June 7, 2013

To: Commissioners

From: Barbara A. Beno

RE: Report on C-RAC

C-RAC met twice this semester in Washington, D.C. In March, the Board of Directors met to review C-RAC’s strategic plan and activities, to meet with the firm Penn Hill, which provides regional accreditors with representation in Washington, and to meet with Congressmen and their staffs on the Hill. The meetings on the Hill were designed to introduce the regional accreditors to the new staff supporting the legislators in key committees, and to renew relationships with staff working on higher education issues. The regional accreditors met with a group of key staffers to the higher education committees in both branches of Congress, and the New America Foundation*, to discuss key concerns about higher education quality. The foundation is helping staffers determine what may be the best approaches to addressing quality through legislation.

We suggested that there be more legislative and regulatory flexibility allowed so that accreditors can better support higher education innovations, such as consortia, partnerships, online educational and support services, and MOOCs. We indicated a less onerous Substantive Change process was desirable, and that accreditors could provide a quicker path to accreditation for innovative institutions only if the law requiring identical treatment of all institutions was changed to allow more flexibility. As in many meetings with Congressional staff, there was great interest in metrics for student outcomes or that might measure “value” of higher education, as well as in what accreditors are doing to remove substandard institutions from accreditation. What is always perplexing is that the people in Washington think that accreditors can and will quickly terminate accreditation, when one of the principles of accreditation is helping institutions to improve.

In May, the C-RAC executives held a series of meetings in Washington with Terry Hartle of the America Council on Education, Judith Eaton of CHEA, Joseph Vibert from the programmatic accreditors, ASPA, and Kay Gilcher and Carol Crawford from the U.S. Department of Education accreditation group. At each meeting, we discussed the upcoming Reauthorization as well as the negotiated rulemaking sessions. Each organization is beginning to draft statements of principles that it thinks should guide the next Reauthorization and intends to submit them to Congressmen Kline and Miller by August 2, the date set for initial input to the House Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.
During the May meeting, C-RAC also interviewed three firms to represent the regional accreditors in Washington; a decision on who we will work with is pending. Penn Hill, a firm that includes persons we have worked with for ten years, is one of those being considered.

A retreat for all regional commission staff has been planned by C-RAC for August 27-29, 2013, in Boston, Massachusetts. A draft agenda is attached. Every three years, the regional accreditors share professional development activities and exchange staffs’ ideas for practices and policies. The Retreat also features some guest speakers on forward-looking issues, and an overview of federal activity by ACE’s Vice President for Governmental Relations, Terry Hartle.

C-RAC executives have agreed to initiate a review of the *Principles of Good Practice in Distance Education* document with the goal of updating it; it has been a shared policy document for about 12 years, and is embedded in ACCJC’s policy statements and manuals on assuring quality in distance education.

Finally, C-RAC has also agreed to set a meeting with the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) in October or November. ENQA is the association of quality assurance bodies operating in Europe, all of which are state-run entities. C-RAC meets regularly with ENQA (every 2 to 3 years) to share information and ideas on higher education quality assurance, and to compare notes on governmental roles in quality assurance.

BAB/cms

Attachment
DRAFT Schedule for the C-RAC Staff Retreat  
Tuesday – Thursday, August 27-29, 2013  
Omni Parker House Hotel, Boston  

Tuesday:  
Executives Meeting/C-RAC meeting  
Welcome Dinner  

Wednesday:  


Executive Directors Panel: “Accreditors’ Role in the Changing Landscape”  

Breakout Groups A: Assurance Compliance, building a Data Infrastructure  
NACIQI: Lessons Learned from Recognition  
Financial Monitoring  
Disclosure/Transparency  

Lunch and “Discussion of Regional Accreditors’ Comparative Analysis Matrix”  

General Session: “Innovation in Higher Education, CBE and Direct Assessment”, Dr. Paul LeBlanc and Dr. Cathy Saneed, University of Southern New Hampshire  

Breakout Groups B: Competency-Based Education Initiatives  
International Accreditation  
Managing Substantive Change and Direct Assessment Programs  
For-Profit Institutions  

Dinner  

Thursday:  

Breakout Groups C: Contractual Relationships and Institutional Outsourcing  
Dual Enrollments/Dual Degrees  
Training Peer Evaluators  
Public Comments/Complaints  
Report on: School of Record  

General Session: Measures of Student and Institutional Success, Mike Offerman and Rick Torres, _______  

Executives Panel: “Accreditors’ Role and the Need for Data on Outcomes”  

Closing Luncheon: TBD
CHEA International Quality Group
Inaugural Meeting Report

The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) held its first annual meeting in January 2013. What follows are excerpts from an insightful and comprehensive report of this meeting prepared by Peter A. Okebukola, President, Global University Network for Innovation – Africa and member of the CIQG Advisory Council. The full report and a report summary may be found on the CIQG Website.

At its inaugural conference attended by 375 participants from 37 countries, the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) went from reflections on current global practices to telescoping into the proximal future of quality assurance in higher education. A broad spectrum of contemporary and emerging issues was covered in the pursuit of these twin goals. At one end, the quest for world-class institutions; university rankings; youth unemployment; cross-border higher education; quality assurance in central and eastern Europe; and academic corruption stoked the flame of lively conversations. At the other end, the conference narrowed its gaze on some emerging issues notably open education resources, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open badges. As the pendulum swung from current practice to future directions, participants came to the increasing realisation of the challenges and opportunities that will continue to unfold in the coming years in the quest to improve quality in higher education across the world.

From the beginning of the conference chaired by Stamenka Uvalič-Trumbić, CHEA Senior Advisor on International Affairs, and general superintendence by Judith Eaton, President of CHEA, it was clear that participants shared one troubling concern – depreciating quality in higher education in the face of increasing student numbers and the urgent need to strengthen quality assurance. At the close of the conference, the need for national, regional and global action became evident.
Outside the United States, there are increasing links between quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. Qualifications frameworks are developed at regional, sub-regional and country/province levels. In some countries, external quality assurance procedures require that descriptors of learning outcomes fit the National Qualifications Framework generic descriptors. In the United States, the Lumina Foundation degree framework may be the only example comparable to a qualifications framework.

Both private for-profit higher education institutions and public-private partnerships are increasing in number. "Profitability" is seen by some to be a major quality challenge for private for-profit higher education as it size, diversity, rapid growth and expectations of transparency. Some respondents call for additional government regulation of private for-profit higher education institutions as well as effective quality assurance mechanisms for them.

Rankings are not widely accepted as part of quality assurance, although they affect the behavior of institutions and students. A number of respondents do not view rankings as reflecting quality and some universities view rankings as a public relations exercise. Governments' attention to rankings varies across the world.

Respondents commented on the importance of international collaboration in approaching quality assurance issues, whether to develop international standards, to create formal agreements for mutual recognition or to clarify fuzzy terminology. They expressed appreciation to CIQG for creating a space for this.

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Urge Your Colleagues To
JOIN CIQG!

As a member of the CIQG, you know the value of being a part of the international conversation on accreditation and quality assurance. Membership provides benefits including:

- The members-only CIQG newsletter, Quality International, and other CIQG publications
- Invitations to CIQG meetings and special activities
- A discounted rate for consultation services

Equally important, members are active participants in addressing the challenges facing quality assurance.

In addition to CHEA's 3,000 member institutions, that automatically become CIQG members, recognized U.S. accrediting organizations, quality assurance bodies, higher education institutions, associations and businesses from around the world are eligible to join the CIQG. This diversity of membership helps to ensure that the issues CIQG addresses are considered from a variety of perspectives, deepening and enriching the conversation.

We ask that you urge your colleagues who would benefit from being a part of this important new venture to join the CIQG. They can learn more about the CIQG and its activities by visiting the CIQG Website at www.cheainternational.org.
Quality Assurance is Going Global

Karen MacGregor
Global Editor, University World News

Note: Quality International invited University World News Global Editor Karen MacGregor to provide a short article offering her views on the growing importance of quality assurance internationally.

In the past decade, global forces such as growth of the knowledge economy have buffeted universities and colleges around the world, and much of the action and innovation in higher education has been at the international level.

Rising student mobility, internationalisation of the curriculum and learning outcomes, world university rankings, branch campuses and joint degrees, international research partnerships, and more recently massive open online courses, are just some of the developments that increasingly connect higher education institutions, systems, and people across borders.

Issues of quality – and of quality assurance – are at the heart of these and other trends.

It has become increasingly clear to University World News, the weekly international e-paper that is both a reflection of and witness to higher education’s internationalisation, that quality assurance is going global.

Universities, quality assurance agencies, staff and governments are engaging ever more internationally – and in new and different ways. Students are more mobile and more demanding, and regulatory environments for institutions operating across borders are hardening, resulting in increased expectations around quality assurance.

There are clear needs for international benchmarking and comparisons in higher education, and for a common ‘language’ or understanding to evolve for those undertaking quality assurance, even as they retain priorities and practices that are locally appropriate.

There are other, fundamental reasons why international cooperation around quality assurance is imperative.

One is that there are lessons to be learned from all around the world, including where quality assurance systems are still evolving. Another is that some developments – such as rankings and MOOCs – are by nature global, will change quality assurance and call for a common approach.

And another is that quality assurance approaches may offer ways to transcend the quantitative, mechanistic approaches that characterise international comparative and ranking exercises and sideline what is at the heart of higher education – teaching and learning processes and outcomes that enable students and academics to thrive in a global society.

Karen MacGregor is Global Editor of University World News, an online publication reporting on higher education news from a global perspective. For more information, visit the University World News Website at www.universityworldnews.com.
CIQG Membership Update

Since the CIQG was launched in September, 2012, 90 institutions and organizations have joined. CIQG members include higher education institutions, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, governmental agencies and businesses, as well as CHEA's 3,000 member institutions that become CIQG members as a benefit of their membership in CHEA.

The CIQG membership represents colleagues from 32 countries, including Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Ecuador, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"Each new member and country expands the international conversation on quality assurance and its future," said CHEA President Judith Eaton. "It is a message about the importance of the international dialogue on quality assurance and its future."

The CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop

The CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop will take place June 25-26 at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. Each year, the workshop brings together representatives from colleges and universities, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, higher education associations, government and media to address a range of accreditation-related issues.

This year’s Summer Workshop will include a session focusing on quality assurance in an international setting, as well as sessions on issues ranging from competency-based education and accreditation to how innovation will affect accreditation and quality assurance internationally.

CIQG members will receive the CHEA member discount for workshop registration. More information and a registration form for the CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop is available on the CHEA Website.