



The Western Instate Commission for Higher Education

Legislative Advisory Committee
September 8, 2025

Part 1– Understanding CHEA and Institutional Advocacy

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a non-profit, non-governmental institutional membership association that recognizes accrediting organizations and periodically reviews their effectiveness in assuring and improving quality in higher education.

CHEA serves as:

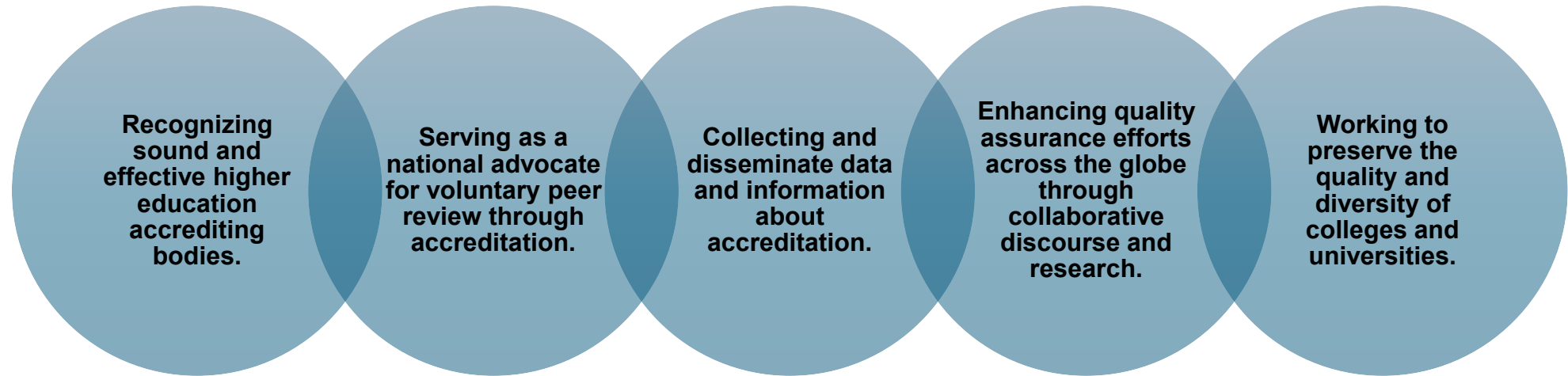
- An advocacy organization for member institutions
- An accreditation research and policy development influencer
- A monitor for ensuring accrediting organizations meet rigorous standards
- A convener and partner to address international quality assurance

Brief CHEA Facts

- Initiated by a referendum of college presidents A new organization *emerged*—**Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)**.
- 1996 to present: CHEA remains as the only non-governmental organization that provides *recognition* for accrediting organizations in the United States.

Functions

CHEA's Major Functions Lead to Student Success



CHEA Recognition Differs from U.S. Department of Education Recognition

CHEA focuses on institutional and program academic quality, academic integrity, student success and the preservation of institutional mission, autonomy, accountability and transparency and academic freedom.

The U.S. Department of Education focuses on institutional compliance to manage federal funds including student aid funds allocated to the institution.

Accreditation Creation and Government Use

- Accreditation was created by institutions over 100 years ago.
- Federal government use of accreditation began in 1952 as part of the Korea War GI Bill.
- Accredited status was used to determine where educational benefits could appropriately be spent.
- The government does not accredit institutions.
- The USDE has a process to recognize accreditors, which is to validate the accreditor as a reliable authority of educational quality
- Accrediting organizations are private, nonprofit organizations created to accredit higher education institutions.

Types of Accreditation

- Institutional Accreditation
 - Applies to an entire institution.
 - It is required for students to access Title IV student aid funds.
 - Institutional accreditors are the formerly called regional accreditors, the faith-related, and career-related accreditors.
- Program Accreditation
 - Individual programs within an institution can obtain programmatic accreditation from specialized accreditors.
 - Aviation, Business, teaching, and health fields are examples of program accreditation
 - There are more than 60 program accreditors.

Importance of Accreditation

- Accreditation was created by institutions over 100 years ago.
- Access to federal student aid
- Public sector confidence in the institution.
- Facilitates transfer of credit for students.
- Reliable evaluation of education credentials and qualifications of job applicants.
- In some cases, accreditation is a requirement to sit for licensing exams

Recognizing the Accreditors

- Accreditors go through a process of external quality review called “Recognition.”
- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the US Department Of Education (USDE) engage in recognition reviews of accrediting organizations.
- CHEA was created by the higher education academy and is non-government. CHEA reviews accreditors from the academic perspective. CHEA recognition is voluntary.
- USDE recognition is required for students to access federal student aid and is heavily weighted to compliance with Title IV requirements.

Washington Landscape: White House

- The Executive Order 14279 issued on April 23, 2025, concerning accreditation
 - Lacks specificity
 - Open to interpretation
 - The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) must develop rules for implementation
- Reduction in Force (RIF) at the U.S. Department of Education
 - USDE was understaffed prior to RIF
 - Data from USDE will not be as available

U. S. House of Representatives

- The House of Representatives reviewed two bills focused on accreditation.
- [HR 2516](#), prohibits accreditors from requiring compliance with social justice issues, specifically around DEI.
- [HR 4054](#), The Accreditation Choice and Innovation Act,
 - Allows states to become accreditors.
 - Prohibits any employee of, or person connected to, an institution accredited by the accrediting organization from serving the accrediting commission
 - Measures student success on a financial model (income vs cost of the program).
 - Requires common terminology among accreditors
 - Provide a religious provision that is heavily weighted against the accreditor and the USDE.

U.S. Department of Education (USDE)

- USDE will allow institutions to have multiple accreditors
- USDE is expected to appoint new members of NACIQI
- USDE filed complaints with the accrediting organizations of Columbia University and Harvard University, alleging that these two institutions do not meet Title VI requirements, and therefore do not meet accrediting standards.
- USDE is undertaking negotiated rulemaking opportunities
 - Public Service Loan Forgiveness
 - Student Aid

Federal Courts

- The Supreme Court decision to permit USDE to implement its proposed reduction-in-force.
- This decision will allow the Administration to lay off nearly half of the USDE staff.
- There is concern that the USDE will not have enough employees remaining to perform its statutory duties.
- The Office of Postsecondary Education, which oversees higher education and accreditation policy within the USDE, is largely intact.

States

- States , led by Florida, are working to develop an accreditor for their public institutions call Commission for Public Higher Education (CHPE)
- The states include:
 - Florida
 - Georgia
 - North Carolina
 - South Carolina
 - Tennessee
 - Texas
- Louisiana public institutions are considering joining this accreditor

THANK YOU