

From the President Continued

The significance of third party recognition for accreditors dates back to 1949 when the academic community formed the National Commission on Accrediting (NCA) to develop criteria and a process that focused on standardization and quality of education. Concern in Congress about the value of the education paid for with federal funds resulted in the 1952 reauthorization of the GI Bill which mandated the Commissioner of Education to publish a list of agencies recognized to accredit institutions and programs eligible to receive those funds. The Department of Education was established in 1965 by the Higher Education Act and with it the Secretary of Education was given the responsibility to periodically determine which accrediting agencies were reliable authorities as to the quality of institutions or programs eligible for Federal funding. An advisory committee, now known as the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NASIQI), was established to advise the Secretary on matters related to accreditation and eligibility of higher education institutions to participate in Federal student aid programs. NASIQI now conducts periodic reviews of accreditors and recommends them to the Secretary for recognition.

In 1974 the NCA merged with the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education to form the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation which after a brief iteration as the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation gave way to the CHEA in 1996 as the primary private sector recognizer of accreditors.

The Higher Education Act (HEA) has been reauthorized nine times, most recently in 2008 with expiration set for the end 2013. Each reauthorization has had broad effects on higher education and in particular the government's role in accreditation. One benefit of our relationship with CHEA is that they have provided analysis of the 2008 HEA reauthorization. While it is not my intent to review the provisions of the HEA, CHEA has posted a [summary table](#) for those interested learning more.

The 2008 reauthorization reflected the tendency of the government to assume a greater role in the aspects of accreditation that have traditionally been reserved for academic institutions and accreditors. In response to this trend, the CHEA Board of Directors approved the CHEA Initiative that included 36 meetings involving educators, accreditors and students throughout the country over a four year period. The Initiative had two major goals: (1) to sustain a balance and distinction between accountability to the Federal government and the academic work of accreditation and (2) to enhance accountability in accreditation. A final report of the CHEA Initiative was released in November announcing six actions in preparation for reauthorization of the HEA. These include: 1) Restate and reframe the division of responsibilities between government and accreditation. 2) Streamline the federal recognition review of accrediting organizations. 3) Explore creation and adoption of voluntary, institutionally based performance indicators to inform the public and students. 4) Initiate an accreditation advocacy campaign. 5) Develop the CHEA International Quality Group. 6) Address through CHEA's existing structure of conferences and meetings, institution-accreditor relationships and accreditor-accreditor relationships including the non-profit and for-profit sectors working together. The [full report](#) can be viewed on the CHEA web site.

CAAHEP accomplishes its goals through the hard work and dedication of volunteers. With the increasing complexity and regulation of accreditation it is essential that CAAHEP participate in the broader community of accreditors including CHEA and the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors ([ASPA](#) is composed of programmatic accreditors and gives us a voice in Washington).