

# ACCREDITATION AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

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ACCT is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,100 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. These community professionals, business officials, public policy leaders, and leading citizens offer their time and talent to serve on the governing boards of this century's most innovative higher education institutions and make decisions that affect more than 13 million students annually. For more about ACCT, see [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).

Dr. Judith S. Eaton is president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the largest institutional higher education membership organization in the United States. She has served as CHEA's President since shortly after its founding in 1996. Prior to her work at CHEA, Dr. Eaton served as chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, as president of the Council for Aid to Education, the Community College of Philadelphia and the Community College of Southern Nevada and as vice president of the American Council on Education. She has held teaching positions at Columbia University, the University of Michigan and Wayne State University. Dr. Eaton has authored numerous books and articles on higher education and accreditation-related topics and addresses accreditation and quality assurance at conferences and meetings in the United States and internationally.

A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. For more information about CHEA, visit [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).

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## FOREWORD

Accreditation matters. It is a time-honored, peer-review process for assessing and ensuring institutional quality. At its core, accreditation affirms adherence to institutional mission and signals to stakeholders and students alike that programs and offerings are guided by principles of quality and integrity. So important is accreditation that without it, institutions may not participate in federal student assistance programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act.

Governing boards hold institutions in trust and define the missions and values of their institutions. Understanding what accreditation is, how the process functions, and what it means for your college is necessary for a board to govern its institution effectively. Trustees must understand their roles in the accrediting process and how to leverage accreditation on behalf of the college. Accreditors pay attention to governing boards – their policies, their decisions, and their behaviors – as key indicators of institutional health and well-being.

Dr. Judith S. Eaton has served as president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) since 1996. She has made the sometimes-complex process of accreditation easy to understand and straightforward, presenting the topic through the lens of what trustees need to know, from the basics to how boards and accreditors can work together as partners.

ACCT is grateful to Dr. Eaton for sharing her expertise in this important paper, and to Lumina Foundation for supporting its publication. We encourage all community college board members to carefully review the information presented on the following pages.

Don't hesitate to contact ACCT or CHEA if you have any questions that aren't addressed here, or if you need any further guidance.

### **J. Noah Brown**

President and CEO

# INTRODUCTION

Accreditation, an external form of quality review of higher education institutions and programs, plays a vital role in a college or university, including community colleges. For community college trustees, awareness of and insight into the role, purpose and impact of accreditation is part of effectively carrying out board leadership. Whether addressing academic purpose, finance, independence or responding to the many challenges that are part of the ongoing life of the college, trustee understanding and engagement in accreditation are central.

## MAJOR TAKEAWAYS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

Make it a point to be informed about:

- What accreditation is
- How accreditation operates
- What accreditation means for your college

Focus on the role of trustees in accreditation:

- Trustee involvement in the accreditation process
- Trustee use of the accreditation opportunity to further explore effective governance
- Trustee use of the accreditation opportunity to build the college's future

## QUESTIONS FOR TRUSTEES ABOUT ACCREDITATION

- What is the organization, purpose and role of accreditation?
- How does accreditation work?
- What is the role of trustees in accreditation?
- Common interests of trustees and accreditors: How can accreditation contribute to effective board practice in leadership and governance?
- What are some caveats as trustees work with accreditation?
- How can trustees make use of accreditation as they build a college's future?

# ACCREDITATION: ORGANIZATION, PURPOSE AND ROLE

The purpose of accreditation is to assure and improve academic quality in higher education

Accreditation has been part of higher education in the United States for more than 100 years as a form of self-regulation and peer review of colleges and universities. Its primary purpose is to assure and improve the quality of a college or specific education program, e.g., business, engineering or nursing. Created by higher education itself, accreditation is a non-governmental activity. The United States stands apart from most other countries in the world where accreditation (often called “quality assurance”) is typically run by governments.

As of 2015-2016, more than 1,500 two-year public and private, for-profit and nonprofit institutions, including community colleges, were accredited.<sup>1</sup> Accredited status is the norm for community colleges throughout the country. Looking across all higher education, 7,600 two- and four-year, public and private, degree and non-degree, non-profit and for-profit institutions are accredited, along with 23,000 programs.<sup>2</sup>

## ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

### 18 Institutional Accreditors

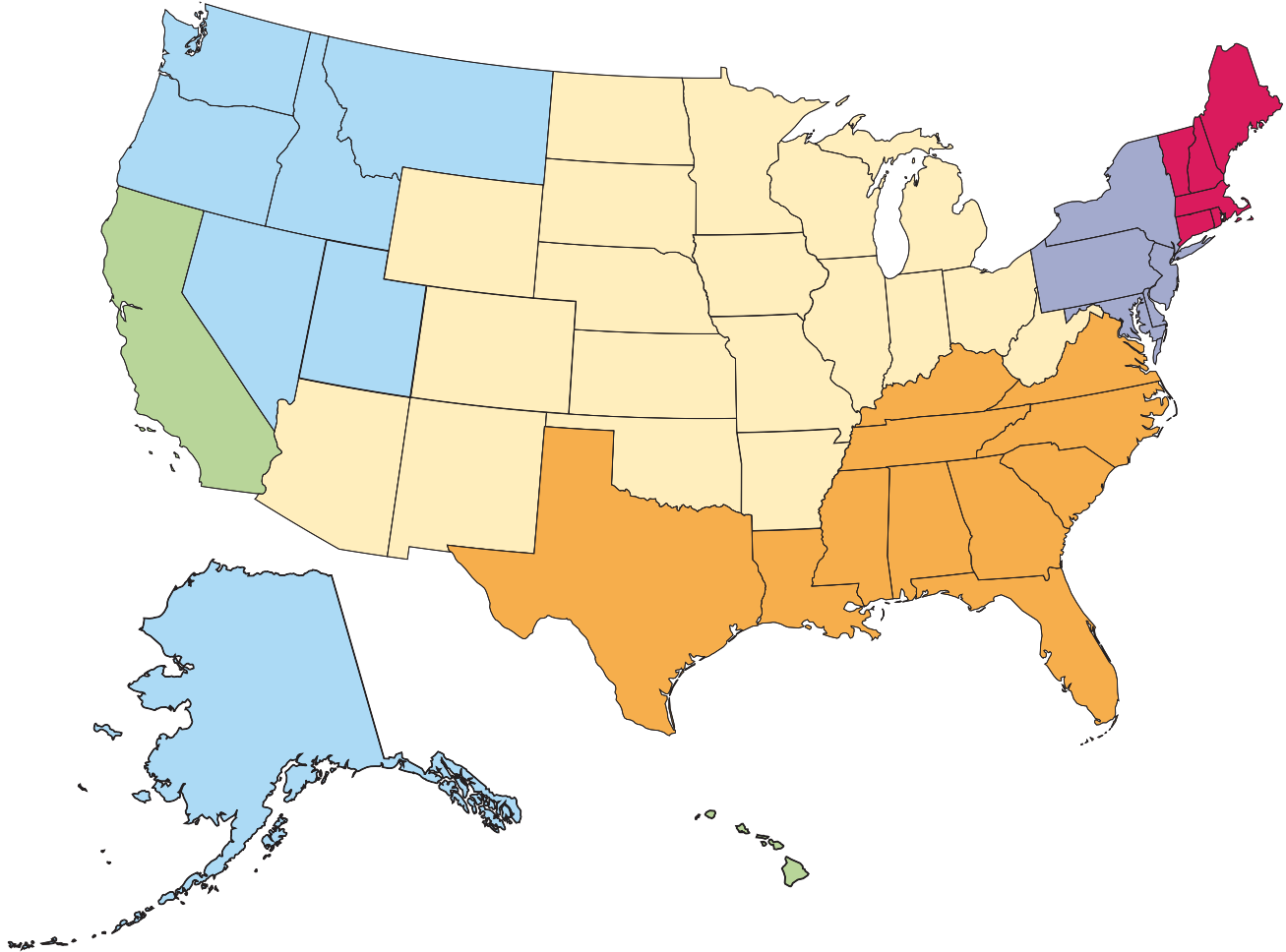
- **Regional accreditors** review primarily degree-granting, public and nonprofit institutions, including most community colleges
- **National career-related accreditors** review primarily for-profit degree and nondegree institutions
- **National faith-related accreditors** review primarily religious or doctrinally based, degree-granting institutions

**67 Programmatic Accreditors** review academic programs within institutions or free-standing institutions in a particular field, e.g. nursing, dentistry, business, physical therapy, journalism

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2017 At a Glance*, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017144>. Accessed 3/1/2018.

<sup>2</sup> Council for Higher Education Accreditation, *Database of Institutions and Programs Accredited by Recognized U.S. Accrediting Organizations*, [http://www.chea.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS\\_Document&DocID=32&MenuKey=main](http://www.chea.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=32&MenuKey=main). Accessed 3/1/18.

## 6 REGIONS OF ACCREDITATION




Northwest   Western\*   Southern   North Central   Middle States\*\*   New England

\*Includes American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

\*\*Includes Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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Eighty-five separate and independent accrediting organizations accredit institutions and programs. Eighteen of these bodies accredit institutions and 67 accredit programs. As of 2015, these various organizations employed small-to-mid-sized staffs, totaling 800 full- and part-time professionals, and had total expenditures of \$154 million. Accrediting organizations rely heavily on volunteers – faculty, academic administrators, trustees and members of the public – to work with the professional staff. More than 16,000 people volunteered in 2015.<sup>3</sup> Colleges and universities fund accreditation themselves through fees that accreditors charge to obtain and maintain accreditation, and the required annual fees institutions or programs pay to be part of an accrediting organization.

Accreditation's roles are to:

- Affirm the basic academic legitimacy of a college
- Provide eligibility for public and private funding
- Assist with student mobility
- Sustain public confidence in a college

A typical community college has institutional accreditation and any number of program accreditations. Accreditation plays four major roles, all of which are essential as a college carries out its work. First, accredited status is the major indicator of the basic soundness and legitimacy of a college. To be accredited is the primary signal to the public, students, lawmakers and the higher education community that an institution meets threshold expectations of quality.

Second, accreditation is essential to the finances of a college: Accredited status is a requirement to have access to public funds, for student grants and loans, and, in some cases public funds for programs or research public funds for programs or research.<sup>4</sup> This is the “gatekeeping” function of accreditation that is often the primary focus of attention. Accreditation is typically a requirement to receive private funding from, for example, a corporation or a foundation. All community colleges rely on some or all of these various funds to operate.

Third, accredited status plays a central role in sustaining and strengthening student mobility – successful transfer of credit from one college or university to another. Students from an accredited institution also are most likely to successfully transfer to a college or university outside the United States.

Fourth, accreditation is essential to sustaining public confidence in a college. The absence of accredited status means that a college is subject to considerable skepticism and concern, if not outright rejection by students and the public.

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<sup>3</sup> Council for Higher Education Accreditation, *2015 Almanac of External Quality Review*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Public funds are available only if the accreditor is “recognized” by the federal government. See below, p. 8.





## HOW ACCREDITATION WORKS

The 85 accrediting organizations are structured in similar ways. Each has developed standards by which to judge a college or program. These standards address all major areas of college operations: e.g., academics, student services, governance, finance and facilities. Each organization has policies and procedures that frame how these judgments will be carried out. The accreditor's membership – its accredited institutions or programs – decide the standards and policies as well as the practices that are part of reviewing a college for accredited status. All accreditors have a decision-making body, a commission, council or board, that decides whether to award accredited status to a specific college.


### Stages of accreditation review:

1. College self-study to provide evidence of meeting accreditation standards
2. Peer review of the college, including a site visit, to validate self-study
3. Judgment about accredited status of the college by the accrediting organization
4. Post-review monitoring of the college by the accreditor

Accreditation is a standards-based, evidence-based and trust-based process made up of several major stages. The first stage is a self-study during which a college or program examines itself and provides a report on its operations, using the accreditor's standards as the basis for this review. The core purpose of the self-study is to provide evidence that a college meets the accreditor's standards.

The second stage is peer review. Once completed, the self-study report is submitted to the accreditor. The accreditor, working with the college, puts together a team of peers – academics, members of the public, practitioners – who review the self-study and undertake a visit to the college, a site team review. The team may involve as few as three members or as many as 20. The purpose of the peer review stage is to validate the evidence provided in the self-study. The peer review team meets with constituents throughout the college community, including trustees, and then prepares and submits a report to the accrediting organization about what the team has learned, sometimes accompanied by recommendations for change.

The third stage is a decision about accredited status for the college made by the accrediting commission. The commission may award accredited status, award accredited status with conditions, deny accreditation to a new applicant, remove accredited status from institutions or programs that are already accredited, or ask for additional information to make a decision about a college's accreditation. Typically, decisions by the accrediting organization (other than denial) are accompanied by specific recommendations.



In the fourth stage, colleges are responsible for acting on the recommendations from the review and reporting to the accreditor on an annual or other basis. If a college makes major changes following an accreditation review, such as adding a new campus or program, the accreditor must approve these plans.

All accredited status is awarded for a specific time period, such as three years, five years or ten years. Once the time period has elapsed, the college must undertake another full review, including the self-study and peer review stages. Otherwise, the college loses its accreditation. A college that loses its accreditation can re-apply at a later date (e.g., after one or two years).

The college assumes full financial responsibility for the entire accreditation process: preparing the self-study, travel and lodging expenses for the site visit and the fee the accreditor charges for the review. These fees typically vary, based on the size of a college or its complexity.

Finally, accreditors themselves are subject to periodic external quality review of their organizations, by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a non-governmental institutional membership organization charged with national coordination of accreditation. When successful in these reviews, accreditors are considered “recognized” organizations. Federal recognition means that the accreditor meets the requirements of the Higher Education Act, the federal law governing higher education that includes accreditation. An institution or program is eligible for federal funds only if its accreditor is federally recognized. CHEA recognition means that accreditation by this accreditor carries the recognition of the academic community.

# THE ROLE OF TRUSTEES IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The role of trustees in the accreditation process:

- Participation in and review of the college self-study
- Participation in the site visit, especially a meeting with the visiting team
- With the college president or chancellor, meeting with the accrediting organization at the time of a decision about accredited status for the college
- Post-review monitoring of recommendations from the accreditation review

Trustees play an important role at each stage of the accreditation process. To develop the needed self-study (the first stage), a college typically creates a series of committees that consist of faculty, staff and administrators. At times, students participate. The governing board has a role in reviewing the overall organization of the self-study activity, assuring full participation from all parties and assuring that the full range of accreditation standards will be addressed. Trustees themselves often sit on self-study committees as well. And, when the self-study is complete, trustees need to review and agree to forward this important document to the accrediting organization.

At the second stage, peer review, trustees play a vital role as part of hosting and engaging the peer review team. This may take the form of an initial introductory meeting with the team, individual trustee interviews with team members, especially the board chair, and participating in the final campus meeting with the team during which the college learns of the major findings and, in some cases, the team's recommendations.

At the third stage of the accreditation process, the decision by the accrediting organization, it is common for the chair of the board to accompany the college president or chancellor to meet with the accrediting commission or council. While not all accreditors have such meetings, many do and this is an important opportunity for the trustee chair to present the college to the commission as well as to engage the commissioners in a valuable discussion about the college's future.

The fourth and final stage of the accreditation process is post-review monitoring. An accreditation review usually results in a number of recommendations that the college must address, in addition to requirements for information from the college on an annual or other basis (e.g., enrollment data, financial information). Trustees, working with a president or chancellor, have a role here as well, both assuring that the accreditation recommendations are addressed by the college and that needed information is submitted on a timely basis.

# ACCREDITATION, BOARD PRACTICE AND A COMMON INTEREST IN EFFECTIVE TRUSTEE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Accreditation can assist trustee practice in carrying out responsibility for:

- Academic leadership
- Financial leadership
- Effective college governance, including shared governance

Community college trustees and accreditors have a number of things in common. Both are focused on assuring and enhancing the effective operation of a college: high-quality academic programs, talented faculty and administrators, financial sustainability, robust service to students and the community, and appropriate governance and planning. While accreditors are not accountable for the college in the same manner as trustees, accreditors are accountable to the higher education community, to lawmakers and to the public for the judgment they make about the quality of the college they are reviewing. To accredit a substandard or poorly performing college is to weaken both the college and the accrediting organization. Students and high-quality institutions suffer when substandard colleges and universities are accredited.

**How does the board examine recommendations for new, revised or terminated academic programs? Other academic initiatives presented by a president or chancellor?** Based on this common interest, accreditation can assist with trustee practice in providing academic leadership for a college. A core purpose of accreditation is to identify college or program-level academic strengths and limitations. Affirming these strengths provides trustees with an external verification of the quality of college operation. Identifying concerns enables trustees to focus on improvement where needed, monitor areas of limitation and set expectations for improvement as needed.

**What safeguards do trustees have in place with regard to how expenditures are approved? Does the board have strong practices when it comes to matters such as conflict of interest and is there ongoing external review of how trustees spend college resources?** Accreditation can assist with financial practice and leadership as trustees engage in ongoing self-scrutiny of their financial operation, reinforcing the board's fiduciary role. Serious problems with financial practice put both the board and the college in jeopardy and can endanger the college's accreditation. As mentioned above, the federal funds that flow to a college in the form of student aid or for other purposes, a substantial portion of the budget of many community colleges, depend on sustaining accredited status.

Most important, accreditors and trustees share a strong interest in effective college governance. All institutional accreditors have standards for good governance and assuring effective governance of the college is the central leadership role of trustees. In general, when trustees are held accountable for good governance, it means that the governing board is well-organized and transparent, with bylaws and documentation of essential procedures. It means a commitment to shared governance – engaging all major college stakeholders (faculty, students, staff) in the decision-making processes of the college. It means that a governing board is committed to the core academic values of academic freedom, free speech and institutional autonomy.

The are other areas in which accreditors and trustees have common interests – the value of strategic planning or

service to the community, for example. However, trustee practice related to academics, finance and governance are at the heart of the relationship.

## ACCREDITATION AND TRUSTEES: SOME CAVEATS

Caveats for trustees relating to accreditation:

- Attend to programmatic as well as institutional accreditation
- Be constructively critical when acting on accreditor recommendations that are very costly
- Be vigilant about the independence of the board

Acknowledging the value and importance of accreditation to a college, there are still times when trustees need to be watchful about how they engage with the accreditation process. There are a small number of tendencies that trustees need to resist. One of the tendencies focuses on trustee action and others on campus reactions to accreditation actions.


Trustees are urged to:

**Pay additional attention to programmatic accreditation.** It is not unusual for trustees to focus primarily on institutional accreditation and pay little attention to the accreditation of programs. Trustees do this at a cost to their colleges. Both institutional and programmatic accreditation are vitally important. For a number of community colleges, the time and effort put into programmatic accreditation is significant, yet the programmatic efforts are at times almost invisible. While larger numbers of programs are accredited in larger colleges, even a modest number accreditation reviews have an impact on smaller colleges. It is essential that trustees are informed of the full number of accreditation processes and the expected visits in any given year, as well as kept current on the actions that the college is taking with regard to the recommendations emerging from all accreditation reviews.

### Programmatic Accreditation in Select Community Colleges

• Community College of Philadelphia (PA):	7
• Cuyahoga Community College (OH):	19
• Delaware County Community College (PA):	6
• Miami Dade College (FL):	19
• Montgomery College (MD):	8
• Pima Community College (AZ):	9

Source: 2018 Higher Education Directory, *Higher Education Publications, Inc.*



**Be thoughtful about accreditor recommendations that involve major outlays of institutional funds.**

All accreditors, whether examining a college or program, understandably aspire for the best, as do trustees. Recommendations emerging from an accreditation review can be attractive, but sometimes costly. It is vital that trustees examine such recommendations carefully before agreeing to new and expensive offerings, services or facilities, based solely on “...our accreditors said we need to do this...” A key part of trusteeship is making choices and college finances rarely lend themselves to doing all that might be desirable, even if recommended by an accreditor.

**Be vigilant about the independence of the board.** Accreditors typically have, as indicated above, standards that address the governance of the college, including the decision-making and judgment of its board. While adhering to these standards, it is also important to make sure that expectations of the accreditors do not, however unintentionally, undermine the appropriate authority of the board, especially regarding selection of presidents and chancellors, approval of academic programs and relationships with faculty and staff, as well as trustee engagement with state and local lawmakers.

Accreditors are of greatest value to community colleges as colleagues and advisors. They are not, when applying standards and policies, to usurp or diminish the role of the governing board.

## A TRUSTEE - ACCREDITATION PARTNERSHIP: BUILDING A COLLEGE'S FUTURE

Trustees can call on accreditors, as colleagues and advisors, to assist with building a college's future. Accreditors can contribute by:

- Focusing on issues that are of greatest importance to a particular college's future success, e.g., demands for accountability, pressure for innovation and the reality of limited finances
- Providing information, suggestions and sharing the work of other colleges
- Conducting meetings, workshops or webinars that bring colleges with common interests and shared challenges together


Much of the discussion about trustees and accreditation focuses on explaining what trustees need to know and urging trustees to value accreditation. Less attention is paid to what expectations trustees themselves might have of accreditation, beyond the practices discussed above, and how accreditation can assist trustees in their important work. Yet, trustees are routinely confronted with an array of challenges and issues for which the resources of accreditation can be valuable.

Here are several examples of issues that are particularly important to community colleges and their trustees, and suggestions about ways in which trustees can tap into both the accreditation review itself and the valuable information about practice that accreditors have amassed through years of examining a broad array of colleges. This, too, is part of how accreditors serve as colleagues and advisors to a community college.

**Calls for greater institutional accountability** are insistent these days, with evidence of student success, along with greater transparency, paramount. These calls are coming particularly from federal and state governments and media.

The ongoing, growing demands for greater accountability for evidence of student success are especially challenging for community colleges, the nation's premier open-admission institutions. Federal policy in particular is increasingly focused on accountability, defined as both access and completion for students, in contrast to prior decades during which a policy commitment to access included an understanding about the challenge of completion in an open-admission environment. Being accountable for student success in an open-admission environment while responding to demands for completion requires enormous effort and skill.

Accreditors can advise and assist trustees by using the occasion of an accreditation review to explore the effectiveness of a college's accountability and transparency efforts. Accreditors can share ideas and suggestions from other institutions and programs with which they have worked. Accreditors can also be even more aware of the special mission of the community college and tailor their accountability expectations accordingly. Accreditors often offer workshops and meetings on important issues such as accountability and transparency, including a special focus on community colleges.



**Pressure for innovation** in community colleges has emerged in part because of technology and in part because of competition from new education providers. This competition is particularly a challenge to two of the most attractive features of community colleges: price and convenience. Growing numbers of students rely on online programs which may or may not be offered by their local community college. Students can take a course at home or at work at a time that suits them, in contrast to attending a specific class at a specific time. Students are attracted to alternative educational providers, such as private companies that offer coursework (e.g., StraighterLine or FutureLearn) or massive open online courses. These providers are often even lower-cost than community colleges or, at times, free.

The current emphasis on short-term education for work, badges, digital certificates and apprenticeships also is challenging community colleges to innovate. Community colleges, although successfully engaged in such offerings throughout much of their history, now face the competition of many more providers, including new companies and large corporations, working in this area.

Accreditors can assist with innovation based, first and foremost, on a thorough and explicit understanding of the community college mission, in addition to viewing innovation through a more general higher education lens. They can help through acknowledging that although innovation must meet the test of academic rigor, there needs to be room for experimentation and even, from time to time, risk and permission to fail. It is important that accreditation expand its role as a partner in innovation, not only for community colleges, but for all higher education.

**Limited financial resources** are bedeviling all of higher education, but community colleges are among those with the greatest challenge. Addressing fiscal needs in today's world is about assuring both cost-effective and cost-efficient college operation, as well as engaging politics at the local, state and federal levels.

Here, too, accreditation can be helpful, beyond the scrutiny of board financial practices mentioned above. Accreditors can share information about effective cost-saving and cost-sharing practices from other colleges as well as alternative financial models. They can offer creative and innovative ideas about financing a college. And, accreditors can offer workshops and meetings here as well – so that colleges can explore ideas together, working toward improvement for all institutions.





## SUMMARY

Accreditation, the primary means of assuring and improving quality in higher education institutions and programs, is vital to community colleges and their governing boards. Accreditation is not only central to academic quality judgments; it is a major conduit for access to public and private funds that colleges need. To be accredited is the norm for community colleges, making the absence of this status a significant problem.

Accreditation is carried out by independent, nongovernmental, membership organizations. It is standards-based, evidence-based, trust-based review, using a combination of self-review by a college and peer review by academic colleagues, with a judgment about accredited status rendered by the colleagues who make up the decision-making body of an organization.

The role of trustees in accreditation needs to be a central one, from the initiation of a college's self-review through the peer review process, the decision made by the accrediting organization and the ongoing monitoring of whether the college meets accreditation standards. Trustees also need to make sure that they stay fully informed about all accreditations – both institutional and programmatic – at their college, focused on such issues as when reviews take place, whether all accreditation standards are met and the ongoing impact of accreditation on the college (e.g. programs and services altered in response to accreditation intervention).

Accreditation is of significant value to trustee practice and how trustees carry out their academic and financial leadership roles, as well as their roles as guardians of effective shared governance. At the same time, trustees need to be probing and, at times, constructively critical of the impact of all the colleges accreditations. This is particularly true in two areas: the first is maintaining the board's independence in its decision-making and not yielding authority for academic or financial judgments to accreditors. Trustees should also be aware that the board's judgment is essential when accreditation recommendations resulting from a review would result in a large outlay of institutional funds.

Beyond trustees being aware of, participating in and valuing accreditation, trustees can look for ways to benefit from the work and experience of accreditors as they address major challenges for their institutions such as accountability, the need for innovation and financial pressures. For example, trustees can call on accreditors to provide ideas and suggestions about the accountability practices of other colleges, to be flexible as the college focuses on innovation and change and to offer workshops and meetings to focus on common financial challenges.

## RESOURCES

In addition to CHEA and C-RAC, this resource list includes information about the six regional higher education accrediting bodies. For information about other accreditors, including national faith-related, career-related, and programmatic accrediting organizations, visit [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org) and click “Databases and Directories.”

### **Council for Higher Education Accreditation**

A national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. Visit [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org), email [chea@chea.org](mailto:chea@chea.org) or call 202-955-6126.

### **Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions**

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) is a collective of seven regional organizations responsible for the accreditation of roughly 3,000 of the nation’s colleges and universities. They are: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, WASC; Higher Learning Commission; Middle States Commission on Higher Education; New England Association of Schools and Colleges—Commission on Institutions of Higher Education; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges; and WASC Senior College and University Commission. Visit [www.c-rac.org](http://www.c-rac.org).

### **Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**


The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent corporation that was founded in 1895 as one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. HLC accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region, which includes the following 19 states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. Visit [www.hlcommission.org](http://www.hlcommission.org), email [info@hlcommission.org](mailto:info@hlcommission.org), or call 800.621.7440.

### **Middle States Association on Higher Education**

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, regional membership association currently serving higher education institutions in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and other geographic areas in which the Commission conducts accrediting activities. Visit [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org), email [info@msche.org](mailto:info@msche.org) or [espanolinfo@msche.org](mailto:espanolinfo@msche.org), or call 267.284.5000.

### **New England Association of Schools and Colleges**

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is an independent, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization which connects and serves over 2,000 public and independent schools, technical and career institutions, colleges, and universities in New England plus International Schools in more than 65 nations worldwide. A globally recognized standard of excellence, NEASC Accreditation attests to a school’s high quality and integrity. The four NEASC commissions decide matters of accreditation in the context of research-driven standards reviewed by their membership. Visit [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org) or call 781.425.7700.



### **Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities**

The Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the authority on the educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education institutions in the Northwest region of the United States, including the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, as well as Canada. Visit [www.nwccu.org](http://www.nwccu.org), email [egossett@nwccu.org](mailto:egossett@nwccu.org) or call 425.558.4224.

### **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education. Visit [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org), email [questions@sacscoc.org](mailto:questions@sacscoc.org) or call 404.679.4500.

### **Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is an official academic body responsible for the accreditation of public and private universities, colleges, secondary and elementary schools in California and Hawaii, territories of Guam, American Samoa and Northern Marianas Islands, in addition to the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Pacific Rim, East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia. Visit [www.acswasc.org](http://www.acswasc.org), email [mail@acswasc.org](mailto:mail@acswasc.org) or call 650.696.1060.



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