

# Archived Information

## **Remarks of Carol D'Amico, Executive Vice President, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana; Chair, NACIQI, to The Commission on the Future of Higher Education. Indianapolis, Indiana April 6, 2006**

Thank you for inviting me to moderate this distinguished panel. I interpret the role of moderator very liberally and have taken the liberty of providing a few comments of my own. I am here today with a variety of titles. I am Executive Vice President of Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Indiana's community college system comprising 23 campuses and close to 75,000 students statewide. I am also Chancellor of the largest campus region, Central Indiana, with 14,000 students. Last year we were named by Community College Times as the fastest growing community college in the country.

I am also the Chair of the National Advisory Council on Institutional Quality and Integrity in Higher Education, NACIQI. NACIQI, as you know from your background paper, makes recommendations to the Secretary in recognizing the organizations that accredit colleges and universities.

And while I am fortunate to hold all these wonderful positions, I can say that I am not speaking for anyone today other than myself.

In a previous life, I also served on Assistant Secretary of Adult and Vocational Education and the Bush Administration liaison to community colleges from March 2001 through June 2003. I want to focus my remarks on the relationship of the accreditation process and criteria as they relate to community colleges.

Simply put, the language of the Higher Education Act (HEA) suggests that NACIQI represents our government's and citizenry's (the students and families receiving federal financial aid) needs for assurance that federal tuition grants and federal loans are expended in institutions that meet standards for capacity and quality.

Although we rely on accrediting agencies to inform the council about the capacity and quality of institutions of higher education, the council is charged with review of the accrediting agencies *and* with making sure that the standards they use will give us confidence in the processes of accreditation and their resulting recommendations to the council.

The paper you were sent raised important questions on the accreditation process. Allow me to raise a few more for the sake of discussion.

I'd like to pose the question of whether NACIQI is playing *enough* of a role in setting standards and examining existing standards for accreditation organizations. Are we really confident that the standards offer accurate assessments the capacity and quality of the institutions? Are theirs the right standards of quality in today's fast changing landscape of higher education?

Or, by not sufficiently employing the leadership opportunities available to the Committee are we simply protecting an institutional status quo in education and in accreditation?

One important contribution NACIQI can make is to challenge its constituents—the accrediting agencies—to think hard about the quality of their educational services and the accuracy of their vision of what education is today, and specifically the higher education role of community colleges, which serve half of the undergraduates in America.

I don't think we are doing enough of this and, consequently, accreditation is not perhaps what it can be.

For example, consider who enrolls in community colleges and what we do in community colleges.

1. Huge enrollment increases in community colleges over the last 20 years---fastest growing (enrollments) sector of higher education.
2. Working adults are seeking post-secondary education---Only one in five community college students look like a traditional, full-time student.
3. Two trends of younger students and more adult learners---
  - a. Starting education here completing elsewhere
  - b. Career oriented students
  - c. Re-education for career building and new careers
4. New requirements for educational services and technologies---
  - d. Distance Learning, Hybrid Courses
  - e. Accelerated Programs for credential/degree
  - f. Remediation/Developmental Education
  - g. Credentialing/Certifications.

What do accrediting organizations have to say about community colleges, their students, and the kinds of education delivered through community colleges? Not much actually. The standards are geared toward traditional universities, assuming traditional instructional delivery of face to face instruction by full time faculty.

Community Colleges, for almost all purposes, are treated pretty much the same as research universities when it comes to institutional accreditation and the regional accrediting bodies.

How does the accreditation process help community colleges offer the kinds of educational experience that students need in their careers? How does it measure student learning and readiness for the sophisticated skill sets required of today's high wage employment opportunities? And how do accreditation standards of quality help us offer the kinds of post-secondary education attainment that students can reasonably obtain in the midst of adult lives?

I maintain that the framework of accreditation or core values if you will, should be examined for new kinds of higher education delivery and in fact the core values may be counterproductive in serving our diverse students and multiple missions.

Some time ago, Judith Eaton, of CHEA, outlined some challenges posed by distance education. The article stated very clearly the six core values of education that accreditation is based on and contrasted these to the challenges of distance education. With Judith's permission I think it is worth looking at the chart in her article.

| <b>Core Academic Values</b>        | <b>Challenged by</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Institutional Autonomy             | Consortia Arrangements   |
| Collegiality and Shared Governance | Dispersion of Faculty and Students                                 |
| Intellectual Authority of Faculty  | Commercial courseware, standardize courses, part-time faculty...   |
| Degree                             | Competition from credentials: reduced dominance of degree granting |
| General Education                  | Pervasiveness of training  |
| Site-based Education               | The diminishing importance of place                                |

I would point out two considerations about this chart—and take it just a little out of context for a moment---

**First**, the challenges identified here are not challenges in community colleges --- these are conditions of existence and describe the ways we now deliver much education.

At Ivy Tech Community College about 40% of all our classes can be taken online. All of the general education requirements at the college are offered through distance learning as well as in classrooms. We blend many degree programs with credentials. We offer accelerated programs.

AND, these conditions arose not because we in community colleges have dropped our guard on values, but because we are responding to a group of students who have real needs for education provided this way.

Fifty-four percent of the college students in the United States attend community colleges. And as we noted, only about 20% of these students are 'traditional students.' These students are asking for and seeking educational solutions to barriers they encounter in higher education. These solutions should not be viewed as challenges that assault our core values.

**Second**, the imposition of these values (and the requirements for infrastructures to support them) may in fact exacerbate significant restrictions on the ability of community colleges to respond to the needs and characteristics of students. For example, how do the core values work to answer these questions:

1. Why are graduation rates so low in many accredited community colleges?
2. Why do average students at accredited community colleges take several years to complete a two-year degree?
3. How do we make post-secondary education and occupational education more widely available to individuals who need it?
4. How do we assure that students are acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills?

These questions reflect our concerns about *what* knowledge and skills students receive in educational institutions and they are questions on which accreditation has been and still is largely silent and largely defensive. None of the core values address the critical issue of being accountable for what and how much students learn.

Another way to look at these questions is through a value perspective --- the questions I pose revolve around a core value of how well we serve our students: how we help students obtain higher education that will make a difference in their lives.

These questions are among the key issues now facing community colleges and beg for new solutions and new concepts and openness to new ways of delivering education. Yet, current practices in accreditation may divert attention from solutions to these questions and unfortunately turn them into challenges to core values.

On the contrary, I would argue that these issues present rich opportunities for us to identify new values that can truly support confidence in education and in educational quality, especially for those students who comprise a majority of students in community colleges, and who I suspect are an increasing proportion of students at other institutions as well.

Finally, the identification of core values in Judith's chart raises questions about the ways accreditation codifies the 'core values' of education. These six core values may reflect an idealized picture of a university, but we should not make the error in logic that these must be the only values that concern us.

We need to re-think how these values and other relevant values---can be incorporated into accreditation and brought into NACIQ's mission.

Finally, while I have the floor, I would like to draw attention to how our system is focusing on outcomes that affect student achievement. We believe there is no other community college with this level of commitment to results. At Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, we have established four overarching goals for our system by 2010. We are committed to:

**50% increase in the percentage of our students who earn technical certificates**

**50% increase in associate degrees**

**50% increase in industry recognized certificates**

**50% increase in successful transfers to four year institutions of pre-baccalaureate students**

The overarching goal for increasing program completion will be achieved in the context of a "balanced scorecard" that will measure progress in specific metrics dealing with: enrollment, remediation, retention, economic results for completers, employer satisfaction with graduates and even instructional efficiency and innovation.

We are working with Future Works to identify high impact strategies to achieve these ambitious goals that involve increased use of technology, more accelerated programs, and more infusions of real life experiences in awarding of college credit. We are hopeful that these strategies that focus on students' achievement of degrees and certifications can peacefully coexist with the root intent of accreditation.