers who conduct site visits to institutions in the accrediting process may have widely varied makeups, both in size and in their mix of educators and professional practitioners. Even the extent and level of training that teams of visitors have varies greatly from one accrediting organization to another. If one can generalize about this, we would say that teams of educators tend to have a more understanding attitude about another institution's problems or resource limitations than those made up of professional practitioners, and in most instances the teams that are predominantly educators have more experience and more training for the accrediting task than do teams of practitioners. But herein lies an interesting paradox. While educators may be more understanding and thus cause less concern or problem for the administration of the subject institution, perhaps the most rigorous and thus the most valuable review comes from professional practitioners. Tension, yes, but a healthy tension!

Another interesting aspect of the difference between accreditation by professional practitioners and accreditation by educators is the conflict of philosophy that can occur in

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the former between faculty and visiting accreditors. Faculty in some disciplines suffer or enjoy (depending on your point of view) a tension between those with traditional academic backgrounds who tend to be more theoretically oriented, and those with professional backgrounds who tend to be more practical in orientation. A visit by a team of professionals who are not particularly sensitive to those differences can cause interesting reactions within the visited institution.

Among the "tension creators" cited above – reliance on inputs, excessively quantitative standards, accreditation as a requirement for professional practice, and intrusion into the affairs of institutions – some can be and are being recognized and ameliorated; others will be with us forever. The over-emphasis on inputs and resource measures is changing; more and more accreditors are reviewing and revising their need for reliance on quantitative standards. The tie of accreditation to state licensure and thus loss of the voluntary aspect of accreditation, however, is not likely to change. In some professions as many as two-thirds of the states require graduation from an accredited program for licensure, and thus accreditation in those disciplines in those states is not voluntary at all; it is, in fact, mandatory. This may be in the interest of the public, particularly where health and safety are concerned, but nevertheless, the tie of accreditation to licensure places great pressure on institutions, and it is a tension that is not particularly healthy.

THE CULTURE AMONG ACCREDITING organizations, like the culture in higher education, has been changing in the 1990s to one of increased interest and emphasis

on student learning outcomes. More and more accreditors have adopted a philosophy of reducing their reliance on resource measures and quantitative standards to the extent possible, and striving instead to determine whether students are being prepared adequately. This is difficult, of course, and the more subjective the measurement the more difficult it is. While some speak about "outcomes" as being whether graduates get jobs, the more enlightened look at broader and more important outcomes. Are students learning basic skills for the profession they are entering? Are they educated broadly enough to cope with the dynamic world of the 21st century? Do their values and attitudes prepare them to be effective contributors to society? Accreditors do not attempt to take these measurements themselves, but most now insist that their accredited programs have a strategy or a system for measuring and answering questions such as these. Not only is this healthy for making appropriate judgments about the worthiness and adequacy of a program, but it is also perhaps the most effective means by which an accreditor can help with program improvement. Furthermore, reliance on these "real," even if difficult, measures diverts attention from resource measures. To the extent that accrediting groups make this cultural change, they meet with less resistance and greater approval from the leadership of the institutions in which they accredit programs.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO MEASURE THE EFFECT that specialized accreditation has had on education for the professions in this country, but in our estimation it is extensive and pervasive. Just the fact that people in the

professions, through their own professional organizations, have input into the educational standards for those who will work with them and eventually succeed them is a significant factor in the advancement of the professions themselves. Could a government ministry of education accomplish that? We're quite sure not! Could professionals have ready input into a governmental process of quality assurance, and would that be flexible and adaptive and responsive to change with the times? We seriously doubt it. American professional education has benefited enormously, it has stayed up to date, and it has improved as a result of the shared, peer-review system of quality assurance and quality improvement that we call accreditation.

Yes, we are believers, but we also recognize some significant challenges for the future – the immediate future, in fact. We will conclude by citing some of those challenges, along with suggestions for how specialized accreditation may deal with them. The first question is whether specialized accreditation will continue to be part of the solution or part of the problem as institutional cultures change. There is a dramatic (even if not yet very rapid) shift occurring on college campuses, one that recognizes the needs and learning styles of today's "digital age" students. Will accreditation first recognize and then encourage that cultural shift? The question is critical partly because, as one example, our definition and understanding of an academic credit has been based on "seat time," e.g., three hours per week in class for a three-credit-hour course. In a new teaching-learning model, institutions are taking advantage of technology and reexamining how faculty spend their time. Class

meetings will likely be less frequent, but student involvement in learning (we hope) will be increased. Will accreditors be flexible enough to accept such changes? They will if they are sincere in their effort to measure student learning achievement rather than how many hours the students spent in class.

OTHER ISSUES include the following:

- **ACCOUNTABILITY**– Higher education institutions will be faced with increased demands for accountability from the business community and the professions in such areas of public interest as the preparation of teachers and from parents and students who are concerned about costs. Accreditation can help institutions and programs to be more accountable, but most especially accreditors can help if they will be more open about their accreditation decisions. There are very good and understandable reasons for confidentiality on certain issues, particularly those dealing with personnel, but we believe the public will demand to know more about an institution's or a program's accredited status than yes or no.
- **VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT**– Specialized accreditation, like every activity within institutions, will have to assess itself with regard to "value-added" and usefulness. Business as usual seems always to be the easiest way, but careful examination of such matters as schedules, number of visitors required, the extent of information needed, sharing of information in common format with other accreditors, and utilizing technology to improve and facilitate the process will be expected by those in institutions.

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- **QUALITY DISTANCE LEARNING**– How will we deal with the assurance of quality in distance learning? More and more institutions will become engaged in offering courses of all types to people who are placebound by family, job, or personal circumstance. The opportunities for both institutions and individuals are exciting, but there is also great opportunity here for charlatans. Furthermore, experience has shown that the institutional label on a distance-delivered course is not necessarily trustworthy as an indicator of quality in itself. How will accreditors be flexible enough and yet thorough enough to assure the public about which programs and which institutions are legitimate? This will require a great deal of thought, experimentation, and probably commitment of resources on the part of accrediting groups. They can, of course, learn from each other. That kind of research and idea and experience sharing is one of the purposes of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

- **INNOVATION**– Will specialized accreditation encourage innovation? The charge has been made for years that accreditation discourages innovation by applying the same standards to all programs and institutions. That charge, in our observation, has largely been false, but the question is worth asking again in this time of rapid and dramatic

change in higher education. Accreditors will have to be particularly vigilant of themselves in order that they not become obsessed with protecting traditional educational processes in the interest of academic integrity and thereby deny experimentation and innovation with curricula and with teaching-learning patterns.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed officially in the spring of 1996 by a referendum of all degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States. In addition to recognizing officially the legitimate accreditors, one of its principal purposes is to conduct research, foster discussion, and coordinate activities among accrediting organizations, both institutional and specialized, in order to address some of these challenges in the immediate future. The CHEA philosophy is that accreditation, to improve on its past performance, must be a cooperative effort between institutions and accreditors. The importance of the professions and their involvement in the accrediting process is recognized, and if the spirit and attitude about accreditation among the higher education community is one of “we” rather than the “we versus they,” American higher education and thus American society in general will be the winners. ③①

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TWO ASPECTS OF ACEJMC's operations apparently are unique among accrediting agencies, and both bear some relation to basic values of journalism and mass communications. One is the open meetings policy, adopted in the late 1980s in the interest of freedom of information. When the U.S. Department of Education last reviewed ACEJMC for continued recognition, it commended this policy. The second unique aspect of ACEJMC is the use of First Amendment concerns as the rationale for a diversity standard. About 40 percent of agencies like ACEJMC (*see p. 12 chart) have developed a standard specifically addressing diversity issues, and about 70 percent address these issues within other standards. About 30 percent do not address diversity at all, and none other than ACEJMC bases a diversity standard on Constitutional grounds.

Agencies fall along a continuum of prescriptivity – the degree to which the agency requires certain curricular content, faculty qualifications, or student experience. ACEJMC historically has avoided overly prescriptive standards, preferring to allow units considerable freedom to address challenges and opportunities. About 80 percent of agencies specify curricular elements in their standards – one lists 22 specific curricular elements and 51 specific educational outcomes. ACEJMC's Standard 3: Curriculum establishes a proportion of coursework that must come from outside the major, but makes only general statements about the content of the journalism/mass communications curriculum. The Standard 3 model has counterparts in other fields; for example, one large agency requires students to take at least 50 percent of course work in general studies.

Outside Standard 3, ACEJMC's standards contain no highly quantitative expectations or abstract, universal rules. For example, they require faculty members to be “academically and professionally qualified for their responsibilities” and units to provide “facilities and equipment in sufficient quantity and quality to carry out [their] stated educational objectives.” Many other agencies use similar language, but about 60 percent specify that faculty members must hold certain degrees, certifications or licenses, and about 45 percent specify that certain equipment or facilities must be provided. ③

ACEJMC MISSION STATEMENT

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications is dedicated to fostering and encouraging excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications.

The Council believes that students can best prepare for careers in journalism and mass communications by studying in accredited professional programs at colleges and universities. The Council embraces the value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum as the essential foundation for a professional journalism and mass communications education.

The Council recognizes that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are indispensable to a free society and that the professional education offered by accredited programs should encourage dissent, inquiry, and free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

To serve this mission, the Council establishes educational requirements and standards and provides a process of voluntary program review by professionals and academicians, awarding accredited status to units that meet its standards. In this role, the Council assures students, parents, journalism and mass communications professionals, and the public that accredited programs meet rigorous standards for professional education.

The Council recognizes and safeguards the institutional diversity of each accredited program and encourages educational innovation by units as they strive to meet accreditation requirements and standards.

ACEJMC VISION STATEMENT

Journalism and mass communication transmit and interpret culture and bind society together, making them among the most vital forces in the maintenance of any society and fundamental to democratic government and a free society. They embody the spirit of a free press and are central to the preservation and advancement of the values provided under the First Amendment.

Because of their importance to society, journalism and mass communication demand the highest possible level of integrity, fairness, understanding, and skill from both practitioners of journalism and mass communications and the educators who teach the practitioners.

To sustain and advance its mission of fostering and encouraging high standards for the educational preparation of journalism and mass communication professionals, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications dedicates itself to providing leadership in:

1. Establishing, preserving, and advancing rigorous standards of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communications.
2. Providing a forum for dialogue and interaction among journalism and mass communications educators and practitioners that can identify trends and developments, assess their impact on the media and suggest changes in the educational requirements and standards that are at the heart of the accrediting process.
3. Monitoring, surveying, and reporting on trends and developments in the fields of professional practice served by accredited units in journalism and mass communications.
4. Assisting journalism and mass communications programs at colleges and universities in interpreting established quality standards and preparing to seek accredited status.
5. Conveying to students, parents, educators, journalism and mass communications practitioners, and the public the value and benefits of accreditation and the assurance that accredited units meet rigorous standards of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communications.

SPECIALIZED AGENCIES COMPARED

Agencies ranged vastly in size. The number of accredited programs ranged from five to 2,292 (ACEJMC accredits 106 programs); median was 120. Likewise, FTE staff ranged from 0.25 to 14 (ACEJMC has 2.25 FTE staff); median was 2.75. To level such differences and get a rough sense of different agencies' levels of service and efficiency, the last two sets of figures show accredited programs per staff FTE and budget per accredited program.

Operating Budget

low	\$ 10,500
ACEJMC	202,000
median.....	240,000
high	1,775,000

Annual Fee to Accredited Programs

low	\$ 100
ACEJMC	650
median.....	712
high	3,200

Annual Fee to Member Organizations (per representative)

low	\$1,500
ACEJMC	1,500
median.....	3,725
high	6,000

Programs per FTE Staff Member

low	15
ACEJMC	47
median.....	53
high	458

Budget per Accredited Program

low	\$ 308
median.....	1,504
ACEJMC	1,905
high	4,000

- Figures in text and charts are based on 23 responses to a survey of specialized accrediting agencies, all members of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

STANDARD 1
Governance/Administration

The chief administrative officer of the unit and administrative associates must provide intellectual, academic, and professional leadership to advance the cause of the unit – both within the university and to outside constituencies.

STANDARD 7
Internships/Work Experience

Quality experience in journalism and mass communications should be encouraged. Academic credit may be awarded only for carefully monitored and supervised experience in fields related to journalism and mass communications.

Academic credit may be awarded for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but should not exceed one semester course (or its equivalent) if the internship is away from the institution and, for the most part, supervised by media professionals rather than academics. Schools may have up to two semester courses

(or their equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the institution can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the institution's faculty and professionals. Schools may have up to three semester courses (or their equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the school where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media is to instruct students. Units should advise students that employers are required to conform to applicable federal, state and local laws relating to employment.

ACEJMC ACCREDITING STANDARDS

Faculty control over basic educational policy must be demonstrated. The chief administrative officer of the unit must have the expressed and demonstrated confidence of the faculty and of the higher administration.

STANDARD 2
Budget

The budget must be adequate to provide a high level of quality in administration, instruction, facilities, equipment, and support services for each area of study. The budget should be adequate to carry out the mission of the program, and fair when compared with the resources of other academic units of the university.

STANDARD 3
Curriculum

The unit must teach students to communicate in a diverse and democratic society. This requirement calls for a balance between courses in journalism and mass communications and courses in other disciplines, primarily in the liberal arts and sciences. Balance also should be provided between professional skills courses and theoretical and conceptual courses. Graduate programs will concentrate on skills and other professional courses but they should not be limited to such courses.

STANDARD 4
Student Records/Advising

Student records must be accurate, up-to-date and readily accessible to administrators, advisers and faculty. Records should show clearly each student's academic requirements and the student's progress toward meeting those requirements. A systematic and effective advising system must be maintained in which the unit takes responsibility for ensuring that students receive accurate information about academic requirements and enrollment and also provides students with career and professional advice.

STANDARD 5
Instruction/Evaluation

High standards in instruction must be maintained by every means available, and a regular program of evaluation, including but not limited to student input, must be undertaken for all teaching staff.

STANDARD 6
Faculty: Full-time/Part-time

Faculty must be academically and professionally qualified for their responsibilities, and full-time faculty must have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.

STANDARD 8
Equipment/Facilities

The unit must have facilities and equipment in sufficient quantity and quality to carry out its stated educational objectives.

STANDARD 9
Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities

Units must have specific policies and take administrative actions to require faculty scholarship, research/creative activity and professional activities that go beyond the teaching function.

STANDARD 10
Public Service

Unit records must demonstrate that the unit is providing coherent, creative service to the journalism and mass communications profession, to journalism and mass communications education and to the public. Regular evaluation of these service programs must be undertaken.

STANDARD 11
Graduates/Alumni

A unit should keep in regular contact with all its alumni. It should assess periodically the experience of its graduates who work in journalism and mass communications and incorporate that assessment into its operation.

STANDARD 12
Diversity

Units should demonstrate a commitment to increased diversity and inclusivity in their student populations and faculties and the creation of a learning environment that exposes students to a broad spectrum of voices and views. Units must have written diversity and inclusivity goals, and they must demonstrate specific results achieved toward accomplishing those goals. Units are encouraged to make effective efforts to recruit, advise and retain minority students and minority and women faculty members for their intended career paths. Recruitment efforts must not be discriminatory in nature and must have as their objective enlarging the overall talent pool. Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

THE COMMITTEE ON Exemplary Practices

IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

Excerpts from the Opening Remarks
of the January 17 Initial Meeting

by ROBERT H. GILES
President, ACEJMC

THIS COMMITTEE was authorized last September by the Accrediting Council. The selection of committee members was done with great care. We attempted to be as inclusive as possible, and as practical as possible, taking into account the numerous academic and professional constituencies. . . . Around this table are representatives from each of the academic disciplines: newspapers, magazines, broadcast, advertising, public relations, visual journalism. We have teachers and administrators, and practitioners from print and broadcast. We have racial and gender diversity, a good geographical distribution, and representatives from large and small programs, public and private universities, major research institutions, comprehensive universities and liberal arts colleges. We also have a diversity of ideas and points of view. The committee was *not* selected with the intent to rubber-stamp anyone's preconceived notions about quality in journalism education. Some of you are skeptical about this project. Some of you remain to be convinced that it is possible and practical to craft a fair and objective process for recognizing excellence. Others believe finding a way to recognize excellence is essential.

I invited Doug Anderson to chair the committee because of his own exemplary record as director of the Walter Cronkite School at Arizona State, and because of his demonstrated ability in the service of accreditation, both as chair of the Accrediting Committee and as chair of the team that carried out an extensive review and updating of the 12 accrediting standards.

Our purpose is to examine the issues, to engage in critical

reflection, to pursue discovery of a means by which every accredited program would have a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate that it has earned recognition for academic excellence. It is my fervent hope that we can achieve our purpose, that we can devise recommendations for public review and for consideration by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Our sponsor *is* the Accrediting Council, and accreditation *is* the mechanism by which any process to recognize excellence must be carried forward.

Accreditation, as a collegial process based on self assessment and peer assessment for public accountability and improvement of academic quality, is an ideal forum in which to establish a mechanism to identify programs that substantially exceed the requirements of the standards. This system of internal accountability requires institutions to nurture a climate of critical self-inquiry where candor and criticism can flourish and where each unit is allowed to express its own mission, its strengths and its weaknesses.

It is with a clear understanding of accreditation's obligation to the public – and through a spirit of self-inquiry and respect for each unit's mission – that this project can succeed.

In spite of controversy over its role, accreditation has been the most effective public way for higher education to maintain its set of core values – autonomy, self-governance, scholarship and the pursuit of quality through peer evaluation.

Larry Braskamp, former executive director of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, who spoke to the Accrediting Council last September about the imperative for accrediting agencies to be concerned about quality, reminds us of the unique role higher education plays in American society and how accreditation serves that role. In an article published in *Chronicle of the Council for*

Higher Education Accreditation last July, Braskamp wrote:

“Higher education has always enjoyed the status of self-governance. As part of the social contract with the larger society, higher education has built its reputation and role in a democratic society on the principle of the necessity of autonomy and self-governance.

“Faculty have had a remarkable history of being able to run their own affairs: the academic community itself has determined the standards held for the faculty and has judged the quality of their work. Being accountable – responsive and responsible – has always been embedded in the social contract between society and higher education.

“Accreditation has the obligation to be sensitive to the nature and substance of academic quality and thus, the goals, strategies and practices of accreditation must fit and reinforce what it is assessing.

“Since higher education is about scholarship, creativity, experimentation, critical analysis and preparation of our future citizens . . . accreditation must encourage discovery, imagination, freedom of expression, diversity and high standards without undue standardization.”

I quote Braskamp at such length because he conveys an accurate sense of accreditation – autonomy, self-governance, collegiality, peer review, public accountability – that must be a foundation of our work in the months ahead. Two additional values of accreditation in journalism and mass communications need to be mentioned here.

Del Brinkman, journalism program officer for the Knight Foundation, writing about accreditation in the Winter 1995 issue of *Insights*, noted the increasing pressure toward prescriptiveness in the Accrediting Council's reviews – pressure from individuals and institutions. Brinkman cautioned that the accrediting review “should be essentially diagnostic rather than prescriptive; it should concentrate on determining the strengths and weaknesses of programs measured against a set of clear and well understood standards and goals. It should not create a narrow pattern of study that inhibits innovative programs.” Brinkman's point

underscores a strength of [ACEJMC] accreditation . . . the standards are designed so they are consistent enough to be rigorous but sufficiently adaptable to meet changing circumstances.

The second value is the right of each program to create its own individual mission and the obligation of the accrediting process to respect those missions. Betty Medsger, in her *Winds of Change* report to The Freedom Forum in 1996, found reason to express concern over the application of this value in accreditation. Medsger noted that “many team reports appear to be more an endorsement of team members' views of whether the program is what they think it should be, not whether it is living up to its mission.”

Let me now move closer to the subject at hand: quality, excellence, distinction, exceptional or exemplary practices – however one chooses to

“accreditation must encourage discovery, imagination, freedom of expression, diversity and high standards without undue standardization”

define it. It has become a subject worthy of our attention and inquiry because of a widely held belief that the accrediting standards only represent a minimum level of acceptance.

In a little more than a decade, 21 additional schools have become accredited, bringing the total to 106 programs. More programs are preparing to seek accreditation. As the number of accredited programs increases, there is a temptation to perceive differences, to suggest that accredited status is not always an assurance of quality. The concern for quality is not limited in its focus to education in journalism and mass communications. It is a subject of serious and

wide-ranging discussion throughout higher education. These discussions often center on a need to pay greater attention to teaching and learning. Braskamp describes this particular focus:

“ . . . colleges and universities are now being conceptualized as learning communities – communities in which the most important persons are the students as learners.

“Faculty and the surrounding learning environment – the curriculum, social activities and facilities – exist to foster social, physical, spiritual and intellectual development of students. . . . A college no longer is to be reviewed as a place to provide instruction, but as one that exists to produce learning.”

Braskamp observes that over the past decade, accrediting agencies have begun to redefine academic quality, seeing the pendulum swing from facilities, SAT scores and other measurements of student excellence as they enter college – as well

*“a college no longer is to be reviewed
as a place to provide instruction,
but as one that exists
to produce learning”*

as the quality of the college experience – to an assessment of quality based on how and what the programs enable students to learn.

Reflecting this new focus, the Accrediting Council adopted a policy at its fall meeting designed to ensure that units have a process to assess student achievement and to act on the information revealed in such assessments. Braskamp suggests that “when standards are connected to student performance, they provide a very compelling argument for refocusing the definition of quality in higher education. By linking standards and performance, student learning and development become the starting points for examining program quality.”

So if excellence is rapidly becoming the watchword of the university, what does it mean in the context of our work? I have some observations about excellence and some questions about our task. I offer them not as conclusions but to invite a wide range of inquiry and discussion.

Bill Readings, a Canadian who before his death in 1994 taught at the University of Montreal, discusses the idea of excellence in his book, *The University in Ruins*. “The notion of excellence develops within the university, as the idea around which the university centers itself and through which it becomes comprehensible to the outside world.”

In a real sense, *our* role is to make excellence comprehensible to the outside world of parents, students, the media and the public. Readings also notes that “excellence is not a fixed standard of judgment but a qualifier whose meaning is fixed in relation to something else.” As this thought applies to our task here, excellence would be a qualifier whose meaning is fixed in relation to the 12 accrediting standards.

In one sense, some terms of accreditation are taken from economic jargon and permit the university's self-evaluation to seem but a matter of accounting. In our accrediting standards, to be sure, there are requirements based on accounting, such as measurements assuring compliance with the 90/65 rule in the curriculum standard. But most of the criteria that provide the basis for judging compliance with standards are set forth in a spirit of high expectations that are demanding without becoming overly prescriptive.

In a January 1997 article for the *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*, Marian Smith reports on a study that sought to measure the characteristics perceived to represent quality to students, faculty and practitioners. The report's findings from all three groups indicate that

practical experience and hands-on learning for students were considered necessary components. . . . She writes, “The high rankings given to opportunities for internships . . . and for contacts with working media practitioners also showed the significance respondents placed on the acquisition of practical information by students.”

It is fair to say, perhaps, that no one knows what excellence is but everyone has his or her own idea of what it is, and out of those ideas around this table can evolve a set of explanations that will characterize it with reasonable accuracy.

Suzanne Shaw, in her article [in this issue of *Insights*], reports that few accrediting agencies have a mechanism to cite programs for compliance with distinction. One other agency exploring the idea, she writes, is the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. NCATE instructs members of its visiting teams on how to cite what it calls “exemplary practices” . . . defined as “those practices and programs that are so outstanding that other institutions may wish to emulate them; they are those activities which may be viewed as progressive, innovative, implemented in an exceptional fashion, and/or with outcomes that are much better than at other sites. They substantially exceed the expectations of the NCATE standards in implementation and/or outcomes.”

NCATE offers the following examples of exemplary practices:

- Grants and/or scholarships offered by the unit to adult or non-traditional students in the local community.
- Distance learning programs that offer courses via interactive technologies.
- Recruitment programs that have resulted in a diverse student body and/or faculty.
- A professional development program that

allows graduates to attend courses or seminars that can help them sharpen their skills and knowledge.

NCATE also provides examples of what exemplary practice *is not*:

- Meeting the standard.
- Appropriation of large sums of money to build new facilities.
- The existence of new buildings or acquisition of the latest technology hardware.
- Plans for the future that may yield exemplary results.

During the past two years, as the general idea of recognizing excellence has been discussed in our Accrediting Council and outside, there have been concerns about:

- Whether such a program would favor the large schools;
- Whether designation as *excellent* or *distinguished* would be influenced by resources and size; and
- Whether, in fact, we would create a two-tier program or, as some have said, the haves and have-nots.

I am committed to assuring that this is *not* the result of our work, *not* a consequence of our work. . . . Our desire to create a process in which

*exemplary practices:
programs so progressive, innovative,
well-implemented and/or with outcomes
so outstanding that other institutions
may wish to emulate them*

each unit, every unit, could reasonably strive for recognition prompts me to suggest that the language of *exemplary practices* has to recommend it as a framework for our discussions.

The meaning of exemplary practices, as I understand it, encourages a consideration of the work of individual teachers, of innovative and effective individual programs, and of initi-

*“it focuses on . . .
the achievement of faculty . . .
of students . . . of the program
in its outreach to the professions,
in the ways it values
the First Amendment, in the ways
in which it serves diversity”*

atives within the unit. It focuses on the achievement of faculty, in the classroom, in their roles as advisers and counselors, and in their research; of students in learning and in acquiring professional experience; of the program in its outreach to the professions, in the ways it values the First Amendment, in the ways in which it serves diversity.

So, as we move toward beginning our work, my questions to the committee are these:

- Can we create language that identifies and recognizes values we might consider to represent exemplary practices?
- Should we include in our assessment the quality of the liberal arts education as a critical component of the journalism student's preparation for a career? If so, would this likely be reflected in percentages of majors taking a dual emphasis or a second major?

- Should we seek to effectively and fairly assess the ability of teachers to enable students to think critically and analytically?
- Should our evaluation of research give greater value to projects that make an impact in the various fields of media?
- Should our evaluation of skills courses draw a distinction between those that set journalistic standards of reporting and writing and those that teach the language of political and commercial persuasion or those that attempt to merge the two?
- How do we define as exemplary practices evidence of vision, innovation, leadership?
- Should the process involve the stakeholders of our journalism and mass communications programs – the graduates and the companies that hire them?
- Should members of journalism school advisory boards be asked to help identify exemplary practices?
- Is there any contribution to our discussions to be made by studying the process used by *Business Week* or *U.S. News & World Report* in their approach to defining the leading schools in a variety of professional fields?
- Is there a practical way for the unit to call attention to exemplary practices as part of the self-study?
- Can we construct a process that can be done effectively and efficiently by the site teams as part of their visit?

These are but a few of the questions that will be raised. . . . This is a challenging undertaking, and an exciting one as well. I believe we can succeed because of the commitment to quality that I know resides in each of you and because of the tradition of the Accrediting Council as a leader in innovation among accrediting agencies. (30)

issues and

ACEJMC ACCREDITATION

SUZANNE SHAW
Executive Director, ACEJMC

ACCREDITATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS IS NOT PERFECT. It never will be. Having said that, I hasten to add that I see numerous signs that accreditation by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) works well and serves the needs of the various constituencies that rely on it. What's more, ACEJMC is addressing issues that promise improvement in the process, with the end result improved education.

One of the best indicators of increased interest in accreditation in journalism and mass communications is its growth. In 1986, ACEJMC accredited 85 programs; today, 106 programs at 105 U.S. universities are accredited, including 21 schools not accredited in 1986. Several new schools seek initial accreditation each year.

Since 1986, four schools have let their accreditation lapse. One eliminated its department of technical journalism; others decided not to seek re-accreditation because of campus mergers and unit reconfigurations. Two schools that had been denied accreditation sought and regained it after the required two-year lapse.

It is important to remember that accreditation is a voluntary process. Schools report each year that they place a high value on accreditation, and that the review is an important measure of quality for them, especially on their campuses. One of the tenets of accreditation is that the self-study year should be a time for planning by the school, and the actual visit should be helpful to the faculty and students.

For example, the School of Communications at the University of Washington faced elimination two years ago because of state-mandated budget cuts. At the same time, the School was undertaking its periodic self-study. The School ultimately reorganized, survived and was re-accredited this year, and the peer-review process documented its high quality.

Professor Anthony Giffard, director of the School, spoke in June at the Leadership Institute sponsored by The Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center and gave high praise to the work of the visiting team. He called re-accreditation a “major boost” and said the visit had had a very positive effect on the School's standing in the university.

After meeting with the ACEJMC visiting team, university President Richard L. McCormick wrote to Giffard: “. . . you already know that they judge the Journalism track to be in compliance with accreditation standards in every respect. But beyond that, they had very, very positive things to say about all aspects of the School – including its faculty, students, and leadership.”

SATISFACTION WITH STANDARDS

More generally, those most affected by accreditation have indicated a high level of satisfaction with ACEJMC's 12 accrediting standards.

In the fall of 1994, ACEJMC surveyed administrators of accredited and non-accredited programs to assess their satisfaction with the standards. For 10 standards, more than 90 percent of responses indicated that the standard either was satisfactory as written or needed only minor changes. The two other standards, which dealt with curriculum and diversity, received 66 percent and 83 percent “approval ratings,” respectively.

REVISION OF STANDARDS

Evidence of ACEJMC's continuing efforts to improve includes the recently completed revision of the accrediting standards. The revision was less extensive than the previous one – a major overhaul in 1984 – but it was nonetheless an exhaustive process.

At the beginning of his second term, ACEJMC President Robert H. Giles formed a committee to review the existing standards. Douglas A. Anderson of Arizona State University, then chair of the Accrediting Committee, led this committee. This group met several times during the next two years, conducted the survey mentioned above and several open hearings, and rewrote the standards. The Council approved the revisions at its September 1996 meeting, with the understanding that work would continue on Standard 12: Diversity. At that meeting, Giles asked Bob

Wedgeworth, University Librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a public member of the Council, to lead a committee to continue development of the diversity standard.

At the May 1997 meeting, the Council unanimously approved the Wedgeworth Committee's version of Standard 12. That action officially ended the Council's standards review process. In September, 12 revised standards went into effect for schools undergoing accreditation reviews next year.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Another sign of the Accrediting Council's intent to improve is its recent discussions of quality and improvement – of education, of the site-visit teams and of the self-studies. In September, the Council authorized ACEJMC President Giles to appoint a committee to examine ways in which the accrediting process could strengthen and improve journalism and mass communications education. Specifically, the committee will attempt to develop a mechanism through which ACEJMC could recognize exemplary practices – those that exceed the requirements of the standards.

ACEJMC would be a leader among agencies in developing such a process. The term “improvement” is used frequently by accrediting

agencies and by the public, but few agencies have a mechanism to cite exemplary practices. However, at least one other agency is exploring the idea.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defines exemplary practices as “practices and programs that are so outstanding that other institutions may wish to emulate them; they are those activities which may be viewed as progressive, innovative, implemented in an exceptional fashion, and/or with outcomes that are much better than at other sites. They *substantially exceed* the expectations of the NCATE standards in implementation and/or outcomes.” Site visit teams are asked to explain why a practice is outstanding.

NCATE offers the following examples of exemplary practices: grants/scholarships offered by the unit to adult/non-traditional students in the local community; a distance learning program that offers courses via interactive technologies; recruitment programs that have resulted in a diverse student body/faculty (especially where the institution is located in an area that offers little or no diversity); or a professional development program that allows graduates to attend courses or seminars that can help them sharpen their skills and knowledge.

NCATE also says exemplary practice is not “meeting the standard; appropriation of large sums of money

to build new facilities, or the existence of new buildings or the latest technologies; plans for the future that . . . may yield exemplary results.”

RECOGNITION OF EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Why would ACEJMC want to measure excellence in this way? The simple answer is that improvement of education is a primary goal of accreditation. Private and public boards that oversee higher education seek to improve university and college programs. Clearly, the public demands this improvement.

A more complex answer is that a mechanism to recognize exemplary practices would make accreditation more meaningful for programs of all sizes and configurations. All schools would continue to have all current benefits and privileges of accreditation. All schools would be eligible to seek recognition of exemplary practices, and the schools themselves would choose the practices for which to seek it. Smaller programs, no less than those with larger enrollments and more faculty, could seek to excel in certain areas of their choice.

In fact, such procedure might provide increased opportunity for smaller schools to gain recognition for excellence. ACEJMC's policies say that the standards set “minimal” levels of performance. The term “acceptable” performance is gaining favor in the accreditation community;

either term connotes a threshold.

After observing Council meetings for the past several years and reading many visiting team reports, I think that the Council now tends to hold larger schools to a higher threshold than it does smaller programs. I do not see a conscious effort by the voting members or the visiting teams, but it often appears that more rigor is imposed on schools with bigger enrollments. High expectations are fine, but differential expectations are not fair. The proposed procedure might enable smaller schools to distinguish themselves more easily.

Some fear that their schools won't be included among those designated for exemplary practice. To the contrary, a program could decide to seek this mark of excellence and work toward it as something to achieve for the next accrediting visit. The Council would expect performance well above “acceptable,” and such recognition would be meaningful.

I think failure to find a way to recognize schools' achievements would be shortsighted. I hope that ACEJMC is successful in this renewed effort to identify and recognize outstanding practices of accredited programs. The idea deserves further exploration that our evaluations should enable the constituencies we serve – students, parents, the public – to know which programs exceed the basic “acceptable” level, and the ways in which they do so. A system that actively encourages programs to

improve makes accreditation more valuable to all concerned.

**PRESCRIPTIVENESS
IN REVIEWS**

Another issue facing the Accrediting Council is pressure from individuals and organizations toward prescriptiveness in its reviews, which it must continue to resist. Del Brinkman, journalism program officer for the Knight Foundation, wrote about accreditation in the Winter 1995 issue of this magazine. While saying that he believed that accreditation of academic programs was absolutely necessary, he cautioned that the review should be essentially diagnostic rather than prescriptive. That is, he wrote, "it should concentrate on determining the strengths and weaknesses of programs measured against a set of clear and well understood standards and goals. It should not create a narrow pattern of study that inhibits innovative programs."

At recent Council meetings, I have been dismayed to see a kind of prescriptiveness among members with apparently narrow agendas that arise from their particular affiliations. They have seemed to base their discussion of programs, and their votes, on the programs' performance in one or two limited curricular areas. Doug Anderson, Council member, noticed this also, and his response was that "the only way to look at this issue was within the context of ALL sequences.

The goal of accreditation is to ensure that all programs are considered in their totality . . . with no greater or lesser attention to any single area."

**RIGOR IN
ASSESSMENT**

Another issue, more difficult to resolve than improvement but related somewhat to prescriptiveness, is the unevenness of visiting teams. Hard as it may be to believe, one of the two most common complaints each year from school administrators is that team members do not prepare for the visit. A few appear not to have read the self-study carefully. The other common complaint from administrators is that individual team members impose their personal views of journalism and mass communications education on the school. If a school under review approaches an issue in a different way from the team member's school, the team member must resist allowing personal opinions to become the basis for an accreditation recommendation.

Nonetheless, Betty Medsger reported evidence of this in her 1996 report to The Freedom Forum, *Winds of Change*: "Visiting teams are directed to place great emphasis on the mission that journalism programs have established and to conduct accreditation evaluations with strong respect for those missions. However, many team reports appear to be more an endorsement of team members'

views of whether the program is what they think it should be, not whether it is living up to its mission."

It is important also to remember that there are 12 standards to consider when making an accreditation decision. When I am asked which standards are most important, my response is that all are important, but standards 3: Curriculum and 12: Diversity are the hot buttons. Each year, these two standards generate more discussion at Council meetings and at professional gatherings than the others combined.

Some visiting teams need to apply more rigor in their assessments. A review of the team reports indicates that visiting teams are not as rigorous as they could be in enforcing Standard 12. This standard is one of the most frequently cited for non-compliance by visiting teams. Yet no school ever has lost accreditation or received a provisional decision because of failure to comply with Standard 12.

**ASSESSMENT
OF CURRICULUM**

Teams' decisions regarding the curriculum standard offer another example of unevenness. A strong curriculum should be the core of every accredited journalism and mass communications program. We ask programs to ensure that at least 95 percent of the members of their last two graduating classes meet the 90/65 semester hour requirement of

Standard 3. Some visiting teams say that a program that does not meet this requirement is automatically out of compliance with the standard. Others have found compliance in the same situation. In fact, there is much more to the curriculum standard than the 90/65 provision, and the standard does not say a school must meet the provision to comply with Standard 3 or to be accredited.

In 1993, the Council changed Standard 3 to permit schools to exempt journalism/mass communications courses that are liberal arts and sciences in nature from the 90/65 provision if they meet one of three exemption criteria. A school may exempt one or two courses depending upon the total hours required for graduation.

Approval of this change stirred controversy because some saw it as a weakening of the Council's commitment to the role of liberal arts in journalism/mass communications education. Others wished, and perhaps still wish, to relax this standard even more. I believe the Council

should continue its commitment to a strong liberal arts component. This implies attention also to the quality of academic advising, shown by experience to be the best tool to ensure that students take courses in the arts and sciences that appropriately complement their journalism education.

QUALITY OF SELF-STUDIES

Another continuing concern of mine is that the quality of many of the self-studies we receive is not what it should be. At least three visit teams in the most recent cycle reported that the self-studies they read were of much lower quality than the schools they visited. We are working to improve the process, but much of the responsibility for this lack of quality lies with the schools. Poor self-studies shortchange schools and frustrate team members. In September the Council discussed a proposed mechanism to deal with them, potentially including loss of accreditation. It authorized me to seek

suggestions and revise the proposal for final action in May.

INTERIM REPORTS

To address a long-standing concern about inadequate monitoring of schools during the six-year accreditation period, the Council in September approved the requirement of interim reports from accredited programs. All accredited programs will report in the second year of accreditation. The mechanism is unfinished, but I can say the reports will be short and simple. We will collect only enough basic, substantive information to monitor continued improvements in programs and continued compliance with the standards. In addition, programs that have received provisional accreditation or re-accreditation and later have been accredited or re-accredited will file progress reports focused on the issues that led to the provisional award.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES the Council has faced recently or will tackle in the next year or so. However, the foremost issue always is that the whole complex enterprise is intended to ensure that our schools offer programs of high – and increasing – quality for students. By that measure, ACEJMC accreditation is doing a good job and improving all the time. ③⑩

- ALABAMA** University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa, College of Communication (B.A., M.A.)
Auburn University, Journalism Department (B.A.)
- ALASKA** University of Alaska - Anchorage, Department of Journalism and Public Communications (B.A.)
University of Alaska - Fairbanks, Department of Journalism and Broadcasting (B.A.)
- ARIZONA** Arizona State University - Tempe, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Telecommunication (B.A., M.M.C.)
University of Arizona - Tucson, Department of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
- ARKANSAS** Arkansas State University, College of Communications (B.S.)
University of Arkansas - Fayetteville, Department of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
University of Arkansas - Little Rock, Department of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
- CALIFORNIA** California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, Department of Journalism (B.S.)
California State University - Fresno, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
California State University - Fullerton, Department of Communications (B.A.)
California State University - Northridge, Department of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
San Francisco State University, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
San Jose State University, School of Journalism and Mass Communications (B.S., M.S.)
University of California - Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism (M.J.)
University of Southern California - Los Angeles, School of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)
- COLORADO** Colorado State University - Fort Collins, School of Journalism (B.A.)
University of Colorado - Boulder, School of Journalism and Mass Communication (B.S., M.A.)
- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA** Howard University, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
Howard University, Department of Radio-TV-Film (B.A.)
American University, School of Communication (B.A., M.A.)
- FLORIDA** Florida A&M University - Tallahassee, Division of Journalism (B.S.J.)
Florida International University - North Miami, School of Journalism and Mass Communication (B.S., M.S.)
University of Florida - Gainesville, College of Journalism and Communications (B.S., M.A.)
University of Miami - Coral Gables, School of Communication (B.S.)
University of South Florida - Tampa, School of Mass Communications (B.A., M.A.)
University of West Florida - Pensacola, Department of Communication Arts (B.A., M.A.)
- GEORGIA** University of Georgia - Athens, Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication
(A.B.J., M.A., M.M.C.)
- HAWAII** University of Hawaii at Manoa - Honolulu, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
- ILLINOIS** Eastern Illinois University - Charleston, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
Northwestern University - Evanston, Medill School of Journalism (B.S.J., M.S., M.S.J.)
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale, School of Journalism (B.S.)
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign, College of Communications (B.S., M.S.)
- INDIANA** Ball State University - Muncie, Department of Journalism (B.A., B.S., M.A.)
Indiana University - Bloomington, School of Journalism (B.A.J., M.A.)

A C C R E D I T E D P R O G R A M S

IOWA Drake University - Des Moines, School of Journalism and Mass Communication (B.A., M.A.)
Iowa State University of Science and Technology - Ames, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (B.A., B.S., M.S.)
University of Iowa - Iowa City, School of Journalism and Mass Communication (B.A., B.S., M.A.)

KANSAS Kansas State University - Manhattan, A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications (B.A., B.S., M.S.)
University of Kansas - Lawrence, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications (B.S., M.S.)

KENTUCKY Murray State University, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications (B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S.)
Western Kentucky University - Bowling Green, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
University of Kentucky - Lexington, School of Journalism and Telecommunications (B.A., B.S.)

LOUISIANA Grambling State University, Department of Mass Communication (B.A.)
Louisiana State University - Baton Rouge,anship School of Mass Communication (B.A.M.C., M.M.C.)
McNeese State University - Lake Charles, Department of Mass Communication (B.S.)
Nicholls State University - Thibodaux, Department of Mass Communication (B.A.)
Northeast Louisiana University - Monroe, Department of Journalism (B.A.)
Southern University - Baton Rouge, Department of Mass Communications (B.A., M.A.)
University of Southwestern Louisiana - Lafayette, Department of Communication (B.A., M.S.)

MARYLAND University of Maryland - College Park, College of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)

MICHIGAN Central Michigan University - Mount Pleasant, Department of Journalism (B.A., B.S.)
Michigan State University - East Lansing, School of Journalism (B.A., M.A.)

MINNESOTA St. Cloud State University, Department of Mass Communications (B.S., M.S.)
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oversight and

SUZANNE SHAW
Executive Director, ACEJMC

JUST AS ACCREDITING AGENCIES REVIEW SCHOOLS, the operations of accrediting agencies are reviewed by outside organizations. ACEJMC and many other specialized accrediting agencies are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, for more than 50 years, national, non-governmental bodies have coordinated and overseen accrediting activities in higher education. Two now-defunct bodies that recognized ACEJMC were the Council for Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and its successor organization, the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA).

Accreditation is undergoing change nationally with the formation last year of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a non-profit organization of colleges and universities. Following a national referendum of college and university presidents, CHEA was established to oversee higher education accreditation in the United States. More importantly, it also will suggest new ways to support accreditation.

Last spring, CHEA surveyed university provosts and executive directors of specialized accrediting agencies about their perceptions of the value, strengths, and need for changes in specialized/professional accreditation. Some tension has existed for many years between these two groups, in part because some accreditors' primary agenda item in meetings with administrators is a plea for more resources.

Increased costs for accrediting visits and demands for irrelevant data are other areas of concern.

In June, CHEA used the responses to the survey to set the agenda for an invitational conference titled "Enhancing the Usefulness of Specialized/Professional Accreditation." The provosts and executive directors were divided into four groups to discuss definitions of quality in academic programs, cost reduction, the use of accreditation to promote academic quality, and enhanced accountability for specialized/professional accreditation organizations.

Both groups gave the meeting high praise. It is hoped that this meeting will serve as an initial step toward a stronger understanding of accreditation among accreditors and university administrators, thereby improving the process. ③

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