

# Issues and Trends in Quality Assurance in the US

*ENQA General Assembly*

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for C-RAC:

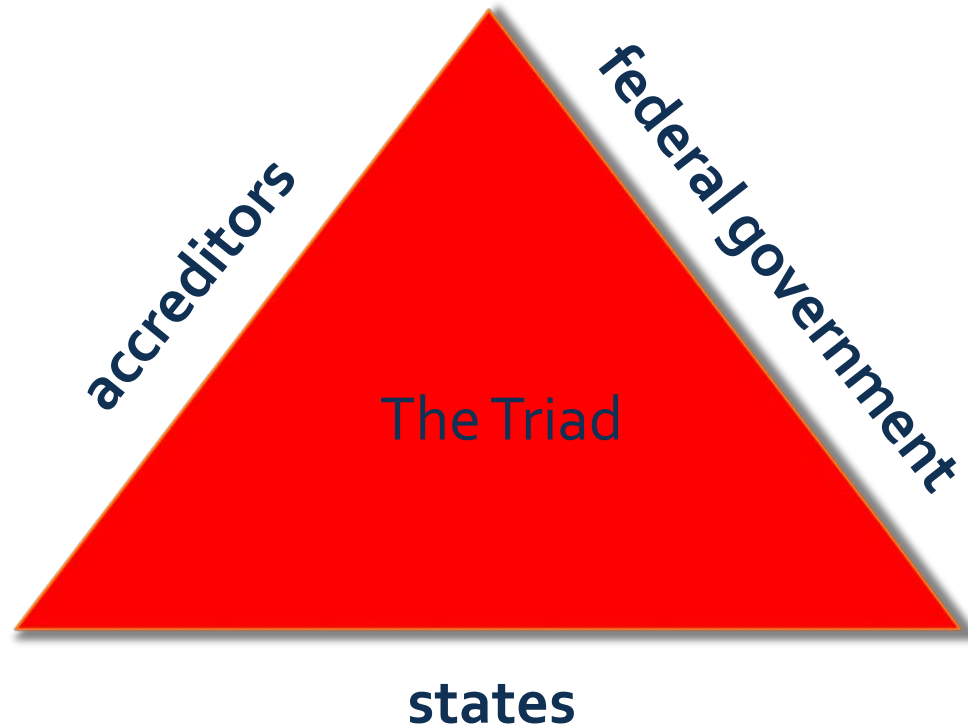
Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions

Barbara Brittingham

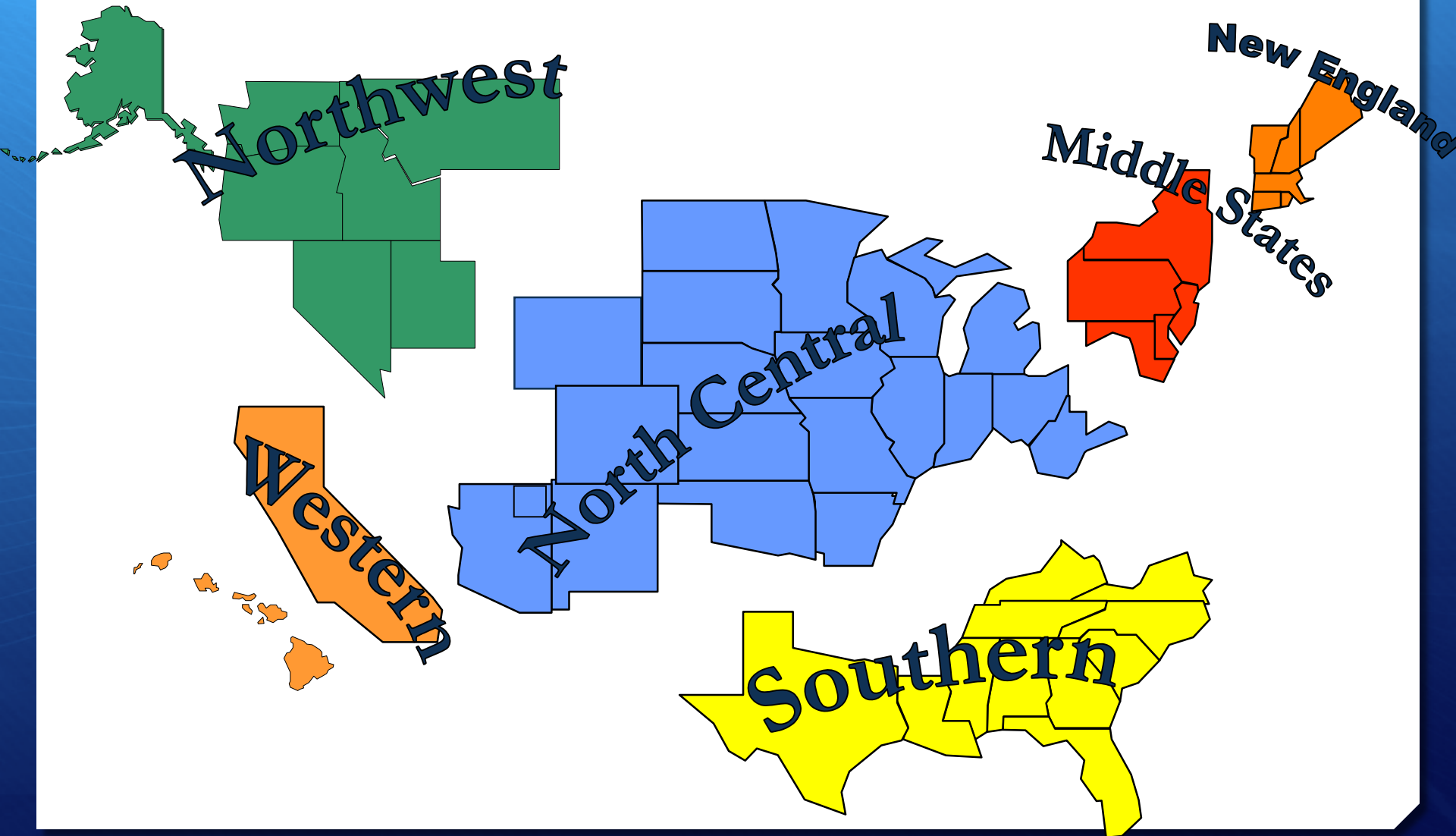
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# Quality Assurance in the United States



# The Regions of Regional Accreditation



## Accredited institutions, by type, with number of students, by type (CHEA, 2011)

	Public	Non-Profit	For-Profit	Total	Students (ooo)
Regional	1561	1383	106	3050	20,547
National Faith-related		468	2	470	150
National Career-related	276	221	3801	4298	4,526
Total Institutions	1837	2072	3909	7818	
Total Students					24,941

Approximately 75% of US students attend public institutions.

## Plus Programmatic Accreditation\*

- 64 Recognized accreditors
- 22,000 programs (and some free-standing institutions)
- Over 3.4 million students

\*Also called 'professional' or 'specialized' accreditation

# American Higher Education Enterprise

## Diversity:

- Community colleges, liberal arts, research universities;
- Public, independent, and for-profit
- Religious and secular
- Comprehensive and single-purpose
- HBCU, Hispanic-serving, tribal
- Large (50,000+) and small (18 students)
- Campus, off-campus, on-line, blended
- Relatively high attendance rate from high school
- Many adult students
- Porous and forgiving

**Competition:** permitted and supported by accreditation

# U.S. Features that Help Define Accreditation

1. Historical: Private institutions first: from 1636
2. Political: U.S. federal system and the Constitution
  - U.S. federal system and the Constitution
  - Dartmouth College case
  - No national university
3. Strong tradition of voluntary associations
4. Not really a system
  - Decentralized
  - Large
  - Diverse
  - Serves a mobile society
  - Porous – and forgiving

# Two minute history of American accreditation

1. 1885: New England Association of Schools and Colleges
2. Periodic review
3. Standards
4. Self-study and visit. . . . and decision
5. Peer review
6. Self regulation
7. Link to federal government
8. Expectations rising



# Characteristics of American Accreditation

- Private, nongovernmental organizations
- Self-regulatory system: membership organizations
- Voluntary
- Benefits
  - Federal financial aid
  - Tuition reimbursement
  - College guides
  - Research funding
  - Public confidence\*
- De-centralized system
- Evolved, not designed
- Volunteer, peer evaluators
- Funded by dues and fees
- Relies on candor and integrity

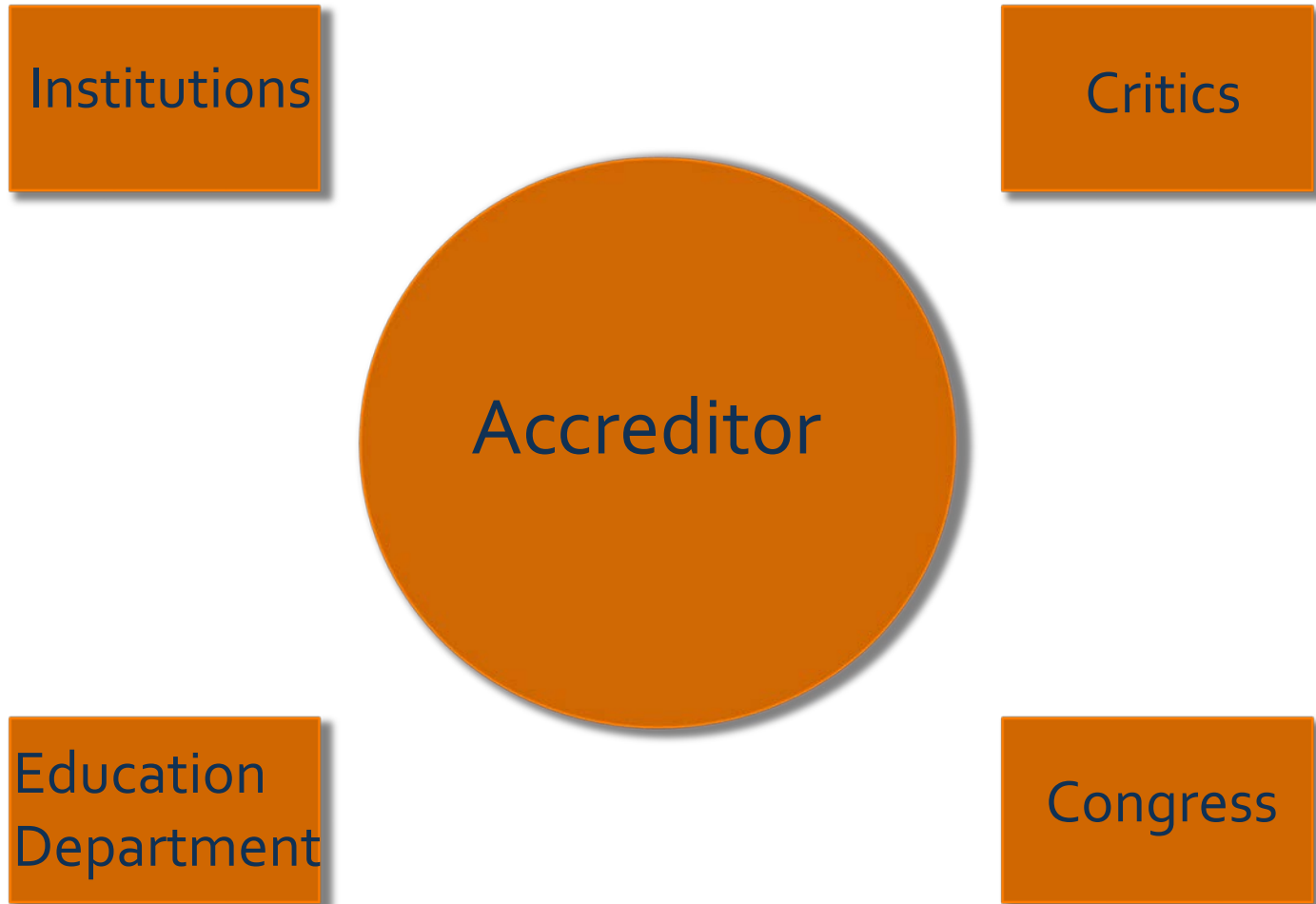
\*The most important and most fragile benefit.

# Basics of the Accreditation Process in the US

- Standards: Set by the membership
- Self-study
- Visit by team of peers
- Decision by Commission (Peers and public members, all elected by the members)

Cycle and monitoring

# Quality Assurance Issues in Context



## Institutions

- More moving parts
- Assessment of student learning outcomes/Data
- Financially fragile institutions
- For-profit higher education



Accreditor

- Recognition
- NACIQI
- “Distressed Schools”
- Other accreditors
- Experimental Sites
- College Scorecard



Education  
Department



## Critics

- “Distressed schools”
- A cartel that stifles innovation
- Not tough enough/too tough
- “Risk-sensitive” accreditation



## Re-authorization of the Higher Education Act

- Substantive Change
- Being sued
- Transparency

Congress

# Trends and Issues

## Institutions

- More moving parts
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- “Distressed schools”
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## Department of Education

- Recognition
- NACIQI
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## Congress

- Re-authorization of the Higher Education Act
- Substantive Change
  - Being sued
  - Transparency



## What to watch for in US Quality Assurance

- Re-authorization of the Higher Education Act: regional accreditation, transparency, and. . . .
- What happens to the for-profit sector
- Competency-Based Education
- Micro-credentials, MOOCs and other innovations
- More data, but will it be good data?

## For information on each C-RAC member, see:

Commission referred to as	Website
Middle States	<a href="http://msche.org">msche.org</a>
New England or NEASC	<a href="http://cihe.neasc.org">cihe.neasc.org</a>
North Central or Higher Learning	<a href="http://hlcommission.org">hlcommission.org</a>
Northwest	<a href="http://nwccu.org">nwccu.org</a>
Southern or SACS	<a href="http://sacscoc.org">sacscoc.org</a>
WASC or Western	<a href="http://wascsenior.org">wascsenior.org</a> <i>and</i> <a href="http://accjc.org">accjc.org</a>

## For more information on accreditation in the US, see:

1. [chea.org](http://chea.org)

1. [www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html)

1. [Insidehighered.com](http://Insidehighered.com)

**Time for your  
comments  
and  
questions.**