 Higher Learning Commission

Accreditation and Quality Assurance: An Overview of Key Considerations and Processes

ECMC Foundation Convening

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HLC Speakers

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Session Overview

- Accreditation 101:
 - Who is HLC?
 - What do we do?
- Substantive Change:
 - What is it?
 - How does it work?
- Career and Technical Education
 - Thoughts and Observations

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Accreditation 101



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What is accreditation?


The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) says it "is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement."



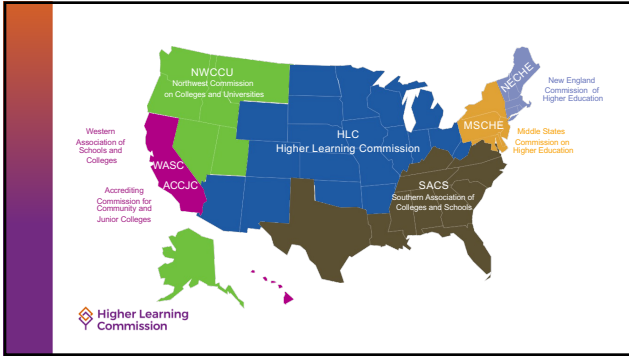
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Types of Accreditation

<p>Specialized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program Specific<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Law– Nursing– Education• Linked to professional associations	<p>Institutional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of the entire institution• National Accreditors• Institutional Accreditors (formerly Regional Accreditors)
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Origins and Scope

1885: NECHE	Peer Affirmation vs. Peer Review Evidence consisted of: > Number of Students > Number of Academic Depts. > Number of Library Books
1887: MSCHE	
1895: NCA (HLC) SACSCOC	

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Historically Regional Accreditors:

- review degree-granting institutions in their “region.”
- are private, not-for profit entities for which membership is voluntary.
- depend on peer review to determine if the institution meets established standards.
- assesses and ensures through peer review that an institution’s academic programs are of high quality.

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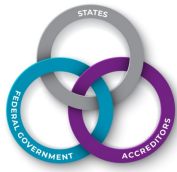
Why It's Important:

- expects comprehensive involvement of faculty and staff in an institution's planning and evaluation.
- eases transfer of credits from one regionally accredited institution to another.
- are part of "the Triad" that includes the state higher education offices and the federal government.
- qualifies institutions to participate in Title IV funding for students.



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Why It's Important:



“The Higher Education Act (HEA) designates three separate entities—states, accreditation agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education—that must grant institutions of higher education approval in order for them to be eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs.”



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HLC's Mission

“Advance the common good through quality assurance of higher education as the leader in equitable, transformative and trusted accreditation in the service of students and member institutions”



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HLC's Profile

Membership Profile


952 member institutions

- 487 (51%) Public
- 415 (44%) Private NFP
- 24 (3%) Private FP
- 26 (3%) Tribal

Fall 2023 Enrollment Data


Total Headcount

- 4.8 million total students
 - > 3.8 million UG
 - > 1 million GRAD
- 3.4 million at Public HEIs
 - > 1.2 million Associate's
- IL, AZ and OH—highest enrollment states
- ~\$5 billion in federal aid



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Substantive Change




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Types of Substantive Change

- 14 categories of substantive change

Examples include...

- New campuses / locations
- Changes to mission / student body
- Changes in clock / credit hours
- Expansion of distance education
- New Program Requests (Degree & Certificate)




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Review Types

FY24 (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024)

- **Change Visits:** 72 (web site: 8 months)
- **Change Panels:** 323 (web site: 5 months)
- **Desk Reviews:** 109 (web site: 3 months)




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Review Types

FY24 (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024)

The good news:

- **Change Visits:** 72 (approval avg.: <6.6 months)
- **Change Panels:** 323 (approval avg.: <3.7 months)
- **Desk Reviews:** 109 (approval avg.: <2.3 months)



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Program & Certificate Approval

FY24 (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024)

- HLC processed 515 total change requests
- New program requests accounted for 229 of the 506 applications (45.3%) total received that went to the IAC
- Screening Forms Notifying HLC of Changes to Existing Programs: 2,227 total submissions




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Program & Certificate Approval

Most importantly, in that same period, for 2,178 total screenings of new academic Program Inquiry Forms (PIFs) and Certificates...

<p>Certificates (Total number of screenings: 1001) Notifications: 790 Applications: 211</p> <p>Programs (Total number of PIFs: 1177) Notifications: 948 Applications: 229</p>	<p>“Notification” means no application required</p>
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Peer Corps and IAC


- Current number of HLC staff: 57
- Current size of HLC’s Peer Corps: 1,226
- Institutional Actions Council (IAC)
 - Appointed by HLC Board of Trustees
 - 125 peer reviewers
 - Monthly meetings
 - Final authority on routine decisions

IAC sets HLC apart



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Career and Technical Education



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What about CTE?

On the one hand...

Career and Technical Education programs are processed exactly as any other 'new' program.



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What about CTE?

On the other hand...

Career and Technical Education programs often need to get to market quickly to serve particular, regional needs.



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Questions and Comments



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