November 30, 2007

Memo to:   Chancellors, Presidents, Accreditation Liaison Officers

From:   Barbara Beno, President

Subject:   Higher Education Act and CHEA Message

This afternoon, CHEA sent to those of you who are on its mailing list list an update on the Higher Education Act (HEA). That communication urged you to call your Member of Congress and to offer your support for the language in Senate Bill 1642, specifically the parts of the legislation that outline the responsibilities of accreditation and deal specifically with student achievement.

I request that you refrain from following CHEA’s advice at this time.

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC) believes the Senate language to be very problematic and has previously informed CHEA and the American Council on Education of its concerns. The higher education community has been divided on this language, and several major accrediting agencies joined together this week to communicate our concerns with the Senate language to ACE and the five other major higher education organizations that share ACE’s facility and for which ACE often serves as a coordinating body. In a teleconference yesterday between CRAC, organizations representing the national and professional accrediting agencies, ACE, and the five other major higher education organizations, we reached majority agreement to hold a meeting next week to work on language to clarify and improve the Senate language, and avoid the risks that the accreditors believe are inherent in that language.

CHEA disagreed that any attempt should be made to clarify the Senate language. Although CRAC agreed not excite debate about this matter until we had explored all options, CHEA apparently has chosen to go its own way and send out a communication today.

I ask that you honor the ACCJC, CRAC and ACE’s efforts to bring the entire higher education community together on a common approach to the language on student achievement. That is the best way to assure we obtain the backing of the entire Congress and prevent federal mischief in the Higher Education Act on the issue of accreditation and the evaluation of student achievement. CRAC believes that there is a good chance of success in working with Congress to insure the common goals of the higher education community on language affecting accreditation, but our chances of success will be greater if higher education associations and accreditors are aligned.
I will inform you as soon as possible about the ACCJC’s and CRAC’s final proposed language, but only after I honor the higher education associations and other accrediting associations that have agreed to work together to develop language that prevents the risks associated with the current version of the Senate language.

Thank you.

BAB