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COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MAY 1, 2007

WHEREAS, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Board of Directors, at its May 2007 meeting, reviewed the recent activities of the U.S. Department of Education and the role of the federal government in the accreditation of higher education, including the report of the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education (September 2006), the Department's Accreditation Forum (November 2006), Higher Education Summit (March 2007) and negotiated rulemaking on accreditation, scheduled to conclude by the end of May or early June 2007.

WHEREAS, the CHEA Board of Directors views the recent activities of the Department and especially the current negotiated rulemaking as threatening the current successful commitment of institutions and accrediting organizations to work together to establish expectations of student learning and institutional performance and make judgments about success in relation to student achievement.

WHEREAS, the CHEA Board of Directors responds with alarm to the Department's proposed rules that accreditation standards are not the product of shared understanding between institutions and accreditors, but instead would have to meet the test of federal acceptance, thereby federalizing accreditation, including rules that would:

- Establish the federal advisory committee (the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity) as a "Ministry of Quality" with comprehensive authority to judge academic programs and disciplines on individual campuses throughout the country.
- Position accrediting organizations as government contractors tasked with imposing government standards of quality.
- Insist on a "one size fits all," bureaucratic approach to quality that ignores the diverse missions of institutions and sets the tangible benefits of a collegiate experience as the primary indicator of higher education effectiveness.
- Constitute an unprecedented federal usurpation of authority to make academic judgments - heretofore the province of colleges and universities.

WHEREAS, the CHEA Board of Directors has consistently advocated immediate, vigorous and thoughtful action on the part of higher education and accreditation to address current accountability challenges and meet the needs of students and society.

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The CHEA Board of Directors reaffirms its longstanding commitment to place responsibility for student learning outcomes and institutional performance in the hands of individual institutions, working with accrediting organizations.

The CHEA Board of Directors continues to advocate that its member institutions and recognized accrediting organizations move aggressively to strengthen and expand their commitment to accountability and transparency in higher education.

The CHEA Board of Directors reaffirms and commends the CHEA "Statement of Mutual Responsibilities" to its member institutions and CHEA-recognized accreditors as a tool to expand and enhance accountability in higher education and accreditation, specifically,

CHEA calls on institutions and programs to:

- Routinely provide students and prospective students with information about student learning outcomes and institutional and program performance in terms of these outcomes.
- Regularly report aggregate information about student learning outcomes to external constituents.
- Supplement this information with additional evidence about the soundness of institutional and program operations and overall effectiveness with respect to mission fulfillment, as well as concrete evidence of how institutions benefit students in other ways.

CHEA calls on accrediting organizations to:

- Establish standards, policies and review processes that visibly and clearly expect institutions and programs to discharge the above responsibilities with respect to public communication about student learning outcomes.
- Clearly communicate to accreditation's constituents the fact that accredited status signifies that student achievement levels are appropriate and acceptable.
- Provide information about specific proficiencies or deficiencies in aggregate student academic performance, if these played a role in an accreditation action or decision about an institution or program.

Approved by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation Board of Directors

May 1, 2007